
Helping Students with Learning Disabilities Prepare for College

Rebecca Field, Ed. M

Rebecca Field Consulting

Director

Bayhill High School

College Advisor

Definition of Learning Disability

A childhood disorder characterized by chronic difficulties in learning to read, write, spell, or calculate in people of average to above average intelligence. This is believed to have a neurological origin.

© Original Artist
Reproduction rights obtainable from
www.CartoonStock.com



“I’m going to need tech support.”

Getting Ready for College



■ Neurotypical Students

- Overwhelming and exciting
- Stressful (GPAs, SAT/ACT)
- I wish my parents wouldn't nag so much
- Will I get in anywhere?
- Will I have friends?
- Am I really ready for this?

■ Students with LD

- Anxiety provoking
- No college wants *me*
- Confusing, too much to do
- Paralyzing
- I can't *do* standardized tests
- Don't rush me!
- I can recreate myself



Student & Parent Concerns

■ Students

- **Unsure of their responsibilities in college**
- **May never have read own documentation**
- **May be unclear about what their disability is**
- **Have typically relied on parents to advocate for them**

■ Parents

- **Want to know what services are available for students**
 - **Want to know how to get them**
 - **Sometimes unsure of eligibility process in higher education**
 - **Unsure of differences between K - 12 and higher education**
-

**Transition from high school
to college is HUGE for all
students but for our LD
students it can be even
more overwhelming than
we might guess**



Can you help me, Mrs. Martin? This wasn't covered in any of my education courses.

Definition of *Transition* for LD Students

- Begins at 15 as part of IEP
 - Provided by the school/other agencies
 - Must focus on students' strengths
 - Are results oriented
 - Facilitate movement from school to post-school
 - Include students, parents, teachers, counselors, therapists etc.
 - Provide a written transition plan upon exit
 - Hopefully focus on developing self-advocacy skills
-

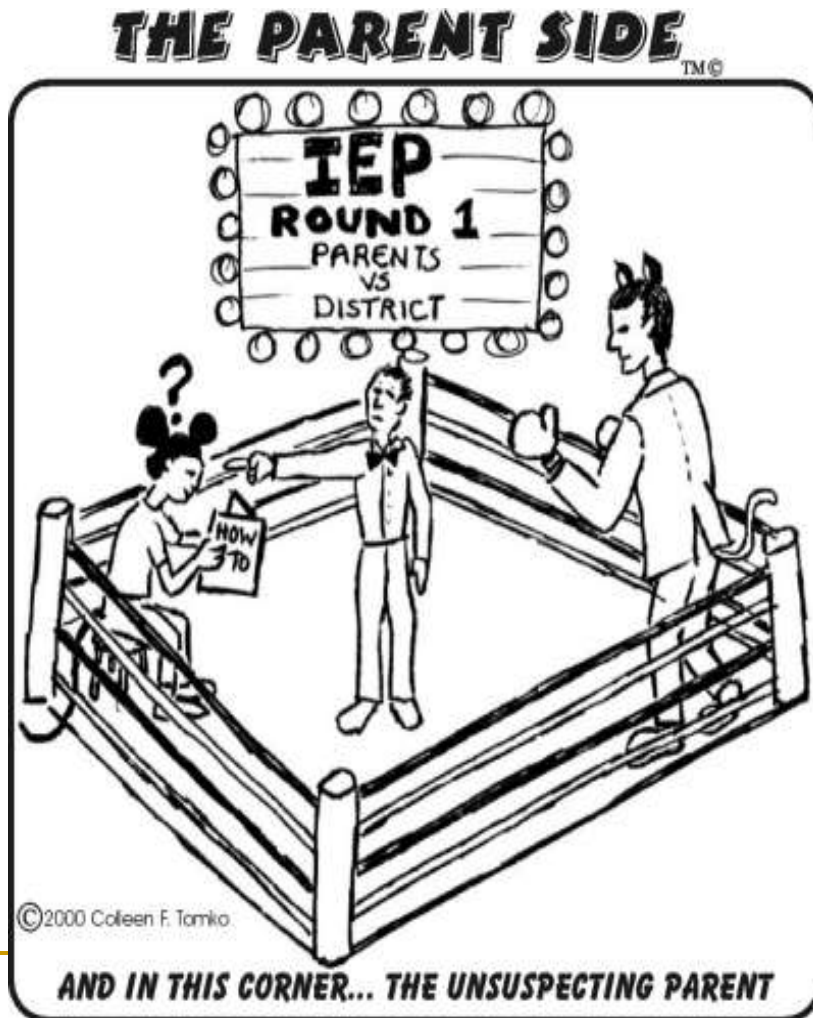
The Law: Understanding Students' Rights

IDEA

(Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act)

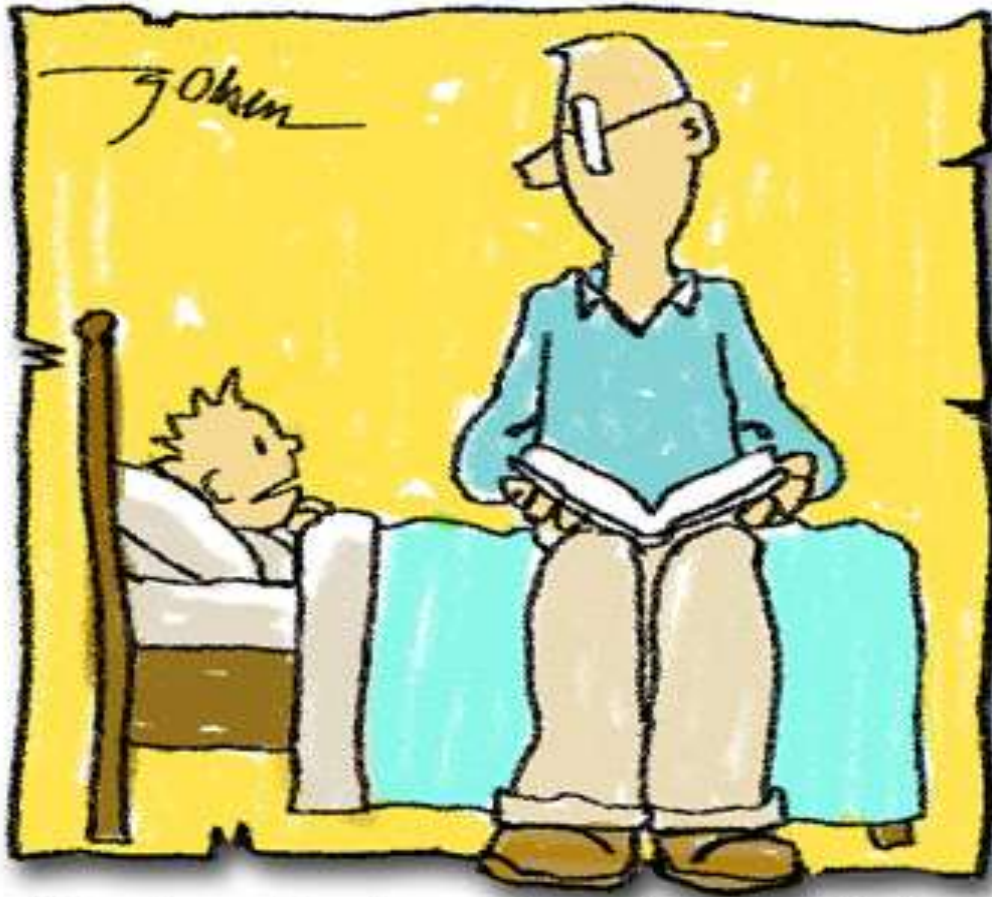
- **Educational Statute**
 - **Governs K – 12 Education. Schools receive federal funding**
 - **Free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment**
 - **Active parent participation in the IEP (Individual Educational Plan)**
 - **Open and active communication with parents/guardians**
-

K – 12 Education: What parents are used to doing...



- Participating in the IEP
- Getting in there and “fighting” for our kids

Also...



"You know, Dad, you do a darn good job. You should let me record you sometime, and I'll podcast you on my website. Just a thought."

- **Motivating their students**
- **Helping teachers understand their unique talents**
- **Asking questions**

And of course...

- **Being involved!**



"I don't have my homework, Miss Flynn—my parents forgot to do it."

from The New Yorker

Things change after high school...

- **Students must self-advocate.**
 - **Schools need to provide equal access. They do not need to modify the program in any way.**
 - **Students are responsible for their records and for asking for what they need.**
-

ADA

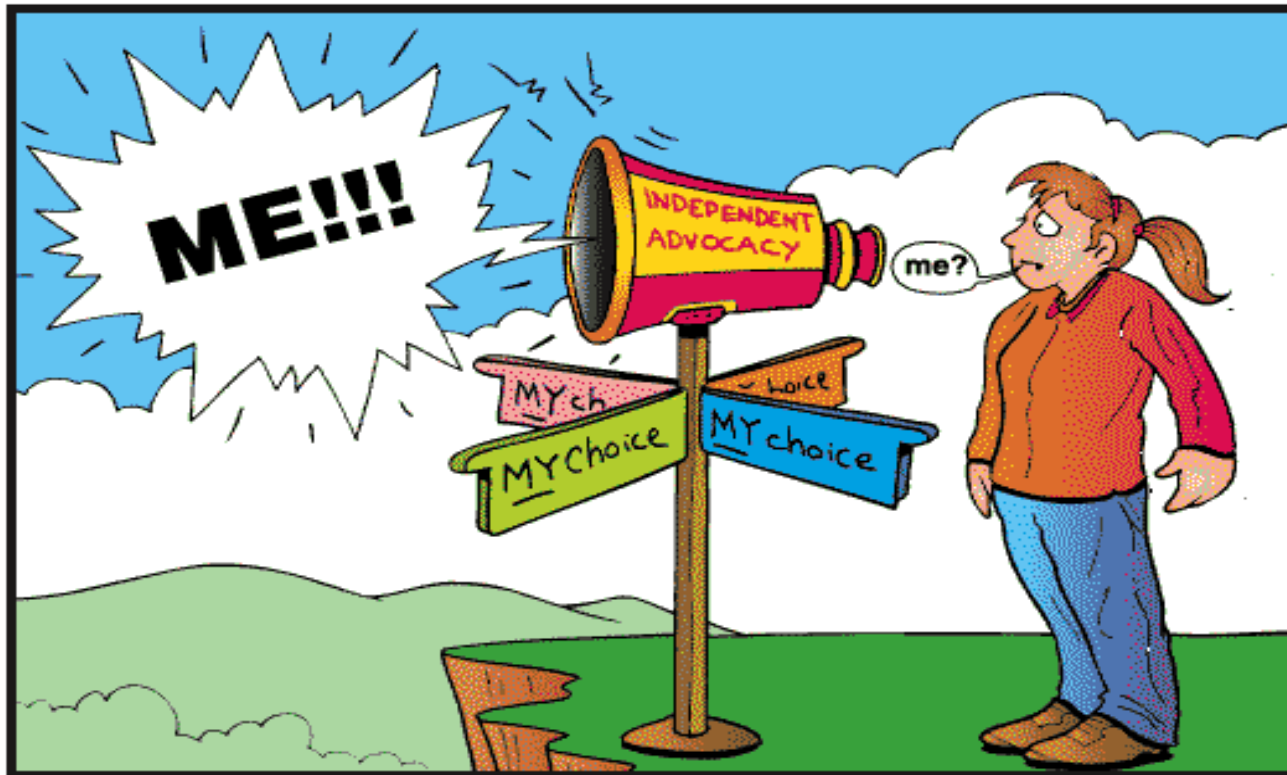
(Americans with Disabilities Act)

- **Civil Rights Law**
 - **Governs post high school**
 - **Students are guaranteed EQUAL ACCESS**
 - **No IEPs in college. Modifications not required**
 - **Students control their records & who can access them**
-

FERPA

- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act**
 - **Rights of education records transfer to student**
 - **College/University personnel may NOT share information without explicit written permission from the student**
-

The Importance of Self-Advocacy Skills





**For students to be successful,
and get what they need in
college, they need to be able
to talk about their disability –
their challenges **AND** their
strengths, i.e. they need to be
able to self-advocate**

How can we help students develop their self-advocacy skills?

- **Address instructional needs with the student – can s/he talk about what works in the classroom?**
 - **Encourage experiences and expertise outside of the classroom setting. Summer programs? Community service?**
 - **Develop independent living skills: money, transportation, etc.**
 - **Involve the student and ask what s/he thinks needs to happen before college**
-

Some Examples

- **Make an appointment with the person who assessed the student and have her/him explain the testing to the student.**
 - **Make sure that the student (not the parent) is talking with teachers if/when school issues arise.**
 - **Encourage work/internship experience.**
 - **Encourage students to develop and pursue passions. Use summers!**
 - **Allow them to fail sometimes.**
 - **Make sure that students have basic understanding of money.**
-

How can we help parents?

- **Explain WHY self-advocacy is so important**
 - **Help them see the big picture and that small failures are part of a larger success**
 - **Teach them about the laws so they begin to back-off now**
 - **Acknowledge that LD parents often struggle with even more stress than parents of neurotypical students**
 - **Remind them that there are over 3,000 colleges in this country and that if their child prepares and finds the right college match, the college experience can be life-changing**
-

Counselors:

When do you ask for help?

- **Parents are asking highly technical questions about testing and assessments**
 - **You know that you are not as familiar with LD specific colleges as a consultant might be**
 - **You feel that you're in over your head**
-

Resources

- **Parents Education Network:**
www.parentseducationnetwork.org
 - **Association on Higher Education and Disability:**
www.ahead.org
 - **Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder:**
www.chadd.org
 - **Great Schools (Learning Disabilities & Difficulties):**
www.greatschools.org/LD.topic?content=1541
 - **Learning about Money:**
<http://resources.bnet.com/topic/charles+schwab+foundation.html>
 - **International Dyslexia Association:**
www.interdys.org/
 - **US Autism and Aspergers Association:**
www.usautism.org/
 - **Special Needs Directory**
<http://www.specialneedsdirectory.org>
 - **Autism, Asperger's Syndrome Coalition for Education Networking and Development (AASCEND)**
<http://www.aascend.net/>
/
-

Contact Information

Rebecca Field Consulting

www.rebeccafieldconsulting.com

rfield@rebeccafieldconsulting.com

(510) 816-7755
