

APPENDIX I

Sample Letters to the School

This Appendix includes sixteen sample letters from two hypothetical parents, Mary Parent and Jane Smith. As you read about the purposes of letters in Chapter 23, refer to letters 1-6 from Mary Parent.

Letters 7 through 16 from Jane Smith show you how to use letters to tell your side of the story. When you read these letters, you will see how Jane used letters to document her son's problems and her requests for help. The letters begin with her request for her son's records and include requests for meetings, an evaluation, eligibility, and a Ten-day Notice letter when she announced her intention to withdraw her son from the public school program. You can adapt these letters to fit your circumstances.

1. Sample Letter to Request Information
2. Sample Letter to Request a Meeting
3. Sample Letter to Document a Problem
4. Sample Letter to Express Appreciation and Document Problems
5. Sample Letter to Document an IEP Problem
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10. Letter to Request a Meeting with a Teacher, Includes Educational History
11. Letter to Request a Review of Educational Records
12. Letter to Express Appreciation for Help
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14. Letter to Request Test Scores as Standard Scores and Percentile Ranks
15. Follow-up Letter after IEP Meeting to Document Unresolved Problems
16. Ten-day Notice Letter to Withdraw Child from Public School

#1. Sample Letter to Request Information

Mary Parent
500 Oak Street
Centerville, IN 60010
(899) 555-1234

September 22, 2002

Dr. Ruth Boss, Superintendent
Independent School District #1
1000 Central Avenue
Centerville, IN 60010

Reference: Jennifer Parent
DOB: 01/01/90
School: Stonewall Elementary School

Dear Dr. Boss:

Please send me a complete copy of my child's cumulative and confidential educational records, including medical records, special education records, formal and informal correspondence, discipline records, tests, evaluations, and teacher-to teacher notes. If there is a cost and policy about photocopies, please let me know immediately.

If you have questions about my request, please call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234) after 6 p.m. I appreciate your help and quick response.

Sincerely,

Mary Parent

#2. Sample Letter to Request a Meeting

Mary Parent
500 Oak Street
Centerville, IN 60010
(899) 555-1234

November 8, 2002

Eleanor Randolph
Stonewall Elementary School
1000 Central Avenue
Centerville, IN 60010

Reference: Jennifer Parent
DOB: 01/03/90
School: Stonewall Elementary School

Dear Mrs. Randolph:

I am writing to request an appointment with you on November 15 at 3:30 p.m. I would like to talk with you about Jennifer's behavior problems. As you know, Jennifer is having difficulty with the transition from elementary school to middle school. Two weeks ago, she was suspended again for "inappropriate behavior."

Please call me at work (555-9876) or home (555-1234) after 6:00 p.m. to confirm this date and time or to suggest an alternative date and time. If I am not available, please leave a message on my answering machine.

I appreciate your taking the time to meet with me.

Sincerely,

Mary Parent

#3. Sample Letter to Document a Problem

Mary Parent
500 Oak Street
Centerville, IN 60010
(899) 555-1234

November 15, 2002

John Belcher
Stonewall Elementary School
1000 Central Avenue
Centerville, IN 60010

Reference: Jennifer Parent
DOB: 01/01/90
School: Stonewall Elementary School

Dear Mr. Belcher:

I am writing to ask you to reconsider your decision to suspend Jennifer from school for three days. I do not believe that talking to a classmate during a quiz is an offense that warrants such serious disciplinary action.

As you know, Jennifer has autism. Four years ago, she was unable to communicate with other children. Her social skills deficits were severe. Jennifer has made remarkable progress in these areas. Despite this, her behavior is not always appropriate. The transition from elementary school to middle school has been difficult for her. Suspending Jennifer from school does not teach her how to behave more appropriately.

I am also concerned that this is the third time Jennifer has been suspended for behavior problems this year.

I am requesting a meeting with you to discuss your decision to suspend Jennifer and her needs as a child with autism. Please call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234) after 6:00 p.m. to schedule a meeting. I look forward to your call.

Sincerely,

Mary Parent

#4. Sample Letter to Express Appreciation and Document Problems

Mary Parent
500 Oak Street
Centerville, IN 60010
(899) 555-1234

November 27, 2002

Lee Green Special Education Teacher
Eleanor Randolph, Math Teacher
Stonewall Elementary School
1000 Central Avenue
Centerville, IN 60010

Reference: Jennifer Parent
DOB: 01/01/90
School: Stonewall Elementary School

Dear Ms. Randolph and Ms. Smart:

I am writing to thank you for meeting with me on November 25 to discuss Jennifer's progress and grades. As a parent, I sometimes find report cards confusing.

Ms. Randolph, I appreciate your explanation of Jennifer's progress. For example, you explained that her grade of A in math was based on the second grade math book that she has used for two years. I was not aware that her grades were raised because of good attendance.

Ms. Green advised me that Jennifer continues to need an aide 100% of the time. I appreciate the school's attempts to help Jennifer by providing an aide. However, I have serious concerns about this aide. She has received no training about autism and is not being supervised. Instead, of teaching Jennifer to communicate, Ms. Jones speaks for Jennifer. Recently, I learned that Ms. Jones has been doing Jennifer's homework.

If you are interested in learning about Jennifer's type of autism, I have lots of information and will be happy to share this information with you. Thank you again for the meeting and your time. I am glad you enjoyed the cake I brought.

Sincerely,

Mary Parent

#5. Sample Letter to Document an IEP Problem

Mary Parent
500 Oak Street
Centerville, IN 60010
(899) 555-1234
January 2, 2003

Lee Green, Special Education Teacher
Stonewall Elementary School
1000 Central Avenue
Centerville, IN 60010

Reference: Jennifer Parent
Sixth Grade
School: Stonewall Elementary School

Dear Ms. Green:

I am writing to thank you for your telephone call about Jennifer's problems in Mr. Small's class. I appreciate your offer to intervene with Mr. Small on Jennifer's behalf.

I am concerned that Mr. Small is not implementing Jennifer's IEP. As you know, the IEP provides for Jennifer to have a quiet place to go when she is overwhelmed. You assured me that Mr. Small has been advised to follow the IEP. You also advised me that the school would provide a quiet place near Mr. Small's class.

Why does Mr. Small refuse to allow Jennifer to go the quiet place when she is overwhelmed? If she cannot get away when she is overwhelmed, she has behavior problems. She has already been suspended three times this year for behavior problems.

I am confused. The elementary school teachers worked with Jennifer. They taught her communication and social skills. Because of their efforts, she made wonderful progress. We will always feel grateful to these teachers.

The middle school teachers seem to have a "sink or swim" attitude about Jennifer. The IEP team spent hours writing an IEP that would provide Jennifer with an appropriate education. How can a teacher refuse to implement the IEP? Why does Mr. Belcher think he can teach Jennifer to behave appropriately by suspending her?

Please schedule an IEP meeting to address these issues. You can contact me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234) after 6:00 p.m. I look forward to meeting with the IEP team.

Sincerely,
Mary Parent

#6. Sample Letter to Decline a Request

Mary Parent
500 Oak Street
Centerville, IN 60010
(899) 555-1234

April 4, 2003

Dr. Alan Brown
Independent School District #1
1000 Central Avenue
Centerville, IN 60010

Reference: Jennifer Parent
DOB: 01/03/90
School: Stonewall Elementary School

Dear Dr. Brown:

On Thursday evening, April 3, I received a letter from you advising me that an IEP meeting had been scheduled for Monday, April 7, at 2:15 p.m.

I regret that I must ask that this meeting be rescheduled. Unfortunately, I cannot cancel my work obligations on such short notice. I hope this request does not inconvenience the team members. As I advised your secretary, I am available on April 9, 10, and 11.

If you have any questions, please call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234) after 6:00 p.m. I look forward to meeting with the team on one of these dates.

Sincerely,

Mary Parent

#7. Letter to Principal to Request Child's Records

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

September 18, 2002

George Williams, Principal
Grove Middle School
1000 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Mr. Williams:

On September 17, I received a letter advising me that a meeting with Michael's teachers has been scheduled for October 2. At this meeting, we will discuss Michaels' educational problems and how we may help him. So that I may be better prepared for the meeting, please send me a complete copy of my son's entire cumulative and confidential records. Please be sure to include copies of all evaluations and actual test scores. If there is a cost and policy about photocopies, please let me know immediately.

I will need time to review Michael's educational records before this important meeting.

If you have questions about my request, please call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234), after 6:00 pm.

Thank you for your assistance and quick response.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

- If you send one letter to the principal and one letter to the superintendent, it is less likely that one person will assume the other person acted on your request.
- Do not send letters by certified mail. Hand-deliver important letters to the principal's office. Provide the guidance counselor with copies of important letters.

#8. Letter to Superintendent to Request Child's Records

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

September 18, 2002

Ruth Meadows, Superintendent
Independent School District #1
10 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Dr. Meadows:

On September 17, I received a letter advising me that a meeting with Michael's teachers has been scheduled for October 2. At this meeting, we will discuss Michaels' educational problems and how we may help him. So that I may be better prepared for the meeting, please send me a complete copy of my son's entire cumulative and confidential records. Please be sure to include copies of all evaluations and actual test scores.

I will need time to review Michael's educational records before this important meeting.

If you have questions about my request, please call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234), after 6:00 pm.

Thank you for your assistance and quick response.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

#9. Second Request for Records

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

October 4, 2002

George Williams, Principal
Grove Middle School
1000 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Mr. Williams:

I am concerned that I have not received a copy of my son's educational records. I requested these records on September 18, 2001 (copy of letter enclosed). When I did not receive a response from your office, I called on September 25, September 28, and October 1, 2001.

As I mentioned in my earlier letter, a meeting with my son's teachers was scheduled for October 2. I needed to review Michael's educational records before this meeting. Because I did not receive the records in time, the meeting was rescheduled. Michael is still not receiving any help from the school.

I would appreciate your prompt attention to resolve what I view as the beginning of a serious problem. I can come to the school to help photocopy these records. If you need to discuss my request, please call me at work (555-9876) or home (555-1234). Thank you for taking the time to resolve this problem.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

Enc: September 18 letter requesting records

#10. Letter to Request a Meeting with a Teacher, Includes Educational History

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

October 15, 2002

Robert Underwood, Teacher
Grove Middle School
1000 Central Avenue
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Mr. Underwood:

I am very concerned about Michael's school problems. I would like to meet with you and get your ideas about his problems and how we can help him.

School has been always been difficult for Michael. He repeated first grade. At that time, I asked for special help for Michael. This was denied. In fourth grade, I again asked that he receive special help. The special education staff found him eligible and provided special education services, but felt that he was not far enough behind in reading to receive reading remediation. I told them that he could not read.

In September, 2001, I arranged for Michael to receive private tutoring at our expense. He received tutoring until Christmas when the tutor moved away. Michael was showing improvement, but he needs more help. In the first and second grades, he was happy and energetic. Now he seems sad, depressed, and tells us that children make fun of him because he cannot read. He does not want to go to school.

I understand that you meet with parents on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, from 3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. I would like to schedule a meeting with you on Tuesday, October 22 at 3:30 p.m. Please call to confirm this date or suggest an alternative date and time. You can call me at work (555-9876) or home (555-1234) after 6:00 p.m. If I am not available, please leave a message on my answering machine. My job requires me to attend meetings every Monday until 5:00 p.m.

I appreciate your taking time to meet with me. I look forward to your advice about how we can help Michael learn how to read.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

#11. Letter to Request a Review of Educational Records

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane, Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

November 12, 2002

George Williams, Principal
Grove Middle School
1000 Main Street, Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

George Williams, Principal
Grove Middle School
1000 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Dear Mr. Williams:

On September 18, 2001, I requested a complete copy of my son's educational records. When I did not receive these records, I hand-delivered a second letter to your office on October 4, 2001. (Enclosed are copies of the letters.) I received copies of Michael's educational records on November 8, 2001. I immediately began organizing his file. I found that the records I received from the school appear to be incomplete. He was tested several years ago and that information is missing.

Because Michael's parents and teachers need to have access to the same information, I am requesting that all my son's educational records be brought together in one place for my review. I understand that I may examine all personally identifiable records regarding Michael. This includes medical records, special education records, formal and informal correspondence, discipline records, tests, evaluations, and teacher-to teacher notes.

I appreciate your having a staff member present at this review to certify that these records represent all records held regarding Michael. My friend, Louisa Johnson, will help me to log in records as we review them.

Please call so we can schedule a convenient time to review Michael's educational records. Since Thanksgiving is just around the corner, I would like to finish this task within the next five days. You can reach me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234) in the evening. I appreciate your help in this matter.

Sincerely,
Jane Smith

Enc: Letters dated September 18 and October 4, 2001

#12. Letter to Express Appreciation for Help

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

November 15, 2002

Nathan Weiss, Director of Special Education
School District #10
1001 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Dr. Weiss:

I greatly appreciate the help your office manager, Joan Patterson, provided during the recent review of my son's educational records.

With Ms. Patterson's help, we were able to locate several records that had been misfiled. Because of Ms. Patterson's suggestions and assistance, we were able to complete the records review more quickly.

You are fortunate to have such a capable office manager.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

#13. Letter to Request an Evaluation for Special Education Services

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

November 20, 2002

George Williams, Principal
Grove Middle School
1000 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Mr. Williams,

I am writing to ask that my son, Michael Smith, be considered for special education services that will teach him how to read. He is in the sixth grade at Grove Middle School.

A brief summary of Michael's educational history follows: Michael was retained in first grade because the teacher felt his problems with reading would improve when he got older. When I asked for special help for Michael, this was denied.

In fourth grade, Michael could not read the labels on cans and boxes at the grocery store. I asked that he receive special education services. He was found eligible and received some services. Although I told your staff that Michael could not read, they said he did not qualify for reading remediation. The special education staff decided to wait to see if his problems improved by the end of the school year. His problems did not improve. I arranged for private tutoring. Michael is now in sixth grade and cannot read labels at the grocery store.

When I met with his teacher last week, I was told that Michael does not read well enough to pass the new state tests. Mr. Underwood explained that Michael's reading skills are at the 2nd to 3rd grade level. He is aware of the severity of Michael's reading problems and is doing all that he can. He suggested that I contact you.

When I first wrote to Mr. Underwood, I told him that in the first and second grades, Michael was happy and energetic. Now he seems sad, depressed, and tells us that several children tease him because he cannot read. He does not want to go to school.

I am afraid that I am losing my child.

Michael needs our help. If you need more information about my request for more reading help for Michael, please call me at home (555-1234) or at work (555-9876). I appreciate your prompt attention to this problem.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

#14. Letter to Request Test Scores as Standard Scores and Percentile Ranks

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

February 21, 2003

Nathan Weiss, Director of Special Education
School District #10
1001 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Dr. Weiss:

I attended an special education meeting for my son on February 20. When I reviewed Mike's test results, I was distressed to find that his scores were reported as "ranges" (i.e. below average, average), not as percentile ranks and/or as standard scores. Because I did not receive his test scores, it was impossible to know where Michael is functioning.

Please send Michael's test scores as standard scores and percentile ranks.

The eligibility team will meet again on **March 20**. To prepare for this meeting, I need the test results no later than **March 13**. If I do not have this information, the team will have to cancel another meeting and waste more valuable time. I understand that your staff is busy. I will pick the information up at the school. If I can do anything to expedite this request or provide any help, please let me know immediately.

Enclosed please find a copy of a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation of Michael by John Black, Ph.D., NASP, a certified school psychologist, completed on February 12, 2003. I received this evaluation by mail yesterday, while we were at the eligibility meeting.

If you have questions about my request, please let me know. You may call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234). I look forward to receiving these test results no later than **March 13**. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

#15. Follow-up Letter after IEP Meeting to Document Unresolved Problems

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234
April 9, 2003

Nathan Weiss, Director of Special Education
School District #10
1001 Main Street, Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Dr. Weiss:

On April 3, I met with you and your staff to develop an appropriate educational program for my son. Michael has received special education services for two years. Before the meeting, I provided you with a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation of Michael by Dr. John Black, an expert in special education. According to this evaluation, after two years of special education, Michael made no progress learning to read. His self-concept has been damaged.

On April 3, Dr. Black traveled to School District #10 so he could discuss his findings and recommendations with you, your staff, and the IEP Team. At this meeting, he advised you that Michael needs a language arts program that is based on a multi-sensory, sequential approach to reading instruction. Michael learns differently from many children. Michael has dyslexia that was not identified until Dr. Black evaluated him. Dr. Black explained that it is not too late to teach Michael to read, but that he requires intensive services and specialized remediation. I asked the district to provide remediation. You said Michael could attend summer school but advised that the district does not provide reading remediation in summer school.

I am losing confidence in the district's ability to teach Michael how to read and write. The district has provided no remediation. The gap between Michael's ability and achievement is growing. His self-esteem has dropped.

We must find a way to teach Michael to read and write.

I appreciate your taking the time to attend the April 3 meeting. If you can help, please let me know. We are running out of time. You may call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234) after 6:00 p.m.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

cc: Dr. Black

#16. Ten-day Notice Letter to Withdraw Child from Public School

Jane Smith
500 Oak Lane
Centerville, IL 60010
(899) 555-1234

May 25, 2003

Nathan Weiss, Director of Special Education
School District #10
1001 Main Street
Middleburg, IL 60010

Reference: Michael K. Smith
DOB: 01/02/90
School: Grove Middle School

Dear Dr. Weiss:

As you know, my son Michael attends Grove Middle School. Michael has dyslexia. Although he was placed in support classes for two years, he did not learn to read.

Michael has been evaluated by the school psychologist and a private sector school psychologist. Last week, he was evaluated by Dr. Kay, a neuro-psychologist. The enclosed findings are clear and not disputed. Michael has not learned to read. According to the last evaluations, he has fallen further behind. The school personnel blame Michael for his lack of progress.

I advised the team that I may place Michael in private school if the school district will not provide an intensive program of reading remediation. I was told that Michael received the services that were available and that nothing else could be done. The school psychologist said I should not expect Michael to learn to read. Dr. Black, who tested my son in February says that my son will learn to read if he is taught appropriately. Dr. Kay concurs with Dr. Black.

Michael has a right to an appropriate education. I have spent two frustrating years in meetings, trying to educate the district and myself. I have spent thousands of dollars on evaluations that the district ignores.

What can I do? What would you do? Is it unreasonable to expect the school to teach my son to read?

I plan to remove Michael from Independent School District #10 and place him in the Dewey School, a private school that specializes in teaching children like Michael to read. If Michael makes progress in the private program, I will ask the district to reimburse me for the cost of his education.

If you have any questions, you may call me at work (555-9876) or at home (555-1234).

Sincerely,

Jane Smith

cc: Dr. Black
Dr. Kay

Your Notes Here