

CSH Support Corner – Parent & Caregiver Blog

October 2022



Next Chapter, New Beginning...

September brings about the start of a new season and many new beginnings. Not only are we saying farewell to the summer days, but we are welcoming Fall in all its glory. We welcome football season, tropical storm season, and most importantly, back-to-school season. For my Anthony and I, it wasn't actually "back-to-school", but our very first day of school ever. We had officially entered the days of packing school lunches, parent-teacher meetings, and the bittersweet world of an IEP. An IEP (Individualized Education Plan) is a legal document that states how the school will meet the student's specific educational needs. It is filled with achievable goals regarding skills in different areas including social skills, academic skills, etc., but all skills are measured by the child's abilities.

The start of school with a special needs child is no walk in the park. The number of meetings to attend and forms to be signed is overwhelming. Walking into our initial meeting to start the process of developing an IEP was nerve wracking. Prior to the meeting, I had no idea how to prepare or what to expect, but thankfully I had resources to turn to that gave me a heads up. I spent days reading up on my child's rights and reading other mom's experiences. Informing myself as much as I could gave me the courage to advocate for my son's needs in school. An IEP wasn't the only challenging part of this start, though.

Anthony has Autism and is non-communicative, so the thought of him going to school was heart wrenching. Yes, the IEP being in place and him being in a special education class calmed me a bit, but not enough to stop my tears from flowing as we got closer to his first day. Anthony is a bright shining star and I want the world to see it, but I wasn't prepared to let go. I wasn't ready to put all my trust in another adult to care for my son for so many hours of the day. I wasn't prepared, but I knew it was necessary to turn to the next chapter of our lives. Yes, new beginnings can be scary and, yes, although both Anthony and I cried like babies on his first day, we knew it was for the best.

Change can be tough. Changes in routines, changes in environments, changes in the people around you are all extremely difficult, but what comes after these changes is amazing. My son and I are still adjusting to the pre-kindergarten life, and I'm so excited to see what the 2022-2023 school year will bring. I have no doubt that Anthony will be great and succeed all throughout this new journey, and I'll be right by his side cheering him on all along the way! I am even volunteering as a "Room Mom" which allows me to assist with and participate in activities for Anthony's class. This season is an emotional rollercoaster, but my boy and I are ready for this new beginning in our next chapter of life.



For more information on IEP's visit:

[https://www.rwjbh.org/documents/csh/kohls/NJ-Parent-IEP-Reference-Guide-English\(1\).pdf](https://www.rwjbh.org/documents/csh/kohls/NJ-Parent-IEP-Reference-Guide-English(1).pdf)

Facebook group:

NJ Autism Moms

