

Dyslexia: What's Your Fight Song?

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From 1996 to 2008 the San Diego Padres had a closing pitcher named Trevor Hoffman. He was the hometown hero who only came into the game to 'save' it or put the finishing touch on the game. Every single time Trevor ran on to the field, the song, "Hell's Bells" played and brought everyone to their feet. There was something about that song that made us all break out our towels and twirl them in the air. That song got us fired up and there was no way we could lose. We all have a song that makes us feel invincible, happy and ready to take on the world.

What's your dyslexia fight song?

Mine is Back in Black by AC/DC. But what in the world does this have to do with dyslexia and IEPs. Well, beyond the typical practical advice I usually give, there are things less practical and obvious that you can do to have more successful IEP and school meetings. The first is to find your dyslexia fight song. Play that song on the way to the meeting. Sing that song on the way to meeting. Sing it at the top of your lungs. Get fired up. When you get to the IEP meeting and things begin to go downhill, are frustrating or get heated, remember how you felt in the car and channel your Trevor Hoffman. You are the closer and you will close this meeting on your terms.

Use Audio/Visual Aids

I know sometimes it is easy to forget that IEP teams are made of people. People made up of flesh and blood; people who can succumb to some creative antics from you. So, I want you to collect the following books: *Overcoming Dyslexia*, *Proust and the Squid*, *Reading in the Brain*, *The Dyslexia Empowerment Plan*. Then I want you to download the [National Reading Panel's report](#). Then print out the [definition of Specific Learning Disability](#) (300.8(c)(10)) with the word dyslexia highlighted. Next, print out a [reading fluency chart](#) by grade level. Next, make a video of your student reading. Finally, print out the entire [2004 IDEA](#) document. Then stack them up and take them with you to all school/IEP meetings. Plunk them down on the table, with the video cued up, and just leave them there. Spread out the reports, take up the table space. You may never even acknowledge them during the meeting, but their presence will speak volumes. They will know you are informed and the informed parent/advocate wins the game.

Overuse the word dyslexia

If you find yourself in a situation where the word dyslexia is being shunned, ignored or discounted and it will make a difference if they acknowledge dyslexia, then say dyslexia. Say it often. Start a sentence like this, “Well, for a student with dyslexia, like my child...” or end a sentence “...and that is important for a student with dyslexia.” Dyslexia, dyslexia, dyslexia...there I said it.

Bring your own team

If you cannot bring an advocate or an attorney, put together your own team. This can be your sister/brother, best friend, neighbor, mailperson, or the guy that walks his dog by your house every morning. They don't have to say a word (and they probably shouldn't), but you have your own team. You are not alone and you are not as vulnerable when you have support. If you cannot do that, then have someone on-call who you can text during the meeting. Request a break during the meeting and call your friend or your advocate.

Ask lots of questions

This is the most conventional advice you will get in this article. By now you know that you are recording any and all school meetings. During these meetings, just respond to many of their suggestions with questions. For example, if the school proposes a goal like:

Alex (who will be in 6th grade the next year) will read a 5th grade text 60CWPM with 95% accuracy as measured by teacher records.

Your question: So, your goal is stating that Alex will be still be reading at least one year behind and be at least 60CPWM behind, is that right. Also, if he is reading 60CWPM with 95% accuracy isn't that really 57CWPM?

Their answers will then be on record and they may realize their mistake without you having to be the 'bad guy' by pointing out the error. Instead you are leading them to their error or pointing out to them what they are stating on the record.

So the next time you have a meeting scheduled make sure your fight song is ready to go, your props are ready and you have questions set to go. If you see a lady in a Prius singing at the top of her lungs, just smile, she is probably singing her dyslexia fight song.