A Parent's Guide to Using AI for Advocacy in Special Education

KALAMAZOO RESA
Special Education

Artifical Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT and Claude can be helpful resources when used thoughtfully. The Kalamazoo RESA Special Education Department offers tips to help you use AI to support your advocacy efforts, protect your child's personal information, and strengthen your partnership with your child's school.



Advocacy Tips

AI can help you understand many special education basics including the IEP process. AI can also provide confusing or incorrect information about special education laws and procedures. If you have a concern about your child's IEP, we recommend the following:

- Talk to your child's IEP Case Manager or other members of the IEP team including service providers, your principal, or general education teachers.
- If classroom-level discussions don't solve the problem, reach out to the Special Education Supervisor or the Regional Director of Special Education for your district. They can help families and school staff work together to find a solution that supports the student.
- Free advocacy and help is available at Michigan Alliance for Families *michiganallianceforfamilies.org* or call 800-552-4821 and The Arc Community Advocates *communityadvocates.org* or call 269-342-9801.
- It can be helpful to connect with a parent of a child with a disability in your local school district. To find your district's Parent Advisory Committee Representative, visit Kalamazoo RESA's Parent Advisory Committee *kresa.org/special-education/parent-resources*.
- If conversations feel stuck, you can contact Special Education Mediation Services (SEMS) which provides free trained mediators and facilitators who can help team meetings run more smoothly. Call 1-800-KIDS-1ST or email info@mikids1st.org.
- Contact the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Information Line at 888-320-8384 or email mde-ose@michigan.gov.
- Check accurate parent-friendly sources for legal information: MDE Family Matters *michigan.gov/mde/services/special-education/parent-resources/family-matters*, Parent Hub *www.parentcenterhub.org/idea/*.
- If a resolution cannot be reached locally, Kalamazoo RESA can help you navigate formal options. The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires states to provide two separate complaint options to resolve disputes: State Complaints and Due Process Complaints. Contact KRESA for guidance at 269-250-9200.

AI can be a helpful preparation tool to:

- Learn common terms (like IEP, FAPE, LRE).
- Organize your concerns into a clear, focused list.
- Generate questions to ask at a meeting.
- Think of collaborative, team-focused ways to raise a concern.
- Practice how you might explain your concerns before a meeting.
- Translate phrases or short communications. AI translation is generally accurate, but it's best to confirm meaning with a trusted bilingual person.

Example: You're preparing for an IEP meeting and want to bring up a concern about your child's reading goals. You can ask AI: "Help me make a list of questions to ask about reading goals at an IEP meeting." AI can give you a starting point — then you should review and adjust it based on what you know about your child.



Cautions Around AI

AI answers the question you ask. It does not fully understand your family, your school team, or what your child needs right now. Additionally, AI does not understand how one action may impact another.

Before acting on AI advice, ask yourself:

- Will this help us solve the problem — or make it bigger?
- Is there a more collaborative step to try first?

If you are not careful, AI can:

- Suggest steps that escalate conflict.
- Provide legal information that is wrong, incomplete, or does not apply to your situation or even the state of Michigan.



Protect Your Child's Privacy

Information you type into AI may be stored digitally and used to train future AI systems. Once shared, that information may not be possible to remove.

Avoid typing in:

- Your child's name, birthday, or other identifying information. Use "my child" instead.
- Staff, school or district names. Use "the school" or "the team" or "the teacher".
- Your child's IEP. Instead describe the concern in general terms.
- Evaluations, reports, or detailed medical information.

This document was inspired and modeled after a document created by CADRE and the Office of Special Education. For the full document, visit CADRE Works cadreworks.org/resources/cadre-materials-for-family-members/ai-guides-for-special-education-and-early-intervention.