

Wrightslaw Creative Solutions Contest # 2

September, 2000

Read the Solutions (below), then send us your vote for the best solution by Noon, Wednesday, September 20, 2000.

Please send your vote by email to vote@wrightslaw.com

In the subject line of your message, put the word **VOTE (in caps)** as the first word, then a **space**, then your **vote by number**. (Example: **VOTE 99** is a vote for entry number 99.) This system will help us to sort your votes. If you vote more than once, we will assume that you changed your mind and will use your last entry as your vote.

Do you have ideas about how we can improve the Creative Solutions Contests? Feel free to send us feedback at creative@wrightslaw.com Tell us a little about yourself and what caused you to vote for your choice. Are you the parent of a child in a special ed program? An advocate? A teacher or school administrator? If you are an educator, do you work in the public or private sector?

1	<p>I would go to the 504 Officer of the school district and tell this person what is going on and that I feared losing my job if I said anything. I would follow up with a letter to the 504 Officer, addressed Personal and Confidential and would also send copies of the letter to the person who supervises the 504 officer in the district. If that didn't get positive results, I would go to the State Board of Education.</p>
2	<p>In regards to "my forged signature" on IEP, I would present this to my union representative. In regard to changes in services, I hope the parents were present at the TEAM meetings. They are ultimately responsible for their children. They should be aware of who is present at the meeting and what services are recommended. Hopefully they paid attention.</p> <p>Rather than arguing with your supervisor or regular ed teacher, ask for clarification. Ask for a summary at the end of each meeting: "What services will Johnny receive?" "What kind of class will he be going to?" After the summary, I would remind the parents that the IEP is a legal document and repeat exactly what the IEP says. If the parents questioned me, I would repeat my recommendations and what I heard at the meeting. I would direct them to the supervisor for any questions. Again, I would follow up with the teachers union.</p>
3	<p>I am entering my 22nd year as a special education teacher and advocate for individuals with LD. Here is what I would do.</p> <p>Meet or write a letter to Advocates for Children. Ask Advocates for Children how to advise the parents about the IEPs that were altered by administrators (who should be held accountable and fired since they are guilty of violating a federal law).</p> <p>Write to the district superintendent, school district administrator in charge of special education, school chancellor, school board members, and Board of Education whose administrators violated the IDEA by rewriting these IEPs. Share what the administrators who violated the law did, including forging your signature.</p> <p>Contact your district's office of school improvement and special education monitoring. Tell them what occurred, what actions they are guilty of, what services they are denying the children, and that what they did is illegal.</p> <p>Last, write to Judy Heumann, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Special Education.</p>
4	<p>Blow the whistle – they can't fire you if everything is documented and the special education staff are unified. Can you file a formal complaint with the state board of education, federal special ed board, school committee, grievance action via the local teacher union, etc.?</p>

	<p>If parents find out that services to their children were cut, can't they sue the school district, including the teachers/staff who signed the IEPs? If this were done to my child, I'd have everyone in court.</p>
5	<p>Your work environment sounds hostile so I don't recommend that you take direct action. But you can help all the children by finding an ally outside the school system. This person may be a strong parent advocate, or one who has the potential to be a strong advocate.</p> <p>Ask the parent to meet you for coffee at a nearby town. Ask her/him to bring a copy of last year's IEP, and the new IEP. Bring a highlighter – highlight areas where you know changes were made. Plant seeds and point the parent in the right direction (“How well do you know IDEA ‘97?” “Have you ever called So and So at the State Department of Education to find out what your rights are?”).</p> <p>I worked with a teacher who was gutsy enough to plant seeds that made me question what the school was providing (not what was written in the IEP). She would nod or shake her head when I asked specific questions that she was forbidden to tell me.</p> <p>I started researching and contacting the people who could make changes (State Dept of Education, State advocacy counsel, legislators). After I gathered information and made contact with people who had the power to make changes, I started a letter writing campaign. A paper trail is the key. I sent letters to the LEA, and sent copies of these letters to key people. When I got lip service, I filed a complaint with the State. The State did an investigation that resulted in MANY changes.</p> <p>The school falsified records but I could prove this. For example, I used a calendar from the correct year to prove that my son did NOT receive 1:1 speech services on a specific date because that date fell on a Sunday that year. Oops! (The records were “created” later.)</p> <p>Document what you know and file it. Don't keep your records on a school computer. Mention the children's names if you know them – this will give investigators (state/federal investigators) or lawyers a starting place when they go through the files. Don't use your name if you can avoid it. Check your calendar to find out what you were doing on specific dates.</p> <p>If you can't find the right parent to write a letter outlining the illegal changes to the IEPs and the failure to provide LRE and get parent input, contact your state legal group that serves as a parent advocacy assistance group. If you can't get help, contact me. I'll do it! This is damaging to the children and not cost-effective in the long run. If nothing is done now, it will become the status quo and will be harder to change.</p>
6	<p>Your story is incredible. Given that you are not making this up, I would-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Find a new job. Send in the Wrights Law Police. Forward a short form of IDEA 97 to your school administration and the parents. <p>Refer your administrators to an Intro to Sped Ed course at your local college.</p>
7	<p>Do not feel threatened about the loss of your job. Forging your name on any document is a crime. Your supervisor is not the issue – you must go beyond the local district. Contact the State Education Department - regardless of whether you communicate your problems to the local school district. Put everything in writing.</p> <p>Try to find a local advocate for kids with special needs. These people will support you and the kids you are concerned about. They will help you make things right. An advocate will not tolerate such blatant dishonesty.</p>
8	<p>Documentation is the key to credibility. Send copies of the IEPs to the Superintendent, parents, and school administrator, along with a statement asking for verification of changes because of “clerical errors” and the teacher's “copied” signature -- because the teacher was on vacation in Disneyland that day.</p>
9	<p>The admin staff MUST know what they are doing is not only wrong but is against the law.</p> <p>First, let the parents know what is going on, if they haven't figured out that their children are not getting</p>

	<p>the services in the IEP they signed. Explain that you could lose your job if it got out what you were saying to them. I would have the PARENTS get in touch with the admin staff and request an explanation about why IEPs were changed and why names were forged on the IEPs.</p> <p>Once the admin staff knows you are on to them, they will bend over backwards to do what you want. All you have to say is, "I have been advised" and it works like a charm. I did this, and it had them jumping, and they didn't even break the law. I know it sounds sneaky, leaving this up to the parents but unfortunately for the teacher, parents have more say in this. I wish there were more teachers in the world like you. Good luck.</p>
10	<p>This same problem came up in our district. The teacher spoke to our parent support group leader, referred several parents for advocacy, and provided all parents with a support person to attend IEP meetings.</p>
11	<p>I have first hand knowledge of parents being told that services in the IEP are elective at the school's discretion. I know school personnel who want to buck the system but can't because they fear losing their jobs. Ultimately it is the parents who can and will make the difference. The key is helping parents understand the system and get involved so positive changes are made. Schools may not follow the child's IEP so parents must continually monitor what goes on in school.</p> <p>Get the state parent training center to give a public information forum about special education and IEPs. Provide parents with information about the meeting and how it will help them understand the IEP process. At the Forum, parents will learn about good and bad IEPs, parent rights, how to effectively lobby for services. The trainer can suggest having IEP meetings in the fall to go over changes that need to be made in the child's IEP.</p> <p>Depending on turnout for the forum, begin "support meetings" for parents. Teach parents to READ and monitor IEPs. If turnout is poor, try to connect the trainer with an active parent and see if this parent will mentor other parents who feel inadequate at IEP meetings.</p> <p>Re forged signatures: Report this to the people in your state Office of Public Instruction who monitor IEPs in your school district – that you did not sign THAT paper. If life gets too sticky people in power generally find a different job or school to go to.</p>
12	<p>As a parent advocate who works in 3 districts in the State of Florida, I have seen altered IEP documents and forged signatures first hand. Make sure that all blank spaces on IEP forms be lined or crossed out, just like you would do when writing a check.</p>
13	<p>I don't know how "creative" my advice is, but I've "been there/done that" and am still doing it.</p> <p>Contact the parents -- you may be surprised to see how many of us WANT to hear the good/bad/ugly. You know which parents are working for their kids' educations and will hear your hints about what is going on. If you tell them what is going on, these parents will be the first to help you out. Much as it pains me, I can keep my mouth shut about WHERE / WHO I got information received in trust. I have used this to change things in my son's classes /IEPs/school.</p>
14	<p>Try to get a team meeting for teachers you know are not reluctant to help students out. General Ed. teachers are often accepting. I'm sure you know which teachers you can work with. Work out a plan under the guise of "cross-peer tutoring" and set up partnerships with your students and others of the appropriate peer age. This will give them inclusive time. With teachers who are willing to do this, educate them about the law.</p> <p>When these partnerships are successful, invite the media --newspaper, TV, radio -- to join in culminating themed activity blow-outs. Get publicity. With these positives what can your principal do? Maybe this will give you enough of a spotlight to get the IEPs and other issues back under your control.</p>
15	<p>The best solution is to get information to the parents in a way that doesn't threaten your job. My daughter's teacher sends home a weekly schedule that includes her classes and special services in 30-</p>

	minute blocks. If services were changed, I'd know it. This information is obvious enough to get parents on the phone asking questions about the services their children are not receiving.
16	I suggest you send a letter to the head administrator and request an explanation for the changes made to the IEPs. Be sure to CC a couple of trusted colleagues and your supervisor. Putting your concerns in writing to the head honcho may seem extreme but no one consulted you before making the changes.
17	<p>I choose battles carefully. This is a battle that is worth fighting. Believe in it. We have to be creative to get help for parents. Here are some ideas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Are you represented by an association? If so, talk to your representative. You will benefit by having someone in your corner legally. 2. Parents bring change. Start working through them. Do you have a parent you have worked with whom you trust implicitly? Work through this parent. Have this parent get other parents together. Get the dads to ask questions. As one of my moms put it, "that chromosome makes a big difference in meetings." Have your parents request a new IEP meeting for this school year. Let them know what to look for. Document everything - have a paper trail. 3. Find a lawyer who works with special education issues. You need to document that your signature was forged. You need to document your concerns. In my state we have a group that works as advocates with families. A similar group in your area may be able to help you. 4. Do any of your parents have contacts in the media? With the emphasis on standards and school reform, perhaps it's time for reporters to look at what parents and students with learning differences face, how the law can work for them, and how the law can easily be subverted. Schools don't like negative press. <p>Another thought: We ordered "Better IEPs" by Barbara Bateman and refer all our parents to this book. Her revised edition is a wonderful "how to" manual about IEPs for parents.</p>
18	Mistakes happen. Send a memo to the director with a list of the IEPs that had "clerical errors" and ask that these "clerical errors" be corrected. If the parent was at the IEP meeting, you have verification and support for your request that the "clerical errors" be corrected. Ask the parents to write to the director about the errors and ask that they be corrected. This approach may be less threatening and may get the desired results. Good luck.
19	<p>After 20 years as a special education teacher, I can identify with your situation. What you describe is clearly illegal. If you do not respond, you will be considered an accomplice to breaking the law.</p> <p>I would err on the side of forthrightness by writing a letter expressing your concerns to your supervisor. Send copies to her supervisor and to your teacher's union. Be very specific regarding the law, how you believe it has been violated, and the fact that you were not a party to this deception. Your purpose in writing this letter is to protect yourself from liability and this should be clearly stated. By sending copies to the union and her supervisor, you are protecting yourself from revenge that may be aimed in your direction.</p> <p>As a teacher, I respond to less serious, unethical situations by informing the parents of their rights and instructing them in how to navigate the bureaucracy. In other words, I tell them how to be a "squeaky wheel". I left public education and began my own private practice. The districts love working with me because I am not adversarial. It's amazing how cooperative they are when they realize I know how the game is played!</p>
20	<p>There are so many violations that it should be easy for the distressed teacher to file a complaint with the State Dept. of Special Education, with anonymity if desired. So many personnel and violations were cited that the teacher could describe cases that did not involve her and would not incriminate her if an investigation ensued.</p> <p>If the teacher knows a supportive parent whose child's IEP was changed, she can also "check back" with</p>

	<p>that parent to make sure the services she was responsible for were accurately documented (she could say she wasn't sure from her meeting notes or that her copy didn't Xerox well). If the parent knows about the "mistake," the parent can bring this to the attention of the building principal, superintendent, AND the state by providing copies of the original IEP and the forged IEPs. The pressure comes from the parent, not the teacher. If the teacher does not have an on-the-ball parent to work with, she should notify the State Director of Special Education that an investigation of practices in her school system is warranted.</p>
21	<p>The teachers' union in my district has a very strong Special Education committee. Here are key elements to empower Special Ed teachers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get active in your union and get into a leadership position. Get other special ed teachers to do the same. 2. Network with and form strong personal relationships with regular classroom teachers. Don't let the district use divide and conquer techniques to pit Special Ed against regular ed. (I can give a whole in-service on how to build strong relationships between regular and special educators.) 3. Set up a Special Ed committee to bring Special Ed teachers together on a regular basis. Set up sub committees as necessary to focus on specific issues. Be willing to take on some of the work yourself. Don't let the meetings become gripe sessions. Stay focused on finding solutions. 4. Contact your state teachers union to find out what support they can lend to your local Special Ed committee. Surely they have resources in that area. 5. Contact your State Dept. of Education, Special Ed Division to get a clear statement of their procedure for making a direct complaint and how they will process the complaint. They may send someone out to meet with you to go over this. States don't want to risk losing federal IDEA funds for Special Ed abuses. 6. Your ace in the hole is the Office of Civil Rights under IDEA. Don't hesitate to involve them if all else fails. Let your district know that you know these procedures and have a legal obligation to follow them if you learn of abuses. <p>A caveat to new teachers: You need the protection of the union or the Special Ed committee in filing complaints. Don't do it alone, especially if you do not have tenure. The complaints should be filed in the name of the union, not in the name of the individual teacher.</p> <p>In states with weak or non-existent teachers unions: You can still form a Special Ed committee and band together to support each other and learn about complaint procedures. You can still use your state Dept of Ed resources and people to help you file complaints. You can still use the Office of Civil Rights where appropriate. You may still find job protection from retaliation by the administration under state labor laws. And most of all, you had better get started on forming a teachers' union. Contact the National Education Association for help.</p>
22	<p>I suggest that the teacher contact the media anonymously about the situation. Does her district have an anonymous tip hotline? If so, she could get her husband to call it from a pay phone. She should let her Superintendent know. She should contact her State Department of Education. Always follow the chain of command.</p> <p>I have been in this situation. With parents whom I knew well and had a great rapport with, I met with them face-to-face over dinner (which I bought) and advised them to "look into their child's current IEP and placement." These parents had graduated from high school, knew a little about their rights, and knew about the type of principal who was leading our school.</p> <p>The teacher should never consider leaving. Who else would be there for the children? I fought and won. Granted it was miserable for me, but I love my students like they were my own children. This principal is in another county now, along with the hard-nosed regular educators.</p>
23	<p>Do you belong to a teacher organization? The thing that caught my attention first was - SOMEONE FORGED YOUR SIGNATURE. This is something that must be handled immediately. It makes me</p>

	<p>wonder what other things you “signed” without your knowledge.</p> <p>If you cannot take that step, call OCR and tell them you are afraid of retaliation. They can take your information and deal with the situation and not reveal the source. Change school districts. I am the first to tell people to look for creative solutions to problems but it sounds like this is not an option. Remember good special education teachers are in great demand.</p>
24	<p>As everyone reading your plight knows, illegal and unfair practices are happening in your school. One of the most effective ways to ensure compliance is to get the parents to take part in the process.</p> <p>Parents need to become aware of their children’s rights. I always encourage the parents of my students to call an IEP if they feel the need. Your problem looks even bigger than that. Try to enlighten the ‘powers that be’ anonymously if necessary, and make sure the compliance review board knows about these problems. Encouraging a parent or two to get an advocate from a nonprofit agency will often get schools back on track.</p>
25	<p>I would file a state complaint. State complaints can be made anonymously and must be investigated. The complaint doesn’t have to be about your specific case. If you’re not comfortable doing this, call your state’s parent training and information center so they can file the state complaint or call compliance and monitoring with the information. Again, this can be done anonymously.</p>
26	<p>I had a similar experience with school personnel who developed an IEP for my daughter by fax and email, without my knowledge or input. Going to the school personnel who were involved did no good, so I wrote directly to the State Dept. of Special Education and described my complaints about the IEP.</p> <p>A state investigator interviewed me about the facts, then investigated. Within three months I received a letter from the State Department listing fifteen violations that the school system was ordered to correct. When I wrote, I didn’t know if anyone would listen or care but they did. The system was corrected so other children won’t become victims of the system that cheated my daughter.</p> <p>The best way to advocate for your students is to get parents involved. This keeps you from having to confront your administration directly. Use your parents. Teach them to advocate and fight for their children’s rights. Getting parents involved is the best gift you can give your students.</p>
27	<p>Just as this teacher advocated for her child before she became an educator, she can teach her parents how to advocate for their children.</p> <p>Empower the parents by educating them. She can identify a trusted parent who is vocal. The teacher can feed information to the parent. The parent can begin an advocacy group. Working behind the scenes, the teacher can be the eyes and ears, and the resource coordinator for the parents. She can make sure the parents know how to get copies of everything related to the meetings, take notes, and record the meetings. A group has far more weight than a single teacher.</p> <p>Once parents are empowered, they can stand up for themselves. Until parents know, the teacher is almost alone in the battle.</p>
28	<p>First, I would like to say that I wish you worked in our district. The solution? It’s like the 12 Step Program that alcoholics learn.</p> <p>First, admit you have a problem. You have taken this step. The problem is that you care more about the children than your employment status, and guilt is eating away at your guts.</p> <p>Second step: You need to make things right, regardless of the consequences to yourself. Although this may place your job security in jeopardy, you will have committed a selfless, admirable, courageous act. These children have so many odds against them. They don’t need educators and administrators to add to their burdens. The children and their families will be grateful for your honesty. You will be remembered and known as a person who made a difference, not one who said how terrible it is but did nothing. By doing this, you will jump from Step 2 to Step 12 in a matter of minutes, completing your program and</p>

	restoring man's faith in one another.
29	Parents don't KNOW. Unless you drop a clue, things won't change. Send a letter to the editor of the local special ed advocate association. Or change a few identifying items, and send the letter to the local newspaper.
30	Contact your association or union president. You and other teachers have knowledge of unlawful practices. You need to learn about "whistleblower" laws. Organize in a group with the help of the lawyer your association can connect you with.
31	<p>Start a special needs committee that meets once a month. This committee should include special needs parents and special needs staff members.</p> <p>The purpose: to train/teach all of the participants about legal rights and get answers to questions about their child.</p> <p>The goal: Parents need to know what they can expect from the school. After this is clear, changes in placement are less likely without the parent's knowledge. Why? Knowledge is power. Once parents gain knowledge, they can make appropriate decisions for their sons and daughters, and support them in their educational settings, which is the foundation of their future. The staff is not being left out, but will gain knowledge about the law that supports students who need of special services. Families and school staff can build partnerships to support the students.</p> <p>The current problem: Get the parents to file a complaint with the State Board of Education. This complaint should cause an investigation or an audit which will shed light on issues that need to be changed. It's worth a try. Good luck.</p>
32	<p>My first reaction about the administrator who changed an IEP is disgust. I have fought hard and long to be considered a professional. This is not professional behavior and affects opinions on a broader range than any of us can anticipate.</p> <p>An IEP is a contract and should be signed by an administrator or an individual appointed to do so. This individual will not sign to provide services or educational materials, etc., unless they are SURE this can be done. If need is established, the IEP is held and will be continued in other sessions, to provide for the needs of the student. Ways and means MUST be found. This is a TEAM approach and must be honored no matter how difficult or how long it takes. When the parents or guardian, and other participants have signed the IEP (contract), it cannot be changed without the consent of each signer.</p> <p>I think of an IEP as a federal contract, because federal money is involved. Contact may need to be made with a responsible individual at the state level. The state should have a built in monitoring system.</p> <p>In this case, it is unlikely that the board, superintendent or higher administrators know the consequences of this unprofessional behavior. If the teacher is not familiar with the proper channels above the district level, advice from a Special Education law professor may help. This involves federal regulations and federal money. These accusations are serious and must be investigated. When federal money is withheld from a district, it usually gets the board's and administration's attention.</p> <p>I started in Special Education in 1959, before it had a special designation. I often felt that it was not necessary to have so many pieces of paper to insure an appropriate education for our students. But collaboration on an IEP is an important safeguard. If it is not honored, we are not meeting our responsibilities to educate each individual to the best of our ability. All concerns, including financial concerns of the administration, must be brought to the table and solutions found.</p>
33	<p>OPTION 1: I would list my grievances, as you did so eloquently in your letter, and send copies of the letter to supervisor, school board members, principals, district officials, state dept. of public instruction. Make sure that everyone knows who else got copies.</p> <p>If your job is threatened, consider going public with the story—for example, to local papers. Also, if your</p>

	<p>job is jeopardized, be sure you have a lawyer who can write letters for you. Your position will be stronger if you get other special ed teachers to sign the letter. Maybe the teachers who left their positions will be willing, since their jobs are not threatened by this action. If they don't join your crusade, gather evidence from them about why they quit. Accumulate evidence from anyone/everyone who can back your position.</p> <p>OPTION 2: Contact a lawyer. Plan ahead with help from your lawyer. If you lose your job, is it likely that other schools/districts would not hire you because of your "whistle-blowing"? Strategizing with a lawyer about the risks of this course of action vs. the benefits. Obviously the children will benefit, and as you anticipate, you may NOT. Decide what it's worth to take the risk. Decide HOW FAR you're willing to take this -- to a grievance committee/board? To court? To a higher court? To the newspapers? To the parents?</p> <p>OPTION 3. Suggest to the parents that they need an IEP meeting NOW. At that meeting, point out, "Oh, I thought we had a different plan last year? Was I mistaken? How could I have missed these changes in the IEP?" It's a game, playing dumb. The parents can take it upon themselves to remedy the situations if they see fit.</p>
34	<p>This teacher has a mighty big problem. I didn't think I would be able to answer this, but if you've ever listened to Judge Judy's phrase, "Keep it simple, stupid!" this turns out to be good advice for this teacher.</p> <p>What school employees are doing is unethical and illegal. As adults, they should know this. It is understandable that you do not want to risk losing your job. You do have a few options. First things first. You cannot control everyone's actions but you can control yours. Don't give up on your kids. You can remain an ethical and moral teacher.</p> <p>Keep a file of your student's IEPs. You should have a true copy from the IEP meeting. The parents should also have a copy of the IEP. At the beginning of the year, invite the parents to meet with you, one on one. Ask them to bring their copy of the IEP so that you can discuss what you should do to meet the IEP's expectations.</p> <p>You should attend any IEP meetings that take place during the year (if they really take place). If you receive an IEP that is "forged," you cannot say a word and throw it out. If there is a question in the future, explain that you already had a copy of the student's IEP when you went to file it, so you disregarded it. Innocent enough.</p> <p>Also, if a parent (like myself) learned that their child's IEP was changed without their knowledge and took everyone to court whose signature was on the altered IEP, you can show that it is not your signature on the altered IEP. Ideally you everyone would know that what they are doing is illegal and wrong. By controlling your actions, and benefit the kids you work with, and will be an asset to your school system.</p> <p>I have one more recommendation. Send an anonymous letter to your Board of Education with no identifying information that would enable them to find out who you are. Advise them what your school is doing. Make to copy the appropriate individuals in your school system (other special ed teachers, the principal, etc.), including yourself so you do not stand out. If a court ever asks you if you were aware that your name was forged, you can answer honestly, then pull out the letter you wrote and explain why.</p> <p>I hope that this helps. And I really hope that your school system gets their act together, because parents like me will find out if our child's IEP is changed or is not adhered to. And I would take legal action. There are other parents like me out there, and I'm surprised that not one has caught on who has a child in your special education system yet!</p>
35	<p>As former teacher, I would take the parents aside and tell them what I would do if I were Johnny or Janey's parent. Let the parent take this up with administration. Maybe the parent knows a strong child advocate to go with him/her. It is the parent who should say that he or she noticed these changes. The parent can quickly set up a meeting. At this meeting, the parent can bring up the child's need for services. The parent can ask for a meeting to monitor the child's transition back into school after the summer.</p> <p>Armed with IEPs, I would expect the parent to make sure that their child's educational needs were met.</p>

	Parents who have dealt with school systems will know how to deal with this situation without involving the dedicated classroom teacher.
36	<p>My first step would be to write an anonymous letter to the supervisor, making it clear that several people are concerned about how IEP and special education decisions are being made and that these decisions are putting our institution and ourselves at risk legally. Note that procedural guidelines were not followed.</p> <p>Suggest that the supervisor survey her staff about their problems and concerns and what is being done correctly. Suggest that a team of regular and special educators be composed to find a more efficient, standard way to address special education issues, and act as a voice for educator's concerns about their classrooms and students.</p> <p>If this letter does not do the trick, follow up with governing agencies about options. I might also send copies to all Board of Education members.</p>
37	Take about 30 ADHD kids without medication and "self contain" them in a very small room for a few hours with nothing to entertain them but the administrator. Then when she realizes that these kids need special attention, let her out, and file forgery charges on her.
38	<p>If no one in your system understands special education law and will enforce it (over your supervisor's head), let your union know that your signature was forged on official documents, and that your school system is violating the civil rights of its students. They may have ideas about ways to go. If not, you have covered yourself in case of an investigation where your signature may implicate you in violating a child's and family's rights.</p> <p>You may approach one of the parents whose child's rights are being violated, one who is a savvy advocate for her/his child, and suggest that they do a "drop in visit" to monitor their child's progress in his program. No need to go into detail, let the parent "discover" what is going on. You can refer them to a parent organization for support if they decide to file a civil rights complaint against the school.</p>
39	<p>Unfortunately you have a tough but not unusual problem. I am not aware of quick fixes.</p> <p>I suggest that you first undertake a thorough analysis of the problem. Do the actions of your supervisor, not particularly special education friendly, perhaps not terribly competent, and the actions of those other administrators who acted criminally by forging your signature; do they represent an attitude held by the majority of the special education department? Do their actions reflect the attitude of the school district, the School Board? How about the community as a whole? In other words, how systemic is the problem? To some degree, the answer to this question can guide a response on your part. It will help to determine the size of your problem.</p> <p>As special educators, our job is to advocate and educate. While this may not seem terribly creative, it's good hard work. You can liken the situation to your experience in the classroom.</p> <p>Our students have challenges that cross many dimensions. These problems include attitudes, misguided and adversarial behavior from others. We do not tell or encourage our students to react or fight fire with fire. We help them think out the problems and decide a course of action that will help them achieve their goals. Like students, we get caught up in systems with cross- purposes, less than ethical players and that do not help our cause. We can and do change these systems, sometimes a little step at a time, sometimes when we are lucky in big ways. The point is to set upon a course that will help the students and not compromise your ability to remain with them.</p> <p>Some specific strategies you might try could include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bringing targeted education and advocacy to your community at the right level. For example, disability groups in your state could be encouraged to approach the school board. Perhaps a local or state delegate with a child with a disability could be invited in to endorse your classroom. You could ask permission to bring in a politician (under many guises such as to promote your district's system) and try to form a relation with this person. Along the way, certain procedures may reveal themselves.

	<p>2. How about having students and perhaps parents prepare short essays on what has been helpful so far? Applaud the system again. See if you can get another force, a positive force, going that supports good programming.</p> <p>3. The local press usually likes local school and human interest stories. Even though the press is drawn to drama, sensationalism and controversy, a good story sells papers as well. Whenever or whatever is going on right should be applauded. Support your side, the student's side.</p> <p>4. At some point, you may have to look your administrators in the eyes and tell them that you disagree with these procedures and why. Tell them what you like about the school and how they could remedy the problem. Give them a chance. Be straight with them without starting a fight.</p> <p>5. After you have been fair (if you can, I do keep in mind that you are there and there is much at stake), follow your ethics. If you are a party to something unethical and perhaps illegal, you have to do something. After you give them a chance, you could contact your School Board, superintendent and/or state educational agency. Succinctly identify the current practice, why it's wrong, the consequences and then how to remedy it. No reasonable school official or government official will condone illegal activities such as a supervisor forging a teacher's signatures in a group effort to under-serve students' with disabilities. One, it's incredibly and blatantly wrong. Two, its politically undefensible. Three, it opens all those with knowledge of it to liability on many levels. In essence you throw them the 'hot potato'.</p> <p>Depending upon your parents and what's at stake for a particular student, you may work with parents to seek legal remedies provided in the IDEA. In my experience, if you get the support of the parents, even just a handful, the district may be careful with you, particularly in terms of possible retaliatory actions. You may find the parents very appreciative of your frank support for their children. If you are right and the parents support you, it's harder to attack you. Besides, you are right. You did not pick the fight, it came to you. Since it's here, let's do something good about it.</p>
40	<p>I'd hire an attorney and have the attorney blow the whistle. Or, you may know a parent who can be trusted with this information. Tell that parent and let them get the ball rolling. I'd also contact OSEP and the State DOE. This can be done anonymously. I'd go to the Union Rep. for the local Teacher's Union and discuss job security with them. I'd also contact the parent advocacy group for the state (the one dictated by IDEA) and discuss the situation with them. If you can get some advocates involved, you can stand back and watch them take care of this situation.</p> <p>If the teacher is dismissed, I'd file a law suit against the BOE, and all parties involved, jointly and individually, for wrongful termination. I wouldn't take this lying down. Since the teacher's role in the IEP process is addressed in IDEA, you have a strong leg to stand on if retaliatory actions are taken. Would whistle blower protection apply here? I'd definitely check into that as well.</p>
41	<p>There are no Band-Aids in this situation. Make a copy of the IEPs that were unilaterally changed. Hire a Special Needs attorney (ask the Wright's for a referral in your area) and meet with the attorney and the parents of the children involved. If the parents grant permission, share the IEPs with the attorney and develop a plan of action that includes informing the State and Federal governmental agencies of these violations.</p> <p>You should not lose your job. These administrators should lose their jobs. You will not be popular - especially with teachers who are ignoring IEPs. Anyone who stands up for what is right is not popular. If you have all of your ducks in a row before you blow the whistle, you will have a strong case. Good luck to you!!!!</p>
42	<p>I would take a multi-pronged approach to this situation:</p> <p>A- Talk to the other special educators in your district to determine the extent of the problem, and find out who is willing to work with you and support you. Outline a plan to correct the situation.</p> <p>B- Contact the parents of the students whose IEPs were illegally altered. Review their rights (from Procedural Safeguards) and encourage them to pursue appropriate actions.</p>

	<p>C- Advise a representative of your teacher's union about the situation. They need to know that their members were exposed to possible litigation (this includes regular education teachers who refuse to provide modifications specified in the IEP, and teachers who were involved in altering IEPs illegally). Then it becomes their responsibility to discuss possible ramifications with those persons.</p> <p>D- Contact the State Department of Special Education. It may be possible to do this anonymously, but in any case, the problem needs to be addressed on a regulatory level.</p> <p>E- Lastly, you should begin taking classes to become a certified special education supervisor. Your letter demonstrates the need for QUALIFIED, competent candidates in this field.</p>
43	<p>Here are my proposed solutions, based in part on my personal experience when my son's IEP was changed unilaterally by the district.</p> <p>1) I would file a complaint with the state Department of Education. In my state anyone can complain about violations of the special education by writing to the Department. The Department has 60 days to investigate and deliver a written report with findings. If a violation is found, the district has to put in place a corrective action plan. Failure to adhere to the plan can result in loss of funding for special education. In this case it appears a number of provisions of the special education law were violated. The most notable is failure to provide parents with notice of changes to the IEP. I assume there are "whistle blower" laws to protect teachers against retaliation for reporting such violations.</p> <p>2) I would inform the parents about what happened and clue them in about how the special education law was violated. I would suggest the parents get a copy of the IEP, which they are entitled to under law. The parents can then complain to the state DOE (as in #1 above) or send a letter to the district describing the violation and then demanding the services be placed back in the IEP in some short time frame (say, 15 days). The parents can always go to due process to correct the wrong, but this can be costly and time consuming, so the DOE route may be preferred.</p> <p>In this case, the identity of the teacher might be protected, since the parents are the complainants. The parents may never have to disclose that the teacher "blew the whistle." Since parents always have the right to the IEP, they can claim they were exercising that right as good parents.</p>
44	<p>Distressed Teacher should contact the parent(s) of the students and tell them to review their children's IEPs. After reviewing the IEPs, "Distressed Teacher" should suggest that the parents call an emergency IEP meeting to review the goals and concerns. If they have good communication, the parent and teacher can get together before the IEP meeting to go over concerns they have. At the new IEP meeting, the parent should put a new IEP in process immediately.</p>
45	<p>The solution is simple. You hold the reins for the parents and children because you are the professional. You have the education, know how, and power, unlike many parents. About those "forged" signatures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Let them know that you are aware of the forged signatures and you are sure the "higher ups" want to know about this, so you're telling them. :). * Let them know you are *concerned* and that you take your job and license very seriously. Show concern for the school and your co-workers reputations and jobs. (We call this saving face.) * Let them know that you are keeping a copy of the IEPs with forged signatures and anything else that may come up the future, in case they need it :) This is for your protection in case they want to give you a hard time. Are you getting my drift? * Be polite but stern. * Don't accuse any one of doing anything -- but make sure you tell someone who will tell everyone who may have been involved. * Work to pull those who want to stray back into your corner by being sympathetic to their problems and understanding. Don't be a "know it all." Instead, say things like, "You know what I found to work pretty

	<p>good for that child?"</p> <p>* With those who are in your corner, stick together.</p> <p>* Get the parents involved with their child's education plan. Make sure they know EXACTLY what the school is supposed to be doing for their child and what their rights are. For example, children with ADHD tend to get into a lot of trouble at school which causes their parents to come in often. Use this time to educate them and encourage them to come for meetings. Some parents need to be lead so lead them!</p> <p>*Keep your logs (dates, copies of papers, what was said during a session with anyone) and you will have some great ammo.</p>
46	<p>As an advocate, I know that parents, when united, have more power than any teacher. I try to unite my parents - sometimes it only takes two or three to be an effective force for change.</p> <p>Have the parents write letters to the principal, special ed director, and school superintendent about the same complaints. In our state, complaints are usually about non-implementation of IEPs. Make sure the parents have copies of the "altered," "forged," and "filled-out when there wasn't an IEP meeting" IEPs.</p> <p>Report this to the Office of Civil Rights -- do this even if it doesn't involve you personally. Send a copy of your complaint to OSEP in Washington, along with copies of the altered IEPs after you have the parents' permission to copy and send them. Send copies of the parents' letters to other officials who might be interested in the situation, from the State Director of Special Education, the Governor, and the Representatives.</p> <p>When there are blatantly illegal acts like these, the proper authorities should be notified. It is no different from committing a crime. I hope this helps.</p>
47	<p>Here is a strategy to consider:</p> <p>STEP 1. The teacher makes contact with the parent of a child who is a victim of the administrators' actions. The teacher should advise the parent that the teacher made contact because she feels a moral obligation. The parent must promise to keep confidential the information that the teacher will share. The teacher advises the parent of concerns about the IEP and encourages the parent to compare the original IEP that the parent signed with the current IEP (which she should request). If the parent knows other parents of children in the program, these parents may be advised to take similar action. The teacher refers the parent to an independent person for assistance and steps out of the picture.</p> <p>STEP 2. The teacher contacts an advocate whom she knows and trusts who is independent of the school district, a person who is savvy about how to get things done in and outside the system. After confidentiality is agreed upon, the teacher explains the situation and asks the advocate to prepare for one or more phone calls from parents who need a strategy to expose the situation.</p> <p>Note: There are many strategies that the advocate may suggest to the parent. The advocate may help the parent write letters to the school board, newspaper, state or US education department, and/or state legislators. The more cc's the better. Hope this helps!</p>
48	<p>Contact an association or organization that works on behalf of disabled people such as the Disability Resource Association. Advise them of the school's failure to educate the disabled children in your district.</p> <p>The Disability Resource Association can contact the parents to inform them about classes to teach them their legal rights and about meetings to discuss ways to ensure that the school district follows their children's IEPs. The association can work directly with parents. The teacher is not put in a difficult situation. The Disability Resource Association can also educate school Administrators that it costs less to educate disabled children than to support them through their adult lives; in more ways than one!</p>
49	<p>As a former special education teacher I know how you feel - betrayed and powerless. You need to think about this situation very carefully. The acts that you describe are NOT legal and violated the special</p>

	<p>education process.</p> <p>Look at the IEPs that were changed. List the changes made and who is responsible for these changes. How do they differ from the original IEPs? You need to document the changes for your own protection -- if you carry out altered IEPs with changes in the goals and objectives, you could be charged with violations as well.</p> <p>Next, invite the parents of each student to school for a conference. Say that you want to review the IEPs developed last year and talk about concerns, questions, ideas that the parents have about their child's IEP. Ask the parents to bring their copy of the IEP to the meeting. This will allow you to compare the parent copy with the school copy. This is a way to let them know that the IEP was changed and they did not consent to the changes. This also addresses forged or added signatures as these signatures will not be on the original IEPs</p> <p>In my experience, parents are grateful when a teacher alerts them to a situation like this. If you have tenure and support from the parents, it should be difficult for the school to fire you for educating parents. Educating parents is part of your work with the students. After I talked with the parents, I would let them handle it. You may want to prepare for what you will say if this becomes a lawsuit or due process hearing.</p> <p>There is no easy way to advocate in a situation that pits you against the school district. Prepare by finding out about resources that you can use. Contact your union. Contact advocacy and parents' groups. You are going to need assistance, so plan for it in advance.</p>
50	<p>It's probably apparent where you work that you are not on board with what is occurring. Eventually they'll find a way to do something about you too. Like ATT used to say," reach out and touch someone." I suggest you reach out and touch everyone.</p> <p>As you know, the IEP is an official document. There are specific federal guidelines about this document, including the fact that a team must meet to address any changes to the IEP.</p> <p>Forgery is a serious crime against you and your professional reputation. To remain quiet is to be an accomplice to this tragedy. This should be reported to appropriate authorities. Contact anyone and everyone about this situation. The parents of the children who are being abused by these actions should be notified so they have recourse and can minimize the damage done to their children. The faster you get information out, the easier it will be to defend your actions.</p> <p>I assume you are a union member. The union has a legal obligation to pursue this if they are notified within a reasonable time. As a special education teacher you have the moral and legal responsibility to look after the welfare of the children under your instruction. You have the trust of the parents of these children. These children are worth the risk and aggravation of standing up for them. If you won't, who will? If you won't, you should get out of the business.</p> <p>Make sure you keep records of all events and evidence. The law and the community you serve will support you if you have your facts together. The administration stepped beyond the bounds and are committing fraud by accepting federal funds for a program they are not implementing. They are committing child abuse by improperly isolating children and forcing them into an improper and potentially irrevocably damaging learning environment. At the least, they are committing criminal fraud by forging the names of professionals on official and permanent documents. You are protected under the law for reporting such incidents to the authorities.</p> <p>There are many protections in our local, state and federal systems for people who speak out on important issues such as this. It is important that you have the facts and the documentation to back up your allegations and that you get your message out first to the appropriate individuals. This information must go outside the District or it will be covered up.</p> <p>It will help to provide the names of individuals involved. This will reduce attempts to cover up or divert attention from the issue, and offer the district the opportunity to address the issues.</p> <p>People who crawl will eventually get stepped on. Stand up and be counted.</p>

51	<p>As the administrator of a large early intervention program and a 23-year employee of a school system, I am appalled at the situation this teacher encountered. It is clear that school personnel engaged in legal and unethical actions by forging of signatures and changing student placements after they were agreed upon by the IEP team.</p> <p>There cannot be any trust between parents and school system employees in this climate. The fact that the school system lost one third of their special education staff is understandable. Who would want to work in such an ethically obscene environment?</p> <p>Here's what I recommend.</p> <p>1.) The teacher, together with other special education and regular education teachers, should request that an Open House be held for the school community. The Open House should include parents, advocates, school system employees, Board of Education members, and local elected officials. Prepare a press release about the meeting and invite the media. The purpose of the Open House is to provide a forum so parents and community members can learn about the process of securing special education services and the nature of those services. The supervisor of special education and other administrators should be asked to attend.</p> <p>2.) Send a letter about the program to all parents and interested community members. In the letter, note that parents will be able to submit questions.</p> <p>3.) Assuming that the parent of the child in question does not wish to speak up at the meeting, a question about this situation should be submitted and the author of the question should not be identified. The moderator could say, "Now we have a question from a parent who is confused. She said that there was an IEP meeting last spring at which time there was agreement on IEP goals and objectives as well as specific services and hours of service for the implementation of the IEP. She wants to know what process the school system would have to undertake if it were to request a change in that IEP." The question should be posed to the Director of Special Education who would, presumably, respond that an IEP meeting would have to be held with parental notification and that there would have to be agreement among team members for a change in the IEP.</p> <p>There is a second part to this question: "We were given a new IEP when our child entered school this year. We were never informed that there was to be an IEP meeting. Goals and objectives were changed. Services that were to be delivered were eliminated. An inclusive placement was changed to a self-contained placement. All of this seems highly illegal. What do you suggest that we do?"</p> <p>This would be an uncomfortable moment for the panelists from the school system. The Director of Special Education will have no choice but to advise the family to take action against the school. She will probably piously volunteer to look into this situation herself. There will be murmurs of outrage from the audience.</p> <p>4) The media would find this an excellent story to feature. The school would be put on notice that their illegal actions will be aired in public and pressure will be exerted on school officials and members of the Board of Education to remedy this situation.</p> <p>This community needs strong advocates who create a climate in which school officials are held accountable to standards of fair play.</p>
52	<p>In this case, the administration had no respect for the law, nor for the rights of handicapped children and their parents.</p> <p>Parents must be well versed in the special education laws, IDEA and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act to protect the rights of their children. The parents need to be vocal advocates to deal with an administration that does not respect their rights. The parents need to know about due process and the state agency complaint resolution system. The parents also need to know how to submit a 504 complaint with the Office for Civil Rights. Once the parents gain advocacy skills, they can draw on these skills to get the best programming for their children.</p>

	<p>To protect her job, the teacher should not point out the school system's violations to the parents. Any attempt to persuade the administration to "do the right thing" will most likely be futile. I think "distressed" should tell the parents whom she deals with how her advocacy skills helped her obtain services for her child. If "distressed" can put parents in contact with the state Parent and Information Training Center, great benefits may ensue. Also, "distressed" could encourage parents to download the IDEA 97 regulations, buy the Wrightslaw book about special education, and visit Wrightslaw and Reed Martin's websites.</p>
53	<p>As a school administrator, I believe that people who do not put the interests of children first should not be in education. These actions are illegal, immoral and unethical. You merely have to do what is right. If your situation with administration is as intractable as you believe, there are some other options.</p> <p>Discretely contact your state special education director and explain the situation to him/her.</p> <p>Discretely contact the parents. Talk to them about the parental rights booklet you should have delivered to them and point out parts from the booklet that are relevant in this case. Parents have strong rights because of such situations as you mention.</p> <p>You owe it to your school and to your continued employment to stay as close as possible to the chain of authority. Read your school policies closely, then pick the person you trust most in the upper echelons of administration and ask for a confidential meeting. Your school will lose a lawsuit based on these facts and should pay attention for this reason, even if they are not interested in doing the right thing.</p> <p>One last thing. Contact the attorney who represents your teacher organization. Tell them about the situation, what you are doing, and ask him/her to intervene in protecting your job when you mutually decide this is necessary.</p>
54	<p>My solution is to mail copies of the changed IEPs to the parents anonymously. Hopefully, the parents will take the ball and call the administration on the carpet. I would. As the parent of a special needs child, this is a very distressing problem.</p>
55	<p>As a special ed. Teacher, if I found myself in your situation I would schedule IEP meetings as soon as possible. I would schedule the three with my forged signature first. If there are advocates who support you for more general ed. time or more PT, OT or speech, invite them to the meeting. They could be the regular ed. teacher, parents, the OT, PT, speech therapist, other special ed. teachers, the psychologist, or inclusion specialist.</p> <p>If you work out solutions to the inclusion issue ahead of the IEP meeting, it will be harder for the administrator to say "no." If your administrator changes the IEPs again, you may have to get the parents to understand so they can go to the state authorities. Good Luck! Remember we are all here for our students!</p>
56	<p>This teacher should use the services of her professional organization(s) -- the National Education Association or the American Federation of Teachers. These groups should have a professional standards division to help her and deal with the problems of administrative dishonesty. With documentation, this would make a wonderful news story. It would be great to hit the administration with acts of dishonesty such as forged signatures on documents.</p> <p>The problem with the IEP process is that parents, teachers and others are treated as isolated units within the planning process. Little is done to create a full team environment in which all are pulling together for the benefit of the child.</p>
57	<p>I have been a Special Education teacher for 7 years; I also have personal and family experiences in special education. Choose some parents you know who will ensure that their children receive appropriate services. Meet informally with these parents a few times. At these "coffee shop" meetings, ask each parent to bring a copy of his/her child's IEP. Bring a copy of Wrightslaw: Special Education Law.</p>

	<p>Encourage parents to voice their concerns, answer their questions, and teach them about the law. Explain that they can form a parent group, request information from their state board of education, and teach other parents about the laws. Even a small group of parents can pick an impressive name that makes the group sound big. Two parents formed a group that requested a state investigation of our school. This investigation forced the school to change in several ways.</p> <p>Now the parents are advocates for their children and other children. I can honestly say that this was a “win win” for the students, the parents, the teachers, and surprisingly, for the school. Sometimes, schools have to learn the law, kicking and screaming. These laws were passed for a reason. The “paperwork” in special education is necessary and facilitates discussion between all members of the teaching team.</p> <p>Many people look at IEPs as a “fill-in-the-blanks” chore. Our school was forced to THINK about the paperwork; to realize it’s meaning and purpose. This experience was draining but was worth my energy and time.</p>
58	<p>I know this teacher’s fear of repercussions is valid. She feels that no matter how grotesque it is for her to work for these slime balls, she can do more good where she is! God bless her.</p> <p>I think she should quietly network and locate an attorney who can spearhead some action on behalf of the families. Tell him or her what she can, provide photocopies, etc., and then GET OUT OF THE LOOP. Request that the attorney get in touch with each of the parent(s) and advise them of their rights to complain to the U.S. Department of Education or file a formal grievance/complaint with state educational authority.</p> <p>The attorney should assist the parent(s) in going to the press if they see fit. If you are unable to find a qualified attorney who will work pro bono, locate a professional Educational Consultant or an advocacy organization and have them organize an effort to band the affected parents together to assert their kids’ rights.</p> <p>THIS IS AN ELECTION YEAR! Elected officials or candidates should be interested in scoring points by stepping in. Use the fact that the Dept. of Education is a Cabinet-level agency and reflects on the White House.</p> <p>I am touched by this teacher’s dedication to her profession. Assurances that “whistleblowers will be protected” cannot ensure that she won’t live through hell if her name is associated with this situation. She must get someone to advise these families of their rights and motivate them to act on their own behalf. I hope she hangs in there!</p>
59	<p>I am an Educational Advocate with a Masters in Special Ed who has worked in the public school system. I also have two special needs (LD) children so I know the problem from all angles. I agree creativity is the key to good advocacy. However in this situation, where the teacher is threatened by the dishonesty of the administration and many of the faculty left rather than stand together as a group to challenge the administration, this teacher has few choices.</p> <p>The right thing to do is stand up and expose what the administrators have done to the parents and community. Let them be judged by the people they are supposed to serve. Call the Department of Education to investigate. If other teachers had the courage to stand and confront the administrators earlier, this teacher wouldn’t have to make to make this terrible decision by herself.</p> <p>If the teacher stands up honestly, exposes dishonest administrators, and presents a valid case, the sentiment of the community should be squarely behind her. This problem happens because most parents blindly trust the administration or don’t have time to get involved, even though they may love their children a great deal, and have at least a sense of what the child needs.</p> <p>In my state, we have the Federation of Children with Special Needs whose purpose is to educate parents in issues about rights of disabled children and educational law. As more savvy parents hire advocates, school systems are becoming more honest (at least administrators have a lot more headaches).</p> <p>In defense of good administrators, the source of the problem is usually, of course, money. The local</p>

	<p>school committee gives the administrator a budget within which he must stay. If he cannot find a creative solution within the confines of his budget, it is too easy to let the ax fall where it will. Sadly, a new air conditioner, or copy machine suck the funds that were deemed to help these children. State and Federal funding needs to be increased, along with tighter control over administrators.</p> <p>Sped teachers feel threatened on all sides these days – by parents, administrators, and sometimes by students themselves. Unless changes are made to improve relations between parents, teachers and administrators, programs in Special Ed will be severely limited because they will be filled with 1st year teachers who won't last more than one year.</p>
60	<p>As the parent of a child who was the victim of similar circumstances, I received help from a wonderful special education teacher. "Mr. X" made suggestions to me, off the record, that helped me get the information I needed to advocate for my son. I had to file due process to force the school to act. We settled prior to the hearing but they gave me almost everything I requested. Perhaps there is a way "Distressed Teacher" can alert the state director of Special Education, or local advocacy groups about this situation. I wish "Distressed Teacher" the best of luck in resolving this situation.</p>
61	<p>Speak to your colleagues about these issues – you need to know who your allies are. As you look for another job, use the time to speak with others. Asking questions is a good way to find out where they stand on "special issues."</p> <p>Many of your colleagues are not aware that a federal law supports the inclusion of students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. The law also allows a parent to choose a smaller classroom if this is appropriate for a student. To be placed in a "self-contained" setting is okay if the student learns better in that environment (it's not determined by a label). The IEP team decides placement after the goals and objectives are agreed upon.</p> <p>I believe it is a teaching the teachers issue. If principals are agreeable, other administrators usually follow suit. We have so many groups rallying around so many causes. Teachers need support and they need to be informed. If they are not being taught the latest in the laws, this is a disservice to them and their students.</p>
62	<p>Some of your difficulties can be resolved by putting information into the hands of parents. Our local Parent Information Center advised me how to get an advocate, contact support groups, and they sent information on the IEP process.</p> <p>As to forging your name and altering the IEP document, you know what your school did is illegal. But don't back your boss into a corner by pointing fingers. Give her/him a chance to correct the "mistake". Send your boss a polite note explaining that you do not recall signing the documents in question and that you believe a mistake was made. Keep a copy of the letter for your records.</p>
63	<p>The power of those who support your battle for these kids is overwhelming – we believe in what you are fighting for.</p> <p>One solution is to start a support group for parents who have children in special education. The saying goes that "A mighty voice comes from many and the small from a few." By organizing this resource, you create a support system for these kids. You also create and organize support for the teachers. By getting the parents involved in the interests of their children, you will have more ability to persuade the administration.</p>
64	<p>The solution is simple. The teacher needs to coach the parents of special education students about how to check for changes in IEPs that were written for their child. Parents can call an IEP meeting at any time, as can any member of the IEP. The teacher can be a facilitator who informs parents of their children's rights. An educated parent is the best kind of checks and balances. The parent has the ultimate stake and can pursue their interests without appearing to be out for revenge. Parents will look out for their child.</p> <p>The system works if all participants play their roles in the process. By educating the parents and/or social</p>

	<p>service workers who may be involved with the child, one can goose the process into working the way it is meant to work. Hope this helps the reader even if I do not win anything!</p>
65	<p>You are between a rock and a hard place. The school and individuals who forged signatures and changed IEPs are vulnerable to law suits if an educated, informed parent's child is affected by these practices.</p> <p>I have learned that school administrators and faculty often don't explain services and programs the child is entitled to, but only describe what they are willing to provide. It took five years of watching my children lose ground and frustration with the IEP process before I found a group that taught me how important the IEP is. Until I found wrightslaw.com, I was under the impression that IDEA was not available or that the law had to be interpreted by an administrator. I attended several meetings about changes in the IDEA, and got a copy of my state special ed regulations. The IEP is no longer a mystery. I know what to look for, and what questions to pose at IEP meetings.</p> <p>Your best defense is to educate your parents. Let the parents know about educational support meetings. Attend some of these meetings to learn which provide good information, and which are just gripe sessions. Encourage parents to keep copies of everything. Explain that the IEP must list the services and modifications that will be made during the year so they should keep it close at hand.</p>
66	<p>Talk to one or two trusted parents of children. Express your concerns and request confidentiality. Parents have the power to change things, but they often don't know it. Give the parents the power and they will get things changed.</p>
67	<p>Let parents know they don't have to accept things as they are. Help them connect with an advocate or point them to this web site. I don't know how creative this is, but I don't know if we should be looking for creative solutions when the actions of the administration are illegal and possibly criminal.</p> <p>I have dealt with too many special education administrators (as an advocate and hearing officer) who don't think that federal laws apply to them. They think that they can do whatever they want regardless of the IDEA -- and the truth is they can -- as long as nobody catches them.</p>
68	<p>My creative solution is just good common sense.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When the law is broken, as citizens we must report it if we do not want to become part of the problem. 2. INFORM Your Parents. As parents, we can take action once we have information. INFORM Your local Learning Disabilities Association – there are local chapters in just about every state. 3. INFORM your school board. 4. INFORM your State Board of Education that children's rights to FAPE ARE BEING DENIED! These State and Local Boards are responsible for the actions of their administrators. 5. BE AN OUTSPOKEN ADVOCATE. A Good Special Educator puts the child's needs before others. Good school systems will be grateful to have you on their staff.
69	<p>Contact your State Department of Education, Special Education Department. This is obviously an administration in need of direct supervision. Be prepared to document and prove statements. I think you have a responsibility to notify the parents. They need to know that their rights and their children's rights have been violated. Enlist the parents' help to bring about needed change in your district. The more people you involve, the less jeopardy your job will be in.</p>
70	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You cannot go it alone. You don't have the clout or the platform. 2. Remember that each of these children has a caring population outside the school (i.e., parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, etc.)

	<p>3. You must inform this population without seeming to blow whistles.</p> <p>4. Send out a friendly reminder to each child's support person explaining that paper work sometimes needs to be checked -- you know that each parent wants to make sure "your child is getting what was committed in the IEP"</p> <p>5. Place special emphasis on placement, IEP attendance and curriculum.</p> <p>6. Tell them you'll be happy to explain anything on the IEP that they don't understand.</p> <p>7. Now you can keep a written record as the repository of the parents concern, not the initiator. Let the parents carry the ball with you as the background expert.</p>
71	<p>The teacher might start a conversation with the parent of a special ed. student, preferably a parent who is outspoken and assertive. During this conversation (which would have nothing to do with fraudulent IEPs), the teacher could say "You know, I read that every parent of a special ed. student should ask to review the student's file once a year. I'm sure you do that, don't you?" Then continue with the conversation -- and wait for the explosion.</p>
72	<p>In my experience, parents are the key to advocacy. Teachers can appear self-serving when advocating for their special education students. When parents receive help from special educators, they can make changes happen quickly. In this situation, meet with parents individually. Let them know what their rights are, that what was done violates their right to due process, and provide them with sufficient information to make complaints to the administration.</p>
73	<p>WOW! This is a tough one, but it is a very ILLEGAL one. I have heard about this from many teachers. One teacher in my area called the parents and told them what was happening. She also called an advocate to help them. The teacher's name was kept out of the complaint and changes were made. The teacher took a little heat but held onto her job and her dignity because the administration could NEVER prove that she was the person who provided information to the parents.</p>
74	<p>My biggest fear would be "my" forged signature on the IEP. Begin by speaking to your supervisor's supervisor (or someone else in administration who did not sign that 'revised' IEP). Explain the illegalities of forging the IEP document and that if it isn't taken out of the student's file, you plan to take it to the parent and explain what happened.</p> <p>If the administration threatened me, I wouldn't fear. They have more to lose by NOT doing what I ask than by doing it. I think this would be a good way to start better practices in your school. You are not happy working in a school that has illegal practices. Why would you want to stay and possibly get in trouble legally? By NOT reporting or trying to change the problem, you are part of the problem (which I doubt you are!!).</p>
75	<p>I have been a special educator for 15 years. I have seen the district cover up Sped. problems to meet their needs but falsifying information is illegal!</p> <p>Request a meeting with the IEP Team. Advise that you were not at the IEP meeting where your signature appears on the form. Bring all data and anecdotal information to the meeting along with your Union rep if you work in a public school. If a meeting is not held, notify the mediation board in your area, and the union lawyer.</p>
76	<p>First, "know your law." IDEA is very specific. Your supervisor should recognize that non-compliance with special ed law can result in loss of funds for the district.</p> <p>Approach her/him in a respectful manner and a conciliatory attitude, but armed with information. Don't "teach" her/him the law, but, "assume" that she/he knows the law and discuss it as though she/he does. Say things like, "As you know this is required by us" and "Because you are well acquainted with this issue, I'm sure you know this is what the law says", etc.</p> <p>In our district, we have a parent volunteer who does IDEA training sessions for parents who can then</p>

	<p>approach the district on their children's behalf. The SpEd parent volunteer also goes to meetings with some parents (at their request) and helps them through tough meetings with the district admin. She also does IEP training for parents. Educating parents on the law and their rights goes a long way toward winning this battle. If this fails, find a parent you know and trust and ask them to contact the state education office with "questions" about analogous situations. This should open the door for the state folks to ask questions and shed some light on the situation you are talking about.</p>
77	<p>It appears that several issues need to be addressed in different ways.</p> <p>#1. If an administrator decides to change placements without the agreement of IEP team members (including parents), the administrator is responsible for his/her actions. Let the parents know so they can contact the teacher and/or administrator (hopefully the special ed. director) and initiate a probe into the whys and hows of the situation. This takes it off the teacher's shoulders. To cover yourself, you can document your concerns in a letter and send copies to the principal, special ed. director and parents. However, this puts you in the position of bringing up the subject and having to prove your allegations. You are also subject to reprisals by unscrupulous bosses.</p> <p>#2. If you know your signature was forged, you have no choice but to report this to the superintendent of the school district. This is a criminal matter and probably needs to be handled by law enforcement officials. If you hide this issue, you will be subject to more of the same. It will be more difficult to lodge a complaint later. When you report the issue, it's out of your hands.</p> <p>#3 Follow the chain of command in reporting issues. No matter how afraid you are, if you don't follow district guidelines, you dig yourself into a deeper hole. Having a good lawyer and knowing your rights and responsibilities as a district employee is a must. Your district policy should contain guidelines about complaints. As difficult as it is, follow the policy to the letter. You will protect yourself from other issues surfacing later. The lawyer needs to know about the situation and have copies of all the documents you send to the administration.</p> <p>Your situation is difficult and you are too vulnerable to go it alone. You can only trust co-workers to a certain degree. Don't share this with other employees. Don't talk about it with others in the system unless you are sure they can keep a secret. Get advice from your lawyer, not your co-workers and friends.</p> <p>I feel sorry for you. It appears that someone higher up on the food chain is trying to devour you and your career. Protect yourself first, then take care of the kids and IEP issues.</p>
78	<p>You are in the classic dilemma of a whistle blower! Once documents are changed this way, the administration put itself outside the law. Federal laws have notice requirements to avoid just such situations, and by making unilateral changes with forged signatures, the District is in violation. And, you have PROOF!</p> <p>Even if you do nothing, some parents kids will find out what happened when the services they expected are not the ones their kids receive. They will fight the District to right the illegal changes. Then you will have to decide whether you have to lie (maybe under oath if it goes that far) to cover for your administration. If you really believe that your District expects you to do this, and will retaliate against you if you don't, you need to be proactive to protect yourself.</p> <p>In protecting yourself, you may be able to help the situation.</p> <p>You do NOT want to be the accuser! Many Districts employ a "see no evil" policy regarding special ed: they delegate jobs to middle management supervisors, just want things done, no questions asked. Are your boss's superiors aware of what she is doing? Informally: maybe, maybe not. But NEVER officially. They just may look the other way because she is doing bold things to save the District money. You need to "innocently" make her superiors "officially" aware of the situation, to cover yourself from her behavior.</p> <p>You need copies of the IEP documents that were ORIGINALLY filled out. If you don't have them, find them (as a last resort, the parents should have copies). MAKE ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THESE AND KEEP THEM IN A SAFE PLACE! THEY ARE EVIDENCE!!</p>

	<p>Then get copies of the current IEPs and collate them by student: original documents first, forged copies later.</p> <p>Call your supervisor when you KNOW she can't return the call. Just leave a general message that "you had some questions to discuss" with her. This demonstrates that you tried to follow the chain of command in the District (and makes you a team player), but couldn't because of her.</p> <p>Then, after a time (before your super can get back to you), find a way to approach one of her supervisors IN PERSON (bump into them somewhere!) and grab them for five minutes. Make sure you have all the documentation with you. Play dumb. Really dumb!</p> <p>Tell them that you have some "logistical concerns" about how you are to implement the IEPs for these kids. Show the originals and the forgeries. Explain that there must have been some "clerical error" as the new documents don't have your signature, etc., and that you don't think you are supposed to honor the IEPs with these types of "technical" flaws. Explain that you tried to reach your supervisor but couldn't, and that you need direction from the District as to what to do. If the administrator wants to keep your paperwork, let him/her have it, saying cheerfully, "That's okay, I have copies." Your demeanor must be COMPLETELY innocent and non-threatening. You are simply a professional trying to do her job . . .</p> <p>What you are REALLY doing is showing the administrator that your supervisor has just been caught red handed! They know you have the proof that parents need to sue the District! They also know you are savvy enough to protect yourself and stick up for what is legal.</p> <p>But, YOU HAVE ALSO GIVEN THEM A SCAPEGOAT: YOUR BOSS! The one who deserves it, anyway! Even if her bosses gave her the nod to do this stuff, they will probably not admit it. They will not ask you to engage in a cover-up, as they aren't sure enough of you now to do that! They will protect themselves. Chances are, some changes will be made to correct the IEPs, probably at your boss's expense. When your boss finds out, she'll be mad as hell! But make it clear that you considered all of this an innocent mistake (so why is she so angry?). After all, you did try to talk with her!</p> <p>Journal privately all conversations you have, date and with whom, during this process. Then let the chips fall where they may. You may have made a few enemies, but you have done so in a way that doesn't make you a "traitor". You will just be seen as someone too honest for the job!</p>
79	<p>I teach special education too – and this seems too easy. First, contact your KIDS' PARENTS and advise them of their rights. Get your parents as floored as we are. Advise them to confront the principal about the changes to the IEPs and demand changes. If nothing happens, have them call the Special Education Advisor in your county and repeat the routine. The State Department of Education is the next avenue.</p> <p>I can't believe your parents would take these changes. Don't they know they are in the driver's seat? If teachers kept parents advised of their rights, and kept them advised of these violations, your principal would be singing another song.</p> <p>When a teacher says, "I don't have the time to follow these modifications," your response as an advocate for your kids should be, "You will find the time." Don't let them bully you. These kids need you and count on your help.</p>
80	<p>As the parent of two special ed students AND an employee of the school district I know "where you're coming from". You need to get the parents involved in this problem. Have a parent meeting, possibly a round table, and have the parents ask questions about the services offered to their children. You also have the right to go above your supervisor's head and ask for an audit of files. But more than anything else the parents need to get involved in the solution.</p>
81	<p>I can empathize with the distressed Teacher as I have faced this problem many times in my 23+ years of teaching. I know the laws and so does the distressed teacher. But being "politically correct " with administrators is a must or the program, students and parents will suffer.</p> <p>I have learned that to be a successful advocate, I must have an "internal support system" that will take action when situations arise. My "internal network" includes a trusted co-worker; a parent advocate; the students themselves; and the local law school.</p>

	<p>My co-worker initiates conversations about Special Education student(s) performance in regular classes; whether they are keeping up with their peers, need assistance, or the appropriateness of the placement. Given the nature of the group, the Principal or Counselor can look good by recommending a change in placement or other measures to ensure student success, not losing face but empowering them as decision makers. (I call these types ‘Little Napoleons’ because they need to be constantly re-affirmed that they are INDEED in charge)</p> <p>My parent advocates find out from parents how things are going for their children -- are they productive and successful, do their classes seem appropriate, are the kids complaining about school or hesitant to go to classes? If there are problems, the parent advocate makes suggestions and offers support to the parents, and calls an IEP to review placement -- the Special Educator can sit back and watch the administrators scramble – that’s fun and changes are made quickly!</p> <p>Then, there’s the Law School. If they get a call about a student’s placement or a violation of due process (a teacher can call anonymously but it’s better if the advocate supports the parent in this venture), they take action almost immediately (within 24 hours)! I’m as surprised as the administration (“Oh, my, how did THAT happen?”) Depending on the situation, this may be the first step I take.</p> <p>It’s really sad that most of us have not felt support from an administration who cares about children with special needs. It’s depressing and probably the reason for the burn-out rate among Special Educators. We fear losing our jobs over the process of doing just that -- our JOBS !</p> <p>We must remember the years of training we put in to hone our skills. Our role is multi-faceted: special educator; support and technical assistance; mentor; presenter; and most important, ADVOCATE ! It’s not easy, but it’s the most important role we play. Developing a strong parent training /support and networking program helps immensely! Good luck -- I hope I have empowered you become the advocate you want to be.</p>
82	<p>As a parent who has worked with the schools, I believe I have a solution to this teacher’s problem. Together we can make a difference</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We need to educate parents, teachers who are on the front lines, principals, and administrators, even the boards of Education. The buck has to stop somewhere. 2. We need to stand up tall with our eyes and ears wide open. We need to make sure information is appropriate, correct, nonbiased, and nondiscriminatory. Don’t look for trouble, just look for facts. Ask that information be given in writing. Trust our instincts. When in doubt ask, but double check. Make sure you have documentation to “prove” the injustice. 3. Give praise and encouragement to the staff, but make sure that the policies of schools change when necessary. We can’t just talk the talk; we need to follow this with action. 4. We need to be polite but assertive. We need to be good role models for our kids at home and when we work in the schools and community. 5. We must think positively. We cannot burn bridges behind us. We need to strengthen the supports of these bridges. We cannot do this unless we work together. No one is the enemy. We need to forgive what we can and put the past behind us, but we must make it known --THE PAST MUST NEVER BE REPEATED. 6. Schools exist for children; children do not exist for schools. We need to put the focus in schools back on the kids. We need to recognize that we must work together as equal partners to create an environment where it is safe to live, grow and learn academically, socially and emotionally. Schools need to help children, not because it is their job or because it are required by law, but because it is the right thing to do! 7. We need to teach our kids the importance of tolerance, patience and forgiveness by example, by showing empathy, flexibility, and understanding. No one is perfect.

	<p>8. We need to prevent problems instead of reacting later, not by being stricter but by being firm and fair with everyone.</p> <p>9. We cannot expect children to act like adults when we allow adults to act like children.</p> <p>10. Together, as parents and caring adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * We need to be assertive not aggressive and by knowing the laws, ensure that schools provide the services kids need to reach their potentials. * We need to look within ourselves to those areas we need to improve. * We need to quit feeling sorry for ourselves and be willing to stand up for our ideals and principles no matter the cost. <p>I guarantee that If this teacher has the dignity, self-respect, and willingness to stand up for what is right, she will not be jobless for long. With us behind teachers like this, she need never feel alone.</p>
83	<p>Follow the law. Keep records. Make copies of everything that is not legal. Do what you are required to do for each child. Refuse to comply with activities that are not legal. Take it to the union (I know that could be a joke!) Inform parents about violations of their children’s rights and ask them not to let anyone know that it is you giving them the information.</p> <p>School personnel call me all the time, telling me what to ask at impartial hearings and sending me information.</p> <p>Notify your state or regional associates and the union representative.</p> <p>Make a record that you are a whistle blower. If teachers stood their ground and did what is right, others could not get away with this. The odds are you can lose your job and/or have your life made into hell at work. But if you are up against me, I will go after your teaching license if you lie under oath in an impartial hearing. I train my advocates to go after any teacher, administrator, therapist and any school personal who lie. Breaking the law and regulations due to ignorance I can accept if the school admits it and is willing to address the child’s needs and correct the problems.</p> <p>Do what is right and you will have a better chance of keeping your teaching license. Being nice gets you nowhere in many school districts. The fact that your district is lying, forging signatures, and engaging in illegal activities will get them in the end. Sooner or later an advocate like me will come along and attack the school district with impartial hearings and organized parents. This is war. Which side do you want to be on? We take no prisoners! You hurt my kids, I will go after you. The only way to stop administrators like yours is to take them out of the system and I do.</p>
84	<p>Make a *SAFE* copy of the original IEP for each child. One copy is the Administration’s copy, one is the Parent’s copy (encourage them to keep the IEP in a *safe* place where it is easy to get their hands on), and the third copy is for your records.</p> <p>Purchase a personalized (your longhand) Initials Stamp (costs around \$15) that you can use to “stamp” your signature/initials (all copies individually). This will give you a “checks/ balances” system to ensure YOUR signature/ initials on the IEPs.</p> <p>Others steps that you can take to prevent unauthorized changes of IEPs is to scratch/mark out any “blank boxes/lines” by placing Big/Bold waving lines ~~ or “X” thru signature lines that are “left over” at the end of the meeting. If you bracket { } written information within boxes, it is harder for someone to add or subtract information later since amendments must be Initialed by Parents and the Staff member who is accountable for the IEP [this is usually the Principal or Vice-Principal].</p>

	<p>To avoid recurrences of “reneged” services, in addition to filling in the “time allotment” area, make handwritten notations in the margin of each page of the IEP (like OT - -30m Weekly, PT - -60m Weekly, Sp-45m Daily) to describe Supportive Service, time allotment and frequency. Do NOT initial these notations. If someone attempts to alter them, the “check/balance” would be an acknowledgment of changes (i.e., Parent/legal guardians initials+ staff initials) during the original meeting.</p> <p>A few of your students or parents can get their copy of the original IEP which will provide documentation of the <unauthorized> “changed/amended” IEP(s). With documentation (original IEP and altered IEP), parents can advise the “chain of command” about the problems. You will need to get the Parent/Legal guardian’s assistance to bring these charges/allegations to light, due to laws of Privacy and Ethical Standards (in the USA) of minors/clients/students.</p> <p>Being a “whistle-blower” is not easy. For me, the parent of 3 children enrolled in Special Education in the public school system (grades 6, 4, and 2), I gotta say I’d be tickled pink if you were one of the members of our “M-team.” It’s wonderful to realize that parents aren’t the only ones looking at the IEP (current) status. Best wishes and Good Luck!</p>
85	<p>Be honest about what happened. Contact your boss’ boss with this information. If someone forged your name, they should not be allowed to continue in their position. Last time I checked , FORGERY IS AGAINST THE LAW.</p> <p>I would not be too concerned about losing your job if you have evidence of what happened. If you are advocate, you will blow the whistle.</p>
86	<p>On way to measure the solution is to ask “What if that was my child’s IEP/PT” and remember this:</p> <p>Everyday a person is measured-- Stand up and speak the truth.</p> <p>If you don’t, who will? This could be your child’s education plan. If you lose your job, we will welcome you to Georgia. We need exceptional teachers. The teacher who understands the needs of a child is rare. A hero. Heroes make tough decisions. Taking care of children is not for wimps. It’s for one who doesn’t “ride the fence,” so stand up and remember your name is on the documents.</p>
87	<p>Faced with this situation, I would give the school district one, last chance. I would take the original and the forged amended versions of the IEP to the superintendent and the attorney for the school district and tell them the story.</p> <p>I would go so far as to present myself less as a whistle-blower than as a loyal employee striving to protect my beloved school district from the dire legal and financial consequences of this illegal and immoral and ill-considered act.</p> <p>Just to prove my blind loyalty to the district, I would even point out that the only way to protect the district would be to change the IEP back to its original form; to notify the parents that it was back in, and was going to stay in, its original form (unless the parents now wanted changes, of course); to notify the culprit (criminal) and the signatory parties (real and imagined) of the action taken; and to fire the culprit [OK, maybe put the culprit on probation if the culprit makes a formal apology to parents and staff].</p> <p>If, in the words of Arlo Guthrie, the superintendent and school’s attorney “give [me] a medal for being so brave and honest,” I would go back to work and begin job-hunting immediately.</p> <p>If not, I would send both copies of the IEP to the parents with a note telling them I had found the second version and observed that it had been changed without my agreement and -- evidently -- without theirs. As with all communications that might affect placement, I would include a copy of parents’ rights. I might drop into the envelope business cards from a special education advocate and a special education attorney.</p> <p>If I had any fantasy about keeping my job, I’d wipe my fingerprints off the business cards. Then I would start job-hunting immediately.</p>

	<p>I often hear administrators ask, "Is this the hill I want to die on?"</p> <p>In the immediate sense, the answer here is "Yes." However, my wife the career counselor reminds me that there are better jobs out there. Certainly there are better districts in which to teach and, if necessary, there are other careers that pay better with less (or at least different) stress.</p>
88	<p>Find a person in whom you have confidence who is not connected with the special education department to present the facts, with copies of pertinent papers, to the superintendent of the school district. Copies should be sent to all members of the school board.</p> <p>The superintendent should be advised that copies of your report will be released to the news media if no action is taken to correct the wrongs. The welfare of these children are at stake so every effort should be made to ensure that these children to not suffer at the hands of such deceit. We cannot fail our children. They are counting on us.</p>
89	<p>There is no way to solve this problem creatively, without involving the authorities.</p> <p>As nice as it is to think that there must be some way to convince this administrator to comply, she obviously doesn't care and has probably gotten away with doing this sort of thing before or she wouldn't be so casual about doing it now. She's fraudulently altered legally binding documents to the disadvantage of powerless children. The administrator needs to be held accountable.</p> <p>What will she get away with next year if she gets away with this now? How many years will she continue to do this sort of thing while her staff cowers or quits and students' entire lives are thrown down the toilet? How much money will be spent supporting these students (her victims) in adulthood because they didn't acquire the skills necessary to take care of themselves while they were in school?</p> <p>The only people for whom we should be concerned about "winning" are the students and the teacher who brought this situation to light. Let these two parties "win-win."</p> <p>As I see it, this teacher should IMMEDIATELY contact her teachers' union and obtain representation for the purpose of protecting herself. She and her union representative, preferably a lawyer, should contact the parents of these students and advise them of this gross violation of their rights. She and her union representative, along with the students' parents, should then <i>at least</i> file a compliance complaint with her state's department of education. Involving the media probably wouldn't be a bad idea, either, but this would be a decision on which the students' parents must unanimously concur.</p> <p>Due to the gravity of the situation and the number of students involved, they should consider filing a class action complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. Her administrator's actions are clear-cut acts of discrimination against these students. She denied them their federally mandated right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as described by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). She also violated the letter of the law by altering the IEPs without the informed consent of the student's parents.</p>
90	<p>As the parent of a special ed child, the solution I share is one I did. Things were going seriously wrong at my son's school. Thanks to a special teacher who trusted me enough to give me a copy of the Wrightslaw book, I was able to approach the school and get things back on the right track.</p> <p>After I read the book, I requested an individualized behavior plan for my son. This was the first step. I also contacted the state board of education who advised me to start a parent group to gain strength in numbers. After the parent group met several times, we were ready for the next step – writing a letter to our state board of education. We composed a list of complaints against the school and sent it to the state board of education, who responded by investigating the school. Three of our six complaints were acknowledged.</p> <p>Now, the school sees us parents as watchdogs and are careful about what they do. This year, I've seen</p>

	<p>improvements. Don't let these children suffer because administrators have lost sight of the real issue – our children.</p> <p>Try to get one parent on your side and give them a copy of Wrightslaw: Special Education Law. If you get the right parent to start a group, the changes you can make will amaze you. I know - I am one of those parents. Knowledge of the law is a powerful tool. If used right, that power can bring many changes in the district to help our children and dedicated teachers.</p>
91	<p>Since the problem is at your school, inform the head of the special education department. They probably are unaware of what is going on inside your school if no one has taken the initiative to blow the whistle about this. Be specific about the things that happened. Indicate that you are informing them so you can avoid legal hassles that may arise from this. The district does not want lawsuits when they are blatantly in violation of special education laws and procedures.</p> <p>Advise that you could probably sue them for forging your signature and involuntarily involving you in this deceit. Demand that all documents containing your forged signature be destroyed and that the school administration responsible for this be reprimanded.</p> <p>Another solution is to anonymously inform parents of the violations concerning their children. Parents will show up at the school to question these violations and demand that they be corrected. Some parents won't know how to address these problems. All you can do is inform them. It may help to provide information about legal representation or advocates for them to seek outside advice. Be sure to support parents if they come to you. You don't necessarily have to tell them that you were the person who anonymously tipped them off about the problems.</p>
92	<p>I've been a special education teacher for 25 years, much of that time in a city public school system. You seem to have two problems here, and I sympathize with you!</p> <p>First, you have the dilemma of inept supervisory staff making decisions regarding individual children's needs, and you have the illegal aspects of IEPs being changed without parent or teacher consent. Both must stop. You can help effect change by remembering that there is strength in numbers! And the numbers can remain largely anonymous! (You want to keep your job!) Other special ed. teachers must be as appalled as you.</p> <p>Talk to several whom you are close to, outside of school, and come up with a "strength in numbers" plan. Enlist the help of special education teachers who left the district for the reasons you outlined. Ask for their support while you try to advocate for change for the good of the children and the remaining teaching staff as well.</p> <p>Is there an attorney who handles matters like these? Or an attorney who has children in the district? Ask him/her if they would become involved to help the teachers advocate for change on behalf of the children. Ask interested parents to get involved. Once you have a small, but determined "core group" poised to help, try to enlist the help of one or two (or more!) outside forces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The media, or, * An active parent advocacy group <p>Depending on the size of your town, there may be an active parent advocacy group. My city has several. They can be tremendously helpful and will keep their referral sources anonymous. They can approach the supervisor and the superintendent on behalf of the children. Typically, they won't back down until changes are made.</p> <p>The media can be a positive force for change as well. Several teachers can approach the education/community reporter for your local TV station. Explain the situation from the legal standpoint and from the "good of the children" viewpoint. Explain your desire to remain anonymous. Present the idea that an "educational scandal" is taking place without public knowledge. Illegal use of tax dollars ought to get their attention! Good luck!</p>
93	<p>Where are the parents? The teacher needs to find a parent or parents to take on the administration. She</p>

	<p>should notify parents of the changes in their children's IEPs and let the parents take it from there.</p> <p>As a parent of two special ed children, if my school district tried to pull something like this, they would be in court in a heartbeat! Unfortunately, when the administration is involved in illegal activities like changing IEPs without proper procedures and forging signatures, I see no other alternative than a parent (or group of parents) taking them on in court.</p> <p>The only non-court alternative is for the parents to contact the superintendent who will stop these activities if they were conducted by lower level administrators without the superintendent's knowledge.</p>
94	<p>This is a very interesting problem. I have one way you can go about solving this.</p> <p>First, send each parent of a child with a modified IEP a copy of their new IEP, and inform them that you did not attend the meeting and tell them whose signature is- and isn't- forged.</p> <p>Second, call an IEP meeting for each child with a modified IEP. Beforehand, make a batch of brownies for each meeting -- with a "secret" laxative ingredient. You may need to tell the parents and any other "good guys" beforehand not to eat any of the brownies, letting them in on your "plan" if necessary. Sometimes this is the only way to get the \$#!t out. At first, the staff will be appreciative of your efforts to "loosen up" the meeting.</p> <p>During the meeting, you should deny knowledge of the fantasy IEP meetings, and the parents and any other involved parties should also. Seek to regain the lost services (speech, OT, PT, and others) and suggest that the students be reintroduced into the regular classrooms with any necessary services. If the administration says they can't do that, or protests, feel free to drag the meeting out as long as necessary (in other words, as long as their digestive systems will hold out). Tip: This is especially effective for meetings right after lunch. (Note: the author described himself as a fifteen year old special ed student.)</p>
95	<p>Nothing will happen until the parents are made aware of what is going on. Invite the parents to come to school and observe their children.</p> <p>Get an attorney. Your supervisor is a criminal. She is breaking the law. Go the head of the school board. Your supervisor must not care about her job.</p>
96	<p>First - congratulations on your distress! Distress is reasonable under the circumstances! Now for possible solutions, keeping these goals in mind:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To keep your job (good idea - there is need for some meaningful changes here...!) 2. To provide effective inclusive programming for children. 3. To establish credibility and honest communication between parents and staff. <p>Recommended action: Take one of these two courses of action - whichever you are most comfortable with, given your knowledge of the individuals involved.</p> <p>Solution A: Ask to meet in confidence with your superintendent. Be honest about your concerns (i.e., job, programming and impact on ALL children - not just special needs children.) Advise that you are seeking assistance to protect the district because if parents (or other regulatory groups) learn about signature forging, changing placements without consent, etc. the district will face serious negative consequences.</p> <p>Solution B: Contact a state or regional parent group in confidence (since you are a parent as well as educator, hopefully this will be comfortable). Ask for a reference/contact in your county or state offices of special education who might be willing to fully investigate the situation (without letting on that you "got the ball rolling.") A site visit with parent participation may be what is needed to begin to change this stuff.</p> <p>After these interventions, it might be worthwhile to revisit why this stuff is occurring, get to the root of the problems, and make changes. Are some of the teachers "afraid" to have special needs children in their classes? Is it administratively and fiscally easier to keep segregated classes? Develop a "stacked"/(l</p>

	mean planned) district wide committee to address the real issues are directly - or they will continue!!
97	<p>I was employed by the same district my children attended. I also have a special needs child. My husband and I had to employ an attorney and go to mediation. I changed districts because the tension was too much. Although I now work in a different district, we have the same problems -- teachers who do not follow IEP goals and objectives, or provide modifications.</p> <p>Sometimes you have to go out on a limb and take a stand for what is right. Be sure you have documentation to support what you are presenting. I am a strong believer in ethics, honesty, and integrity. This is hard but worth the effort, as is the welfare and education of the students. Always do what is right. You may have to fight for your job but that's what contracts, attorneys, and unions are for. Besides, the good guy always wins! Good luck.</p>

Thanks for your vote!

For your vote to be counted, we must receive it by Noon, Wednesday, September 20, 2000. We will tally the votes as quickly as possible and send out an announcement by email about the winners.

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