

To the members of the EQS Subcommittee,

I am speaking today as the parent of two boys living with disabilities, as a professional advocate for students and their families in special education, and as a person living with a disability. My understanding is today your focus is on the inclusion of independent schools in following the Education quality standards and I am speaking in complete support of that change.

Too many students with disabilities in special education are placed in out of district placements such as independent schools across Vermont and they often do not receive the free and appropriate public education they are entitled to under IDEA. These students that are publicly placed and publicly funded should have the same educational quality and standard as any public student would. In addition to the many equity and discrimination issues these students and their families experience, the ability of the sending district to monitor and ensure compliance with the legally written IEP documents is severely limited from my experience which limits what they know or can address when it comes to ensuring safe and equitable experiences and opportunities as well.

I have sat at several IEP meetings with at least 3 different Vermont independent schools involved as a placement for a student I'm supporting, the independent schools at times do not attend or engage with the school team and refuse to provide data or services/plans in their IEPs.

I've had a meeting with one independent school where they explained they don't provide any specialized instruction and the district had to explain the definition of both specialized instruction and the requirements of special Ed. This same school was having the student try to put together office furniture that had just arrived for their school as part of their instruction that they used to report back to the school. They didn't help with reading the instructions, or measurements etc just gave them some tools and had them work on it and that feels very wrong to me knowing our tax dollars and funding could be paying for this type of experience and education.

I do believe including the expectation to follow EQS for these publicly placed students especially is absolutely necessary and support this change.

Thank you  
Katie