

Complete Record Review and Advocacy Plan

Prepared for Sam Carter family

Riverbend School District | Complete Record Review

All names, dates, schools, scores, and case facts in this sample are invented.

MY OVERALL CONCLUSION

The records tell a clearer story than any one document does. Sam has a persistent word-reading and spelling weakness that has been identified more than once, but the IEP gradually shifted toward fluency and general classroom support. The underlying decoding need did not disappear; it disappeared from the plan. The immediate priority is to reconnect the evaluation findings, instruction, goals, and progress measurement so the IEP addresses the skill Sam actually needs to learn.

What I reviewed

- Initial multidisciplinary evaluation dated February 2023
- Reading intervention summaries from 2023 through 2025
- IEPs dated March 2023, March 2024, and February 2025
- Quarterly progress reports and benchmark data
- Parent and teacher email history concerning reading and homework

The strongest parts of Sam's story

Sam is curious, verbally expressive, persistent, and strong in discussion-based learning. Teachers repeatedly describe thoughtful ideas and good listening comprehension. Those strengths matter because they show that the reading difficulty is not a lack of effort, interest, or general ability. Sam understands far more than Sam can independently decode from print.

The story across the records

Date	What the record said	What happened next
Feb 2023	Evaluation identified weaknesses in phonological processing, decoding unfamiliar words, and spelling patterns.	The first IEP added reading support but did not name a specific decoding method.
Nov 2023	Intervention note reported slow acquisition and continued guessing from context.	Service continued without a revised baseline or increased intensity.
Mar 2024	IEP changed the primary reading goal to oral reading rate.	The decoding weakness remained in present levels but was no longer directly measured by a goal.
Oct 2024	Progress report said Sam was making progress with teacher support.	No dated decoding scores or independent word-reading measure were provided.
Feb 2025	Draft IEP proposed continuing the same fluency goal and general reading intervention.	The plan still did not identify how the original decoding need would be taught or measured.

The pattern I see

Each document looks plausible by itself. Read together, however, the pattern is unmistakable: the district identified an underlying word-reading problem, reported that it continued, then changed the plan to measure reading speed without showing that the underlying skill had been remediated. That is the central disconnect in Sam's current IEP.

Evaluation findings that must drive the plan

Phonological processing

The evaluation described difficulty holding and manipulating speech sounds. This weakness helps explain why Sam struggles to read unfamiliar words and spell new patterns even when familiar text can be memorized or guessed from context.

Decoding

Sam's performance was notably weaker when words were unfamiliar or could not be predicted from sentence meaning. Classroom notes describe the same behavior: slow reading, substitutions, and reliance on the first letter or surrounding context.

The strength that can hide the need

Strong oral language and listening comprehension allow Sam to participate well in discussion and sometimes produce passing classroom grades. Those strengths should be used in instruction, but they should not be mistaken for evidence that independent reading is secure.

What is missing from the current IEP

- A current baseline for decoding unfamiliar single-syllable and multisyllabic words
- A goal that directly measures the skill identified in the evaluation
- A clear description of the instructional approach, frequency, group size, and provider
- Separate reporting of decoding progress rather than folding it into oral reading rate
- A decision about whether the current intensity is sufficient after two years of slow progress

Current IEP audit

IEP area	What works	What needs to change
Present levels	Describes effort, reading hesitation, and stronger listening comprehension.	Connect those observations to the evaluation findings and add current independent decoding data.
Annual goal	Uses a repeated reading measure.	Add a separate decoding goal; fluency alone does not measure the underlying word-reading skill.
Services	Provides scheduled reading support.	State the instructional focus, frequency, group size, and how missed sessions are handled.
Progress reporting	Reports quarterly.	Provide dated scores for each goal measure and explain the level of prompting or support.
Parent concerns	Notes concern about slow reading.	Add the history of limited response, homework distress, and the request for explicit decoding instruction.

Why the current fluency goal is not enough

Reading faster is not the same as learning to decode. Repeated practice may improve speed on familiar passages while leaving Sam unable to read a new word independently. The IEP needs to measure whether Sam is gaining the underlying skill, not only whether performance improves on practiced text.

Goals I would propose

Decoding goal

Given a teacher-created or standardized list of unfamiliar words representing the spelling patterns taught, Sam will decode the words accurately and explain the sound-symbol pattern used, increasing from a baseline established before instruction begins to at least 85 percent accuracy across three consecutive weekly probes.

Supporting objectives

- Segment and blend words containing the current instructional pattern
- Read unfamiliar one- and two-syllable words without relying on picture or sentence context
- Apply taught syllable patterns when reading unfamiliar multisyllabic words
- Spell dictated words containing the same patterns used in decoding instruction

Progress monitoring

Use an unpracticed word list aligned to the sequence being taught. Record the date, pattern assessed, number attempted, number correct, error type, and level of prompting. Report the actual scores to the parent at least monthly in addition to formal quarterly reports.

Service language I would request

Specialized reading instruction focused on explicit, systematic decoding and encoding skills, delivered by a provider trained in the selected approach, at a frequency and group size sufficient to implement the sequence with fidelity. The IEP should state the minutes, sessions per week, maximum group size, location, provider role, and procedure for missed sessions.

The questions the team must answer

- What current data shows that Sam's decoding weakness has resolved or no longer requires a direct goal?
- What explicit decoding and spelling sequence is being used, and where is Sam currently working within it?
- Who provides the instruction, how often, for how long, and in what group size?
- How many planned sessions were delivered during the last two reporting periods?
- What unpracticed measures show that Sam can transfer the skill to new words?
- Why did the decoding goal disappear while the evaluation finding and classroom difficulty remained?
- What will the team change if the next four to six data points do not show adequate growth?

The parent request in plain language

I am asking the team to address the decoding weakness identified in Sam's evaluation with a direct goal, explicit instruction, and progress monitoring that measures unfamiliar word reading. I also want the IEP to state who will provide the instruction, how often it will occur, the group size, and how the team will respond if the data does not show sufficient progress.

Priorities for the next meeting

Priority	What to secure	Do not leave with
1 Decoding need	Agreement that the need remains and must be directly addressed.	A vague statement that fluency work covers everything.
2 Goal	A baseline, defined skill, objective measure, and reporting schedule.	A percentage goal with no named assessment or starting point.
3 Instruction	Approach, frequency, duration, group size, and provider.	Only the label reading support.
4 Accountability	A review date and predetermined response if growth is inadequate.	Another open-ended promise to monitor.

Documents or data still needed

- Provider service logs for the current IEP year
- The individual scores behind quarterly progress statements
- Current decoding and spelling baseline data
- Description or scope and sequence of the reading intervention
- Draft IEP in editable or searchable form before the meeting

Email I would send before the meeting

Thank you for sending Sam's draft IEP. Before the meeting, please provide the current decoding and spelling baseline data, the individual progress-monitoring scores underlying the quarterly reports, and the reading-service logs for this IEP period. The evaluation identified decoding and phonological-processing weaknesses, but the current draft measures oral reading rate without a separate decoding goal. At the meeting, I am asking the team to address that disconnect and identify the explicit instruction, service details, and progress measure that will be used for Sam's underlying word-reading need.

What a stronger result would look like

- The IEP clearly names the decoding need instead of burying it in narrative text
- The annual goal measures unfamiliar word reading from a current baseline
- The service description tells the family what instruction will actually happen
- Progress reports include dated scores the parent can understand
- The team agrees in advance when it will revisit intensity or approach if growth remains inadequate

My working recommendation

Do not spend the meeting debating whether Sam is a good student or whether teachers care. The records already show effort and good intentions. Keep the team on the unresolved instructional question: what is being done to remediate the identified decoding weakness, and what objective data will show whether it is working?

Sam's reading profile in plain language

What Sam can do

Sam understands spoken information, contributes thoughtful ideas, remembers stories, and can explain complex concepts when reading demands are removed. In familiar text, Sam sometimes appears more fluent because context, memory, and repeated exposure help fill in words.

Where reading breaks down

When the words are new, longer, or cannot be guessed from context, accuracy drops. Sam substitutes visually similar words, omits endings, hesitates, and loses meaning while trying to identify the words. Spelling shows related difficulty with sound-symbol patterns and syllable structure.

Why the classroom picture can look inconsistent

On one day Sam may discuss a chapter intelligently after hearing it read aloud. On another day Sam may be unable to read a short unfamiliar passage independently. Those performances are not contradictory. They show the difference between understanding language and independently accessing printed words.

The educational impact

- Reading assignments take substantially longer than intended
- Independent work may be incomplete even when Sam understands the lesson
- Writing is shortened to avoid difficult spelling
- Fatigue and embarrassment increase as text becomes harder
- Grades may depend on adult help, oral presentation, or repeated exposure

Discrepancies I found across the file

The record says	A later document says	What must be reconciled
The evaluation identified a significant decoding weakness.	The current IEP contains only a passage-fluency goal.	Where and how the identified decoding need is being directly taught and measured
Intervention notes report continued guessing and slow acquisition.	Progress reports state adequate progress.	The actual scores, task types, and level of support behind adequate
The IEP schedules specialized reading service.	Emails describe provider absences and schedule changes.	The number of sessions planned, delivered, missed, shortened, and replaced
Parent concerns describe nightly distress and extensive help.	The draft summarizes concern as slow reading.	The full functional and emotional impact that should appear in present levels

Why this table matters

None of these conflicts should be argued from memory during the meeting. Each one points to a specific record, a specific unanswered question, and a specific correction the team can make.

Service delivery audit

Before the team draws conclusions about Sam's response to instruction, it needs a complete accounting of what instruction actually occurred.

Period	IEP schedule	Documented delivery	Open question
March to June	4 sessions weekly	Logs show uneven entries and three provider cancellations	Were cancelled sessions replaced?
August to October	4 sessions weekly	Teacher email refers to a staffing vacancy	Who provided service and at what frequency?
November to January	4 sessions weekly	Progress report says regular support	Where are the session dates and minutes?
February to present	4 sessions weekly	Draft proposes continuation	What current delivery and outcome data supports the proposal?

The calculation I would require

For each school week, list the sessions required, sessions delivered, duration, provider, group size, sessions missed for student absence, sessions missed for district or provider reasons, and any make-up instruction. A total number of service minutes without dates is not enough to verify implementation.

Instructional fit and intensity

The program name is not the answer

A school may name a reading program and still leave the important questions unanswered. The team must explain which component addresses Sam's phonological, decoding, and spelling needs; where Sam entered the sequence; how mastery is determined; and what happens when progress stalls.

Details I would ask the IEP to make clear

- The specific reading skills and sequence being taught
- The provider's role and relevant training
- Sessions per week and minutes per session
- Maximum instructional group size
- How instruction is adjusted from the data
- How missed sessions are documented and replaced
- The date the team will review whether intensity is sufficient

What adequate intensity means here

Intensity is not simply more minutes. It is the combination of frequency, duration, group size, instructional match, provider skill, student response, and continuity. The team should choose those elements from Sam's actual need and response—not from the service schedule that happens to be available.

Progress data the parent can actually use

A meaningful monthly report

Date	Skill and measure	Score	Prompting	What changed next
Sept 12	Unfamiliar closed-syllable words	11 of 20	4 verbal cues	Reteach vowel discrimination
Sept 19	Unfamiliar closed-syllable words	14 of 20	2 verbal cues	Continue mixed practice
Sept 26	Mixed taught patterns	13 of 20	3 verbal cues	Increase contrast practice
Oct 3	Mixed taught patterns	16 of 20	No cues	Check transfer in connected text

What this prevents

With this information, the parent can see which skill was measured, whether the words were new, how independently Sam responded, and how instruction changed. A sentence such as making progress toward the goal provides none of that protection.

Meeting language for the hardest moments

If the team says	What I would say
Sam is making progress.	Please show us the dated unpracticed decoding scores and the prompting used. We need to know which skill improved and whether it transferred.
Fluency includes decoding.	Fluency depends on several skills. The evaluation identified decoding as a distinct weakness, so the IEP needs a direct measure of that weakness.
We cannot name a methodology in the IEP.	I am asking the team to describe the specially designed instruction with enough clarity to know what skill will be taught and how the service will be delivered.
The group size changes based on need.	Please state the maximum group size the team believes is appropriate for Sam to receive this instruction effectively.
We can discuss missed service later.	Please document that the question remains open, identify who will review the logs, and set the date for the team's decision.

The sentence that brings us back

The evaluation identified a decoding weakness. Please show us where the current IEP directly teaches it, measures it, and tells the family whether the instruction is working.

After the meeting

What I would compare in the new draft

1. Confirm the present levels include the evaluation history, current baseline, classroom impact, and full parent concern.
2. Compare every proposed goal with the language and measurement decisions made in the meeting.
3. Confirm the service page states frequency, duration, location, provider role, and agreed group size.
4. Check that progress reporting names the actual measures, frequency, and information that will be shared.
5. Verify that every unresolved issue, refusal, owner, deadline, and reconvene date appears in the written record.

Email if the draft does not match

Thank you for sending the revised draft. It does not yet reflect several points discussed by the team. The decoding goal uses practiced passage reading rather than the agreed unfamiliar-word measure; the reading service does not state the agreed maximum group size; and the missed-service question is absent from the notes. Please revise those sections or identify in writing whether the district is declining each requested correction and why.

When this work is complete

The goal is not a longer IEP. The goal is a plan in which the need, instruction, measurement, and accountability finally line up—and a parent can read it and know what the school is required to do.