

Pulling It All Together Spring Forward 2015 Panel Discussion

April 11, 2015



What Will We Learn?

Participants will...

- ▶ gain strategies for improving organization of students' time and materials.
- ▶ learn positive approaches for communicating with school personnel generally and in IEP meetings specifically.
- ▶ identify options for addressing troubling behaviors at school and at home
- ▶ learn from and with other parents/caregivers and gather resources to use in supporting the children and youth in their care

Our Time Together...

- ▶ Discussion Topics - 30 minutes
- ▶ Q & A - 10 minutes
- ▶ Closing Remarks - 5 minutes



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Our Panelists



Angela Thanyachareon is a part time immigration attorney who serves on the DisAbility Law Center of VA Board of Directors. She has a 12 yr old son in the 7th grade who receives special education services at South County Middle School. She was a foster parent for 2 years. She and her family live in Northern VA.



Cathy Greulich is a mother by adoption of two sons, ages 18 and 22, both whom received special education. She currently co-leads the West Fairfax CHADD Parent Support Group and the CHADD Support Group for Parents of Teens and Young Adults with ADHD. In a former life, she put together science textbooks, and she worked at camps for the disabled.

Our Panelists



Yonna Diggs is a grandmother caregiver in Prince William county. A career Naval civilian, Yonna performs project management for the Chief of Naval Operations. She cares for her grandson who has special needs and receives special education at his high school.



Kelly Henderson is the Executive Director for Formed Families Forward. She is a special educator by profession, training Master's-level special education teachers at George Mason University. Kelly is mom to three school-age sons, two of whom joined her family through public foster care and adoption. Kelly trains adoptive, foster and kinship families and agency personnel on special education-related needs of children and has provided information and supports to many individual families

The Legal Foundations for Special Education

- ▶ The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) 2004
<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>
- ▶ State Special Education rules, regulations, policies-
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/regulations/state/regs_speced_disability_va.pdf



IDEA Guarantee:

- ▶ A free, appropriate education for all children (FAPE)
- ▶ Placement in the least restrictive environment
- ▶ Protection for the rights of children and their parents
- ▶ Parent participation in educational planning



Topic: Organization of student materials and schedules

For parents and caretakers

- File folders
- Weekly planner



Topic: Organization of student materials and schedules

- ▶ Organization is key to managing your child's educational materials
- ▶ Keep all paperwork in a binder with school and school year on side/front of binder
- ▶ File binders in a library, bookcase or in a storage box
- ▶ Keep a list of team members' name, title, and email address on your child's IEP team
- ▶ Know who the key players are on your child's IEP Team (who to contact for a particular problem) & use chain of command when reporting problems
- ▶ Make sure spouse, guardians, babysitter, etc. knows child schedules before a problem arises (inclement weather, sick, etc.)



Organizing Materials and Schedules Cont.

- ▶ Make sure your child's school knows your schedule (for normal school hours and IEP meetings)
- ▶ Give teacher as well as school office all contact information for you, your spouse, babysitter, etc.
- ▶ Update contact information as soon as changes
- ▶ Inform school if your schedule changes
- ▶ If you are missing copies of IEP, ask school for a copy
- ▶ Keep copies of everything and file in your organized folder/binder



Topic: Organization of student materials and schedules

- ▶ Review your child's schedule for the new semester
- ▶ Note teachers and any new requirements
- ▶ Make a list of any new supplies or labs required
- ▶ Visit Parent Portal (Blackboard) and get any updates on school activities that may support your child
- ▶ Contact your child's caseworker and facilitator on any issues of concern that requires being addressed.
- ▶ Arrange meeting with teachers, if you need more specifics
- ▶ Help your child organize school materials and notebooks



Topic: Accommodations and Modifications

- ▶ Notice the types of difficulties your child has with school work.
- ▶ Google: accommodations + your child's disability.
- ▶ Learn about and try a wide variety of accommodations and modifications.
- ▶ Get your child's input on which of them help her do her work.
- ▶ Add the most helpful ones to the IEP.



Topic: Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

- ▶ Revisit IEP to ensure it is relevant to your child's specific needs at the current time.
- ▶ If IEP needs to be amended, arrange to have a new meeting set up to target additional goals.
- ▶ Assess if your child is meeting IEP targets and ask if there is additional help available to assist you.
- ▶ Read your Parent Handbook on the rights of parents of children with disabilities. Know your rights!



Topic: Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

- ▶ Remind team, if necessary, that your child is the “I” in IEP
- ▶ Focus on strengths as well as weaknesses
- ▶ Your child is capable of learning (all kids learn differently)
- ▶ Do not feel anxious or insecure in IEPs (sit at the head of the table and wear a business suit/take charge of the meeting)
- ▶ You are the expert of your child (no degrees needed)
- ▶ Develop SMART IEPs (Specific/Measurable/Use Action Words/Realistic/Relevant/Time-limited)



Topic: SMART IEP Goals

- ▶ SMART IEPs have specific goals and objectives. *Specific* goals target areas of academic achievement and functional performance. They include clear descriptions of the knowledge and skills that will be taught and how the child's progress will be measured.
- ▶ Measurable means you can count or observe it. Measurable goals allow parents and teachers to know how much progress the child has made since the performance was last measured. With measurable goals, you will know when the child reaches the goal.
- ▶ IEP goals include three components that must be stated in measurable terms:
 - ▶ (a) direction of behavior (increase, decrease, maintain, etc.)
 - ▶ (b) area of need (i.e., reading, writing, social skills, transition, communication, etc.)
 - ▶ (c) level of attainment (i.e., to age level, without assistance, etc.)



SMART IEP Goals Cont.

- ▶ Realistic, relevant goals and objectives that address the child's unique needs that result from the disability. SMART IEP goals are not based on district curricula, state or district tests, or other external standards.
- ▶ Time-limited goals and objectives enable you to monitor progress at regular intervals.
- ▶ You are an Integral part of the IEP.



Topic: Transition Planning

- ▶ Planning for transition is required by IDEA at several points
- ▶ At age 2 ½ planning should start for the transition to an IEP at age 3
- ▶ The transition to kindergarten should be planned
- ▶ If your child changes school systems, IDEA requires that comparable services be provided
- ▶ Starting at age 14, planning for postsecondary goals should be included in the IEP
- ▶ Start having your child attend IEP meetings in middle school or before



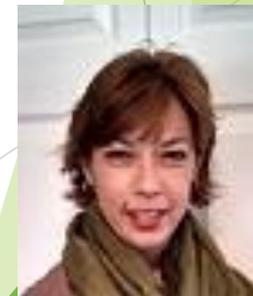
Topic: Managing behavior

- ▶ Seek help and guidance from the experts
- ▶ Be patient (it will get better)
- ▶ Be consistent
- ▶ Time out (for yourself too)
- ▶ HALT (Hungry/Angry/Lonely/Tired)



Topic: Procedures in IDEA to support behavior change

- ▶ A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is a process to determine the underlying cause or functions of a child's behavior that interferes with the learning of the child with a disability or that of his or her peers.
- ▶ May include review of existing records and other information and may include new information, as determined by IEP team.
- ▶ IEP team develops a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) that uses positive behavioral interventions and supports to address behaviors that interfere with learning of the child or others, or require disciplinary action.



Topic: Special Procedures for Behavior Problems

- ▶ When a child breaks important school rules a “manifestation determination” should be made as to whether the child’s conduct resulted from that child’s disability.
- ▶ If the child’s conduct resulted from the disability then a Functional Behavior Assessment and a Behavior Intervention Plan are put in place instead of a suspension.



Topic: Communication with school staff

- ▶ Stay plugged into the Parent Portal for all class assignments and grades
- ▶ Email works well, in communicating with teachers regarding your concerns
- ▶ Download and make copies of child's assignments from the Parent Portal, so if they fail to bring them home, you have a copy available to assist them.
- ▶ Set up meetings when you feel appropriate.
- ▶ Ask to attend your child's classes for a day, so that you have an idea of what a class day looks like
- ▶ Voice your concerns early on, so as to alleviate future problems down the road.



Topic: Communication with school staff

- ▶ Develop a rapport with at least one teacher/staff
- ▶ Keep the lines of communication open (even if you do not like that person)
- ▶ Know their email addresses/telephone numbers
- ▶ Complain and Compliment (Balance)
- ▶ Thank you notes to staff/teachers
- ▶ Small tokens of appreciation (teacher app day/holidays/end of school yr)
- ▶ Volunteer at the school



Topic: Communication with school staff

- ▶ Be respectful and gracious.
- ▶ Sometimes email is NOT the best way to communicate.
- ▶ Be a knowledgeable advocate
- ▶ Be a translator for your child.
- ▶ Work together with your child's teacher to achieve a common goal.
- ▶ Be patient and celebrate small victories, but know when you need more help.



Topic: Books on the Special Education Process

- ▶ *The Complete IEP Guide: How to Advocate for Your Special Ed. Child* by Lawrence M. Siegel
- ▶ *Everything Parent's Guide to Special Education* by Amanda Morin
- ▶ *From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide* by Peter and Pamela Wright
- ▶ *Negotiating the Special Education Maze: A Guide for Parents & Teachers* by Winifred Anderson
- ▶ *Nolo's IEP Guide: Learning Disabilities* by Lawrence M. Siegel



Topic: Special Education Resources Within Your School System

- ▶ Assistant Principle for Special Education (in high school)
- ▶ Parent Resource Center Library, Specialists and Workshops
- ▶ Pyramid Parent Liaisons



Topic: Special Education Resources

- ▶ Formed Families Forward, www.formedfamiliesforward.org; 703-539-2904; info@formedfamiliesforward.org
- ▶ *Parent's Guide to Special Education*, revised 2010, Virginia Department of Education, Division of Special Education and Student Services, http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents/parents_guide.pdf
- ▶ Local Parent Resource Centers in your school division
- ▶ PEATC, www.peatc.org, 1-800-869-6782
- ▶ Federally-funded centers that have expertise on special ed topics: <http://www.tadnet.org/>



Topic: Virginia Special Education Specialists

- ▶ PEATC - Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center

Phone: (800) 869-6782

www.peatc.org

- ▶ Gloria Dalton, Parent Ombudsman

Phone: (804) 371-7420 or (800) 422-2083

Email: Gloria.Dalton@doe.virginia.gov

- ▶ Hank Millward, Coordinator of Complaints & Family Involvement

Phone: (804) 371-0525

Email: Hank.Millward@doe.virginia.gov



Topic: Special Education Documents

- ▶ *Parent's Guide to Special Education*, revised 2010, Virginia Department of Education
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/parents/parents_guide.pdf
- ▶ Virginia Standards of Learning and assessments:
<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/index.shtml> and
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/participation/guidelines_for_assessment_participation.pdf
- ▶ Special Education Handbook for Parents (for your school system)
- ▶ Federally-funded centers that have expertise on special education topics:
<http://www.tadnet.org>



Topic: Other Disability Resources

- ▶ Va Behavioral Health and Developmental Services
<http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/>
- ▶ SSI - <http://www.ssa.gov/pgm/ssi.htm>
- ▶ Rehabilitation - <http://rsa.ed.gov/> (link to Va. Dept of Rehab Services)
- ▶ Va Disability Services agencies <http://www.vadsa.org/>
- ▶ Va long term care/waivers
http://www.dmas.virginia.gov/Content_pgs/ltc-home.aspx
- ▶ The Legal Center for Foster Care and Education
www.ambar.org/LegalCenter



Topic: Long Term Goals in Child Raising

- ▶ Develop interests and passions
- ▶ Encourage strong relationships with family, friends & community
- ▶ Develop independent living skills
- ▶ Limit screens to encourage other activities



Questions & Answers



Formed Families Forward

Contact us at 703-539-2904

www.formedfamiliesforward.org
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Thank You for spending your day with us!

