

Together is Better: Building Collaborative Relationships between Caregivers and Educators

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Formed Families Forward - who we are...

- A family-led resource center in Northern Virginia supporting foster, adoptive and kinship families who are raising children, youth & young adults with specialized needs, and professionals who work with our families.
- We offer free training, consultations to families, events, resources, and systems navigation. Also - peer support groups; webinars; virtual trainings; videos and other resources.
- Family partner to Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS; a VDOE project)



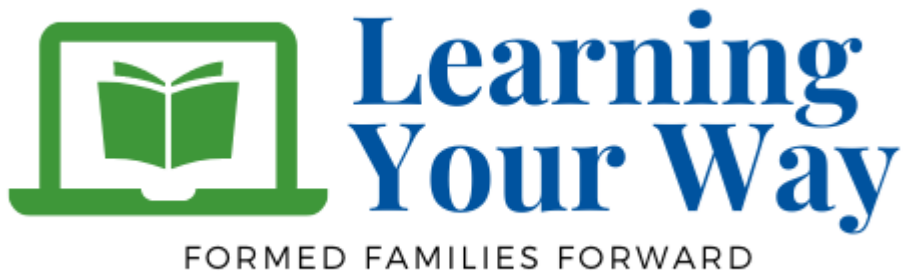
Upcoming Offerings

Oct. 2, 7-8 PM Communicating Effectively:
The Hard & The Easy webinar

Nov. 13, 7-8 PM Functional Behavior
Assessments: What Families Should Know
webinar

Dec. 12, 7-8 PM Making the Most of Your
Child's Individualized Education Program
(IEP): The '411' on Creating Effective IEP
Goals webinar





FORMED FAMILIES FORWARD

FREE ONLINE COURSES

LEARNING YOUR WAY

Self-Paced Classes open now!

FREE access to topics:

- Special Education 101
- Constructive Communication and Collaboration
- Trauma Basics
- Dispute Resolution
- Kinship Care
- Other Health Impairments including a new lesson on Tourette Syndrome

*Now
Open!*

FORMED FAMILIES **FORWARD**

Peer Support Groups



Fairfax Kinship Support Group-
Virtual on first Thursday
evenings; In-person on third
Thursday evenings



Formed Families Together
(foster, adoptive and kinship)
Support Group- Virtual on first
Sunday evenings; In-person on
third Wednesday evenings

Stronger Together Youth Peer Support Groups

- IN-PERSON for youth and young adults ages 14-22
- Weekly for 8 Tuesday nights, 6:30 – 8 PM, starting October 1. Clinician-led. FREE of charge.
- In Fairfax city
- Register at <https://bit.ly/STgroupfall24>



Who I Am...

- Stacia Stribling - Mom; Deputy Director; Part-Time Farmer; Former Elementary School Teacher; Former Assistant Professor, Education at GMU Stacia.Stribling@FormedFamiliesForward.org



POLL

Mark all that apply:

- Foster Parent
- Adoptive Parent
- Kinship Caregiver
- Birth Parent
- Human Service Professional
- Teacher



Overview

- Teacher Perspective
 - Training
 - Knowledge & Experiences
- Building a Collaborative Relationship
 - Language
 - Structures
- What to share and when to share it
 - Protecting our children's stories
 - All About Me!

Teacher Prep Program Requirements



Broad Requirements

- Coursework
 - Human Development (neurotypical)
 - Curriculum & Instruction
 - Content
 - Pedagogy
 - Classroom Management
 - Assessment
 - “Diversity”
- Field experiences
 - Varies across states and sometimes within states
- Some type of assessment (PRAXIS, etc.)
- Child Abuse and Neglect Training

Missing Pieces



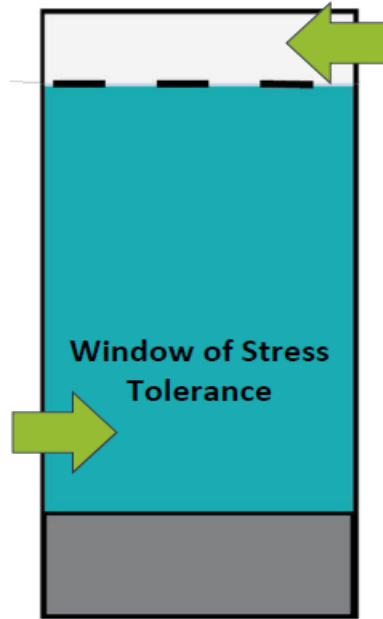
The Foster, Adoptive & Kinship Connection

- **Reasons** for entering care are associated with disability. In 1 state, more than a quarter of children over age 5 with **substantiated maltreatment** were identified as having disabilities. (Lightfoot et al., 2011)
- 37% of infants and toddlers in **nonrelative foster care** had developmental delays. 29% of children 3 to 17 years old placed in **nonrelative foster care** have identified developmental, cognitive, or academic needs. (Casanueva et al., 2020).
- **Adopted children** are more likely to have ever been diagnosed with depression, ADD/ADHD, or behavior/conduct disorder. (NSAP, 2009)

The Window of Stress Tolerance

Regulated (Within Window)

- The child is able to manage emotions and control impulses
- They are generally able to handle life and school activities
- Functioning from the upstairs brain



Dysregulated (Above Window)

- Stress or sensory input has triggered an alarm state in the child
- Functioning from the downstairs brain
- Child has difficulty listening and comprehending (not in learning mode)
- They will often display maladaptive behavior

Image Source: South Dakota Statewide Family Engagement Center

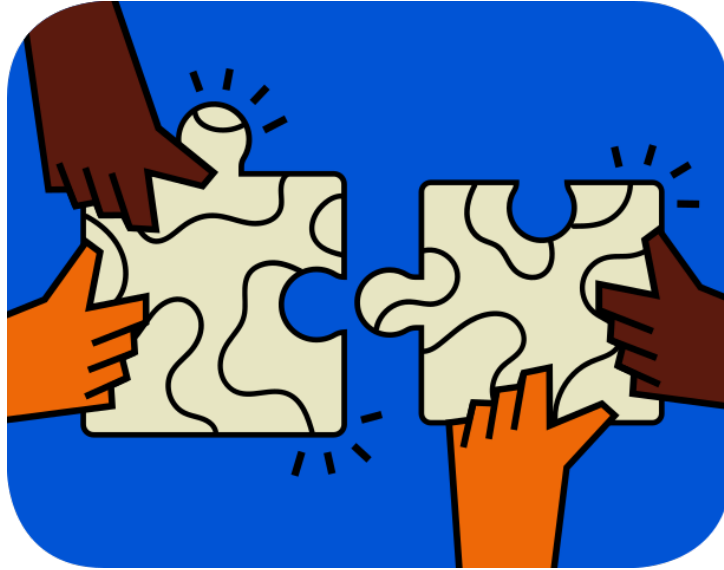
POLL

How would you describe your relationship with your child(ren)'s school:

- Contentious - constant conflict
- Minimal - no news is okay news
- Collaborative - respectful & supportive
- Depends on the day



Setting the Stage for Collaboration



- Meet in person - lay the groundwork for a reciprocal relationship - each person brings expertise
- Be proactive - share your child's challenges with teachers BEFORE they happen
- Share what works and what doesn't work with your child (and why!)
- Create a culture of problem solving. Consider:
 - Language we use
 - Structures we create

Language

- “Yes, that behavior can be so frustrating...”
- “I understand...”
- “When that happens at home, we have found that...”
- “It sounds like we share the goal of....”

ACTIVITY



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“One on one, Kiran is great, but he triggers all the other kids.”

“Natalie’s FBA says the function of her acting out is to escape work. You really need to tell her how important school is and why she needs to try harder.”

Structures

- Communication journal - sharing the good too!!!!
- Heads-up when there are potential challenges
 - Substitutes
 - Change in schedule
 - Trauma anniversary
- Weekly or monthly check-ins
- Problem solving sessions
- Resource sharing
- Goal monitoring
- Check-in-Check-out

Creating Routines

- Predictable structure eliminates “unknowns” and can reduce stress
- Routines eliminate the opportunities for negotiation
- Include academic, social-emotional and relational components in the routine
- Match home and school expectations; home can mirror class- and schoolwide PBIS matrices

Example Matrix for Home

Home Expectations Matrix | PBIS Rewards®

Expectations	Meal Time	Work Time	Play Time	Bed Time
Be Respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say please, thank you, and excuse me • Ask others about their day and share about our day with others • No cell phones, tablets, or computers at the table 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep work area clean • Keep voice volume low • Only ask for help after attempting to complete assignments independently • Mute yourself during Zoom meetings unless the teacher gives permission to speak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with toys as intended • Keep voice volume low in the home and medium outside • Include everyone • Share toys with siblings and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put dirty clothes in basket • Use quiet voices • Say something you are grateful for
Be Responsible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help set the table or prepare meals • Try new foods • Take your plate from table when done eating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in a location that promotes focus • Check Google Classroom and emails from teachers during the day • Keep a schedule of assignments/due dates • Turn in work completed and on-time • Show up on time for any type of meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow rules during games • Congratulate the winners of games • Only play with one toy at a time • When asked to stop playing, stop the first time • Clean up/put toys back where they're stored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put on PJ's • Brush your teeth • Use the bathroom • Read for fun before bed
Be Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands • Keep chair on 4 legs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report unsafe or bullying sites and comments to an adult • Keep personal credentials and information private (username & passwords) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep small toys/pieces on the table • Use toys and games as intended • Ask permission before going to a new location • Wear protective eye wear when necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up toys before you go to bed • Lights out at 9:00 PM
Adult Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announce meal time in advance • Assign chore roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor work and provide assistance when needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor playtime • Provide a 5-minute warning before it's time to stop playing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind kids to go to bathroom and make sure lights are out at 9:00 PM

Managing Anxiety

- “Behavior is the language of trauma. Children will **show** you before they tell you that they are in distress.”
-Micere Keels
- Key strategies are rooted in:
 - Co-regulation
 - Modeling (tools)
 - Connection

I Wonder...

Use “I wonder...” statements to help your child articulate emotions and root causes; prompts ideas to begin brainstorming solutions...

- I wonder if you really like P.E., and you feel sad when this class ends...
- I wonder if writing makes you feel icky and frustrated...
- I wonder if it is hard for you to leave home and start your day at school...
- I wonder if you really want to play with (insert name) and want some help to let them know...
- I wonder if the lunch room is too loud for you, and you would prefer an option to eat in a more quiet space with just one or two friends...

Ampersand Cards

I feel angry



&

I can...

- Find a quiet place to sit
- Anchor my feet
- Picture a stream
- Practice "Square Breathing"



More Ampersand Cards

I don't know how to
start my homework

&

I can...

• Ask for help:



- Can you explain that
part again?

- Can I show what I
know another way?



- Can I talk it through
with you first?

What do we share & when do we share it

- Our children's stories are not ours to share
- General information over details
- Be proactive whenever possible
- Be clear on what specific information staff can share with others.



What School Staff Should Know

- Children in foster care are involved with many child welfare professionals
- School is not a top priority...survival is
- Children often enter foster care with gaps in their education
- Trauma and adverse child experiences may impact a child's learning and behavior
- Children in foster care have many strengths
- There are unintended negative impacts of discipline for children in foster care

Source: DCCCA- KS

What School Staff Should Do

- Maintaining confidentiality and sensitivity is important
- Be flexible with homework and due dates
- Implement trauma-informed practices in the classroom
- Expect trust issues regarding children in foster care
- Understand there will be social issues
- Try to build relationships, establish trust, and develop a positive rapport with children in foster care

Source: DCCCA- KS

All About Me!

- A positive student profile helps quickly and visually orient teachers and other staff with whom your child will be working
- Clarifies important family and other background information
- Clearly states what information is/is not to be shared
- Succinctly states strengths/challenges
- Leaves no room for lack of contact!

Let's do this!

Form in Word & format guide at
https://www.formedfamiliesforward.org/resource_category/special-education-advocacy/

All About Me

Name:

You will see me for: (fill in classes, times, periods, etc.)

Photo

I am good at:

- Interests
- Academics
- Hobbies
- Sports
- Personality traits, etc.

I have trouble with:

You should know: family information, medical information, etc.
I do/don't want this information shared with other students.

What works for me at school:
Physical arrangement of room, lesson preparation/ academic accommodations, assignments, test taking, organization, behavior/ reinforcement, health/medication, home/school communication, etc.

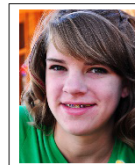
Contact me by
Student email, cell, home phone; study hall or support periods?

Contact my parents/caregivers by
Email, phones, times of day, preferred frequency of contacts

All About Me

Name: Jillian Smith

You will see me for: Math Studies, 2nd block



I am good at:

- Group activities, I like working with other students, especially other girls
- Fractions are easy for me.
- Talking out problems

I have trouble with:

- Getting started on work by myself
- Working with too many bossy boys in a group
- Writing long answers to things

You should know:

- I live with my aunt. It is OK to share this information with other students.
- My mom is in jail until 2023; it is not OK to share this with students.
- I have ADHD and depression; I have a harder time with depression after I visit my sister and brother the first weekend of every month.

What works for me at school:

- Being able to tell teachers my answers instead of writing it out long.
- Taking a break when I can't focus. I like to read [Under the Moon](#) and other books by Lauren Myracle when I get overwhelmed.

Contact me by

Text 703-555-8944

Contact my parents/caregivers by

Aunt Kaye's email is auntkaye@gmail.com; her cell is 804-555-9088

Other Student Profile Formats

- [Student Personal Profile](#) (IU)
- [Student Introduction Letter](#) (Understood.org)
- [Positive Student Profile](#) (UNC)
- [Understanding Me: An Individual with FASD](#) (FASD Success)
- [Dear Teacher, What I Want You to Know About Me](#) (Embracing the Brain)

Formed Families Forward – Stay in Touch!

PLEASE COMPLETE EVALUATION right after we end.

****Certificates (only available for those who attended the live session) Email: Natalie.Johnson-Abbott@FormedFamiliesForward.org****

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