Back to School Basics:
Helping Your Child with Special Needs Be Ready!

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Today's Agenda

- Why is **back-to-school** so hard for some?

- Avenues for **support:**
  - ADA and 504   - Special education

- Setting **high expectations**

- **Communicating** with educators

- Q & A throughout!

- **Please complete evaluation…**

Some content lifted from PEATC (Va State PTI, www.peatc.org and DREDF's Cheryl Theis, www.dredf.org)

Poll 1

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwcYbo7pjto

Why is BTS So Hard?

- High likelihood of disabilities among children and youth in formed families

- Schools are large, busy places requiring MANY transitions

- Social and academic demands

- Executive function is rewarded in school

- Even well-trained, trauma-sensitive educators may not have a full set of records from which to work
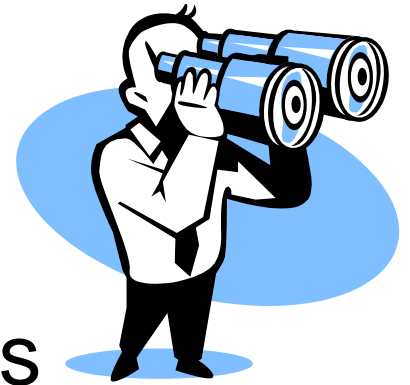
Be Prepared!

- Get schedules in advance

- Walk it!

- Organize materials – hard copy texts as necessary

- Set up meetings before school starts or in first two weeks

- Introductory practice (more later)

Awareness

- Regular, mandatory grade reports (quarterly, interims)
- Teacher-generated computerized grade updates
- PowerSchool portal/Parent Portal
- Blackboard
- Social media for individual schools, classes, teachers

The "Go-To's"

- Already-available school resources (web, handbooks, syllabi, e-portals, etc.)
- Experienced families (neighbors, PTA/PTO, advisory committee members)
- Teachers/aides/instructional specialists
- School social worker, school counselor
- School psychologist
- Administrators (school and central office)
- Outside organizations

Poll 2

Informal Supports

- There is not one consistent name for school-level team that oversees **Response to Intervention**, **Responsive Instruction** or **Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**: Instructional Consultation Teams, Instruction Support Team, Student Support Team, Child Study Committee, Intervention Assistance Teams, school names!

- The plans that results (if any) may have different names as well: Student Intervention Plan, Assistance Plan, Support Plan, Tier I Problem Solving Plan, Personalized Ed Plan

Know Your Own

Formal Options for Support

- Access/equal opportunity
  - Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Specialized Instruction
  - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and its many parts
- Services and Supports through other systems

Section 504

- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects rights if individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance, including public school districts.

- Prohibits discrimination of those with disabilities- physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity, including learning, communicating, concentrating, reading, etc.

Section 504, continued

- Office of Civil Rights, US Department of Education enforces. New guidance re: implications of 2008 amendments to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that more broadly defines "disability".

- Referral begins with Multipurpose Referral form and local screening committee meetings. Once eligible:

- Knowledgeable committee creates a plan for accommodations; reviewed annually.
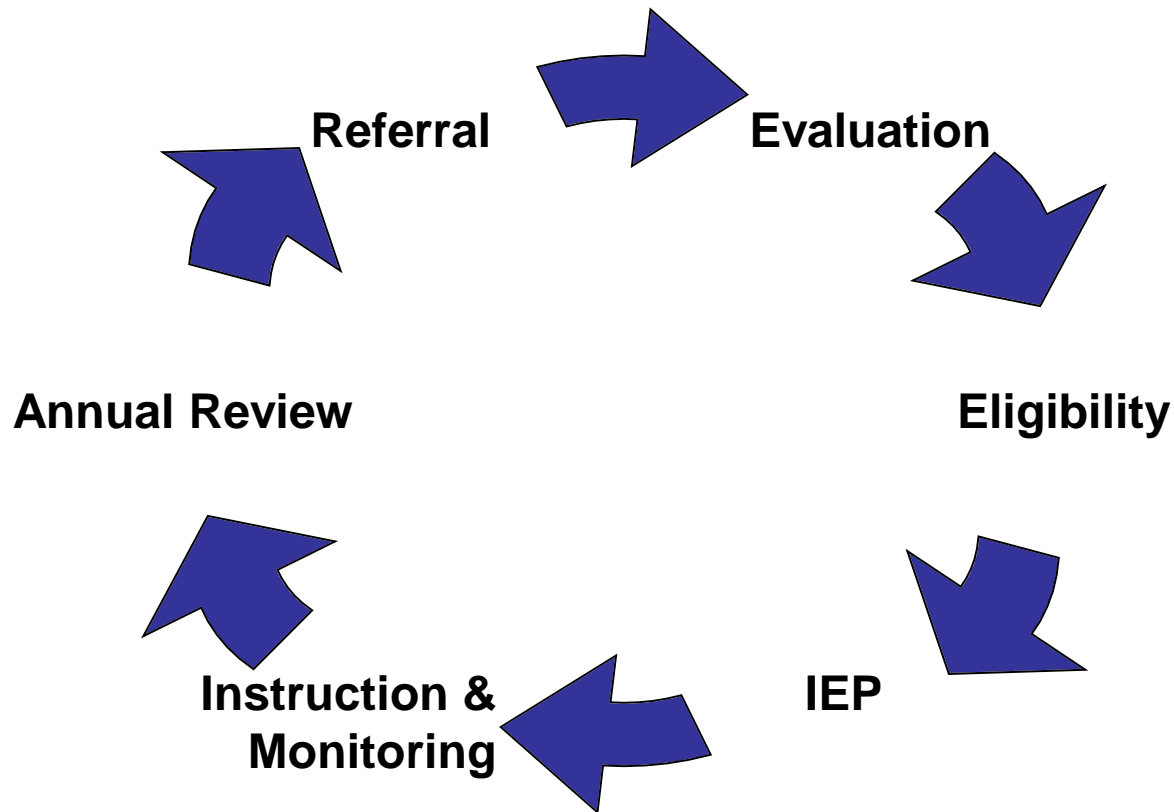
- Procedural safeguards apply.

Amendments to Americans with Disabilities Act, 2008

- Amends the ADA and Section 504 to **broaden the potential class** of persons with disabilities protected by the statutes.

- Academic success does not necessarily disqualify a student from being identified with a disability.

- http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-504faq-201109.pdf

Getting In…

The Special Education Cycle

Referral

Evaluation

Eligibility

IEP

Instruction & Monitoring

Annual Review

From the beginning, there are steps to getting a program for a child with disabilities.

Evaluation

- An **Evaluation** is the process of collecting information about a referred student's learning needs through a series of individual tests, observations, and talks with the student, the family and others.

- This information is used to determine whether the child has a disability as well as the nature and extent of the special education and related services that the child needs.

- Conducted at no cost to parents.

- Parents are members of the team reviewing the evaluation data and deciding whether more information is needed.

Eligibility

Referral → Evaluation → Eligibility → IEP → Instruction & Monitoring → Annual Review → Referral
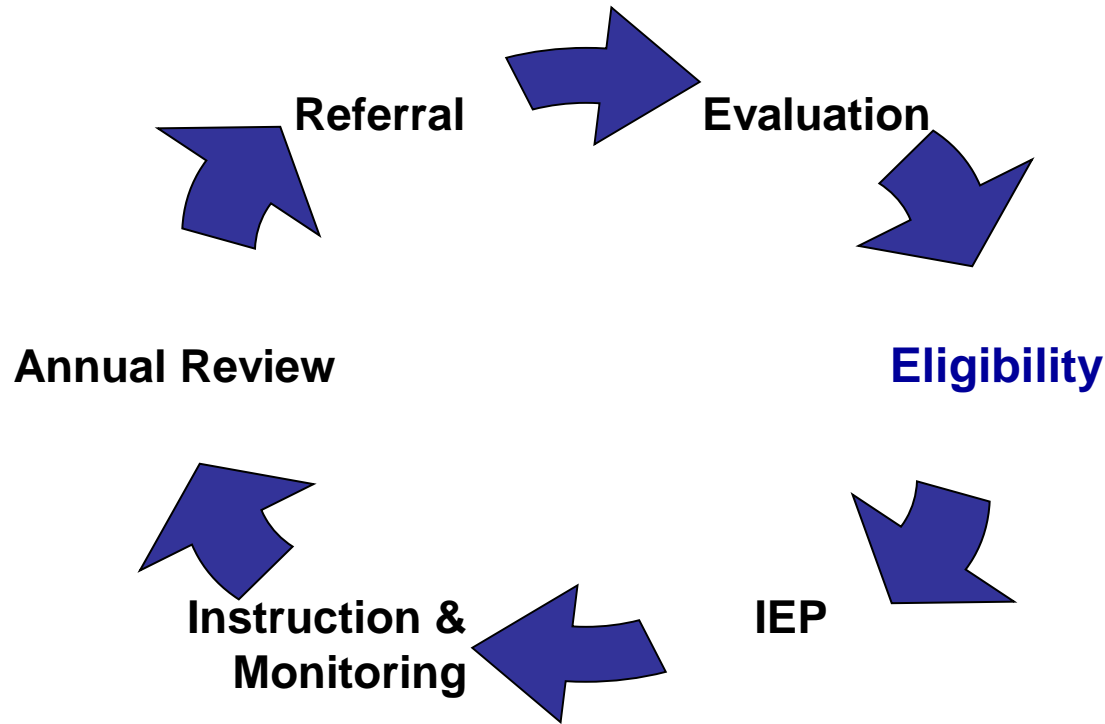
- Based on the results of the evaluation, a team decides if a child is **Eligible** to receive early intervention or special education and related services.

- Parents are members of the eligibility team and receive documentation of the determination of eligibility at no cost.

Who is Eligible?

Poll 3

Children with:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Deaf-blindness
- Developmental delay *
- Emotional disability
- Hearing impairment, including deafness
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disability

- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment, including ADHD
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness

* Use of DD for children age 3 through 9 is at discretion of state and local school systems.

IEP Timelines

- For a child NEW to special education, the IEP must be developed within **30 calendar** days of the initial determination of eligibility.

- Individual states may have specific timelines about revision of the IEP following re-evaluation, receipt of new information or lack of expected progress towards annual goals or in the general education curriculum.

Timelines, continued

- Once a child is determined eligible and has an IEP, the team meets at least once a year to review and revise the IEP. Parents can request an IEP review at any time.
- In between annual reviews changes to IEP that school and parents agree to can be made without a meeting as long as all members of the team are informed of the changes.

What is on the IEP?

- Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance
- Measurable annual goals
- Plans for measuring progress
- Participation in state and division-wide assessments
- Special education, modifications and related services to be provided including dates and locations
- Participation with children without disabilities
- Secondary transition services including rights at age of majority

IEP: Big Questions

Big questions the IEP team MUST answer:

- Where are we now? Present Levels of Performance (PLOP)

- Where are we going? GOALS/OBJECTIVES

- How are we going to get there? SERVICES & INSTRUCTION

- How do we know when we have succeeded?
  MEASUREMENT: What objective DATA will tell us if we have?

- How and when progress will be reported to the parents?
  ACCOUNTABILITY.
  STAYING ON TRACK ("progress monitoring")

IEP: Think of it this way!

- Special Education is a SERVICE brought to the student through the IEP in order to CLOSE THE GAP between the student's Present Level of Performance (PLOP) and the student's Expected Level of Performance.

Visualize an Elevator!
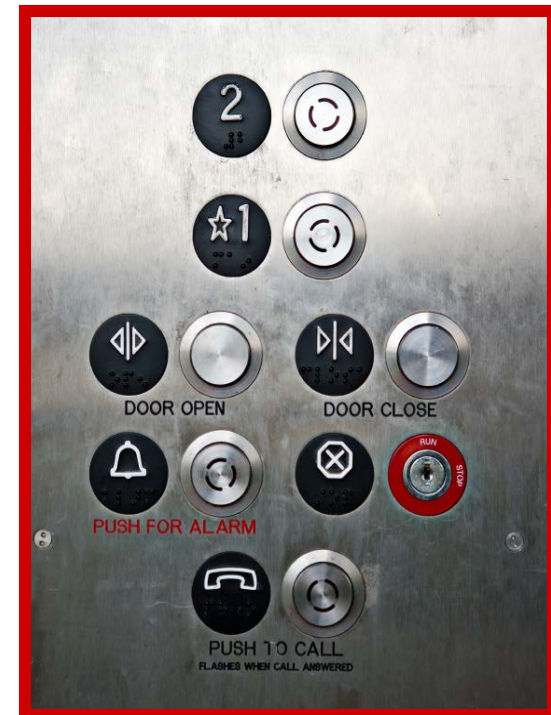
In Developing the IEP, Team shall consider…

- Strengths of the child

- Concerns of the parent(s) for enhancing the education of the their child

- Results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child; and

- Academic, developmental and functional needs of the child

- PLUS…Special Considerations: SPECIAL FACTORS

Goals Rule the Day

Importance of Setting HIGH expectations

Developing SMART IEP goals

S - Specific

M - Measurable

A - Use Action Words

R - Realistic and relevant

T -   Time-limited

SMART Examples

- At the end of the first semester, Mark will touch-type a passage of text at a speed of 20 words per minute, with no more than 10 errors, with progress measured on a five-minute timed test.

- Given a class discussion on assigned reading material, Heather will squeeze stress ball and wait silently for 20 seconds for others to comment before adding to discussions, in 4 of 5 weekly trials by the end of 2nd grade.

Related Services

partial list of developmental, corrective, or supportive services required for the child to benefit from special education, including:

- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Transportation
- Counseling
- Speech and language therapy
- Audiology services
- Interpreting services
- Early identification
- Diagnostic services

- School health/nurse services
- Social work services
- Crisis Intervention
- Assistive technology
- Non-academic services
- Extra curricular activities
- Orientation/mobility training
- Rehabilitation counseling
- Psychological services
- Parent counseling and training

THEN, Consider LRE

Least Restrictive Environment
The extent to which the student <u>will</u> or <u>will not</u> learn with and participate in school with students without disabilities <u>AND WHY</u>.

- Usually expressed as percent.

- IDEA has a strong presumption that students with disabilities learn with their non-disabled peers. Home school. General Ed. Typical classes.

- Supports and services should protect LRE.

- Be vigilant. ASK: <u>Where is the data</u> to support removal from typical learning environments?

IEP: Placement
<u>LAST</u> part of IEP Meeting
Protect Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- Placement is a "set of services" provided to the student. NOT a place for the student to go!

- Watch for "label and sort" offers. LRE must be protected in offers of instructional and other settings.

- Consider supports and services to protect LRE.

- Appropriate placement is one in which the student has a reasonable expectation of achieving IEP goals.

Making it Work with School Partners!

- Recognize any behaviors or personalities in your meetings with the school?

Poll 4

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gq0jfzgvvrM

Meeting Preparation

- Talk to your child (DREAMS / CONCERNS / I WISH…)

- Gather Your Thoughts (VISION STATEMENT)

- Prior Meetings with Teachers

- Gather/Organize Independent Reports/Evaluations

- Find out availability of the people you will need to attend.

- Observe placements; Network w/ families re: placement

- Make a List of Questions/Concerns.

- Prepare a "Parent Report" (can be in PLOP). You are an EXPERT!

- Understand your rights.

Successful advocacy requires effective communication and a willingness to collaborate

Meeting Tips: Building Partnerships

- Model what YOU expect from others!
- Protect relationships.
- Ask open-ended "help me understand…" questions.
- Be responsive. Follow through on your commitments.
- Share ideas about your child that will support the team.
- Encourage your child to value school.
- Don't visit only when there are problems.
- Be proactive – not reactive.
- Let the team know what's important to you.
        Say: "thank you." Say: "I'm sorry."
- Have *"the courage to forget."*
- Always remember that you are an equal member of the TEAM.

Strategies for being heard

- Beforehand, think and write out your main points- what do you want for your child as a result of the meeting/conversation?

- Bring another adult with you.

- If you don't understand something, ask.

- Clarify your understanding.

- End conversation/leave meeting only after a plan for future steps is developed and responsible parties identified.

- Keep records of all communications.

Communication between caregivers at home and at school

Consider how to inform school:

❖ Letter, meetings, documentation

   – How much to share; what is the need to know?

   – Who shares?

❖ Practice your 1-minute elevator speech- what is essential for staff to know about YOUR child.

Does your child have a speech too?

Language about Families and Needs

- Heather has dyslexia and is joined to our family through adoption. While these characteristics don't define her, she is open to disclosing information about both her adoption and her disability.

- Jevon is placed with our family as a foster child through Loudoun County DFS, a fact he wishes that school staff NOT share with other students. We have learned he does best in classrooms with high structure. We look forward to working with you to support his behavioral needs this year.

Back to School: Why "All About Me"?

- 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!

Things to know about me:

I am usually a very happy boy. Most teachers like me when they get to know me.

I can hear very well but too many words confuse me. If you can draw a picture or give me some other visual demonstration when I don't understand that would help a lot. I like seeing things on the smart board.

I ask new friends a lot of questions that have to do with years. What year were you born. Month? Day? I then calculate how old they are. This is how I remember people. I ask about where people are born, how to say hello in the place they are from. I've met people from Australia, India, Montana... all over the place. I know where all these places are because I am also good at geography. Ask me about capitals and where they are on the map.

Things I like!

Running

Swim Team

Cars

Wii

MAPS

COMPUTERS

ELECTRONIC GAMES

I love to listen to all kinds of music. I can play a song on the piano after listening to it. I sing too.

Student name

I 'm excited to be a 9th grader at Heritage HS this year! Let me tell you about myself!

Mom's contact info
phone
Email address

RULES

I like to follow the rules and do what is expected of me. In fact I am less nervous when there are rules and everyone knows what they are doing. I don't always know the rules unless I'm told what they are. Like in the picture above. How did all the other kids, in 6th grade chorus, know they weren't supposed to grab the mike? Someone should have told me! The girl behind me was allowed to introduce the song. So I thought I could grab the microphone too. If you think of a rule that I might not know please tell me before I get myself in trouble. It's also confusing to me if I see other students breaking a rule and not getting in trouble. I like attention. It would make me feel good if you tell me when I've done well in class.

NOISE

Sometimes I get distracted by too much noise, scraping chairs, loud timers or a lot of people moving around! If startled I may yell out and/or cover my ears. I will try not to do this but if I do please don't yell at me. If you quietly remind me not to yell I will calm down quickly.

Everyone tells me that thunderstorms and fire drills won't hurt me. But they do hurt me. Loud noises hurt my EARS!

If I'm **_nextless_** I sometimes sing, hum or talk loudly. I don't even realize I'm doing it. Again a quiet reminder or finger to your mouth will help me stop.

PICK ME!

I like to be called on in class. When you ask me a question please give me a little time to answer. If I don't know the answer I will say so, otherwise I sometimes take a little longer to think about how to answer the question. I still get confused between words like who, what, when and where. I don't like to be wrong. If you tell me I did something the wrong way I may get upset. Please tell me in a kind quiet voice if I make a mistake. Words like guess again or try another one make me think of learning as a game and don't make me feel bad.

I am really good at math calculations.

$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$
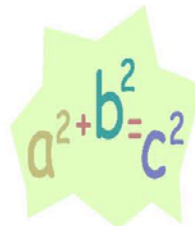
Lewis will be in your class this school year.
Here are a couple things you should know about Lewis:

Coughing and pills

Lewis has cystic fibrosis (CF), a disease
that impacts digestion and respiratory health.
It is not a big deal, but he:

- may cough frequently in class (he knows to cover)
- may need to have reasonable but immediate access to the restroom.
- If he has a snack or a meal, Lewis carries digestive enzyme capsules he takes with food. He takes care of this himself.

CF is not contagious.

Off to a good start

Lewis is a smart, active, talkative boy.
Lewis will be a great contributor to your class,
but may need some help.
He does best when he:

- has clear rules and expectations;
- has cues when it's time to work independently ;
- can type rather than handwrite assignments;
- has an adult check every day that he has all his assignments written correctly in his planner before he leaves class.

Lewis will work hard to please adults, but sometimes
has a hard time asking for clarification in class
about the lesson or assignments.

Stay in touch

Lewis does MUCH better
when he knows that his
teachers and parents are
in communication
with each other.
Please email or
call us if any
issues
arise.

Parents: Kelly and

Thank
You!

Let's do this!

Form in Word & format guide at http://formedfamiliesforward.org/resources/

All About Me

Name:

Photo

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

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

Who we are…

▶ Formed Families Forward's **mission** is to improve developmental, educational, social, emotional and post-secondary outcomes for **children and youth with disabilities and other special needs** through provision of information, training and support to adoptive and foster parents, and kinship caregivers. We provide:

❖ In-person trainings (we sponsor and we come to you!)

❖ Webinars

❖ Fact sheets and other resources

❖ Youth/YA peer support group; parent/caregiver support group

❖ Direct support- calls and meetings

❖ Connecting families to resources

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