



Fall 2018

Partners for Success— Family Support Services

Fall Newsletter

WHAT IS PARTNERS FOR SUCCESS—FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES?

We are a resource center for families that have children ages 3-21 with disabilities.

Partners for Success was established state-wide as part of each local school system in Maryland to provide knowledge and develop essential skills fundamental to parents and professionals working together as equal partners in the educational decision making process.

What do we do?

- Support families of children with special needs
- Strengthen communication between parents and schools
- Host workshops on special needs topics of interest
- Represent special education issues and concerns of families

HOW TO STAY CONNECTED?

- ◆ Contact **Cara Phillips**—Family Support Coordinator

Cara.Phillips@fcps.org or 240.236.8744

- ◆ To get news quickly concerning all the great workshops offered by Partners for Success, follow us on **Facebook** and **Twitter** and sign up for **Find Out First**.

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Sign up for Special Education News on Find Out First:

Go to www.fcps.org, under **Quick Links**, click on **FindOutFirst Email & Text**. When signing up, make sure you request **Special Education** under **News**; or if updating your account, under **Subscriptions**.

- ◆ You can access additional information and resources on topics such as therapists, sources of funding, etc., and summer recreational opportunities at www.fcps.org, under **Academics**, then **Special Education Parent Resources**, then go down to **Resources**.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- What is Partners for Success—Family Support?
- What's the difference between an IEP and 504?
- Where can I connect?



A NOTE FROM YOUR PARENT COORDINATOR

I began working as your Family Support Coordinator last January, after 20 years in a corporate career. As a special needs parent myself, I have relied on Partners for Success and attended many parent support groups and workshops, and just knew that this was the world I wanted to be in.

I know I have big shoes to fill, as my predecessor had been here for over 15 years, and created such a great foundation for our families and our schools.

Last semester we had many great

speakers, events, and family days. The year kicked off with 3 Sensory Movie days, and some incredible speakers and workshops. We wrapped up the Spring with a successful Resource Fair in March, and a fun-filled day at a local horse farm in May, despite the flood-like rains for days before.

We're excited to jump back into fall, with many speakers and workshops lined up, and even more family connection days.

I hope to meet many more of you in the coming year!

— *Cara Phillips*

“It’s important that you and the school communicate early and often!”

YOU ARE STRONG

By Terry Mauro

How often has it happened -- an acquaintance hears your story or sees your child and says, "I'm not as strong as you. I could never deal with all the things you deal with."

And you shake your head modestly, and brush it off, and maybe even feel a little condescended to. But you know what? They're right. You're strong.

You're facing things that the average parent doesn't even want to imagine, and you're handling them.

Whether you were strong to begin with or had strength thrust upon you by necessity, you're one strong parent, one strong person.

Your family needs that strength, your children thrive on it. You may wish you never had to be so strong. But appreciate that strength now.

It makes you special. Capable. A force to be reckoned with.

BACK TO SCHOOL: TIPS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1. Organize all that paperwork

In the world of special education, there are lots of meetings, paperwork, and documentation to keep track of. Try to keep a family calendar of school events, special education meetings, conferences, etc. A binder will help!

2. Start a communication log

Keeping track of all phone calls, emails, notes home, meetings, and conferences is important. Create a communication log for yourself and keep it with your binder (see above).

3. Review your child's current IEP

Refresh your memory. Make sure this IEP still fits your child's needs and know when the IEP expires or is up for review. If you're unsure, contact the school about holding an IEP review meeting.

4. Relieve back-to-school jitters

Talk to your child about exciting new classes, activities and events that they can participate in during the new school year. With older students, it is sometimes helpful to explain the services and accommodations in their IEP so they know what to expect.

5. Keep everyone informed

It's important that you and the school communicate early and often! The more proactive and honest you are, the better the school staff will be able to meet your child's needs.

6. Establish before and after school routines

Discuss and plan the changes in you and your child's daily routine—focusing on morning and evening routines.

7. Stay up-to-date on special education news

Try to keep up-to-date on new special education legislation, news, and events. The more you know, the more prepared you will be to navigate the world of special education and successfully advocate for your child.

8. Attend school events

Take advantage of back to school nights, conferences, etc. Share the positives about working with your child and let teachers know about changes, events, or IEP concerns.

(SOURCE: www.readingrockets.org)



Navigating Special Education

IEP—THE SEQUENCE

You will see that the sequence of discussion and decisions must proceed in an orderly manner: first assessments, then goals, then services, and only then, placement. Assessment is the base or foundation for the development of the IEP. All of the components of the IEP are to flow from assessments of the student. Below you will see how the IEP is “built” from the assessment.

1. Assessment

Assessment should occur in all areas related to the suspected disability. It consists of standardized tests, background information, and data on functional performance such as work samples and observations. Assessment cannot be discriminatory: students not speaking English should not be tested in English, visually impaired students should have assessments that do not rely on seeing, etc. For students with language disabilities, their cognitive ability (intelligence) should not be measured with tests that are heavily dependent on language. No single procedure is to be used as the sole criterion of eligibility. Parental consent is required for all such assessments. Screenings by teachers are not considered to be an evaluation.

2. Goals

Using the assessment information, the IEP team—including the parent, identifies areas of need that the IEP will address so that the student will make progress in the general curriculum. Beginning with specific and measurable statements of present levels of performance, the team develops annual goals, both academic and functional. These are specific and measurable statements of how the student will perform after one year of special education services. Student strengths and interests must be considered in addressing areas of needs.

3. Services

Once goals are written, the team determines the services the student needs to make progress on their goals and be educated in the least restrictive environment. This means being educated to the greatest extent appropriate with non-disabled peers. The frequency and duration and location of services must be specified. Availability and convenience should not determine services; rather the determination is based on what the student needs to make progress. Needed modifications should be specified as well as behavioral support.

4. Placement

The last decision to be made is where services should occur for the student to make adequate progress on their goals and be in the least restrictive environment appropriate for this student. Discussion of placement occurs after agreement is reached on assessment, goals, and related services; and should be based on needs, not category of disability. Parents have a right to visit any recommended placement.

IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal special education law which requires that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

This law establishes a process with a sequence designed to ensure that students with disabilities receive an individualized education program (IEP) based on their specific needs, and that they not be needlessly segregated from their non-disabled peers.

IEP—INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

An **IEP** is a blueprint or plan for a child’s special education experience at school.

An IEP provides individualized special education and related services to meet the unique needs of the child.

504 PLAN

A **504 plan** is also a blueprint for how the school will provide supports and remove barriers for a student with a disability, so the student has equal access to the general education curriculum.

Some students with learning and attention issues don’t need special education or individualized instruction. But they might still need supports or services at school. Depending on their challenges, they may be able to get that help through a 504 plan.

504 plans are designed to help kids with disabilities learn alongside their peers. They do this by removing barriers to learning.

504 plans aren’t the same as IEPs. They’re each covered by different laws and work in different ways. But the end goal is the same: to help students be successful in school.



PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS—FALL

Morning Support Groups

Where: Dublin Roasters, 1780 N Market St., Frederick MD 21701

When: Tuesday, 10/2, 11/13, 12/4

Time: 9:30 am—11:00 am
(childcare not available)

Evening Support Groups

Where: YMCA, 1000 N Market St., Frederick MD 21701

When: Thursday, 9/20, 10/18, 11/15, 12/20

Time: 6:30 pm—8:00 pm
(childcare available with pre-registration)

WORKSHOPS & EVENTS

September:

9/15, 9:30am–4pm—Executive Functioning Workshop—Strategies for Home and Classroom—Monica Werner, Co-Author of *Unstuck & On Target*

Location: Frederick High School Auditorium

9/26, 6pm–8pm—Signing with Young Children Workshop—Join this exciting hands-on workshop to learn the steps to successfully sign with your baby or toddler. You will leave with resources, information, and having learned more than 100 signs. **This workshop is for adults only.**

Location: Frederick County Health Department

October:

10/19, 9:30am–12:30pm—Introduction to Special Education Workshop. An orientation for parents/educators new to Special Education and the IEP Process.

10/30, 10am–12 pm—Make & Take—Getting Organized: Managing the IEP Paperwork

Date to be Determined —ADHD & Anxiety Presentation & Workshop

November:

Date to be Determined—Effective Parenting Strategies for Children with Emotional & Behavioral Disabilities

Date to be Determined —Transition Planning

FAMILY CONNECTION DAYS

Kids with special needs just wanna have fun, but sometimes the crowds, noise, lights, and social expectations on family outings **can all be a bit too much**—both for them and their families. Join Partners for Success and our Community Partners for some fun-filled days with less stress!

9/10—Sensory Movie Day at Holiday Cinemas

10/5—Family Fun Day on the Farm at Green Meadows Petting Farm

10/27—Nature Exploration Day at Catocin Nature Center

12/2—Sensory Holiday Celebration at Pump it Up Frederick

More details and registration links will be shared as events get closer.

Be sure to read the “HOW TO STAY CONNECTED” section on Page 1 to stay up to date.