

Working with Parents of Exceptional Children & Community Agencies Webinar

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Welcome!

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Family Engagement





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Why This Topic Matters





Learning Objectives

- Understand the importance of family engagement
- Understand how educators engage families
- Understand how to engage your child's teachers
- Identify practical ways to build positive relationships and create opportunities for families to be involved in ways that they want



Children with Special Needs

Include

- Gifted and talented children
- Children who are linguistically or culturally different from the mainstream
- Children who are at risk for school failure because of poverty or other social conditions





Children with Special Needs

Include

- Children with health and medical conditions that may impede their success in school
- Children with disabilities





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Children with special needs need accommodations

- Children with health and behavior issues may receive accommodations under a 504 Plan of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act
- Gifted and talented children may receive accommodations based on their school district's policies for gifted and talented children or through differentiation of instruction by their classroom teacher





Children with Special Needs need accommodations

- English language learners may receive accommodations from specially trained ESOL teachers
- Children living in poverty may benefit from Title I funding of their school.
- But children with diagnosed disabilities must be provided with special education services under IDEA



IDEA



- Zero rejection.
- Nondiscriminatory and multidisciplinary evaluations.
- Free appropriate public education.
- Least restricted environment (LRE).
- Procedural due process.
- Parent and student participation.



Classroom Family Engagement

- Teachers possess the beliefs and mindsets to effectively engage families.
- Teachers and families have trusting relationships and meaningful two-way communication.
- Teachers engage families in constructing goals together, monitoring progress, and supporting learning.



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Classroom Family Engagement

- Parenting
- Communicating
- Volunteering
- Learning at Home
- Decision-making
- Community Collaboration



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Gompers Elementary Detroit





Culturally Responsive Engagement

- Let's shift our thinking about classroom family engagement
- Traditional methods of family engagement within schools (e.g., parent-teacher associations, volunteering in classrooms, sending written communication home in backpacks) often are not successful at engaging families from nondominant cultures.



Culturally Responsive Engagement

- Understand how people of different ethnicities and cultures view disability itself (e.g., as a stigma, particularly as pertains to mental illnesses or developmental disabilities; as a gift or blessing). Even if they do not agree, it is essential that educators respect those views to build effective working relationships.
- Learn about the individual family's values and their expectations and priorities for their child's educational needs.
- Recognize where there are differences in perspectives regarding the educational system and services.



Culturally Responsive Engagement

- Build trust and empathize with families
- Provide adequate resources
- Know students' friends, actively model positive behavior
- Use a cultural insider.
- Embracing families' individual narratives



Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students

- Include sexual identity and gender identity or expression as a protected category in district and school policies
- Include LGBTQ issues and themes in school curricula



Working with children of incarcerated parents

- Share information with caregivers regarding school successes and challenges regarding academic, emotional, and behavioral concerns
- Connect the student and family with community resources and services that address the particular needs of children with incarcerated parents
- Advocate for children with an incarcerated parent with other school support staff
- Collaborate with school-based mental health professionals

Building Trust Through

- Friendliness
- Optimism
- Patience
- Sincerity and honesty
- Tact
- Responsiveness
- Openness to suggestions
- Respect for each family's strengths, culture, language, and ability to make decisions for their child.



Building Trust

- Be available and responsive
- Maintain confidentiality
- Recognize that families may have different perspectives



Wisconsin-based supports

- Handout includes state family engagement resources & family support organizations
- I want to highlight a few here

Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiatives



- Their coordinators are parents of children with disabilities
- They work for CESAs through a DPI grant
- They help families navigate special education services
- <http://wspei.org/contact/>



WI FACETS



- The federally funded Parent Training and Information Center for Wisconsin
- They provide information on special education and IEPs and referrals to agencies and resources, parent support groups, parent and youth leadership development, and trainings.
<https://wifacets.org/contact-us>.



disability**rights** | WISCONSIN

- A private non-profit organization designated by the Governor
- DRW is part of a national system of federally mandated independent disability agencies
- Has staff who can provide legal advocacy
- <https://disabilityrightswi.org/contact-us/>

WI Family Ties



- Statewide
- Run by families
- Focus on emotional, behavioral and mental health supports
- They provide “Parent Peer Specialists” who can help families access services
- <https://www.wifamilyties.org/contact/>



In Summary

- Family engagement is essential in the process of determining the best educational setting for children with disabilities
- Helping families negotiate the complex process of identifying children with special needs and the legal procedures involved in making a placement is an important task for educators



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Questions?

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Resources

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