

# Building Bridges:

Effective advocacy strategies for parents of children with disabilities

Prepared for  
Inclusion Fusion  
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# Participants will:

- Create a vision statement
- Write a rough draft of “Introducing My Child”
- List a family’s “rights” and responsibilities at church
- Identify positive communication strategies
- Set a measurable goal for working effectively with church staff

*Coming together is a beginning.*

*Keeping together is progress.*

*Working together is success*

*~Henry Ford*



# Creating a Vision Statement

- Dream BIG~and *plan annually*
- Consider strengths and needs
- Include your child in the process
- Goals are for everyone!

# My GROW Plan

<b>God</b> Growing in my knowledge and understanding of Him and His Word	<b>Relationships</b> Forming and keeping relationships with my church family	<b>Outreach</b> Using my gifts and talents to serve God, my community and the church	<b>Worship</b> Singing, praying, listening and sharing

# Setting goals

- Your relationship with the church staff
- Your part in your child's spiritual development

# What does research say?

## Characteristics of successful relationships

- mutual respect
- clear understanding of roles
- opportunity for feedback
- openness to change and adjustment
- similar expectation
- defined common goal

Gorman, Jean Cheng (2004). "Working with Challenging Parents of Students with Special Needs"



<p>High</p> <p>C O N T R I B U T I O N</p>	<p><b>Traditional School Volunteer (Helper)</b>          PTA Leader          Classroom Aide          Fundraiser          Board Member          {School Focused}</p>	<p><b>Fully-Engaged Parent (Collaborator)</b>          Communicator          Problem Solver          Active Listener          Strategist          {School and Child Focused}</p>
<p>T O C O M M U N I T Y</p> <p>LOW</p>	<p><b>Uninvolved Parent (Outsider)</b>          Disengaged,          Isolated          Rumor          Blaming          Collusion</p> <p><b>Reactive Parent (Provoker)</b>          {Neither Child nor School Focused}</p> <p><b>CONTRIBUTION TO STUDENT SUCCESS</b></p>	<p><b>Mindful Parent (Mentor)</b>          Teaches respect          Instills discipline          Inspires learning          Models positive behaviors          {Child Focused}</p> <p>HIGH</p>

## What does the law say?

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act
- FERPA

# What does God have to say?

- 1 Corinthians 12: 14-31 ~ ***The Church is incomplete without the gifts of all.***
- Matthew 28:19-20 ~ ***Make disciples of all people***
- Luke 4:18-19, Matthew 25:40 ~ ***Share the hope of the Gospel and serve those who are broken***
- John 9:1-3 ~ ***HE will get the glory***

# Advocacy at Church: The best of both worlds

- Every child has the right to learn
- Determine the least restrictive environment
- Building the body
- Eternal perspective
- GOD gets the glory.

# Coming together

- Do your homework (visits, website)
- Make an appointment
- Listen!
- Share your hopes for church
- Offer to help

# Provide documentation~

Introducing...MY CHILD! (include a picture!)

- Child's strengths and needs
- Relevant diagnostic and medical information
- What if...
- Summary of goals for church
- Contact information
- Emergency information

# Introducing...Gavin

- Gavin loves to read and talk about his train collection. He is kind and enjoys being the “helper.”
- Gavin needs to be redirected when he gets stuck on a subject. He also doesn't take turns very well, and often needs reminders to let someone else play.
- Gavin has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, and ADHD. He takes Concerta. He has no food allergies, but does NOT like many foods...

# Gavin (continued)

- If Gavin begins to get agitated, the best thing to do is offer him some time alone. We always try to find a quiet corner in any new place he visits, so he knows he can escape there, be safe, and collect himself.
- This year, we are hoping Gavin will be able to tell the Christmas story in his own words, as well as the Easter story. We also hope he will be able to find make one friend in church.
- Please email us with questions! [sue@email.com](mailto:sue@email.com)
- If Gav has a meltdown, don't hesitate to get us during church.

# Preparation

- Practice day
- Experience story/video
- Modified schedule

# Keeping together

- Remember to review goals and expectations
- Focus on the purpose of church
- Glorify God in your interactions

# Key Players...

- Parents
- Senior Pastor
- Children's Ministry Director
- Last year's volunteer
- Parish Nurse
- Sunday School volunteers
- Child, when appropriate

# A Guide to Successful Meetings

- Identify the purpose
- Prepare
- Include the “Most Valuable Player.”
- Take five...or as long as you need
- Get on the same side of the table
- Have a follow-up plan

# Communication

- LISTEN!
- Be positive
- Speak the truth in love
- Be productive

# THINK before you speak...

- Is it **T**RUE?
- Is it **H**ELPFUL?
- Is it **I**MPORTANT?
- Is it **N**ECCESSARY?
- Is it **K**IND?

# Be part of the solution~

- Ask for materials in advance, or ask to purchase an extra set
- Arrange for a home visit
- Have the child do an act of service for the teacher/staff
- Emails, phone calls
- Visual schedules, other school-based materials
- Recruit from beyond the church walls

*Remember, part of good leadership is  
good follow-through.*



# The Church's "Chain of Command:" follow the principles of Matthew 18

- God
- Sunday School Teacher
- Children's Pastor
- Executive Pastor
- Senior Pastor

Expect some difficult days

- *...we are, all of us,  
human!*

## Snafus

- It would be better if you taught PSR at home...
- There's no OCD here. She just wants to go to the coat room all the time...
- ADHD? What a cop out.
- *Is this yours?*

## Parents have snafus, too...

- What I'd really like you to do is have a 1:1 Bible Study with my kid.
- My child needs a positive role model in his life.
- You're letting the Franklin's child have a room with just one roommate...why can't my child have just one roommate?
- "Oh, do you work here, too?"

## Doing our part~

- An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up!

*Proverbs 12:25*



*Because*

*NICE*

*matters!*

# Working Together

- Periodic reviews
- Invest in your relationships
- Think long-term
- Tending the Vineyard

...and give thanks.



# What did we Learn?



Provides FREE training, consultation, resources and support to help churches serve, welcome and include families of kids with hidden disabilities



# Stay in Touch!

Diving For Pearls...Katie Wetherbee's Key Ministry Blog

<http://katiewetherbee.wordpress.com>

Church4EveryChild...Steve's Key Ministry Blog:

<http://drgrcevich.wordpress.com>



<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Key-Ministry/116940088329098>



<http://twitter.com/#!/KeyMinistry>





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