

Effective Advocacy

Working with Your Child's IEP Team



as School Reopens

Matrix Parent Network

We **empower** families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them.

We want **you** to become successful advocates and role models for your children.



Who Are We?



Introductions

Things to remember as we begin:

- Self-care is key at this time and all the time!
- Did you observe and make notes of present levels (academics, speech, OT, social interactions, behavior)?
- Did you see progression or regression during distance learning?
- You can call a meeting (IEP or other).
- Be ready to collaborate with team: smaller meetings with teacher, therapists, psych – maybe don't wait to get the whole team together for an IEP.

You Will Leave Here Knowing:

- What does advocacy look like during distance learning, or the hybrid model that many districts are opening with?
- Skills and techniques to use before, during, and after your next IEP, whether it is in-person or virtual.
- Why collaboration is THE KEY to successful advocacy at all times.

What is an Advocate?

An Advocate is someone who pleads the cause of another or promotes the interests of a cause or group.

You advocate every day!

Have you ever:

- Met with your child's teacher about any issue?
- Questioned a medical professional on issues concerning yourself or your child?

If you have done these things, you already are an Advocate

What is your Biggest Challenge Right Now?



Wow!



Really?

TURN & TALK

Skills & Strategies



Skills & Strategies

1. Use your understanding of your child.
2. Learn about the systems and key players.
3. Stay current on special education as schools reopen.
4. Try to stay organized.
5. Clear and compassionate communication is important.
6. Recognize perspective (yours and others).
7. Solve problems creatively to resolve disagreements.
8. Practice self-care.



Skills and Strategies 1:

Use Your Understanding of Your Child

**You know your
child best!**



1. Use Your Understanding of Your Child

Your experiences are valuable and may be used to improve things – but only if you share with your team:

- You know when something is or isn't working.
- You have ideas about how to make things better.



If you can, observe, learn and communicate:

- How does the disability affects various aspects of life?
- How does the disability manifest itself in your own child?

1. Use Your Understanding of Your Child

If distance learning is still part of the curriculum:

- Focus on what can be provided right now.
- Moderate your expectations.
- Use the services and resources that are helpful and convenient.
- Matrix resources are available.
- Remember to communicate your thoughts, concerns and observations to your team.



MATRIX RESOURCES

- Helpline
800-578-2592
- [Website](#)
- [Training](#)
- [Training online](#)

1. Use Your Understanding of Your Child

During distance learning:

- Try keeping a journal of what is working and what's not working.
- You could take videos of your child learning to illustrate what's working and what's not.
- Email teachers and the IEP team about what's working and what's not working.
- Observing progress on goals may help with receiving services to remediate learning losses due to change of service delivery during COVID-19.



1. Use Your Understanding of Your Child

Your observations are important!

- You can help teachers understand how well your student is “accessing the curriculum” by observing and recording how they do during distance learning sessions, how well they understand instructions, and how successful they are at completing homework independently. The examples on the next two slides show the kinds of observations you might record.
- If you have concerns about a particular IEP goal your child is working on, talk with the teacher to get specifics about how progress on that goal is being monitored.



Daily (or weekly) Observation Log: Homework/Distance learning observations:

Date: Tues, Sept. 15

Online class: Was Sam able to sit and focus on the class being delivered on line? ☒ Yes/No

If Yes, how long did Sam focus on the class? 10 minute of a 40 minute class

How many times did I have to redirect him during the class? (Tell him to focus, tell him to sit down, point to the screen, etc.) 8 times.

Did Sam interact with the teacher or other classmates? ☒ Yes/No

If so, how? Asked questions? Answered questions? Made suggestions? Joked with classmates?

Sam attempted to get other students' attention by making faces and gesturing.

Was Sam able to complete classwork or homework independently? Yes/☒ No

Did Sam understand the class work or homework he was being given? Yes/☒ No

If no, check one:

☐ I had to spend a few minutes reviewing the directions with him

☐ I had to read and explain the directions

☒ I had to completely review the concepts needed to do the work

Did Sam complete the class work/homework assignment? Yes/☒ No

If yes, how long did it take: _____ minutes

If no,

Estimate what percent of the work was done: 30 %

How long did Sam work to attempt his homework? 20 minutes

Other observations

Sam threw down his books and broke his pencil when asked to start his assignment. After 15 minutes of cajoling, and reminding him he could go outside afterwards, he agreed to do the work if I sat with him. After he got started, he seemed to enjoy the word search worksheets and was proud of how many words he could recognize.

Daily (or weekly) Observation Log: Homework/Distance learning observations:

Date: Tues, Sept. 15

On line class: Was Suzi able to sit and focus on the class being delivered on line? ☒ Yes/No

If Yes, how long did Suzi focus on the class? 30 minute of a 40 minute class

How many times did I have to redirect her during the class? 2 times.

Did Suzi interact with the teacher or other classmates? Yes/☒ No

If so, how? Asked questions? Answered questions? Made suggestions? Joked with classmates?

Suzi refused to speak when the teacher called on her.

Was Suzi able to complete classwork or homework independently? Yes/☒ No

Did Suzi understand the class work or homework she was being given? Yes/☒ No

If no, check one:

☐ I had to spend a few minutes reviewing the directions with her.

☒ I had to read and explain the directions.

☐ I had to completely review the concepts needed to do the work.

Did Suzi complete the class work/homework assignment? Yes/☒ No

If yes, how long did it take: 90 minutes

If no,

Estimate what percent of the work was done: _____ %

How long did Suzi work to attempt her homework? _____ minutes

Other observations:

Suzi broke down in tears three time while working on her class assignment, however, she refused to take a break and kept working even though she seemed quite agitated and upset about it.

USING AN ACTIVITY MATRIX TO INFUSE IEP GOALS THROUGHOUT THE DAY

- 1) List the student's goal areas along the top of the matrix
- 2) List the daily schedule of activities along the left side of the matrix, including all routines throughout the day (lunch, etc.)
- 3) In each corresponding cell write how the student will be taught and/or practice each skill during the daily activities and which EBP for ASD will be used

DAILY ACTIVITY:	Goal Area: Academics	Goal Area: Communication	Goal Area: Social Skills	Goal Area: Independence	Goal Area: Fine Motor
REVIEW DAILY SCHEDULE 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM	Reading: Reads words on schedule Math: Reads times on schedule	Responds to prompt: "Tell me what you want to do today."	Requests help using two-words "Help, please."	Builds order of daily schedule	Uses pincer grasp to put Velcro picture symbols on schedule
READING 9:30 AM – 10:00 AM	Reading: Read a story to student Have student sequence three pictures related to the story	When offered two books and asked, "Which book?" will answer, "I want to read ____."	Takes turns turning the pages Waits until his turn to turn the page	Returns the books to the bookshelf	Uses pincer grasp to open and close book and turn pages
BATHROOM 10:00 AM – 10:15 AM FREE CHOICE 10:15 AM- 10:45 AM	Reading: Follows mini-task schedule for toileting/washing hands	When offered two free choice activities, "Want to take a walk or do iPad" will answer, "I want to ____."	Walk: Take a scavenger walk with sibling/parent and check off items on list iPad: Play a two person game with sibling/parent	Independently completes toileting and handwashing using mini-task schedule	Use pincer grasp to zip and unzip pants Use efficient pencil grasp when making checkmarks on scavenger list while using an adaptive pencil grip, short pencil/crayon, or standard wide Kinder pencil
MATH 10:45 AM – 11:30 AM	TouchMath: Lesson 7	When offered two lesson choices, "Want to do this lesson or this lesson he will answer, "I want to do ____."	Requests help using two-words "Help, please." Or by raising hand Asks for more time saying, "Five more minutes, please"	Sets TimeTimer Quits when TimeTimer ends Shuts down program Checks schedule	Uses pincer grasp to set TimeTime

1. Use Your Understanding of Your Child

CAPTAIN website is a wealth of information, even if your child experiences another disability

Check out the padlets for more resources to support school closure /distance learning:



Resources to Support School Closures/Distance Learning for Students with Autism

Recursos en Español para Las Familias con Estudiantes con Autismo

Skills and Strategies 2: Systems and Key Players

Lots to learn!



2. Systems and Key Players

Public Agencies are trying to provide support

School Districts

Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA)

- [Napa SELPA](#)
- [Sonoma SELPA](#)
- [Marin SELPA](#)
- [Solano SELPA](#)
- [Vallejo SELPA](#)



2. Systems and Key Players

Public Agencies are trying to provide support

Matrix COVID-19 Updates

“Stronger Together: A Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of CA’s Public Schools”:

Community Advisory Committees

- Marin SEAC
- Sonoma CAC
- Solano CAC
- Napa CAC (scroll down to “Parent Resources”)
- Vallejo CAC (scroll down to “Community Advisory Committee”)



2. Systems and Key Players

Public Agencies are trying to provide support

Social Security Administration

- <https://www.ssa.gov/>

County Mental Health & Human Services link

- [Sonoma](#)
- [Marin](#)
- [Napa](#)
- [Solano](#)



2. Systems and Key Players

In summary:



- You can reach out to your child's case manager for every agency you interact with.
- You can reach out to the director or decision maker for each organization that supports your child.

Skills and Strategies 3:

Stay Current on Special Education



3. Stay Current on Special Education

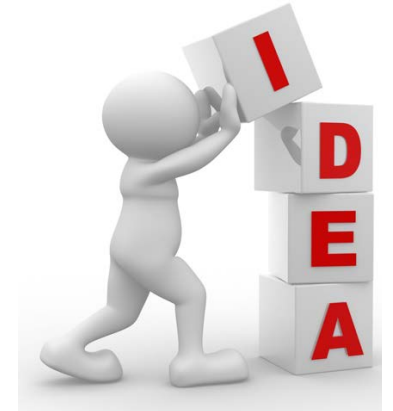
Matrix Website and Matrix Newsletters

- Your school website
- Your SELPA (see links on previous slide)
- The School & College Legal Services (SCLS) updates
- California Department of Education COVID-19 Guidance:
Coronavirus Response and School Reopening Guidance
Weekly COVID-19 updates from State Superintendent of Ed.
Special Education Guidance for COVID-19
Weekly newsletter registration – email [to join-covid19-update@mlist.cde.ca.gov](mailto:join-covid19-update@mlist.cde.ca.gov)
- National disability groups ([CHADD](#), [NAMI](#), [Autism Speaks](#), etc.)



3. Stay Current on Special Education

- Service delivery may not be back to normal, depending on your school
- “Compensatory education” vs. “learning loss and remediation under COVID-19”



3. Stay Current on Special Education

Language Matters

- Compensatory education is not part of IDEA, and is awarded court when FAPE has been denied.
- Compensatory education is not for regression due to COVID-19.
- Chances are many students have regressed.
- Use the language “*learning loss and remediation under COVID-19*” when talking to your IEP team about making up services.



3. Stay Current on Special Education

Resources on Compensatory Education

[Wrightslaw Website](#)

[Article Pete Wright wrote on compensatory education](#)

[Webinar with 4 attorneys discussing special education](#)

[Pete Wright's slides from above webinar](#)

[How Parents Can Overcome Roadblocks to Compensatory Education](#)



3. Stay Current on Special Education

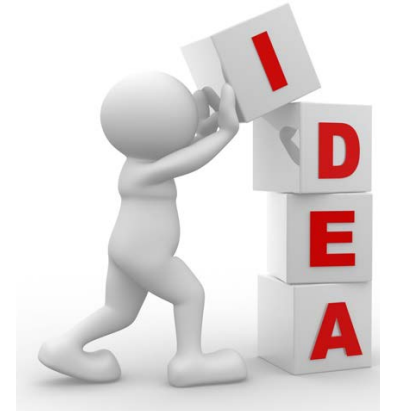
More from Wrightslaw website

Wrightslaw Website

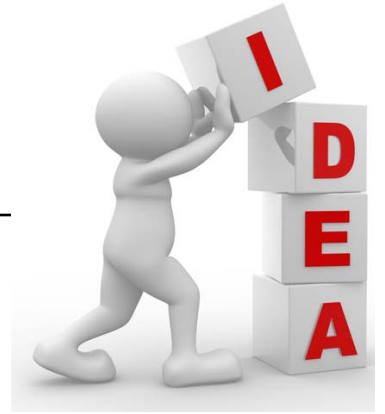
How to Prepare for IEP Meetings, Provide Information and Share Concerns

How will I know if my child is making progress?

Check out Wrightslaw's IEP Pop-Up Tool covering present levels, goals and services, measuring progress and providing accommodations



3. Stay Current on Special Education



New provisions in 2020 – [link to legal updates](#)

See the updates for all provisions, but what you really need to know:

- IEPs will now have to describe how special education and related services will be provided during **emergency conditions**, including epidemic, fire and many other situations.

3. Stay Current on Special Education

Special Education Legal Updates

Some places you can look for legal information:

- [School & College Legal Services of California legal updates](#)
- [Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy](#)
- [Disability Rights California](#)



3. Stay Current on Special Education

Resources on Distance Learning

[Community Alliance for Special Education: Covid-19 Guidance Memo](#)

[COVID-19 and K-12 Students with Disabilities: A Second-Legal Look](#)



Skills and Strategies 4:

Try to Stay Organized

**Emails, more emails,
and zoom meetings!**



4. Try to Stay Organized

- Keep an IEP binder or folder on your computer for documents, assessments, and important school records.
- If you don't have these documents, ask the school to provide them, even during distance learning.
- Put your questions, concerns and requests in writing (email is ok, but keep your emails).
- Keep a phone log.
- The Matrix IEP Toolkit is on the website.



Skills and Strategies 5:

Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

**Do You Hear
Me Now?**



5: Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

- Everyone needs to try and be flexible, compassionate and patient during this difficult time.
- Acknowledge and process your emotions.
- Focus on your child's needs *and* your own.
- Show respect and expect it from others.
- Try to avoid making people feel defensive.
- Be grateful and assume your IEP team is doing the best they can!



5: Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for Good Communication at a Meeting:

- Set ground rules, these will be different for video conferences.
- Having an agenda can help.
- Clarify time constraints.
- Listen & ask questions.
- Use and ask for facts and data rather than opinions.



5: Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for Good Communication at a Meeting:










Virtual Meetings: Strategies, Tips and Resources

IEP Meeting Tip Sheets



5: Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Virtual IEP Meetings: Technology Tips for All Participants

	Be patient—technology may not work as intended. Assume that everyone is doing their best.
	Test out technology in advance, and make sure all devices are charged.
	Have a back-up plan ready in the event technology issues arise.
	Join the meeting about 10–15 minutes in advance to troubleshoot any technology issues.
	Actively listen and participate in the meeting.
	Set up a meeting space that reduces potential distractions to minimize background noise as much as possible.
	Ensure the security of confidential information before, during, and after the meeting.
	Turn off any notifications on your computer—they may show up on others' screens.
	Use headphones or a headset with built-in microphone, when possible.



5: Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for Good Communication at a Meeting:

- Be appreciative, acknowledge the efforts of others.
- Use humor.
- Repeat, reflect and rephrase for clarification.
- Build on small agreements.



5: Clear and Compassionate Communication is Important

Tips for written communication:

Letters or emails should:

- Be sent to person who can make a change
- Focus on only one or two issues
- Be solution vs. blame oriented
- Be no longer than 1 page (less is more!)
- Set a deadline if a reply is requested
- Give your contact information



Skills and Strategies 6:

Perspective (Yours and Others)

**Its Nice When We
Acknowledge Each
Other's Thoughts**



6. Perspective (Yours and Others)

- Acknowledge your fears & concerns as a parent.
- Empathize with the challenges teachers & administrators face – this is an unprecedented time!
- Find common goals & build upon small agreements.
- Don't rehash the past. Focus on what can be done today.
- Keep an open mind.
- Be grateful!



Skills and Strategies 7: Solving Problems Creatively

**Practice
Flexibility!**



7. Solving Problems Creatively



- Understand the difference between *position* & an *interest*:
 - A fixed position is one way to solve a problem.
 - An interest can be met in several ways.
- Be willing to brainstorm.
- Ask questions to help others to be more specific.
- Call Matrix for help with this.

7. Solving Problems Creatively



- Focus on what can be done now.
- Document what services your child is getting... or not getting.
- Observe/record whether your child is accessing distance learning.
- To the extent you can, monitor progress; ask for help from teachers/specialists.
- Document your child's progress if distance learning continues; data is important.
- Collaborate/communicate with your IEP team – reach out to them!

7. Solving Problems Creatively



Tips for Resolving Disagreements:

- Solve disagreements as close to source as possible.
- Communicate your concerns clearly.
- Be calm and factual.
- Document your process.
- Utilize administrative hierarchy.
- Work to preserve good relationships.

7. Solving Problems Creatively



When you disagree:

- Disagree without being disagreeable.
- Separate the person from the problem.
- Realize no one has all the answers.
- Make sure your facts are correct.
- Choose your battles.
- SELPA and ADR are still available during school closures.
- Call Matrix for help.

Skills and Strategies 8:

Practice Self-Care

**Self-Care is
not Selfish!**



8. Practice Self-Care

- Try to get rest, exercise, and healthy food.
- School is not everything! Consider family harmony and well-being.
- Add enjoyable activities to you and your child's schedules when possible.
- Connect with people who give you encouragement & hope.
- Consider a class in Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) or other stress relief approaches.
- Try not to feel guilty!



8. Practice Self-Care

- Be gentle with yourself.
- Practice asking for help when you need it.
- Try not to not give in to resentment or frustration, but everyone does sometimes.
- Try to make self-care a habit.
- Look for Special Express emails from Matrix on stress reduction.
- We are role models for our children in how we manage stress, growth, and change.



Apply what you've learned



I'll try that.



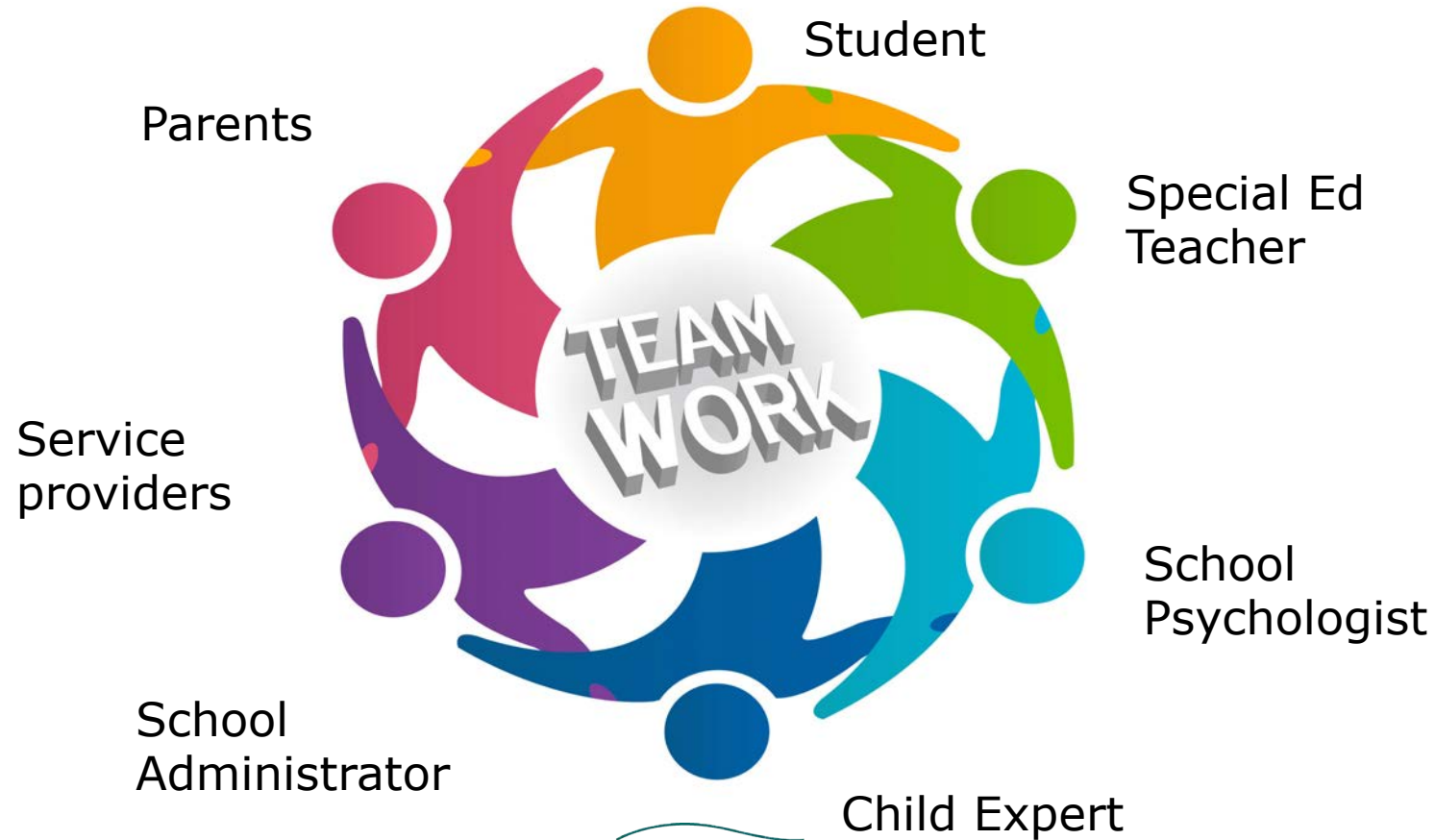
Me too!

TURN

&

TALK

Collaboration = Success



Collaboration = Success

- Parents & Professionals should be partners.
- Maintain good relationships in this difficult time.
- Work together.
- Share goals.
- Recognize that roles have changed.
- Draw on everyone's different skills and strengths.
- Solve problems together.



Skills Checklist

What have you learned?

- Is there a skill you hope to improve?
- Do you need more resources?
- Do you need more support?



What did you think about this presentation?

Q & A

**The ability to ask
the right question
is the single most
important skill!**



Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

We are Parent Advisors not
Attorneys or Advocates

We *do not* give legal advice or advise a course of action.

We provide support and information to help parents learn about their rights and options, find referrals and resources and help parents become the best advocate they can be for their child,

1-800-578-2592



www.matrixparents.org

Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

Federal Parent Training & Information Center

designated by the *Office of Special Education, US Department of Education*, serving families of children birth through 26 in Marin, Napa, Sonoma & Solano counties

California Family Resource Center

designated by *CA Department of Developmental Services*, serving families of infants and toddlers

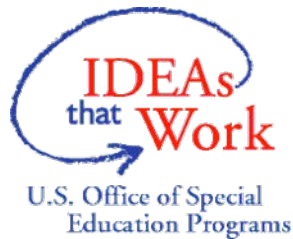
California Family Empowerment Center

designated by *CA Department of Education*
serving the underserved in Solano and Sonoma Counties

Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

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Matrix is grateful for the Federal and State funding it receives, but it's not enough. We rely on other grants and on donations from people like you!



Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center

Please consider supporting
Matrix in any way you can!

Thank you.

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