Guidance on Protecting High-Risk Students

Family Matters has heard from many families who have children with disabilities with health conditions that put them at greater risk when exposed to COVID 19, and as schools have lifted their mask mandates those parents have experienced concern and anxiety about their children returning to the school environment. On March 24, 2022, the U.S. Secretary of Education, Dr. Miguel Cardona, issued a letter to parents and educators, which says that even as schools relax some COVID-19 rules, like mask mandates, they are legally obligated to take steps to protect students with disabilities, who may be at greater risk of severe illness than their peers.

To meet the requirements of federal disability rights laws, for example, schools may require teachers and peers to mask around higher-risk students, even if there isn’t a school-wide requirement to do so. For some vulnerable students, masking for themselves and those around them may be necessary in order for the student to receive a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE), under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

In the letter, Cardona wrote: “The [Education] Department recognizes the difficulties many families have experienced as they strove to balance the need to ensure their child’s physical safety and their child’s need for in-person learning. As we enter this next phase of pandemic response, we urge schools to lead with equity and inclusion to ensure all students have access to in-person learning alongside their peers.”

Cardona also references the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations that people who are at increased risk of severe illness – and family, friends, and coworkers who spend time with them – should consider taking extra precautions even when the COVID-19 Community Level is low. When the COVID-19 Community Level is medium or high, these precautions can include properly wearing well-fitting masks and getting tested before gathering.

The letter reminds educators and parents that IDEA requires schools to address the school-related health needs of eligible students with disabilities who are at increased risk of severe illness from SARS-CoV-2. State or local laws, rules, regulations or policies that have the effect of improperly limiting the ability of the IEP Team to address the school-related health needs of a student with a disability, or the ability of the placement team to appropriately place a student with a disability has

Continued on Page 2
school-related health needs in the least restrictive environment (LRE), violate IDEA. The same is true under Section 504.

As with students who have severe food allergies, seizure disorders, or immune deficiencies, a health plan may be required as part of their Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan to ensure their health and safety at school. Implementing layered prevention strategies (like masking, distancing, sanitizing, and proper ventilation) in schools can protect the rights of students with disabilities to continued access to safe in-person learning in the LRE.

To comply with their Federal non-discrimination obligations under Section 504, school districts must make reasonable modification when necessary to ensure equal access for their students with disabilities. If a parent or other member of the IEP or Section 504 team believes that particular COVID-19 prevention strategies are necessary for the provision of FAPE to the student, the team must consider whether, and to what extent, such measures are necessary, based on student-specific information, which may include medical or health records, diagnostic or other evaluative data, or information documented by medical or health professionals. Depending on the circumstances, a school could decide that some degree of masking of students and staff is necessary as a reasonable accommodation to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to in-person learning without incurring an elevated risk of hospitalization or death due to COVID-19.

Dr. Cardona said, “It is important to keep in mind that every IDEA-eligible student’s program is the sum of their access to, and progress in, the general education curriculum along with progress on their individual functional goals. The two are linked, and both must be prioritized. It is important for teams to be creative and make decisions promoting maximum and appropriate inclusivity, rather than more separate or restrictive programs. Schools may consider whether providing smaller cohorts of group instruction with peers without disabilities can minimize a student’s health risks while maintaining the obligation to provide FAPE in the LRE based on the individual needs of the student with a disability.”

The letter concludes by saying: “Students learn best in person and all children with disabilities must continue to receive FAPE and must have the chance to meet challenging objectives. Students are better able to engage with rigorous instruction and access services and supports tailored to their needs when they are learning alongside their peers.”


Series on Communication
PRESENTED BY: Heather Miller Schwarz, M.S., CCC-SLP
Heather Miller Schwarz is a Speech-Language Pathologist with over 20 years of experience working with individuals with complex communication needs. She has had experiences in public school, private practice and non-profit settings and has participated as a member of IEP and assistive technology teams. Currently, she is an Assistive Technology Lead for Collaborations and Trainings at UCP Seguin-Infinitec where she collaborates with IEP teams to provide augmentative and alternative communication support through student assessment and communication partner training and coaching.

Series on Communication Devices Part 1: Overview, Tools, and Myths About AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)
Join us for a webinar on Apr 06, 2022 at 12:00 PM CDT. REGISTER

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) is any form of communication that enhances or supplements verbal speech or written language. This family-centered workshop will discuss the many ways that a child communicates and how to identify if he or she may benefit from AAC. Participants will discuss tools, strategies and myths that will be helpful to know as they begin to explore the exciting world of AAC.
AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) Evaluations - What to Expect and What to Ask

Join us for a webinar on Apr 13, 2022 at 12:00 PM CDT.

REGISTER

You and your educational team have identified that your child may benefit from augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), what is next? This family-centered workshop will discuss what to expect during the AAC assessment process. Participants will discuss the steps to the feature-match assessment, strategies that you can employ while trying systems at home, and helpful definitions to know along the way.

AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication) Implementation and Carryover

Join us for a webinar on Apr 20, 2022 at 12:00 PM CDT. REGISTER Using your child’s augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system at home can be the key to helping him or her to communicate successfully in places and with people that are not as familiar. This family-centered workshop will identify evidence-based strategies to encourage the use of AAC systems in the home environment. Participants will discuss how to build on your child’s current communication strengths as you use AAC tools and strategies during existing activities and routines throughout the day.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

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East Central Illinois Transition Planning Committee presents

Dwelling in the Possibilities

Bridget and Nancy Brown

Wednesday, April 6th, 2022

6-8 PM

EIASE

Join us to learn more about tools and strategies to help people design full and productive lives filled with possibilities. Participants will hear how Bridget Brown, a self-advocate, used person centered planning to help her find her own voice and present at her own IEP meetings. She believes that this tool helped her learn how to speak for herself and advocate for others as well. Nancy will share her journey using person centered planning to present at Bridget’s meetings so that the educational team would keep Bridget at the heart of the meeting and focus on the possibilities and dreams. She will share her Parents Review design to help parents find their own voice. They believe that we never segregate people we value and to be valued is the basic core of our human experience. This webinar is for everyone - Self advocates, parents, and people of all ages who care about helping people live full and inclusive lives.

This event will take place in the Board Room at Eastern Illinois Area Special Education (EIASE) office

5837 Park Drive, Charleston, IL 61920

For questions or to join us virtually, please email ecitpc@gmail.com by 4/5/22

CPDUs available for Educators

CEUs available for Professionals
Illinois Family Leaders Collaboration Presents
the 15th Annual
Free Virtual Family Conference
for Families of Children with Disabilities

The Power of Families: Using Your Voice to Make a Difference

Saturday, April 23, 2022
You will need to register for each session separately. For details and registration visit: https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/cu/VIsah1H

Agenda

Presented with Live Spanish Translation
Resiliency is Also Contagious: How to Protect Our Families from the Impact of Adversity and Trauma
Presented by Dr. Matt Buckman, Stress & Trauma Treatment Center
Break from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Presented with Live Spanish Translation
Inclusive Education for Families of Young Children
Presented by Tammy Wrobble & Talin Tokat, Early CHOICES
The evening session, from 6:00 p.m to 7:00 p.m. will offer the same topic separately in English and Spanish
Presented in English
Mindfulness for Families
Presented by Karla Belzer, University of Illinois
Presented in Spanish
Self-Care
Presented by Lourdes Perez, Consultant & Consuelo Puente

REGISTER
REGISTER
REGISTER

Spring 2022
Archived Webinars

Our webinars are available any time of day as archived recordings on our website. Learn beneficial information as your schedule allows. Just visit www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings and search by topic category, title, date of recording, or presenter name. Click on the event you plan to watch, submit basic registration data (name, email, etc.), and the webinar will begin.

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Items Available From Our Lending Library

**Dyslexia-Wrestling with an Octopus-10 Tips to Help Your Child Thrive in Every Aspect of Life Academically, Socially & Physically**
Beth Beamish

Learn how to build on your child’s strengths and understand the 8 areas of difficulty for those with dyslexia: reading, listening, spelling, writing, memory, motor control, spatial awareness, and social challenges.

**Assessment and Student Success in a Differentiated Classroom**
Carol Ann Tomlinson & Tonya R. Moom

Learn how differentiation can improve the assessment process and empower students with improved understanding and skills.

**It’s OK to be Different**
Sharon Purtill

This children’s book is a celebration of kids who have the courage to be themselves.

**Transition Ahead-Lesson Plans for Life Beyond High School**
Dr. Anette Anderson Fields

A tool designed to prompt students to develop personal strategies, and to use self-advocacy skills while making informed choices.

To borrow these items free of cost go to: www.fmptic.org/library

Encouragement Hotline

**Need a pep talk from kindergartners? A new hotline gives you options for joy**

What started as an art project at a California elementary school has gone viral. The free hotline offers wise advice and encouraging messages from kids to anyone who calls. If you need a boost, call Peptoc at 707-998-8410.
Worlds Imagined: Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month 2022

March 1, 2022  CCIDS News

Source: Administration for Community Living, Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month 2022 (March 1, 2022) Every March, the National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities (NACDD) and its partners collaborate to observe Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM). The social media campaign highlights the many ways in which people with and without disabilities come together to form strong, diverse communities. The campaign seeks to raise awareness about the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life, as well as awareness of the barriers that people with disabilities still sometimes face in connecting to the communities in which they live.

Developmental disabilities include disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism, muscular dystrophy, Down syndrome, or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and affect a person’s growth and/or cognition. The figures show as of 2017, about 1 in 6 children have some type of developmental disability. However, people should not have to be worried or alarmed if someone has a developmental disability. They can usually live normal lives as long as they have the proper supports.

The Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month shines a spotlight on the disabled community and demonstrates how people with developmental disabilities live normal lives. In return, the public can learn how they can help people with developmental disabilities achieve their dreams.

The 2022 theme, Worlds Imagined, focuses on how the world is changing as we move through and beyond the pandemic. With this theme, NACDD plans to highlight intersectionality and disability, as well as how people with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities (ID/DD) are living longer and more productive lives than ever before. The 2022 DDAM theme encourages exploration of new and ever-changing opportunities.

This year’s social media campaign features the artwork of Calvin “Sonny” Clarke from the studio, Art Enables, in Washington, DC.

In honor of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, please watch the following short video and then think about how you can support and promote the gifts of people with developmental disabilities in your communities.

https://youtu.be/l_QGlbwwCy4
Family Matters is recruiting volunteers who would like to become educational surrogate parents

WHAT IS AN EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT?

An Educational Surrogate Parent is an individual who has been appointed to represent the educational interests of a child with disabilities when:

- No parent (as defined under 34 CFR 300.30) can be identified;
- The parent cannot be located;
- The child is a youth in care; or
- The child is an unaccompanied homeless youth.

What are the responsibilities?

- Learns about the student’s educational needs by getting acquainted with the student, communicating with personnel involved in the student’s education and/or care, and observing the student at school;
- Acts as the student’s advocate for educational matters;
- Provides or withholds consent for assessment and services/placement;
- Attends educational meetings on the student’s behalf;
- Works with school staff to develop an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for the student;
- Negotiates for appropriate services on behalf of the student;
- Abides by the laws of confidentiality when sharing information about the student;
- Requests complaint, mediation or due process procedures, if necessary;
- Reports services twice a year (also basis for reimbursement).

By volunteering as an educational surrogate parent, he/she becomes an important member of a team in determining and ensuring a child receives a free and appropriate public education. The educational surrogate parent must:

1. Complete the entire training (An educational surrogate parent application must be completed during the training.),
2. Pass the training exam, and
3. Complete and pass a background check.

Is there reimbursement for expenses?
An educational surrogate parent (ESP) is eligible to receive a flat fee ($50) stipend for expenses incurred while providing services. To be eligible for the stipend, the ESP must have provided at least one of the following services:

1. Observed the student at school
2. Met with personnel involved in the student's education
3. Met with personnel involved in the student's care
4. Attended meetings in person (virtually during Covid) to develop or review the student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP)

ESPs submit a form twice a year to request the stipend for each service provided to each student the ESP serves. An ESP can also choose to forego the stipend and volunteer their time.

See training options available on page 8.
Family Matters Provides Training for the Illinois State Board of Education’s Educational Surrogate Parent Program

If you are interested in serving as an educational surrogate parent for children in Illinois who need representation, or if you are already serving as an educational surrogate parent and need a refresher training, contact our office for more information. The required training on the special education process is six hours in length. Want to learn more about what Educational Surrogate Parents do? Read more in the article on page 7. Our office number is 866-436-7842

**April 8, 2022 from 9am to 4pm**
Advocates for Access
4450 N Prospect Rd Ste C8 Peoria Heights, IL 61616
*Lunch will be on your own from 12-1*

**April 20, 2022 from 9am to 4pm**
Carbondale Chamber
131 South Illinois Ave Carbondale, IL 62901
*Lunch will be on your own from 12-1*

**April 26, 2022 from 10:15am to 5:00pm**
Woodstock Public Library
414 West Judd St Woodstock, IL 60098
*Lunch will be on your own from 12-1*

Want to help make a difference while you shop in the Amazon app, at no extra cost to you? Simply follow the instructions below to select "Family Matters Parent Training And Information Center" as your charity and activate AmazonSmile in the app. They’ll donate a portion of your eligible mobile app purchases to us.

How it works:
1. Open the Amazon app on your phone
2. Select the main menu tap on "AmazonSmile" within Programs Features
3. Select "Family Matters Parent Training And Information Center" as your charity
4. Follow the on-screen instructions to activate AmazonSmile in the mobile app

Donate to Family Matters each time you order from Amazon. Just shop at http://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-5808691. You will have access to the same merchandise and pricing as you do when shopping at amazon.com.

Family Matters’ Board of Directors

If you have an interest in serving as a Board member, please visit our website and complete an application.

http://www.fmptic.org/sites/default/files/prospective%20board%20member%20questionnaire2.pdf

We welcome parents that fulfill demographic needs including geographical locations; parent representation of disability types; representation of age ranges, gender, and diversity; related professional interests; and volunteer experiences.

During the school year, our hours of operation at Family Matters are:
**Tuesday and Wednesday 8:00AM to 6:30PM**
**Monday, Thursday, and Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM**
As a parent of a child who received special education and related services in an inclusive setting with the support of a paraprofessional I know how important it is to find valuable resources that encourage the IEP team to work together in order to appropriately meet the needs of the student. When my daughter received supports from a paraprofessional it was important to me that she not only maintain the level of independence she had but also grow and build upon those skills. As my daughter grew and had a stronger voice and advocated for herself it was important to her that the role of the paraprofessional not hinder her independence or her relationships with other staff or peers.

Sometimes there can be a fine line between meeting the needs of a student with a disability by providing necessary assistance vs overly accommodating or providing too much support for that student. We are all lifelong learners and there is always room to grow and learn more whether we are a student or an adult. This book offers opportunities for the IEP team to grow and learn together. It offers strategies and approaches that allow the team and paraprofessional to effectively support a student in an inclusive classroom while taking the student’s preference for support in mind.

In this book Julie Causton and Kate MacLeod teach the reader:

- What the meaning of paraprofessional is.
- How the law defines paraprofessional.
- The benefits of paraprofessionals.
- Inclusive education and universal design.
- How special education is a service and not a place.
- The importance of collaboration and working together as a team.

When developing the IEP the focus is always on the student. There is no better way to keep the focus on the student than by asking that student questions about their preferences for support. Kate and Julie offer a list of questions that the IEP team can consider presenting to students. Examples include:

- What are your greatest strengths?
- How do you learn best?
- How should we support you during a challenging moment?
- How would you like to communicate with teachers about progress?

This book is offers a wealth of information and is a resource you can refer back to at any time you have a question about supporting a student in an inclusive setting.

You can borrow this book from the Family Matters lending library by visiting our website. For another helpful resource check out the The Inclusive Art of Supporting Students with Behaviors that Challenge Us, a webinar presented by Kate MacLeod, archived on our website here: [https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4786](https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4786)

Other Resources Related to Paraprofessionals:

30 Minute Message - Paraprofessionals - Who Are They and What Do They Do? [https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4305](https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings/4305)
Seeking Input from Families about Inclusive Technology

CAST researchers as part of the Center on Inclusive Technology and Education Systems (CITES) project in collaboration with research intern Angel Morgan from North Carolina State University are conducting a study about ways in which school district leaders, school leaders, teachers, and service providers involve families of students with disabilities in planning, implementing, and using technology.

Family members of a K-12 student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan who attends a public school in the United States are invited to participate in a survey to share their thoughts. Survey participants may enter to win a $50 Amazon gift card and volunteer to participate in a Focus Group to provide more detailed feedback. For more information (English & Spanish) and a link to the survey, visit https://bit.ly/3L6j8Hp.

Questions? Contact Angel Morgan, email: amorgan@cast.org

Upcoming Events

April 1, 2022 via webinar Reducing Stress Through Improving Family Communication
April 6, 2022 via webinar Series on Communication/AAC
April 7, 2022 via zoom Early Intervention Zoom Meetings
April 8, 2022 in Peoria Educational Surrogate Parent Training
April 13, 2022 via webinar Series on Communication/AAC
April 20, 2022 via webinar Series on Communication/AAC
April 20, 2022 in Carbondale Educational Surrogate Parent Trainings
April 21, 2022 via webinar STEP Programs for Youth in Transition
April 26, 2022 via webinar Introduction to the Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project
April 26, 2022 in Woodstock Educational Surrogate Parent Training
April 28, 2022 via webinar Quality Indicators of Programs Serving Students with ASD

We’ll Be Your Connection

Monthly Parent-to-Parent Chats

Parents of children with special education needs, do you care to chat? Facebook chat that is.

We offer a Parent-to-Parent Chat on the first Tuesday of every month at 12:30 PM through Facebook Live. We will broach a subject, but the chat can be about anything you want to discuss. Parents offer each other tips on things like preparing for IEP meetings, finding appropriate assistive technology to assist with learning, getting behavioral supports, and more. “Like” our page and click “See First” to get all our Facebook notifications.

www.facebook.com/FamilyMattersPTIC
Educate to Advocate – What Makes Inclusion Work

Families can often become overwhelmed by today’s education system. Many times, it is difficult to keep up with the latest technology, teaching methods, best practices, and early learning outcomes. Families of young children with disabilities have even more to maneuver. Families need to understand Individual Family Service Plans, Individualized Education Programs, special education acronyms, different types of services and placements, parent rights, special education laws, and much more. The education system can completely overwhelm even the most knowledgeable person. You can learn more about inclusion for you and your family by visiting here.

Don’t miss our last scheduled inclusion parent session to learn more about implementing inclusion scheduled for Thursday, April 21, 2022, from 6:30 pm to 7:30 pm.

We’d love to hear from you! Reach out to Early CHOICES here for more information.

Can guidance during play enhance children’s learning and development in educational contexts?

The Hechinger Report summarized the findings of 17 studies on play, published in the journal, Child Development, which found that when we stop teaching young children via direct instruction and instead set up purposeful opportunities to play, they learn just as much, or more, when it comes to literacy, numeracy, and executive function skills critical to early academic success.

Guided play, unlike free play, means there is a learning goal set by an adult and children are ‘gently steered’ to explore. The study
found children also learned slightly more in some areas of numeracy, like knowledge of shapes, and showed a greater mastery of some behavioral skills, like being able to switch tasks.

These findings, published in the journal, *Child Development*, add to a growing body of research that has found play is not simply a carefree tangent to learning, but rather an effective way to teach important early skills.

“Children often struggle with mathematical concepts because they are abstract,” said Elizabeth Byrne, a co-author of the study and a research associate at the University of Cambridge, in a statement. That’s why the hands-on nature of play may be helpful. Those concepts “become easier to understand if you are actually using them in an imaginary game or playful context.”

These findings come at a time when many experts are calling for more play for kids to mitigate the trauma children have experienced during the pandemic. Last year, a report by the LEGO Foundation that looked at 26 studies of play from 18 countries found play is so powerful it can reduce inequality and close achievement gaps between children ages 3 to 6. Those studies, which also looked at free play in addition to guided play, found children progressed in several domains of learning, including language and literacy, math and social-emotional skills.

While direct instruction gets information across quickly and is effective for certain skills or lessons in a classroom, “real learning” occurs when children are active and engaged, said Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, a professor of psychology at Temple University and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. That’s why play can be so effective, she added, as children are active and engaged when playing, but may be passive listeners when sitting through some direct instruction lessons. “What it’s really about here is can we teach human brains in the way human brains learn,” Hirsh-Pasek said.

An added benefit is kids enjoy play more than sitting and listening to an adult talk at them. “The kids are happier, the teachers are happier. It’s teaching them more about how to collaborate and communicate,” she added.

You can read the full article at this link: https://hechingerreport.org/kids-can-learn-more-from-guided-play-than-direct-instruction-report-finds/

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**Illinois Self-Advocate Appointed to President’s Commission**

Congratulations to Tia Nelis for her appointment to President Biden’s Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities. The panel, which originated in 1966, advises the president and the secretary of health and human services. In addition to citizen members, 13 federal officials including the secretaries of the Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Labor, Housing and Urban Development, Commerce, Transportation, Interior and Homeland Security as well as the attorney general are part of the committee.

Tia Nelis has been active in state and national self-advocacy for many years. She is the past president of Illinois People First as well as the past chairperson of Self-Advocates Becoming Empowered. Tia was the co-director of the National TA Center for Voting and Cognitive Access in years one and two of the grant. She has done numerous training workshops and provided ongoing technical assistance for self-advocacy leaders across the nation. Tia is a well known speaker, trainer, and consultant on self-advocacy. She also was the first person with a cognitive disability to be certified as a Franklin Covey Institute Leadership trainer. Tia currently works at the University of Illinois in Chicago and is a Vote Project trainer.

Congratulations Tia, we are happy that you will be representing Illinois on this national committee and that you will be helping to shape disability policy in our country.
Youth Empowerment

Dr. Keyon L Anderson is a true believer in always progressing forward. As a young African American student, Dr. Anderson encountered and overcame many hardships while seeking a better future for himself and his family. He was exposed to poverty, gang violence, and drugs, and he cites his struggle with overcoming Dyslexia as one of his most significant challenges. Learning to read was difficult, and this discouraged him from pursuing his dreams as he felt frustrated and intimidated by peers and teachers. With a thirst for knowledge and the motivation to change educational expectations within his community, he was inspired to press ahead and excel in school.

Today, Dr. Anderson’s work focuses on helping Long Beach’s underserved populations, including those of first-generation, low-income and ethnic minority students. In seeing the struggles of other students who come from backgrounds similar to his own, Dr. Anderson desires to provide support for local communities through nonprofit work, research, and mentorship. He hopes to establish someday a nonprofit organization that focuses on fostering academic resiliency for students who are at risk for dropping out of school, mainly focusing on ethnic minorities. In cultivating a culture of parent involvement, he hopes to help families develop the skills necessary to ensure children’s academic success.

Dr. Anderson is also inspired to help students with disabilities in fighting stigma and serve as a model for student success. After achieving his Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) in 2012, he went on to attain his Masters in Social Work in 2016. He also recently completed his Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership program at the University of Southern California (USC) School of Rossie. It is a dream come true for Keyon, who once thought of USC as an "unattainable school." Since graduation from USC, Dr. Anderson has published a total of five children/teen's books and became a best-selling author. Moving from one accomplishment to the next, he now aspires to empower and transform communities like his own, through education.

During March, Keyon did a series of three webinars for Family Matters, targeted toward youth to help them set goals, believe in themselves, and plan for their futures. Those webinars are recorded and can be viewed on the Family Matters’ website by following this link: https://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings

Additional information is available at Dr. Keyon L Anderson’s website keyonanderson.com.

IEP Meeting Transition Planning Tool

Parents, does your high-school aged youth participate in their IEP meetings or does the whole process make them uncomfortable and quiet? A little preparation and practice could help your youth to be engaged and involved in their IEP meetings. Our friends at the PACER Center have a transition planning tool that is ideal for parents and youth to work on together before the date of the IEP meeting.

Check out the IEP Owner’s Manual at this link: https://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-a55.pdf
Questions:

1. Differentiated Instruction helps students with disabilities as well as students who are gifted. True or False?
2. When teachers use differentiated instruction, they individually tailor their instruction for each student in their classrooms. True or False?
3. There are two core elements of differentiated instruction; content and process. True or False?
4. Teachers who use differentiated instruction are more easily able to include students with disabilities in their general education classes. True or False?

Answers:

1. True. Differentiated instruction is an approach in which teachers adjust their curriculum and instruction to maximize the learning of all students. Instead of teaching one lesson to the whole classroom the same way, the teacher adjusts instruction according to the readiness, interests and learning needs of the students. Instead of expecting everyone to learn at the same rate, the teacher provides instruction and classwork in the proximal zone of development; in other words - work that is just right for the students to be challenged, but not too easy and not too difficult.

2. False. Differentiated instruction is a teaching approach that tailors instruction to all students’ learning needs by using flexible grouping, ongoing assessment and monitoring, while all students have the same learning goal. Unlike IEPs for students with disabilities, which provide individualized programs for each student, differentiated instruction groups students with similar learning needs and allows students to move in and out of groups as appropriate for each learning goal.

3. False. There are three core elements of differentiated instruction; content, process, and product. This means that depending on the group students are in, they may work on different skills to master the same learning goal, or participate in different activities to master the content, or use different products to show what they know. For example, to provide differentiation in content, a teacher might use various resources to teach the subject matter, such as textbooks with the same content but written at lower and higher reading levels for certain groups of students, or by using audio and written materials as well as supplemental materials for more advanced students. To differentiate the learning process, students might work in collaborative groups, do independent research, or use tools like graphic organizers or manipulatives. To differentiate the product, teachers allow students to show what they know in various ways: some students may write an essay, while others give an oral report, or others build a model to demonstrate what they have learned. Those products are an alternative to all students in the class taking the same written test on the subject they have studied.

4. True. Students with disabilities have IEPs that provide services to meet their individual needs, which include things like specialized instruction, and supports like accommodations and modifications to the general curriculum. So, when teachers are differentiating instruction in their classrooms, they are already accommodating the various readiness levels of their students, as well as using their interests to engage them in learning, and are responding to their learning needs by adjusting the way they teach the content to various groups of students. That process makes teachers better prepared to accommodate the IEP needs of students with disabilities.
Career Coach, Jackie Marquette, Offers Ten Ways To Foster Career Preparation In Youth (In This Chaotic and Unpredictable Time)

1. Reveal to youth they matter greatly, because they do.
2. Reinforce to youth the ways they have ‘purpose’ and ‘meaning’ to their daily life and to others.
3. Support youth to let go of self-criticism and self-doubt and replace with curiosity and possibility thinking.
4. Guide youth to be open to consider career options that match their strengths and become who they want to be.
5. Help youth see the ‘why’ behind their career goals and the necessary actions to get there.
6. Assist youth to take chances on their own behalf, even if only making small steps of progress at a time.
7. Teach youth when they fail not to give up on their goals, and to emphatically keep moving little-by-little, going after what they want.

In one study, the reading skills of elementary- and middle-school students who participated in a reading program that incorporated differentiated instruction improved compared to the reading skills of students who did not receive the program. 

“When a teacher tries to teach something to the entire class at the same time, “chances are, one-third of the kids already know it, one-third of the kids will get it, and the remaining third won’t. So two-thirds of the children are wasting their time.”

Lilian Katz, Professor Emeritus, College of Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

8. Train youth to see ‘failure’ as a teacher and to reflect on the loss with these two questions: What did I ‘learn’? and What did I ‘love.’
9. Mentor a young person. Your impact may be life-giving to him/her seeking their own answers about how to live in this world.
10. Appreciate all youth. When we see a young person as a gift to the world, and then we tell him/her, our impression may be just the seed that ignites a positive image or a feeling of self-value to go after that career.

All youth deserve work that brings psychological safety, belonging, and capability to perform. When a young person leaves high school or college, it can be overwhelming and scary. But youth are worthy of a job that’s aligned with their strengths, vision and values.

You can download free resources and learn more about Jackie by visiting her website or by emailing her: drjackie@drjackiemarquette.com

References:
https://www.readingrockets.org/article/what-differentiated-instruction
https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/di/ cresource/q1/p01/

Research Shows
Strategies used to differentiate instructional and assessment tasks for English language learners, gifted students, and struggling students were also effective for other students in the classroom. 
McQuarrie, McRae, & Stack-Cutler (2008)

Students with learning disabilities received more benefits from differentiated instruction than did their grade-level peers. 
McQuarrie, McRae, & Stack-Cutler (2008)
Free Assistive Technology Trainings

Brought to you by Infinitec and the Illinois State Board of Education

WEBINARS (all webinars are recorded except Jessica Minihan)

Free Technology Tools to Support Multiple Means of Expression & Action By Jennifer Skalitzky, April 8th – 11:30-12:00 Registration link: https://tinyurl.com/2p8ctxbc

Goal Writing to Foster Autistic Identity (2 Part Series, recording for 4 weeks only) By Rachel Dorsey, MS, CCC-SLP - Goal Writing to Foster Autistic Identity, Part 1, April 12th – 3:30-4:30 Registration link: https://tinyurl.com/bdfpsxr7

- Goal Writing to Foster Autistic Identity, Part 2, April 19th - 3:30-4:30, Registration link: https://tinyurl.com/mryp8ph7

From Play to Planning - Strategies to Shape the Development of Executive Function Skills in Young Learners (recording for 3 weeks only) By Sarah Ward, M.S., CCC/SLP, April 13th – 12:00-1:00, Registration link: https://tinyurl.com/2p8hr6c8

Free Technology Tools to Support Multiple Means of Representation By Samantha Conklin, MS, ATP, April 22nd – 11:30-12:00, Registration link: https://tinyurl.com/yam46uxs

The Art of Access By Daniel Rortvedt, OTD, OTR/L, April 29th – 11:30-12:30, Registration link: https://tinyurl.com/2p8vrs9p


FACE-TO-FACE – Knowledge Based Trainings


Thinking and Planning Ahead: Keys to Self-Regulation by Sarah Ward – May 25th, Rend Lake, Registration Link – Coming soon

PODD: Two Day PODD Introductory Course with Gayl Porter, June 28 and June 29, 8:30-4:30, Tinley Park, Registration link - https://bit.ly/3Kv2b9u

FACE-TO-FACE – TECH CAMP – Must attend as a team and if travel is more than 60 miles one-way a hotel room will be provided.

Ready-Set-Write! Facilitated by Gretchen Hanser, 2 Day Tech Series, June 15 and 16, 2022, 8:00am – 3:30pm, Tinley Park, Applications accepted here: https://bit.ly/HanserTechCamp2022

ZOOM BOOK CLUBS FOR AAC USERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Book Club for Families with their Students in Elementary Grades K – 4 beginning April 27- Registration link - https://bit.ly/3IHBgKR

Book Club for Families with their Students in Elementary Grades 5-8 beginning April 27- Registration link - https://bit.ly/36OM0FC