Self-Care in the Time of Coronavirus

We have been hearing a lot of parents talk about the toll that the pandemic is having on their mental health so we want to share some recommendations from the clinical psychologists at the Child Mind Institute, who say that for parents, prioritizing your own well-being benefits your whole family.

All families are different, but during the pandemic most families have had their lives disrupted. Having the kids out of school for so many months, dealing with the lack of childcare resources, remote learning, remote working or loss of employment, financial hardships, Zoom meetings, Zoom classrooms, remote learning plans, behavioral issues from disrupted routines, the list goes on ......

Many parents have taken on so many new roles that self-care often slips to the bottom of the list. The experts at the Child Mind Institute remind us that taking care of yourself isn’t a luxury. It’s essential. And during this difficult time, when children are home and stress is running high, it’s more important than ever. They offer five tips from their clinicians that can help.

⇒ Make time for yourself. Much of the personal time that was part of daily routines – commutes, time alone at home or at the store, social time with friends – is not available for folks with kids at home. So you have to be intentional about creating space to recharge.

⇒ Prioritize healthy choices. The added stress and lack of structure can make it easy to slip into habits that feel good in the moment but can be detrimental in the long term. Make sure you’re eating enough nutritional food, try to get enough sleep, and some physical activity.

⇒ Be realistic. Avoid burnout by setting realistic expectations and giving yourself grace if you can’t meet them.

⇒ Set boundaries. With so much worry and uncertainty floating around it can be easy to absorb other people’s fears and concerns without even realizing it. Take a break from worrying news, or friends or family members who share worst-case-scenario news.
Self-Care in the Time of Coronavirus, cont.

⇒ Reconnect with things you enjoy. Think about hobbies or activities you enjoy but rarely have time for and use the forced time at home to take them up again or choose to learn a new skill. Being kind to yourself will not only help you stay calm during this difficult time, it will help insure that you have the bandwidth you need to take good care of your family. When you take care of your own needs, you’re filling your tank, emotionally and physically and that means you’ll be in a position to offer comfort and care to others when they need it most.

You can read the entire article here: https://childmind.org/article/self-care-in-the-time-of-coronavirus/ and also find links to more great resources on why self-care is essential to parenting, preventing parent burnout, and managing anger and frustration during coronavirus parenting.

Speak Up and Speak Out Summit
Virtual Conference
November 16-20, 2020
Zoom Speaker Sessions, Zoom FUN Sessions

Speaker topics include:
⇒ Disability Awareness: How to Work Together
⇒ Self-Advocates & Sexuality: We Have Rights!
⇒ Special Chronicles: Giving Respect and Voice to People with Disabilities through Digital Media Storytelling
⇒ The Election is Over: Now What?
⇒ Get Involved in Holiday Celebrations
⇒ Disability is Part of Social Justice/Diversity Movements/Work
⇒ Through the Same Door: Inclusion Includes College and Beyond
⇒ Going to College and the Challenges Faced
⇒ Finding Success Through Struggle
⇒ Being the Best Advocate That You Can Be
⇒ #Hear our Voices!: Stories from People of Color with Disabilities
⇒ Disabled I AM
⇒ Financial Wellness
⇒ Wellness Recovery Action Plan—W.R.A.P.

This virtual conference is for self-advocates and those who support youth with disabilities

Summit website: https://www.speakupspeakoutsummit.org/
The Return to School

Many schools have resumed in-person learning but going to school is still far from what a typical school year looks like. In some districts only the youngest students are attending, while older students continue with remote learning. In other school districts a blended plan is used with alternate days of in-person and remote. In many cases, school days of attendance are shorter than normal. Classrooms look different with social distancing requirements and masks on students and teachers. Teachers and therapists move from classroom to classroom so that students stay in the same class for the duration of the school day. And some families of students of all ages are choosing remote learning because of health concerns. Regardless of what scenario fits your family, it is helpful to know about the guidelines and considerations when making decisions about how your children will be taught.

The State Superintendent has determined that days of instruction during a public health emergency must include at least 5 clock hours. Remote and Blended Remote Learning Plans must ensure that at least 5 clock hours of a combination of instruction and school work for each student participating in Remote or Blended Remote Learning Days occurs. Schools and districts should include as much face-to-face or synchronous instruction as possible. Districts can be flexible in determining how to best meet the requirement in their own context by counting all learning activities toward the 5 clock hour expectation. Learning activities may include, but are not limited to, in-person instruction, the teacher delivering instruction via recorded video or synchronous platform, remote small group work via breakout room or conference call, independent/flexible student work time, and virtual/telephone teacher-student check-ins. If using non-interactive platforms, students must have means to confer with an educator and receive feedback before assignments are graded or assessments are administered.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) strongly recommends that districts ground their school plans in equity by providing each student the additional individual supports and resources they need to address learning loss and make academic gains to meet grade-level standards.

ISBE strongly encourages districts to provide in-person instruction to students. However, schools and districts that are unable to adhere to IDPH requirements may choose to implement Blended Remote Learning Days, which are authorized by PA 101-0643. During these days, schools and districts may utilize hybrid models of in-person and remote instruction. A high priority should be placed on providing in-person instruction for students who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), 504 Plans, and/or who receive English language supports when building an equitable schedule for Blended Remote Learning Days. These students should be in attendance in-person daily during Blended Remote Learning Days. In addition, schools should consider prioritizing in-person instruction for students under the age of 13 and those who have had greater difficulty learning remotely, as evidenced by the intake form and attendance rates from spring 2020. IEP teams should consider appropriate in-person instruction for special education students.

Continued on page 4
The U.S. Department of Education’s guidance states, “Where, due to the global emergency and resulting closures of schools, there has been an inevitable delay in providing services – or even making decisions about how to provide services - Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams must make an individualized determination whether and to what extent compensatory services may be needed when schools resume normal operations.” Compensatory services have to be determined on an individual basis and are normally used when districts have failed to provide the services agreed to in the IEP. The pandemic shutdown was unexpected and disrupted services through no fault of the school districts. But if your school district did not make an effort to find alternative ways to provide services and your child has lost skills then you may be entitled to compensatory services. This means parents need to share with their IEP teams, how the disruption in school has affected their children. Their present levels of performance, the part of the IEP that describes what their current learning levels are, may have changed if they have lost skills during the school closures. Schools won’t know that unless parents share that information. So, be sure to look at your child’s IEP and compare what they can do now with what is written in the present levels section and if there is a difference, you can ask for an IEP meeting to review and revise the goals and services.

Consider holding a reintegration meeting with school staff, parents/guardians/caregivers, and students to address any specific health concerns or learning needs or gaps identified during remote learning. Schools and districts should review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s list of those who are at higher risk of severe illness if they are exposed to the coronavirus. Administration should work closely with school nurses and/or other health officials, as well as the student’s medical provider, to determine safe alternatives to in-person instruction. Schools and districts should consider continuing remote instruction for medically fragile students, students at a higher risk of severe illness, and students who live with individuals at higher risk of severe illness for the duration of Phase 4.

Considerations should include:

> Whether the student’s medical condition is conducive to in-person attendance or if needs would best be met remotely.

> The student’s behavior and capacities, including to control secretions, cover mouth/nose when sneezing and coughing, ability to maintain distance from other classmates, ability to tolerate wearing a face covering (may consider option of face shield instead), ability to wash hands with/without assistance, and ability/safety of use of hand sanitizer. Students with an IEP or 504 plan who are unable to wear a face covering or face shield due to medical conditions may not be denied access to in-person learning if their school is offering in-person learning to other students.

> Number of students per classroom and ability to maintain 6-foot distance, when possible.

> The CDC recommends, where possible, that teachers rather than students move between classes.

The Maryland State Department of Education notes, “Research on summer slide shows that a break or slowdown in instruction has a greater negative impact on math as compared to English Language Arts. This suggests that, if school systems cannot teach all subjects in person, it may be beneficial to prioritize the teaching of math in person (or at least synchronously via distance learning). Additionally, students are more likely to receive help at home in reading than in math.”

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Continued from page 4

There are many things to think about when deciding when your child should go back to school in-person, if they haven’t already. Just remember that communication is most important in these decisions. You can ask for an IEP meeting at any time and it can be in-person or virtual. You have a lot of information to share with the team about what you have observed during the long period of home learning, what has been most difficult for your child, what their current skill level is, whether they made any progress or whether they lost any skills, or whether they gained any new skills. Communicating with your IEP team members about what worked and what didn’t work will help to get the right supports for this school year.

References and additional resources:

ISBE Fall 2020 Learning Recommendations
https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Fall-2020-Learning-Rec.pdf

Illinois Priority Learning Standards for 2020 school year

Back to School Decision Making Tool for Parents

Public Health Guidance on when to exclude children from schools and daycares due to COVID

Frequently asked Questions for Parents of Students with Disabilities Regarding School Year 20-21

The Myth of Average

Todd Rose dropped out of high school with less than a 2.0 grade point average. Yet, he went on to successfully complete college and became a Harvard University faculty member. He is a proponent of Universal Design for Learning because he recognizes that there are no average students. He is concerned about the 50,000 students who drop out of high school every year because it is such a waste of human potential. When students drop out of school we often blame the students or the parents or the teachers. Todd Rose thinks the blame lies with bad design of our educational system. He says that when curriculums are designed for average students it destroys the talents of many students because they don’t nurture individual potential.

We know that all students have strengths and weaknesses and vary on the dimensions of learning. All students have jagged profiles. So, Todd Rose thinks we need to learn lessons from the Air Force who realized they had a problem with they bought expensive fighter jets designed for average sized pilots, when the Air Force had no average-sized pilots. The solution was to require manufacturers of jets to design cockpits that would accommodate the full range of pilot sizes. Todd Rose says schools districts are the biggest buyers of iPads, so we need to embrace technology changes and do more to use technology to nurture the potential of every student.

He proposes that we ban the average in education and embrace “technology as the equivalent of adjustable seats”.

You can listen to Todd Rose explain the myth of average in a Ted Talk at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eBmyttcflU4
Support Your Child’s Learning During COVID

As educators and communities grapple with the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's difficult to know what "school" will look like from day to day, much less week to week. For many parents, the question is a bit more focused: What can I do to best support my child’s continued learning, whether it be fully online or some version of in-person and virtual?

The Parents: Supporting Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic module from the IRIS Center clarifies what is—and what is not—a parent’s role, promotes young people’s social and emotional well-being, and addresses special considerations for children with disabilities.

More, the module includes practical, real-world tips and strategies for:

- Keeping up with what your child is expected to learn
- Creating and sharing learning spaces in what are often crowded living environments
- Reducing distractions and other obstacles to learning
- Using lessons learned from the Spring to improve learning at home this Fall

Collaborating with the Families of Students with Disabilities

Family engagement is a best practice in which families and school personnel collaborate to support and improve the learning and development of children. Simply put, when families and schools work together to help children with disabilities grow socially and academically, they are more likely to be successful.

The Family Engagement: Collaborating with Families of Students with Disabilities module from the IRIS Center overviews:

- Many of the challenges faced by these families, including emotional responses to disability, the stressors of daily living, and more
- Practical strategies and tips that educators can use to cultivate and maintain positive, meaningful relationships with families to better support the learning and behavior outcomes of their students
- Actions that educators can take to engage families
- Ways to involve families during distance learning

https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/fam/#content

The IRIS Center is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions.
Join STARNET to learn together, play together and celebrate families of young children! Gather useful information, helpful tips, and fun activities for learning at home! Prizes every session!

**WHEN:** Saturday, November 7, 2020

FREE workshops through the day & short family activities in between!

**WHERE:** Live! in your own home - on your computer

**WHO:** parents/guardians, caregivers, children

**WHAT:** Lots of great learning and activities to celebrate you!

### 8:30am-10:00am  Sign-Language Basics

Have some fun while learning the beautiful language of sign! Simple signs such as the alphabet, numbers, food and drink, animals, clothing, and basic needs signs will be taught. All ages are welcome and will be encouraged to participate. Lots of laughter, love and language will be shared. Hope to see you there!

Register here: [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwof-igpzwoH9L3876LT0vSF9ysD0CAKwzn](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwof-igpzwoH9L3876LT0vSF9ysD0CAKwzn)

### 10:30am-12:00pm  Safekeeping, Security and Peace of Mind for You and Your Family

During times of uncertainty and frequent change, adults seek ways to gain stability, composure and prioritize what matters most. Guess what? Our kids are seeking the same in the form of routines, structure and consistency. This workshop is designed for parents who want to learn about tools and approaches to build emotional safekeeping, security, and peace of mind for themselves and for their children.

Register here: [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMqduqurzoqGtwG0sCu678wi80Mk_AOL2](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJMqduqurzoqGtwG0sCu678wi80Mk_AOL2)

### 12:30pm-2:00pm  Supporting Your Child’s Independence Skills

For young children, learning skills for independence increases self-esteem, motivation to try new things, and an eagerness to learn that applies to so many areas. Join us to learn how you can teach and support your child to learn independence skills at home, and discover how happy they are to be a helper on the family team! We’ll share tips and strategies you can use today!

Register here: [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tlLqfuivrjkJH90p0EpCf5Es1A044vmHYv-G](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tlLqfuivrjkJH90p0EpCf5Es1A044vmHYv-G)

### 2:30pm-4:00pm  Self-Care for the Caregivers

In this interactive session, we will discuss the importance of simple things, and using them to provide your body and mind nutrition, stimulation and relaxation. Our nervous systems are overwhelmed during these crazy times, and we need to UP the game of taking care of those that take care of our people, including ourselves. You will learn new tricks, tips and ways to incorporate health and well-being into your busy life.

Register Here: [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/)
“Thanks so much for your help. I can’t imagine doing this without you being there.”
(a parent working with our new Information Specialist, Abbi Mars)

Struggling with How to Help Your Child with Online?

During the last few months of the past school year, many parents expressed frustration and feelings of inadequacy about helping their children with the remote learning they were suddenly and unexpectedly forced into. Summer provided a break but now that the new school year is underway, there are still many families forced into overseeing their children’s remote learning, or who are choosing the remote learning option as the safest route for their families.

A September online journal from the Center for Mental Health in Schools in the Department of Psychology at UCLA, is devoted to tips for parents who are assisting kids with online instruction. It is full of helpful guidance on how to talk with your child instead of to your child, how to engage them in learning instead of forcing them to learn, and how to account for individual differences in stages of development and motivation. It contains material that will help you to understand student motivation.

The online journal, Addressing Barriers to Learning, September edition is available here: http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdffdocs/newsletter/fall2020.pdf.

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.
Dr. Mel Levine was a pediatrician with a high interest in working with kids who had trouble learning or getting along in school. He traveled all over the world, speaking publicly about how to help children with learning problems and working with other doctors and teachers to help them understand how students learn best. He believed that no child should feel like a failure.

When Dr. Levine was a young child in school, he experienced learning problems. Because of his own experience compensating for his learning problems, he is well-suited to helping children develop strategies, focus on their strengths, and develop skills to improve their school performance and reach their goals and dreams. After all, he became a Rhodes Scholar, went to medical school, became a doctor, and has had a very successful career. So, who better to talk to kids about learning problems and what to do about them?

In All Kinds of Minds, Dr. Levine does just that. This book is written for young people and begins by introducing five children as they get on their school bus to head to school for the first day of the school year. That is followed by a chapter on each of the five children’s different learning disabilities. The reader learns about Eddie’s attention deficit disorder, Sonya’s reading disability, Bill’s memory problems, Eve’s language disorder, and Derek’s social and motor skills problems. Each of their learning problems are described in a story format, within the context of school or family life. Children listening to the book or reading the book who have any of those learning disabilities, will recognize and relate to similar situations that they have experienced.

After hearing the stories about how learning disabilities affect the children’s ability to pay attention, listen and follow directions, complete homework, make and keep friends, understand lectures, keep organized, and tell what they know, Dr. Levine devotes the remaining chapters to explaining evaluations and getting help for these learning problems.

It’s a very positive, uplifting way to help children understand how they learn and what they need in order to be successful in school. Dr. Levine’s emphasis is on diversity and the reality that all minds are different and there is no one right way to learn. At the end of the book he includes a chapter on his own kind of mind, describes the difficulty he had in learning, how he learned to compensate and how he focused on his own strengths.

All kinds of Minds is the perfect book for parents to read to or with their children who have learning disabilities and who may be feeling discouraged, or have given up, or feel inferior to their classmates.

This book is available in the Family Matters lending library and can be checked out from our website or by calling our office.
Make Mental Health a Priority for Students

The challenges of remote learning, social distancing, and new classroom restrictions can cause emotional stress for both our students and teachers. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency and local emergency managers have highlighted various resources to help the public make mental health a priority during these unprecedented times.

“When we think of school safety, we often think of violence or storm preparedness, but the mitigation measures associated with COVID-19 underscores the importance of mental health awareness,” said IEMA Director Alicia Tate-Nadeau. “Behavioral Threat Assessment Teams are great resources to identify behavior and trends that can lead to early intervention, but when students are not in class more tools are needed to check on the wellbeing of our students.”

The Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF) School Safety Working Group was created in 2018 to help improve safety in Illinois Schools. This group of subject matter experts has focused their efforts on providing practical and helpful recommendations for schools to adopt. These recommendations range from physical school improvements, policy suggestions, increasing mental health services, information sharing and more. [ITTF_School_Safety_Working_Group_Recommendations.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/ready/plan/Documents/ITTF_School_Safety_Working_Group_Recommendations.pdf)

Now, more than ever, our parents and educators need reliable information to help protect our students. Everybody experiences mental health issues in different ways. Students who are contemplating hurting themselves or others frequently give warning signs of their distress. Some common signs of distress include not acting like they normally do, a loss of interest in things they used to enjoy, talking about feelings of hopelessness, being more reckless, or isolating from family and friends.

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) recognizes that student well-being extends beyond learning and nutrition. To that end, the ISBE website features additional tools that can help provide care for mental/emotional wellbeing of our educators and our students. [www.isbe.net](http://www.isbe.net)

The National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement has several resources specifically related to mental health and coping with pandemic. These resources are specifically tailored for educators, school staff and parents. These videos and presentations have been adopted by the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA) and the National School Superintendents Association (AASA). [https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/](https://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/)

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) also has a helpline for residents who need emotional support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Illinoisans can text "TALK" to 552020 (or "HABLAR" for Spanish) for the Call4Calm service. The text line is free of charge and designed to support residents who are experiencing stress.

To learn more about how you can help a friend, student, parent or co-worker, visit [ready.illinois.gov](http://ready.illinois.gov)

“Thank you for what you do. I can’t tell you how much I appreciate the information you have provided. I have learned so much already in one phone call.”

(Parent who worked with Karrie Potter, Information Specialist at Family Matters)
TOT SPOT

What Has Stayed the Same and A Few Resources

As we all adjust to the every-changing nature of our lives right now, let us remember some things that will never change. We are the experts on our children. We know our children’s strengths and challenges, what makes them laugh, what helps them feel soothed. Our children rely on us to let them know that they are safe. And, we have places to go to get the supports we need.

Here are some resources that might be especially helpful now:

Relaxation Exercises in English and in Spanish
https://www.ecmhc.org/relaxation_exercises.html

Tips for Supporting Yourself During the Pandemic In English
https://challengingbehavior.cbc.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic_Supporting-Yourself_tipsheet.pdf

Tips for Supporting Yourself During the Pandemic In Spanish
https://challengingbehavior.cbc.usf.edu/docs/Pandemic_Supporting-Yourself_tipsheet_SP.pdf

Using Mindfulness with Children of All Abilities to Keep Connections Strong

For more resources, follow Early CHOICES on Facebook, Instagram, & Twitter @earlychoicesorg

Emily Ropars
Inclusion Specialist, Early CHOICES
www.eclre.org

What Kids Want Teachers to Know About Them

The young children in this video, are learning self-advocacy skills. They have messages for their teachers (and parents, too) about what they need in order to be able to learn, and how the way they are given directions affects their ability to follow them. Check it out!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITMLzXzgB_s
Equip for Equality’s Transition Project - Ensuring Students Receive Transition Services So They Can Realize Goals of Independence

The Special Education Clinic at Equip for Equality is initiating a Transition Project this fall. The Transition Project’s mission is to ensure that students age 14 ½ to 22 receive appropriate transition evaluations, planning, and services that are both timely and individualized to prepare students for post-secondary education, training, employment, and independent living. The project also helps prevent the improper graduation of students with disabilities before they can fully access appropriate transition services to prepare them for life post-graduation.

EFE provides the following free legal services:

Legal advice on transition services and what to include in IEPs.

Attendance at IEP meetings (in select cases) to help with transition planning.

Assistance with negotiation or mediation to support parents and students in having schools develop appropriate transition plans and implement transition services.

Assistance to prevent premature graduation and remedy improper graduations.

Special education know-your-rights trainings for community service providers, parents, advocacy groups, and schools.

If you need help, have further questions, or would like to schedule a training, contact Emily Wilson, Equip for Equality attorney and Skadden Fellow, at EmilyW@equipforequality.org or 312.895.7309. For more information about Equip for Equality, please visit https://www.equipforequality.org/.

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

The National Bullying Prevention Center, PACER, in Minnesota, has many free resources for parents, educators and students who want to change bullying behaviors. The Student Action Plan Against Bullying is designed for youth to complete, with or without an adult, to help them think through a difficult situation and determine steps to change what is happening to them or someone else. Whether someone is the target of bullying, a witness, or the person who bullies, this plan can help guide potential responses and action-based solution. A supplemental parent and educator guide is also available.

The Student Action Plan template and example is here: https://www.pacer.org/publications/bulypdf/BP-25.pdf

The parent and educator guide is here: https://pacer.org/publications/bulypdf/BP-37.pdf

Many additional bullying resources can be found at PACER’s website.

Parents and Professionals
www.PACER.org/Bullying

Middle & High School Students
www.PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org

Elementary School Students
www.PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org
Office of Special Education  
U.S. Department of Education

Transition Guide to Postsecondary Education and Employment  
for Students and Youth with Disabilities

This updated August 2020 guide provides resources to advance efforts in ensuring that all students and youth with disabilities are equipped with the skills and knowledge to achieve their post-school and career goals.


Items Available From Our Lending Library
Books on Student Learning

A Guide to Helping Your Child At Home—Developing Foundational Skills in Reading and Writing  
Diana Hanbury King  
Covers what you need to know to teach reading and writing skills to children from preschool through the primary grades.

Winning the Study Game—Learning How to Succeed at School  
Lawrence J. Greene  
Includes guidance on developing a personal study plan, organizing study materials, setting up a study environment, taking notes, studying for tests, setting priorities, and developing strategies to head off problems.

25 Strategies for Guiding Readers through Informational Text  
Barbara Moss  
Assists parents and teachers in helping children learn how to read and to enjoy nonfiction books and articles.

Authentic Learning in the Digital Age—Engaging Students through Inquiry  
Larissa Pahomov  
Describes how to set learners up to inquire, research, present, and reflect.

To borrow these items free of cost go to: www.fmptic.org/library
Families Matter at School                                                                  Fall 2020

Test Your Knowledge About…

Specific Learning Disabilities

Questions:

1. The term Specific Learning Disability is one of the eligibility categories for special education services and includes intellectual impairments, as well as executive functioning impairments. True or False?

2. To be identified with a Specific Learning Disability, a student would need to have a specialized neuropsychological evaluation. True or False?

3. Besides specially designed instruction, some other common services for students who have Specific Learning Disabilities include the use of assistive technology. True or False?

4. Sometimes students are identified as having Specific Learning Disabilities after first going through the process of a multi-tiered system of supports. True or False?

Answers:

1. False. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, motor, intellectual, or emotional disabilities. The Illinois and the federal definition of specific learning disability (SLD) is: “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia”. Students with SLD struggle with reading, math, writing, language or spelling, not because they have intellectual impairments, but because their brains process information differently than typical students. People with SLDs have average or above average intelligence and are able to comprehend material at grade level or above, as long as they receive appropriate accommodations and supports. For example, students with dyslexia (a reading disorder), may not be able to read and comprehend a textbook written at their grade level, but if accommodated with the text in an audio format, their understanding may be at their grade level. Some students with SLDs also have problems with executive functioning skills, such as organizing, planning, and prioritizing, but so do many students with other kinds of disabilities. SLDs are often called “hidden disabilities” because upon meeting a person with a learning disability it may not be apparent that they struggle to demonstrate a skill level expected for their age. SLDs are lifelong challenges; they can’t be fixed, that’s why it is important to get specialized instruction to increase their skill levels and to use accommodations that “level the playing field” for their access to materials and information. Examples of SLDs are: dyscalculia, difficulty with understanding numbers and learning math facts; dysgraphia, difficulty with handwriting and fine motor skills; dyslexia, difficulty with reading; non-verbal learning disability, difficulty interpreting nonverbal cues like facial expressions or body language and may include poor coordination; dyspraxia, problems with movement, coordination, language and speech; and oral/written language disorder, difficulty understanding what they read or hear or express in spoken language.
2. **False.** Most students with SLDs are evaluated by school psychologists through multiple measures, including cognitive assessments, adaptive skills assessments, achievement testing, curriculum-based measurements and standardized assessments. In other words, school psychologists look at how students perform on district-wide assessments that are routinely given to all students, at tests given by teachers on the materials taught in the classroom, at the test given by the school psychologist to measure general intelligence, at questionnaires completed by parents on adaptive or daily living skills, and at other specialized assessments to pinpoint exactly how the student learns and to find their areas of strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes, after reviewing all those measures, parents and/or schools may decide that a neuropsychological evaluation may be needed to give more specific information about how student’s brain processes information. Neuropsychological evaluations are not required to determine a student’s eligibility for special education under the category of SLD, but may be helpful in figuring out the most appropriate interventions for an individualized program for the student.

3. **True.** Assistive technology can “level the playing field” for students with SLDs and allow them to access the general curriculum. Students with reading disabilities need specialized instruction, but also can use audio books to access their grade-level texts. Students with writing disabilities can use voice-to-text software on a computer to produce their written work. Students with math disorders can use calculators to solve problems. Students with language disorders can use work prediction software, etc. Each year more and more “universal design” is incorporated in the devices people use in their everyday lives making learning more accessible for a wider array of learning abilities.

4. **True.** Both federal and state laws allow the use of response to evidence-based interventions as part of the process for determining if students have specific learning disabilities. In Illinois, a multi-tiered system of supports is required to be implemented in all classrooms. That MTSS process identifies children who are not succeeding with the tier one support that is high quality evidence-based instruction delivered to all the students in that grade, and offers additional tier two supports that are interventions targeted to their specific areas of need in academics, behavior, and school culture. Children who don’t make sufficient progress with tier two supports may then need the comprehensive evaluations (mentioned in the answer to question #2) to determine if there is a learning disability, or they may receive more intensive tier three supports, or they may receive both.

If you have questions about learning disabilities you can call our office and consult with one of our Information Specialists, at 866-436-7842. Two excellent resources for information about specific learning disabilities are the Learning Disabilities Association of America, [www.ldaamerica.org](http://www.ldaamerica.org), and Smart kids with Learning Disabilities [www.smartkidswithLD.org](http://www.smartkidswithLD.org).

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**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
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](http://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.

Here are a few to check out:

Remote Learning for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Tips and Tricks to Make It Work!
Presented by Barbara Doyle

Updated Information: Your Child’s Special Education Rights During COVID-19 Remote Learning
Presented by Mike Shea, Equip for Equality

Advocating for Appropriate Transition Assessments and Services
Presented by Mike Shea, Equip for Equality

Using A Social Story to Explain the Coronavirus
Presented by Dr. Kerry Magro

CENSUS 2020

Census statistics are used to determine the number of seats each state holds in the U.S. House of Representatives and inform how billions of dollars in federal funds will be allocated by state, local, and federal lawmakers annually for the next 10 years. The Census Bureau strongly encourages households that have not yet responded to the census to complete their questionnaire online at [2020census.gov](http://2020census.gov) or by phone at 1-844-330-2020 in English and 1-844-468-2020 in Spanish by September 30, 2020.

Upcoming Events at Family Matters

Register at: [http://www.fmptic.org/events/](http://www.fmptic.org/events/)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>10-27-20</td>
<td>Your Child’s Right to Appropriate Transition Services presented by Emily Wilson and Mike Shea</td>
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<td>of Equip for Equality</td>
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<td>11-10-20</td>
<td>Tools to Support Executive Function While Learning at Home presented by Jenn Skalitzky of Infinte</td>
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Other Upcoming Events

11-07-20
**Super Family Saturday** for parents of children birth to eight with special learning needs
STAR NET Virtual Event

11-16-20 through 11-20-20
**Speak Up and Speak Out Summit** for self-advocates and those who support youth with disabilities
Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities Virtual Event
[https://www.speakupspeakoutsummit.org/](https://www.speakupspeakoutsummit.org/)