

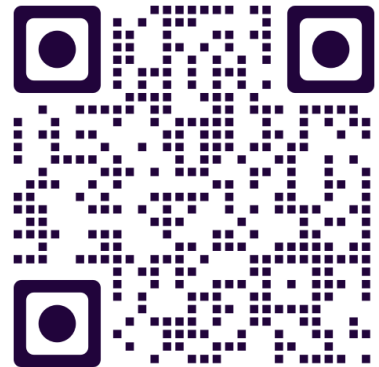
OLD BRIDGE TOWNSHIP



PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Simple Guide to Understanding Special Education

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AGENDA

- What drives Special Education Services?
- Overview of Timelines and Meetings
- Review of the Components of the IEP
- How Can Parents Get Involved
- Q&A



**"An Investment in
Knowledge Pays the Best
Interest"**

BEN FRANKLIN

Three Major Components that Drive Special Education Services

- Data should identify learning style, strengths, and areas of need/support
- Needs/Supports- how does the IEP help them achieve their goals?
- Proceed- How does the Special Education process work? What are the components of the IEP evaluations and timelines?



THE ELIGIBILITY PROCESS



**TIMELINES, EVALUATIONS,
MEETINGS, DECISIONS**

Referral

A referral is a written request for an evaluation that is given to a school district when a child is suspected of having a disability and might need Special Education Services

Who can make a referral?

Parents

School Staff

Agencies concerned with the welfare of the students, including the NJ DOE

A parent can write a letter requesting an evaluation

Identification Meeting



Within 20 calendar days of receiving a referral, the school district must hold a meeting to decide whether an evaluation will be conducted.



If Yes, discussion and agreement on evaluations that will be used to determine eligibility



If No, recommendations may be made regarding interventions (RTI) or supports provided to general education students

Evaluations

- ▶ The process includes a review of any relevant data, and the individual administration of any tests, assessments and observations of the child.
- ▶ At least two child study team members must participate in the initial evaluation along with any other specialists whose observations are necessary for a meaningful assessment of the child's needs.

Eligibility

The parent must receive copies of evaluation report(s) and other documents and info used to determine eligibility no less than **10** calendar days before the meeting.



To be eligible for special education & related services:

A student must have a disability according to one of the eligibility categories;

The disability must adversely affect the student's educational performance; and

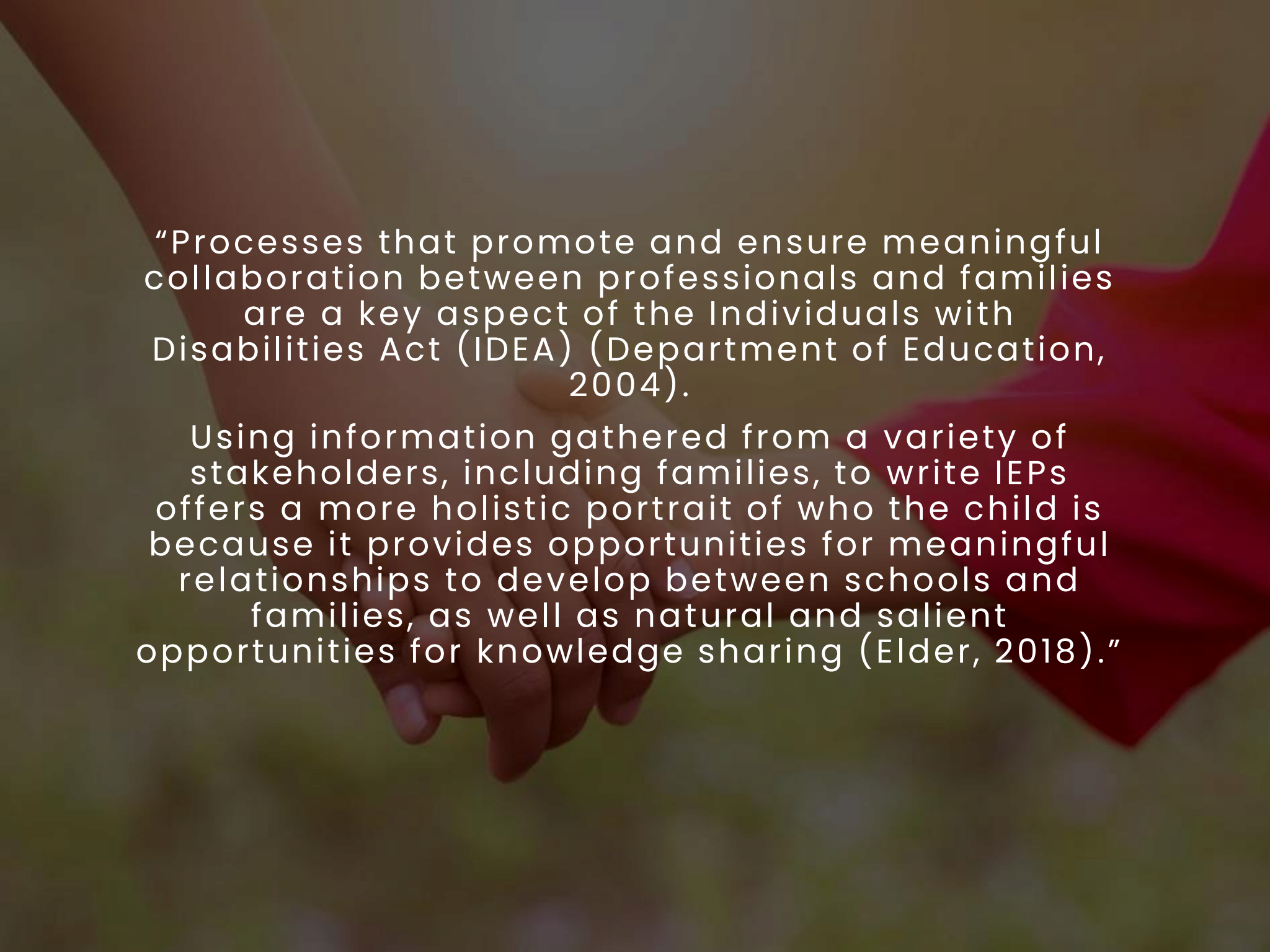
The student must be in need of special education and related services.



The Rule of 1 Signature

Individualized Education Program





“Processes that promote and ensure meaningful collaboration between professionals and families are a key aspect of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (Department of Education, 2004).

Using information gathered from a variety of stakeholders, including families, to write IEPs offers a more holistic portrait of who the child is because it provides opportunities for meaningful relationships to develop between schools and families, as well as natural and salient opportunities for knowledge sharing (Elder, 2018).”

The Big Picture

- ▶ The purpose of an IEP
 - ▶ to establish measurable annual goals for the child
 - ▶ to state the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services that the school district will provide to the student
- ▶ The IEP is a blueprint AND a living document

Basic Rights of Federal IDEA and NJAC 6A-14

A golden scale of justice with a gavel resting on a stack of books. The scale is positioned in the center-left of the image, with the gavel lying horizontally across the top of the books. The books are stacked vertically, with the top one being the most prominent. The background is a dark, textured grey.

- ▶ Provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE)
- ▶ Development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- ▶ Inclusive of Parent Participation

The IEP Team

- ▶ Parent
- ▶ At least one general education teacher
- ▶ Someone qualified to provide or supervise special education
- ▶ Someone who can interpret evaluation results
- ▶ Someone who can make commitments on behalf of the district
- ▶ Student, when appropriate

Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Levels

- ▶ Describes your child's present abilities, skills, weaknesses, and strengths- both academically and functionally
- ▶ Explains how learning differences affect your child's ability to learn the Gen Ed curriculum
- ▶ Should be clearly written and include specific details
- ▶ The PLAAFP serves as a starting point for the coming year's IEP. From that baseline, the IEP team develops measurable annual goals.

PLAAFP Examples

Vague: Brianna is not progressing adequately in the 2nd grade reading curriculum.

Clear: Brianna is reading 15-20 words per minute (WPM) with three to eight errors in 2nd grade materials. She reads slowly with inaccurate decoding skills.

Vague: Jack is a friendly boy

Clear: Jack has strong collaboration skills and can work effectively with peers in large and small groups

Parent Tip: Positive Student Profile

Goals & Objectives



Annual IEP goals are statements that describe what knowledge, skills and/or behaviors a student is expected to achieve within the year the IEP will be in effect



The IEP must include measurable annual goals consistent with the student's needs and abilities, as identified in the student's PLAAFP.



Annual goals should focus on knowledge, skills, behaviors and strategies to address the needs that are preventing the student from progressing in the general education environment

Parent Tip: When appropriate, include goals that address functional or non-academic skill areas. These include – but aren't limited to – social skills, communication skills, organizational skills, behavioral skills and study skills

Goals & Objectives

Benchmarks are the major milestones that the student will demonstrate that will lead to the annual goal. Benchmarks usually designate a target time period for a behavior to occur (Generally, benchmarks establish performance levels that allow for regular progress checks which coincide with the reporting periods for informing parents of their child's progress toward the annual goals

Parent Tip

The IEP should include a goal for each need identified in the present levels of performance, as well as for any needs that correspond with modifications or accommodations.

Supplementary Aids & Services

AIDS, SERVICES, AND OTHER SUPPORTS THAT ARE PROVIDED IN REGULAR EDUCATION CLASSES, OTHER EDUCATION-RELATED SETTINGS, AND IN EXTRACURRICULAR AND NONACADEMIC SETTINGS, TO ENABLE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES TO BE EDUCATED WITH NONDISABLED CHILDREN TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT APPROPRIATE.

Supplementary Aids & Services

- Adapted equipment- pencil grip, special seat
- 1:1 aide
- Assistive Technology
- Training for staff, student, parents
- Adapted materials- books on audio, large print, highlighted notes
- Collaboration/consultation among staff, parents, other professionals such as OT, BCBA, Mobility Specialist, etc

Parent Tip: ensure that what is selected is justified in the PLAAFP, consider aids and services for supporting both academic and functional needs, consider aids and services that may be needed in extra-curricular activities and other nonacademic activities to promote access with peers.

Measurement & Progress Reporting

Goals should identify easily measurable evaluation criteria and procedures that allow the district to ensure the student is making progress toward annual goals

Parent Tip: Goals and objectives are the destination; data regarding progress are the rest stops along the way. Progress reports reflect progress through data. If a child is not making progress, you can request a meeting to discuss, adjust or amend the goals and objectives.

Placement

... To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities ... are educated with children who are nondisabled; and ... special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. [§300.114(a)(2)(i)]

Parent Tip: Question to consider- "how can we implement this IEP in the gen ed classroom with supports and services?" Any decision to remove a child from the general education classroom must be justified in writing in the IEP; Observe Proposed Placement

Parent Input

Why? You're an equal member of the IEP team and you share unique insights about your child

This is such a simple way to advocate for your child and it can create a huge impact.

It doesn't have to be lengthy and fancy, a few sentences or bullet points will get your input across. Keep it fact based and use supporting data when available

Prior Written Notice (PWN)

Prior written notice is one of the most important parental rights in Special Education. It must include a full description of what the school plans to do or refuses to do. It must also give parents the following:

- ▶ An explanation of why the school wants to make this change or is refusing to make the change you requested
- ▶ A description of other options that were considered and why those options were rejected
- ▶ A description of each test or record the school used in making the decision
- ▶ A reminder that parents have legal rights to procedural safeguards
- ▶ Information about how parents can get a written copy of their legal rights
- ▶ Contact information for help in understanding their rights

What Can You Do To Prepare?



Positive Student Profile



Option to Record



Bring a +1



Request a virtual observation
prior to meeting



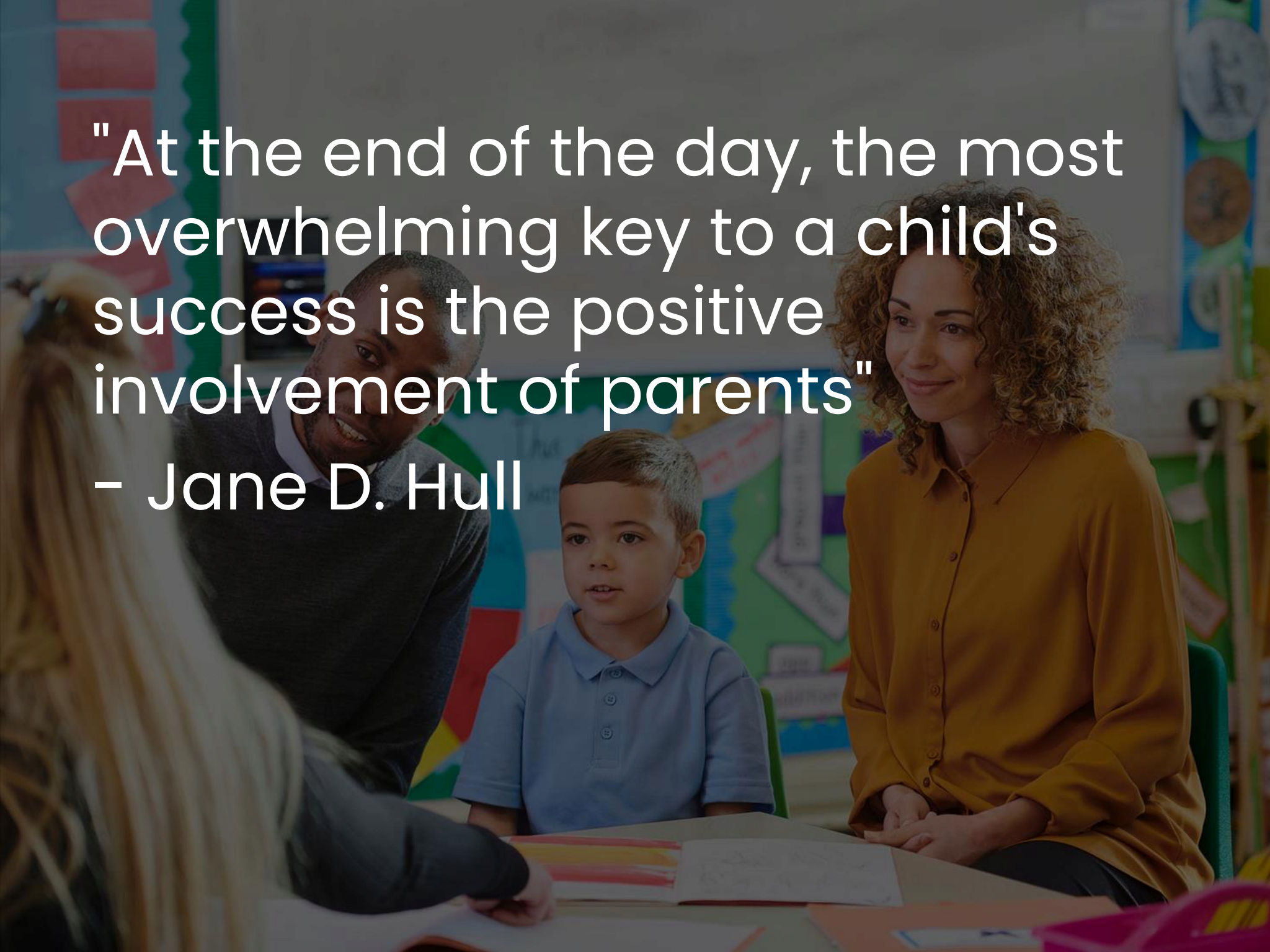
Review resource sheet for
checklists and strategies

FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE IEP

- An IEP is a living, breathing document. It can be adjusted throughout the year based on the student's progress and changing needs
- An IEP should always be individualized to the needs of the student
- An IEP should provide the student with the best possible supports to be as successful as possible
- Progress made through the proper implementation of an IEP should help students become active, successful, and productive members of society
- Always attempt to have a finalized IEP by the last day of school

"At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child's success is the positive involvement of parents"

- Jane D. Hull



Get Involved

School Building:

PTA meetings, Title 1 committee,
school climate committees

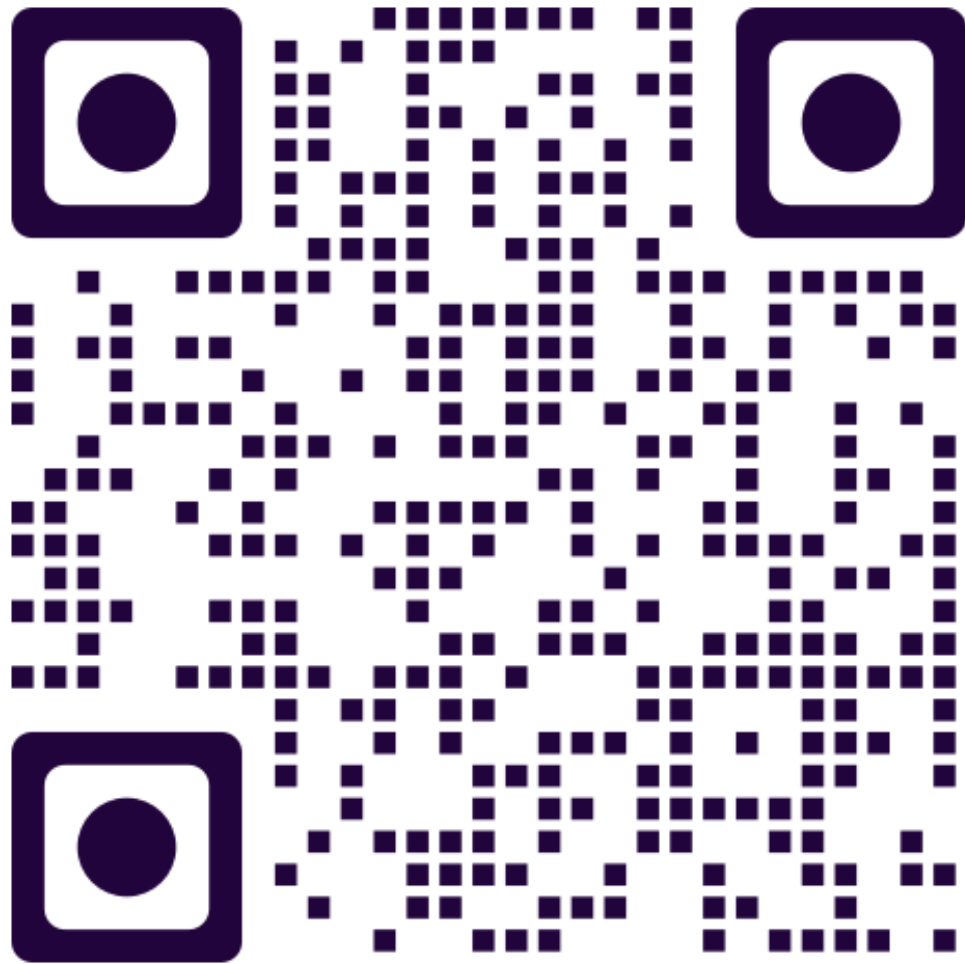
District:

SEPTA, SEPAG, BOE

Community:

Old Bridge Recreation, Parent
Connections





THANK
YOU!