

## Best Practices for Designing and Implementing Communication Strategies: Presenters Notes

### Slide 2:

- Today we are going to focus on discussing the importance of family involvement
- We will be discussing specific strategies that if applied correctly can improve the school's approach to family friendly practices
- Finally we will discuss how these strategies impact our environment & how we can take steps towards improving.

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### Slide 3:

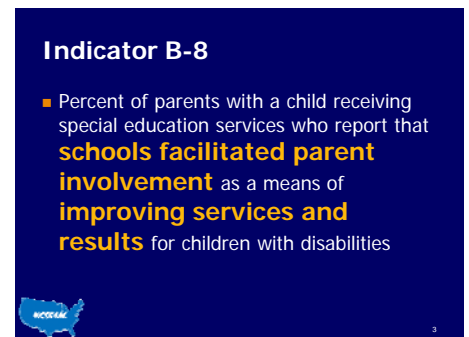
- Review the definition of Indicator 8 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Focus on the importance of involving families in the education process
- You can review that every school in every state is responsible for taking positive steps to include families. The Department of Education monitors parents perception of how well schools reach out to families and how this improves services for their students.

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**Slide 4: Ask Yourself . . .**

- Introduce that the topic highlights effective communication strategies & in order to place in that frame of mind, let's answer a few questions first
- How do you approach and view family involvement with schools?
- What are your beliefs about building connections between families and schools?

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**Ask yourself:**

- How do you approach & view family involvement with schools?
- What are your attitudes and beliefs about building connections between families & schools?

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**Slide 5: Ask Yourself . . .**

- Is the atmosphere of your school/classroom inviting and family-friendly?
- What do you do to promote communication and partnerships with families?

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**Ask yourself:**

- Is the atmosphere of your school/classroom inviting & family friendly?
- What do you do to promote communication & partnerships with families?

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### Slide 6: The 4 A's

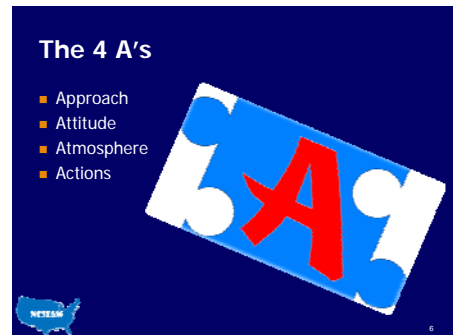
- For flourishing family-school partnerships to occur, certain condition should be met.
  - These include:
    - The manner in which educators *approach* families
    - The *attitudes* educators hold regarding family involvement
    - The *atmosphere* created by educators.
    - Once these conditions are in place, effective family-school partnerships can take place (*actions*).

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### Slide 7:

- Discuss how the approach, attitude and atmosphere must be appropriate before parent friendly “action” can be taken. Conduct a discussion with the audience of suggestions of how these areas can be improved within your school environment.
- This is a schematic to better understand how the 4 A's connect

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**Slide 8: Approach – defined as: The framework you use when interacting with families.**

- Families & educators: Both families and educators are *essential* for children’s growth and development.
- Shared responsibility: Teachers and parents share in the responsibility for working together as partners.
- Relationships vs. roles: Place an emphasis on *relationships with parents*, rather than on separate roles that teachers and parents each play.

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**Slide 9: Approach**

- Empowerment: Ask for help. Create opportunities to talk to and empower parents.
- Importance: Let parents know why they are important.
- Cooperate & communicate: Cooperate and communicate with families (e.g., home-school notes, home reinforcement for school performance).

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### Slides 10: Approach

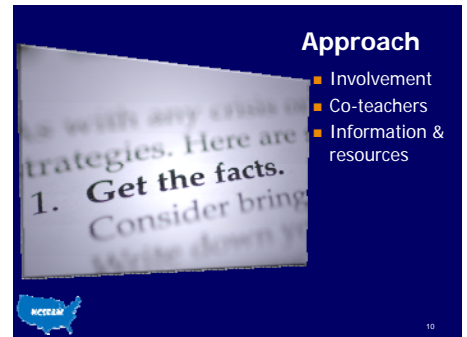
- Involvement: Make sure everyone is involved (i.e., parents, teachers, child when appropriate).
- Co-teachers: Consider parents as co-teachers who can make your job easier.
- Information & resources: Share information and resources with families to make their jobs easier.

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### Slide 11: Attitude – defined as: The thoughts and beliefs you have about family-school relationships.

- Feelings about partnerships: How do you feel about families as co-teachers and partners?
- Healthy & constructive: Healthy and constructive attitudes about families are necessary & convey a genuine belief that . . . next slide

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### Slide 12: Attitude

- Strengths: All families have strengths.
- Information & support: With necessary information and support, parents can help their children succeed in school.
- Perspectives: Parents have important information and perspectives that can help with the education of their children.
- Unique expertise: Parents and educators each contribute unique and important perspectives and expertise.

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### Slide 13: Attitude-Refer to Handout 1

- Parent’s perspective: Take parents’ perspectives whenever possible.
  - Ask yourself . . .
  - Parents place?: Do I put myself in the parents’ place? (e.g., How would I feel as the parent of a child about whom there are concerns?)
  - Parents as equals?: Do I really believe that parents are equal to me and are experts on their child
  - Value comments?: Do I value the comments and thoughts of parents and use their knowledge about the child’s needs and activities
  - Listen & attend?: Do I listen to parents, communicating with words, eye contact, and posture that I respect their insights?

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**Slide 14: Atmosphere – Your classroom can be an inviting and parent-friendly place.**

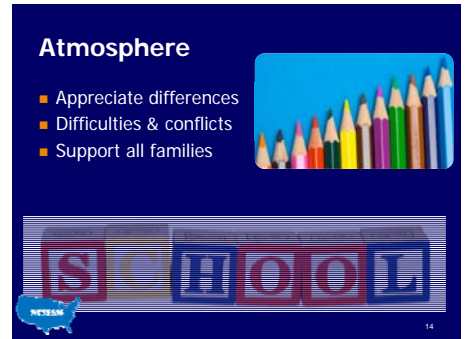
- Help families feel welcome by:
  - Appreciate differences: Appreciating differences in parent backgrounds & experiences
  - Difficulties & conflicts: Being aware of & sensitive to personal difficulties in school or previous conflicts the family may have experienced
  - Support all families: Supporting all families, including those of different ethnicities, languages, religious groups, or classes, especially when that communication is difficult

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**Slide 15: Creating the Atmosphere**

- Open: Be open to diverse family structures, circumstances, and responsibilities, and how they may impact roles
- Welcoming classroom: Make your classroom welcoming and family friendly
- Time spent: Spend time getting to know families and developing ongoing relationships
- No assumptions or generalizations: Try not to make assumptions and generalizations about families

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**Slide 16: Actions – defined as: What schools do to build partnerships and shared responsibility with families. Refer to Handout 2**

- No “one” approach: There is no “one” action, strategy, or approach that works in all situations.
- Current practice: Examine what you already do to create partnerships with families, your willingness to include families, and how you ask for their input.
- Communication: Communication is a key action for reaching out to families.

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**Slide 17: How can we accomplish this?**

- This is to serve as a segue from wrapping up the content of the 4 A's and moving toward how we can move in this direction in our schools.

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### Slide 18: Effective Communication

- Meeting times: Schedule meetings at times that are convenient for families.
- 2 positive: 1 negative: Send positive messages twice as often as negative ones.
- Regular progress reports: Provide regular information to parents about their child’s progress (e.g., “good news” phone calls; home-school notes; e-mails, weekly folders, newsletters).

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### Slide 19: Effective Communication- Refer to Handout 3 & 4

- Tone of partnership: Use words that convey a partnership (e.g., “we, us, and our” versus “you, I, yours, and mine”).
- Helping at home: Share information about how families can help their child at home.
- Clear statements & problem solving: Prevent communication conflicts by using clear statements and problem-solving strategies.

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### Slide 20: Effective Communication

- Concerned expressions: Use statements that express concern for the child, not frustration, irritation, or problems that cannot be solved.
- Goal achievement: Stay focused on the child’s goals and how you can achieve them together.
- Solicit information: Ask parents for ideas, information, and perspectives using open-ended questions (e.g., “How?” “When?” “Describe”).
- Check understanding: Check parent’s understanding (e.g., “I hear you saying...”; “You are concerned about...”).

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### Slide 21: Administrative Support - Working with administrators is key!-Refer to Handout 5

- Policies for partnership: Work with administrators to establish policies for partnerships. Policies at the building level should be in place for:
  - Low literacy: Working with parents who lack literacy skills
  - Non-English speakers: Working with parents who do not speak English

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### Slide 22: Administrative Support- Refer to Handout 4

- Professional staff development: Professional development for teachers and staff to enhance their effectiveness with parents.
- Parent opportunities: Opportunities for parents to help with education at home and school.

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### Slide 23: Key points- Refer to Handout 6

- Time: The development of effective atmosphere, approach, attitudes, and actions takes time.
- Not equal: The strategies may not work equally for all students, families, and educators.
  - Individual schools may want to discuss what type(s) of programs will best meet their needs.
- Commitment: Committing the time and resources while developing and implementing effective strategies will allow the process and outcomes to be most effective.

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**Slide 24:**

- Discussion points for your school staff

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## Evidence-Based Family-School Interventions with Family-School Partnership Communication Strategies

### *What we know...*

**Model:** Communication Strategies – The 4 A's

**Goal:**

- To create conditions for family-school partnerships (actions) to be established:
  - An *approach* that conveys a belief in shared responsibility between families and schools.
  - Positive and constructive *attitudes* regarding family involvement
  - A family-friendly, inviting *atmosphere*.
- To build effective family-school relationships characterized by trust and partnership

### **Strategies to Facilitate Effective Communication and Family-School Partnerships:**

- Schedule meetings at times that are convenient for families.
- Send positive messages twice as often as negative ones.
- Provide regular information to parents about their child's progress (e.g., "good news" phone calls; home-school notes; e-mails, weekly folders, newsletters).
- Use words that convey a partnership (e.g., "we, us, and our" versus "you, I, yours, and mine").
- Share information about how families can help their child at home.
- Prevent communication conflicts by using clear statements and problem-solving strategies.
- Use statements that express concern for the child, not frustration, irritation, or problems that cannot be solved.
- Stay focused on the child's goals and how you can achieve them together.
- Ask parents for ideas, information, and perspectives using open-ended questions (e.g., "How?" "When?" "Describe").
- Check parent's understanding (e.g., "I hear you saying..."; "You are concerned about...").

**Results:**

- Family-school partnerships have positive benefits for children’s educational engagement, work habits, task orientation, social skills, and academic achievement.
- The effects of family-school partnerships can be lasting; continuous and consistent family-school partnerships are more likely to complete high school.
- Schools with formal family-school partnership approaches report higher academic achievement.
- Effective family-school partnerships have been linked to several short-term outcomes including changes in family environment, parent-child relationships, parenting skills, and family involvement in learning at home and school.
- Long-term outcomes for children include improved academic outcomes and social-emotional competence.
- Benefits of effective home-school communication include increased trust between parents and teachers, as well as increased parent commitment to helping their children with academics.

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***What we don’t know...***

- Effective approaches for increasing access to partnership practices for disenfranchised families
- The best method for training and encouraging teachers to adopt this framework