District and Parents Working Collaboratively
Parent Liaison’s Top 10 Tips
CAC Presentation March 5, 2013

1. Know your IEP team. (You are an important part of the team.)
   - Who is your child’s case manager
   - Know your child’s teacher, Principal, speech, OT, all service providers, Program Specialist
   - Know the team before there is a problem, before there is an IEP – take time to acknowledge them and what they do for your child.
   - Let me say this again, the parent is an important part of the IEP team!

2. The Child’s needs should be the center of all discussions and decisions.
   - Always keep your child at the top of your mind.
   - It is not what you want it is what they need.

3. Educate yourself (rights, laws, avenues for expression) and use your resources.
   - Parent Liaison
   - Program Specialist
   - Resource Parent
   - Community Advisory Committee and CAC Blog
     - Gather all the data that you need to prepare yourself for an IEP/discussion
     - Ask questions, visit classrooms, get and review reports ahead of time, Progress and proposed goals
     - Get as much information as you can from all different sources
     - Know who is there and who to call
     - If you don’t know, find out!

4. It is imperative to take responsibility.
   - This is your child, you are their best advocate.
   - Don’t be concerned to ask for what you need like requesting an IEP Meeting, information, data, etc. – Communicate and ask for what you need.
   - Take control, don’t sit back and watch or wonder why something is not happening!
   - Sometimes people say: “why am I the one that has to…?” Forget the question and just take charge.
5. Communicate (Keep staff informed of questions, concerns, topics would like to discuss.)
   o Communication or lack of communication is the main source of most challenges or difficult situations that I come across – it is when people stop communicating that I see things stop working.
   o Be open with the team! Keep an open mind!
   o I am a strong advocate of informing people in advance, get your questions and concerns out so all are prepared at the meeting. Don’t bring up something that will surprise the team or the parent/staff at the meeting, introduce this information prior to the meeting and gather as much information as possible. Help allow staff and/or parents to prepare a response/info to the proposed discussion topic.
   o Share what you know and what you don’t know.
   o Keep the lines of communication flowing.
   o LISTEN!

6. Start at the source:
   I. Case manager, teacher, service providers
   II. Principal
   III. Program Specialist
   IV. Parent Liaison/ADR Administrator
   o Go to the place where the question/concern came from first.
   o Concerned with something that is going on in the classroom then speak with the classroom teacher.
   o Get your information from the source first, then if you have to go to someone else you have gotten info firsthand. Let that person know you are going to follow up with someone else.
   o If you have to follow up with someone else because you are not satisfied that your concern was resolved, move up the ladder to next closest individual to the source. (see above)

7. Focus on the goal at hand – what are you trying to accomplish?
   o Make sure you are working towards the final product that you are trying to accomplish.
   o Placement Change: not discussing judgment of character or information that does not address why another placement would address needs and goals more appropriately.

8. Find common ground and a common goal of the IEP team members.
   o Not always easy to agree with others on everything.
   o Start with what you can agree on, what you can live with.
   o Compromise on a solution by working together, you might have to give in a little. Is it still going to accomplish the goal but in a different way?
Example: Mainstreaming – Parent wants student to mainstream full time immediately because student is at middle of 4th grade year and Parent wants to prepare for middle school. Finding common ground on developing a mainstreaming transition plan might be best for the student and reach the goals of all IEP team members. The outcome could be the same, but maybe more successfully.

9. Stick to the IEP Topic (Keep IEP info to the IEP Meeting and keep non-IEP topics out of the meeting.) Keep personal opinions and emotions out of the IEP Meeting.
   - If the topic does not apply to the discussion at the moment – say concerns with the past that may not be affecting the student currently then keep that out of the meeting.
   - If had a less than ideal first impression of someone but then discredit the person or bring negative feelings about the person based on that impression to the meeting can block what you are trying to accomplish.
   - Try to “keep it outside”
   - Certain topics may not be IEP appropriate or necessary, some topics are necessary in an IEP discussion. (appeal suspension – stud serv.)

10. It is not about winning and losing!
    - Don’t fight to win an argument; don’t keep track of winning or losing a disagreement.
    - It is really about meeting the needs of the student, not who got their way.
    - The student should always be the winner!