

Building Bridges Between Families & Schools

“The student is the reason we build the bridge”

Hope Harmon

Special Education Parent Mentor



IEP

FAPE

LRE

MTSS

SST

PWN

Overwhelmed

ESY

PLAAFP

yet?

FBA

BIP

Imagine hearing these terms
while you're worried about your child.

AAC

IDEA

Special education has its own language.
Parent-friendly communication makes all the difference.

IFSP

SDI

BCW

What Does A Parent Mentor DO ?

The goal: Building bridges between families & schools.

LISTEN

Understand family questions, concerns, and goals.

EDUCATE

Help families better understand processes and resources.

CONNECT

Connect families with school personnel, district supports, and community resources.

COLLABORATE

Work alongside families, educators, schools and community partners.

EMPOWER

Help parents become informed and confident participants in their child's education.

I am not replacing teachers, case managers, administrators, or the IEP team. I am serving as another resource helping families participate meaningfully in their child's education.

My “Why”

Before I was a Parent Mentor,
I was a special education parent.

Mother.

Parent.

IEP Team Member.

**I know what it feels like
to sit on the other side of the table**



My First Six Weeks: Building The Foundation

August 31 - October 13, 2026

FAMILIES

- IEP & 504 Support
- Evaluation & Eligibility guidance
- Resource Connections Guidance
- Individual Family Follow-up

SCHOOLS

- School-based meetings
- IEP amendment, eligibility, reevaluation, and 504 meetings
- Staff collaboration
- Parent communication support

COMMUNITY

- Family Engagement Events
- Community Presentations
- Early Intervention Outreach
- Agency Partnerships

RESOURCES

- Parent Friendly materials
- Child Find information
- Referral & Connection Tools

What I'm Hearing From Families

Recurring needs have emerged:

- Understanding the Process
 - IEPs, 504s, Evaluations, Eligibility, Accommodations, Services
 - Clear Communication
 - Knowing who to contact and understanding information from schools
 - Understanding Progress
 - "What support is my child receiving – and is it working?"
 - Access to Resources
 - Medicaid, SSI, Behavioral Health, Autism Resources, Community Services
 - Support Beyond Academics
 - Behavior, Sensory needs, Transportation, Food Insecurity, Family Needs
 - Earlier Information
 - Families need information before concerns become crises
-

Building the Bridge



FAMILIES

Questions
Goals
Concerns
Knowledge of their child



SCHOOLS

Educators
Services
Supports
Educational expertise

PARENT MENTOR

LISTEN • SUPPORT • CONNECT • EMPOWER

The student is the reason we build the bridge.

STRONGER TOGETHER • BRIGHTER TOMORROWS

Meeting Families Where They Are

School Events

Grandparents/Grandfriends Days
* Parent Meetings * Fitzgerald Housing Authority *
ESOL/Migrant Families Night

Community Engagment

Fitzgerald Rotary Club * Fitzgerald
Housing Authority * ESOL/Migrant

Community Partners

Family Connections * Communities in Schools
* Health & Behavioral health resources

Early Connections

Babies Can't Wait * Head Start * Local pediatricians

State & Government Resources

Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership * Federal Agencies

Where We're Going

Parent Education

✓ Parent Academy – IEP/504 education – Family-friendly resources

Early Connections

✓ Child FIND awareness – Early Intervention Resources – Connecting with families before school-age concerns grow

Resource Connections

✓ Strengthening school/community partnerships – Family resources opportunities

Transition

✓ Helping families prepare for educational transitions and life beyond high school

What Does Success Look Like?

- Families who understand the process
- Parents who know who to contact
- Concerns addressed earlier
- Stronger communication between home and school
- Families connected to the right resources
- Parents who feel confident participating in their child's education

YOU CAN HELP BUILD THE BRIDGE

Hope Harmon

Special Education Parent Mentor

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***Building Bridges Between
Families & Schools***

