Back to School Tips for Parents

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ASA McKEOWN: Alrighty, welcome everybody to our PreK webinar for our PreK ESE kiddos. My name is Asa McKeown, I'm the Content Specialist for the Deaf Hard of Hearing Program with Brevard Public Schools.

I want to remind everybody to please mute your microphones. This presentation will be recorded and will be available on the fiddlers East and Brevard public Schools websites.
Our wonderful speaker today is Bill Pearlman who is a facilitator with the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) and today he brings us Back to School Tips for Parents for your students and we have two lovely interpreters, and I will put that information in the chat box as well. If you could again, make sure to mute your microphones and turn off your video we will go ahead and get started. Bill.

BILL PEARLMAN:
Welcome everyone on Bill Pearlman and I work for the Florida Department of Education in a project called the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN). I support schools in Brevard and Volusia counties in order to increase and improve inclusion for kids with disabilities. I started my career about 40 years ago. I am certified in four areas of special education and have worked as a general special education teacher as well. I am happy that you are here today, and I hope I share some valuable information with you.

So, on the slide is a quick mention of the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) we collaborate with districts and schools to provide customized services and supports ensuring that all students with disabilities have the same educational social and future opportunities as their peers.

Just a continuation of the mission, we love to implement best practices for inclusive education to planning and problem solving as well as providing professional development and technical assistance across districts and schools.

As you can see on this slide, part of our mission is to share information and build collaborative relationships between families, schools and districts and we hope my presentation today can further those goals.

These are my objectives for today and I'll give you a moment to scan through those.

Build some alliances, identify ways to actively support your child's success in school and use some resources to build your knowledge and to support your child.

I think we should mention the applicable federal laws and I think it would be a good idea and there are two of those. The first one is Every Student Succeeds Act also known as ESSA and insist that all students must be taught to high standards and schools must address the needs to meet the standards. It also talks about the universal design for learning which addresses diverse ways that learners can take information and express what they know. Also engage actively in their learning. The other federal law is IDEA addresses mandates for special education, and it states the general education classroom must be the first placement considered. With supplementary aids and services provided we always aim to meet the needs.

Inclusion isn't specifically mentioned within IDEA but the state of Florida defines inclusion in its statute and I thought it would be helpful to show that. Students receive education in a general education setting with natural proportions and age-appropriate heterogeneous groups in core academics and electives or special classes. So natural proportions means that the percentage of students with disabilities should be similar to the percentage or grade, if 20% of the school's population are students with disabilities, natural proportions suggest that an individual classroom would have a similar percentage.

With the Florida Inclusion Network, we are pretty proud of our role and providing support in these areas. I wonder if there are any questions on anything that I've covered so far.

If you can let me know if there are questions in the chat I would be happy to address those.

ASA McKEOWN:
There are no questions in the chat at this time.

BILL PEARLMAN:
In Florida every school and school district must complete an assessment of their inclusive practices every three years. It is called the B PIE. It looks at different indicators of different practices and these two indicators on this slide focus on the importance of building district and family partnerships. That collaboration supports positive outcomes for students with disabilities and is one of the reasons for offering the webinar today.

The research supports what we probably all already know to be true that when parents and caregivers are involved in their child's education the students experience greater success academically, socially and behaviorally. Partnerships between parents and teachers are key. Here you see some key findings from a couple of research studies. The first one says regardless of family income are background, students whose parents are involved in their school are more likely to have higher grades and test scores and attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school.

And the second part of the slide says parent involvement leads to positive benefits for students, parents and schools. Including improved academic performance and improved parent teacher relationships. Students whose parents were involved in school during their elementary years experience lower rates of high school dropout and were more likely to complete high school on time and had higher grades.

The studies from which they come are referenced on the slide.

So let's talk about some ways you can start the year off on the right path. And some of these tips come from the Peak Parent Center. It is a nonprofit that works to ensure that all people with disabilities are fully included in their neighborhood schools and communities and all walks of life. Peak Parent Center was founded in 1986 and offers an array of free and low-cost services to family of children with disabilities and they self-advocate across all of their domain. They are headquartered in Colorado but the reach beyond the borders.

Building alliances with teachers and support staff and other parents and creates support for you and your child. Connecting with others is a two-way street so offer your support to school staff and other parents. I know from my own experience as a teacher, when parents came to me to extend themselves it encouraged me to work even harder to support the partnership. It is critical to the school success.

Making sure the IEP is understood and implemented by your child's teachers is really important. It is OK to ask your child's teachers if they have a copy of the IEP. If they have any questions about addressing the goals or providing the accommodations.

I recommend having this conversation with your child's teacher.

Consider creating a "What Works" portfolio so that your child's transition to each new school year, the portfolio can contain positive descriptions of your child's strengths, interests or favorite activities and learning priorities for the year which should be discussed as well. Include tips about physical assistance, communication with your child if these are needed. Describe behavioral support that work or ways to structure situations to avoid or minimize behavioral challenges. Describe classroom arrangements that are supportive to child such as seating and positioning needs, noise level, tolerance, climate comfort and whatever you can think of. It would be great to include samples of your child's completed work and the accommodations or modifications that were made to the original assignment especially if those accommodations allowed for greater success.

You could also choose to include a photo and maybe a brief video that would show your child engaging with other students and participating successfully with other children.

I can count on one hand how many portfolios were presented to me when I was a classroom teacher but I also know that those students had a significantly more positive experience in school because their parents took the time to do that. And to keep me informed.

Contact your child's teacher. Request a meeting to share insights and information about your child, this is your chance to begin developing a positive relationship with your child's teacher and to establish yourself as an active team member in your child's education. It is a great time to review your child's IEP and “What Works” portfolio, and most teachers will appreciate your involvement in the knowledge you can share about how your child works best... It is a good idea to end the meeting with ongoing plans for communication with the teacher. Establish if you will make contact daily, weekly, or only as needed. Would you communicate using notes, the phone, email or text? It could be a schoolwide communication platform like we have in Brevard called Focus. Or perhaps in person meetings. But establishing this routine will help to reinforce your involvement and in a manner that is respectful of the teacher’s schedule and duties.

Talk to your child's teacher about visiting the classroom to talk to your child's classmates to frame your child in a positive light. You can help them understand how they could become a friend to your child.

Disability awareness through language arts and literacy guides that are pictured on this slide, provide suggested books at each grade level for both elementary and secondary students that explain a variety of disabilities through the challenges and successes of the characters portrayed. They also include additional resources specifically for families. I've placed both of these resources and more including the PowerPoint I am using today on an electronic bulletin board and that you are code underneath are both ways that you can access this. I encourage you to do that now and if you experience difficulty feel free to let us know. The way to access the QR code is you open the camera up on your smart phone and the image at the code and it should immediately open a new window that you can then look at on your smart phone. Another option is to... If that doesn't work is to copy the code and paste it into a browser window to get there. Don't forget to bookmark it if you like it and we can put it in the chat so you have easy access to copy and paste it into a browser window.

ASA McKEOWN:
Thanks it is in the chat.

BILL PEARLMAN:
Thank you. You can see that through these disability awareness through language guides are in there and many other things I have placed there.

Here is a different QR code and a different code which will give you access to a form so that you can receive a very valuable resource called Special Education connection will stop by following this link, you will have access to a form that will provide access to special ed connection and we can put that in the chapter you as well. So by completing that form, we will make sure that you are enrolled to have access to Special Ed Connection. I encourage parents to become involved in the larger school community. The more active you are, the more impact you can have on your child's school and the staff and the education that your child is receiving.

Schools in Brevard will be forming their BPIE team shortly which stands for best practices for inclusive education and they will created in the next several weeks. It will work towards completion of that self assessment. They will be completed, at the schools between November and March.

I encourage you to contact your child's school to see when they will be forming their team and if you can play a role on that team.

You are your child's most important ally so continue to grow your skills and your knowledge. The Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) has a variety of resources and they will be provided on some of the next slides.

Feel free to visit Florida Inclusion Network (FIN)'s website. And specifically, our family resource page. For this resource pictured here and many others that are available in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole to name a few. I have also placed a few of these on the site we just discussed to make it easier for you. I would encourage you to visit our website. Feel free to navigate to the family resources tab.

The Florida Department of education also offers resources for parents. So the link is here but a quick Google search for Florida Department of education resources for parents which get you there as well.

There are a number of discretionary projects funded through the Florida Department of Education and these are some of them that can provide assistance for students and families. Remember this slide and all of the slides in this PowerPoint are available to you on the Padlet for review at a later time. And some more discretionary projects funded through the Florida Department of education.

Here's another reminder that the Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) website has some wonderful resources for you in here is a screenshot of what you find when you navigate to the website.

I hope I have shared some valuable information with you today, I have included my contact information at the top and I would really appreciate it if you would take a moment to complete the exit slip and survey. You can do that by using the QR code or the code underneath. It would only take a couple of minutes to complete and will allow us to reflect and modify future presentations.

I encourage you to reach out to me if I can provide any supports as you go forward. I will look forward to hearing from you and let me know what I can do to support you and your child. Thanks so much.

ASA McKEOWN:
Thank you so much Bill for sharing that wonderful information. If you can complete the exit slip and survey you can find it in the chat box as well as via that code. I just want to thank everybody for participating and thank our interpreters and captioner's for being here today. I also want to encourage everyone to join us for our next webinar on November 5 to join us in our presentation of Understanding Resources Available to You. That will be also at 12 PM on November 5 will stop this recording will also be available on the Fiddlers East website as well as the Brevard public school website. You all for coming and have a wonderful day.

BILL PEARLMAN:
Take care everyone.

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