

**DEVELOPING PARENT COUNCILS IN DELAWARE:  
FROM LEGISLATION TO IMPLEMENTATION**

by

Joan Y. French

An education leadership portfolio submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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## **ABSTRACT**

Parent involvement in education is vital to their children's success. Parents of students with disabilities have additional challenges understanding the rights, processes, and services involved in special education. Recognizing the struggle of parents and their ability to engage in special education procedures and policies, the Delaware legislature approved the regulation for the establishment of parent councils in June 2015. Accordingly, each district and charter school that enrolls children with disabilities is required to reach out to their parents annually and provide them support for the development of a parent council. Each parent council is charged with advocating for children with disabilities and providing person-to-person support to individual parents and children (14 Delaware Code, 2015).

The Department of Education (DOE) asked the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) to do a needs assessment to determine the development and function of parent councils throughout the state. Working with PICDE, two surveys were developed on SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, Inc. 2018b, 2018c): one for school administrators and one for parents. The survey links were sent to the director of special services for each school district and the principals of each charter school. These school officials were to distribute the parent survey link or hard copies to their parents of children with special needs. After six weeks, these responses were analyzed, and the findings are included here as PIC Analysis and Summary of the Surveys (See



Appendix D), and a short version was prepared for the DOE (See Appendix E).

Seeking to assist PICDE in understanding the complexities of implementation of this policy, a literature review (See Appendix W) was conducted on current research in implementation science and research and practices in adult learning, parent training, and parent involvement.

Presenting these research sources emphasizes the challenges of implementing state-wide policy and supports PICDE in planning professional development for PICDE staff. It is intended that this information assists PICDE in developing programs that build parent capacity in advocacy and improve collaboration with the school community. In response to the survey data and the goals that PICDE has for working with parent councils, an instructional PowerPoint presentation was created entitled “Parent Council: Let’s Get Started” to be used in PICDE workshops, webinars, and as an online resource in the “Tool Kit for Parent Councils.”

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In June 2015, the Delaware State legislature passed Senate Bill 33, which requires that parent councils be developed to engage and support parents of children with disabilities in each school district and charter school:

Each school district and charter school enrolling any child with disabilities shall, on an annual basis, contact the parents of each such child to attempt to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a parent council for the parents of students with disabilities. Parent councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support for individual parents and children. The charter schools and school districts shall collaborate and coordinate with existing parent groups and other information and support groups to facilitate creation, maintenance, and effectiveness of the Parent Councils (14 Delaware Code, 2015).

The process of implementing an educational policy statewide is a huge undertaking. Bertram, Blase, and Fixsen (2015) note that implementation stages take two to four years to develop a framework to move from exploration to full implementation. The framework of implementation is constructed from knowledge about the targeted population, the ability for skilled personnel to understand the policy and plan and develop the process and all necessary components to effectively

implement the purpose and intention of the policy. I am not aware of a framework for the implementation of the parent council policy currently. Notwithstanding, the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) has contracted with the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) to assist with parent council establishment, sustainability, and success. Accordingly, the general approach taken by PICDE and me was to develop and distribute a needs assessment survey to gather information from parents and school administrators in each district and charter school to ascertain their progress in the development of parent councils and to determine what supports are needed to secure and maintain their parent councils.

This education learning portfolio (ELP) project begins with the needs assessment survey, followed by the analysis and compilation of data from the survey and a summary report to PICDE management and the DOE Special Education Department on the ideas and needs expressed by parents and school administrators. The plan for PICDE is to develop an online “Tool Kit for Parent Councils” to help the councils develop and sustain their work. From the survey, the PICDE executive director and I recognized the need for materials to help get parent councils started. The first task was to develop an instructional PowerPoint to guide parents through the first steps of organizing a meeting to get their parent council through the initial stages.

A literature review (See Appendix W) was developed to look at research and materials for adult learning, parent involvement, and school communities that support or discourage parent involvement. It was expanded to include literature on

implementation science to recognize the challenges in implementing large initiatives that require systems-change.

The learning and experiences of this portfolio are contained in nine artifacts:

Artifact 1: ELP Proposal Special Education Councils in Delaware, which contains the history and purpose of the PICDE and the goals and purpose for this project (See Appendix A).

Artifact 2: The Parent Council Survey for School and District Administrators (See Appendix B).

Artifact 3: The Parent Council Survey for Parents of Special Needs Students (See Appendix C).

Artifact 4: Parent Information Center Analysis and Summary of Parent Council Surveys, which contains the analysis and summary of the parent and administrator surveys. The responses from parents and administrators are compared and compiled with recommendations (See Appendix D).

Artifact 5: Parent Information Center Summary of Parent Council Surveys for the Department of Education (See Appendix E).

Artifact 6: Program Evaluation: Parent Information Center's Program to Assist Parents and Children's Transition from Birth to Three Services. This work was done in EDUC 863 to better understand how PICDE organizes and addresses parent needs. Note that this artifact (Appendix F) contains appendices G through U.

Artifact 7: Essay Response: "Developing a Parent-Professional Team Leadership Model in Group Work." This article sets the stage for positive outcomes for children

when parents and professionals collaborate. The essay was completed for EDUC 890 and is a fundamental article for this project, given the need for professionals and parents to work together for the good of the children (See Appendix V).

Artifact 8: The Literature Review, which provides insights into factors and challenges in training and organizing parents and also addresses funding of legislative initiatives. (See Appendix W).

Artifact 9: PowerPoint Presentation: *Parent Council: Let's Get Started*. This is a presentation that will be used by PICDE staff, school personnel, or parents to guide them on the basic steps in setting up a parent council (See Appendix X).

These artifacts attempt to address the goals of the chapters presented here, which involve:

- Chapter 2: The Problem Addressed identifies the goals for this project and the complex issues involved in getting parent councils up and running.
- Chapter 3 The Improvement Strategies includes two surveys to understand the needs of parents and school personnel, the survey analysis, the summary report for the DOE, and the literature review to support further professional development, strategies on parent engagement, monitoring, and funding needs.
- Chapter 4 The Improvement Strategies Results involves reports to the DOE and development of materials for the tool kit and lend support to recommendations for funding to provide direct support to districts and charter schools for the development and sustainment of parent councils.

- Chapter 5 Reflection includes what I have learned from the literature review, the surveys, my coursework applied here, my thoughts on what was accomplished in this work, and what needs to be done to support parents in becoming knowledgeable advocates for their children.
- Chapter 6 Reflection on my Leadership Development includes what I gained from my classwork and the impact that this work has had on my growth in leadership skills.

This portfolio is just scratching the surface of what is needed in Delaware to help parents become educated and engaged in advocacy and policy making.

## **Chapter 2**

### **PROBLEM ADDRESSED**

The state of Delaware recognizes that many parents of children with special needs are not prepared to be advocates for their children. Working with the recommendations of the IEP Improvement Task Force, the state approved legislation supporting the development of parent councils in each school district and charter school (14 Delaware Code, 2015). In support of this legislative action, the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) contracted with the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) to do a needs assessment and develop a tool kit of resources and materials to assist in developing and sustaining parent councils. The tool kit may comprise online resources accessible by the public on PICDE's website, as well as workshops and webinars provided in person or by video through PICDE staff.

The problem of parent engagement and advocacy is long standing and affects students nation-wide. The reasons for the lack of parent engagement are varied and many. Parents may be busy holding down jobs, feel unwelcome in the school environment, or may believe that they have nothing to offer to their child's school program. The ELP proposal begins with literature on parent engagement and their interest and abilities in advocacy for their children. Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) learned that building social and intellectual capital with parents increased the community's capacity to engage in actions that positively affected school programs and policies. Another consideration is helping school personnel and parents to

recognize and respect cultural differences. Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) used culturally responsive practices to reform schools. Their work in a middle school dealt with racism and unconscious biases which contributed to the achievement gap for black and impoverished children. Key to closing that gap was opening opportunities for parents to become active in their child's education, an activity facilitated by promoting culturally responsive practices with the staff and faculty. Delaware has a diverse population, and each school and district has its own culture. Helping schools and districts to look at their culture and invite parents as partners underlies the development and sustainability of parent councils.

School leadership and the behavior of the professional faculty and staff are intertwined with parent engagement. Accordingly, professional development for PICDE staff and charter school and district administration and faculty will be necessary to improve the school or district culture with inclusive actions and policies towards parents. Research shows that professionals often do not treat parents as equals. Ruffolo, Kuhn, and Evans (2006) found that parents feel isolated and that professionals do not listen to or understand their expertise and needs. Their research demonstrates that parents must feel valued to be engaged. Ruffolo et al. (2006) reviewed two programs that accomplish increased parent involvement by bringing parents together and listening actively to their ideas and concerns. Professional development for Delaware school personnel using similar strategies may be necessary and beneficial in resolving part of problem facing the development of parent councils. These are some of the issues contributing to the problem of increasing parent



involvement in school programs, advocacy, and policy making. PICDE and the DOE have begun to look at what is needed to help mitigate, if not resolve some of the factors which prevent parents from participating in their child's program. The processes and structures of implementation science could assist in developing a plan and corresponding resources to effectively implement the parent council policy.

### **Organizational Context**

The Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) began in 1983 as a statewide non-profit organization with the purpose of training and helping parents of children with special needs, in accordance originally with public law 94-142, passed in 1975; it then continued under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The mission of PICDE has always been to facilitate parent understanding of the policies and procedures surrounding the federal laws, which mandated individualized education programs (IEP) and later 504 Plans. In conjunction with these special education processes, it is required that parents be educated in the rights and procedures that would secure a free and appropriate public education for their children (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Informing and training parents on special education policy and practice has been the task for PICDE and other federally mandated parent centers throughout the country.

According to their website (Parent Information Center of Delaware, 2017), the mission of the PICDE is "To advance effective parent engagement in education," adding that

PIC is especially focused on supporting parents of children with disabilities and youth self-advocates to assist them in gaining the knowledge and skills to access appropriate special education programs and related services.

The vision of PICDE is “For all children to fulfill their potential to succeed.” Under the vision rubric, PICDE elaborates:

[PICDE] is a statewide non-profit organization with a mission to advance effective parent engagement in education. We deliver important information, education, and advocacy to help parents and caregivers with diverse needs understand public education policies and program options. PIC empowers parents to become their child's best lifelong advocate!

In addition to its vision and mission statements, PICDE specifies its values:

**Accountability:** We promote school accountability to ensure that all children, youth, and families receive proper services and supports.

**Accessibility:** We ensure accessibility to our supports and services for all families and the community at large.

**Commitment to Children and Families:** We are committed to the idea that all children and youth can succeed with the appropriate tools and support.

**Integrity:** We are committed to providing high quality, useful, and relevant materials to help families better understand their rights in education. (Parent Information Center of Delaware 2017)

Regarding the parent council project and state purpose for parent councils, PICDE has educated parents for more than 30 years on their children's rights in education policy:

- the individualized education program (IEP) process for children ages 3 to 21
- the individual family support plan (IFSP) process for children ages birth to 3
- transitions from early childhood to school-based services
- transition in adolescents to secondary school programming
- transition to adult services at age 21,

PICDE serves families of children with disabilities ages from birth to 26 and has a statewide footprint. To fulfill such varied tasks, PICDE has a small staff of ten employees, which includes the executive director and special programs director. Two staff work in the Sussex office. Two staff are bilingual in Spanish, one in the Sussex County office and one in the New Castle County office. The remaining staff are native English speakers.

PICDE organizes outreach meetings in schools in Wilmington and rural Sussex county to assist parents who are impoverished and underserved. There are PICDE offices in Newport, Delaware for New Castle County and a PICDE office in Georgetown for Sussex County. PICDE strives to maintain offices in each county and is working on a location and additional staffing in Kent county. PICDE provides workshops and programs throughout the state in conjunction with other agencies such as the Center for Disabilities Studies, the state Parent Teacher Association, school districts, and the DOE. In recent years, PICDE and other parent centers have expanded their work to include more service and attention to the recognized gaps and

discrepancies in services for children with behavioral and mental health needs.

Overall, PICDE is open to parents of all children, as many children suffer from a variety of challenges in meeting their educational needs (Parent Information Center, 2017).

In formulating PICDE's role in the implementation of parent councils, the DOE and PICDE recognize that there are several gaps attendant on what PICDE has been asked to do by the state. First, the DOE and PICDE have no accurate measure of how many districts and charter schools have begun to implement the new parent councils or to what degree. Second, PICDE needs to develop materials to support, train, and assist parent councils as well as materials to train PICDE staff in providing such support. There is also an ancillary gap: funding. While the state DOE has asked PICDE to assist it in establishing effective parent councils, the state has not provided funding to fulfill the mandate of the new law. Unfortunately, there is no implementation plan in place to guide and support the many factors involved in setting up parent councils. Still, it is possible that this study may inform the appropriate agencies in the state of the need for comprehensive planning and funding necessary to implement the parent council policy.

The skills and information needed to help districts and charter schools to organize and support parents are extensive. Parents will need information on the IEP, IFSP, and 504 plan purpose and process, as well as information on current federal education policy and policy making in Delaware. Additionally, and most immediately, parents need information on how to structure and develop the parent council, including

the mission, vision, and goals. To address these needs in services and special education process, PICDE and other agencies have developed and prepared resources. PICDE already addresses the goal of increasing the capacity of parents for advocacy and policy making through the Family Leadership Academy, which has been presented annually. The Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council has sponsored the program Partners in Policy Making since 1993. Partners in Policy Making is designed to build partnerships between policy makers and those who need and use special education and disability services. The training provided in Partners for Policymaking runs for 8 months with 2 days of training each month. Participants learn a great deal of information about disability services such as assistive technology, along with strategies and guidance on how to meet and interact with public officials, run effective meetings, and conduct community organization (Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council, 2018). These are two examples of on-going parent training in advocacy and policy making that will need to expand as parent councils develop.

### **My Role**

I have served on the board of PICDE for over twenty years. My main purpose has been in the role of the educational liaison; however, I have also served as board secretary. For the work of this ELP I am serving as a volunteer assisting with the components of parent council development. Working as a board member and now more closely with the PICDE executive director as a volunteer, I am ideally situated to understand PICDE's resources and their goals on the parent council project. In preparation for my ELP, which I knew would be on parent engagement earlier in my

studies, I did a program evaluation (See Appendix F) of two PICDE workshops for parents of preschool children and their transition into school services. These observations gave me insights into the types of materials PICDE uses in their workshops and the capabilities of their staff.

As a volunteer, I am augmenting PICDE resources and working to achieve the goals for PICDE in developing and sustaining parent councils. This goal involves first understanding what parents and school personnel need to develop and sustain a parent council and then creating materials to support the capacity building of parents, PICDE staff, and school administrators and personnel.

The things I have control over in this project are the survey questions, the interpretation of the survey results (one extensive and one short report), the literature review on parent engagement, adult learning, and implementation science, discussions of the survey responses and possible actions with the PIC executive director, and the contents of the PowerPoint presentation *Parent Council: Let's Get Started*.

### **Improvement Goals**

These are the core goals discussed in my proposal:

- Identify and implement professional development for PICDE staff based on parent council needs (PICDE Strategic Plan 2018).
- Identify where parent councils are established and determine their needs and how PICDE can assist them.
- Prepare materials to train and support parent councils based on the councils' expressed needs (add materials to the parent council tool kit).

After surveying administrators and parents on parent council needs and function, this fourth goal was added:

- Secure funding to meet the needs of parent councils.

These goals support the state's purpose for parent councils that "[p]arent councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support for individual parents and children" (14 Delaware Code, 2015). In accordance with the PICDE Strategic Plan (See Appendix Y), PICDE will continue with professional development for staff to prepare them for the new responsibilities involved in supporting parents and school staff, work to increase the capacity of families to participate in policy making, and secure funding through strategic partners and diverse funding means. Accordingly, fulfilling such goals will enable PICDE to expand on what PICDE has done for more than 30 years, which is to train parents to understand the education and services for their children, be advocates for their children, and be active in policy review and development, as stated in their vision, mission, and strategic plan.

Overall, my improvement goal was to help PICDE understand where and how parent councils are functioning and what parents and school administrators recognize as needs in developing parent councils. From these needs, I would identify a product that would add to the parent council tool kit and provide evidence that long term funding is needed to effectively implement and support parent councils.

### **Chapter 3**

## **IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

The steps taken to develop improvement strategies include writing the two surveys to gather views on the need for parent councils: one for parents (See Appendix C) and one for administrators (See Appendix B). The surveys were compiled and analyzed into a full report (See Appendix D) and a short version for PICDE leadership to discuss with the DOE (See Appendix E). Both the survey analysis and the report contain recommendations for programs and resources requested by the schools and parents as well as identification of the need for adequate funding for the implementation and support of parent councils. Understanding that staff training and professional development for parents and school personnel is needed, I completed a literature review (See Appendix W), which includes research on adult education and successful models for parent engagement in the school community and studies centered on the implementation research and systems-change processes. I initiated and attended meetings with the executive director(s) of PICDE to discuss survey results and next steps. Based on our discussions, I created an instructional PowerPoint (See Appendix X) that outlines basic actions to take to start a parent council. In preparation for this work, I observed PICDE parent trainings and completed an evaluation of the programs observed (See Appendix F). I started research and wrote an essay on the value of parent training (See Appendix V). These actions resulted in data on parent councils and their stage of development and in information for further decisions by PICDE regarding this project and resources to be added to the parent council tool kit.



In my discussions with the PICDE executive director(s), we considered the limits of funding and staffing. As good stewards, we first looked at the resources PICDE already has. PICDE began working on the parent council tool kit in 2017. They put together resources that were already in use by PICDE or other agencies such as:

- *Connecting the Dots...A guide to finding services for children and adults with Disabilities and Special Healthcare Needs in Delaware* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). This is a directory of Delaware agencies and services they provide for children and adults with disabilities (*Connecting the Dots*, 2016).
- Tools for Change Worksheet: A blank form to use in recording actions of the councils (See Appendix AA)
- The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC)  
Acronym List: A list of the acronyms used in special education to denote policies, agencies, documents and more (See Appendix z)
- Parents are the Key: A Manual about the Rights and Responsibilities for Parents of Children with Special Education Needs in Delaware (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc., 2013)
- Common Terminology related to Special Education: Definitions and explanations of terms used in special education and related services (See Appendix BB).

- Workshops on the IFSP, IEP, and 504 Plans: Scripts, PowerPoints, and printed materials used in presentations for parents. Guardians, and school personnel (Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc., 2018a)
- The Family Leadership Academy: One- to two-day workshops training parents on how to be advocates (Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc., 2018a).

With these resources in hand, further development of the parent council tool kit was discussed with the DOE. From PICDE's meetings with the DOE, it was decided that the first step was to do a needs assessment in the form of a survey to guide further development. The survey questions were developed in collaboration with PICDE staff, my advisor, and survey development resources (Fink, 2012). The survey questions addressed both quantitative questions on demographics and qualitative questions on parent and administrator perceptions of the purpose and needs of parent councils. All questions were reviewed and approved by the PICDE executive director.

Under the guidelines of the DOE General Services grant, PICDE was advised to use SurveyMonkey to distribute the surveys (SurveyMonkey, Inc., 2018), and the links were sent out to charter school and district administrators on February 28, 2018. Prior to sending the surveys, the PICDE executive director informed me that she had reviewed the purpose of the surveys with the special education directors and supervisors at their meetings in January and February (J. Taylor, personal communication February 16, 2018). The special education directors and other administrators were to complete the administrator survey and send the parent survey link to their parents and guardians of special needs students in their charter school or

district. The surveys were anonymous. We allowed five weeks for the surveys to be completed and returned. All surveys were completed online through the PICDE's Survey Monkey account. Hard copies were also made available; however, none were returned. In early April, I was concerned with the small number of responses and asked the PICDE executive director if I could follow up with the districts and charter schools via phone calls or email. I also asked if the parent survey could be placed on the PICDE website or if PICDE staff could ask parents to complete the survey after workshop presentations. I was told that my follow up was not needed but she would send a follow up email to the special education directors. (J. Taylor personal communication April 6, 2018). At that time, we had received 21 parent and 14 administrator responses.

When no more responses were received by the middle of April 2018, I began reviewing the results from the 35 respondents. Additional data was gathered through phone calls and emails in December 2018 to ascertain the number of parent councils that are up and running with the new school year and when the councils meet and how many parents attend on average. The survey responses were analyzed and compiled in the report, *Parent Information Center of Delaware: Analysis of Survey Responses from Parents and School Personnel on the Development of Parent Councils in Delaware* (Appendix D). This report was considered too long to submit to the DOE, so I worked on several shorter forms. The latest is entitled *PICDE Summary of Parent Council Surveys for the Department of Education* (Appendix E). The data from the phone call and email follow up is in the DOE report and chapter 5. This report was updated and

resubmitted to the PICDE executive director for review and approval prior to further discussions with the DOE and the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Children (GACEC). Although the rate of response was low, PICDE has requests and recommendations from parents and school administrators in the qualitative questions on skills and information needed as well as best ways to communicate with and engage parents in parent councils and related training and support. After review of the survey data, the executive director of PICDE gave me permission to develop the PowerPoint: *Parent Council: Let's Get Started* to add to the parent council tool kit.

Further research was advised by my ELP committee during my proposal, and a literature review on adult learning strategies, successful parent engagement programs, and implementation research and science was completed and shared with the PICDE executive director. This research can support future development of parent and school personnel trainings on the IEP process, advocacy, policy-making, and structures for planning policy implementation. The most important take-aways from the literature review are (1) the need to recognize the many factors that influence a parent's desire or ability to engage in their child's school program and how societal, economic, or their child's disability may limit or prohibit a parent's engagement in acts of advocacy or policy making, (2) that there are successful models available to demonstrate strategies that help parents become involved in their child's education, (3) studies to mitigate the low response levels and plan for improved distribution of surveys and the use of focus groups, and (4) research from implementation science is valuable to the parent council initiative and may guide informed planning, including

funding and evaluation (See Appendix W). The research selected does not encompass every aspect of implementation of parent councils in Delaware. Ongoing examination of research related to best practices in parent empowerment is recommended to assist PICDE in planning professional development programs for school staff, administrators, and parents in pursuit of strong parent support and engagement throughout Delaware.

The parent council regulation itself, Senate bill 33 (14 Delaware Code, 2015), is an improvement strategy with the best intentions of supporting and engaging parents, but it is not well-planned or funded. Fowler (2009 p.202) points out that the “the wording in the law and its funding are determined by separate legislation in U. S. lawmaking.” The same appears to be true in Delaware law making. I have researched Delaware legislation activity since the regulation was voted on in June 2015 and have not found any other information on funding for parent council development. However, there is this reference to parent councils in the Special Education Strategic Plan of 2017 (Delaware’s Special Education Strategic Plan, 2017):

Section 4 Parents and Families: To increase engagement with families as partners in collaboration to support their children at home and at school with access and knowledge to the resources they need.

4.1 Increase levels of engagement and collaboration as well as sharing of information among families, supporting organizations, and related stakeholders.

4.1.1 Create and implement a system of technical assistance to the LEA-level Special Education parent councils for the purposes of increasing engagement with related stakeholders in the delivery of special education.

I have spoken with a member of the Strategic Planning Committee, and the plan has no funding sources connected with it (K. Herel, personal communication, October 24, 2018). Plan provisos are looked at solely as recommendations by the DOE. Implicit in the policy language is the responsibility assigned to the school districts and charter schools. They may be expected to use their parent engagement funds on parent council development. Interested districts and charter schools can use their budget to work with PICDE or other state agencies to obtain information, services, training, and so on for their parent councils.

Without an implementation plan, parent councils run the risk of failing as a policy. Bertram, Blase, and Fixsen (2015) provide current research in implementation frameworks and organization change. They lay out a framework encompassing 4 stages of implementation: exploration, installation, partial implementation, and full implementation. Each stage is well planned and utilizes three kinds of implementation drivers: Competency drivers promote competence and confidence in those chosen or assigned to implement the program or policy. They utilize training, coaching, and assessment with selected staff to prepare them for crucial elements of implementation. Organizational drivers secure funding and manage. Leadership drivers apply technical and adaptive strategies. Technical leadership is called for when the project is set out

with clearly understood and accepted methods. Adaptive leadership is called for in situations where solutions and conditions are more complex. Adaptive leadership will utilize coaching and systems level interventions. Both leadership roles guide the process of implementation. Organization drivers are involved in all stages of implementation with special attention given during the exploration stage to define the model or process needed. PICDE and other agencies that support parent development could serve as competency drivers for the parent council policy. The surveys could serve as part of the exploration data to begin effective planning.

The parent council tool kit is an improvement strategy that can be a valuable resource to PICDE and the families it serves. After a review of the materials gathered and consideration of comments from the needs assessment survey, the most obvious piece missing was a means to instruct parents in the basics of organizing a parent council. I submitted a sample PowerPoint to the PICDE executive director and she liked the approach taken and provided me with additional topics to include. This start-up PowerPoint (See Appendix X) will be available in the parent council tool kit on the PICDE website for use by parents and school personnel. PICDE staff may use it in various face-to-face presentations for parents getting their council up and running.

Notwithstanding, the question of resources is not yet assured. Further planning is needed with consideration of effective implementation processes and strategies. If PICDE is determined as a key organizing agency and expected to train and support parents in 19 districts and 25 charter schools across the state, they will need additional funding for additional staff and training from the Department of Education or directly

from the schools and districts. PICDE is funded through federal and state grants. The federal money comes with designated use and restrictions; however, PICDE can look at how the needs of parent councils interact with their core work to see if they can support the PIC mission under IDEA and the parent council policy implementation. It is hoped that the survey data and follow up phone interviews to determine the number of parent councils throughout the state will persuade the DOE to secure adequate funding through state or federal grants

Furthermore, this funding will need to be long-term if it is to provide effective support of parent councils. Parent council development will not be a “one and done” project. The proper support and maintenance of parent councils will require constant effort. New parents will need to be trained each year, since valuable knowledge will be lost when parents relocate or when their children age out of school services. The best goal or hope is to have parents teaching parents, which may happen in many districts or charter schools, but transitions occur, and laws and regulations change each year. Hence, the improvement strategies that keep parent councils current and functioning will need to be updated annually, and this will take time and money. These are the types of challenges and conditions outlined and addressed in implementation planning.



## **Chapter 4**

### **IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES RESULTS**

The parent and administrator surveys and resulting data and analysis are valuable improvement strategies and provide data needed to warrant effective training and support for parents to develop and sustain parent councils. However, the low number of survey responses bring into question factors of validity. Low survey responses affect external validity. In longitudinal studies with high volumes of quantitative data, validity can be enhanced by weighting responses (Dey, 1997). Dey notes the reluctance of respondents in the decrease of response rates in higher education surveys over three decades from 58% in 1961 to 21% in 1991. His weighting process allows the researcher to make interpolations regarding non-respondents based on large quantities of past demographic data. Dey's process would not be helpful here, however, because we do not have the volume of data needed and PICDE does not know the demographics or number of the targeted population of parents. Other practical reasons can be cited for the low response level. Personal communications and connections with the respondents (Watson, 1998) were not available to PICDE as they were not made aware of how parents were selected or the number of parents who were sent the survey. Watson points these out as Coverage and Nonresponsive errors. The Coverage error occurs when the list from which the sample is drawn does not include all elements of the population that are meant to be studied. This is true in the pool of data collected in that only respondents identified as white and African American participated and all respondents spoke English. The

Nonresponse error may be a factor, as noted within Dey's approach, but we do not know how many parents were in the target group to assess this further.

Although the response pool was small, comprising only twenty-one parents and fourteen administrators, their responses were clear, and they coincide with factors reported in the literature regarding parent involvement and parent concerns. Through my experience as a school administrator, I believe the administrative responses gave a realistic account of the school or district's resources and demonstrated the administrator's knowledge of and experience with parents and families in their school population. Parents reported that they needed information on their child's programs, including understanding how lessons are modified to help their child and how to help their child with college and career needs. Parents and administrators both noted needs to address mental health issues. The surveys add evidence for the need for more parent programs that build parent capacity in understanding school programs and services, advocacy for children, and education policy. Furthermore, parents request support, better communication, and information on their concerns for their children regarding the IEP process and services and accommodations and services for students with ADD and ADHD challenges. These comments and requests from the survey coincide with the repertoire of workshops PICDE already provides and PICDE's awareness that more information is desired on mental health practices and services. Table 4.1 compares responses of parents and administrators regarding their concerns for the parent councils. The responses are listed in descending order from most to least number of comments or references to the items of concern in Table 4.1:

Table 4. 1 Concerns for parent councils.

Table 4.1 What concerns do you have about the Parent Councils? (Parent question 6, Administrator question 8).			
<u>Response Codes</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Total</u>
Communication	6	3	9
Low Attendance		6	6
Meeting time/schedule	4	1	5
Relevant training/Diverse topics	4	0	4
Improve services	3		3
Meeting Place	2	1	3
Partnership	0	3	3
Respect	2		2
Parent Driven Leadership		2	2
Table 4.1			

Better communication was high on the parents' list and low attendance at parent meetings was high on the administrators list of concerns. Parents ask for topics relevant to their students' age and needs. Two parents and the literature note that parents want to be respected as their child's capable caregiver, teacher, and advocate. Meanwhile, two administrators ask that parents take the lead on running the parent council because they do not have the resources to guide parents through all that the parents need to know about organizing effectively.

When asked what tasks or issues need to be addressed by or through parent councils, parents and administrators agreed on several issues, particularly on the IEP processes and services and behavior supports. Parents also felt left out of discussions

which would help them to understand how the school is providing accommodations for their child to learn. Parents from the secondary vocational high schools were concerned about their child's ability to tolerate longer periods in block schedules and navigate the noisy and sometimes dangerous situations in the halls during class changes. The issues and tasks noted by both parents and administrators are compiled in Table 4.2:

Table 4. 2 Tasks and issues for parent councils to address.

Table 4. 2 What tasks or issues would you like the Parent Council to address? Please check all that apply:" (Parent question 7, Administrator question 9)			
<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>Parent</u>	<u>Administrator</u>	<u>Total</u>
IEP processes and services	17	9	26
Behavior supports	15	6	21
Academic classes	13	5	18
Elective classes	10		
Other open-ended responses:			
College and career/Transition	5	2	7
ADHD/ADD lesson support, modification, accommodation, block schedule challenges	3	2	5
Connection with outside resources	2		
Exit surveys, prepared for life	1		
Assessment	1		1
Open to address any concerns	1		1
Table 4.2			

The responses to this question on tasks and issues indicate the need for further resources and funding to provide information and support to the parents or school personnel. The costs to consider include materials and personnel for PICDE and related parent agencies to do the work required by the legislation.

On the topic of meeting attendance, fifty percent of the parents provided information on their desire and ability to participate through video and phone conferencing. These options for parents may alleviate the administrators' concerns on parent participation and attendance. The two administrators who want parents to organize themselves would benefit from the literature provided by the PACER Center (2018) and Epstein et al. (2009). These resources provide tested processes and strategies to organize and empower parent groups. Related articles in the literature review provide real life scenarios and strategies that can be used to help parents become involved; however, human resources and materials are required to convey these to parents.

To find out more about what schools or districts are dealing with on behalf of their students and parents, administrators were asked "What special education, mental health, or disciplinary issues are raised by parents?" (Question 22). Of the ten administrators who replied, one stated that there were no issues, and three stated that these issues "run the gamut" or vary with parents being assisted individually. The responses from six administrators indicated that parents want information and or education on:

- Mental health services
- Home supports
- Understanding related services
- Understanding due process
- Understanding availability of services
- Bullying
- Inclusive practices
- Academic supports including Reading Intervention
- Behavior supports
- Autism services
- Assessment accommodations
- Transition assessment and planning
- Changes to federal law/policy
- Transition after graduation/transfer of rights

This list reported by administrators on parent concerns flowing through their office highlights the many questions and concerns parents have and their need for information to better understand the system and services that are meant to help their children. Parents want to know how to find resources for their children and what the school needs to improve services and academic success for students. Parents can be motivated and educated on how to advocate for these services.

Considering the low response rate and limited responses from the diverse families in Delaware, further assessment of parent council needs is recommended. The results of this and future surveys can inform the DOE of needs, success and progress in parent council development.

Creating the literature review is an improvement strategy that empowers implementers with knowledge about parents, model programs and implementation frameworks. It is intended to help PICDE staff be aware of obstacles to parent engagement as well as strategies that have been successful in involving parents in their child's school program. For example, the literature review sheds light on the many factors that prohibit parents from getting involved, especially the isolation felt by parents of children with severe developmental or emotional challenges (Ruffolo et al., 2006). Brookfield (2002) uses the writings of Marx and Fromm to explain how adults, groomed as workers in industrial America, are not likely to ask questions or take a voice in society. Regarding keeping people in their place, Walker (2017) notes that emotions such as shame influence the adult's ability to engage in new learning. Through shame of their circumstances or perceived level in society, people may not feel capable of learning what is needed to advance themselves, let alone what is needed to advocate and make reforms for their children. Accordingly, the literature arms stakeholders in advocating for the recruitment, training, and funding of parent councils. It provides examples of successful means of engaging parents and supporting school personnel in the development of parent councils, committees, or initiatives. It also gives insights into factors to consider when teaching adults. Auerbach (2007)

notes in a small study how parents from different cultures may not be visible in school but use their parenting skills at home to support their children in their effort to attend college. Porras Hein (2003) looked at the actions of two principals and reports how they used strategies to bring their students' parents into the school community. Ruffolo et al. (2006) examined parents and professionals working in groups to provide therapeutic interventions for their children. At first, parents reported that the professionals did not respect their knowledge and expertise with their child's needs and abilities. The parent engagement model used helped parents and professionals overcome these and other challenges and misunderstandings so that the children could make substantial progress.

Other factors that may deter parents from school involvement is the attitude and perceptions of school administrators towards parents. Richardson (2009), in her study of urban principals' perceptions of parent involvement, used gender, age, education, and school level (secondary or primary) assignments to determine their effects on parent involvement. The principals in her study were receptive to their role of facilitator of parent involvement but were reluctant to bring parents into the decision-making process. This finding was consistent with the work of Chavkin and Williams (1987), which demonstrated the failure of administrators to build relationships with parents that would welcome and encourage them to participate in true school governance and decision-making. Auerbach (2007) defines three types of school and parent partnerships: 1. nominal, where administrators maintain a wall between parents and staff, 2. traditional, where administrators manage parents into



particular roles in certain areas of school support, and 3. authentic, where parents participate in everything related to school or student success. She found the principals engaged in authentic partnerships were mindful of moral commitments to social justice in their impoverished high needs district. Auerbach sets up a self-evaluation continuum for school leaders to assess their leadership style, goals, partnership orientation, view of families and their roles, and school climate. The continuum ranged from *leadership preventing partnerships* to *leadership for authentic partnerships*, including *nominal* and *traditional partnerships* in between. Auerbach notes that authentic parent partnerships go beyond coffee with the principal. Significantly, involving and respecting parents improved attendance and reduced dropout rates. She concludes that involving parents in shared decision-making is linked to promoting social justice. These studies bring to mind the low rates of responses on the parent council surveys and the suspicions that school administrators in Delaware are resistant to meaningful parent involvement.

Several sources provided systematic strategies for the implementation of parent councils. Dr. Joyce Epstein, who has been working on parent engagement for decades, provides step-by-step recommendations and actions to assist parents and school personnel with resources to implement effective parent committees (Epstein, et al., 2009). The Massachusetts Department of Education provides a manual *Guidance for Special Education Parent Advisory Councils* (Massachusetts, 2010), which offers advice on community collaboration and outreach to underserved communities. The PACER Center, a long-established agency that supports children with disabilities and

their families, has online resources to answer many of the challenges in starting an effective parent organization, including the guide, *Parent Leadership in Special Education* (PACER, 2018). PACER and other parent centers across the country are examples of effective parent action groups. These three sources offer step-by-step information on how to organize parent meetings and develop a mission and values. They also offer successful models for parent instruction and collaboration with school administrators and outside partnerships with helpful programs and organizations. The online sources from Massachusetts and PACER are updated regularly and keep parents informed of regulation changes and legislation that affects special education. Their resources are directed at parents to build their capacity in organizing and advocacy and can provide a strong foundation for implementation of effective parent councils.

Along this vein of getting parent councils up and running, implementation science is a growing resource in education. Implementation science was first developed in the medical environment to move practitioners to utilize evidence-based practices (EBPs) in their daily routines and practice in health care. Implementation science outlines the many complications of selecting proven and effective practices and then implementing them with fidelity. Bauer, Damschroder, Hagedorn, Smith, and Kilbourne (2015) note that EBPs can take an average of 17 years to be incorporated into daily practice. Cook and Odom (2013) note that research-based practices promote better outcomes for students in special education. Odom (2009) describes implementation science as “the tie that binds” EBPs to positive student outcomes.

Odom presents a streamlined process of implementation science in preschool special education service. His model moves educational practices from the researcher to the practitioner (teacher), who adapts it and follows an implementation process and structure to successful implementation, resulting in positive child engagement and outcomes. Fixsen, Blasé, Metz, and Van Dyke (2013) discuss implementation science in the implementation of evidence-based programs statewide. They utilize the four stages of exploration, installation, initial implementation, and full implementation supported by leadership, competency, and organization drivers. They also present defining criteria of a program:

1. “Clear description of program” with “philosophy, values, and principles, [and] clear inclusion and exclusion criteria to define the [targeted] population.”
2. “Clear description of essential functions,” sometimes referred to as core intervention components.
3. “Operational definition of the essential functions,” including “practice profiles” that make the “core activities . . . teachable [and] learnable.”
4. “Practical assessment of the performance of practitioners . . . using the program,” which “relates to program philosophy, values, and principles” incorporated with the “core activities specified” and is practical and repeatable “in the context of . . . human service systems.” Includes evidence that the program is successful and “highly correlated with intended outcomes for children and families” (p. 219).

This criteria for a program and the framework of implementation science demonstrate the unfortunate status of Delaware parent councils. It is a policy, but it requires definition as a program that can be learned and taught as well as adapted to the population it is trying to serve. The catch is in the implementation and all the details required to make the work effective. I note this here because implementation of strong parent councils can be positively affected by consideration of the principles in implementation science. The framework needed to implement a new reading curriculum successfully are the same structures and supports needed for parent councils, utilizing comprehensive planning and proven research-based strategies.

The information on reliable parent resources and the principles of implementation science can influence changes in PICDE's current workshops and presentations. It encourages staff to make modifications that are sensitive to parents' abilities and improve strategies to enhance parent understanding and learning in future trainings, webinars, and workshops.

The PowerPoint on how to get a parent council started is a key product of the improvement strategy in the strategic plan (See Appendix Y) for parents who may be novices in organizing meetings and understanding the legal constraints they will contend with. It is a first requirement in adding a step-by-step resource, as outlined in implementation science principles, to guide parents with accurate information. For example, the PowerPoint addresses privacy issues under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and notes how access to other parents needs to be done through the school. It also explains the process and channels through which parents

can organize and use school or district space, media, and related information to contact other parents. Additionally, it directs them to other resources in the tool kit. The tool kit is itself a work in progress. I recently learned additional strategies for community organizing through the writings of Lopez (2003), which will be helpful in the development of new materials, additional PowerPoints, and even webinars to assist parents in organizing.

The survey responses shed light on other information and workshops that PICDE can develop for the parent council tool kit, such as secondary programs that help parents form partnerships with career training programs and colleges, advocacy and policy making processes, and strategies to understand and navigate mental health services. These areas requested by parents require further action from PICDE and other agencies to deliver these programs. PICDE continues to evaluate its resources and ability to provide information, support, and training for all the issues noted in the survey.

PICDE is now on its third executive director in the four years since the executive director for thirty years retired in September 2014. These transitions in PICDE leadership have slowed numerous activities and reduced the impact that PICDE has been able to have on the development of parent councils. My work might be considered an intervention in the midst of such instability. My actions and collaborations with each successive executive director have provided knowledge and labor in support of the PICDE Strategic Plan (See Appendix Y). This work has resulted in enhancements to several specific strategies called for by the plan:

Strategy 1.1: Increase PIC's presence in the community.

Strategy 3.1: Increase PIC's visibility by reaching out to targeted populations.

Strategy 4.2: Leverage strategic partnerships to increase funding.

Strategy 5.1: Increase quality staff retention.

Strategy 6.1: Increase the capacity for families to participate in systems change.

Strategy 6.2: Increase the number of materials which are high quality, relevant, and useful for families.

Work on the parent councils increases PICDE's presence in the community and provides visibility and awareness of PICDE's services to targeted populations. The demands of parent councils will aid in forming partnerships that may lead to shared funding and resources. Professional development supported by research and proven strategies will increase staff retention and support the ability to build capacity in families that promote systems change. Professional development and corresponding literature improve the quality and relevance of learning materials for families. PICDE now has an executive director who has worked with PICDE for more than nine years. She has been instrumental in developing programs for underserved communities in Delaware. I am hopeful that I can continue to assist PICDE in their efforts to develop parent councils in line with its own strategic plan and in the spirit of the state regulation instituting parent councils.

## **Chapter 5**

### **REFLECTION**

The activities undertaken here provide the initial stages of what is needed and possible in supporting the development and sustainment of parent councils. Although there were only thirty-five responses, the survey responses of the administrators and parents were very informative and insightful. Their information helped us accomplish our goal to understand what parents and administrators need to support their parent councils. They have confirmed several points that PICDE was already aware of: that parents want meaningful information that will help them help their children, that parents do not have all the skills needed to organize and sustain a parent council, and that schools and districts do not have the resources to share with parent councils to assist parents in setting up and sustaining the parent council. The surveys also revealed what information parents are seeking at the secondary school level:

- career and college planning
- understanding what accommodations and lesson modifications are provided to their child
- accommodations for block schedules as well as typical secondary schedules which require children to navigate the noisy and confusing school environment
- more information on programs for mental health services

Knowing these concerns helps PICDE to know what types of information needs to be researched and collected and how best to deliver this information to parents in the form of workshops, webinars, or videos. This information also helps PICDE to negotiate new or redistribute current funding for the parent council needs.

Although the survey responses provide useful information, the participation was far less than hoped for and lacked demographic diversity. The distribution of the survey to parents was dependent on the actions of the district administrators and school personnel, and we do not know how well this effort was undertaken. PICDE did not receive any information on the demographics of the parent groups or number of surveys sent out to parents from the districts or charter schools. There were no numbers to compare the response rate to. I would have preferred to run the survey on the PICDE website and had PICDE staff recommend to parents in PICDE workshops that they complete the survey. PICDE might have received more responses from more parents and with more diverse ethnicities and languages represented. As work around parent councils develops, PICDE can update the surveys and redistribute them as needed within schools and districts to expand the database on parent councils.

In updating the surveys, I would reduce the number of questions, removing the questions on parent efficacy, for example. I would also encourage districts and their motivated parents to use these types of questions in their own surveys to see who may be prepared to take on leadership roles or to determine how they might boost parent confidence and efficacy through education and information. Looking for inclusion and outreach to diverse populations, I would urge districts and charter schools to get the



surveys out in the language of the parents they serve. SurveyMonkey can provide translations for additional fees or upgrades in membership (SurveyMonkey, Inc, “Multilingual Surveys,” 2018).

Although much thought went into developing the survey questions, upon further reflection and research, I know now that it would have been helpful to develop the questions with a focus group and test the questions with a small group of parents and administrators (Morewood & Bond, 2012). Also, Watson (1998), in her work on surveys, advises researchers to be respectful of the respondents’ abilities to respond, to design surveys to appear brief, and to reduce the physical and mental effort required. Taking the time to test the questions on a small group of parents and administrators would have helped with the survey design and might have supported more responses. She also suggests that rewards for participation might improve the rate of responses. PICDE has tried this practice of rewards by giving gift cards to parents for attending workshops, and, if PICDE had had more control over the distribution of the surveys, there might have been ways to reward parent participation in the survey.

Perhaps coming through the district office was another deterrent in getting parent responses. PICDE has good credibility with parents, but parents may not have understood that PICDE was the agency gathering the information. In my observations of the workshops on the IFSP and Transition to School Services, PICDE staff gave brief surveys to the parent participants at the end of the workshops. All parents willingly stayed and completed the written surveys. The PIC staff had built a positive relationship with parents throughout the presentation, and parents were happy to

complete the additional paperwork. Building personal relationships either through prior contact in workshops or phone calls and face to face contact is invaluable and would likely increase the number of respondents (Watson, 1998).

Utilizing an online survey such as SurveyMonkey (SurveyMonkey, Inc. 2018) was very helpful in the distribution of surveys by simply sending the link in emails. However, online delivery of the survey may have limited the number of participants. PICDE is advised to use SurveyMonkey under the DOE General Services grant. This is a cost saving action which eliminates the cost of postage and paper, but parents may prefer a paper survey and they may not have been given that option. Consideration of paper surveys, interviews, or phone surveys can be helpful in the future to reach a broader sample of the population.

The analysis tools that SurveyMonkey provides yield easy to interpret qualitative responses (SurveyMonkey, Inc. “How to Analyze Survey Results,” 2018), but they require proper coding. Through my teaching experience, graduate course work, and knowledge of PICDE resources and parent council regulation, I feel that I was able to code each written response meaningfully for the sake of gathering important opinion and determining actual needs. Although responses were limited, coding and categorizing added weight to what each respondent said, and the concerns were shared by more than one respondent.

### **Reflections after enhanced reporting on Parent Councils**

On the recommendation of my committee, I addressed the paucity of state parent councils reported in the surveys. Originally, these surveys had documented only

9 districts and 6 charter schools that had started work with parent councils.

Accordingly, I conducted follow-up phone calls and email inquiries with each district and the Charter School Network office. These contacts added further information on how many charter schools or districts have a parent council or committee, how often the parent councils meet, and how many parents attend.

This effort has confirmed that 13 districts have parent councils or parent advisory committees (one of the thirteen districts that responded “yes” asked not to be listed), 4 districts said they do not have a parent council, and 2 did not respond to phone call and email. The school district results are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5. 1 School District Parent Council Responses

Table 5.1 School District Parent Council Responses				
District	Does the district have a Parent Council?	When or how often does Parent Council meet?	Approximately how many parents attend?	Notes
1. Appoquinimink	yes	Monthly with sessions offered in the morning and evening	Many	
2. Brandywine	Yes	Monthly on Wednesday evenings	10-12	
3. Caesar Rodney	No, but we hold parent outreach meetings	2-3 per year	8-10	
4. Cape Henlopen	Yes	Quarterly	0-10	PIC has been invited to present, but meeting cancelled due to lack of rsvp
5. Capital	Yes	Monthly		
6. Colonial	Yes	4 per year	10-14	Childcare, translator, food provided in a central meeting location
7. Delmar	No	Offered once annually	0	
8. Indian River	Yes	Monthly	6 (Nov. 2018)	More parents attended (20-30) in Fall 2015
9. Lake Forest	No (PAC invites Special education parents)	PAC meets monthly		
10. Laurel	No			Working on getting council established
11. Milford	Yes	4 per year	5-10	
12. NCC Vo Tech	Yes	3-4/year	10	
13. Polytech	Yes	Monthly	4	
14. Red Clay	Yes	Monthly	18	Food and childcare provided
15. Smyrna	Yes	Every other month	15-20	
16. Sussex Tech	Yes	1/year	5	
Totals	12 Yes 1 Yes Not identified 4 No 2 Non-responders (not named)	1 per year		

Table 5.1

The Charter School Networks office gathered the data over the course of five business days. This contact more than doubled the number of charter schools reported in the survey data, increasing the number of schools responding from six to 15 schools. Of the 15 schools that responded, 13 answered “yes” they do have a parent council and two answered “no.” Ten charter schools have not responded. The charter school responses are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5. 2 Charter School Parent Council Responses

Table 5.2 Charter School Parent Council Responses			
Charter School	Does your school have a Parent Council?	When or how often does Parent Council meet?	Approximately how many parents attend?
1. Academia Antonia Alonso	Yes	3 per year	0
2. Academy of Dover Charter School	Yes	2 per year	0
3. Charter School of New Castle	Yes	Not noted	
4. Charter School of Wilmington	No		
5. Delaware Military Academy	Yes	1 per year	0
6. Design Thinking Academy	Yes	5 per year	1
7. East Side Charter School	No	Parent meetings 2 times per year	1-2
8. Early College High School at DSH	Yes	2 per year	2
9. First State Montessori Academy	Yes	1 per year	5
10. Great Oaks Charter School	Yes	4 per year	0-2
11. MOT Charter School	Yes	1 per year	0-4
12. Newark Charter School	Yes	4 per year	25
13. Positive Outcomes Charter School	Yes	3-4 per year	15
14. Providence Creek Academy	Yes	3 per year	0-2
15. Sussex Academy of Arts & Science	Yes	Monthly	7-10
Total	13 Yes 2 No 10 Non-responders (not named)		

Table 5.2

The councils meet from once per year to monthly throughout the school year. Six districts and one charter school report meeting monthly. Six charter schools and four districts report three or more meetings per school year. Parent attendance ranges from zero to 20 at the district meetings and zero to 25 at the charter school meetings.

This is quite a range in implementation and raises questions regarding consistency in implementation of parent councils.

Inconsistency in the establishment of parent councils may be due to the lack of planning for implementation of the policy including monitoring and evaluation. There are no guidelines with the legislation that defines adequate implementation of parent councils. Furthermore, district and school administrators may be resistant to improving and increasing parent involvement. Regardless of administrators' perception of parent involvement, it may be unreasonable that administrators, hampered by limited personnel and funding, should also take on the role of thoroughly educating parents in advocacy and policy making. Hence, school administrators may not be prioritizing parent councils and the support councils need to be effective.

### **Utilizing literature review and literature on social change**

The literature review is a resource for PICDE staff as they revise old and develop new parent training materials. PICDE serves all families from varied economic and culture backgrounds; therefore, PICDE can use ideas from the literature to draw in families of other ethnicities and languages. From Brookfield (2002) and Morawska, Ramadewi, and Sanders (2014), we know that parents can feel isolated either by their child's disability or by cultural and economic factors. In terms of their child's disability, parents requested help on behavioral plans and interventions; the literature review presents successful programs where parents and professionals worked together in a therapeutic manner to help their children (Ruffolo et al., 2006). These types of effective therapeutic programs come with costs to pay the specialists involved

for their time and knowledge. Implementing such supports requires partnerships with other agencies that have experts in the fields for which parents need help. As noted in PICDE's strategic plan, PICDE can continue to build meaningful partnerships to share resources or secure funding. PICDE's knowledge of these programs and this research can give direction to the districts requesting such programs and materials for parents

Regarding the goal of adding materials to the parent council tool kit, the instructional PowerPoint was a start. The PowerPoint and the other components of the tool kit need to be tried and tested and revised as needed. The PowerPoint and bank of resources provide immediate information for parents to get started and to help each other locate services and materials that may immediately answer some of their questions. The intention of the regulation for the parent council is to help charter schools, districts, and parents reach out each year to parents of children with special needs and provide them with support and develop advocacy skills. This annual mandate may be difficult to fulfil. If the tool kit can be kept current, it will give parent councils that are established or in transition a stable point of reference.

Looking at literature on parents becoming change agents working on systems change, PICDE and parent councils can learn from community organizing. Lopez (2003) points out that successful community organizing for school reform has mastered the same steps needed for healthy parent councils:

- They work to change public schools to make them more equitable and effective for all students.



- They build a large base of members who take collective action to further their agenda.
- They build relationships and collective responsibility by identifying shared concerns among neighborhood (district) residents and creating alliances and coalitions that cross neighborhood and institutional boundaries.
- They develop leadership among community residents to carry out agendas that the membership determines through a democratic governance structure.
- They use the strategies of adult education, civic participation, public action, and negotiation to build power for residents of low to moderate-income communities that results in action to address their concerns.

Lopez further notes that successful community organization has started with grassroots organizing around a concern or purpose. There are professional community organizing groups who can help with training and technical assistance. Parent community groups use these strategies to organize (*italics mark my own notes*):

- Base organization on parent concern (*literacy, children's health*)
- Develop parent leadership (*workshops run by professionals to educate on issue*)
- Build social capital (*build relationships, trust, confidence*)
- Mobilize collective power (*knock on doors, social media*)

#### Accomplishments of Community Organizing:

- Policy and systems change. *Groups in New York, California, and Texas gained funding to finance innovative practices for school improvement, a small schools initiative, and restructuring for school accountability.*
- Home school connections. *Parents increase their role in school as mentors, volunteers, decision-makers.*
- School climate. *Parents are welcomed and develop mutual respect.*
- Student Achievement. *Political action by parents holds schools accountable to providing appropriate education and services.*

(Lopez, 2003)

Lopez reminds us that community organizing and systems change actions are open-ended and ongoing. Community organizing strategies harness the passion of parents and others to repair and improve broken systems that limit their children's success. Parents solve one problem and move on to the next in most cases. The little successes boost them on to solving bigger problems.

Zachary and Olatoye (2001) give us another example of successful community organizing in the Bronx. The New Settlement Apartments (NSA) Parent Action Committee (PAC) took on the challenge of improving their failing low-income schools. They utilized the strategies outlined by Lopez, which involve organizing around the problem, educating themselves on the problem, compiling research to make their arguments, meeting with school officials, and persisting until the system changes.

Parent councils require these same strategies in organizing. They must go beyond the traditional types of parent engagement such as PTA and fundraising (Lopez, 2003). To be change agents, they must demand mutual respect, prioritize goals and purposes, be educated on the issues, and prepare for the struggle to resolve the issue. To support this type of parent organizing, PICDE needs to prepare their staff to provide workshops that attract parents from all backgrounds into the school community and build their capacity as confident advocates, capable of participating in education policy development.

### **Limits and Challenges**

Implementing a statewide policy takes extensive planning and commitment. However, PICDE is not aware of an implementation plan for Delaware parent councils. The research, guidelines, and resources provided by implementation science would help set the standards and supports needed for statewide implementation. Having such a plan would organize and guide the role of PICDE and other parent support agencies. An organized well-planned implementation framework could coordinate services and partnerships to support the intent of the policy.

PICDE is grant funded through both the federal government and the DOE, and their funding supports PICDE's work with families. PICDE relies on the DOE to put into place policy and practice that enables PICDE to establish itself as a welcome resource to school administrators and thus permit PICDE access to the district or charter schools' parents. With its current resources, hiring additional personnel to train parents and professionals and assist in getting the parent councils up and running

would be difficult. PICDE is always looking for other means of funding. PICDE did apply for a new federal Statewide Family Engagement Center grant in partnership with the DOE. However, there were only 12 grants awarded and they went to universities and larger agencies across the country. Undeterred, PICDE constantly looks for local and national sources to bring in funding to support their mission.

Other, unforeseen challenges during this project include three changes in PICDE leadership. Fortunately, the new executive director has a long history with PICDE as the Special Programs Director and she has been aware of and supportive of my work. However, these changes in leadership have delayed discussions with the DOE and GACEC.

Data collection was difficult because PICDE had no control over the selection of parents and the distribution of the parent surveys. Sending the surveys out online through the school districts did not allow PICDE to make personal connections with parents to encourage greater participation. This led to very low responses and did not include underserved groups based on race, ethnicity, or language spoken at home.

Working with the executive director as a board member and volunteer, I have observed many challenges for PICDE. The first is understanding the limits of PICDE's human resources and related materials and programs. Offering my services as a volunteer while working on my ELP solved one problem for PICDE as my work freed up the executive director and related staff to work directly with parents on other issues. I hope that the information gathered from the surveys and supporting research provides better understandings for both DOE and PICDE of what is needed for parent

councils and keeps all of us on the road to proper implementation of parent councils as intended by the legislation.

## Chapter 6

### REFLECTION ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development, for me, is ongoing. I have been on a sort of sabbatical, working part time at the university while completing my doctoral studies. I look forward to returning to a greater role in education and applying the ideas I have learned over the past few years. I have benefitted immeasurably during this process from my doctoral coursework, the composition of this Educational Leadership Profile, the accompanying literature review, and my collaboration with the Parent Information Center of Delaware.

The coursework in my program gave me a great deal to consider. Starting with *Politics and Public Relations within School Systems* with Dr. Jeff Lawson, his insights into the complications of leadership were very eye-opening. Dr. Lawson reminded me that a big piece of leadership is political (unfortunately) and that leaders must be able to navigate the various constituents, competitions, and challenges that hinder or support one's goals for one's school, staff, and district. Building good relationships with parents is the kind of good school leadership that can benefit the schools, especially when parents are allies. Looking at parent and school relationships, the parent council policy is well intended, but poorly planned; therefore, progress has been very slow going on 3 years now in parent council development. Both politics and public relations play a role in what has happened so far with parent councils.

I gained further insights in politics and policy making working with Dr. Lauren Bailes in *Education Policy and Governance*. The problem of an unfunded mandate with no monitoring and consequences is evident in the parent council policy (Fowler, 2009, p. 250-251). The legislators were either unaware of or blind to the economic costs that were attached to the policy. Once again, we see that parents and students are short-ended with unfinished or not well-planned initiatives on the part of lawmakers. The legislature and DOE puts together groups such as the IEP Improvement Task Force and the Special Education Strategic Plan Committee to research and offer recommendations, but these groups do not have the power to determine policy or funding. In Delaware, funding must be secured through allocations or by lobbying the Joint Finance Committee for grant money. Learning to follow the money helps me to understand which policies are considered important. Funding not only has affected the implementation of parent councils, but it has influenced the daily work and effectiveness of teachers and administrators. During my time as a public school administrator, we struggled through the reduction in school counseling services. Counselors were split between schools, being present at either site less than 2 days per week. This was devastating for the school community, as both parents and students benefited from the work of the counselor. Another loss due to funding was the removal of reading specialists. This change particularly affected low income students, whose parents were not in a position to protest. Fortunately, there has been a turnaround, and reading specialists are now returning to their area of expertise and once again providing much needed services to children with reading challenges while

adding their knowledge and effort to Response to Intervention programs mandated in federal law.

Dr. Buttram's work with us in *Program Evaluation in Education* was instrumental in helping me understand the resources PICDE possesses to meet the unique responsibility of providing adequate training to parents in education rights and policy. Evaluating and valuing the PICDE programs was difficult. The staff presenters do as much as possible in the short time they have with parents attending their workshops. PICDE's dedicated staff is a big part of the reason for their trustworthy reputation. Looking at the school or organization from an evaluator's point of view helps a school leader understand how effectively one is in producing positive outcomes for the school or community. Dr. Buttram also helped us understand the implications of working with human subjects and required that we get our CITI certificate before the end of her course. I did apply to the University of Delaware IRB for review of the two surveys, but it was determined that the surveys did not meet the criteria of human subject research (See Appendix CC).

Dr. Archbald's work with us in *Collection and analysis of Data for Decision Making* strongly influenced this project. What I learned there helped me decide on the survey questions and incorporate quantitative and qualitative information in the design. The result is the evidence gathered to support further discussion and decisions that would strengthen parent councils. The additional guidance of my committee helped me to look closer at how to increase participation in survey respondents via various means of distribution and personal contact, and to be cautious in interpreting



data from limited numbers of participants. The course studies and further research on low response rates has provided strategies that can enhance the likelihood of more respondents on the use of a survey for data collection in the future.

I gained a great deal of knowledge on many topics in education. I have a far better understanding of the issues involved in teaching certain disciplines and content areas and the joy of designing one's own classroom space and exploring learning environments outside the classroom. I also learned new strategies and resources for developing literacy in children and successful approaches for literacy development in children who are learning English as a second language. This knowledge will follow me into my next school leadership role. All of these collaborations and this learning have contributed to my skills as an educational leader. I will miss this wonderful think tank environment that I have had the pleasure of working in these past four years.

Woven throughout our course studies was the application of educational leadership standards for school administrators. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) developed, adopted, and advanced standards for school administrators in 2008 (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). These were revised in 2015 and named Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board, 2015). For this work on parent engagement, Standards 5 and 8 specifically address the administrator's responsibility in supporting and engaging students and their families:

Standard 5 Community of Care and support for students:

Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student.

Standard 8 Meaningful engagement of families and community:

Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being. (National Policy Board, 2015)

The regulation for parent councils and these professional standards go hand-in-hand. The professional standards support the development of new parent and school partnerships for improving learning and the school environment. The standards require administrators to engage with parents, students, and their broader school communities to problem solve collaboratively and ensure the success of the students. With insights gleaned from the survey responses and from my own experience as a school administrator, I believe that most administrators would welcome more support from their communities and the opportunity to collaborate with parents engaged through parent councils. In my experience as a school administrator, I was able to recruit parents to be mentors when we started a school garden. I also approached parents for help when trying to find community service activities for students. These interests, which may seem unrelated to the classroom, can spawn relationships that strengthen the opportunities we want for the students and give parents a chance to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise for the benefit of the school. These leadership standards

should be innate in school leaders; if one wants to change the world by teaching kids, then one needs the help of parents and the rest of the community.

The school leadership standards could help address the problem of monitoring parent council development. The success of a parent council could be incorporated with the professional standards as part of the school administrator evaluation system. Once parent council implementation is monitored, funding could follow as administrators pay closer attention to the needs of their parent councils.

An additional influence on my leadership development was the literature review. The literature review boosted my knowledge of how adults learn and how mutual respect can be an asset to the educational team serving the parent and child (Ruffolo et al., 2006). It is funny how often in life and in school administration we return to the golden rule of treating others as we want to be treated. Having the trust of parents and realizing mutual respect are key in growing a strong school community. As an educational leader I share this belief that an administrator must ensure that their faculty and staff understand the needs of parents and present a welcoming and supportive school environment. Learning about successful collaborations between parents and school professionals offers hope that other administrators and I can expand upon. The information is out there in the research and we do not have to reinvent every wheel to help our school community.

A vital part of the literature review was research on implementation science in education. The studies reviewed begin with early implementation work and research on medical personnel incorporating evidence-based practices (EBPs) into daily

practice and expand to current implementation frameworks and their success in implementing educational programs and policy. Fortunately, there is more emphasis on the use of EBPs in the classroom, and researchers are assisting with selection of worthy EBPs. There will continue to be challenges in determining research based effective practices, and it will take more time and energy to establish understanding and consistency in delivering evidence-based lessons or services, but student outcomes will be worth it. I recognize that proper implementation of a strategy, curriculum, or intervention is the foundation for providing positive outcomes for students. I have had two experiences in the application of implementation studies in education. The first was in my days teaching children with autism. The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) was carefully and systematically implemented. We at the Delaware Autism Program (DAP) had the good fortune to work with one of the key experts in PECS. PECS manuals and staff training models were developed at the program. Teachers were trained and observed as they worked with children to be certain that the teachers were using the strategies with fidelity. Consistency in following the PECS protocols was expected and evaluated. At that time the DAP was small but growing. Having a small contained environment delivering a particular intervention to a defined population made it easier to monitor what teachers were doing and to provide instruction as needed to maintain effective implementation. The second experience was doing lesson studies with fellow teachers to review and critique the implementation of new content and materials for reading. Teachers were trained and coached in lesson development and presentation supporting the implementation of

new curriculum. There was whole school commitment to getting the program effectively implemented with the thought of improving student outcomes. Reading about the essential stages and components of implementation science reminded me of the details involved in staff buy-in and commitment and the role that administrators have as change agents. It also reminded me of the fragmented and possibly unsuccessful attempts at implementing educational initiatives such as the parent council policy. I hope that it is not too late to apply implementation science philosophy and practices to the parent council initiative.

A key element in implementation is truly understanding the challenges facing the community educators. The article *Overcoming alienation as the practice of adult education: The contribution of Erich Fromm to a critical theory of adult learning and education on social and economic conditions* (Brookfield, 2002) demonstrates how the practices of employer-employee relationships and societal rules in our world impede parent confidence. It may be the biggest reason that parents do not appear to be present and working on behalf of their child. Remarkably, the study by Auerbach (2007) documents the cultural differences of how parents practice parenting from home and instill values in their children with expectations that support the child in the school setting. Many classroom teachers and administrators need to recognize the power of parents, even though the parents may not be present at school functions. Like parents, we as professionals may not know what to do and this can be overwhelming and cause isolation. As administrators, we do not always know what to do because we do not have all the information, but we do know the tool of shared decision-making.

Parents and the knowledge they possess may be invaluable at these times. As a person who has worked closely with parents of children with severe disabilities, I have seen the dedication and frustration as well as the knowledge parents have of their child's needs and what motivates their child to learn. I have tried to put myself in the other's place when dealing with families. It does not help to judge or complain; it is important to empathize and understand that parents are doing the best they can, and anything the school can do to make parent participation easier is welcome.

Having spent most of my career in public schools working with children with autism, who did not fit the mold for typical special education services, I have had to be a problem solver. Working with PICDE requires the same kind of optimistic can-do attitude. Becoming a volunteer and developing the surveys and doing the research for PICDE has saved them time and money. It has helped me improve my knowledge of how PICDE and other state agencies work and collaborate and what parents need. This better understanding will help me guide families to resources in my future work with PICDE or other school facilities.

Notwithstanding, the information uncovered by the surveys and literature review reveals new challenges for PICDE in their efforts to be responsive to parent needs. To help PICDE meet these challenges, I hope to continue as a volunteer, updating materials in the parent council tool kit and gathering materials for workshops that enable parents of secondary students to gain access to career and college resources, support, and guidance. The process of the needs assessment and the related research and outcomes have demonstrated to me the importance of detail and follow

through as a leader. Building personal relationships with colleagues and parents based on trust is invaluable to the foundation of productive collaboration in the advancement of the parent council policy.

I believe that when we administrators look at our students from the parent's point of view, we develop more empathy and understanding of the drive parents have for inclusion of and equity for their children. Many school leaders are parents themselves, and this empathetic approach should come easy. Education holds the key to economic and social justice. As a school administrator, I see it as my job to inform and involve the parents for the success of their children and for themselves. The parent council regulation is meant for parents to help parents, and the opportunities for this to happen can be facilitated by open-minded educational leadership on the part of the legislators, district, school administrators, and faculty.

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**Appendix A**  
**ELP PROPOSAL**  
**SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT COUNCILS IN DELAWARE**

ELP Proposal  
Special Education Parent Councils in Delaware:  
Needs Assessment and Materials  
Joan Y. French  
EDUC880  
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Advisor: Dr. Gary Allison

## **Overview**

In June 2015, the Delaware State legislature passed a law to require that Parent Councils be developed to engage and support parents of children with disabilities in each school district and charter school (14 Delaware Code, 2015). Several districts have begun to establish parent councils; however, the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) has contracted with the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) to assist with parent council establishment and success. Accordingly, PICDE is to develop and distribute a Needs Assessment Survey to gather information from each district and charter school on their progress in the development of their Parent Council and to determine what supports are needed to secure and maintain the Parent Councils.

This proposal is for the work that I will do under the supervision of PICDE and the DOE. The project begins with the needs assessment survey, followed by the analysis and compilation of data from the survey and a report to DOE on needs expressed. Pending approval from the DOE, I will begin work on developing the materials and programs requested.

## **Organizational Context**

The Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE), founded in 1983, is a statewide non-profit organization with the purpose of training and helping parents of children with special needs, in accordance originally with public law 94-142, passed in 1975; then continued under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The initial mission of PICDE was to facilitate the policies and procedures surrounding

this law, which mandated Individualized Education Programs (IEP) and later 504 Plans that required parents to be educated in the rights and procedures that would secure a free and appropriate public education for their children.

According to their website (Parent Information Center 2017), the Mission of the PICDE is “To advance effective parent engagement in education,” adding that

PIC is especially focused on supporting parents of children with disabilities and youth self-advocates to assist them in gaining the knowledge and skills to access appropriate special education programs and related services.

The Vision of PICDE is “For all children to fulfill their potential to succeed,” Under the vision rubric, PICDE elaborates:

[PICDE] is a statewide non-profit organization with a mission to advance effective parent engagement in education. We deliver important information, education, and advocacy to help parents and caregivers with diverse needs understand public education policies and program options. PIC empowers parents to become their child's best lifelong advocate!

In addition to its vision and mission statements, PICDE specifies its Values:

**Accountability:** We promote school accountability to ensure that all children, youth, and families receive proper services and supports.

PICDE serves families of children with disabilities ages from birth to 21 with a statewide footprint. They have two bilingual Spanish Parent Consultants who serve parents across the state. They organize outreach meetings in schools in Wilmington to assist parents who are impoverished and underserved. There are PICDE offices in



Newport, Delaware for New Castle County parents and a PICDE office in Georgetown for Sussex County. PICDE strives to maintain offices in each county and is working on a location and additional staffing in Kent county. PICDE provides workshops and programs throughout the state in conjunction with other agencies such as the Center for Disabilities Studies, the state PTA, school districts, and the DOE. In recent years, PICDE and other parent centers have expanded their work to include the recognized gaps and discrepancies in services for children with behavioral and mental health needs as well those with cognitive and mobility challenges. Overall, PICDE is open to parents of all children, as many children suffer from a variety of challenges in meeting their educational needs (Parent Information Center, 2017).

With regard to the Parent Council project, PICDE has educated parents for more than 30 years on their children's rights in several areas of education:

- the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process for children ages 3 to 21
- the Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) process for children ages birth to 3
- transitions from Early Childhood to school-based services
- transition in adolescents to secondary school programming
- transition to adult services at age 21,
- the 504 plan and process, which provides accommodations for students with mild disabilities.

Among the supports that PICDE provides are training and information on the IEP process and related services, parent advocate attendance at IEP meetings, and assisting parents in understanding the goals and services required for their child's progress. Additionally, PICDE administers the Parent Training and Information (PTI) grant and projects under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) through the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). PICDE has the only PTI in Delaware. The PTI provides information to parents of children ages birth to 26 with disabilities. With its PTI grant, PICDE strives to assist parents with amicable solutions within the IEP process. The information and training provided to parents seeks to enable them to become effective partners in their child's education through a deeper understanding of special education and related services.

To fulfill such varied tasks, PICDE has a small staff of ten employees, which includes the Executive Director and Special Programs Director. Two staff work in the Sussex office. Two staff are bilingual in Spanish, one in the Sussex office and one in the New Castle County office. The remaining staff are native English speakers. PICDE provides staff development to keep their staff informed of policy and process changes that influence the lives of children with special needs.

### **Problem Statement**

The state of Delaware has recognized a gap between the knowledge and ability parents now have and what they require to advocate adequately for appropriate policies and services for their children with special education needs.

To begin to address this gap, in June of 2015 the Delaware legislature passed into law a provision for the development of Parent Councils in each of the state's nineteen school districts and charter schools:

The Delaware Department of Education (DOE) has enlisted the expertise of the Parent Information Center of Delaware to assist them in organizing and supporting these Parent Councils, now mandated under 2015 amendments to the Delaware Code regarding Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

Responding to recommendations from the IEP Improvement Task Force, which was established by the state Senate, the 147<sup>th</sup> Delaware General Assembly added the following paragraph to the Delaware Code:

§ 3125. Parent Councils.

Each school district and charter school enrolling any child with disabilities shall, on an annual basis, contact the parents of each such child to attempt to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a parent council for the parents of students with disabilities. Parent councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to- person support for individual parents and children. The charter schools and school districts shall collaborate and coordinate with existing parent groups and other information and support groups to facilitate creation, maintenance, and effectiveness of the Parent Councils (14 Delaware Code, 2015).

As one of the principal “information and support groups” in the state, PICDE was asked by the DOE to complete a needs assessment of the 19 districts and

approximately 25 charter schools within the Delaware Charter Schools network. The needs assessment should assist PICDE and the DOE in planning supportive programs, materials, and training for the Parent Councils. The Parent Councils' core purpose is to advocate for and assist parents of children with special needs. Therefore, PICDE will determine the needs and current status of Parent Councils in each school district and charter school within the state of Delaware. According to the law, Parent Councils are to "advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support for individual parents and children."

There are several gaps attendant on what PICDE has been asked to do by the state. First, at this time, PICDE has no accurate measure of how many districts have begun to implement the new Parent Councils or to what degree. Second, PICDE needs to develop materials to support, train, and assist Parent Councils as well as materials to train PICDE staff in providing such support. There is also an ancillary gap: funding. While the state has asked PICDE to assist it in establishing effective Parent Councils, they have not provided funding to fulfill the mandate of the new law. Still, it is possible that this study may inform the proper funding agencies in the state as well as empower those advocating for such funding.

The skills and information needed to help districts and charter schools to organize and support parents are extensive. Parents will need information on the IEP, IFSP, and 504 plan purpose and process. Additionally, information on the development and structure of the Parent Council will be needed, including the development of their mission, vision, and goals.

## **Improvement Goals**

The Goals for this project are threefold. First, in accordance with the PICDE Strategic Plan, PICDE will continue with professional development for staff. Secondly, PICDE will identify where Parent Councils are not yet established or how PICDE might assist them where they are established. Third, PICDE will have materials in hand to train Parent Councils based on the Councils' expressed needs. These three goals support the state's purpose for Parent Councils that "[p]arent councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support for individual parents and children" (14 Delaware Code, 2015). Supporting the ideal of advocacy, Bolívar and Chrispeels (2011) learned that building social and intellectual capital with parents increased the community's capacity to engage in actions that positively affected school programs and policies. Another challenge in fulfilling these goals is helping each party to recognize and respect cultural differences. Mayfield and Garrison-Wade (2015) used culturally responsive practices to reform schools. Their work in a middle school dealt with racism and unconscious biases which contributed to the achievement gap for black and impoverished children. Key to closing that gap was opening opportunities for parents to become active in their child's education, an activity facilitated by promoting culturally responsive practices with the staff and faculty. According to this research, then, fulfilling such goals will enable PICDE to expand on what PICDE has done for more than 30 years, which is training parents to be advocates for their children and be

active in policy review and development, as stated in their vision, mission, and strategic plan (see below).

#### Components of PIC Strategic Plan

Action	Outcome
Provide more Professional Development Training for staff	PIC prepared to meet needs of parents and statewide initiatives.
Assess staff knowledge and skills	Strengthen PIC's capacity to reach more families and have more services and supports.
Train the trainer model Provide opportunities for staff to apply what was learned from training	PIC staff viewed as experts.
Work with outside organizations to help families increase participation in systemic systems.	Increase level of parent advocacy and participation in committee meetings, legislative hearings, school board meetings, etc.
Create materials that are family friendly. a. Inventory for existing materials. Identify gaps in materials and knowledge base. b. Develop criteria for determining what is family friendly	Increase the number and types of materials that are accessible, high quality, relevant, useful, and utilized by families.

In consideration of professional development to PICDE staff and district administration and faculty, research shows that often professionals do not treat parents as equals. Ruffolo, Kuhn, and Evans (2006) found that parents feel isolated and that professionals do not listen to or understand their expertise and needs. Their research demonstrates that parents must feel valued to be engaged. They review two programs which make successful effort by bringing parents together and listening actively to their ideas and concerns. Professional development using similar strategies may be necessary to the successful development of Parent Councils.

## **Organizational Role**

I have served on the board of the Parent Information for more than 20 years, serving as the educational liaison to offer expertise as needed and support and review PICDE activities and development. Given the longevity of my involvement with the board, I try to offer continuity, as we have recently transitioned from our Executive Director of 30 years to two new directors in the past 4 years. Since my involvement in PICDE for this project is much more extensive than that of a regular board member, I now serve as an active volunteer, as well.

PICDE has a very small staff, and the Department of Education, which is contracting this project with PICDE, faces similar funding challenges to those faced by other public agencies dependent on federal and state funding. Although the Department of Education is not able to fully fund this project at this time, PICDE has agreed to complete the needs assessment and begin development of programs requested by the parent councils. The Executive Director has agreed to allow me to participate in the work needed to support Parent Councils. I have developed questions for the two needs assessment surveys and modified them in collaboration with the Executive Director and my adviser. I will collect, analyze, and organize priorities from the needs assessments, and then plan, develop, and write programs for the parent councils and professional development programs for the PICDE staff. PICDE will be prepared to deliver the programs as funding allows from the DOE.

## Artifacts

Number	Artifact	Type	Audience	Description	Action Steps	Timeline
1	Needs Assessment Survey	Online Survey	District Administrators	Online survey to determine the specific needs of parent Council.	Distribute in January 2018	January 22, 2018 through February 16, 2018
2	Needs Assessment Survey	Online and hard copy survey	Parents of Special needs children in each district	Online and hard copy survey to determine the specific needs of parent Council.	Distribute in January 2018	January 22, 2018 through February 16, 2018
3	Program Evaluation Report	Paper	UD Professor and class	Evaluation of 2 programs offered by PIC to parents of birth to 3 students	NA	Complete 5/2017
4	Article review	Essay	UD Professor and class	Review of article on effective strategies to engage and value parents.	NA	Complete 8/2017



5	Compilation of survey responses	Chart and report	PIC administration  District administration and parents	Organize and prioritize survey responses	Tabulate responses  Present to PIC executive director, DOE and related staff and/or district representatives	February-March, 2018
6	Prioritize needs and programs and create action plan with PIC administration	Develop action plan and Time line for delivery of programs	PIC ED, DOE and district representatives.	Meeting minutes  Report and timeline.	Meet with PIC executive director and related staff to prioritize and clarify actions needed	March 2018
7	Develop and prepare programs and materials	Manual or guidelines for development of Parent Councils.  Programs requested by parent councils on Special education procedures and services	Parents and district administrators	Brochures  Videos  Workshop trainings for parents and school personnel.	Research and develop programs and materials in accordance with Parent Council priorities	March-June 2018

#### Artifact 1: Needs Assessment Survey School Administrator

Artifact 1 is the Needs Assessment Survey for District Administrators. The Survey was developed collaboratively with the PICDE Executive Director and Special Programs Manager. It was agreed that the main questions regarding needs and expectations for the Parent Council will be open-ended. Both Parents and district Administrators would have the same opportunity to express their thoughts and wishes for the work and purpose of the councils. The survey uses a combination of open-ended, additive scale, category, and gradation scale questions. (Fink, 2012).

#### Artifact 2: Needs Assessment Survey Parents

As noted for artifact 1, the Needs Assessment Surveys were developed collaboratively with the PICDE Executive Director and Special Programs Manager. The main questions regarding needs and expectations for the Parent Council are open-ended. Parents will have the opportunity to express their thoughts and wishes for the work and purpose of the councils (Fink, 2012).

#### Artifact 3: Program Evaluation Report

This paper was an assessment of two workshops provided by the Parent Information Center in late winter and spring of 2016. This project allowed me to observe two workshops presented in English and Spanish to parents of children with special education needs. The children were being served by the birth to 3 programs and were about to transition into school-based services. The first program was Transition based on the policies, procedures and resources available to children who

are aging out of birth to three services and into the programs and services provided by their local public school district. The second program explained the difference between an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This paper examined the pre and post surveys taken by parents measuring what they learned during the 90-minute workshops. Observing the workshops and reviewing parent responses gave me insights into varied levels of parent's knowledge of and familiarity with special education services within the population of parents of young children.

Artifact 4: Essay on Parent Training: Developing a parent-professional team leadership model in group work: Work with families with children experiencing behavioral and emotional problems. By: Ruffolo, M. C., Kuhn, M. T., & Evans, M. E.

This is an example of the type of research I have read in support of this project. PIC will work with district and school officials to inform and engage parents in their children's education as well as in the school and state policies and processes that influence their child's education. The points from this paper will be helpful in creating professional development for district and school staff and faculty that assists them in valuing parents as knowledgeable collaborators (Ruffolo et al., 2006).

Artifact 5: Survey Analysis, Compilation and Report

This artifact will be developed after surveys have been received. The purpose will be to determine what needs are specified in the responses and how PIC or other agencies can assist in addressing the needs.

#### Artifact 6: Prioritize Needs and Develop Action Plan

This artifact is to be determined and may consist of meeting minutes and a report addressed to the DOE outlining the resources needed to address the district and charter school Parent Council needs.

#### Artifact 7: Develop and prepare programs and materials


This artifact will be several documents which may include workshops for parents, information brochures, videos, and professional development for staff, pending review of survey needs.

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## Appendix B

### PARENT COUNCIL SURVEY (Administrator Version)

 <small>Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc. NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION</small>	Parent Council Administrators
Parent Council	

Dear School and District Administrators:

Under the requirements of the Delaware Code Title 14 section 3125, each district will support/convene a Parent Council. The Parent Council is to reach out to parents of children with disabilities to provide support and advocacy. The Parent Information Center of Delaware, under the guidelines of the Department of Education, is responsible for assisting district personnel and parents in the development and successful function of each Parent Council. Please complete this questionnaire/survey so that we can aid in meeting the needs and goals for your Parent Council.

#### 1. My role with the School or District is:

☐ Supervisor

☐ Principal

☐ Director

☐ Other (please specify)

#### 2. What type of school/district do you serve?

☐ Charter School

☐ Public school

#### 3. What is the name of your school and district?

#### 4. Does your school /district have a Parent Council?

☐ Yes

☐ No

5. If there is a functioning parent council, where are Parent Council meetings conducted?

☐ School

☐ District office

☐ Local library

☐ Online using Skype or other technology

☐ Community center

☐ Phone Conferencing

☐ Other (please specify)

6. What do you believe is the purpose of the Parent Council?

7. What goals do you have for the Parent Council?

8. What concerns do you have about the Parent Council?

9. What tasks or issues would you like the Parent Council to address? Please check all that apply:

☐ IEP process and services

☐ Elective classes

☐ Discipline

☐ Behavior supports

☐ Academic classes

☐ Other (please specify)

10. What are or should be the strengths of the Parent Council?

11. What is the process used by the Parent Council to make the district aware of concerns?

☐ I do not know the process.

☐ I understand the process is:



## 12. How does the school/district resolve or respond to Parent Council concerns?

☐ I do not know how Parent Council concerns are resolved.

☐ I understand the Parent Council concerns are resolved by:

## 13. What types of support does your school/district offer to help parents attend Parent Council meetings and activities?

☐ Childcare

☐ Food

☐ Transportation

☐ Access via phone or online

☐ Translator

☐ Varied meeting times and days

☐ Other (please specify)

## 14. What other means are used to encourage parent attendance (please specify):

15. What languages are spoken by families in your school/district?

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English                | <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish                | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urdu                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farsi                  |                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |                                   |

16. How does your school/district communicate with parents?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notes sent home from school(s)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone texts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letters via U.S. postal service | <input type="checkbox"/> Email            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone calls or voice mail  | <input type="checkbox"/> Social media     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)          |   |

17. Does your district/school use a website to send and receive news and information?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. Does your district/school use a website to send and receive news and information?

☐ Yes

☐ No

18. Does your school /district have an English Language Learner population (ELL)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

19. If so, how many students are enrolled in ELL services?

20. How many students are receiving services through the IEP or 504 programs?

Number of IEP students

Number of 504  
students

21. How many children does your school or district serve in each of the following categories?

Autism	
Deafness	
Deaf-blindness	
Developmental Delay	
Emotional Disturbance	
Hearing Impairment	
Intellectual Disability	
Multiple Disabilities	
Orthopedic (Physical) Impairment	
Other Health Impairment	
Specific Learning Disability	
Speech/Language Impairment	
Traumatic Brain Injury	
Vision Impairment	
Other	


22. What special education, mental health, or disciplinary issues are raised by parents?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a written response. A small, dark, diagonal hatched mark is located in the bottom right corner of the box.

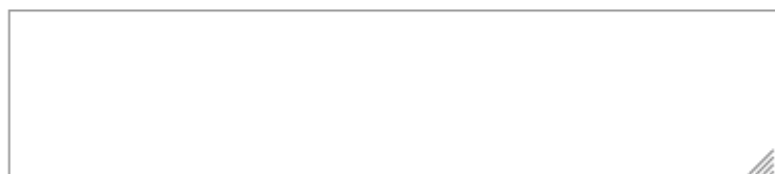
23. How are parents informed of their child's rights?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a written response. A small, dark, diagonal hatched mark is located in the bottom right corner of the box.

24. What steps does your school/district take to make the school welcoming and family friendly?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a written response. A small, dark, diagonal hatched mark is located in the bottom right corner of the box.

25. What activities or events bring parents into the school/district?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a written response. A small, dark, diagonal hatched mark is located in the bottom right corner of the box.

26. How satisfied are you with the school/district's effort to create a school environment that helps children learn?

☐ Very Satisfied

☐ Somewhat Dissatisfied

☐ Somewhat Satisfied

☐ Very Dissatisfied

☐ Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied

27. Do you have any suggestions or comments to improve the school environment?



## Sources

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*Administrators*. SurveyMonkey, Inc. San Mateo, California, USA

## Appendix C

### PARENT COUNCIL SURVEY (Parent and Guardian Version)

Parent Information Center  
of Delaware, Inc.  
NATIONAL EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

Parent Council Survey: Parents and Guardians

Parent Council

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Under the requirements of the Delaware Code Title 14 section 3125, each district will support/convene a Parent Council. The Parent Council is to reach out to parents of children with disabilities to provide support and advocacy. The Parent Information Center of Delaware, under the guidelines of the Department of Education, is responsible for assisting district personnel and parents in the development and successful function of each Parent Council. Please complete this questionnaire/survey so that we can establish the needs and goals for your Parent Council.

#### 1. Does your school /district have a Parent Council?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Do not know/Not sure

#### 2. If your school or district has a Parent Council have you attended any meetings?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No



3. Are there barriers to your attendance and participation in Parent Council meetings and events? Please check all that apply:

☐ Transportation

☐ Day and time of meeting

☐ Childcare

☐ Work schedule

☐ Other (please specify)

4. What do you believe is the purpose of the Parent Council?

5. What goals do you have for your Parent Council?

6. What concerns do you have about the Parent Council?

7. What tasks or issues would you like the Parent Council to address? Please check all that apply:

☐ IEP process and services

☐ Elective classes

☐ Discipline

☐ Behavior supports

☐ Academic classes

☐ Other (please specify)

8. What are or should be the strengths of the Parent Council?

9. What is the process used by Parent Councils to make the district aware of concerns?

☐ I do not know the process.

☐ I understand the process is:

## 10. How does the school/district resolve or respond to Parent Council concerns?

☐ I do not know how Parent Council concerns are resolved.

☐ I understand the concerns are resolved by:

## 11. What is your role in the family?

☐ Parent

☐ Educational Surrogate Parent

☐ Grandparent

☐ Guardian

☐ Other (please specify)

## 12. What type of school/district do your child attend?

☐ Charter School

☐ Public school

## 13. What is the name of your child's school and district?

14. What is the grade level of the child indicated in the previous question?

- |                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> PreK/Preschool | <input type="radio"/> 6th grade  |
| <input type="radio"/> Kindergarten   | <input type="radio"/> 7th grade  |
| <input type="radio"/> 1st grade      | <input type="radio"/> 8th grade  |
| <input type="radio"/> 2nd grade      | <input type="radio"/> 9th grade  |
| <input type="radio"/> 3rd grade      | <input type="radio"/> 10th grade |
| <input type="radio"/> 4th grade      | <input type="radio"/> 11th grade |
| <input type="radio"/> 5th grade      | <input type="radio"/> 12th grade |

15. What is your race/ethnicity?

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> African American       | <input type="radio"/> White       |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian/Pacific          | <input type="radio"/> Multiracial |
| <input type="radio"/> Hispanic               |                                   |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) |                                   |

16. I would use the following supports in order to participate in Parent Council meetings and activities. Please check all that apply:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare  | <input type="checkbox"/> Food  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation   | <input type="checkbox"/> Access via phone or online Varied meeting times and dates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Translator   | <input type="checkbox"/> Varied meeting times and dates                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) supports that would help me attend: |  |
| <div></div>   |  |

17. I prefer to attend school related meetings at:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> My Child's School      | <input type="checkbox"/> District office                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local library          | <input type="checkbox"/> Online using Skype or other technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community center       | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Conferencing                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |   |
| <div></div>                                     |   |

18. I can attend meetings and workshops during these times:

- ☐ Morning
- ☐ Afternoon
- ☐ Evening
- ☐ Saturday

### 19. What languages are spoken at home?

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English                | <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish                | <input type="checkbox"/> Japanese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arabic                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Urdu                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindi    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farsi                  |                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |                                   |

### 20. Does your child receive services in the English Language Learner Program (ELL)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

### 21. What are the best ways to communicate with you? Check all that you prefer:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notes sent home from school(s)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone texts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letters via U.S. postal service | <input type="checkbox"/> Email            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone calls or voice mail  | <input type="checkbox"/> Social media     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)          |   |

22. Do you use the district/school website to receive news and information?

☐ Yes

☐ No

23. Does your child receive Special Education Services?

☐ Yes

☐ No

24. Does your child have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan?

☐ IEP

☐ 504 Plan

☐ No IEP or 504 Plan

25. If your child has a disability, please check the appropriate disability classification

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autism                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Orthopedic (Physical) Impairment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deafness                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Health Impairment          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deafness Deaf-blindness | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech/Language Impairment       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developmental Delay     | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific Learning Disability     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Disturbance   | <input type="checkbox"/> Traumatic Brain Injury           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing Impairment      | <input type="checkbox"/> Vision Impairment                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Intellectual Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Disabilities   |   |

26. How well do you understand the IEP process?

- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Fairly well
- ☐ Somewhat well (some knowledge)
- ☐ Not well at all

27. How satisfied are you with your district's IEP process?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied                    | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Dissatisfied |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Satisfied                | <input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied     |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied |   |



28. How satisfied are you with your district's Special Education services?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied                    | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Dissatisfied |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Satisfied                | <input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied     |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied |   |

29. How satisfied are you with the school/district's effort to create a school environment that helps children learn?

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Very Satisfied                    | <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Dissatisfied |
| <input type="radio"/> Somewhat Satisfied                | <input type="radio"/> Very Dissatisfied     |
| <input type="radio"/> Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied |   |

30. How confident are you in your ability to bring about district-wide change?

- ☐ Extremely confident
- ☐ Somewhat confident
- ☐ Slightly confident
- ☐ Not confident at all

31. How confident are you in your ability to connect with other parents?

- ☐ Extremely confident
- ☐ Somewhat confident
- ☐ Slightly confident
- ☐ Not confident at all

## Sources

Andrew M. I. & Lee, J. D. (2018). Understood: The 13 Conditions Under IDEA.

Retrieved from <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/special-education-basics/conditions-covered-under-idea>

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## **Appendix D**

### **PARENT INFORMATION CENTER ANALYSIS AND SUMMARY OF THE SURVEYS OF PARENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARENT COUNCILS IN DELAWARE**

#### **Introduction**

The state of Delaware has recognized a gap between the knowledge and ability parents now have and what they require to advocate effectively for appropriate policies and services for their children with special education needs. To begin to address this gap, in June of 2015 the Delaware legislature passed into law a provision for the development of Parent Councils in each of the state's public school districts and charter schools.

Responding to recommendations from the IEP Improvement Task Force, which was established by the state Senate, the 147<sup>th</sup> Delaware General Assembly added the following paragraph to the Delaware Code:

#### **§ 3125. Parent Councils.**

Each school district and charter school enrolling any child with disabilities shall, on an annual basis, contact the parents of each such child to attempt to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a parent council for the parents of students with disabilities. Parent councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to- person support for individual parents

and children. The charter schools and school districts shall collaborate and coordinate with existing parent groups and other information and support groups to facilitate creation, maintenance, and effectiveness of the Parent Councils (14 Delaware Code, 2015).

As one of the principal “information and support groups” in the state, the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) was asked by the DOE to complete a needs assessment of the 19 districts and approximately 25 charter schools within the Delaware Charter Schools network. The needs assessment should assist PICDE and the DOE in planning supportive programs, materials, and training for the Parent Councils. The Parent Councils’ core purpose is to advocate for and assist parents of children with special needs. Therefore, PICDE will determine the needs and current status of Parent Councils in each school district and charter school within the state of Delaware. According to the regulation, Parent Councils are to “advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support for individual parents and children.”

### Survey Analysis and Summary

The Parent Information Center of Delaware developed and distributed two surveys, the Administrator Survey and the Parent Survey, to obtain information on the formation and function of Parent Councils in Delaware public school districts and charter schools. The Administrator Survey was directed towards school and district administrators and the Parent Survey towards parents of children with identified disabilities enrolled in the district or charter school. The key survey questions were

qualitative, asking for open-ended responses regarding the establishment of Parent Councils and the perceived purpose, goals, strengths, and needs for a Parent Council. The Parent survey questions differed with demographic questions (race, gender, language spoken at home) and 2 questions on the parent efficacy. Additionally, there were 5 questions directed to administrators on how the district or school accommodates parent needs when scheduling meetings, what parents have presented as issues to the district, and what ideas and actions do administrators suggest in making a supportive learning environment.

On February 28, 2018 the two surveys were sent to the 19 school district Special Education Directors, the Charter School administration office, and the 24 charter school administrators. The administrators were asked to distribute the Parent Surveys to parents and guardians in their district who were already members of a Parent Council or committee and other parents who have children receiving special education services who may be interested in participating in the survey and possibly serving on a district or school Parent Council.

During the next five weeks PIC received 35 survey responses: 21 from parents and 14 from district or school administrators. Overall responses came from nine public school districts and six charter schools. The Parent responses came from six public school districts:

- Three Elementary schools Carrcroft and Hanby in the Brandywine school district and North Smyrna Elementary in the Smyrna School District
- Four middle schools in the Brandywine, Smyrna, and Indian River school districts that were not identified specifically by parents.
- One Special services school KCCS in the Capital School District.
- Three high schools from the New Castle County Vocational Technical School districts: Delcastle, Howard, St. Georges.
- Polytech High School

There were no responses from parents of children in any of the charter schools.

Administrator responses came from six public school districts and six charter schools:

- Brandywine
- Capital
- Indian River
- Lake Forest
- New Castle County Vocational/Technical
- Polytech
- Red Clay

Charter Schools:

- Academia Antonia Alonso

- Charter School of New Castle
- Charter School of Wilmington
- Delaware Design Lab School
- Early College High School
- Positive Outcomes

Notably, 13 districts and 18 charter schools did not respond. Oddly, there were no parents from the Red Clay School District, which has a Special Education Parent Association; however, one administrator did respond. There were also no responses from the Christina School District, although a search online located a letter to parents during the 2016-2017 school year that invited Christina parents to council meetings. The table below demonstrates the distribution of parents and administrators across the charter schools and districts that did participate in this first action to determine the needs of Parent Councils.

Number of Parent and Administrator Responses by School, Grade, and District			
<u>Schools/District</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Administrators</u>
<b>Brandywine:</b>			2
Carrcroft Elementary	5	1	
Hanby Elementary	5	2	
School not indicated	8	3	
No grade or school indicated		1	
<b>Caesar Rodney</b>	9	1	
<b>Capital:</b>			1
Kent Community School	PreK	1	
<b>Indian River:</b>			1
School not indicated	6	1	
<b>Lake Forest:</b>			1
<b>New Castle County Vocational/ Technical</b>			1
Delcastle	12	1	
Howard	9	1	
St. Georges	12	2	
School not indicated	9	2	
<b>Polytech High School</b>	11	1	1
<b>Red Clay</b>			1
<b>Smyrna</b>			
North Smyrna Elementary	PreK	1	
Smyrna Middle School	7	2	
Smyrna Middle School	8	1	
<b>Charter Schools</b>			
Academia Antonia Alonzo			1
Charter School of Wilmington			1
Charter School of New Castle			1
Early College High School Delaware State			1
Delaware Design Lab High School			1
Positive Outcomes			1
<b>Total</b>		21	14

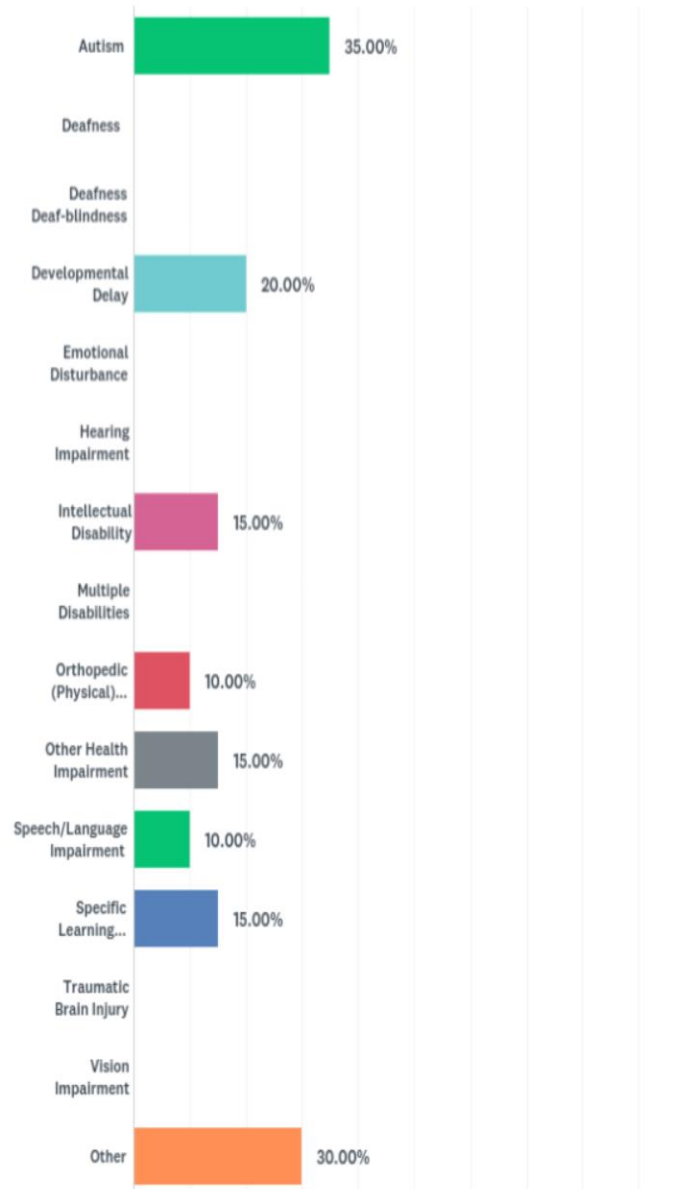


## **Demographics**

All the respondents on the Parent/Guardian survey identified as parents. The majority of the parents identified as white (16/ 21), three parents identified as African American and two chose not to answer the question. All parents identified as English speakers with English spoken at home. No responses are noted from Hispanic, Asian, Arabic or other ethnicities in Delaware. All parent responses were from district public schools. All parents had children receiving special services; eighteen parents noted their children had IEPs and 3 noted children with 504 Plans. Twenty parents designated a disability or multiple disabilities; six parents checked the box for “Other” but did not specify a disability. However, looking at the individual responses 2 of these parents had children with 504 Plans and listed concerns for ADD/ADHD needs. The figure below lists the special education categories identified by parents for their children.

## Parent response on child's disability classification

Q25 If your child has a disability, please check the appropriate disability classification



Source: Parent Council Survey: Parents and Guardians 2018

There are many student populations missing in the data, so further outreach is needed to engage these parents and families in participating in the survey and developing their involvement. Grade levels represented are also thin and scattered. Parent responses involved students in PreK, grades 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 12. There were no parent responses from grades Kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Administrator responses were at the district level as supervisors or coordinators.

Statewide there are 20 school districts including the sixteen regional, three vocational school districts (New Castle County, Polytech, and Sussex), and Charter School Network/district. There are 24 charter schools listed in the Charter School district under the school profiles of the Delaware Department of Education (State of Delaware, 2017). Given the limited number of survey responses to date there is sparse representation throughout the state with nine of nineteen regional public school districts having either one parent or one administrative response covering 47% of those districts. In the charter school district there were 6 schools of 24 providing 25 % participation; however, all responses are from administrators.

According to the state of Delaware enrollment data for 2017-2018 school year, there are 138,371 students, with 21,659 identified with special education needs. With only 21 parent responses we have slightly less than 00.10% of special education students represented (State of Delaware, 2017).

The Parent Information Center recognizes that although there are few responses, those that participated have given meaningful insights to the effort of establishing Parent Councils throughout the state. What follows is an analysis and

compilation of Parent and Administrator responses on the Parent Council Surveys. We begin with the table below that presents the results of question 1 on the Parent Survey:

Does your school or district have a parent council?

Does your school or district have a parent council? (Parents question 1, Administrators question 4)		
<u>Responses</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Administrators</u>
Yes	18	12
No	1	2
Not Sure	2	
Total	21	14

Two administrators, one from a Charter School the other a district supervisor responded that there was no Parent Council in that charter school or district. Three parents responded No or Don't Know. Checking the individual responses between administrators and parents it is determined from this sample that one charter school and two districts do not have Parent Councils.

### **Purpose of Parent Council**

Determining the perceived purpose of the Parent Council is vital to the foundation of developing collaboration and trust between parents and school personnel. The question was the same on both surveys:

“What do you believe is the purpose of the Parent Council? “

The open-ended responses were coded based on word usage and interpretation of point of view into these categories:

- Inform/Educate

- Support
- Improve communication
- Share/Discuss
- Collaborate
- Do not know or skipped question
- Empower

The responses are sorted and listed by number and percentages in the table below.

<u>What do you believe is the purpose of the Parent Council?</u>			
<u>Response Codes</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Administrator</u>	<u>Total</u>
Inform/Educate	10 (48%)	2 (14%)	12 (34%)
Support	8 (38%)	4 (29%)	12 (34%)
Improve communication	6 (29%)	4 (29%)	10 (29%)
Share/Discuss	5 (24%)	5 (36%)	10 (29%)
Collaborate	4 (19%)	6 (43%)	10 (29%)
Do not know or Skipped question	3 (14%)		3 (9%)
Empower		1 (7%)	1 (3%)
Table 3			

The top two themes of Purpose are to Inform/Educate and Support parents. The next three themes are Improve Communication, Share/Discuss, and Collaborate.

Parents were concerned with feeling supported and learning more about their child's programs and services and policies of the district. Administrators were concerned with developing collaboration with parents along with providing settings to encourage

discussions and sharing of information with parents. Only one respondent, an administrator, used the term Empower, which in the spirit of the policy, is what needs to be done to enable parents to advocate for and participate in meaningful dialogue and actions to support students and families.

### **Goals for Parent Council**

Understanding the goals of Parent Councils is vital to their effectiveness and sustainability. Goals will differ based on the type of school and age and grade level of students. The open-ended responses to the question “What goals do you have for your Parent Council?” covered a range of interests and issues. Responses listed below were coded into the categories in the table following:

- Educate
- Improve education, ensure best practices
- Parent-District Relations/Partners
- Skipped Question
- Better topics
- Empower parents/Advocacy
- Network with other parents
- Involvement/Engagement
- Improve attendance
- Regular meetings

Compilation of goals for parent councils:

What goals do you have for your parent council? (Parent question 5, Administrator question 7)			
<u>Response Codes</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Total</u>
Educate	8	7	15
Improve education, ensure best practices	6	1	7
Parent-District Relations/Partners	4	1	5
Skipped question	5	0	5
Better topics	2	2	4
Empower parents/Advocacy	2	2	4
Network with other parents	0	3	3
Involvement/Engagement	2	0	2
Communication	0	2	2
Improve attendance	1	1	2
Regular meetings	1	1	2

The data is organized from most to least number of responses on the theme or category. The most prominent response for both parents and administrators was to educate parents on student programs, school/district/state policy, curriculum, and best practices in teaching. Parents asked for information on the costs and decision-making process for services provided and how to ensure that their child's program is based on Best Practices and high standards. Administrators cited the need to help parents lead the council and address the needs of other parents. Other administrator responses focused on developing relationships between the district and parents, greater parent

involvement, and that parents take on more responsibility in running the Parent Council.

### **Concerns for Parent Council**

This question was raised to help vent perceived or actual concerns that parents and school administrators have regarding the establishment of parent councils. The open-ended responses were coded into the following categories:

- Communication
- Low Attendance
- Meeting time/schedule
- Relevant training/Diverse topics
- Improve services
- Meeting place
- Partnership
- Respect
- Parent driven leadership

The responses are listed in descending order from most to least number of comments or references to the items of concern in the table below:



What concerns do you have about the Parent Councils? (Parent question 6, Administrator question 8).			
<u>Response Codes</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Total</u>
Communication	6	3	9
Low Attendance		6	6
Meeting time/schedule	4	1	5
Relevant training/Diverse topics	4	0	4
Improve services	3		3
Meeting Place	2	1	3
Partnership	0	3	3
Respect	2		2
Parent Driven Leadership		2	2

Communication concerns topped the list with parent comments regarding the lack of distribution of meeting minutes to the manner and tone at meetings in which one parent felt disrespected by school personnel. Parents are also concerned about improving services for their children and having the proper training to assist them in advocating for better services, understanding policy making, and budgets for education services. School administrators are concerned about low attendance at parent meetings and difficulty in finding parents who are prepared to lead and run the parent council.

### **Tasks and Issues to be Addressed**

This question was raised to find out what special education issues and related topics parents and administrators believe need attention. The question format provided a list of 5 choices in a checklist of potential issues and an opportunity for open-ended

responses. The question was the same on both surveys: “What tasks or issues would you like the Parent Council to address? Please check all that apply:” the answer choices were:

- IEP processes and services
- Behavior supports
- Discipline
- Academic classes
- Elective classes
- Other (with option to write in specific issue)

The responses are compiled in the following table:

What tasks or issues would you like the Parent Council to address? Please check all that apply:” (Parent question 7, Administrator question 9)			
<u>Response Choices</u>	<u>Parent</u>	<u>Administrator</u>	<u>Total</u>
IEP processes and services	17	9	26
Behavior supports	15	6	21
Academic classes	13	5	18
Elective classes	10		
Other open-ended responses:			
College and career/Transition	5	2	7
ADHD/ADD lesson support, modification, accommodation, block schedule challenges	3	2	5
Connection with outside resources	2		
Exit surveys, prepared for life	1		
Assessment			1
Open to address any concerns			1

The tasks and issues most requested for attention at Parent Council are the IEP processes and Behavior Supports. As a special education teacher and administrator, I have witnessed the overwhelming situation presented to a parent when reviewing the components of an Individualized Education Program (IEP). This request for knowledge and information on IEP services and process is ongoing. The request for attention to Behavior Supports is also continuous in Delaware schools. Of the 21,659 students enrolled in special education services, over 3000 are identified as Emotional Disability or Autism. Students within these categories and others with 504 Plans require behavior plans and supports. Nationally, much attention is given to Positive Behavior Supports (Warren, et al., 2006); however, often parents do not understand these programs and need assistance at home in implementing an individualized behavior plan. Parent comments in conjunction with academic and elective classes include wanting to understand what kind of modifications and accommodations were being made to support their children in the classroom. The comments made under the Other category are in line with concerns of older students. These parents want information on career and college opportunities after graduation and wish to know about agencies that can help their adolescent with career skills and employment.

### **Strengths of Parent Council**

In an attempt to match up purpose, goals, and concerns with positive attributes or strengths, participants were asked “What are or should be the strengths of the Parent

Council?” The responses in the table below are coded with word use and interpretation of intended meaning.

What are or should be the strengths of the Parent Council? (Parent question 8, Administrator question 10)			
<u>Response Codes</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Administrators</u>	<u>Total</u>
Inform, educate	4	1	5
Support	2	3	5
Effect change/Advocacy	2	1	3
Collaboration	1	2	3
Strong Parent Leadership		1	1
Improve Services	1	1	2
No Council/no strengths	2		2
Local agencies present to families			1

The strengths correspond with the responses for goals and purpose, which are to Inform, Educate, and Support. Advocacy, Effect change, Collaboration and Strong Parent Leadership are the other important strengths (goals, purpose) designated in the spirit of the regulation. These were open-ended responses and it is very exciting that parents and administrators share the same ideas on the strengths needed for effective Parent Councils.

### **Parent Attendance**

The more basic needs of Parent Councils, as noted in the administrators’ earlier comments, are to get parents to attend council meetings, to engage them in the education of their children, and to prepare parents as leaders. The three questions below attempted to shed light on barriers that prevent parents from attending, the types

of supports they would use to help them attend, and the supports that the district or school provides:

- Parent question 3: Are there barriers to your attendance and participation in Parent Council meetings and events? Please check all that apply:
- Parent question 16: I would use the following supports in order to participate in Parent Council meetings and activities. Please check all that apply:
- Administrator question 13: What types of support does your school/district offer to help parents attend Parent Council meetings and activities?

The table below is a compilation of responses to these three questions:

Combines responses regarding barriers, supports parents would use, and supports provided by schools and districts.			
	<u>Parent barriers to attend</u>	<u>Supports Parents would use</u>	<u>Supports provided by schools &amp; districts</u>
Childcare	3 (19%)	4 (21%)	2 (14%)
Transportation	0	0	0
Translator	0	0 (No non-English speakers responded)	4 (29%)
Food		2 (11%)	6 (43%)
Access via phone or online		9 (47%)	4 (29%)
Varied meeting times and dates		9 (47%)	7 (50%)
Day & time	10 (63%)		
Work schedule	6 (38%)		
Other	3 (19%)	4 (21%)	4 (28%)

The “Other” comments regarding barriers reported by parents include:

- Schedule conflicts with other student commitments such as sports.
- Location of meetings.
- Last minute notice of meetings with uncertain meeting location

Other comments under parent supports that would be used:

- Two said no assistance needed.
- Two requested timely notice and location of meetings

Other comments by individual administrators regarding district or school supports:

- Mail notice sent to all parents.
- Provide snacks and venue.
- Have tried consistent days such as the 3rd Thursday.

The data above can give guidance to parents and district staff as they plan and prepare strategies to help increase parent attendance at Parent Council meetings and events.

One additional question on the administrator’s survey demonstrates specific actions taken to encourage parent attendance. This question was answered by 11 administrators:

Question 14 What other means are used to encourage parent attendance (please specify):

- Emailed invitations and mailed letters to those without an email address

- Email communication, calling parents, mailing invitations home.
- Try to schedule it as a subset of other meetings involving parents.
- Email, principal's weekly Sunday message, letters, fliers.
- Topics of their choice, outside speakers
- I have a Parent Council email distribution list - even if they miss a meeting, I will send them the presentation, PowerPoint or information and offer a personal phone call or conversation.
- We try to schedule the meeting on a night that the school is already hosting an event.
- Automated calls home to encourage and remind parents of the meetings.
- Pamphlets handed out at IEP meetings and verbal invitation.
- Parent Council has a Facebook Page
- Email, principal's weekly Sunday message, letters, fliers

From these comments it appears that email is used regularly to inform parents of school activities. Coordinating parent meetings with other activities and providing topics chosen by parents seem to be logical motivators to attract parents.

To take another look at what attracts parents to school, administrators were asked specifically in question number 25 “What activities or events bring parents into the school/district?” All fourteen administrators replied with activities and/or events in these areas:

- Sports

- Celebrations/Awards programs
- Informational meetings
- Parent/Teacher conferences
- PTO meetings
- College night
- Student Driven Events (Senior presentations, Art, Math, Science Fairs)
- Open house
- Talent show, Plays, Musicals, Concerts
- Multicultural programs
- IEP meetings
- Parent University (District)
- Special Services Council (District)
- Committees: Diversity, Inclusion
- Family night
- Literacy night

This list is endless, depending on the age of the students and the energy of the staff and parents. As Parent Councils develop they may be able to use these events to recruit or inform parents.

### **Meeting Locations**

Meeting location can be a problem for parents, depending on their work schedule or other commitments. Questions on how parents prefer to participate in



meetings and what districts offer were covered in parent question number 17 “I prefer to attend school related meetings at:” And, for administrators question number 5 “If there is a functioning parent council, where are Parent Council meetings conducted?”

The table below compares parent preferences with district/school practices

Combination of parent preferences and district practices on meeting locations.		
Response choices	Parent Preference	District/School Practices
Child’s School	16 (80%)	10 (72%)
Local library	6 (30%)	1 (7%)
Community center	6 (30%)	0
District office	4 (20%)	2 (14%)
Online via Skype or related technology	3 (15%)	1 (7%)
Phone conference	4 (20%)	0
Other	4 (20%)	3 (21%)

All administrators responded to this question and one parent skipped this question. The “other” comments for parents included three statements that they are flexible and would meet anywhere and one stating that meetings in a school that is centrally located would help. The administrators “other” comments noted that the meetings were just getting started so no distinct practices are established. From this data it appears that both parents and administrators prefer school facilities for meetings, but parents are open to using the public library or community center and approximately a third of the parents would use phone conferencing or online meeting options.

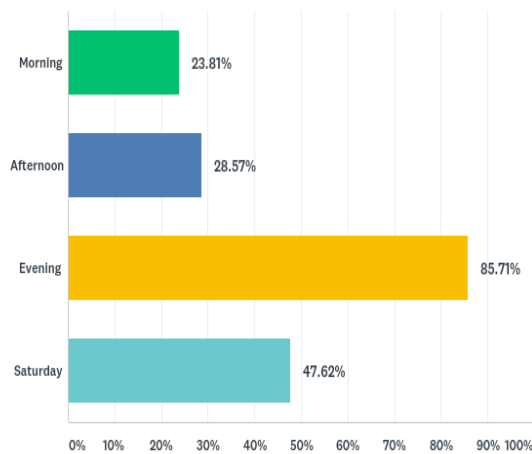
### **Meeting times**

There was one question for parents regarding their preferred meeting times,

question number 18 “I can attend meetings and workshops during these times:” Figure 2 demonstrates parent preferences on times of day most helpful for their attendance. Evenings and Saturdays have the most preference, which will be something for school administrators and personnel to consider.

Parent preferences on meeting times:

Q18 I can attend meetings and workshops during these times:



Source: Parent Council Survey: Parents and Guardians 2018

## Communication

Communication was listed as a purpose, a goal, and a concern. Parent question number 21 “What are the best ways to communicate with you? Check all that you prefer:” and Administrator question number 16 “How does your school/district communicate with parents?” attempt to shed light on how parent preferences and district practices correlate.

This table combines responses from parents and administrators:

Combination of responses for parent preferences and district practices for communication		
<u>Response choices</u>	<u>Parent Preferences</u>	<u>District/School Practices</u>
Notes home via school	9 (43%)	11 (85%)
Notes home via US mail	5 (24%)	11 (85%)
Cell phone/voice messages	8 (38%)	10 (77%)
Cell phone texts	11 (52%)	7 (54%)
Email	18 (86%)	12 (92%)
Social Media	2 (33%)	10 (77%)
Other	1 (5%)	5 (38%)

The responses under “Other” from administrators included:

- Robo calls
- Voice mail
- Email
- District website

The only parent “other” response was a request to “not use or depend on Social Media”.

One administrator skipped this question, all parents responded to this question. Email seems to be the most preferred means of communicating with parents and is regularly used by districts. All districts and schools noted that they have a website and use it to convey information to parents. The parent question number 22 “Do you use the district/school website to receive news and information?” and the administrator question number 1 “Does your district/school use a website to send and receive news

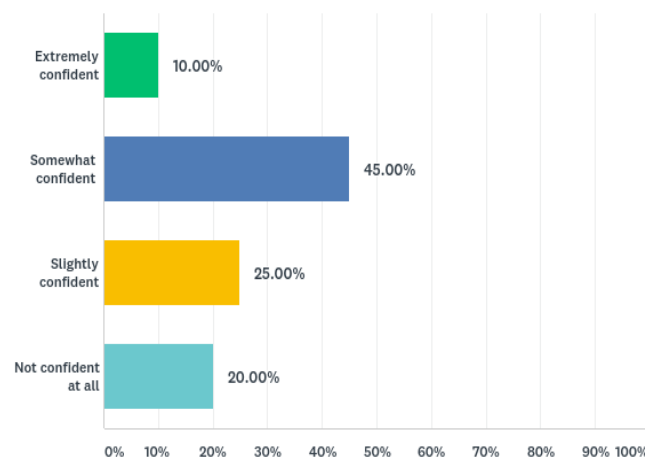
and information?” were asked to ascertain whether websites are a useful option. The parents’ responses indicated that 67% (14) of the parent participants used the district website for news and information; however, 33% (7) do not use the district website. The website may be a good tool depending on parent ability access and their comfort in using or navigating the website.

### **Parent Efficacy**

Two questions were asked to get a sense of parent efficacy: Parent question number 30 “How confident are you in your ability to bring about district-wide change? And question number 31 “How confident are you in your ability to connect with other parents?” The following figures used a Likert Scale to allow parents to rate their ability to influence district-wide change and ability to connect with other parents:

Parent confidence to bring about change:

Q30 How confident are you in your ability to bring about district-wide change?



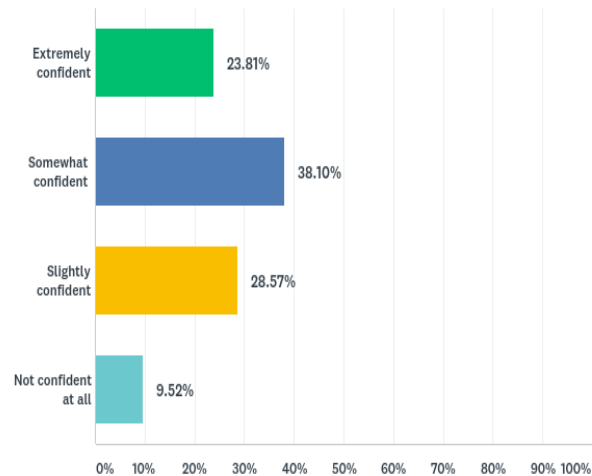
Source: Parent Council Survey: Parents and Guardians 2018

The confidence measure here is very close in that most parents feel positive about their ability to bring about district-wide change with 55% feeling confident. Of these 55%, 9 parents (45%) felt Somewhat Confident and 2 parents (10%) felt Extremely Confident in their ability to make district-wide change. However, the other 9 parents (45%) rated themselves with less confidence, 5 parents (25%) responded as Slightly Confident and 4 parents (20%) responded with No Confidence in effecting district-wide change. One parent did not answer this question. These responses hint of the diverse and struggling sentiments regarding parent preparedness or confidence in leading other parents.

Connecting with and reaching out to other parents is vital for the development of parent councils. The intention of the Parent Council regulation is for parents to reach out to parents to provide support. Building parents' confidence through education and successful social and professional interactions may increase parents' ability to network and collaborate with other parents and school personnel. Parents rated themselves for their ability to connect with other parents. This trait is represented below:

Parent ability to connect with other parents:

Q31 How confident are you in your ability to connect with other parents?



Source: Parent Council Survey: Parents and Guardians 2018

These results appear quite positive with the majority of the parents (62%) feeling Somewhat to Extremely confident in reaching out to other parents. However, 38% feel less confident in communicating with other parents. Research shows us that humans can be inhibited in reaching out by many factors or issues. Brookfield (2002) applies the teachings of Erich Fromm on alienation to understand what inhibits adult learning and education. Politics, culture, ego, and principles of competition and production in a capitalist society, teaches Fromm, all contribute to separations and divisions in our society. These separations impact self-confidence in one's ability to cross over divisions and feel empowered to learn and improve one's status or well-being. According to Walker (2017) and her work in adult learning, shame, like alienation, is another obstacle that keeps adults from learning and succeeding. While

fear of shame can motivate adults to work harder, shame can lead to a lack of confidence. Understanding the role of alienation and shame may be useful as we look into helping parents gain confidence to participate, support each other, and effect strategic changes at the district and state level.

### **Satisfaction**

The first question in the survey regarding parent satisfaction with IEP process and services was question 26: “How well do you understand the IEP process?”

Of the twenty out of the twenty-one parents who responded, 85% (13) responded positively, with 35% (7) saying they understand the IEP process Very well and 50% Fairly well. On the other end, 15% (3) responded Somewhat well (some knowledge), and none responded Not well at all. Understanding the IEP process can be challenging for parents and this was noted as one of the most requested topics for Parent Councils to address.

These two questions were asked of parents to confirm satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the district or schools’ IEP Process and Special services:

- Question 27: How satisfied are you with your district’s IEP process?
- Question 28: How satisfied are you with your district’s Special Education services?

The parent responses are compiled below:

Parent Satisfaction with IEP process and Special Education Services.		
<u>Ratings</u>	<u>IEP Process</u>	<u>Special Education Services</u>
Very satisfied	7 (35%)	5 (25 %)
Somewhat satisfied	7 (35%)	5 (25 %)
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	3 (15%)	5 (25 %)
Somewhat dissatisfied	3 (15%)	5 (25 %)
Very dissatisfied	0	0

These results are generally positive towards these 2 important aspects of special education. That is a good start, but I refer to previous responses in which parents want more information on both of these issues.

School climate and positive learning environment are key issues in education. Given the concerns around school climate and safety, both parents and administrators were asked “How satisfied are you with the school/district’s effort to create a school environment that helps children learn?” (Parent Question 29, Administrator Question 26). The following table compares parents’ and administrators’ satisfaction with a school environment that helps students learn:

Parent and Administrator satisfaction with effort to create an environment that helps children learn,		
	Parents	Administrator
Very satisfied	5 (24%)	9 (64%)
Somewhat satisfied	10 (48%)	4 (29%)
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	4 (19%)	0
Somewhat dissatisfied	2 (10%)	1 (7%)
Very dissatisfied	0	0
Total	21	14



All parents and administrators responded to this item. The bulk of responses have a positive view of the school environment, which is very wonderful to see. However, we know from various school data that bullying and aggressive behaviors occur in all schools and parents asked for information on Behavior Supports and Bullying in their previous responses within the survey.

To find out what schools or districts are dealing with that may disrupt the learning environment, administrators were asked “What special education, mental health, or disciplinary issues are raised by parents?” (Question 22). Of the ten administrators who replied, one stated that there were no issues and three stated that these issues “run the gamut” or vary, with parents being assisted individually. Six administrators indicated that parents want information and or education on:

- Mental health services
- Home supports
- Understanding related services
- Understanding due process
- Understanding availability of services
- Bullying
- Inclusive practices
- Academic supports including Reading Intervention
- Behavior supports
- Autism services

- Assessment accommodations
- Transition assessment and planning
- Changes to federal law/policy
- Transition after graduation/transfer of rights

These issues can disrupt the child's learning environment, whether they impact the child directly or cause concerns for their parents. These are topics that administrators and parents should address. Parent Councils may become resources to administrators in making the school environment learner-and family-friendly by helping parents understand these issues.

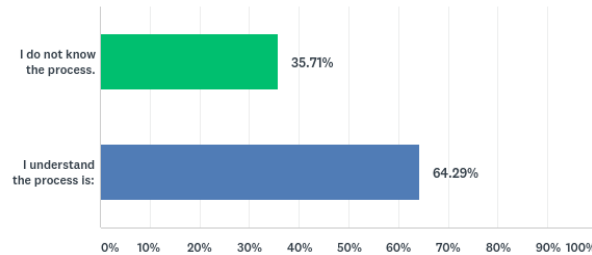
### **District and Parent Interactions**

In an effort to be sure that processes are in place to communicate concerns and solutions between school, district, and parents (council), the following questions were asked of administrators to gain a better sense of how schools and districts interact and communicate with parents and parent councils:

Administrator question 11: "What is the process used by the Parent Council to make the district aware of concerns?"

This figure presents the administrators' awareness of the process their school or district has to resolve parent concerns:

Q11 What is the process used by the Parent Council to make the district aware of concerns?



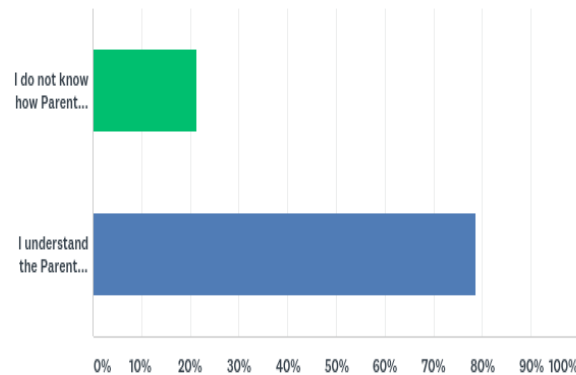
Source: Parent Council Survey: Parents and Guardians 2018

All administrators responded to this question; however, nine are aware and five are not aware of how their school or district responds to Parent Council concerns. A review of the comments includes having parents emailing or interacting with a district administrator, particularly the Special Education Director or Coordinator. There does not appear to be a clear process for Parent Councils (committees) to bring their concerns to the school or district's attention.

Another question related to the process of conveying concerns is the ability to respond to and resolve problems. This is addressed in Administrator question 12: "How does the school/district resolve or respond to Parent Council concerns?"

The administrators' knowledge about resolving and responding to concerns is presented below:

Q12 How does the school/district resolve or respond to Parent Council concerns?



Source: Parent Council Survey: Parents and Guardians 2018

Three (21%) responders did not know the process and eleven (79%) responded that they understood the process. Two administrators replied that the special education coordinator is serving as liaison between the council and district. Other administrators cited these actions as part of the process to resolve concerns:

- Gathering information and getting back to the council
- Providing workshops for global questions
- Communicating with the supervisor of special education
- Building and district staff collaborate
- Meetings are scheduled to address problems

There was no reference to a process or manual that guides Parent Councils and their interactions with schools or districts to resolve concerns. The regulation does not provide any guidance as to how Parent Councils and school personnel should share, identify, and resolve concerns.

Communicating with and supporting parents are responsibilities of all school personnel and administrators. Schools and districts do try to invite parents and engage them in the school community. Administrative question number 24 “What steps does your school/district take to make the school welcoming and family friendly?” gave districts and schools the opportunity to shine a light on this effort, and twelve administrators responded with these actions or practices:

- Communicate effectively and respectfully
- Respond to parent concerns within 24 hours
- Disseminate information electronically via phone messages
- Parent information night, Open House, Back to School night picnic and barbecues, Parent Conferences
- Open communication with in-person, email, phone calls, and meetings
- Social media posts of positive activities
- Professional development for staff concerning how to be supportive to students and families
- Specific school activities to engage and support families of children with special needs.

- Art displays and student led events
- Flexible meeting schedules and location
- Translated documents
- School rooms and space provided with comfortable chairs and materials for taking notes.

These are just a sample of activities that have proven to be helpful in bringing parents into the school environment. All these actions and activities should be considered when coordinating and increasing parent involvement.

Keeping with the theme of school environments and how they can be improved, Administrative question number 27 “Do you have any suggestions or comments to improve the school environment?” was used to find out what administrators are thinking or hoping for. Eight administrators responded, with three saying they had no information to offer and the other five saying:

- We are housed in an old building and many issues associated with that.
- Need outside support for Parent Councils
- Reduce class sizes to have more learning space in the classroom
- Secondary classes too crowded
- Implementing strategic plan for academic and emotional support, building a positive and welcoming culture.
- We work every day to teach children, there is always something to improve.

These are all honest statements; with respect to the purpose of this survey on Parent Councils, Parent Councils do need outside support. District staff are stretched with day to day duties and are not able or prepared to provide the support and training needed by parents to become effective advocates. From a more optimistic view, an effective Parent Council could help resolve the issues of class size and building maintenance listed here along with other vital issues listed that affect students and their success at school.

### **Summary**

The questions asked in these two surveys have attempted to ascertain which districts and charter schools have developed Parent Councils and what Parent Councils need to be effective in the manner intended according to the state regulations that established Parent Councils in June 2015. The surveys were sent to 19 school district Special Education Directors, the Charter School administration office, and the 24 charter school administrators. The administrators were instructed to send the Parent and Guardian Survey out to parents on their Parent Council or other parents of children receiving special education services in their district or charter school. The Parent Information Center received thirty-five responses from nine regional public school districts and six charter schools. Twenty-one surveys came from parents and fourteen from district and charter school administrators. The sample is small, and it is safe to say that less than 47% of the school districts and 25% of charter schools have begun work on implementing and supporting Parent Councils. Accordingly, more work needs to be done to establish Parent Councils throughout the state as intended by

the regulation. Although the sample is small, the responses from these parents correspond to the research literature on parent-school involvement and empowerment.

## **Funding**

Funding for the proper implementation and sustained support of Parent Councils appears to be part of the problem. I have been unable to locate any language in the Delaware State budget allocating funds to Parent Councils. The only reference to Parent Councils, since the legislature voted in favor of this policy, is in the Special Education Strategic Plan of 2017:

4.1.1 Create and implement a system of technical assistance to the LEA-level Special Education parent councils for the purposes of increasing engagement with related stakeholders in the delivery of special education. (Delaware's Special Education Strategic Plan, 2017)

Technical assistance is a key component of support for Parent Council implementation, development, and sustainment. Administrators are looking for outside support because they do not have staff or faculty to devote to Parent Councils. With this reference to the Strategic Plan I have also searched for and been unable to locate funding for the Special Education Strategic Plan.

Parent Councils or parent committees with similar missions are the core of parent involvement and empowerment. Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University describes 6 key types of parent involvement in her research. The six key types are:

- Type 1: parenting or helping all families establish home environments to support children as students



- Type 2: communicating or designing effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communication
- Type 3: volunteering or recruiting and organizing families to help the school and support students
- Type 4: learning at home or providing families with information and ideas to help students with homework
- Type 5: decision making or including parents in school decisions and developing parent leaders
- Type 6: collaborating with the community or identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen schools, students, and families (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002)

Each of these types of parent involvement is critical to what schools need. Not all parents can engage in all six types, but to begin to motivate parents to take on responsibilities in one or several areas will require many additional resources that schools and districts do not have in their budget; without funding, districts and charter schools will continue to have great difficulty with implementation.

### **Diversity and Cultural Inclusion**

Noticeably missing from the parent samples were parents whose first language is not English and parents of ethnicities other than Black or White. All parent respondents listed English as their main language. Bringing in parents from other ethnicities and cultures and who speak languages other than English will require

training for both parents and administrators. Porras Hein (2003) outlines actions taken by school administrators to help improve the participation of Mexican American parents. She notes that school administrators, particularly Principals, are the gatekeepers and must establish principles and practices for welcoming and engaging parents in the school community (Porras Hein, 2003). Following Porras Hein and other researchers on parent involvement, the Parent Councils and their respective districts or schools will need funding for translators at meetings, translated materials, research on cultural etiquette and school engagement, and other resources in order to include parents of diverse backgrounds.

### **Monitoring**

It appears that there is no funding and no monitoring or oversight designated for the Parent Council policy. Citing McDonnell and Elmore (1987, p. 138), Fowler (2009) points out that a mandate is “a rule governing the actions of individuals and agencies” It consists of specified language regarding behaviors for the group and penalties for non-compliance. The wording of the Parent Council policy may not constitute a mandate, but it does need monitoring and support to be implemented. Returning to the issue of no funding, there is also no inducement, “a transfer of money [or in-kind grants] to individuals or agencies in return for the production of goods and services” (McDonnell & Elmore, 1987, pp.137-138). Districts are already pressed to finance all the needs of the children they are concerned with; without further state funding designated for Parent Councils there will be little development and this policy will falter.

Finally, for the betterment of all children's education there has been progress in developing standards for school administrators. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) has developed, adopted, and advanced standards for school administrators (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). The ISLLC Standard 4 specifically addresses the administrator's responsibility in supporting and engaging students and their families:

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources (Young et al., 2013).

Administrators would welcome more support from their communities and the opportunity to collaborate with parents engaged through Parent Councils. The ISLLC professional standards support the development of new parent and school partnerships for the benefit of improving learning and school environment. An initial step in monitoring may be through administrator evaluation systems and review of data supporting the implementation of Parent Councils.

### **Recommendations**

The survey has brought to light many challenges in implementing and supporting Parent Councils. Parent Councils need to be part of a network which serves and supports parents across the state. The Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) is a known entity in effective education and support of parents and may be the likely agency to take on the challenge of developing strong Parent Councils. The

PICDE has been a reliable Delaware agency for more than 30 years. The PICDE has established itself as a resource for parents throughout the state. Its dedicated staff, wealth of knowledge, and resources have contributed to the positive reputation that PICDE has with parents, schools, state legislators and the Delaware Department of Education. PICDE has already been asked by districts to assist them with the establishment of Parent Councils.

Given the data and insights provided by the two surveys, the Department of Education should consider expanding PICDE's role to coordinate the development of Parent Councils. PICDE already has a number of workshops, presentations, and partnerships that would support the development of Parent Councils, but like the districts, PICDE has many ongoing commitments with parent support and does not have the staff to take on such a broad and consuming task. Funding for additional staff and materials required to work directly with districts and schools would be necessary.

PICDE has experience in training parents as advocates. One of PICDE's programs, the Family Leadership Academy, strives to inspire and empower parents to be knowledgeable advocates for their child. Developing partnerships with other state agencies and programs such as the Developmental Disabilities Council and their program, Partners in Policy Making, could expand the resources available to Parent Councils. Coordinating these types of partnerships will take time, effort, and money to match programs with the needs of various parent councils.

PICDE already has presentations in place on IEP Development, Early Childhood Education, Parental Rights, and more that would help parent councils;

however, staff to deliver these programs and develop them with Parent Councils would be needed.

Materials such as a manual on developing an organization (Parent Councils) with basics on setting an agenda, establishing a mission statement, keeping minutes, communication strategies, problem solving, and related standards in establishing an organization may be helpful to interested parents who may not know where to start with their council.

A manual or similar document may be necessary to outline the processes for communicating problems and concerns to the school or district and how they are resolved.

Professional development for school and district staff on inclusive practices and valuing parents as equal partners may be critical to the success of a Parent Council.

The professional development or training for parents in policy making and advocacy that has already been requested by both administrators and parents needs to be planned, rolled out, and put into effect. Much of this may be covered in programs like Partners in Policy Making, but perhaps shorter versions or online webinars would help parents who may not be able to attend full day or extended workshops.

Further professional development for PICDE staff will be necessary to expand their skill set to meet the demands of parents and districts will be required.

The survey data will continue to be collected as parents and administrators respond. This is a start to some solutions for the basic needs in establishing Parent

Councils across Delaware. It is hoped that this work provides a foundation for the development of a cohesive plan through the Delaware Department of Education and partners such as PICDE to provide supports for effective Parent Councils. In the current climate of severe cuts to education and services, it is vital to have parents prepared to play a strong role in advocating for all that needs to be in place to effectively provide education for our diverse student populations.

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## **Appendix E**

### **PARENT INFORMATION CENTER SUMMARY OF PARENT COUNCIL SURVEYS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

PICDE Summary of Parent Council Surveys for the  
Delaware Department of Education  
July 6, 2018

The Parent Information Center of Delaware developed and distributed two surveys, an Administrator Survey and a Parent Survey, to obtain information on the formation and function of parent councils in Delaware public school districts and charter schools. The Administrator Survey was directed towards charter school and district administrators and the Parent Survey towards parents of children receiving special education services enrolled in the charter school or district.

On February 28, 2018 the two surveys were sent to the 19 school district special education directors, the charter school administration office, and the 24 charter school administrators. The administrators were asked to distribute the parent surveys to parents and guardians in their district who were already members of a parent council or committee and other parents who have children receiving special education services.

The surveys were all online through SurveyMonkey, after 5 weeks running online, 35 responses were received: 21 from parents and 14 from district or school

administrators. Overall responses came from nine public school districts and six charter schools.

The Parent responses came from six public school districts:

- Three Elementary schools Carrcroft and Hanby in the Brandywine school district and North Smyrna Elementary in the Smyrna School District
- Four middle schools in the Brandywine, Smyrna, and Indian River school districts that were not identified specifically by parents.
- One Special services school KCCS in the Capital School District.
- Three high schools from the New Castle County Vocational Technical School districts: Delcastle, Howard, St. Georges.
- Polytech High School

There were no responses from parents of children in any of the charter schools.

Administrator responses came from six public school districts and six charter schools:

Public Districts	Charter Schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brandywine</li> <li>• Capital</li> <li>• Indian River</li> <li>• Lake Forest</li> <li>• New Castle County Vocational/Technical</li> <li>• Polytech</li> <li>• Red clay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academia Antonia Alonso</li> <li>• Charter School of New Castle</li> <li>• Charter School of Wilmington</li> <li>• Delaware Design Lab School</li> <li>• Early College High School</li> <li>• Positive Outcomes</li> </ul>

Notably, 13 districts and 18 charter schools did not respond. Oddly, there were no parents from the Red Clay School District, which has a Special Education Parent Association; however, one administrator did respond. There were also no responses from the Christina School District. Follow up by phone and email confirmed more schools and districts with parent councils or committees. From this follow up, there are 13 charter schools and 13 districts with parent councils or committees meeting from once per year to monthly.

### **Summary**

The questions in the two surveys attempted to ascertain which districts and charter schools have developed Parent Councils and what Parent Councils need to be effective in the manner intended according to the state regulations establishing Parent Councils in June 2015. From the survey data and PIC's assistance with 2 districts, it appears that approximately 12 districts have begun to address the development of parent councils. The charter school administrator responses did not clearly indicate that any work has been started on their parent councils.

### **Funding**

Funding for the proper implementation and sustained support of Parent Councils appears to be the main problem. There is no funding in the state budget designated for Parent Councils. Administrators are looking for outside support because they do not have staff or faculty to devote to Parent Councils. Administrators note that parents need to be prepared to run the councils and they need training and support, which the district does not have resources, to do so. Without funding, districts and

charter schools will continue to have great difficulty with implementation and sustainment of parent councils.

### **Diversity and Cultural Inclusion**

Noticeably missing from the parent samples were parents whose first language is not English and parents of ethnicities other than Black or White. All parent respondents listed English as their main language. The surveys can be sent out again in the language of the district or PIC can post the surveys on their website where it can be translated. Parent councils and their respective districts or schools will need funding for translators at meetings, translated materials, research on cultural etiquette to enhance school engagement, and other resources to include parents of diverse backgrounds. Parents of all backgrounds need to be represented in the parent council.

### **Monitoring**

It appears that there is no monitoring or oversight designated for the Parent Council policy. This may be why so few administrators responded to the survey.

### **Tasks and Issues to be Addressed**

Parents indicated need for information and discussion of issues:

- IEP Processes and services
- Behavior supports
- Academic classes
- Elective classes
- College and career transition

- ADD/ADHD lesson support and accommodations
- Block schedule challenges
- Connection with outside resources (college prep, counselling, career options)
- Assessment
- Exit surveys
- Students prepared for life

Administrators note these concerns:

- Parents need to know how to run the parent council
- No time or staff to train and support parents
- Low attendance of parents at meetings

Additional comments from the administrators' survey indicated that parents want information and/or education on:

- Mental health services
- Home supports
- Understanding related services
- Understanding due process
- Understanding availability of services
- Bullying
- Inclusive practices
- Academic supports including Reading Intervention

- Behavior supports
- Autism services
- Assessment accommodations
- Transition assessment and planning
- Changes to federal law/policy
- Transition after graduation/transfer of rights

### **Recommendations**

Parent Councils need to be part of a network which serves and supports parents across the state. An implementation plan needs to be developed to encompass the challenges noted from the survey and current status of parent councils. PICDE has already been asked by districts to assist them with the establishment of Parent Councils. The following actions and resources need to be considered for full implementation and sustainment of Parent Councils in Delaware:

- Funding for additional staff and materials required to work directly with districts and schools to engage and support parents.
- Coordination of services offered through PICDE, IEP Task Force, the Developmental Disabilities Council, the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, and related agencies providing programs such as the Family Leadership Academy and Partners in Policy Making
- Develop a guide (online) with instructions on how to organize a Parent Council with basics on setting an agenda, establishing a mission statement, keeping

minutes, communication strategies, and related standards in establishing an effective organization.

- Collaborate with charter school or district to establish the processes for communicating problems and concerns to the school or district and how concerns are addressed and resolved.
- Provide Professional development for school and district staff on inclusive practices and valuing parents as equal partners.
- Expand professional development or training for parents in policy making and advocacy.
- Provide professional development for PICDE staff and related agencies to expand their skill set to meet the demands of parents and districts as Parent Councils develop.
- Assist districts and charter schools in expanding use of technology to support attendance at meetings. Thirty five percent of parents would participate in meetings via phone or video conferencing.
- Expand outreach to families and parents of non-English speakers and other cultural and ethnic groups that did not respond or were not included in the survey distribution.

It is hoped that this information provides a foundation for development of a cohesive plan to provide supports for effective Parent Councils. In the current climate of severe cuts to education and services, it is vital to have parents prepared to play a

strong role in advocating for all that needs to be in place to effectively provide education for our diverse student populations.

Further details of survey responses and research literature to support parent programs and faculty professional development can be provided. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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## **Appendix F PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Program Evaluation:  
Parent Information Center's Program to Assist Parents and Children's  
Transition from Birth to Three Services  
to School-based Special Education Services  
Joan French  
University of Delaware  
EDUC 863  
May 2016

## Introduction

The Parent Information Center (PIC) of Delaware is a nonprofit organization with the purpose of educating and empowering parents to protect the rights of their children. The Parent Information Center of Delaware started in 1985. Under federal regulations every state must have at least one Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). These centers provide free information to parents of children with disabilities. Parents and guardians can learn more about their child's needs, services, and rights at a parent center (Morin, 2014). The parent centers have a broad reach assisting parents of children ages birth to 26. Parent centers must meet the training and information needs of parents of children with disabilities living in areas served by the centers, particularly underserved parents and parents of children who may be inappropriately identified (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

One of the programs presented by the Delaware PIC is done in partnership with Child Development Watch (CDW) for the benefit of parents of children who are receiving early childhood education services through CDW. The program's goals are to help young or new parents navigate the transition from early childhood services to school-based services for their child; additionally, the program serves to introduce parents to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) which their child will receive when they enter the school system at age three. This program is presented twice a year through two workshops. One workshop focuses on transition events and procedures that occur for their child as they turn three and are eligible for continued special education services through their school district. The second workshop describes school

services and the difference between an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) for children ages birth to three and the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for children and young adults ages three to twenty-one. This program is the subject of this evaluation plan.

### **Purpose of Evaluation**

PIC and CDW staff want to be sure that they are providing accurate information to the parents and that the parents understand the information well enough to be confident and active in participating in and planning for their child's special education services with their school team under the IEP process. There are two purposes of the evaluation:

1. Determine the accuracy and relevance of materials presented and handouts given to parents during the IEP Basics workshop.
2. Determine the knowledge gained by parents during the workshop.

The findings will assist PIC staff in determining any changes needed to better assist parents in their understanding of the events and procedures within the transition to school services and the IEP process. The results of the evaluation will guide PIC staff in modifying materials and delivery of workshops.

### **Description of the Program**

The PIC program aims to prepare parents for their child's transition from Child Development Watch and Early Childhood services to school services and IEP procedures and planning. This program is done in partnership with Child Development Watch (CDW) through two evening workshops each consisting of two hours of

presentation and discussion with the parents. The first workshop is called Early Childhood Transition. According to the flyers sent to prospective participants, “This session gives [parents] an overview of the steps for [the] child to transition from Child Development Watch into [the] local school district.” The second workshop, IEP Basics, aims to “walk [parents] through the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process [and] learn what happens at the IEP meeting and how [parents] can become an active participant in developing [the] child’s IEP.”

The general information included in the programs are:

Workshop 1: Transition to school:

- Services provided by PIC
- IFSP content: Individuals with Disabilities: Part C
- Criteria for eligibility
- Comparison of IDEA Part B & C (“Understanding IEP Law and Special Education,” 2016),
- Explanation of transition meeting

Workshop 2: IEP Basics:

- Services provided by PIC
- Recap of birth to three transition and Part B and C
- IEP meeting components
- Least Restrictive Environment (definition and intention)
- Related services

Through these workshops with parents of young children, PIC wants parents to gain confidence for long-term outcomes in which they are informed and involved and become advocates for their children. PIC also wants parents to know that they are not alone. If there is a concern with their child's education program, PIC is a resource for them to turn to for guidance and support.

### **Evaluation Questions**

1. Process Question: How well do the materials and content of the workshops convey relevant information on the IEP as recommended in federal and state regulations?
2. Outcome Question: How well do the presentations improve parent knowledge of early childhood transition and IEP basics?

These two questions are key to the staff's concerns for presenting effective comprehensive information.

### **Methodology**

For this session, there are two 2-hour workshops, one on Transition from Early Childhood to School Services and one on IEP Basics. Each workshop will be offered in both Spanish and English. Prior to this session, workshops were offered in English and a translator sat with Spanish speaking parents and translated during the presentation. Both presenters for this session are fluent in English and Spanish. Parents will complete a pre and post survey (See Appendix G) during the workshop. The survey is meant to recognize parents' prior knowledge or experience with transition and IEPs and gauged their feeling of growth at the end of the workshop.

However, this survey was not available for parents in the transition workshop. Parents will also complete a demographics information sheet (See Appendix H) required by the funding grants, and a Participant Evaluation (See Appendix I) that is an overall rating of the materials and presenters. These forms are completed within the workshop and collected by the presenters.

### **Sample**

The sample comprises parents who attended these sessions. The practice has been that CDW takes responsibility for inviting the parents. CDW sends invitations to the parents of children who will turn three within the next 6 months. For this session, the CDW representative reported that 300 invitations (See Appendix J) were sent to families receiving early childhood services with children within the birthdate range. Parents may also learn about the workshops from an older child's school, the PIC website, PIC newsletter, related advocacy groups, or word of mouth.

For the transition workshop on March 23, ten (10) parents attended: three (3) Spanish speaking (2 present and 1 on the phone) and seven (7) English speaking parents (all present). For the IEP Basics workshop on March 30, thirteen (13) parents attended: five (5) Spanish speaking and eight (8) English speaking parents. These workshops were postponed for a week due to weather conditions and that delay may have affected parent enrollment and attendance.

### **Materials**

Three hundred invitations with the dates and times for each workshop, the session topics and summaries, and location were sent to all parents of children turning

age 3 within the next 6 months who were receiving services from CDW. There was also information highlighting free child care and dinner. Two presenters use PowerPoint presentations (See Appendix K) at each workshop and handouts to parents which include PIC services and contact information, IEP sample pages, and bulleted summaries of key issues presented (See Appendices L-S). The pre and post surveys, demographics, and participant evaluation forms. The PowerPoints, hand-outs, and evaluation forms were translated into Spanish and reviewed by native Spanish speakers.

### **Variables**

Parents attended the workshop in the language of choice, either English or Spanish. Parent level of education was not known. Parent's reading level or comprehension of educational terminology may have affected how much they learned and how they completed the surveys. Parents' prior knowledge may have varied if they had older children or relatives with disabilities. Presenters may have emphasized various aspects differently, causing parents to focus on some information more than other information.

### **Instruments**

The instruments are based on the questions for the evaluation.

- Process Question: How well do the materials and content of the workshops convey relevant information on the IEP as recommended in federal and state regulations?

A checklist (See Appendix T) was developed to evaluate the contents of the PowerPoint and handouts for IEP Basics. The checklist came from two sources Wrights Law (Wright, 2017), a notable legal agency considered expert in the field of Special Education and the U.S. Department of Education Center for Parent Information and Resources: “Developing Your Child’s IEP” (Rebhorn, 2018). This checklist represented a standard by which to evaluate the contents of the workshop’s presentation and materials. The items presented in the IEP Basics workshop were compared with the recommended items from these two sources. The PIC materials were rated by the percentage of items covered through the workshop as compared with the recommended items from the resources.

- Outcome question: How well do the presentations improve parent knowledge of Early Childhood Transition and IEP basics?

PIC has used these materials for several years. Parents completed three forms during each workshop:

- 1.) A demographics form, which includes role or purpose for attending workshop, ethnic group, age of child(ren), services child receives, and child’s disability (See Appendix H)
- 2.) A pre and post survey of parent’s knowledge of content. (See Appendix G)
- 3.) A participant evaluation an overall evaluation form on the presenter and materials used, and key points of the workshop (See Appendix I),



The pre and post surveys consisted of 6 questions, three of which used a four-point Likert scale and three of which required written responses. The Likert scale ratings are:

1. No Knowledge
2. A little knowledge
3. Somewhat knowledgeable
4. Very knowledgeable

Along with each Likert-rated question, parents are asked to list specific details of what they have learned by writing their responses. These are the six questions and written responses on the IEP workshop:

1. I know all components of the PreK IEP form. (Likert scale response)
2. List three sections of the PreK IEP form. (written response)
3. I can identify two ways parents can help to develop a meaningful IEP. (Likert scale response)
4. Identify two ways parents can help. (written response)
5. I know the signatures required from parents on the IEP and can describe the purpose of each signature. (Likert scale response)
6. List three times/places I must sign the IEP. written response)

The forms were completed at the start and end of the workshop. The presenter allows time after the question and answer period.

## **Data Collection**

- Process question: How well do the materials and content of the workshops convey relevant information on the IEP as recommended in federal and state regulations?

Data was collected through a checklist (See Appendix T) developed by this evaluator on the IEP Basics workshop. *Items presented in the workshop and handouts are compared with a list of recommended items by notable resources: Wrights Law and U.S. Department of Education.*

- Outcome Question: How well do the presentations improve parent knowledge of Early Childhood Transition and IEP basics?

For this question data was collected from participating parents at each workshop through pre and post surveys presented at the beginning and end of each program. The surveys utilized a four-point Likert scale and asked parents to write in specifics learned at the workshop. Parents also completed a demographics form used for reporting details of families served to the department of education and related grant funders. A final document the participant evaluation asked participants to rate the overall presentation materials and the presenters.

## **Results**

- Process question: How well do the materials and content of the workshops convey relevant information on the IEP as recommended in federal and state regulations?

Based on the comparison of the IEP Basics workshop PowerPoint and handouts to the checklist compiled from Wrights Law and the US Department of Education Parent Information Resources the PowerPoint used to inform parents contains 96 % (27 out of 28) of the items recommended as important to the IEP Process. The one item not covered in the PowerPoint was State-wide testing, since this was a presentation for parents of preschoolers and the state-wide tests do not start until grade 2 or age 7. However, the handouts included 100% (28 of 28) of the items recommended, including an explanation of the state-wide testing (Appendices L-S). This was a very thorough PowerPoint and set of handouts for parent use.

- Outcome question: How well do the presentations improve parent knowledge of Early Childhood Transition and IEP basics?

Unfortunately, the presenters did not have the correct pre and post surveys for the Transition to School Services workshop; consequently, there are only the surveys on the IEP Basics workshop.

The results of the parents' pre and post surveys on knowledge gained at the IEP Basics workshop are presented in the following table:

<u>Question</u>	<u>Spanish</u>			<u>English</u>		
	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Growth</u>	<u>Pre</u>	<u>Post</u>	<u>Growth</u>
I know the Components of a PreK IEP	1.8	3.3	1.5	1.6	3.5	1.9
List 3 sections of the PreK IEP	0%	25%	25%	9^%	100%	100%
I can identify 2 ways parents can help develop the IEP for their Child	1.5	3	1.5	1.8	3	1.2
List 2 ways parents can help.	60%	80%	20%	44%	100%	100%
I know the signatures required and the purpose on the IEP	2.5	3	0.5	1.8	2.6	0.8
List 3 places to sign on the IEP	26%	66%	40%	22%	75%	75%

This data shows that both groups of parents scored similarly on the Likert scale questions and demonstrated similar range of growth on each item. On the written response questions, the answers were counted and coded and given a percentage score based on the information requested in the item. The English speakers scored 35% to 80% better than the Spanish speakers. This may have been due to the writing and/or reading skills of the Spanish parents as well as their comprehension of materials presented.

The next table summarizes the participant evaluation form in which participants used a Likert Scale with a note that four is the Highest and one is the

lowest rating to rate workshop materials and presenters' knowledge. There were also write-in areas that few parents completed; for example, no one responded to the question: "I have a question about... (Please leave your contact information so we may respond)" for either workshop. Few responses were made to "The one interesting thing I learned today was...". Parents in the IEP Basics workshop responded with three to five-word phrases. These range from "How to qualify for daycare" to "Therapists change in schools." and "Difference between IFSP and IEP." The last question is "How did you hear about this event?" for which parents could circle the option: PIC website, PIC News, Facebook, School, Other advocacy/support group, Word of Mouth, or News. This data should be helpful in planning how to contact parents for future workshops and increase attendance.

Parent opinion of workshop materials and presenters.

Parent Opinion of workshop materials and presenters		
Participant Evaluation 3/23/17		
	<u>English</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
<u>Question</u>		
<u>Workshop Materials:</u>		
Are High Quality	4	4
Help me gain knowledge & Skills	4	4
Meets my needs at the moment	3.9	4
<u>By participating in this workshop:</u>		
I have a better understanding of learning styles	3.7	4
I know where I can go if I have more questions.	3.9	4
<u>I found:</u>		
The presenter knowledgeable & skilled	4	4
Time and location convenient	3.7	4
All parents gave a rating of 3 or 4 (High or Highest) to each point. Seven English and two Spanish speaking parents responded.		

Overall, the data from the participant evaluation was not that helpful in providing data for the evaluation questions. Parents rate all areas very highly which is wonderful, but there is no way to tell how much they knew prior to the workshop or if they are rating high because of their admiration or gratitude to the presenter. The most relevant information here is that the time and location are acceptable for the presentations.

Although this was not part of the evaluation questions, it may be worth looking into how parents are most effectively notified of upcoming programs. The following

table compiles responses from parents who participated in both workshops.

Unfortunately, this question was not on the Spanish version of the participant evaluation.

Event notification					
How did you hear about this event?	English 3/23	Spanish 3/23	English 3/30	Spanish 3/30	Total
PIC Website	2	No Data	1	No Data	3
Pic News					0
Facebook					0
School	2		1		3
Other					
Advocacy/Support Group	1		1		2
Word of Mouth			1		1
News					0
CDW			1		1

## Recommendations

The purpose of the evaluation was first, to determine the accuracy and relevance of materials and handouts presented to parents during the IEP Basics workshop and second, determine the knowledge gained by parents during the workshop. Regarding the first point on relevance of materials, the materials in the presentation on the IEP Basics are well researched and supported by Wrights Law and the U.S. Department of Education guidelines for Parent involvement in the IEP process. However, to measure parents' knowledge growth, it would be wise to redesign the Participant Evaluation and Pre and Post Surveys:

- Combine the two forms into one document.

- Reword the Likert scale to reflect more detail in parents' responses.
- Continue using written responses for parents to specify what was learned.
- Allow more time for writing responses or responding to surveys at the end of the program.

Other recommendations for future programs:

- Video tape programs so that questions asked within the presentation can be noted later and reviewed for possible incorporation into future programs.
- If videotaping is not possible, maintain a chart paper and list parent questions during the program
- Ask the same questions in English and Spanish on the written evaluations so that all parents can contribute their opinion or sentiments.
- Bring the correct participant feedback forms for the presentation.
- Present the workshops over three sessions to allow more time to review key processes and address parent questions.

The PIC staff appear to be very knowledgeable and dedicated. Modifying the parents' feedback and evaluation forms can make it more comprehensive for the parents and provide more meaningful information to plan future work.




## References

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## Appendix List for Program Evaluation

- G. Pre and post Survey
- H. Parent Demographics
- I. Participant Evaluation
- J. Invitation/Announcement
- K. IEP Basics PowerPoint Summary
- L. Handout: Developing Your Child's IEP
- M. Handout: IEP/504 Team Meeting Planner
- N. Handout: IDEA Disability Eligibility Criteria
- O. Handout: Present Level of Performance
- P. Handout: Examples of Goals
- Q. Handout: IEP forms Grade K-7
- R. Handout: Signatures
- S. Handout: Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) IEP Checklist
- T. Checklist Comparison of Federal recommendations for IEP presentation and PICDE Basic IEP Presentation
- U. Evaluation Design Worksheet

## Appendix G Pre-Post Survey

 BEFORE the workshop		No knowledge (1)	A little knowledge (2)	Somewhat knowledgeable (3)	Very knowledgeable (4)
I know all the components on the PreK IEP Form					
List three sections of the PreK IEP Form		1 _____			
		2 _____			
		3 _____			
I can identify two ways parents can help to develop a meaningful IEP for their child.					
Identify two ways parents can help		1 _____			
		2 _____			
I know the signatures required from parents on the IEP and can describe the purpose of each signature					
List three times/places I must sign the IEP		1 _____			
		2 _____			
		3 _____			

 AFTER the workshop		No knowledge (1)	A little knowledge (2)	Somewhat knowledgeable (3)	Very knowledgeable (4)
I know all the components on the PreK IEP Form					
List three sections of the PreK IEP Form		1 _____			
		2 _____			
		3 _____			
I can identify two ways parents can help to develop a meaningful IEP for their child.					
Identify two ways parents can help		1 _____			
		2 _____			
I know the signatures required from parents on the IEP and can describe the purpose of each signature					
List three times/places I must sign the IEP		1 _____			
		2 _____			
		3 _____			

## Appendix H Demographics

### Parent Information Center of Delaware

Our funders require that we collect the following information from those who attend our events.  
Please, respond to the questions as accurately as you can.

1. In what role are you attending this event?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mother                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Educator                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Father                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Professional              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grandparent                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Student (middle or high school) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Relative               | <input type="checkbox"/> Student (beyond high school)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Surrogate Parent |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foster Parent                |  |

2. Which ethnic group most closely describes your child?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American  | <input type="checkbox"/> Latino/a        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian   | <input type="checkbox"/> White           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian/South Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____     |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 or more races |

3. How old is your child?

- ☐ 0-2  
☐ 3-5  
☐ 6-11  
☐ 12-14  
☐ 15-18  
☐ 19+  
☐ N/A

Child #2?

- ☐ 0-2  
☐ 3-5  
☐ 6-11  
☐ 12-14  
☐ 15-18  
☐ 19+  
☐ N/A

Child #3?

- ☐ 0-2  
☐ 3-5  
☐ 6-11  
☐ 12-14  
☐ 15-18  
☐ 19+  
☐ N/A

4. What services does your child receive?

- ☐ Early intervention  
☐ General education  
☐ Special education  
☐ Section 504  
☐ Title I  
☐ Adult services  
☐ N/A

Child #2?

- ☐ Early intervention  
☐ General education  
☐ Special education  
☐ Section 504  
☐ Title I  
☐ Adult services  
☐ N/A

Child #3?

- ☐ Early intervention  
☐ General education  
☐ Special education  
☐ Section 504  
☐ Title I  
☐ Adult services  
☐ N/A

What is your child's disability?

- ☐ ADHD  
☐ Autism  
☐ Deaf/Blindness  
☐ Deafness/Hearing Impairment  
☐ Developmental Delay  
☐ Emotional  
☐ Intellectual  
☐ Learning  
☐ Medical  
☐ Physical  
☐ Traumatic Brain Injury  
☐ Visual Impairment (including blindness)  
☐ Speech Language Impairment

Child #2?

- ☐ ADHD  
☐ Autism  
☐ Deaf/Blindness  
☐ Deafness/Hearing Impairment  
☐ Developmental Delay  
☐ Emotional  
☐ Intellectual  
☐ Learning  
☐ Medical  
☐ Physical  
☐ Traumatic Brain Injury  
☐ Visual Impairment (including blindness)  
☐ Speech Language Impairment

Child #3?

- ☐ ADHD  
☐ Autism  
☐ Deaf/Blindness  
☐ Deafness/Hearing Impairment  
☐ Developmental Delay  
☐ Emotional  
☐ Intellectual  
☐ Learning  
☐ Medical  
☐ Physical  
☐ Traumatic Brain Injury  
☐ Visual Impairment (including blindness)  
☐ Speech Language Impairment

## Appendix I Participant Evaluation

Parent Information Center of Delaware

### Participant Evaluation



Session Title:  
Date:

Location:  
Time:

Presenter:

*Please complete all sections rating from highest (4) to lowest (1) and feel free to add comments. Your answers will be used to improve our services and plan for future sessions. We appreciate your participation.*

The workshop and materials...	Highest			Lowest
Are of high quality	4	3	2	1
Help me gain knowledge and skills	4	3	2	1
Meet my needs at the moment	4	3	2	1
By participating in this workshop...				
I have a better understanding of learning styles	4	3	2	1
I know where to go if I have more questions about	4	3	2	1
I will share this information with.....				
I found...				
The presenter knowledgeable and skilled	4	3	2	1
The time and location convenient	4	3	2	1

That I need to learn more about \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about this event? (Circle as applicable)

PIC Website - PIC News - Facebook - School - Other Advocacy /Support Group - Word of mouth - News

The one interesting thing I learned today was...

Tear off here and kindly give us your contact information so that we may respond to your question



I have a question about (Please leave your contact info so we may respond to your question)

2016 Evaluation & Demographic Form

## Appendix J Invitation

**You're Invited!**


*Learn About the Transition from  
Child Development Watch to School Services*


**Thursday March 16: Smooth transitions:** An overview of the steps to transition from Child Development Watch to school services.

**Thursday March 23: IEP Basics:** An overview of the Individualized Education Program process. What happens at the first meeting and how to be involved in the process.

**Place:** The Western Family YMCA, Youth Development Center (YDC)  
2600 Kirkwood Highway, Newark, DE 19711

 FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY **Time:** 5:30 – 8:00 pm *Includes dinner.*

**Registration required:** Bring your children to play while parents learn!!  
This workshop is **FREE!**  
Register today at [www.picofdel.org](http://www.picofdel.org)  
or call 302-999-7394



Parent Information Center  
404 Larch Circle  
Wilmington, DE 19804

**Estan Invitados!**

*Aprenda en Espanol acerca de la transi-  
cion de CDW a servicios escolares.*

**Jueves Marzo 16:** Hablaremos de los pasos  
a seguir durante la transicion de CDW a  
servicios escolares.

**Jueves Marzo 23:** IEP conceptos basicos:  
Resumen del proceso de un plan de edu-  
cacion individualizada. Que pasa en la pri-  
mera reunion y como se puede envolver en  
el proceso.

**Lugar:** Western YMCA **Hora:** 5:30pm–  
8:00pm **Ofrecemos cena y cuida de ninios!**

**Todo es Gratis!** Llame a registrarse al 302-999-  
7394. Pregunte por Paula Broody. Les espera-  
mos!

## **Appendix K IEP Basics PowerPoint Summary**

### **IEP Basics**

#### **What to Expect at the Eligibility / IEP Meeting**

##### **Workshop goals**

- Identify all the components of the IEP form
- List the signatures required from parents and describe the purpose of each signature
- Identify two ways parents can help to develop meaningful IEPs for their child

##### **Scheduling the Eligibility / IEP Meeting**

- May be scheduled at the transition meeting
- Should be held before child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday
- May receive 10 day notice of meeting in the mail along with procedural safeguards and registration information
- Parent has to formally invite service coordinator
- Service coordinator may or may not attend

##### **Participate**

- Ask questions
- Be open to information
- Prioritize your requests
- Know your rights
- Say "thank you"

##### **Eligibility Meeting**

- Team introductions
- Review purpose of meeting
- Review of evaluations, scores, some history of the child
- Propose eligibility classification
- Parent and team members agree or disagree to eligibility and classification
- Parent has 10 days to decide and agree to eligibility
- Parent / team signs 10 day waiver if agreeing to eligibility classification
- Complete Evaluation Summary Report (ESR)

##### **Eligibility criteria**



- Autism
- **Developmental Delay**
- Deaf/Blind
- Emotional Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Learning Disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment (including blindness)
- **Pre-school Speech Delay**

#### Developing the Individual Education Program (IEP)

##### Collect Data and Identify Needs

- What are the child's strengths?
- What are the parent's concerns?
- Academic needs (e.g., math, reading, language arts)
- Functional needs (e.g., social skills, mobility, personal care)

##### Needs

##### What does your child need:

- to reach goals?
- in order to learn?
- to participate with other children?

##### Examples of Supplementary Aids and Services

- Presentation of subject matter (via sign language, visual cues, using multi-sensory materials etc.)
- Age Appropriate Materials
- Consultation time (needed for staff)



- Personnel Training
- Child's specialized equipment needs (lo and hi tech)
- Preferential seating
- Related Services

**Know Your Child's Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP)**

- Based on your child's unique needs
- Must be current, accurate & specific
- The Annual IEP Goal is based on the PLEP
- Is the point from which future progress will be measured

**Help Develop Annual Goals**

- A goal must be meaningful
- A goal is measurable
- A goal guides future planning

**PLEP**

(Present Level of Education Performance)

**PLEP (Present Level of Education Performance):**

<b>Benchmark #1</b>
(Every Marking Period- Approx- 9 weeks)
<b>Benchmark #2</b>
—
<b>Benchmark #3</b>
—
<b>Benchmark #4</b>
—

- Frequency: x times per week / month
- Duration: x minutes
- Location: a place – not push-in or pull-out

#### Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

- The goal is for children with disabilities to be taught with all other children.
- Provide supplementary aids and services in general education classroom
- Only remove children to a different classroom if they can not learn in the regular classroom.

#### Signatures

- Meeting Invitation
- Eligibility Determination
- IEP Attendance
- IEP and Placement Agreement
- Prior Written Notice
  - “I waive the 10 day waiting period before implementation of the IEP and agree that the IEP can be implemented as soon as possible.”
- Accessing Public Benefits or Insurance (Medicaid) for Special Education and Related Services (2 forms and signatures)
- Initial Provision of Special Education Forms
- The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education, CFDA 84.328M. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

## Appendix L Developing Your Child's IEP

Parent Information Center of Delaware



**Developing Your Child's IEP**  
Have you discussed **Related Services** and **Supplementary Aids and Services** with your IEP team?

**Related services** are services (developmental, corrective, or supportive) that may be necessary for a child with a disability to benefit from special education services.

Examples of related services include:

- ☐ Speech-language pathology and audiology services
- ☐ Physical and occupational therapy
- ☐ Recreation, including therapeutic recreation
- ☐ Counseling and psychological services, including rehabilitation counseling
- ☐ Parent counseling and training
- ☐ Orientation and mobility services
- ☐ Social work services in schools
- ☐ Medical services for diagnostic and evaluation purposes only
- ☐ Assistive technology devices and training
- ☐ Interpreting services
- ☐ School health and nursing services

**Supplementary aids and services** are additional services or help that your child may need.


Examples of supplementary aids and services include:

- ☐ Supports to address environmental needs
- ☐ Levels of staff support
- ☐ Specialized equipment needs
- ☐ Pacing of instruction
- ☐ Presentation of subject matter (by tape, sign language, paired reading, etc.)
- ☐ Materials (shared note taking, large print, etc.)
- ☐ Testing adaptations
- ☐ Planning time (needed by staff)
- ☐ Personnel Training



For more information visit [www.picofdel.org/events](http://www.picofdel.org/events) or call 302-999-7394

Appendix M IEP/504 Team Planning



# IEP/504 Team Meeting Planner

For: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

My concerns	Priority no.	Based on (e.g. lack of progress, failing math grades etc.	I think my child needs/could benefit from	Why I feel this would be helpful (data to support this can be found in....	Did we cover this in today's meeting?	Result/Decision
	1					
Action items/Follow up				Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	

2013 Parent Information Center of Delaware. Adapted in part from PACER Centers' 'IEP Meeting Planner'.  
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## Appendix N Eligibility Criteria


### IDEA Disability Eligibility Criteria

- Autism
- **Developmental Delay**
- Deaf/Blind
- Emotional Disability
- Hearing Impairment
- Learning Disability
- Intellectual Disability
- Orthopedic Impairment
- Other Health Impairment
- Speech and /or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment (including blindness)
- **Pre-school Speech Delay**



## Appendix O Present Level of Performance


**Parent Information Center of Delaware**



### Present Level of Educational Performance (PLEP)

The present level of performance tells you what the child knows and is able to do. The PLEP must be measured, current, and accurate. The PLEP and goals must all be in the same units of measurement. Here are some examples:

PLEP	Annual Goal
a. Unexcused absences and tardies average 5 a week.	Unexcused absences and tardies average less than one a week.
b. Orally reads 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade text at 25 wpm with 5-10 errors.	Orally reads 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade text at 90 wpm with 0-2 errors.
c. Instantly and correctly recognizes 20 of the ABC Sight Words List.	Instantly and correctly recognizes 120 of the ABC Sight Words List.
d. Given unfamiliar material from a 4 <sup>th</sup> grade level text, Joan orally reads 40-50 wpm with 4-7 errors.	Given unfamiliar material from a 6 <sup>th</sup> grade level text, Joan orally reads 150-180 wpm with 0-2 errors.
e. Assists in dressing self by pulling pants up and shirt down.	Dresses self except for buttoning and shoe tying.



For more information visit [www.picofdel.org/events](http://www.picofdel.org/events) or call 302-999-7394

## Appendix P Examples of Goals

### Examples of Goals

- Condition, Performance, Measure
- Given unfamiliar material from a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level text, Joan orally reads 150-180 wpm, with 0-2 errors
- By June 1<sup>st</sup>, Carl will be able to walk independently across a level surface for 50 yards without falling.
- During free time such as lunch or recess, Ivy will interact appropriately with peers who approach her or will initiate an interaction with at least one other peer and say "Hi" every day.



## Appendix Q IEP GradesK-7

### Individualized Education Program (IEP) Elementary IEP State of Delaware

Student Name:			
Student ID#:		D.O.B.:	
		Current Grade:	
Address:			
District of Residence:			
Attending Building:			
Recommended Building:			
Disability Classification:			

IEP Status			
Meeting Date		Most Recent Evaluation Summary Report Date	
IEP Initiation Date		IEP Meeting History:	
IEP End Date			

Parent/Guardian* 1:	
Address (if different):	
Home Phone:	
Email Address:	
Parent/Guardian* 2:	
Address (if different):	
Email Address:	

Temporary Placement	
Agency Representative:	
Parent:	
Date:	
Within 60 days, an IEP meeting must be held.	



Name:

DOB:

Meeting Date:

**Meeting Participants**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Signature</b>
Parent* 1		
Student		
General Education Teacher		
Special Education Teacher		
Administrator/Designee		

\*Parent includes legal guardian, educational surrogate parent and relative caregiver.

Name:

DOB:

Meeting Date:

**Data Considerations**

1. What are the student's strengths?
2. What are the educational concerns of the parent (or student, if appropriate)?
3. What multiple data sources (including district or statewide assessments) are being used to create this IEP?
4. How does the child's disability affect the child's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum?
5. What are the child's other educational needs that result from the child's disability (e.g., organizational skills, self-care, fine/gross motor)?
6. Will the student participate with non-disabled students in extracurricular and non-academic areas? If yes, identify supports and services on the "Needs, Services and Annual Goals" page. If no, explain why below.  <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**Other Factors to Consider:**

IEP Team must consider each of the factors.

If there is a need identified, check "Yes" and address in the IEP.

Yes	No	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication needs of the student
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Braille instruction for students who are blind or visually impaired
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication and language needs for students who are deaf/hard of hearing
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Language needs for students with limited English proficiency
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Positive behavior interventions, supports, and strategies for students whose behavior impedes learning
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Need for assistive technology devices and services
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Intervention supports and strategies for students who have difficulty accessing and/or using grade-level textbooks and other core materials in standard print formats.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evidenced-based reading interventions, supports, and strategies for students with limited reading proficiency.

Name:

DOB:

Meeting Date:

<b>Unique Educational Needs and Characteristics #</b>	Provide a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services, based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable, to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will enable the child: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals</li> <li>• to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum, and to participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities; and ,</li> <li>• to be educated and participate with other children with disabilities and non disabled children.</li> </ul>	
<b>Services, Aids &amp; Modifications:</b>  <div> <b>Frequency:</b> <b>Duration:</b> <b>Location:</b> </div>		
<b>PLEP (Present Levels of Educational Performance):</b>		
<b>Benchmark #1</b>	<b>Marking Period:</b>	
<b>Benchmark #2</b>	<b>Marking Period:</b>	
<b>Benchmark #3</b>	<b>Marking Period:</b>	
<b>Benchmark #4</b>	<b>Marking Period:</b>	
<b>Annual Goal</b>		
<b>Therapist Signature:</b>		<b>Date:</b> (For Medicaid Cost Recovery)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Related Services**

Services	Type of Delivery	Start/End Date	Frequency	Duration	Location

**Transportation**

Special transportation needs?	
If yes, specify:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is it necessary to place this student, who is transported from the school by bus into the charge of a parent or other authorized responsible person?	
If so, Transportation Department will be notified by:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

**Participation in Statewide Assessment**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Student is not in a grade that is assessed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student will participate in regular testing conditions without accommodations unless one of the below is checked.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student participates with accommodations as documented on the attached Student Accommodation Checklist.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student is included in Alternate Assessment. The Participation Guidelines form is attached and #500 is filled in on the Student Accommodation Checklist.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Discipline

The student will adhere to School Code of Conduct. (Check below if any of the following are needed):	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interventions and supports are described under services/supports and/or in goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Behavior intervention and support plan (see attached).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

### Participation in Twelve-Month Program

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
By State law (14 Del.C §1703), parents of students with certain disability classifications may choose a 12-month program which does not exceed 217 school days (Severe Intellectual Disability; Moderate Intellectual Disability; Orthopedic Impairment; Traumatic Brain Injury; Deaf-Blind) or 241 school days (Autism). As a parent of a qualifying student, I choose a 12-month program.		

### Consideration of Reading-Based Extended School Year Services

Does the student meet the following criteria?							
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Age 7 or above					
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Not demonstrating phonological awareness and ability to use letter sound knowledge and decode unknown words.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Eligible							
<input type="checkbox"/> Eligible, declined by Parent							
<input type="checkbox"/> Eligible, declined by IEP team							
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Eligible							
If the student is eligible but Reading Based ESY Services are declined by the IEP team, provide a specific explanation of why such services are inappropriate:							
If the student is eligible for Reading Based ESY, specify goals and evidenced-based interventions:							
Services	Type	Placement	Grade	Start/End Date	Frequency	Duration	Location
Reading	Instruction						

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Consideration of Eligibility for Extended School Year Services (ESY)**

IEP team must consider each of the following factors:

- Regression/Recoupment
- Vocational Skills
- Degree of Impairment
- Breakthrough Skills
- Extenuating Circumstances

Is ESY needed?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ To Be Determined

☐ ESY offered, but declined by parent

Rationale for Decision:

Specify goals and services:

Services	Type	Placement	Grade	Start/End Date	Frequency	Duration	Location

Name:

DOB:

Meeting Date:

**Least Restrictive Environment/Placement**

A student with a disability shall not be removed from an education setting in age appropriate regular classes solely because of needed modifications in general education curriculum. 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.

Use the option below to determine the appropriate setting.

<input type="checkbox"/>	A.	<b>Regular Setting</b> Includes pull-out related services and team classrooms. Student served inside the regular classroom greater than or equal to 80% of the day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	B.	<b>Services Provided Both in Separate Special Education Classes and Regular Setting</b> Student served inside the regular classroom greater than or equal to 40% of the day and no more than 79% of the day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	C.	<b>Separate Special Education in an Integrated Setting</b> Student served inside the regular classroom less than 40% of the day.
<input type="checkbox"/>	D.	<b>Separate School</b> Student served in public or private separate day school facility for greater than 50% of the school day or a residential facility if student does not live at the facility.
<input type="checkbox"/>	E.	<b>Residential Facility</b> where student resides during the school week.
<input type="checkbox"/>	F.	<b>Homebound or Hospital</b>
<input type="checkbox"/>	G.	<b>Correctional Facilities</b> (only used by DSCYF and Prison Education) Students placed in short-term detention or correctional facilities.

An explanation must be provided about the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class.

**Signatures**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Procedural Safeguards. My due process rights under these Procedural Safeguards have been explained to me.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	I agree with the program described in this document.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	I agree with the placement decision as noted above and discussed at this meeting.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	At least one year before the age of majority (18), the student has been informed that rights will transfer to him/her unless a legal guardian has been appointed.

---

 Parent/Student Signature

---

 Date

---

 Parent/Student Signature

---

 Date
**If Parent Does Not Attend**

Staff member below is responsible for forwarding a copy of the IEP and Procedural Safeguards and explaining content, if necessary, to the Parent/Guardian/Surrogate.

---

 Name

---

 Position

---

 Method of Contact

## Appendix R Signatures

### Signatures

- Meeting Invitation
- Eligibility Determination
- IEP Attendance
- IEP and Placement Agreement
- Prior Written Notice
  - “I waive the 10 day waiting period before implementation of the IEP and agree that the IEP can be implemented as soon as possible.”
- Accessing Public Benefits or Insurance (Medicaid) for Special Education and Related Services (2 forms and signatures)
- Initial Provision of Special Education Forms





## Appendix S IEP Checklist

### IEP Checklist

*The following is a checklist for parents and teachers to consider as they develop the IEP. Not every item on the checklist is required by special education regulations. For more information, consult the Federal regulations and other information that can be found at <http://idea.ed.gov/> or call PEATC at 800-869-6782.*

#### **IEP team members include:**

##### **Required**

- ☐ Parent(s)
- ☐ Student (as appropriate and invited at age 15 when discussing transition)
- ☐ Special education teacher(s)
- ☐ Regular education teacher(s)
- ☐ Professional(s) who can interpret the instructional implications of assessments
- ☐ School division representative (qualified to provide/supervise special education services) (Members can serve more than one role. Written agreement of parent required to excuse attendance of required member. If area being discussed, written information must be provided to parent in advance of meeting.)

##### **Optional:**

- ☐ Family members/Friends
- ☐ Peers/Advocates
- ☐ Specialists
- ☐ Other Professionals including: Representatives from Early Intervention or Adult Service Agencies (optional members are at the discretion of the school and parent and may require parental consent)

##### **IEP team members notified and the meeting scheduled:**

- ☐ In time for parents to arrange to attend

- ☐ Mutually agreeable time, place & purpose
- ☐ Notice includes date, time, location, purpose and attendees

##### **Present Level of Performance:**

- ☐ Student described in positive way
- ☐ Reflects parent concerns
- ☐ Includes strengths and needs
- ☐ Results of most recent evaluations
- ☐ States academic & functional performance in objective terms
- ☐ Results of assessments including statewide or district-wide assessments
- ☐ Describes how the disability affects involvement and progress in general education (for preschool students – in appropriate activities)
- ☐ Describes academic, developmental and functional needs

##### **Annual Goals:**

- ☐ Includes academic and functional goals based on needs from assessments and described in Present Level section
- ☐ Meaningful and attainable within one school year
- ☐ Student's involvement and progress in the general education curriculum
- ☐ Measurable - clear about what, how, where & when
- ☐ Includes academic and functional goals

- ☐ Positive Behavioral Supports, if needed
- ☐ How progress will be measured and how often parents will be informed of progress
- ☐ High expectations, including how student will keep up with or catch up to non-disabled peers
- ☐ Based on validated research
- ☐ Measurable objectives or benchmarks (required for students taking alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards)
- ☐ Prioritized in terms of the student's age and time left for schooling
- ☐ Skills to help the student live as independently as possible

##### **Related Services, Supplementary Aids and Supports:**

- ☐ Help child advance toward attaining annual goals
- ☐ Help child be involved in and make progress in the general curriculum
- ☐ Help child participate with other students with and without disabilities
- ☐ Include specifics: start/finish dates: frequency: duration: location: who will deliver, delivery method (individual or group in class)
- ☐ Assistive Technology devices or services

- ☐ Help to access nonacademic and extracurricular activities
- ☐ Needed accommodations/modifications for educational program and assessments.
- ☐ Teacher/staff training if needed to implement program

**Special Factors (when needed):**

- ☐ Communication
- ☐ Assistive Technology
- ☐ Behavior
- ☐ Language (English Language Learners)
- ☐ Braille (for blindness/visual impairment)
- ☐ Communication needs (for deafness/hearing impairment)

**Placement:**

- ☐ In the least restrictive environment (first option considered is school where child would attend if there was no disability)
- ☐ Includes interaction with non-disabled peers to *maximum extent appropriate*
- ☐ Justification, if student not participating in general education curriculum
- ☐ Coordinated with general education classroom, schedules, activities and programs

**State-wide and District-wide Assessments:**

- ☐ Lists assessments student will take
- ☐ Specifies needed accommodations and modifications

- ☐ If participating in an alternate assessment, aligned with challenging standards

**Instruction and Adaptations:**

- ☐ Assignment of a case manager or primary contact
- ☐ Person(s) responsible clearly listed i.e. special education teacher, general education teacher, specialist, aide, parents, students, other
- ☐ Extended school year recommendation (if needed)

**Transition Plan (if necessary):**

- ☐ Plans for a smooth transition to a new setting, i.e. early intervention to preschool, or moving to kindergarten, elementary, middle school or high school (suggested a year before change)
- ☐ Includes input from service providers in current setting and future setting

**Secondary Transition**

- ☐ By age 15, or before as appropriate, student takes active role in planning and attending IEP
- ☐ Types of classes needed and type of diploma planned for student (this may need to begin in middle school)
- ☐ Includes postsecondary goals based on student needs, strengths, preferences and interests
- ☐ Specific transition services, related services needs and other agencies to be included

- ☐ Activities needed to assist student in reaching postsecondary goals
- ☐ At least 1 year before age 18, information about what rights will transfer to student at age 18
- ☐ Summary of Performance for students who are graduating or who will exceed the age of eligibility for special education.

**Prior Written Notice (If a revision of service or change in placement or refusal of parent request)**

- ☐ Description of action proposed or refused
- ☐ The reason for the proposed change
- ☐ The date of proposed change
- ☐ Description of evaluations and other information used to make the decision
- ☐ Other options or choices described
- ☐ Other relevant factors
- ☐ What steps to take if parent disagrees (Availability of procedural safeguards and where to get more information)

**Review (at least annually)**

- ☐ Whether annual goals being achieved
- ☐ Lack of expected progress in annual goals and general education curriculum
- ☐ Results of any reevaluation
- ☐ Information about child provided to or by parents related to reevaluations
- ☐ Child's anticipated needs
- ☐ Other matters
- ☐ Revisions as appropriate

## Appendix T Comparison Checklist

Comparison of Federal recommendations for IEP presentation and PICDE Basic IEP Presentation

Wrights Law & U. S. DOE PIC IEP Information to Parents	Delaware PIC PowerPoint Presentation	Delaware PIC Handouts
<b>Planning before the meeting:</b>		
1. <b>Doing a Positive Student Profile</b>	Yes	Yes worksheet
2. <b>Ask other team members</b>	Yes	Yes
3. Brainstorm with people: teacher, friend, tutor, therapist	Yes	Yes
4. <b>Know your rights</b>	Yes	Yes
5. <b>Consider whether to invite another person to go with you</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>During the meeting:</b>	Yes	No
6. <b>Stay focused, Be thorough</b>		
7. Developing the IEP involves two main things: IEP meeting IEP document	Yes	Yes
8. <b>IEP meetings invitation includes:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the purpose of the meeting;</li> <li>the time and place for the meeting;</li> <li>who will be there; and</li> <li>that you may invite other people who have knowledge or special expertise about your child to the meeting.</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes
9. The school must hold the meeting to develop your child's IEP within 30 calendar days of when your child is found eligible for special education services.	Yes	Yes
10. You must agree to the program, in writing, before	Yes, PICDE provides additional information on	Yes

the school may carry out your child's first IEP.	key signatures needed	
11. The IEP must be reviewed at least once every 12 months and revised as necessary.	Yes	Yes
12. <b>IEP meeting attendees:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent(s)</li> <li>• <b>School Administrator</b></li> <li>• <b>General Education Teacher</b></li> <li>• <b>Special Education Teacher</b></li> <li>• <b>Evaluation Personnel</b></li> <li>• <b>The Child</b></li> <li>• <b>Other members of the team</b></li> <li>• <b>Translators or interpreters</b></li> <li>• <b>Transition personnel</b> (if child is age 14 or older)</li> <li>• <b>Others with knowledge or special expertise about your child</b></li> </ul>	Yes	Yes
13. <b>IEP document:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• child's strengths</li> <li>• concerns for enhancing your child's education;</li> <li>• results of the most recent evaluation of your child; and</li> <li>• child's academic, developmental, and functional needs.</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes
14. Determine Needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communication</b></li> <li>• <b>Assistive technology services and devices</b></li> <li>• <b>Behavior</b></li> <li>• <b>Visual impairment</b> and need instruction in or the use of Braille</li> <li>• <b>Deaf or hard of hearing</b> and have language and other communication needs</li> </ul>	Yes	Yes
15. <b>Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLEP)</b>	Yes	Yes
16. <b>Annual Goals</b>	Yes	Yes samples provided

17. <b>Measuring Your Child's Progress</b>	Yes	Yes
18. <b>Services and Supports: Special Education, Related Services, accommodations, etc.</b>	Yes	Yes
19. <b>Participation with Children without Disabilities (LRE)</b>	Yes	Yes
20. <b>Modifications to State or District-Wide Assessments</b>	Not included due to age of children for this particular program. Children age 5 and under are not part of State-wide testing	Yes
21. <b>Location and Duration of Services</b>	Yes	Yes
22. <b>Reporting Your Child's Progress</b>	Yes	Yes
23. <b>Transition Services</b>	Not included due to age of children for this particular program. Transition begins at age 14.	Yes
24. <b>What is placement? How is placement decided?</b>	Yes	Yes
25. <b>IEP Signature of agreement</b>	Yes	Yes
26. Things to do after the IEP meeting and before the next one.	Yes	Yes
27. Amending or changing the IEP	Yes	Yes

## Appendix U Evaluation Design Worksheet

### Evaluation Design Worksheet

Evaluation Purpose: To review PIC workshops presented that propose to increase parent knowledge of transition events and procedures from the Birth to 3 special education services to school based services within the IEP process. And, to review materials and handouts used for two workshops to determine their alignment with federal guidelines and recommendations under IDEA.

Evaluation Question		Sample	Variables/ Instruments	Data Collection Procedures	Data Analysis Procedures	Timeline
Process	How well do the materials and content of the workshops convey relevant information on the IEP as recommended in federal and state regulations?	Materials and handouts used in workshop: IEP Basics	Presenter knowledge Parents literacy capabilities Accuracy of materials	Program materials (PowerPoint and handouts) will be compared to federal IDEA guidelines for parents.	Percentage of items covered in workshop as compared to recommended items from IDEA	Develop list of federal guidelines on the IEP. Compare presentation materials with list.
Outcome	How well do the presentations improve parent knowledge of Early Childhood Transition and IEP basics?	Workshop attendees: Parents of children ages birth to 3 who receive special education services through the department of Child Development Watch (CDW)	Presenter knowledge Parents literacy capabilities Survey question clarity.	Pre and Post presentation questionnaires. Demographics of parent participation. Overall presentation evaluation responses.	Tabulate and average the scores by language groups (English and Spanish)	Two evening workshops presented on March 23 and 30. Compile pre and post questionnaire responses.

**Appendix V**

**ESSAY RESPONSE: DEVELOPING A PARENT-PROFESSIONAL TEAM  
LEADERSHIP MODEL IN GROUP WORK**

**Developing a Parent-Professional Team Leadership Model in Group Work:** Work  
with families with children experiencing behavioral and emotional problems.

By: Ruffolo, M. C., Kuhn, M. T., & Evans, M. E. (2006)

Joan French  
EDUC 890  
Leadership Research Analysis: Essay  
August 8, 2017

## Introduction

We are asked as professionals to work with parents as a team, but very often we only want parents to agree with what we have already decided. Thinking about the IEP team process, usually the professionals have all the answers and forms are completed before the parent arrives. Many students we are expected to serve have very unusual and challenging disabilities. Sometimes the parent is the expert for these children. There are professional standards for administrators written by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011) which guide administrators as school and community leaders. The ELCC standards have been noted throughout this article review to indicate areas where the standards are evident or applied.

This article describes the development of a Parent and Professional Team organized to help families with children who have severe emotional and behavioral problems (National Policy Board, 4.1-4.4). It is a bit of a recipe for shared leadership and mutual respect for one another, be they parent or professional, and a way to build capacity for both types of members as well as build empowerment for parents who are very distraught, depressed, angry, lonely/isolated, and hopeless about their child and his or her relationship with the family and school.

The authors recognize that professionals have difficulty receiving and treating parents as equals. Breaking this barrier requires new constructs to the relationship building between parents and professionals (National Policy Board, 3.4). Along with parents feeling valued, it has been found that family participation increased when



parents thought that their involvement improved the services provided to their children.

For the development of a group, interventions or actions that build on strengths of the members are the focus, while developing new roles for each member. The benefits of group work include:

- Facilitation of change by providing opportunities for mutual support, cohesiveness, positive relationships, and a diminished sense of being alone,
- Fostering hope for change and providing opportunities for members to help each other, support new knowledge and skill acquisition, and allow for (enhance) shared perspectives.
- Particularly for families of children with Social Emotional Disabilities (SED), there is potential for improved parent-child relationships, parent competence, and reduction in family stress.

#### Developing the Parent-Professional Team Leadership Model

This work took place in New York with the support, empowerment, and education (S.E.E.) group intervention for families of children with SED. Prior to this group model, parents had intensive support from a case manager and very little contact with other parents or families dealing with the same problems. The group developers used focus group methods to look at the experiences of parents, the mental health system, and mental health professionals serving the families. The focus was on aligning their concerns within partnership building.

## Findings

Common themes for parents were frustration and anger with mental health professionals; they identified three major areas of concern in raising children with SED:

1. Feeling isolated
2. Difficulties coping
3. Needing information on how to handle their child

Parents with previous group experience felt that their concerns were minimized by the professionals and little help or relief was offered.

Outside consultants then met with mental health professionals. The goal was to promote/discuss the mental health professionals' participation in a shared parent-professional leadership model. The cofacilitation leadership model expected parent and professional leaders to establish partnerships and collaborate to conduct and share responsibilities for parent support meetings. Fifteen professionals stepped up. Training commenced to help parents and professionals to value each other's knowledge and skills. They made up training groups of mixed race and gender. A special task force developed the training program to include:

- Defining partnership and leadership in groups (National Policy Board, 2.4).
- Addressing the unique roles and contributions of parents and professionals within the model.
- Learning the group psychoeducational approach/format (S.E.E.) together.
- Developing group skills in participation, problem solving, and empowerment.

The training took eight hours and there were three one-hour booster sessions every three months for the first year.

#### Lessons Learned

- Finding the right mix of personalities was relevant to the success of the group.
- Professionals had a hard time letting go of control of the meetings at first.
- Developing trust with new acknowledgements of ideas, respect and sharing was crucial.
- Initially parents reported that they deferred to the professionals as they started working with other families, but they began to develop their roles and expertise as they worked with families.
- Parents began to think of themselves as persons of value.
- Mutual respect and open communication was developed and ongoing.
- Ongoing feedback by supervisors of the model and therapeutic input was perceived as valuable throughout by both parents and professionals.
- Parent leaders found that their ideas were sometimes more practical and helpful to the family than the suggestions of the professionals. (National Policy Board, 2.3)
- Professionals and parents report that their work together gave them power to work on policy together (National Policy Board, 6.2).

## Results

The parent leaders and the parents in the treatment group reported positive feedback in the ways the group helped them to be better parents and their children improved their behavioral functioning at home and in school (ELCC 2.1). Parent leaders and professionals agreed that having the same group format helped them manage the challenges of facilitating an open group. It took time, but the teams were able to improve their communication and collaboration skills.

## Implications for Practice

The authors note that this was a small sample, but with positive results that can be applied to other parent-professional teams. Training on mutual respect, shared decision making, and team focus and format can all be put into place for future teams with proper planning and training.

For us as school leaders, it is important to recognize and appreciate the knowledge and experience of our parent community (National Policy Board, 5.1, 6.3). It is our job to be inclusive and respectful of our community's needs. Helping parents and professionals achieve mutual respect and understanding would support positive parent engagement and positive school climate, something school leaders are always striving for. I am particularly interested in how this addresses students with special needs as my ELP will address the development of Parent Councils in each district. The Parent Councils will advocate for children and families with special needs.

## References

- National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). (2011). Educational Leadership Program Standards: Building Level. Retrieved from <http://npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ELCC-Building-Level-Standards-2011.pdf>
- Ruffolo, M. C., Kuhn, M. T., & Evans, M. E. (2006). Developing a parent-professional team leadership model in group work: Work with families with children experiencing behavioral and emotional problems. *Social Work, 51*(1), 39-47.

**Appendix W Literature Review**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Joan French

Literature Review on Parent Councils and Parent Involvement

University of Delaware

EDUC 881

May 2018

## Introduction

The overarching take-away from this literature review is that involving parents in their children's education takes knowledge, cultural insights, money, time, and patience. The impetus for it was the successful campaign by parents and advocates to convince Delaware legislators to pass a new state regulation under IDEA that prescribes the development and sustainment of parent councils across Delaware school districts and charter schools (IEP Improvement Task Force, 2013; 14 Delaware Code, 2015). In the parent council regulation, districts and charter schools were tasked with contacting each parent of a child with special needs every year and supporting those parents in becoming advocates for their child through the establishment of parent councils.

To comply with the new regulation, the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) contracted with the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) to do a needs assessment for parent councils. The PICDE executive director regularly attends the special education directors' meetings in Dover. There, the executive director discussed the needs assessment surveys with the district special education directors and supervisors prior to sending the surveys out in February 2018 to school district and charter school administrators (J. Taylor, personal communication February 16, 2018). The school and district administrators were to distribute the parent surveys to the targeted parents. The purpose of the surveys was to determine the status of the development and function of parent councils in Delaware since the regulation was put into place in June 2015. Fewer than 25 % of charter schools and 50% of districts

responded. Although participation was sparse, the parents and administrators' responses echoed many aspects of the current research regarding parent engagement and helped to define the key questions addressed in this Literature Review:

- How do we get more parents involved?
- How do we get schools and districts to comply with the regulation (to implement parent councils?)
- How do we pay for the education, information, monitoring, and materials needed to develop and sustain the parent councils?

### **How do we get more parents involved?**

There are articles and research that cover the gamut of how to reach out to parents, including guides to develop parent-friendly activities on the part of school personnel and administrators and articles that help school personnel understand what inhibits parents from coming to school to be involved. Inhibitors affect parent efficacy and may include shame or alienation and cultural or economic issues. Brookfield (2002) presents a review of Marx and Fromm's theories to understand what influences the ability to think freely and have a voice in society. Brookfield cites their observations on how people as workers become automaton conformists and are subject to *commodification*, that is, their reduction to objects themselves through the sale of their labor and the soul-destroying process of production. Even in a putatively democratic society, say Marx and Fromm, we conform ourselves to what the employer desires to make gains in life. When considering adult education, it is important to help adults come to terms with what in society has molded their thinking. Are they thinking



for themselves and what is needed in our world or are they thinking as conformists? In adult learning. Brookfield cites the need to teach a *structuralized* worldview that connects what is happening in the world to what dictates everyday life for many people.

We as educators may believe that parents do not care and are uninterested in the needs of schools and their children's education. Reading Brookfield's take on Marx and Fromm helped me realize that conformity (not rocking the boat) has made the majority complicit in relinquishing their rights and ideas to a small group of powerful people. This loss of voice or powerlessness primes disengagement of people in their world. I agree with Brookfield's summary that to teach adults we must first help them understand democratic participation and the history that has led to the diminishing of democratic principles. Fromm and Marx used humanism and socialism to demonstrate the interconnectedness of people and their society and the influence of capitalism in destroying democratic, humane, egalitarian approaches.

This article brings many things to light as we plan programs to help engage parents in their child's educational program and bring about district and state-wide policy change for students with special education needs, including mental health services. Connecting Brookfield's studies to educational researchers on cultural sensitivity and inclusion of diverse populations may help attract parents to the table, build their confidence in participating in their child's education, and help them to make an impact on the system that governs education in Delaware and nationally.

Morawska, Ramadewi, and Sanders (2014) looked at a variety of other factors that may inhibit parents from participating in their child's education program. Their parent group study was based on parent training programs that worked to reduce behavior problems in children. They looked at factors that may both predict participation and show barriers to participation. The parent factors considered were self-efficacy, help-seeking behaviors, depression, and parenting style. The student factors were perceived behavior problem of the child, child gender, and family context factors such as social support and socioeconomic status (SES). They found, in a study of 2,999 parent volunteers, that factors of parent self-efficacy, social support, child gender, and SES did not have a significant impact on parent participation. However, they did find that parent participation in parent training increased with the prevalence of parent depression and perceived child behavior problems. Help seeking behaviors also increased the likeliness that parents would attend parent training. A barrier to attending was ineffective parenting style unless it coincided with parent depression.

The Morawska et al. study clarifies several factors which negatively or positively influence parent participation in parent training. Parents may be depressed by many factors including concerns for their child's behavior, but they are motivated to seek help possibly to relieve their anxiety or depression over their child's well-being and to help their child. Ineffective parent style without other characteristics is a concern because parents may not know what they do not know in parenting or there may be factors distracting them from parent training that might improve their parenting style and skills. The clear response from this study is that contrary to what

educators may think, parents with mental health issues and children with challenging behaviors, when compounded with ineffective parenting, are more likely to reach out for help and attend parent training. Parents of children with special education needs in Delaware are asking for help, and parent responses in the PICDE survey asked for relevant programs and information to help their child. School personnel and parent councils would be wise to survey their respective parent populations and plan meaningful workshops that intend to help parents with their specific needs for their children, improve parent health and well-being, and improve parenting skills.

Ruffolo, Kuhn, and Evans (2006) studied model programs that build the strengths of parent and professional-led groups. The proposed parent-professional team leadership groups worked together on interventions for youths with serious emotional disturbances. The authors began the study knowing from prior research that professionals sometimes have difficulty viewing parents as equal partners in the development of interventions for their children. Additionally, parents report that professionals do not understand their concerns and often minimize them even when the treatment for one child creates challenges and completely disrupts the family. Valuing the family experiences and knowledge is key to building relationships. A positive driving force found in the data is that family participation increased when parents believed that they had a role in improving services for their child. Ruffolo took data from a 26-member parent focus group and participating mental health professionals in their staff meetings. Each group evaluated the implementation of a model involving support, empowerment, and education (S.E.E).

Four mental health professionals and six parent volunteers were trained in the new leadership model for group interventions. The parent-professional teams were supervised, and other experienced mental health professionals and experienced parents provided guidance. The parent and professional partnership produced a manual outlining roles and responsibilities. The team met with their supervisors and found these meetings helpful in enhancing the mission of collaboration between parents and professionals. One strategy of note as it relates to Delaware parent councils is that, through phone contact with parent clients, the parent leaders were able to discuss and overcome the parent clients' barriers to attend the meetings. This outreach and problem-solving greatly improved parent attendance, and parents who attended a minimum of two S.E.E. group trainings usually stayed active and attended trainings and meetings until their child was discharged from services.

According to the authors, the implications from this study indicate that more research is needed on the influences of education, race, gender, background, and socioeconomic status of the coleaders to determine any inhibitors or motivations among different demographics. The authors recommend that with any parent-professional partnership there must be clear principles of practice that encourage and support family-centered goals and partnership building and elevate parents into equal partners with professionals. These partnerships need active supervision and ongoing support. Likewise, professionals need training that promotes collaborative practices with the active participation of parents and family members to build strong and effective parent-professional partnerships. This article reassures us that there are

models in the literature that can guide and advise the sustainable development of parent councils, giving parents and professionals mutual respect for their respective skills and contributions and facilitate the success of the partnership.

Another issue that may keep parents away from the school community is the feeling of shame. Walker (2017) claims that we do not talk enough about shame and its impact, and he attempts to start a conversation about shame in adult learning and education to inspire learning communities to look at the effects of shame and other emotions on the engagement and progress of adult learners. “Shame is at the core of who we are—” explains Walker “and who we can become—as adult learners and educators.” Shame is a sense that one is not good enough or has not done enough. Quoting Kaufman (1985), Walker says that “to feel shame is to feel seen in a painfully diminished sense (1985, p.8).” Citing Fussi (2015), Walker argues that shame is the gap between who we want to be and who we appear (or think we appear) to be. Nonetheless, Walker claims that shame can be either a deterrent or a motivator of learning. While it can prevent adults or parents from participating in their child’s program, with self-examination, it can be the catalyst for transforming adults into participants in their own learning.

These representations of a strong emotion tie into what Brookfield was gleaned from Fromm, in that people need to feel pride and a sense of accomplishment. With the challenges of drug addiction, poverty, immigration laws, unemployment, institutional racism, and other factors that diminish or discourage adults from furthering their education, it is understandable that very few adults (or

parents) come forward to involve themselves in issues they may not understand, such as the IEP process or education policy. Lack of education and skills is one of the shame events cited by Walker. Consequently, adult learners feel that they do not belong or that there is something wrong with them.

Walker (2017) also relates shame to isolation: “Shame is closely related to fears of social exclusion and rejection and is culturally specific” (p. 359). The shame one may feel as an immigrant with limited English will keep a parent from coming into the school environment. Parent councils can use this knowledge of shame, alienation, and related emotions to help parents overcome their feelings of inadequacy or whatever is holding them back from participating. Knowledge can be empowering when parents who struggle in isolation with their child’s disability learn that there are many parents dealing with the same issues and that there are processes in place to help their child and themselves.

These studies demonstrate some of the issues that disengage or deter parents from participating in their child’s education program. One size does not fit all, but the knowledge here can be used to plan programs that help Delaware parents overcome obstacles that isolate or alienate them from the school community.

### **How do we get schools and districts to comply with the regulation?**

The implementation of parent councils relies on the voluntary action of schools and their administrations. Whether parent councils succeed or fail depends on school and district administrators and on how well they demonstrate welcoming behavior and

supportive actions and policies that are inclusive of all families and staff in their schools or districts.

Porras Hein (2003) looked at two school districts in California and the effects of actions taken by principals in the districts. Two schools were observed, and principals were interviewed. The behavior and actions taken by the principals to welcome and engage parents brought about partnerships and collaboration between school faculty and parents. Principals set the stage in their schools to promote parents as allies in education. To enable parent and teacher collaborations, the principal provided substitute teachers so that classroom teachers had time to meet with parents at parent council meetings. One principal had well-organized and punctual council meetings with agendas and minutes from previous meetings. This principal also provided instruction and support to the parent and teacher groups to help each group understand the needs and expectations of the other.

These practices of organization and outreach are needed for Delaware parent councils. The survey respondents in our needs assessment noted that meetings were irregular and developed on short notice and that the district administrator was not respectful of parents. Training for both administrators and parents to overcome these challenges is explored further in related literature.

Kathleen Kelley-Laine (1998) was the project officer of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, France in 1998. In her article, she cites the ways many countries encourage parents as partners. She summarizes strategies to help countries develop or enhance parent involvement:

- Parents and teachers do not need to reinvent the wheel; there are successful practices in place for parent engagement, and these should be publicized and utilized across populations within a country and in other countries.
- Value what all partners bring to the situation. Encourage mutual respect; both parents and teachers must learn how to handle opposition or differing opinions. They must value the others' roles.
- Teachers and parents work together on a clear legal structure which guides the rights and responsibilities of all involved.
- Identify and recognize what parents want and need. Parent agendas must be inclusive of community groups and agencies and a wide cross section of parents from the community.

These points are obvious in developing fair and effective interactions between partners. They elevate parent and school partnerships to the professional state they should be. Parents have much to contribute, if we recognize them as human beings and demonstrate concern for their values and what they know about their child's needs.

Gardiner and Tenuto (2015) interviewed ten practicing educational administrators in a suburban school district serving over ten thousand students from diverse backgrounds. The authors' queries included what patterns arise in ethical dilemmas during day-to-day work, how ethical dimensions of leadership processes relate to leadership practices, and what decision-making processes are employed to attain ethical leadership and resolve conflict. The authors compiled challenges confronted by administrators:



- Cultural differences and situations of conflict concerning race, ethnicity, or other cross-cultural differences
- The need to process emotions connected with conflict surrounding these differences
- The role of reflection for processing ethical decision-making

The study confirmed that the administrators recognize the need for ethical relations to build trust, acknowledge that emotion in leadership can be used to understand the perspectives of others, and see that reflection and contemplative learning are essential to the growth of a leader. School leaders benefit from reflection on their ethical thinking and decision-making. Discussions of these practices in a collaborative setting can support cultural sensitivity and awareness. The findings support further training of administrators, instructional leaders, instructional coaches, and teachers to work with university faculty around ethics and issues of practice. The authors advance the thinking that cultural understanding, care, and connectedness go hand-in-hand with efforts supporting rights, justice, and the law in ethical decision-making. The administrators in the PICDE needs assessment survey demonstrated conscientious concern about students' and parents' rights. Further guidance and instruction will be needed to help school administrators and personnel become equal and supportive partners to parents and the parent council.

Auerbach (2007) presents a small study of working-class Mexican, African American, and Chicano parents and their means of supporting their college-bound children. Auerbach adds to the literature qualitative information on the culture of these

families and how the parents take on responsibility and roles to support the children on their paths. The families and students are all part of an information and support program for college placement called *Futures*, which assists students and families in understanding the process of preparing for and applying to college. The parents' educational backgrounds ranged from not completing high school to some community college education. Through interviews and observations, the parents fell into three categories: as *moral supporters*, *struggling advocates*, and *ambivalent companions*.

The moral supporters were of Latino origins and had very little education and limited English. These parents trusted their highly motivated children to take their own path to college. They supported their children from home by encouraging them and protecting them from chores and distractions that would keep them from their studies. The students themselves were intelligent and capable, and they recognized and appreciated their parents' support. Because of their parents' education level and limited English, the children taught the parents about the process and challenges of getting into college. These parents cleared the path from home and made sacrifices to keep their children in school. Parents reported that the strategies they used involved showing the child how hard their life was and telling the child that they wanted them to have a better life. The families knew the meaning of hard work, respect for elders, honesty, and other honorable traits, all of which the parents instilled in the children. They provided love and as much stability as possible in their home life. Their goals were to build resilience in their child and send them on the road to success.

The struggling advocates focused their support both at home and in school. They were hands-on pushing for progress in their students and monitoring, advocating, and seeking information and access through school counselors, teachers, and college representatives. These parents had mixed educational background with the greatest level of college knowledge within the groups studied. They were motivated by mobility aspirations, a distrust of the education system, and a belief that parents can make a difference.

The ambivalent companions were based on a group of single mothers and their daughters. These moms were also hands-on but felt it was their job to listen. They accompanied their student on the journey and worked to hold on to their relationship with their growing teenager. Their mode of support was to encourage, communicate, protect, and at times assist their child with a request. Some of the mothers had experience with community college but had limited college knowledge. They had close relationships with their daughters, and their goals were to boost their self-esteem, keep them safe, and maintain a good relationship.

These three types of parents would not be considered part of the mainstream school involvement definition. They did not come to school unless their children invited them in. They were distracted by work and other family members and did their work to support their children mostly from home. This absence of parents from school events may have given school staff the impression that they were not caring and concerned parents, but the interviews and their unseen actions at home prove otherwise. Looking at these three types of parent roles and their goals and

responsibilities for their children, Auerbach concluded that educators and researchers need to:

- broaden value laden traditional middle-class idea of parent involvement.
- Help educators understand that parent support and involvement take many shapes and may not be visible in the school environment.
- Recognize that students of color and limited resources need help navigating the system to gain access to higher education.
- Extend understanding and communication to reduce sources of conflict and barriers to access for marginalized families.
- Schools, college access programs, and government initiatives need to capitalize on the parents' intense concern and needs for information and work to include parents in the conversation about their student's path to college.

All these principles could apply to the effective development of Delaware parent councils. Parents of secondary students specifically requested information on college and career planning and transition in their needs assessment responses.

Auerbach (2010) continued her work to understand and broaden the view of parent involvement for marginalized parents. She interviewed three principals working in predominately Latino low-income schools with a high population of English language (ELL) and underachieving students in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Through this study, Auerbach defines types of school and parent partnerships:

- Nominal: Schools provide a service and administrators maintain a wall between parents and staff. Parents are considered incapable of helping with homework and other student supports because of their limited English and cultural differences.
- Traditional: Listening and managing parents into roles as resources to help the school but keeping parents in certain areas of school support.
- Authentic partnerships: Parents have a voice in everything related to school/student success.

The three principals actively pursuing authentic partnerships were mindful of moral commitments to social justice for the Latino community. They moved beyond Epstein's six key ideas of parent involvement (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002) to broader emphasis on encouraging the parent community to become active, and they provided education for parents to become effective advocates. Parents were surveyed to find out their needs to be better parents and advocates. Parents asked for training and information on student rights, parents' rights and responsibilities, and understanding the problems facing their school such as high drop-out rates.

In her conclusions, Auerbach sets up a self-evaluation continuum for school leaders to assess their leadership style, goals, partnership orientation, view of families and their roles, and school climate. The continuum ranged from *leadership preventing partnerships* to *leadership for authentic partnerships*, including *nominal* and *traditional partnerships* in between. She concludes that there must be a merger of the diverse research literature on authentic parent involvement, on shared decision-

making, and on promoting social justice. This knowledge base would serve to educate school leaders to be open to the resources, needs, and roles of parents and enable schools and communities to provide education and resources to empower parents.

Curry and Adams (2014) look at parent responsibility and how social networks support parents in developing their role and efficacy as part of the responsibility expected of parents of school-age children. They begin with the No Child Left Behind act of 2001, which requires that parents be included in reform efforts within each school, district, and state department of education. Local agencies are required to develop and implement parent involvement policies but establishing parent partnerships has proven difficult. Quoting their previous article, when the authors drew on the work of LoGerfo and Goddard (2008), the authors define parent responsibility as “a willingness to take action once they have constructed their role in the educational process and their efficacy beliefs have been developed (Curry & Adams, 2012, p. 222)” (p. 991). The construction of role comes from one’s personal experiences and the influence of others. Self-efficacy is defined by several researchers as what one believes regarding their skills and ability to effect change. Here we look at parents’ beliefs about their ability to effect educational outcomes for children.

Social forces influence our daily lives from our families or partners to our workplace and community. Curry and Adams surveyed over eighteen hundred fifth grade parents throughout three distributions of their survey. They used a Likert scale for efficacy questions and to determine a parent’s social network, and they used a method of *name generators* to count the number and type of people that parents

communicated with about their child's education. The goal of this study was to help advise educational leaders in building networks of parents which support parent involvement. The authors found that the parents surveyed had small groups of 2-3 parents which they interacted with over school issues. These limited contacts indicate that there was a limited sense of school community. The data show that relationships are stronger predictors of parent responsibility than their social background. The authors recommend that school leaders develop informal community building activities such as athletic events, family nights, and school socials that bring families together to build relationships with other parents. Curry and Adams recognize research in which middle class families have more resources such as social capital and time to collaborate, making them better able to organize and take collective action. Lower income families do not have these same resources. Educational leaders who help parents to bond and develop relationships can empower parents of underrepresented student populations. School leaders can create avenues for information sharing and decision-making and thus enhance parent responsibility. These actions bring up leadership training. Training must help school leaders build relationships between parents, not only partnerships between parents and schools. Expanding relationships and social networks go further than typical school-parent partnerships by enabling parents to be partners working in and outside schools. However, the authors note that there are few university courses available to school leaders to provide information on how to bring parents together to support each other and the school needs. These parent partnerships are what parent councils are based on.

Although the legislation discussed earlier required that the schools should include parents, there is no reference to empowering parents. School communities must support parents as a collective to be advocates and decision makers. Curry and Adams close with the idea that cultivating and building parent relationships under the school community umbrella and promoting parent responsibility and efficacy bring about empowerment.

Administrators have considerable power regarding the implementation of policy, and their attitudes towards parents is key. In her study of principals' perception of parental involvement, Richardson (2009) notes that administrators are open to parent involvement in typical areas of parent involvement such as fundraising, volunteering, or as field trip chaperones. However, Richardson reports, citing Chavkin and Williams (1987), administrators hinder parent involvement in governance, finance, and school policy. They do not create an environment that welcomes or supports parent engagement in those issues that affect systems change. Regardless of the beliefs of administrators, Richardson insists that it is their role to encourage and support high level of participation by parents. Like Auerbach (2010), Richardson demonstrates that some administrators are content with keeping parents in their place and not at higher levels of planning school improvement policies. Administrators with this restrictive mindset may be a key reason for the low rates of responses to the needs assessment surveys and the slow development of parent councils across the state.

The PACER Center in Minnesota has been a noteworthy clearinghouse and curator of specific parent support and engagement strategies and actions. There are



resources listed that have proven successful with assisting parents in understanding and participating in the special education services and practices affecting their children (PACER, 2018). PACER advises parents on behavior and strategies to improve communication between them and their child's schools. It advises parents of their rights and roles within the IEP process. PACER has been a resource to all parent centers throughout the states and PICDE uses their resources regularly to develop programs and information for Delaware parents. PACER is also a resource to schools and parents in the implementation of parent councils.

There are several well-thought-out and practical guides and manuals that support parent engagement and go beyond typical parent involvement into knowledge and processes that support parents' work in policy making and systems change. In the book *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, Epstein et al. (2009) provide comprehensive guidance for involving parents and training school personnel. Epstein et al. include detailed actions and strategies to help districts and charter schools move beyond the minimums of compliance with parent council legislation. The authors look at various types of parent engagement: *parenting*, *communicating*, *volunteering*, *learning at home*, *decision making*, and *collaborating with the community*. She and colleagues provide documentation for high-quality partnership programs to improve a broad range of student outcomes including academics and attendance (pp. 40-53). Epstein and her team help schools understand their families and utilize an array of activities that encourage and develop parents' skills in parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making,

and collaborating with the community. Compliance with the parent council legislation requires that districts broaden their ideas and commitment to student success.

Epstein's levels of parent engagement are scaffolded, starting with helping parents become better parents, who understand how they can help their children in school; at this level, data show improved attendance for students (p. 49). Moving up the engagement ladder to volunteering as a mentor, tutor, or coach, schools have utilized parent volunteers to improve reading skills (p. 71). Out of the six types of parent engagement, decision making and collaborating with the community are most relevant for parent councils. In decision making, the goal is to get parents on school committees. Under collaboration with community, parents liaise with community resources for the arts, health and well-being, and related agencies. To accomplish this work, Epstein recommends the development of an *effective action team for partnership*. The guidance provided can be adapted to suit various school or district needs for organizing the school community and influencing the greater community to improve outcomes for students.

Successful implementation of parent councils requires the will of the district or charter school to evaluate their school or district climate, gain understanding of the needs of the students and their families, select evidence-based practices that support parent learning and engagement, and plan how to implement them with fidelity. Ensuring these strategies would aid in the development of parent engagement at a level that enhances and builds upon parent knowledge to empower or ignite actions of advocacy through the IEP process and services. This type of parent support and

engagement at the district and state level can bring about systemic change for the benefit of children receiving special education services. These practices may benefit from the application of implementation science, which is introduced as a fourth question in this review.

**How do we pay for the education, information, and materials needed to develop and sustain the parent councils?**

I used *Policy studies for educational leaders: An introduction* by F. C. Fowler (2009) during my education policy course and was intrigued by the components of getting a policy in place. I found it eye-opening that there are a lot of politics and well-planned strategies in place to promote or reject policies. In Chapter 9, “Looking at Policies: Policy Instruments and Cost Effectiveness,” Fowler presents information very relevant to the policy development and funding for parent councils.

Fowler introduces us to Theodore Lowi, who identified three types of policies (Lowi, 1964; Lowi & Ginsberg, 1994):

- distributive
- regulatory
- redistributive

Distributive policy bestows gifts on citizens in the form of goods, services, or special privileges. These gifts come in the form of subsidies, contracts, and nonregulatory licenses. In education, we may see these as subsidies for free school lunches and block grants. Contracts may be conferred with textbook companies, and construction and transportation contractors. Nonregulatory licenses may include

parking permits for teachers and students and library cards for community members to use the school library.

Regulatory policy is defined as “formalized rules expressed in general terms and applied to a large group of people” (p. 241). Rules imply enforcement by the government and penalties for breaking them. Types of regulatory policies include regulatory licensing such as teacher and administrator certification, and laws, rules, regulations, and guidelines such as graduation requirements, compulsory attendance, school discipline codes and more. Regulatory policy creates regulatory politics, which causes community or social groups to battle over policy language and funding. Regulatory policy does not please all members of the group and conflicts are common.

Redistributive policy “shifts resources or power from one social group to another.” Governments use this to “control conduct by indirectly altering conditions of conduct or manipulating the environment” (p. 245). Redistributive policies include Social Security, which, contrary to common misconceptions, is neither insurance nor an annuity, since it is actually a redistribution of wealth through taxation. In education, redistributive policies include affirmative action, Title I (remedial programs for the poor), Title IX (for gender equity), and vouchers. Lowi notes that redistributive politics are very controversial and sometimes create difficult to resolve differences among the large groups affected.

Regarding school leadership, Lowi points out the need for school leaders to be vigilant on policy proposals and to learn to recognize the impact of policy. There may be obvious and hidden impacts that will make the policy difficult to implement.

Fowler also informs us of McDonnell and Elmore's (1987) Policy Instruments:

- mandate
- inducements
- capacity building
- system change

Mandates are “rules governing actions of individuals and agencies.” There are two parts, one is the language that spells out the required behavior for the specified group and the other outlines penalties for failure to comply. Compulsory attendance, with its rules and penalties, is a mandate.

Inducements are “the transfer of money (or in-kind grants) to individuals and agencies in return for the production of goods and services.” Inducements consist of money, services or in-kind materials, and guidelines on how they are to be used. Title I is an inducement, with funds available for use with specific populations of children.

Capacity building is defined as “the transfer of money for the purpose of investment in material, intellectual or human resources.” Schools may receive funding for professional development or more likely to fund a school improvement plan.

System change is defined as the “transfer of official authority among individuals and agencies.” This may involve the weakening of an authority on decision-making or a shift in resources. Often the authority shifts with the resources. An example of this is school vouchers.

These four policy instruments and Lowi's description of regulatory policy relate to the implementation and sustainment of parent councils. The parent council

policy in its present form is weak, in that it does not have specific guidelines for implementation and there is no funding mechanism attached to build capacity in parents to become strong advocates.

These authors and their expertise provide information, advice, and tried-and-true practices for building and funding effective policy. Strong parent council policy requires public support through education, funding, and supervision. The responsibility is on the schools and districts to reach out and provide bridges and means for parents to engage meaningfully in the school community. In our effort to develop strong and productive parent councils, with knowledgeable parent advocates, the next step may be to go back to the policy itself to define and strengthen its purpose and clarify funding mechanisms that will support the work necessary to be successful.

### **Implementation science: a framework worth exploring**

The prior questions on how to get parents involved, how to achieve compliance and support of parent councils by schools and districts, and how to fund parent councils center around effective implementation of the parent council policy. As we look at the status of parent councils in Delaware according to data from the needs assessment survey and follow up phone calls to districts and charter schools, we find that 13 out of 25 charter schools (52%) and 13 out of 19 school districts (68%) report having a parent council up and running. The districts and schools report a range of meeting frequency for their council from once per year to once per month during the school year. Parent attendance at these meetings ranges from zero to 25. This evidence demonstrates the lack of consistency in parent council implementation throughout the

state. Implementation science can offer a foundation that can guide the effort to fully develop and sustain parent councils.

Implementation science started in the medical field as a tool to train professionals to utilize known evidence-based practices (EBPs) in their daily routines and treatment plans. Implementation science has since taken off and is integrated across all disciplines, including education. EBPs set the standards for educational practices; however, consistent implementation of best practices is often lacking. Implementation science strives to make EBPs routine (Bauer, Damschroder, Hagedorn, Smith, & Kilbourne, 2015).

Education is an area where EBPs are difficult to implement consistently and effectively. EBPs in education are defined as “practices and programs shown by high-quality research to have meaningful effects on student outcomes” (Cook & Odom, 2013, p. 136). Cook and Odom outline the challenges in identifying EBPs in special education, considering factors such as what makes a quality study, how many studies support an EBP, what types of research designs are applicable, and what effects a practice must have to be considered an EBP. The authors emphasize that an EBP must not be a “one size fits all” for every student. Furthermore, an EBP will not positively support student outcomes if it is not properly implemented. Educators must be knowledgeable and discriminating about the practices they choose to improve outcomes for each student. The authors point out how the understanding by stakeholders (educators, administrators, parents) and their trust in the practices influence the uptake of knowledge on a prescribed practice and the fidelity with which

it is implemented. Implementation science is fundamental to understanding the landscape of systems change and how to implement the findings of empirical science. The expansion of the field of implementation science to help educators translate research knowledge into classroom practices requires more attention in teacher preparation programs. Looking at the application of implementation science in education shows that it can be applied to adult education and parent engagement, as well. Notably, the application and implementation of concepts and practices must consider the population they are intended for; adult education and parent training are two audiences of focus for parent councils.

Bertram, Blase, and Fixsen (2015) meet many of the challenges outlined above by attempting a practical guide to “the most current iteration of implementation constructs and frameworks in a well-accessed juried publication” (p. 478). Especially important, they say, are the “implementation components,” outlined by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) (Fixsen, Naoom, et al. (2005):

These intervention components include (a) model definition (who should be engaged, how, in what activities and phases of service delivery); (b) theory bases supporting those elements and activities; (c) the practice model’s theory of change (how those elements and activities create improved outcomes for the target population); (d) target population characteristics (behavioral, contextual, cultural, socioeconomic, and other factors that suggest a good match with the practice model); and (e) alternative models (a rationale for why the program therefore rejects using other practice models) (pp. 477-478).



Citing their previous article (2011), Bertram and Blase et al. assert that utilization of these frameworks is ideal when the “service organization must adjust its infrastructure” at the outset, making “practice-informed adjustments” until it meets full program implementation benchmarks. Lacking an “evidenced-based practice model,” administrators can at least assign responsibilities and “[record] these in a program manual” to benefit future administrators, yet they still need a unified “rationale” to avoid an “eclectic approach” (p. 478), which tends to be less robust, particularly following personnel changes.

Having described the implementation components, Bertram and Blase et al. highlight the tremendous value of a solid grounding in what implementation science describes as the “implementation stages” and “implementation drivers” (p. 479). The authors warn how implementation is a multi-year process entailing identified modifications. Specifically, the four stages of implementation are (1) exploration, evaluating the match between implementing organization and target population, resources, key elements, theory and feasibility, funding, staffing, and required systems changes, (2) installation, the reorganization and repurposing of organizational drivers (elaborated below), (3) partial implementation, characterized by coaching and problem solving, and (4) full implementation, when “implementation drivers are fully installed and easily accessible . . . , support fidelity, and are regularly reviewed” (p. 481).

The authors provide some elaboration on the three implementation drivers, which “establish the capacity to create practice, program, and systems-level changes needed to achieve improved population outcomes”:

- Competency drivers develop the competence and confidence of practitioners by attending to staff selection, training, coaching, and performance assessment (fidelity) (pp. 482-484).
- Organization drivers create a more hospitable administrative, funding, policy, and procedure environments to ensure that the competency drivers are accessible and effective as well as to ensure continuous quality monitoring and improvement with attention to population outcomes (pp. 484-486).
- Leadership drivers discriminate adaptive challenges from technical challenges to implementation (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997) (p. 484).

The authors provide detailed prescriptions on each of these implementation drivers.

The dissemination and regularization of implementation science, from the legislative halls to departmental administrators to principals to social service organizations like PICDE, could facilitate and expedite implementation of science-based practices centered on parent engagement. It might also help replace a culture of fragmented educational fiefdoms that resist change or rely on eclecticism with a robust culture of competence and confidence in progress. Ironically, all this implies an implementation framework for implementation science itself.

In his article “The Tie That Binds: Evidence-Based Practice, Implementation Science, and Outcomes for Children,” Odom (2009) situates implementation science

in a continuum of effective frameworks and provides a useful flowchart for those seeking to understand the basics of the approach.

Odom borrows from the popular magazine *Wired* to describe three tiers of approaches to EBPs for Children and Families

- Expired: based on “narrative” reviews, which are often not peer reviewed and contain little detail about how to use the practices in the classroom. While they may be based on “professional opinion,” they lacked “a systematic attempt to find the research base that supported the individual practice.” Odom suggests that such an approach characterizes “one-shot workshops,” for which, Odom claims, “[r]esearchers have repeatedly reported that teachers do not consistently use practices introduced” (p.540).
- Tired: “Ones to which professionals in the field have for years devoted time and energy . . . [but] gaps between research and practice continued to exist.” An example is Meta-analysis, an aggregation of the literature to “identify practices that produce the greatest effect sizes.” In brief, the method is tired because of “the lack of agreement about best way to compute effect sizes” and, like other approaches Odom discusses, it “usually [does] not provide detailed procedural information about the practices studie[d].” While evidence-based practices (EPBs) by themselves identify “the practices having scientific support,” they also lack “procedural details” (pp. 55-56).
- Wired: Odom identifies implementation science as the “hottest” of the three levels, although it is hampered by “varied definitions” of “implementation.”

Odom (in press) defines implementation “as a program delivered to and experienced by participants . . . and their families” (p. 56).

Odom’s flowchart is accompanied with clear descriptions of the various roles and process components found in implementation science. The “researcher/purveyor” (p.56) gathers research, outlines the processes, and sometimes creates materials. “Practitioner adaptation” (p. 57) refers to when those tasked with implementation adjust the processes to reflect their own circumstances (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), with an eye to the values of their community and support they can expect from administrators.

While implementors may adapt their process, they must be faithful to the “core” (p. 57) elements identified by the researchers. Odom addresses issues of time, resources, how well the teacher delivers lessons, and attendance, a variable often beyond the implementer’s control. Finally, Odom delineates various outcomes requiring measurement, such as child engagement, child outcomes, family outcomes, family differentiation, program acceptability, and program scope and reach.

Odom warns that the components of the flow chart are not enough for the application of implementation science, but require “enlightened professional development” (p. 58), a change from stand-alone single workshops or presentations. Enlightened professional development involves coaching and consultation, team building, communities of practice, online instruction, web-based videos, and interactive systems. Odom notes that implementation science (processes) is the tie that binds RBPs to positive outcomes for children.

In “Statewide Implementation of Evidence-Based Programs,” Fixsen, Blase, Metz, and Van Dyke (2013) assess the current state of “closing the ‘science-to-service gap’” (p. 213) and prescribe how implementation science should be utilized in statewide policies. Citing Greenhalgh et al. (2004), Fixsen et al. characterize many past and current approaches as either “letting it happen” or “helping it happen,” the former relying on the publication of findings alone, leaving the implementation to others, and the latter providing a modicum of guidebooks and workshops, but still falling short of “making it happen” (p. 214). Fixsen et al. underscore the need for funding, citing Clancy (2006) to report how funding by the National Institutes of Health was 99% for “developing new interventions” and only 1% “for their implementation” (p. 214).

The authors schematize various components in implementing EBPs, delineating external supports, executive management, and a category that includes the practitioners, the recipients, and—most importantly—an implementation team, those tasked with “making it happen” through their “special expertise regarding evidence-based programs” (p. 215). By communicating activities and results with executive management, this team empowers management to scale up implementation state-wide.

Introducing expertise in implementation science into any attempt at system change requires wide-ranging inputs, note Fixsen et al., such as “altering funding streams” and “modifying” diverse factors from “staff certification standards” to “union contracts” to “transportation and supply issues” (p. 217). The authors elaborate

on the complexities facing external supports and sketch out the stages of implementation covered by Bertram and Blase et al. (2014) above.

Fixsen et al. assign particular importance to clearly delineating the criteria for defining any particular program, and they provide an outline of such criteria that prescribes a clear description of the program, its scope, its essential functions, and a system of “performance assessment (fidelity)” (p. 219).

The authors urge the enhancement of “implementation capacity” in each state, managed and assessed by “competent implementation teams.” They acknowledge “the general lack of implementation capacity in state systems” (p. 220), and admit the difficulty in knowing how many implementation teams would be needed. This observation returns us to the issue of funding and the need for an implementation framework for implementation science itself.

Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) look at cognitive processes and implementation in their article “Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research.” They present work on policy adoption of standards-based education aimed at promoting rigorous and intellectually challenging learning for students. These standards came with what appeared to many local states and school districts as a top-down initiative. The authors look at how implementing agents (teachers and administrators) interpret and implement the policy through changes in their cognition and behavior and adapt new teaching strategies in line with standards-based instruction.

Spillane et al. ask how well implementing agents understand policy.

Accordingly, they examine the effects of knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards new information contained in the policy and posit a cognitive framework of information processing: prior knowledge, motivation, affect, social context, and social interaction, all of which influence sense making, which is key to understanding and behavior change with respect to new information.

The cognition framework includes three stages:

- Individual cognition looks at the individual as implementing agent and at their prior knowledge, beliefs, values and how these influence the processing of new information.
- Situated cognition looks at social context in which an idea or practice is presented and the influence the social context or community have on interpretation and sense making of ideas and practices.
- Representation demonstrates the influence of how ideas are presented to the learner or implementing agent. These are design issues that impact understanding and purpose of policy.

These stages present sense-making challenges in adopting policy changes.

They may be the focus of policy failure where there is discord between implementing agents and policy makers. The authors cite Werner (1980) and his natural premise that there “must be shared understanding among participants” (p. 391). Unfortunately, the implementing agents of Delaware’s parent councils have applied beliefs, expertise, knowledge, and values which in many cases have diverged from the intent of the

policy. The authors use the term policy evolution to describe this type of shift from policy intentions to individual interpretations.

Implementing agents may process the new ideas in the policy as something they are already familiar with and apply old knowledge, which degrades their fidelity to the new knowledge. Similarly, they may incorporate new knowledge into an existing framework, thus hampering the transformation of new knowledge and the activation of associated behavior changes. Implementing agents may also focus on superficial components of the policy or initiative, missing the important features and relationships. Biases, prior knowledge, emotions, values, and beliefs are all part of cognitive perspectives of the individual or group and influence understanding and application of a policy or practice. Successful implementation requires knowledge of the targeted audience, thorough planning for their understanding and interpretation, organization, and clear design to enable the implementing agent to follow and advance the principles of the policy with fidelity.

The cognitive model presents the many factors that influence learning and behavior change. The authors note that policy makers are only as effective as their ability to convince implementing agents to process new knowledge and apply it to the content and intent of the policy. Consideration of the cognitive processes in planning policy for system change is invaluable. This can be said about the delays experienced with the implementation of parent councils. The policy is vague and does not outline any standards for successful implementation.



The articles reviewed here on implementation science make a strong case for the kind of planning and training needed to effectively implement changes in people's mindset and behavior that favor the adoption of a positive change in one's practice or a complete system change. The steps, stages, and components presented provide ample resources to support effective implementation of valuable structures which support research-based practices in educational policy and practice. It is hoped that PICDE staff recognize how extensive the field is and how implementation science can assist them in their work with parents.

### **Summary**

The intention of this literature review was to present peer reviewed and practical articles and books that would help the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PICDE) become better prepared for whatever role it is given in the task of developing successful parent councils. I used the literature to respond to three broad questions raised from the needs-assessment survey responses:

- How do we get more parents involved?
- How do we get schools and districts to comply with the regulation (to implement parent councils?)
- How do we pay for the education, information, monitoring, and materials needed to develop and sustain the Parent councils?

These three questions and the readings chosen apply specifically to the goals of the paper and several strategies from PICDE's Strategic Plan (See Appendix Y) involving

increased parent outreach, retention of PICDE staff, the development of relevant materials, and partnerships to increase funding.

**ELP Goals:**

- Identify and implement professional development for PICDE staff based on parent council needs.
- Prepare materials to train and support parent councils based on the councils' expressed needs.
- Secure funding to meet the needs of parent councils.

**Professional development for PICDE staff**

The parent council policy states that districts and charter schools will contact the parents of children with disabilities each year “to attempt to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a parent council. Parent councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support for individuals and children.” PICDE’s goals are to reach out to targeted populations and increase capacity for families to participate in systems change. Reaching out to targeted populations, PICDE may benefit from the literature on inhibitors to parent involvement. Brookfield (2012) and Walker (2017) shed light on how to reach parents negatively affected by shame, cultural, socio economic, and parent efficacy issues that restrict parents from participating.

Kelly-Laine (1998), Morawska et al. (2014), Porrás-Heim (2003), Richardson (2009), and Ruffolo et al. (2006) present successful practices and strategies of school administrators and personnel who have improved parent involvement and engagement

in their schools. These authors can direct PICDE to resources available without reinventing the wheel; they promote building parent and professional communities based on mutual respect and the valuing by professionals of the knowledge and skills of the parents. Auerbach's (2007) assessment of the value parents can contribute from home may help PICDE staff and school personnel to better understand how parents contribute to their children's education.

The reluctance or resistance of school administrators and personnel to engage parents in higher levels of advocacy may be the most challenging in this system change initiative. However, the responsibility for training administrators to be inclusive and respectful of their parent population is not the responsibility of PICDE, although administrators, teachers, related services providers often attend PICDE events and workshops. Being aware of these barriers can help PICDE navigate these challenges and prepare information that may help open doors to school communities and change school cultures. Auerbach's (2010) continuum of administrators' perceptions and actions for parent partnerships, ranging from nominal to authentic, gives weight to the administrators' responsibility to self-evaluate their practices regarding parent involvement and their active support of parent engagement, equity, and social justice. Gardiner and Tenuto (2015) recommend support for administrators through university instruction on ethics and social justice in educational practices. Recognizing that there is resistance from school leaders and staff to assist parents in their effort to become knowledgeable advocates may require further support from the DOE.

## **Preparing high quality materials**

Preparing new materials such as relevant and informative short videos, workshops, and supporting information to be available online and in formal workshops or presentations will increase PICDE's presence within and outreach to parent/school communities. Each district and charter school will have different school populations and needs. Parents need and have requested more information on the IEP process and related services and information and training on how to organize themselves and run a parent council. The PACER Center (2018) and Epstein et al. (2009) are strong resources, which have already put into practice "how to" manuals and proven strategies to organize parents and provide education and resources to build parent capacity in all levels of parent engagement from basic volunteerism to policy making. Not only are they resources for PICDE staff development, but they also provide a foundation on which districts and charter schools can develop their specific mission for their parent council.

PICDE is utilizing social media and online resources to build parent capacity. These online sources enable parents to access valuable information at any time from their home. Curry and Adams (2014) note the value of expanding the network of parents. Technology and media networks can help parents connect over valuable learning opportunities that support their children. Further development of PICDE's use of Twitter and Facebook could be used to connect parents through functional and empowering information pertaining to their children's challenges.

**Securing funding for parent councils through strategic partnerships:**

Funding was completely overlooked in the parent council legislation. PICDE must continue to form partnerships with other advocacy groups, build parent networks, and create the critical mass needed to influence the Delaware legislature and funding mechanisms to provide adequate resources for successful implementation of parent councils. Fowler (2009) provides practical insights into funding. She demonstrates how policy language and funding at the federal level are split into two separate pieces of legislation.

PICDE and the DOE partner with higher education institutions throughout the state to improve and update administrator training. The work of Gardiner and Tenuto (2015) supports university instruction for administrators on ethics and social justice in educational practices, which include valuing and respecting parents. Building partnerships has been a strategy of PICDE, and their current strategic plan emphasizes developing new partnerships to better serve parents.

Utilizing the principles of implementation science (IS) underscores the development of professional development, instructional materials, capacity of staff, and individuals responsible for implementing policy and practices as they relate to parent councils. Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) discuss the roles of implementing agents and the influence they have on policy adoption. Spillane et al. look at the motivation, emotions, and related aspects that make sense of a policy and increase (or decrease) the likelihood that the policy will be implemented as intended. Bertram, Blase, and Fixsen (2015) provide clear guides to the processes and stages of

implementation science. The authors describe the roles of competency, organization, and leadership drivers. PICDE staff may take on the role of competency drivers to assist the school administration, staff, and parents in identifying the resources and elements needed to secure their parent council. Applying components of implementation science to school administrators, they are the organization drivers and hold immense power over implementation of practice and policy.

The work of the PACER Center (2018) and Epstein et al. (2009) are related to the ideology of implementation science in that they promote tried and tested strategies for parents, schools, and districts to use. They recognize that one size does not fit all, and they understand that one needs to know their school community (students and parents) before attempting to implement activities and strategies.

Fowler's research (2009), combined with lessons from implementation science, could mitigate the problems rising from poorly planned legislative initiatives. The challenges to implementing parent councils are the result of inadequate planning for effective implementation.

Implementation science is a comprehensive resource that PICDE and the DOE can utilize to develop the process and materials needed to form strong parent councils. The comprehensive steps and stages addressed in implementation science would bolster PICDE's or any state agency's effort to effectively implement valuable programs and initiatives.

The literature here provides an array of strategies and insights regarding parent engagement and the difficulties in implementing parent councils in Delaware. It is

hoped that this information will be useful to PICDE as they embark on ways to increase parent involvement and expand parent capacity into the realm of advocacy and policy making.

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## Appendix X

### POWERPOINT: PARENT COUNCIL: LET'S GET STARTED!


Slide 1



Thank you for taking the first steps to getting a parent council started in your school or district. Be patient and take time to work with school administrators and personnel to get everything you need to get started. If you are having difficulty contact the Parent Information Center for advice and support. PIC Main Office: 404 Larch Circle | Larch Corporate Center | Wilmington, DE 19804 Email: [picofdel@picofdel.org](mailto:picofdel@picofdel.org) | Tel: [\(302\) 999-7394](tel:(302)999-7394) or Toll free: [\(888\) 547-4412](tel:(888)547-4412)

## Slide 2

### The Parent Information Center of Delaware



Established more than 30 years ago, the Parent Information Center is a statewide non-profit organization that provides tools for parents, guardians, caregivers and advocates of children to secure appropriate education and related services. PIC empowers parents to become their child's lifelong advocate and for youth to become self advocates.

Our Mission: To advance effective parent engagement in education.

Our Vision: For all children to fulfill their potential to succeed.

The Parent Information Center of Delaware


Inform. Educate. Advocate

<https://picofdel.org/>

Background on PIC. PIC works with the Department of Education to help parent councils set up and be effective advocates.

## Slide 3

### Does your district or charter school have a Parent Council?



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Ask	Ask your district Superintendent or Special Education Director or charter school administrator if there is a functioning Parent Council.
Attend	If YES, attend the next meeting.
Read on	If NO, read on.

## Parent Councils established by Senate Bill 33 in June 2015



### 25.0 Parent Councils

- 25.1 Each school district and charter school enrolling any child with a disability shall, on an annual basis, contact the parents of each such child to attempt to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a Parent Council for the parents of students with disabilities.
- 25.2 Parent Councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support with individual parents and children.
- 25.3 Each school district and charter school shall collaborate and coordinate with existing parent groups and other information and support groups to facilitate creation, maintenance, and effectiveness of the Parent Councils.

This is a state regulation which made Parent Councils a law.

There is enough information and advice on organizing a Parent Council that can take 2-3 meetings to accomplish. It may feel overwhelming, but there are agencies to help you. Depending on the parents that come to the meeting and the urgency of their needs, support and advocacy are at the core of parent councils. As we know the first step in any problem solving is to be a good listener.

## What are the benefits of Parent Councils?

**Advocacy** – Learn to be advocates for your own child and other students with disabilities and how to provide person-to-person support to individual parents and children

**Outreach** – Invite families of students with disabilities to help them become involved in shaping local special education programs and policies.

**Positive Relationships** – Connect with teachers, child study teams, and community resources as sources of support to help improve programs and services. Establish shared goals and priorities that benefit students with disabilities.

**Collaborative problem solving** – Improve outcomes for students receiving special education services by sharing a common mission with team members that bring different perspectives.

**Systems Change** – Educate parents on advocacy principles and actions. Determine the needs of parents whose children receive special education services, inform school leaders about unmet needs, and work to resolve or change the system.

These are just a few of the ways parent councils can make the lives of students and their families better. Helping parents become knowledgeable advocates is the key purpose of parent councils.

Give parents the skills needed to be a contributing member of their child's education team.

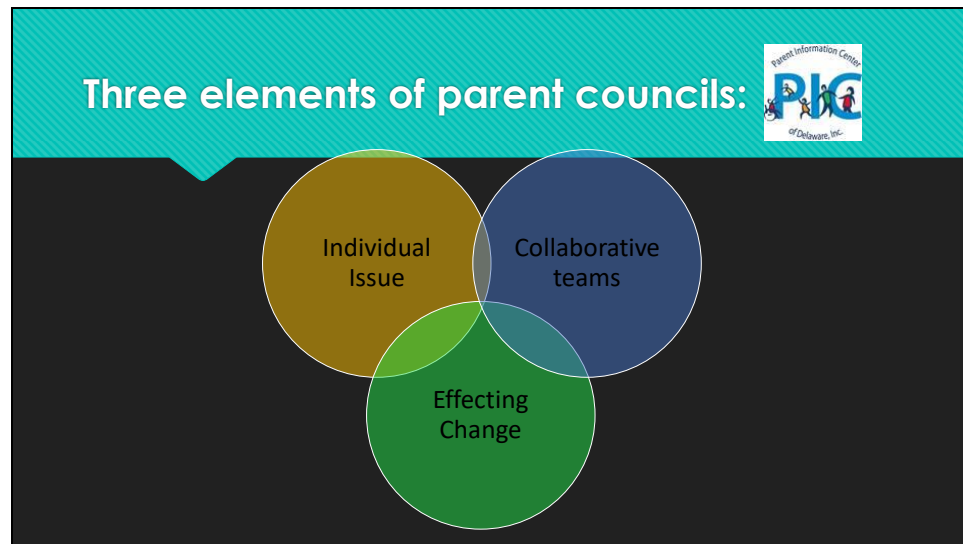
Help other parents grow their skills and knowledge to help their children.



## More benefits of Parent Councils

- **Trusted source of information** - Strengthen the bridge between the school and district families. Educate parents about school policies, channels of communication, information, support, and resources for their school.
- **Information sharing** - Provide an opportunity for districts to share information with all parents about instructional programs, professional development opportunities, and other matters related to special education.
- **Improved services and programs** - Advocate for changes and improvements to special education services, resources, and policies.
- **Effective resource allocation** - Provide valuable input regarding allocating resources, identifying and establishing priorities.

## Slide 7




It is important for parents to understand that they may be very concerned about an issue for their child that is personal. Individual issues will be part of the problem solving, advocacy, and support work of the parent council. An individual can join a collaborative team whether it is their child's Child Study Team or parent group to work as a collaborative team to effect change or bring about meaningful solutions. Understanding these components is important for parents to be able to work together.

### Examples of Parent Council elements in action:

- The individual issue – one child bullying at lunch – was reframed and validated as a systemic issue. The problem was larger than a single disruptive child – it reflected an unmet need for many.
- The Collaborative Team - A collaborative meeting environment encourages parents, school leaders, and community members to speak freely and work on problem solving respectfully and honestly.
- Effecting change - Parent advisors and school leaders used well-structured collaboration. Parents offer vital input and ideas. When the first solution is not viable, participants continue the conversation until the group agrees or has consensus a solution or plan of action.

These may help clarify how individual concerns may be affecting others and help the council organize school or district human resources to resolve problems. Who is the contact person for bullying? How does the council communicate verified or valid concerns to the district? What is the process, timeline for resolution?

### Invite Parents and School staff to a first Parent Council organization meeting.



- Contact the district or charter school office regarding your interest in starting a Parent Council.
- Ask how parents can be notified through district and charter school communication systems (email, post office, website, phone calls) to attend a start up meeting for a parent council.
- Work with administrator(s) to develop an invitation with the location, date, and time of a general organization and information meeting.
- Have letters and emails translated into the home language of parents.
- Inquire about funding for refreshments through the district or school budget.

Due to FERPA laws (Family Education Rights and Privacy Act) the school district will need to make the initial contacts with parents of children in special education programs and services. Once parents sign up, the parent council can then contact them directly.

Ask the administrator about funds for light refreshments for the meeting. Note that there will be the refreshments in the invitation. If the school can provide a light meal (pizza, sandwiches, wraps, etc.) that would be great.

## Meeting Preparation

- Reserve room with school district or community location.
- Ask for a phone connection and computer to assist with phone and/or video attendance by parents.
- Prepare sign in sheets with space for name, email, phone number, home address, and child's school
- Prepare a short survey so parents can write down their talents and skills as well as needs, expectations, and commitment to the Council. (see sample questions at the end of this PowerPoint)
- Have chart paper available to record suggestions and start a "wait List" or "parking lot" list of suggestions that will be looked at in future meetings.
- Have chart paper for Mission statement.

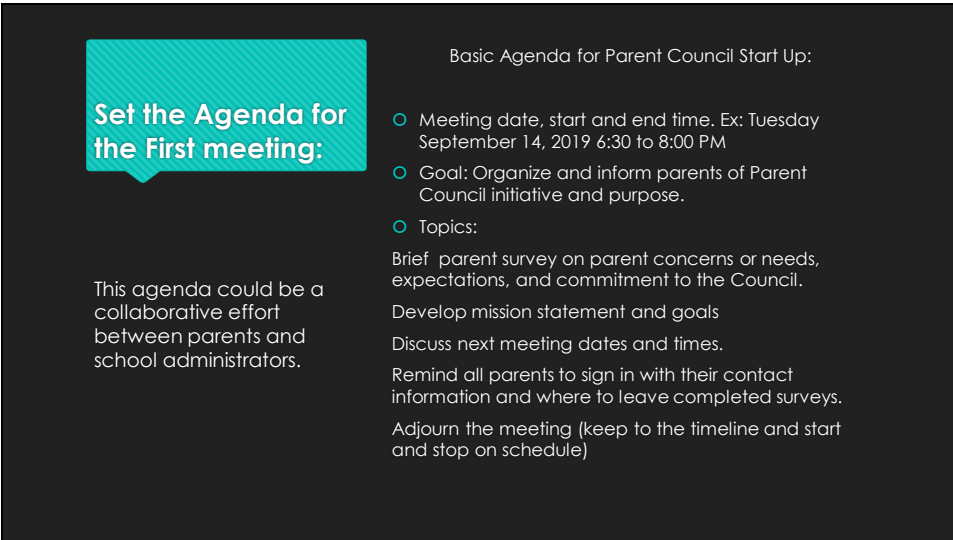


Schools and districts have online forms to request use of building space for a meeting. School secretaries should have copies of these forms or print one for you to request a room for the meeting. A large conference type room or any room with a phone that has an outside connection will work so parents can call in on the conference call number. See what parents need as far as video conferencing and you may be able to get help with this from the school or district technology department.

A sign in sheet can be just a notepad with these headings at the top: Name, phone number, email, child's school (Any other information that may be relevant)

Chart paper should be available from the school, just ask.

## Slide 11



**Set the Agenda for the First meeting:**

This agenda could be a collaborative effort between parents and school administrators.

**Basic Agenda for Parent Council Start Up:**

- Meeting date, start and end time. Ex: Tuesday September 14, 2019 6:30 to 8:00 PM
- Goal: Organize and inform parents of Parent Council initiative and purpose.
- Topics:
  - Brief parent survey on parent concerns or needs, expectations, and commitment to the Council.
  - Develop mission statement and goals
  - Discuss next meeting dates and times.
  - Remind all parents to sign in with their contact information and where to leave completed surveys.
  - Adjourn the meeting (keep to the timeline and start and stop on schedule)

This is a sample of what may be on your first agenda. You may want to allow a little time for a meet and greet, depending on your sense of the parents' needs. Formal meeting management can be found in "Roberts Rules" is a resource to help organize meetings and formalize the process of decision-making. The council may find it needs these rules of order so the council can function effectively. Here is an online resource: <http://www.rulesonline.com/rror-09.htm>

## Start up Expenses

Discuss and obtain assistance for these expenses with the district or charter school:


- Paper and postage for mailing list
- Translations of letter/invitation or email notifications
- Translator(s) at the meeting
- Snacks and/or beverages
- Child care
- Chart paper
- Microphone and computer presentation set up with projector.



The districts and charter schools have the task of supporting parent councils, these expenses should be understood and covered by the school or district.

## Outline for First General Meeting

- Prepare an agenda and send out 2-3 days before meeting.
- Have all attendees or online respondents sign in to the meeting with their current contact information (email, phone number, home address, child's school).
- Assign a parent or ask school personnel to take minutes.
- Inform attendees of state policy and purpose in the Parent Council Regulation. (use the slides from this PowerPoint)
- Inform attendees of the benefits of parent councils.
- Ask parents about their concerns or needs for the parent council.
- Ask for volunteers to assist with the start up of the council.
- If time develop mission and goals (these could wait to the next meeting) (Use the slides from this PowerPoint)
- Schedule next meeting date and time.
- Request space on school or district website to post summary/minutes of meeting and next meeting date and time.



A short survey questionnaire may allow all parents to respond and provide a copy of their name, interest, contact information etc.:

Sample survey questions:

What are your concerns or hopes for the parent council?

How can you help the mission of the parent council?

\_\_\_\_ Attend meetings

\_\_\_\_ Assist in planning meetings

\_\_\_\_ Serve on the Leadership Team

\_\_\_\_ Contact parents or be contacted by parents to provide support and information

\_\_\_\_ Other support (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_


To respond to this information, respondents must leave their name and contact information. Regarding concerns and hopes, these can set the next agenda after they have been read and tabulated.



### Parent Council Roles and Responsibilities

Work with other parents and the school representative(s) to develop roles and responsibilities.

Will there be a Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, Secretary?



Parent Councils are for parents and run by Parents.

Roles for Leadership Team

- Chairperson
- Co-Chairperson
- Secretary
- Treasurer (will be needed when/if any funds are designated to or collected by the Council)

These can be reviewed at the next meeting but give parents an idea of what they are committing to, for example one meeting per month involving 2-4 hours of time. Inform parents that it is their council and parents will run the mission and goals that are decided.



## Suggested Roles & Responsibilities

All Members	Parent Leadership Team Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Understand the function of the parent council</li><li>○ Identify the roles and responsibilities of members</li><li>○ Develop and maintain knowledge of regulations pertaining to the special education process.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Participate in outreach that extends to the larger community.</li><li>○ Record and distribute meeting minutes. Distribute information to families via a wide range of channels. Establish connections with school committees such as PTA/PTO and community resources.</li><li>○ Attend and offer oversight/participation for activities and events.</li><li>○ Explore meetings and events held in other districts.</li><li>○ Seek representation from other schools in the district and connect with other parent leaders.</li></ul>

More clarification of roles and responsibilities among members and leadership team.

## Parent Council Mission and Vision



**Mission:**  
The Mission Statement concentrates on the present; it defines the members, critical processes and it informs one about the desired level of performance.

**Vision:**  
The Vision Statement focuses on the future; it is a source of inspiration and motivation. Often it describes not just the future of the organization but the future of the society in which the organization hopes to effect change.

Mission and vision development can be done at the first or at later meetings, but they are key to let parents know what will be driving the Parent Council. Have copies of the Parent Council Regulation posted or in a hand-out. Ask parents to identify key words in the regulation that helps to define the Mission. The mission statement describes what an organization wants to do *now*, a vision statement outlines what they want to be in the *future*.



**Develop Parent Council Mission Statement**

**Vision Mission & Values**

**Mission Statement**  
A written declaration of an organization's core purpose and focus that normally remains unchanged over time.

- Review the legislation establishing Parent Councils
- Select key words that represent the purpose of the Parent Council
- Write the first "Draft" Mission statement.

Mission writing takes time and must be approved by council members. The mission is basically outlined in the legislation: advocate, support, assist parents and families of children receiving special education services. Be open to all parents, there are children who go undiagnosed and have difficulties with behavior management and other challenges. All parents can participate in the parent council.

## Goals and Objectives: Use key language from the law

### Parent Councils

- *Each school district and charter school enrolling any child with a disability shall, on an annual basis, contact the parents of each such child to attempt to facilitate the creation and maintenance of a Parent Council for the parents of students with disabilities.*
- *Parent Councils will advocate generally for students with disabilities and provide person-to-person support with individual parents and children.*
- *Each school district and charter school shall collaborate and coordinate with existing parent groups and other information and support groups to facilitate creation, maintenance, and effectiveness of the Parent Councils.*

### For example:

- Contact parents of children receiving special education services every year.
- Advocate for students with disabilities.
- Provide support to parents.
- Collaborate with school personnel to create and maintain an effective Parent Council

There may be one goal or focus for the parents in your council. Let that be the beginning project to improve upon or resolve. There are so many possibilities in the regulation that come under the terms of advocacy for students with disabilities and person to person support for individual parents and children, the council may have to prioritize issues and put some on the wait list.

## Meeting location and times

- Meeting times and locations may need to vary so that parents with different schedules can participate.
- Parents have asked to participate in meetings by phone or video conferencing. Securing phone lines or computers through the school would be very helpful.
- It is easy to set up free conference calls and all participants can call in from anywhere: Free Conference Call .Com
- <https://www.freeconferencecall.com/onenumber>

Parents want to be involved, be open to ideas for locations and times that allow the majority of parents to participate. Use a suggestion box or set up a blog so that parents can contribute if they can't attend meetings.

## Parent Council Resources

Make use of these offices and agencies as you develop questions for the parent councils function. All of these are responsible for helping Parent Councils.

- The Department of Education Special Services Office :

The Townsend Building  
401 Federal Street, Suite 2  
Dover, DE 19901-3639 Phone: 302-735-4000  
<https://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/2297>


- Your School District Superintendent office

- The Charter School Network  
100 W 10th St #308, Wilmington, DE 19801  
**Phone:** (302) 778-5999 <http://decharternetwork.org/>

- Parent Information Center of Delaware:  
404 Larch Circle, Wilmington, DE 19804  
Email: [picofdel@picofdel.org](mailto:picofdel@picofdel.org) Tel: (302) 999-7394  
Toll free: (888) 547-4412

You can start with your child's school principal when trying to organize parents. If you need more support contact one of these agencies.

## Resources



- Business Dictionary (2018) WebFinance Inc.  
<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/mission-statement.html>
- Google Dictionary (2018)  
<https://www.google.com/search?q=mission+statement&oq=mission+statement&aqs=chrome..69l57j0l5.8739j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>
- How to write a mission statement  
[https://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Write%20a%20Mission%20State  
ment.pdf](https://www.tgci.com/sites/default/files/pdf/How%20to%20Write%20a%20Mission%20Statement.pdf)

These resources offer more information on organizing a meeting and writing a mission and vision statement. There are many resources like this, use what is most helpful and ask for help from PIC staff.



## Resources



- A Step-by-Step Exercise for Creating a Mission Statement(2016)  
<http://www.jeffersonawards.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Mission-Statement-Exercise.pdf>
- "Mission Statement vs Vision Statement." *Diffen.com*. Diffen LLC, n.d. Web. 11 Jul 2018.< [https://www.diffen.com/difference/Mission\\_Statement\\_vs\\_Vision\\_Statement](https://www.diffen.com/difference/Mission_Statement_vs_Vision_Statement) >
- Roberts Rules Online: Rules Online.com (2013) <http://www.rulesonline.com/rror-10.htm>

## Appendix Y PICDE STRATEGIC PLAN



# 2018-2020 PIC Strategic Plan



## **Appendix Z**

### **ACRONYM LIST**

**Updated February 2014**

The following list of acronyms was compiled by GACEC members and staff to assist members and visitors in developing a better understanding of discussions at GACEC meetings. We apologize in advance for inadvertently leaving out any relevant terms or agencies. Please feel free to submit suggestions to the GACEC office.

ACEIHL	Advisory Committee on Education of Individuals with Hearing Loss
AAB	Architectural Accessibility Board
AAP	American Academy of Pediatrics
AAR	Adult Abuse Registry
AARP	American Association of Retired Persons
ABCD	Assuring Better Child Health and Development Program
ABI	Acquired Brain Injury
AC	Augmentative Communication
ACA	Affordable Care Act
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADA	American Dental Association
ADRC	Aging and Disability Resource Center
ADD	Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
ADL	Activities of Daily Living
AFP	Alliance for Full Participation
AGEC	Access to the General Education Curriculum subcommittee
AHRQ	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality
AI	Autistic Impaired
AI DuPont	A.I. DuPont Children's Hospital
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

AL	Assisted Living
ALS	Adult Life Skills
AMI	Area Median Income
AMSES	Administrative Manual of Special Education Services
ANCDRP	Abuse/Neglect Child Death Review Panel
APE	Adapted Physical Education
APR	Annual Performance Report
APRN	Advanced Practice Registered Nurse
APS	Adult Protective Services (Division of Aging)
ARC/DE	For People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (formerly Association for the Rights of Citizens with Mental Retardation)
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
ASDC	American Society for Deaf Children/DE Chapter
ASD	Autism Society of Delaware
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
ASHA	American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
ASL	American Sign Language
ASQ	Ages and Stages
ASQ-SE	Ages and Stages – Social Emotional
AT	Assistive Technology
AU	Autism
AVT	Auditory-Verbal Therapy
AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress (NCLB)
BD	Behavior Disorder
BEH	Behaviorally/Emotionally Handicapped
BH	Behaviorally Handicapped
BIE	Business, Industry and Education Alliance
BIP	Behavior Intervention Plan
BMC	Behavior Management Committee
BSNPTA	Brandywine Special Needs Parent Teacher Association
CAC	Community Advisory Council (University of Delaware)
CAN Coordinator	Children and Youth Action Network (Council for Exceptional Children)
CAP	Client Assistance Program
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
CAS	Comprehensive Assessment System

CASA	Court Appointed Special Advocate
CCCD	Coordinating Council for Children with Disabilities
CCCP	Community Continuum of Care Program
CCDF	Child Care and Development Fund
CCMS	Comprehensive Compliance Monitoring System (Education)
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDNDSB	Child Death, Near Death and Stillbirth Commission & Work Group
CDS	Center for Disabilities Studies (University of Delaware)
CEC	Council for Exceptional Children
CERTS	Collaborative Efforts to Reinforce Transition Success
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
ChADD	Children with Attention Deficit Disorder (national, county groups in DE)
CHINS	Children in Need of Services
CHIP	Children's Health Insurance Program
CIS	Child Indicators Subgroup
CLASI	Community Legal Aid Society, Inc.
CLSC	Career and Life Studies Certificate (UD)
CM	Case Manager
CMS	Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
CNA	Certified Nursing Assistant
CODHHE	Council on Deaf and Hard of Hearing Equality
COPM	Coordinator of Planning and Monitoring
COTA	Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant
COWG	Child Outcomes Work Group
CP	Cerebral Palsy
CPS	Child Protective Services
CQSE	Center for Quality Special Education
CSBS-DP	Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales – Developmental Profile
CSCR	Children's Services Cost Recovery Project
CSPD	Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (Education)
CIT	Crisis Intervention Training
CSHCN	Children with Special Healthcare Needs
CST	Child Study Team

CTQ	The National Center for Improving Teacher Quality or Delaware's Collaborative for Teacher Quality
CYAAC	Center for Youth and Adults with Conditions of Childhood
CYSHCN	Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs
DAAD	Diploma-At-A-Distance
DAAP	Delaware Alternate Assessment Program
DADB	Delaware Association for Deaf/Blind
DACCVE	Delaware Advisory Council on Career and Vocational Education
DAPA	Delaware Alternate Portfolio Assessment
DART	Delaware Authority Rapid Transit (formerly DAST)
DASAG	Delaware Aspergers Support and Advocacy Group
DATI	Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative
DB	Deaf/Blind
DBLN	Delaware Business Leadership Network
DCAS	Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System
DCDAL	Delaware Center for Distance Adult Learning
DCDT	Division of Career Development and Transition
DCF	Department of Children and Families
DCMHS	Division of Child Mental Health Services
DCPS	Division of Child Protective Services
DD	Developmental Disability
DDC	Developmental Disabilities Council
DDDS	Division of Developmental Disabilities Services (formerly DMR)
DEAP	Disability Education and Awareness Program
DELARF	Delaware Association of Rehabilitation Facilities
DeIDOT	Delaware Department of Transportation
DEMA	Delaware Emergency Management Agency
DEPTA	Delaware Parent Teacher Association
DESS	Delaware Education Support System
DFRC	Delaware Foundation Reaching Citizens with Intellectual Disabilities
DFS	Division of Family Services
DFV	Delaware Family Voices
DHC	Delaware Housing Coalition
DHCI	Delaware Hospital for the Chronically Ill
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services, U.S.
DHIN	Delaware Health Information Network

DHMIC	Delaware Healthy Mother and Infant Consortium
DHSS	Department of Health and Social Services
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DIAA	Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association
DIDER	Delaware Institute for Dental Education and Research
DIMER	Delaware Institute of Medical Education and Research
DLP	Disabilities Law Program
DLTCRP	Division of Long Term Care Residents Protection
DMAP	Delaware Medical Assistance Program
DME	Durable Medical Equipment
DMMA	Division of Medicaid and Medicare Assistance
DMR	Division of Mental Retardation (Changed to DDDS)
DMS IV	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Retardation (4 <sup>th</sup> Edition Revised)
DMV	Department of Motor Vehicles
DNASW	Delaware National Association of Social Workers
DNG	Did Not Go (policy Paratransit language)
DNREC	Department of Natural Resources & Environmental Control
DOC	Department of Corrections
DOE	Department of Education
DOL	Department of Labor
DPAP	Delaware Prescription Assistance Program
DPAS	Delaware Performance Appraisal System
DPBHS	Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health Services
DPC	Delaware Psychiatric Center
DPCI	Delaware Physicians Care Insurance
DPH	Division of Public Health
DPI	Delaware Passport to Independence
D-PIP	Developmental Surveillance and Screening Policy Implementation Project
DPS	Data and Programming Subgroup
DRA	Deficit Reduction Act
D-RTI	DOE Response to Intervention Taskforce
DREDF	Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund
DSAAPD	Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities (DHSS)
DSAMH	Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DHSS)
DSBA	Delaware School Boards Association
DSCYF	Division of Services for Children, Youth and their Families

DSDS	Delaware State Dental Society
DSEA	Delaware State Education Association
DSHA	Delaware Speech-Language-Hearing Association
DSHA	Delaware State Housing Authority
DSHP	Diamond State Health Plan
DSHS	Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security
DSIP	Delaware State Implementation Project on Preventing Secondary Conditions and Promoting Health for People with Disabilities (formerly Healthy Delawareans 2010)
DSNA	Delaware School Nurses Association
DSPAC	Delaware State Parent Advisory Committee
DSS	Division of Social Services
DSTP	Delaware Student Testing Program
DSTW	Delaware State Transition Website
DTC	Delaware Transit Corporation
DTI	Delaware Department of Technology and Information
DUR	Drug Utilization Review
DVI	Division for the Visually Impaired (DHSS)
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DOL)
DWIB	Delaware Workforce Investment Board
DYLI	Delaware Youth Leadership Initiative
DYRS	Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services
Early CHOICES	Children Having Opportunities in the Continuum of Educational Services in early intervention programs
E/BD	Emotional/Behavioral Disorder
ECAP	Early Childhood Assistance Program
ECCS	Early Childhood Comprehensive System
ECSA	Early Childhood Screening Assessment (Rhode Island)
ECT	Exceptional Children Team (DOE)
ED	Educational Diagnostician
ED	Emotional Disturbance
EDTAC	Elderly and Disabled Transit Advisory Committee
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
EFI	Employment First Initiative
EFOC	Employment First Oversight Commission
EH	Emotional Handicap



EHA	Education of the Handicapped Act (P.L. 42-142)
EHLR	Education of the Handicapped Law in Review (now IDEALR)
EIC	Education Improvement Commission
EI	Early Intervention
EI	Emotionally Impaired
ELF	Early Learning Foundation
ELL	English Language Learners
ELP	Essential Lifestyle Plan (DDDS)
EMD	Educable Mentally Disabled (IQ 50-70), formerly EMH
EMI	Educable Mentally Impaired
EMR	Electronic Medical Records
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EPPC	Educational Planning and Placement Committee
EPSDT	Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment
ESD	Extended School Day
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	Educational Surrogate Parent program
ESR	Employability Skills Rating
ESSE	Early Start to Supported Employment
ESY	Extended School Year (special education program)
FACES	Family Advocacy and Child Educational Services (DSD)
FACT	Families and Communities Together
FAPE	Free Appropriate Public Education
FAS	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
FBA	Functional Behavioral Assessment
FBABSP	Functional Behavior Assessment Behavioral Support Plan
FCCLA	Family, Career and Community Leaders of America
FCRB	Foster Care Review Board
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FLA	Family Leadership Academy
FLAC	Family Leadership Advisory Council
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FPL	Federal Poverty Level
FQHC	Fully Qualified Health Care Center
FSP	Family Support Plan
FTA	Federal Transit Administration

FTE	Full Time Equivalent
G-T	Gifted and Talented (Children with Outstanding Talents now used)
GACEC	Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens
GACAAPD	Governor's Advisory Council on Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GCCBAID	Governor's Commission on Community-Based Alternatives for Individuals with Disabilities (Now GCBACS)
GCBACS	Governor's Commission on Building Access to Community-Based Services
GED	General Education Diploma
GBHC	Governor Bacon Health Center
GIC	Government Information Center
GSEG	General Supervision and Enhancement Grant
HB	House Bill
HBCU	Historically Black College or University
HCBS	Home and Community Based Services
HCC	Health Care Commission
HCCA/CCHP	Health Child Care America/Child Care and Health Partnership
HCR	House Concurrent Resolution
HEU	High End User program
HHPD	Hard of Hearing/Partial Deafness
HI	Hearing Impaired
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
HLADE	Hearing Loss Association of Delaware
HMO	Health Management Organization
HO	Hearing Officer
HOPWA	Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS
HOUSSE	Highly Objective State Standards for Educators
HRC	Human Rights Committee
IADL	Instrumental Activities of Daily Living
IAES	Interim Alternative Educational Setting
IBSER	Intensive Behavioral Support and Educational Residences

ICAP	Inventory for Client and Agency Planning
ICAS	Inclusive Comprehensive Assessment System
ICC	Interagency Coordinating Council (Infants and Toddlers)
ICCF	Interagency Council for Children and Families (state and county)
ICT	Interagency Collaborative Treatment Team (Unique Alternatives)
ICF/MR	Intermediate Care Facility for persons with Mental Retardation
ID/DD	Intellectual Disabilities/Developmental Disabilities
IDA	Individual Development Account
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (successor to P.L. 94-142)
IDEALR	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Law Review
IDEIA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Improve Act of 2004
IED	Intermittent Explosive Disorder
IEE	Independent Educational Evaluation
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
IFSP	Individualized Family Service Plan
IHCAP	Independent Health Care Appeals Program
IIP	Individual Improvement Plan
ILC	Intensive Learning Center
ILI	Independent Living, Incorporated
IOP	Intensive Outpatient program
IPE	Individualized Plan for Employment
IPPSE	Institute for Problem Prevention in Special Education
IPRD	Identification, Placement, Review, Dismissal – process for Special Education classification and determination of eligibility for services, conducted on a Local School District level.
IQ	Intelligence Quotient (test)
IRI	Independent Resources, Incorporated
IRMC	Interagency Resource Management Committee
ISD	Intermediate School District

ISI	Inclusive Schools Initiative
ISIS	Integrated Services Information System
ISP	Individualized Service Plan
IST	Instructional Support Team
IT	Information Technology
ITP	Individualized Transition Plan
IVR	Interactive Voice Recognition
JCAHO	Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
JFC	Joint Finance Committee
KSI	Kent-Sussex Industries
LD	Learning Disabled
LCCE	Life Centered Career Education
LEA	Local Educational Agency
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LIHTC	Low Income Housing Tax Credits
LOF	Letter of Finding
LOP	Local Operational Plan
LRE	Least Restrictive Environment
LSLS	Listening and Spoken Language Specialists
MA	Medical Administrator
MA	Mental Age
MAP	Measures of Academic Progress assessment
MBI	Medicaid Buy In
M-CHAT	Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers
MCHB	Maternal and Child Health Bureau
MCO	Managed Care Organization
MDA	Multi-Disciplinary Assessment
MDT	Multi-Disciplinary Team
MEANS	Making Employment a New Success for Delawareans
MFCU	Medicaid Fraud Control Unit
MFP	Money Follows the Person
MH	Mental Handicap
MI	Mental Illness
MiCASSA	Medicaid Community-Based Attendant Services and Supports Act
MIG	Medicaid Infrastructure Grant
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MR	Mental Retardation (now replaced by Cognitive Disability)

MSD	Medical Society of Delaware
MSW	Master's in social work
NAECS/SDE	National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Ed.
NAEP	National Center for Education Statistics
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAMI-DE	National Alliance for Mental Illness-DE Chapter
NASBE	National Association of State Boards of Education
NASDSE	National Association of State Directors of Special Education
NASDTEC	National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification
NCSET	National Center on Secondary Education and Transition
NCATE	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education
NCC-PA	New Castle County Pediatric Association
NCCVT	New Castle County Vo-Tech
NCQA	National Center for Quality Assurance
NDCCD	National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)
NDRN	National Disability Rights Network
NGA	National Governor's Association
NICHCY	National Information Center for Children and Youth with disabilities (now National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities)
NIMAS	National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard
NCLB	No Child Left Behind (federal legislation)
NP	Nurse Practitioner
NPA	Nurse Practices Act
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
NSTTAC	National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center
NTICCHC	National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants
NYMAC	New York Merger, Acquisition and Collaboration Fund
OAASIS	Organization of Adult Alumni and Students in Service
OCR	Office of Civil Rights (federal office)
OCD	Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
ODD	Oppositional Defiance Disorder
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
OH	Orthopedically Handicapped
OHI	Other Health Impaired

OSEP	Office of Special Education Programs (U.S. Dept. of Education)
OSERS	Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (U.S.DOE)
OT	Occupational Therapist/Therapy
P&A	Protection and Advocacy
PA	Physician's Assistant
P&T	Pharmaceutical and Therapeutic
PAC	Parent Advisory Committee (districts)
PABSS	Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security
PAAT	Protection and Advocacy for Assistive Technology
PADD	Protection and Advocacy for persons with Developmental Disabilities
PAIMI	Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness
PAIR	Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (program of CLASI)
Part B	P.L. 99-142, section which authorizes assistance for the education of all children with disabilities or FAPE
Part C	P.L. 99-457, section which authorizes Early Intervention Programs for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (formerly Part H)
PAS	Personal Assistant Services
PAS	Play Assessment Scale
PASARR	Preadmission Screening and Annual Resident Reviews
PAT	Parents as Teachers
PATBI	Protection and Advocacy for Traumatic Brain Injury
PBS	Positive Behavioral Supports
PC (Personnel Ctr)	National Center for Special Education Personnel & Related Service Providers
PCA	Personal Care Attendant
PCCD	Partners Council for Children with Disabilities
PCMH	Patient-Centered Medical Home
PCP	Primary Care Provider
PD	Professional Development
PDD-NOS	Pervasive Developmental Disorder— Not Otherwise Specified
PDL	Preferred Drug List
PE	Physical Education

PEDS	Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status
PEEC	Parent Early Education Center
PI	Physically Impaired
PIC	Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc.
PLEP (PLP)	Present Level of Educational Performance (Present Level of Performance)
POC	Point of Contact
POHI	Physically and Otherwise Health Impaired
POMS	Programs Operations Manual System (SSA)
PPEC	Prescribed Pediatric Extended Care
PSC	Pediatric Symptom Checklist
PT	Physical Therapist/Therapy
PWD	Person with a Disability
QRMP	Qualified Mental Retardation Professional
RAS	Reporting and Assessment Subgroup
REAL Program/CDS	Recreation Enhancement and Learning Program
RFP	Request for Proposals
RID	Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (National)
RN	Registered Nurse
ROI	Return on Investment
RPC	Regional Placement Committee (DDDS)
RS	Related Services
RSI	Residential Services Indicator (DDDS)
RTC	Residential Treatment Center
RtI	Response to Intervention
SAMSHA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SAS	Supplement Aids and Services
SB	Senate Bill
SCAT	Senior Citizen Affordable Tax
SCC	Statewide Curriculum Cadre
SCPD	State Council for Persons with Disabilities
SCQ	Social Communication Questionnaire
SCR	Senate Concurrent Resolution
SE	Special Education
Section 504	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
SEA	State Educational Agency
SED	Severely Emotionally Disturbed
SEED	Student Excellence Equals Degree scholarship program

SEEDS	Special Education Effectiveness Development System
SEM	Social/Emotionally Maladjusted
SES	Special Education Services
SGIM (DE)	Society of General Internal Medicine
SHCN	Special Health Care Need
SHHH	Self Help for Hard of Hearing People of Delaware, Inc
SIB	Self-Injurious Behavior
SIG	State Improvement Grant
SIP	State Improvement Plan for Special Education
SLD	Specific Learning Disability
SLI	Speech and Language Impaired
SLP	Speech Language Pathologist
SLPA	Speech Language Pathologist Assistant
SMH	Severe Mental Handicap (IQ below 35)
SMD	Significant Multiple Disabilities
SMI	Severely Mentally Impaired
SPARC	Special Education Partnership for the Amicable Resolution of Conflict
Special Ed.	Special Education (sometimes written as "Sped" or "Spec. Ed.")
SPP	State Performance Plan
SRAC	State Rehabilitation Advisory Council
SRAP	State Rental Assistance Program
SREB	Southern Regional Education Board
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SSP	Student Success Plan
ST	Speech Therapy/Therapist
STEPS	Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools
STOMP	Specialized Training of Military Parents
SWD	Student with a Disability
SXI	Severely Multiply Impaired
TA	Technical Assistance
TAG	The Association for Gifted, or Talented and Gifted Program
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families



TASH	The Association for Severely Handicapped (national group)
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury
TC	Transition Coordinator
TDD	Telecommunications Device for the Deaf
TEACCH	Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication Handicapped Children
TEAM Act	Transitioning towards Excellence Achievement and Mobility Act
TEEM	Transition Education Employment Model
TMH	Trainable Mentally Handicapped (IQ of 35-50)
TPR	Termination of Parental Rights
TPSID	Transition and Post-Secondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disabilities
TQM	Total Quality Management
TTY	Teletype or Teletypewriter
TWIA	Ticket to Work Incentive Act
UBD	Understanding By Design
UCP	United Cerebral Palsy
UD	University of Delaware
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
USBLN	United State Business Leadership Network
VCAP	Victim Compensation Assistance Program
VI	Visually Impaired
Vo-Tech	Vocational-Technical School or Program
VE	Vocational Education
VR	Vocational Rehabilitation
VRTF	Delaware Victims' Rights Task Force
WISC	Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children
YRS	Youth Rehabilitative Services (DSCYF)

## Appendix AA

### TOOLS FOR CHANGE WORKSHEET

#### Tools for Change: Group Reflection Sheet

List possible topics for discussion for parent council meeting	Individual? (address through IEP)	Systemic? (affects most/all students)	What are some ways that this issue can be addressed/resolved?

## **Appendix BB**

### **COMMON TERMINOLOGY RELATED TO SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Age of Majority – The age when a child is legally considered an adult - in Delaware that age is 18. Under the IDEA, at least one year before a student reaches the age of majority, the student’s IEP must include a statement that the student has been informed of his or her rights and that the rights will transfer (from the parent) to the student on reaching the age of majority. Parents must also be notified that all rights will transfer to their youth.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) – A plan that is developed based on data or information gathered about a child’s behavior (from a Functional Behavioral Assessment). The BIP should include positive strategies or interventions, program or curriculum modifications and supplementary aids and supports necessary to effectively change or modify disruptive or maladaptive behaviors.

Case-by-case determination – School personnel may consider any unique circumstances on a case-by-case basis in determining whether a change of educational placement is appropriate for a child with a disability who violates the school code of conduct. School authorities may only exercise their discretion on a case-by-case basis to allow removals for unique circumstances if other disciplinary procedures have been satisfied.

Charter School – School that receives public money and develops a formal agreement or “charter” with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) or specific school district. The “charter,” includes a description of how the charter school

will be held accountable for improving student performance and achieving the goals of the charter. Charter schools in Delaware must adhere to the mandates set forth under the IDEA.

Child Development Watch (CDW) – Delaware’s statewide early intervention program for children ages Birth to Three. CDW provides services that promote growth and development for infants and toddlers with, or at risk for disabilities or developmental delays.

Child with a disability – A child evaluated under the IDEA and determined to be eligible for special education and related services because of having a disability that adversely affects the child’s educational performance.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) – Set of shared goals around the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn in English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics at each grade level. The CCSS were created with the intention of preparing children for higher education and competitive careers.

Delaware System of Student Assessments (DeSSA) – The former DE Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) has undergone changes and is now called DeSSA. The “Smarter Assessments” are the tools being used to measure individual student’s understanding of Common Core State Standards. More info visit DelExcells [www.delexcells.org](http://www.delexcells.org) and <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/assessment/>.

Disability Classification – Classification selected by IEP team when team determines that child is eligible for special education and related services. Classifications: Autism, Deaf-Blindness, Developmental Delay, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Learning Disability, Intellectual Disability, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Speech and/or Language

Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment and Preschool Speech Delay (for 3 and 4 year olds only).

Due Process Hearing – A legal process for resolving a disagreement between parents and a school concerning any aspect of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) guaranteed children with disabilities under the IDEA.

Early Intervening Services – School districts may use up to 15% of their allotted special education funds to provide targeted services to children who may be at risk of being referred for special education services. These are children who are having learning difficulties and may need additional academic and behavioral support to succeed in school.

Early Intervention Services – Early intervention services are designed to identify and meet a child's needs in five developmental areas (hearing, seeing, talking, moving, or learning). In Delaware, Child Development Watch provides screenings, evaluations, assessments, services, coordination and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) development.

Educational Diagnostician (ED) – School personnel who often facilitates an IEP meeting and might evaluate a child's academic ability, personality, behavioral factors and ability to process information.

Educational Evaluation – Formal and informal assessments and observation data collected and analyzed to determine if a child has a disability per the IDEA. An educational evaluation is conducted to determine if a child is eligible for special education and related services.

Educational Surrogate Parent (ESP) – A person appointed by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) to represent a child in foster care, who receives, or

may need, special education and related services. The ESP is to be included in all educational decision making pertaining to special education and related services when a parent is unavailable or unable to do so. ESPs receive training and support from Parent Information Center.

Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) – A report that documents educational evaluations and eligibility decisions. This document guides the eligibility discussion and parents are entitled to receive a copy of this document.

Extended School Year Services (ESY) – Special education and related services that are provided to a child with a disability beyond the normal school year and in accordance with the child's IEP. Using criteria described in the IDEA, the IEP team determines whether a child qualifies for such services.

Facilitated IEP Meeting – A process whereby a trained neutral third party facilitator is used to improve collaboration between parents and IEP teams. A facilitator helps keep IEP team members focused on the development of the IEP while addressing conflicts and disagreements that may arise during the meeting. More information <http://www.ipa.udel.edu/crp/iepmgtfacilitation.html>

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) – Provision of special education, related services, special aids and services to eligible children with disabilities as per the IDEA.

Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) – A process using interviews, rating scales and direct observations to determine and analyze the cause or function of a behavior and its antecedents and consequences, before developing interventions or strategies to address the behavior.

Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) – An evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the school district responsible for the education of the child. A parent has the right to one independent evaluation at no cost each time the school conducts an evaluation with which the parent disagrees.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) – A document developed and written by a team that describes the special education, related services, modifications, accommodations and supplementary aids and services for a child age 3-21 who is eligible to receive a FAPE per the IDEA.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) – A plan developed and written by a parent and a team for a child aged Birth-to-Three. The IFSP puts into writing the child's strengths and needs, family priorities, and the goals the parent would like to achieve. It outlines the early intervention services to be delivered to the family and child.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) – The federal law that mandates a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and early intervention services to eligible children with disabilities from Birth to age 21 – commonly referred to as “special education” services.

Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) – School personnel may remove a student to an appropriate Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) for disciplinary reasons, the length of stay depending on the disciplinary action. The child's IEP team determines the IAES for services.

Manifestation Determination – When a child with a disability violates the school code of conduct that results in a change in placement, a manifestation determination must be conducted (within 10 school days of the change of placement)

by relevant IEP team members and the parent. This review of information is to determine if the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the child's disability, or whether the conduct is the direct result of the school's failure to implement the child's IEP.

Mediation – A voluntary process conducted by a trained third party to help parents and school districts solve problems about a child's provision for special education and related services together in a safe, productive and neutral environment. If the mediation results in a written agreement, that agreement is legally binding for the school/district. More information <http://www.ipa.udel.edu/crp/sparc.html>

Parent – An IDEA parent is defined as: a biological or adoptive parent of a child; a guardian appointed by the court; an individual acting in the place of a biological or adoptive parent (including a grandparent, stepparent or other relative with whom the child lives and for whom a Relative Caregiver's School Authorization form is on file); an individual who is otherwise legally responsible for the child's welfare; or an Educational Surrogate Parent (ESP) appointed by the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE).

Parent Centers – Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) are funded by the U.S. Department of Education under the IDEA. PTIs and CPRCs in each state provide training and information to parents of children with disabilities and to professionals who work with them. This assistance helps parents to participate more effectively with professionals in meeting their children's educational needs. Parent Centers work to improve outcomes for children with all disabilities ages birth-26 years. The Parent Information



Center of Delaware is Delaware's federally funded Parent Training and Information Center (PTI).

Parent Councils – Established under Senate Bill 33 in 2015, each school district and charter school enrolling a child with disabilities will establish a parent council to advocate generally for students with disabilities.

Peer-Review – Is a process of subjecting work, research or ideas to the scrutiny or careful examination of others who are experts in the same field.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) – A school-wide approach to promoting positive behavior and academic, social and emotional development by teaching and recognizing positive behavior and correcting misbehavior. The PBS approach uses a combination of comprehensive and intensive interventions and supports. Delaware PBS schools adopt a problem-solving process using data-based decision making for addressing behaviors and implementing interventions and providing on-going support to students and staff.

Prior Written Notice (PWN) – Written notice provided to a parent when the school district proposes or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a child, or the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to a child.

Related Services – Transportation and developmental, corrective, and other supportive services that are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education services.

Relative Caregiver Authorization Form – The Delaware Relative Caregivers' School Authorization Affidavit is required for a relative caregiver who is raising a child without legal custody or guardianship to register a child for public school. The

Relative Caregiver is then the legal contact for the school and can make school-based decisions regarding but not limited to special education. This form can be obtained from a school or from the Delaware Health and Social Services office.

Resolution Session – A meeting with the parent and relevant IEP team members convened within 15 days of receiving notice of a parent’s due process complaint, but before a due process hearing. The purpose of the meeting is for the school and the parent to have an opportunity to resolve the dispute.

Response to Intervention (RTI) – RTI is a research-based approach for helping struggling students to determine if a child responds to scientific, research-based interventions for reading and mathematics. Some schools use RTI to address oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression and behavior. Delaware has very specific guidelines about RTI outlined in their Special Education Regulations.

More information <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/domain/72>

School Psychologist – School personnel who might evaluate your child’s intellectual ability, learning aptitudes, personality and emotional development.

Serious Bodily Injury – The legal definition as used in special education is “bodily injury which involves substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain; protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss of impairment of the loss of a bodily member, organ or mental faculty”. This term may be used in discussions about school discipline.

Smarter Assessments – This is the standardized testing in grades 3 to 8 that aligns with Common Core State Standards.

Social Worker – School personnel who is working with a child and their family and may provide social and developmental history at the IEP meeting.

Special Education – Specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability. More information

<http://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/900/index.shtml#TopOfPage>

State Complaint – A written complaint filed with the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) alleging that a school district is out of compliance with state and/or federal special education regulations.

Student Success Plan (SSP) – User-friendly, web-based career exploration program. Students in 8th, 9th and 10th grade are using the SSP in school to explore career interests and develop long-range plans around employment, college and/or training programs and living in the community.

Transition Services – Additional components to the IEP for students age 14 or entering 8<sup>th</sup> grade (in Delaware) that include: the child's strengths, interests and preferences related to postsecondary goals; high school courses of study needed to assist the child in reaching those goals; and plans for employment, education and training after exiting high school.

Universal Design – Principle of designing and making accessible curricula, products and services that are usable by people with the widest range of functional capabilities.

## RESOURCES

**Center for Parent Information and Resources** – Resources and access to products related to children with disabilities <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/>

**DE Department of Education (DOE)** – Information about Delaware schools and education <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/>

**DE Administrative Code/State Special Education Regulations** – Information about the regulations that apply to Delaware’s special education process <http://regulations.delaware.gov/AdminCode/title14/900/index.shtml#TopOfPage>

**Parent Information Center of DE (PIC)** – Fact sheets, webinars, videos, workshops, information and news about education and disabilities [www.picofdel.org](http://www.picofdel.org)

**Note:** Information specific to Educational Surrogate Parents  
<http://www.picofdel.org/services/educational-surrogate-parent-program.html>

## Appendix CC

### IRB LETTER



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Hullihen Hall  
University of Delaware  
Newark, Delaware 19716-1551  
Ph: 302/831-2136  
Fax: 302/831-2828

DATE: December 21, 2017

TO: Joan French  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1155768-1] Developing Parent Supports within the Parent Councils of Delaware

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF NOT RESEARCH  
DECISION DATE: December 21, 2017

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project does not meet the definition of human subject research under the purview of the IRB according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or [nicolefm@udel.edu](mailto:nicolefm@udel.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.