

FY17 Best Practice Summary ASPIRE

Parent Mentors are successful in working with all stakeholders and families so students develop and use their skills for participation in IEP meetings as well as in their classrooms, home, and community environments. Parent Mentors encourage families to have an active role in supporting their student to gain and to use self-determination and self-advocacy skills.

Evidence Statements: *Parent involvement has a positive impact on post-secondary outcomes for individuals with disabilities.*

Source: CEC's DCDT Fast Facts *When families stay engaged in a young person's education, social and community activities, the young person is more likely to complete high school, participate in post-secondary education and is more likely to be employed.* **Source:** NCWD – Youth *When teachers reach out to parents, students make more progress in both reading and math, researchers studying schools in low-income neighborhoods found student performance improved 40 to 50 percent faster if teachers did these three things: 1. Met face-to-face with each family at the beginning of the year to build relationships 2. Sent families materials each week on ways to help their children at home 3. Telephoned parents routinely with news about how their children were doing, not just if there were problems.* **Source:** PTA Standards

Objective: Increase the self-determination and self-advocacy skills of students while giving students opportunities to plan and meet their goals to improve outcomes

Vital Behaviors:

1. Family and student will participate in person centered planning and complete tasks regularly that are related to their plan and goals
2. Family and student will use provided exercises to practice at home, regularly reporting efforts using preferred communication method
3. Family and student will use an IEP checklist or planning tool to review and plan for conversations related to setting and meeting goals
4. Family and student will identify ___ actions from a transition activity list to complete, regularly reporting progress
5. Family and student will use a self-determination checklist to identify tasks to complete, regularly reporting progress
6. Family and student will track ongoing conversations by using conversation starters or progress reports to discuss attendance/behavior/academic needs of the student

30 Parent Mentors engaged families in order to increase the self-determination and self-advocacy skills of students while giving students opportunities to plan and meet their goals in FY17.

249 Families and their partners were targeted in initiatives related to building self-determination and self-advocacy skills as part of ASPIRE related initiatives in FY17.

63% of Parent Mentors met the end-of-the-year goal they set related to building self-determination and self-advocacy skills as part of ASPIRE related initiatives in FY17.

Parent Mentors were engaged in ASPIRE related initiatives by:

- Providing training to family and teachers
- Providing related material to family and teachers for practicing skills
 - IEP planning tools
 - Self-determination checklists
 - Vision tools
 - Future planning facilitation with goal setting opportunity

- Transition activity list or assessments
- Supporting teachers, family, and student as they prepared items for student to share during an upcoming team meeting
- Attending IEP meetings

Parent Mentor trainings which focused on improving self-determination and self-advocacy included topics such as:

- Discussing your child's disability with them
- Need for self-determination skills
- IEP purpose, IEP content, and roles of team members
- Education and transition planning for all grade levels and abilities
- Linking self-determination and leadership opportunities
- Transition planning
- Importance of planning questions and comments ahead of IEP meeting
- Keeping work samples and IEP material together in notebook for reference and participation
- Bridge Bill, IGPs, and no IEPs in college

Parent Mentors promoting self-determination through ASPIRE reported these challenges and solutions:

- Families not attending meetings or trainings were offered alternatives access to Parent Mentor support
- Low expectations were replaced with empowerment through additional practice
- Students were not educated about their disability so talking in terms of strengths and challenges helped families understand how they could start conversations with their child about why they had an IEP team

Parent Mentors that demonstrated success, while promoting self-determination and self-advocacy during ASPIRE related initiatives, had the following outcomes:

- Improved academic achievement, behavior, and attendance
- Improved communication between teachers and families
- Increased student confidence and empowerment
- Family prepared to participate meaningfully in IEP meetings
- Students' self-advocating and self-determination skills improved
- Students meeting and reporting achievement of goals
- Increased number of students and family members attending IEP meetings
- Improved sense of value of education and literacy
- Increased interest of students about their futures

It is the recommendations of Parent Mentors who have focused on ASPIRE related initiatives that you:

- Start early in the year building relationships with families, school personnel, and community members
- Seek buy-in of essential partners to work with you and the families that need support
- Plan face-to-face or one-on-one meetings to identify needs and discuss solutions with hard to engage families
- Offer online training opportunities as an option for families unable to attend trainings
- Listen to feedback and follow-up often
- Set clear expectation so that families you are working with understand the commitment involved in learning a new skill and accomplishing goals
- Be consistent and persistent to gain partners and the trust of families
- Utilize other school leadership opportunities so that by being involved students will gain confidence in their communication and social skills