

TIPS FOR STARTING A SPECIAL EDUCATION SUPPORT GROUP

By Lincoln Middle School – Special Ed Support Group

BECOME A SPECIAL ED PARENT REPRESENTATIVE AT YOUR SCHOOL

Decide if you will create the group as the primary Special Ed Parent Representative or if another parent or two want to co-chair the group with you. You may or may not be a District Parent Resource Network representative for your school.

Meetings and Parent Nights:

- Discuss with the Principal, Assistant Principal, Community Liaison or other school stakeholders when, where and how you'll schedule your meetings or events. Will they be in the morning, after school or evening? Or a combination?
- How many meetings and parent nights will you host for the school year? Be practical with the schedule. You'll learn a lot along the way, and you will adjust things as you go. Also make sure you are checking dates against the school's master calendar, PTA/PTSA events or meetings, and District Special Ed or Board meetings as well.
- Identify the partners at your school who will make the support group more successful. It's important to be able to share information both directions.

Communication:

- Once you've determined the dates and times, create an agenda or topics that you can advertise to help parents know what will be discussed in advance.
- Create an email or use a consistent contact number(s) that you can include on all of your marketing materials for the Support Group.
- In order to advertise the meetings and events, make sure the date, time and location are included on the school calendar, the PTA/PTSA calendar and in email blasts.
- Work with someone at your school (possibly the Community Liaison, Assistant Principal or Principal) to determine who from the staff will send out the Support Group email messages to the special ed parents. The school coordinator for the emails may be the person who sends out the ELAC information, since it's a similar process. Gail Pinsker at the District can request a school specific Special Ed parent email list for students with IEPs, and it can be made into a Group through the District database to be used for this purpose.

ASK YOUR PTA/PTSA PRESIDENT & EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO CREATE A SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE AT YOUR SCHOOL

Speak with the PTA/PTSA Board President about creating a Special Education Committee, and then your support group will have representation at the monthly PTA/PTSA Executive Board meetings.

- It's fairly easy to create a Special Education Committee through your PTA/PTSA since the rules are in the by-laws.
- The Executive Board must officially vote during a meeting to create a Special Ed Committee.
- As a Committee member, you can attend the Executive Board meetings, so you'll know what's happening at school and you can share your insight about special education events, meetings, information or inclusion opportunities.
- At the regular PTA/PTSA meetings, you can also introduce yourself and the Support Group, so that parents know it exists.
- You cannot vote as a Committee member, so if you want to have a vote, you could run for an Executive Board seat at your school.
- Distribute information, event and meeting information in an email that can be sent with the PTA/PTSA communication to all parents.
- Sometimes, we've asked for specific information to be sent through the Principals email blasts as well.

CREATE A SPECIAL EDUCATION COMMUNITY (PHYSICALLY OR VIRTUALLY) AT YOUR SCHOOL BY STARTING A SUPPORT GROUP

All parents, students and school personnel are busy, so think of the support group as a physical resource for your parents, but also a virtual one.

- Send regular communication about upcoming events or how to include special education students in school events or activities
- Provide a virtual resource for parents by sending out meeting times, agendas and notes once your meeting occurred, so even if they can't attend, they feel informed.
- Create a place where parents can ask questions about the special education program at your school and the ones within the District.
- Listen to questions and concerns and offer to try to find someone to address them, as other parents or students may have similar questions or issues.
- Use the school website to create a special education resource list.
- Refer parents to SEDAC members or District resources for special ed parents.

You will make a difference!