Family Engagement
Special Considerations and Tips for Schools

Kentucky Special Parent Involvement Network, Inc. (KY-SPIN) is:
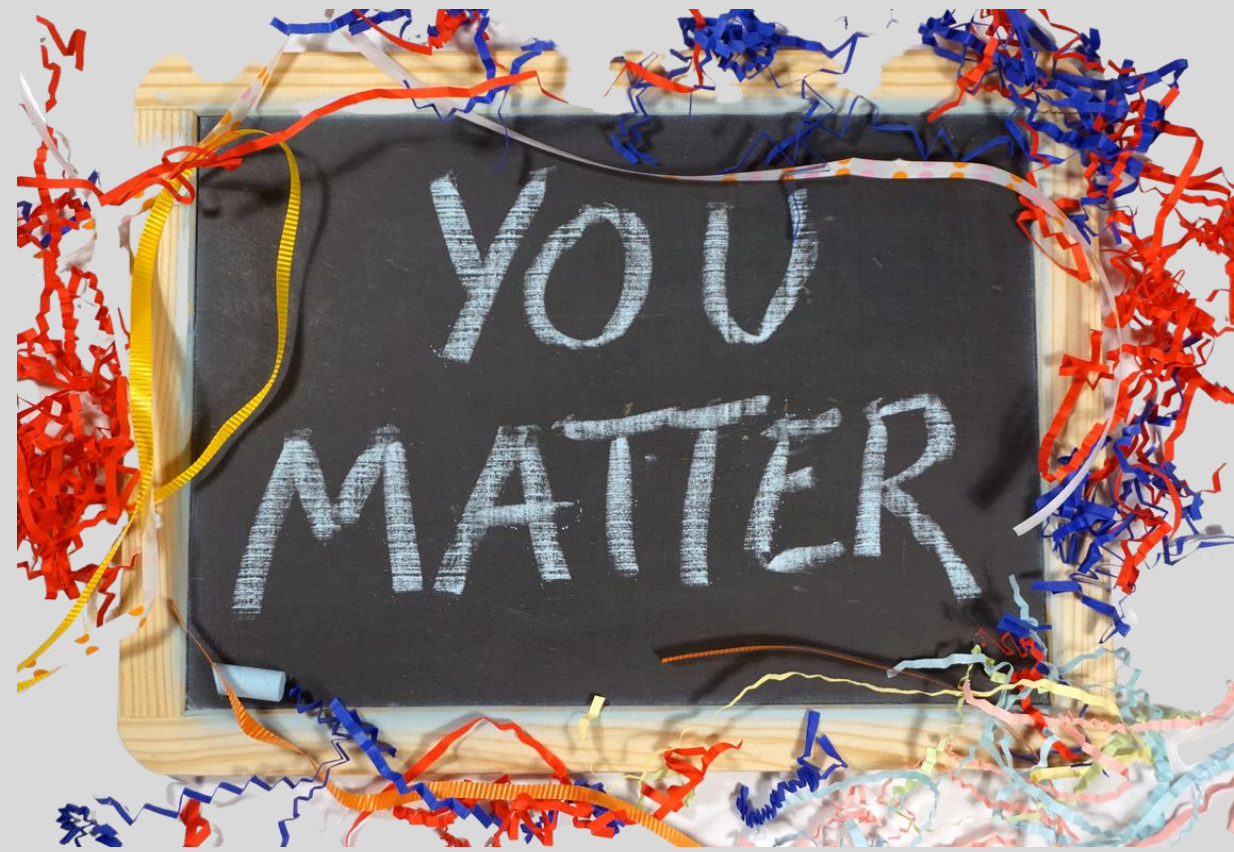
- Family Driven

- Non-Profit 501(c)3

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(Special Parent Involvement Network)
Parent Training & Information (PTI) Center

Funded by the U.S. Dept. of Education under IDEA since 1988 when Kentucky first received a PTI. KY-SPIN Parent Center provides training, information and support for children and youth with all types of disabilities (birth through 26 years old), their parents, families, and professionals.

We DO:

- Empower Families to effectively advocate for their Children

- Provide support to help families access needed information and resources

- Lend a listening ear

We do NOT:
Act as
Attorneys

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What does Family Engagement mean to you?

Let's abandon the notion that Family Engagement equals attending school events
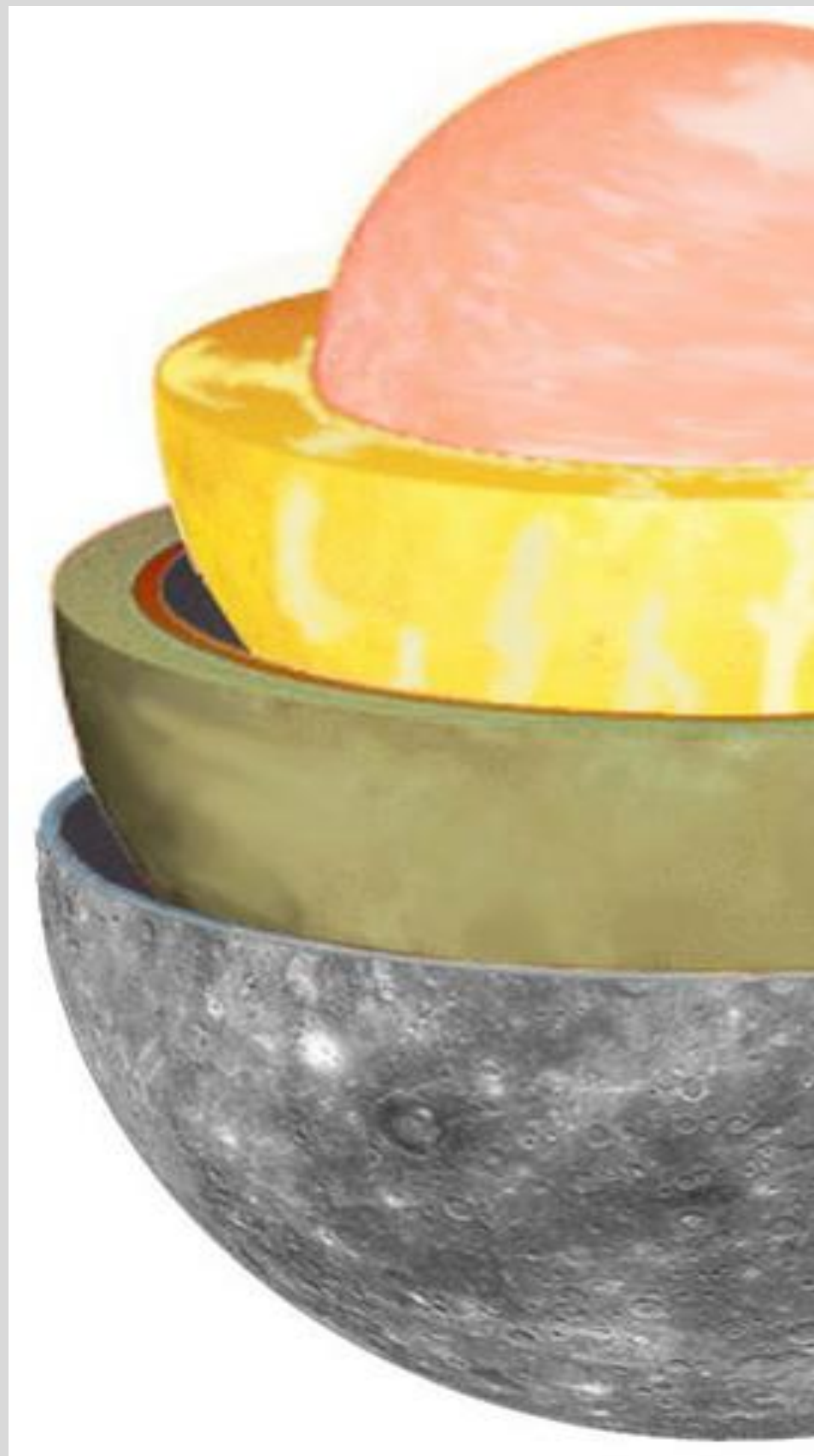
Family Engagement

- Looks different for each family & school

- Means something different to everyone

- Includes the whole family

- Puts child/youth as the main focus

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At the Core

**Family Engagement starts
with a relationship.**

What are the characteristics of great
relationship you have?

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Does each of your students & their family have at least one meaningful & trusting relationship with someone at school?

Each Child/Youth Needs Someone at School to make them a Priority

Each Child/Youth needs to feel special and valued just as each family does!

This allows for a Strong Family – School Partnership and will increase Family Engagement

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Successful Relationships

- Mutual respect and value
- Strong two-way Communication
- Builds on everyone's strengths
- Everyone is equal
- Ability to problem solve
- Honors each person's view even if you do not agree
- Help one another
- Don't blame one another or hold grudges

Building School - Family Relationship

Thank You !

- Hi, How are you today? Hope you all have a great day!

- Start by reaching out without a reason

- Share the great things you see with one another

- Share what works for you

- Take opportunities outside of meetings

- Be honest with one another

- Allow disagreements

- Bring solutions to the table

- Respond to one another

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Relationship Building

- Get to know parents
- **Build relationships- not acquaintances**
- Ask parents what is needed to participate in the child's education
- Communicate often, not just when there are concerns
- Ask the parent(s) about the child's strengths and weaknesses
- Provide opportunities to engage in the child's education at all levels
- View parents as equal partners
- Work collaboratively to solve problems

How to Embrace Strong Family – School Partnership

Involve families at all levels

- Open door policy
- Make time available
- Share information
- Use language we all know
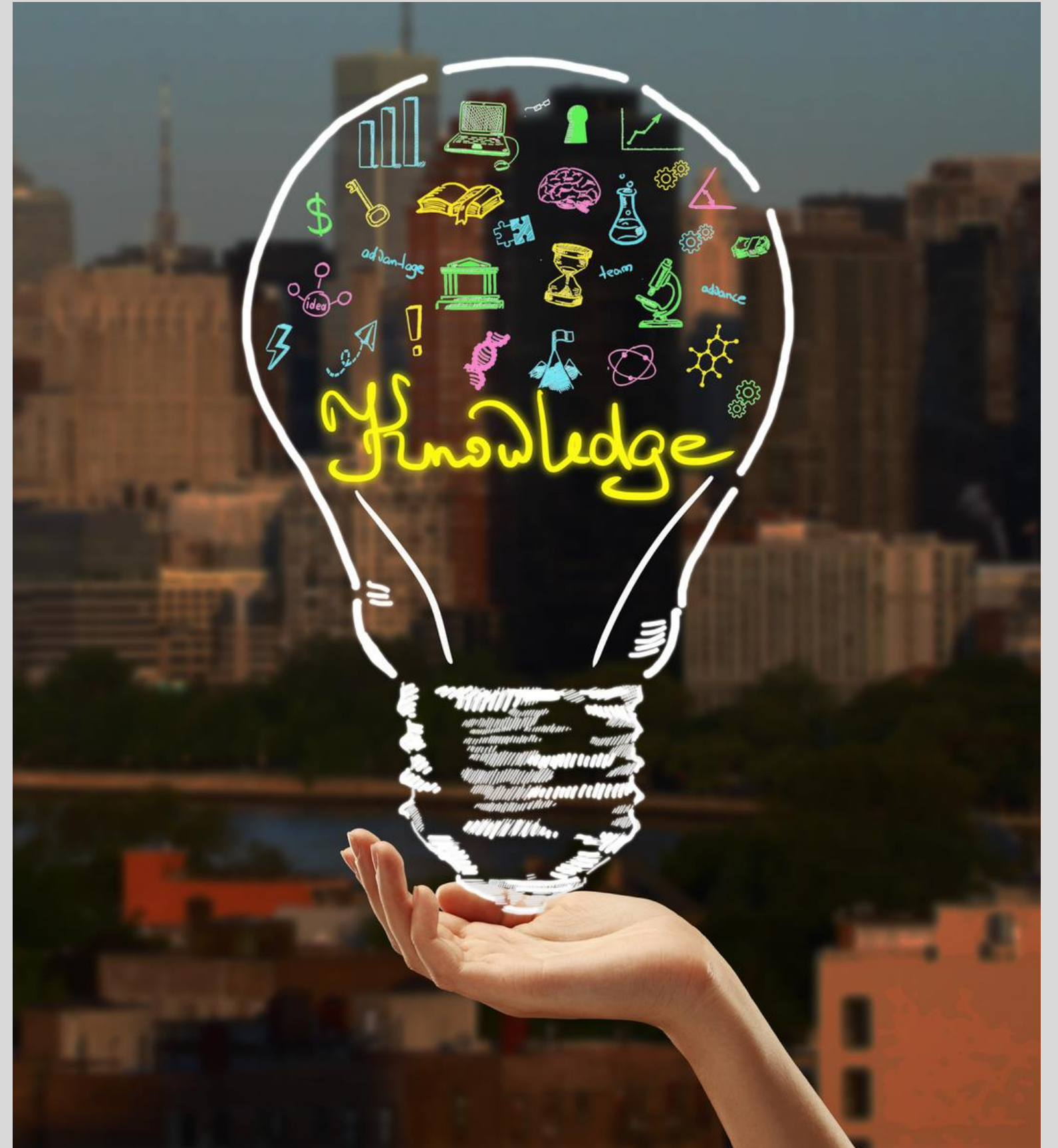- Ask
- Help
- Plan together

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What are some characteristics of good Family – School Partnership to you?

Knowledge

- Use student/parent-friendly language
- Provide information and community resources to parents and assist in accessing them if needed
- Aid parents in understanding rights and responsibilities
- Provide parents with periodic updates on the child's progress, Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals, and objectives
- Provide evaluation results, present levels, and IEP drafts before the Admission and Release Committee (ARC)/IEP meeting to allow full participation
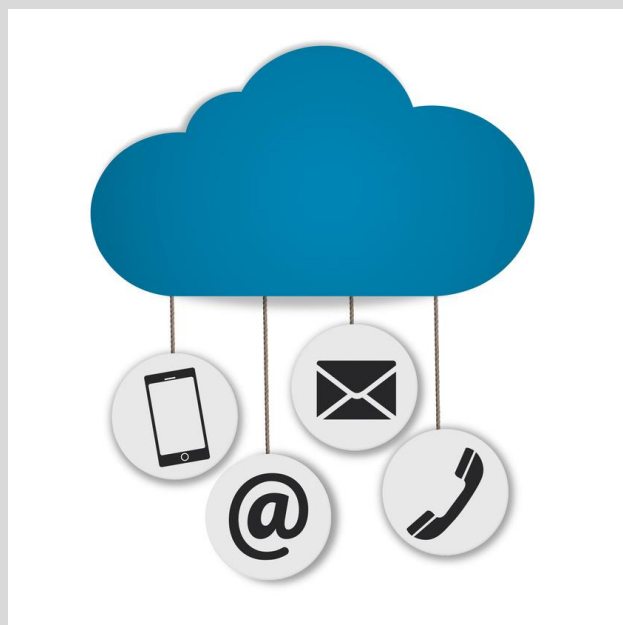
School Meetings & Events

- Encourage parent participation in event scheduling and planning
- Host events at a time convenient for family participation
- Offer participation via alternate means; ex. virtually or by phone
- Provide alternate ways to contribute, even if the family is unable to attend the event
- Provide news and updates in multiple formats (e.g. social media and email)

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Parents know their child best! They have a wealth of knowledge that will help their child be educationally successful!

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Communication

Ask parents for preferred communication method; i.e. email, text, or phone

Reading Materials

Offer school news, the Individualized Education Program (IEP), the child's school progress reports, and other reading materials in simplified versions.
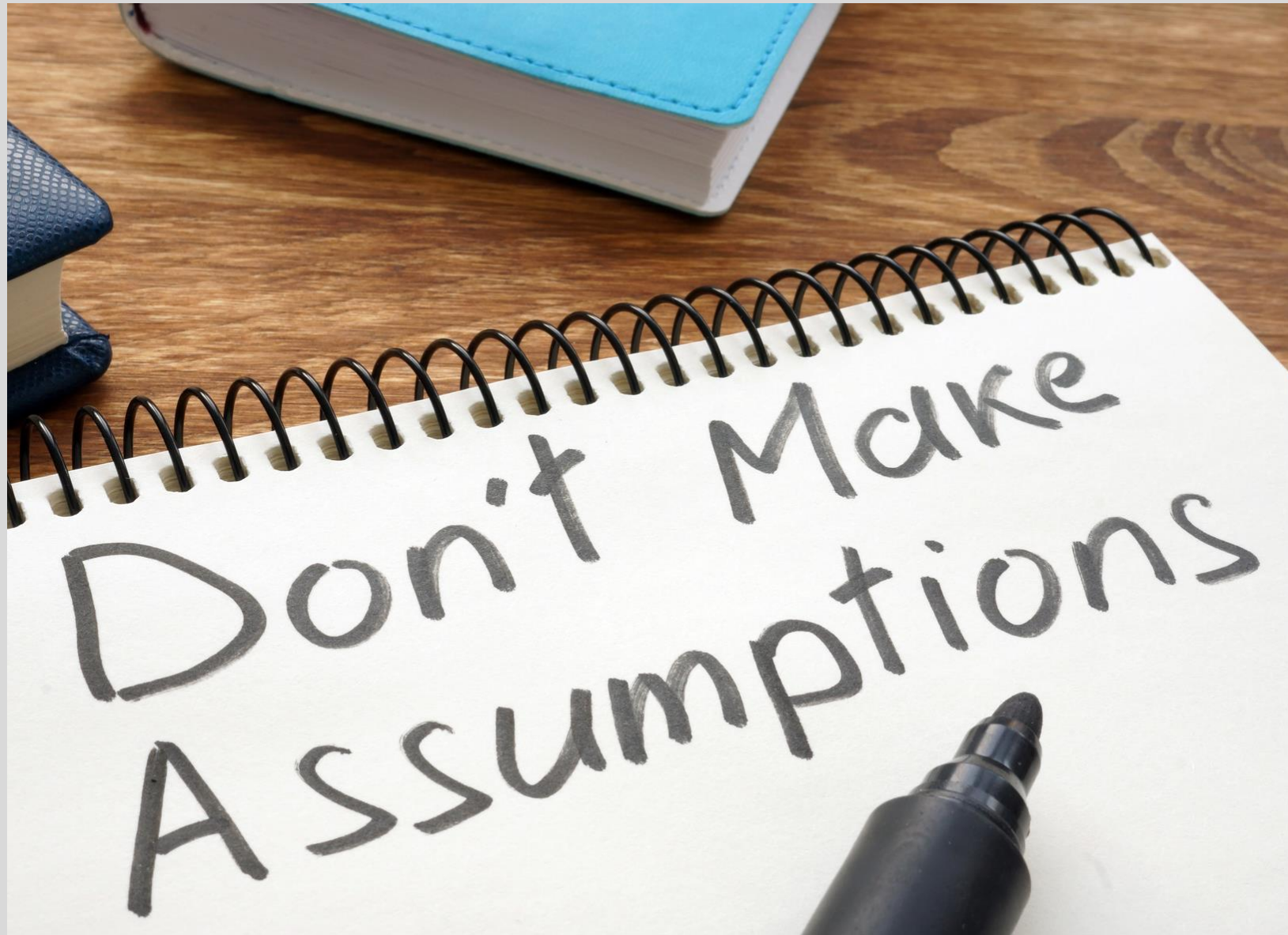

English Learners

Provide interpreters and translated materials in native languages.

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Does the Family Need Accommodations?

If the parent discloses they have a disability, ask what accommodations they need to fully participate.
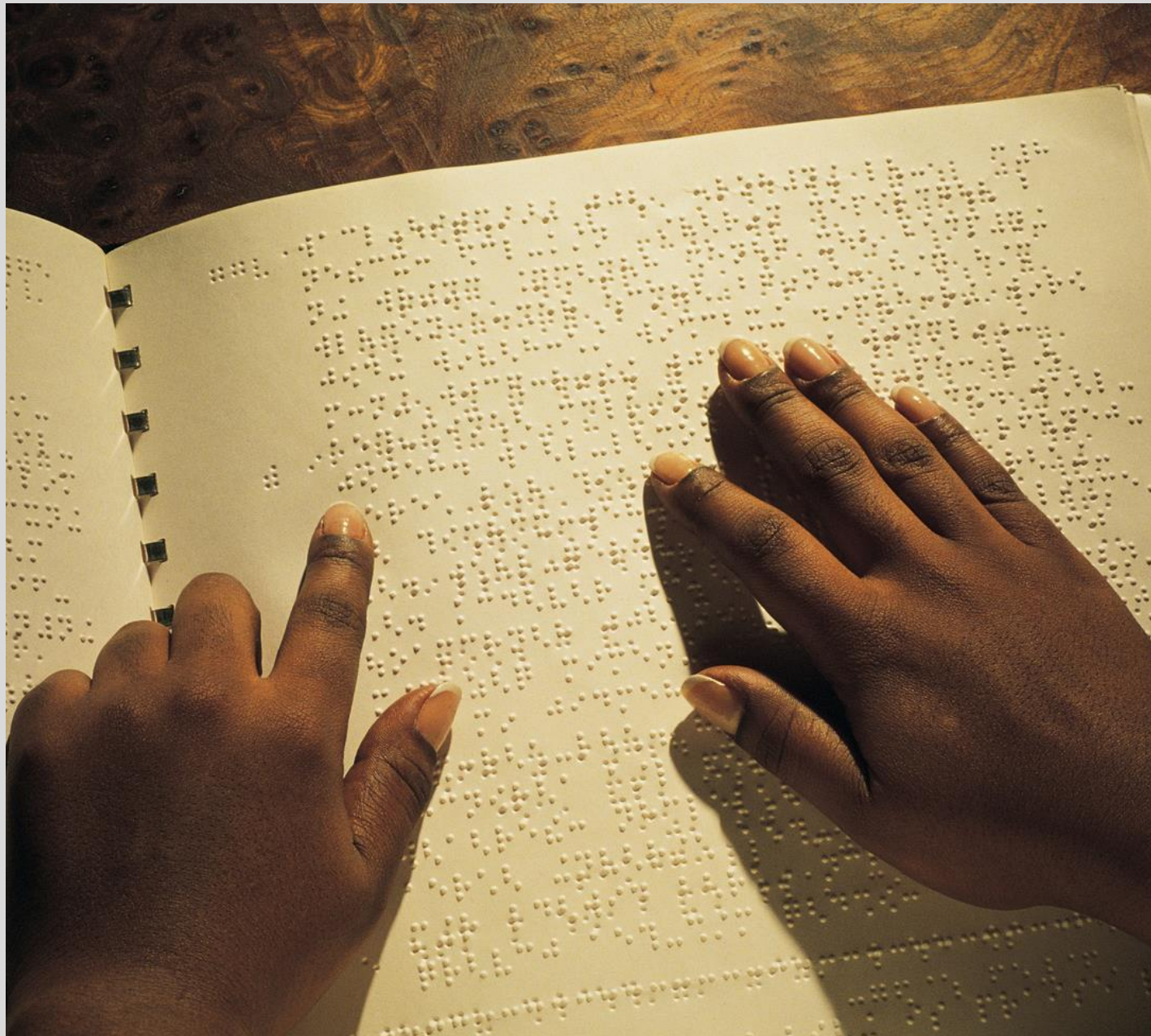
Avoid Assumptions

- Never assume a parent with a disability is not capable of participating fully in their child's education.
- Assume all parents have great knowledge.
- Provide assistance when requested.

Materials

Offer reading materials such as school news, IEP, and progress reports in formats that are easy to read and understand.
Ex. large print, braille, digital, infographics, videos, etc.

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Communication

Ask the parent about their preferred communication method. Disabilities affect everyone differently, and some parents may prefer one communication method over another.

School Events & Meetings

Host meetings in an accessible location, or if a parent is unable to attend in person due to their impairment, offer participation through alternate means.
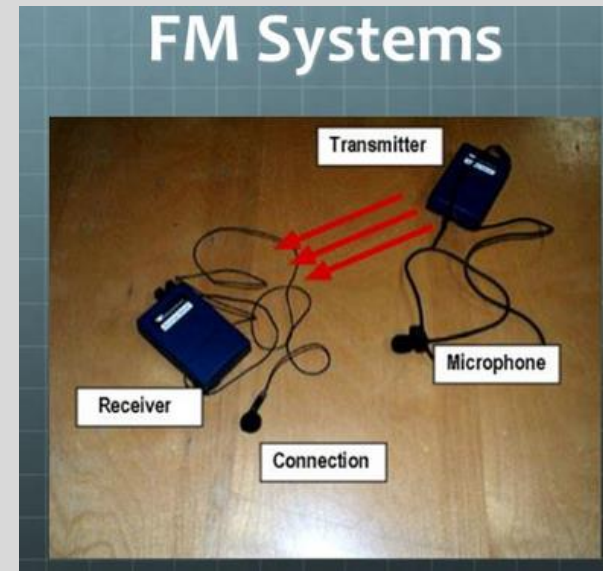
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Accessibility encompasses many things, physical accessibility is just one type.

Accessibility Considerations for Parents with Disabilities

A parent's disability can affect their ability to fully participate in their child's education.

FM Systems

Transmitter

Receiver

Microphone

Connection

- Provide an ASL Interpreter for IEP meetings, parent/teacher meetings, or any other interactions involving the child's education (2-week notice provided by the parent or teacher).

- Ensure translation services and/or closed captioning is available and enabled for parents to see. Parents who are hard of hearing may need access to an FM system.

- Provide material in a variety of formats such as braille, large print, or electronically for a screen reader.

R E S P E C T

- Address the parent with respect and consideration.

- Be intentionally patient.

- Keep conversations simple and focused.

- Use alternate means of communication such as written text or images.

- Provide accessible parking, entrances/exits, wheelchair ramps, if possible round tables, and assigning a staff member to the parent to assist with accommodations could be a huge benefit.

- Use spacious, comfortable rooms for events and meetings to accommodate appropriate spatial needs.
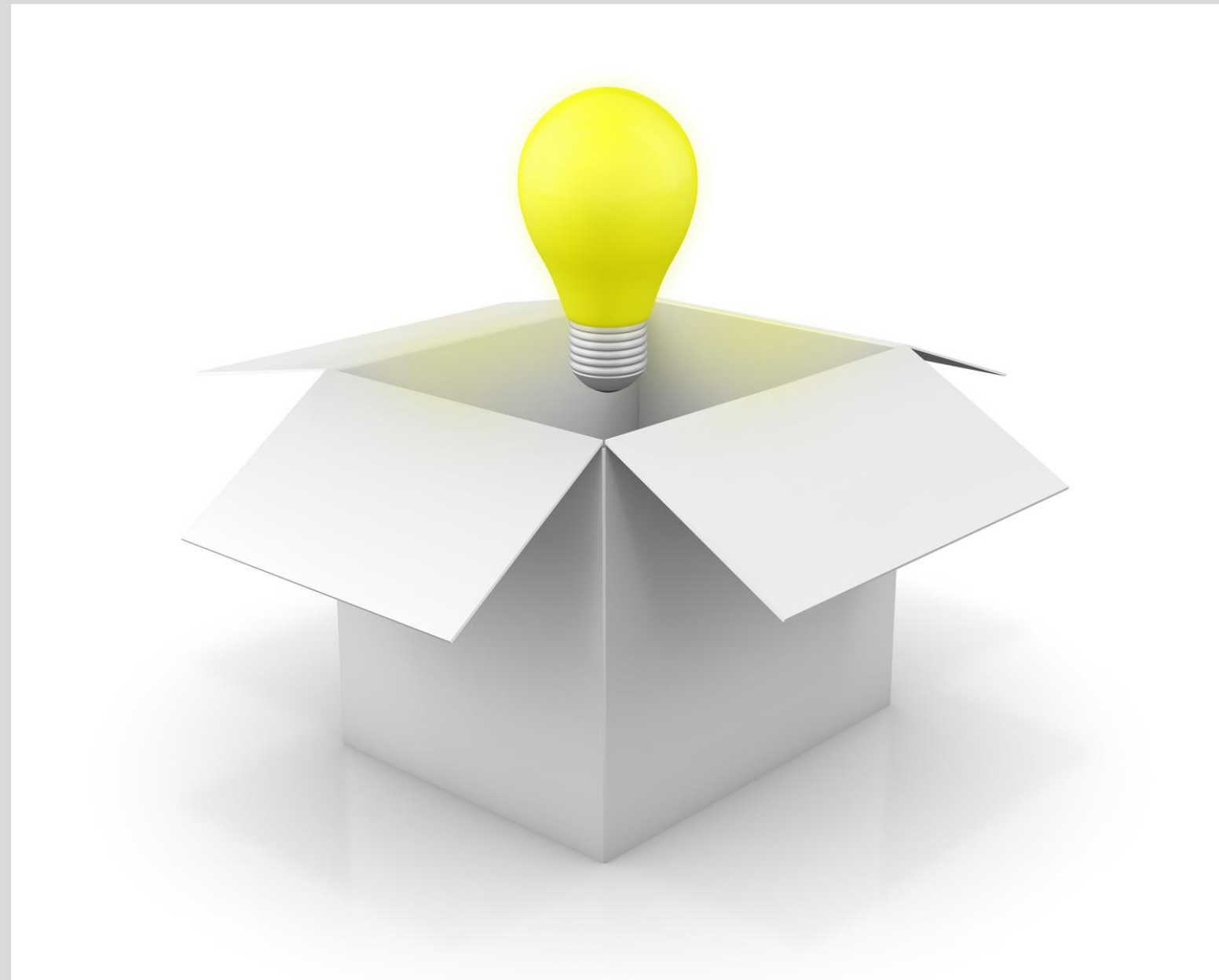
Research the disability. Keep in mind that disabilities affect every person differently. Ask the parent how to best support them. Understanding ways to interact, communicate, and clarification may be needed to help achieve educational success for the child.

Choices

Provide choices when possible. Chunk information into small and understandable steps. Provide positive reinforcements and breaks. Use trauma-informed practices. Allow individuals to voice any needs they may have.

Think Outside the Box

Parent Counseling and Training

Parent counseling and training is an important related service that can help parents enhance the vital role they play in the lives of their children. Its definition is found at IDEA §300.34(c)(8) and reads:

(8)(i) Parent counseling and training means assisting parents in understanding the special needs of their child;

(ii) Providing parents with information about child development; and

(iii) Helping parents to acquire the necessary skills that will allow them to support the implementation of their child's IEP or IFSP.

KY-SPIN can help!!

Video/Webinar library

Training for parents and professionals

Extensive resource library, infographics, and more!

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What has worked for you in Family Engagement?

Together we can accomplish great things for our children!

None of us have all the answers!

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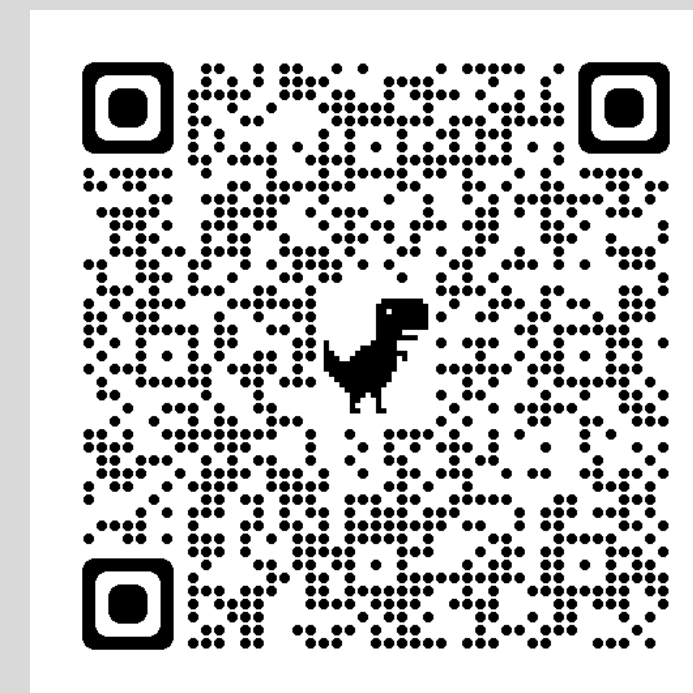
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