

SPED Parent News

Summer 2021

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Introducing our NEW Parent Information Center

The Parent Information Center is a “one stop shop” where you can find helpful information to assist you in understanding the Special Education process. The site may be accessed through a link on the co-op website, or by going directly to this web address, <https://sites.google.com/pisd.us/parentinformationcenter>

On the site you will find:

- ◆ Helpful websites and parent friendly resources
- ◆ Lunch and Learn Parent Training handouts and recordings
- ◆ Student Introduction Portfolio examples
- ◆ SPED Parent Newsletters
- ◆ Procedural Safeguards, ARD Guide, IDEA Manual
- ◆ And More!



Thinking Beyond the IEP: A Student Introduction Portfolio

By Brenda Nelson, ARD Facilitator and Special Ed Parent

Many years ago, I attended a parent training to learn how to create a Student Introduction Portfolio for my son. At that time, he was entering Kindergarten. He is now a college graduate. Little did I know back then how this useful and creative tool would not only help me build positive working relationships with school personnel, but it would also turn into a terrific self-advocacy tool for my son. The portfolio was provided at the beginning of each school year to every person that would interact with my son, from the Principal, to the classroom teachers, to the cafeteria monitors and the bus driver.

So, what is a Student Introduction Portfolio? It is a creative way to provide information about a student beyond what is seen in a typical IEP/ARD document. Think about it, the focus of an IEP is to address the needs and challenges of a student. Besides the list of strengths in the PLAAFP, there is very little positive information included in an IEP document. A Portfolio provides all the “good stuff” about the student. It can be used to paint a picture of who the child is beyond their disability including their likes and dislikes, their talents, abilities and hobbies, their history, health concerns, pictures and so much more.

During the elementary years, my son’s portfolios were in the form of a short book. I like working on the computer, so this is the tool I used, but the “book” could be a binder, or in the style of a scrapbook, or a document that can be emailed. In the middle school years, the book was condensed to a two page introduction with the most important information, and more recently to a PowerPoint presentation that my son created about himself with the information he wanted to share with his teachers. When he met his new teachers for the first time, he would hand them a disk and ask them to watch the presentation, thus it becomes a self-advocacy tool. Step-by-step details about how to create a portfolio for your child can be found on the Texas Project First website (www.texasprojectfirst.org). Examples of the portfolios and information pages I did for my son are available on the Parent Information Center link (see above). With a little bit of effort, you can start the new school year on a positive note and help your child’s team see beyond their IEP.

Fun with a Purpose...Learning Activities for Summer

Learning doesn't just happen within the confines of a school building or a school day. Learning can happen anytime and anywhere! Did you know activities that seem like childhood play can also build foundations for new skills or reinforce skills already acquired? If you are looking for some fun activities to keep your kids busy this summer, check out these ideas and resources.

Core Strength is the foundation for children to be able to assume and maintain an upright posture while standing and sitting without support. If a child has poor core strength, they will therefore have difficulty controlling fine motor skills, such as handwriting, and participating in gross motor activities like school sports. Core strength is both the anchor and launching pad for everything we do.

Core Strength activities include: Superman - lying on stomach and lifting arms and legs, wheelbarrow walking, crab walking, curl-ups, climbing a ladder, riding a bike, skating, swimming, play Twister, exercise ball, etc.

Fine Motor Skills refer to a person's ability to control the small movements of the hands and fingers. These skills are necessary for performing everyday academic, play and self-care skills. Cutting with scissors, coloring with crayons and pencils, painting, playing with small objects such as Legos, beads and puzzles are important fine motor activities, as well as buttoning a shirt, tying shoelaces and using utensils to eat. Good control of the hand muscles is essential for efficient handwriting in school.

Fine Motor activities include: stringing beads, working clothespins, rolling and squishing playdoh, painting, writing in shaving cream, using squishy toys and spray bottles, building with Legos, cutting with scissors, sorting objects with tongs, etc.

Handwriting requires some prerequisite skills, such as core strength and fine motor development as described above. Handwriting Without Tears® is a highly recommended, developmentally appropriate curriculum which provides a step-by-step method for learning letter formation. Check out the website for more information about this program. www.lwtears.com

Here are some favorite resources for fun Summer learning activities:

KidsMasterSkills.com

theottoolbox.com

OT-mom-learning-activities.com

WriteOutOfTheBox.com

Detailed handouts from this Lunch and Learn Training may be downloaded from the Parent Information Center site.

Parent Resources, Conferences and Workshops

Summer is a great time to learn more about your child's disability and the special education process. Check out these terrific resources.

- ◆ Center for Parent Information & Resources - www.parentcenterhub.org
- ◆ Navigate Life Texas - www.navigatelifetexas.org
- ◆ Parent Companion: First Five Years - www.parentcompanion.org
- ◆ Partners Resource Network - www.partnerstx.org
- ◆ Texas Legal Framework - www.framework.esc18.net
- ◆ Texas Project FIRST - www.texasprojectfirst.org
- ◆ Texas Parent to Parent - www.txp2p.org
- ◆ Transition in Texas - www.texastransition.org
- ◆ Wrightslaw - www.wrightslaw.com



Have a Fun and Safe
Summer Break!

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: The Atascosa-McMullen Special Education Cooperative provides support services to Pleasanton ISD, Poteet :
: ISD, Jourdanton ISD, Charlotte ISD, and McMullen County ISD. We can be reached at 830-569-1355. For more :
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