



WELCOME !!

Please Fill Out the Attendance Form

Starting & Running Effective Special Education Parent Advisory Groups



Engaging Parents of Students with Disabilities is a partnership between the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (NJOSPE) and SPAN Parent Advocacy Network.

Who Is SPAN?

SPAN PROVIDES:

- TRAINING
- TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
- INFORMATION
- SUPPORT

...to parents who have children birth through 26, including children who have special needs or are at risk.

SPAN ASSISTS PARENTS TO:

- Communicate more effectively
- Increase knowledge
- Participate in decision-making
- Be informed about their child's disability/special health care needs
- Meet other parents





TOGETHER!
Families Can Make A Difference

**Improve Special Education
Programs & Services
Improve Student Outcomes**

Assistance is available for schools and districts and for parents and parent leaders to enhance family engagement to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.



Workshop Goals

Participants will:

- Increase their awareness of the role of Special Education Parent Advisory Groups;
- Increase their understanding of how to develop and implement a group;
- Gain awareness of many questions around developing and implementing groups.

“Caring for the Children We Share”

“The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children’s families.”

Dr. Joyce Epstein,



N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.2(h)
Special Education Parent Advisory Group

“Each board of education shall ensure that a special education parent advisory group is in place in the district to provide input to the district on issues concerning students with disabilities.”

How Committed Am I to the Idea of “Parents As Advisors?”

For the Parent:

- Can I look beyond my own child’s and family experiences?
- Do I listen respectfully to the professionals’ opinions?
- Do I bring a spirit of collaboration to the table?



How Committed Am I to the Idea of “Parents As Advisors?”

For the District:

- Do I believe that parents can look beyond their own families' experiences?
- Do I value parents' opinions as important?
- Do I work to create an environment where parents are supported and comfortable enough to speak freely?



Purpose/Function

- To provide suggestions and input
- To provide feedback
- To enhance and strengthen collaboration
- To advise on unmet needs of children with disabilities.



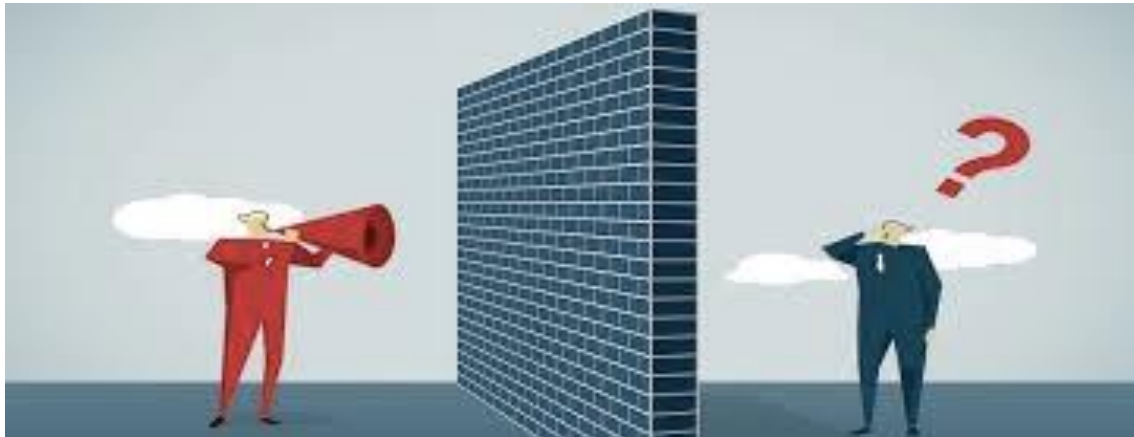
Keeping the Focus on Input

- Keep a *systems focus*.
- An Advisory Group is *not a support group*.
- Avoid getting bogged down in *busy work*.



Potential Barriers

- Professional attitudes
- Families' reluctance
- Administrative barriers
- It is hard work



Developing & Implementing Effective Education Advisory Groups

1. Review district's history.
2. Clarify mission/function.
3. Discuss operational structure.
4. Define membership.
5. Set goals and priorities.
6. Identify resources & supports.

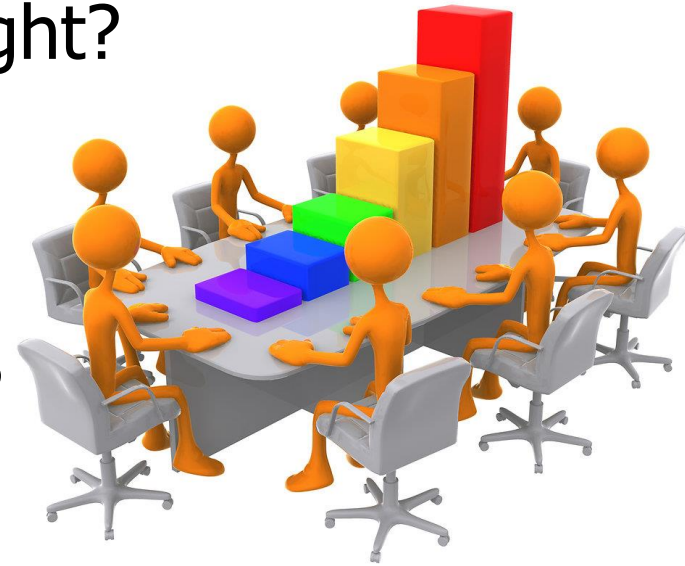


Step 1: History

- What avenues are there for parent involvement?
- Are there any parent groups currently?
- What has been tried in the past?
- What has been successful? **HISTORY**
- What do we want to change? **MATTERS**

Step 2: Function

- ❑ What will be the function of the district group?
- ❑ How will input be attained?
- ❑ From whom will input be sought?
- ❑ Who will input go to?
- ❑ What will be done with input?
- ❑ How will it be documented?



Step 3: Operational Structure

- What will be the structure of the group?
- Are by-laws needed?
- Will there be leadership roles?
- How will it link with other groups, committees and boards?
- How often will the group meet?
- Will meetings be open to the public?



Step 4: Membership

- What will be the make-up of the group?
- How will members be recruited?
- How will outreach be conducted to ensure that the parent group is representative of the community?
- Will there be terms of office?
- What supports will be provided to members?
- What roles and responsibilities will members have?



Reaching All Families



The **SPAN Parent Advocacy Network** recommends :

Districts conduct outreach to ensure that Education Advisory Groups are representative of the various programs and schools within the district; as well as, diversified based on age spans, disabilities, race, ethnicity and gender.

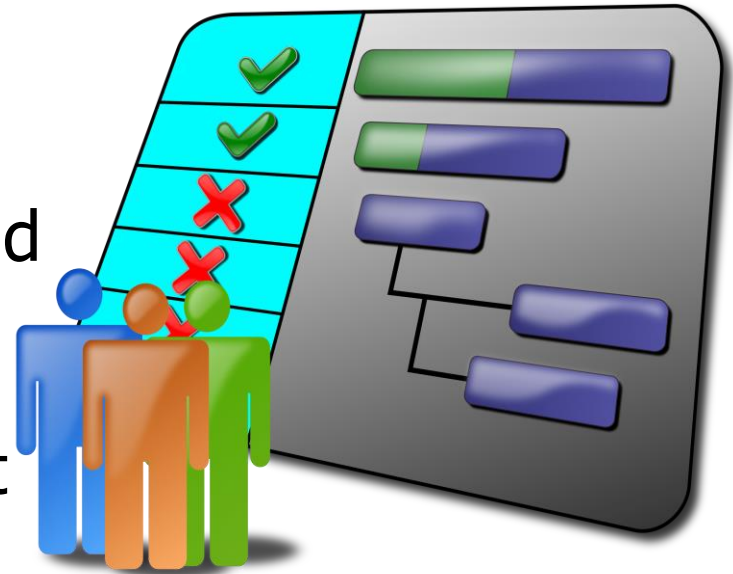
Step 5: Goals and Priorities

- How will goals and priorities be set?
- How will you determine the needs and issues to be addressed?
- Will goals be set annually?
- How will you document success?
- How and with whom will this information be shared?



Step 6: Resources and Supports

- What supports must be in place for the group to run effectively?
- What administrative supports will be provided to the group?
- Who will take minutes of the meetings, prepare agendas and secure meeting space?
- What supports will the district provide to the group?



Holding Productive Meetings

- Announce meeting dates and agenda items early enough to give interested parties an opportunity to plan to attend.
- Hold regular meetings at least quarterly.
- Start and end meetings on time.
- Build agendas with input from multiple people.
- Create opportunities for active participation.
- As a group, agree on the process for making decisions.
- Official minutes should be kept on all group meetings and should be made available on request.



Developing Effective “Advisors”

Effective groups provide information on:

- Best practices in teaching & education
- Family & student rights
- District programs and supports
- District policies and procedures
- Effective decision making
- Parent-professional collaboration
- Funding sources and allocations



Effective Practices

- New member orientation
- Established by-laws
- Set goals and priorities
- Necessary services should be provided at group meetings
- Relationship with other district groups
- A report should be presented to the local BOE



Reflection

- Where are you now?
- What do you still need to know?
- What is your next step?



Thank You
for joining us for this Presentation!

Please Complete Evaluations!



For more information contact us at:

SPAN

35 Halsey Street, 4th floor

Newark, NJ 07102

Phone: 973-642-8100

Toll free: 800-654-SPAN

Fax: 973-642-8080

www.spanadvocacy.org