
Power of Partnerships

— From Parent's Perspective —

Parents

Michele Williers

- Parent to 19 year old son who is DeafBlind with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities
- Executive Director, PEAK Parent Center
- Servant & mission driven non-profit leader with a 30 year-career in leadership and administration for youth serving agencies.

Anna Stewart

- Parent to three adult children; 23 year-old with IDD & 27 year-old with physical and emotional disabilities
- BVSD Parent, School and Community Liaison
- SEAC Coordinator and trainer for CDE
- Transition specialist

We are...



Fierce advocates for families of children with disabilities, self advocates, transition aged youth, educators, and professionals.

Valuable contributors on a local, statewide, and national basis in support of schools to improve services and outcomes for students with disabilities.

Beck Williers

- ❖ A 23-week, 15 oz, micro-premature miracle baby
- ❖ Changing the world through the power of strength, determination & perseverance
- ❖ Inclusive education & very strong social skills
- ❖ Fluent in American Sign Language
- ❖ Independence increasing in 18-21 services
- ❖ 19 years old & at Skills Academy this summer before his senior year of HS
- ❖ Honor Roll at Pine Creek High School
- ❖ A huge gamer who gets the high score at PacMan wherever her goes (his name is in Vegas)
- ❖ Offered his first job (without even applying) Chuck E Cheese this summer
- ❖ Plans to attend UCCS



Sabrina Wilsdon

- ❖ First words at 3 years old- now a receptionist!
- ❖ First steps at 2 years old- now a swimmer!
- ❖ Inclusive education
- ❖ Began self-advocating in middle school
 - Didn't want paraeducators
 - Didn't want "life skills" classes
 - Walked to and from school on own
- ❖ Independence increased in 18-21 services
- ❖ Went to ENMU Roswell at 21
- ❖ Now 23 and lives independently
- ❖ Works independently



Goals

1. To understand parent perspectives, experience and expertise
2. To learn strategies for including parent perspectives and input
3. To identify collaborative approaches



What we live with everyday...



- Fear about who loves and cares for our child when we are gone
- That our jobs guiding, managing, and supporting our adult children will never, ever end
- Fatigue and dealing with our own health and wellness needs
- Judgement from everywhere

We live with...

- ❖ A world that is often not accessible, inclusive or accommodating
- ❖ Navigating new & complicated systems and expected to be experts
- ❖ The daily question of how do we advocate successfully for our children
- ❖ Gaps created by fragmented or siloed services



**Let's communicate and
collaborate!**



Parent Voice in IEP

- ❖ Parent/Student input section
- ❖ Have a written agenda
- ❖ Encourage to bring support
- ❖ Give parents draft IEP 5 days before meeting
- ❖ Plan for time and a half for meetings requiring interpreters
- ❖ Don't be afraid to ask questions, pause and process



What we wish for...



- ❖ Call and tell us good news about our child
- ❖ Help us to better understand the transition process
- ❖ Identify people and organizations that can help our child
- ❖ Connect us to DVR/SWAP
- ❖ Encourage your district to have a local SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee)
- ❖ Communicate concerns early

More of our wishes...



- ❖ Focus on the whole person while keeping the big picture in mind
- ❖ Support parents in moving their child into a less restrictive role to increase independence and become a self-determined adult
- ❖ Our children and adults with disabilities will live rich, active lives participating as full members of their schools and communities

Create Networks



Think outside the box

- Build networks for staff
- Build networks for families
- Build networks for students

Let's collaborate and engage our community!

Building Networks for Staff



- ❖ Advocate for all staff meetings
- ❖ Professional Development Opportunities
- ❖ Create Collaboration through Connections
- ❖ Create a place for the discovery and development of capacity
- ❖ Share tools & resources that can be used to intentionally identify networks for transition for students and families

Building Networks for Families



- ❖ Parent groups, training & networking
- ❖ Create new ways to build a sustainable long term network of unpaid support who will be there after you are gone
- ❖ Strategically support the development of meaningful relationships that are capacity focused and lead to living a good life of belonging
- ❖ Safely transfer roles and responsibilities to our child and a trusted group of individuals who love and support them.
- ❖ Share your journey, ask questions, and learn from each other

Building Networks for Students



- ❖ Include peers in IEP Process
- ❖ Consider student led IEPs
- ❖ See students apart from labels and identify their strengths
- ❖ Through my gifts and strengths develop my identity which leads to capacity - based connections and relationships with others in the community
- ❖ Intentionally invite others in to participate in my life in meaningful and practical ways
- ❖ Take Up Space

As we look into the eyes of our young people and their families, we see abundance, potential and a path towards a more just and inclusive world.

And together, taking action in the powerful ways you all embody, we can manifest that change.

Thank you!

— On behalf of parents throughout —
Colorado
