



The Parent Information Center of Delaware

Inform. Educate. Advocate.

EDUCATION CONNECTION



Summer Edition— June-August, 2019

Inside this Edition

Finding Time to
 “Unplug”1
 Parent Focus.....2
 Swank Autism Center.....2
 Focusing on Literacy this
 Summer.....3
 IDEA vs 504.....4

Mission

Advancing effective parent engagement in education. We are especially focused on supporting parents of children with disabilities and youth self-advocates to assist them in gaining the knowledge and skills to access appropriate special education programs and related services.

About PIC

PIC is home to Delaware’s Parent Training and Information Center, (PTI)

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Finding Time to “Unplug”

Because of technology...

A child with a physical disability discovers a whole new world playing video games with their friends. What a step forward for inclusion! A teen monitors her own blood sugar level with the click of a button. What a wonderful way to practice independence! A student uses an “app” to learn how to read. What a great enhancement to instructional time!

With a wide range of customization, the benefits of technology cannot be underscored enough. But how many times have you felt like you were looking at the back of your child’s head as she leans over texting or posting to social media? It seems that today’s youth are spending more and more time attached to an electronic device. The same technology that we praise, is the same technology that causes concern.

Technology and Mental Health

Mental-health surveys indicate that today’s youth are the most anxious ever and while experts point to a number of reasons, anxiety over social media is certainly highlighted.

It is reported that adolescents who spent more time using new social media and electronic devices were more likely to report mental health issues, while those who spent more time on non-screen activities (in-person social interaction, sports, exercise, print media) were less likely to report such issues.

The combination of cutting edge technology and social media is fast paced, habit forming, visual and easy-to-access, so it will continue to forcefully propel us into the future. Being mindful of the anxiety it may bring is essential.

As adults, we must first “disconnect” from the same addictive devices and encourage, model and practice other activities that are proven to help reduce anxiety such as:

- Deep breathing exercises
- Positive self-talk
- Healthy nutrition and sleep
- Yoga, meditation, exercise, massage
- Music
- Exploring nature

Learn how to enjoyably “disconnect” and you may just find a more rewarding way to re-connect with a child!



Sources:

NAMI <https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Public-Policy/Mental-Health-in-Schools>
 NEA <http://neatoday.org/2018/09/13/mental-health-in-schools/>
 SAGE journals <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2167702617723376>

Parent Focus—Andrea Creed

“Choices are the hinges of destiny.” ~Edwin Markham

Andrea Creed has made a lot of really difficult decisions in the last few years. She moved from Massachusetts to be closer to family here in Delaware when her son, Adrian, was diagnosed with Autism. She and her husband had planned to move to New Jersey, but plans changed and they instead found themselves in Kent County, Delaware with very little information about resources and lots of questions about how to proceed. Andrea describes the time as isolating and chaotic. She reached out to a number of different organizations within Delaware for assistance, but didn't know where to start and found the system of calling different organizations for different purposes frustrating. Andrea heard about the Parent Information Center of Delaware (PIC) while participating in the Partners in Policymaking program. She had heard about PIC before, but it took a referral from another parent to understand how the services could assist her and her family. Over the next few weeks, she received information, support, and one-on-one assistance from PIC Project Coordinator, Christina Andrews. As a

result, Andrea says that today, “My son is in a better placement receiving the supports that he needs, and we are hopeful for the future.” If you, like Andrea and her family, are having difficulty navigating the education system and advocating for the supports and accommodations your child needs, call PIC at 302.999.7394 or email at picofdel@picofdel.org.



Partner Focus: Swank Autism Center at A.I. duPont Hospital

The Swank Autism Center at Nemours features specially designed physical space and highly trained staff. We provide medical diagnoses, comprehensive medical and psychological evaluations, treatment plans, parent education and various aspects of intervention. We work as a team. Together, we create a collaborative partnership to meet each child's and family's specific needs.

Nemours is creating autism-friendly spaces and experiences, not only in the Swank Center, but in other areas of the hospital as well. An autism-friendly environment takes into account the sensory needs of children with ASD in terms of the lighting, décor, acoustics, and flow of traffic from the families' entrance through their exit. The goal is to create a calming effect, anticipate needs and triggers, and minimize sensory overload. The Emergency Department at duPont Hospital for Children, for example, follows a protocol with autism-friendly accommodations to make visits go more smoothly for children with ASD and their families.

To help improve access to services, Nemours has added the professional staff and technical support needed to perform evaluations without long delays and to offer more problem-focused interventions, such as a feeding clinic and therapy groups. In addition, Nemours coordinates services with schools, educators, and community-based providers and counts among its collaborators the University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies and Autism Delaware. The goal is to create a more coordinated care and support network for families; to enhance and expedite screening, assessment and referral practices; and to help families navigate the early childhood and school systems.

If your child is diagnosed with ASD, many resources and support services can help. Your doctor and care team can point you in the right direction.

- submitted by Carrie Sewell-Roberts, Swank Autism Center and Developmental Medicine at Nemours

Focusing on Literacy this Summer

Libraries have amazing resources for every member of the family in person and online. There are also story times, summer reading events, and classes happening at libraries throughout the state.

There are many reasons to incorporate regular reading into your upcoming summer plans. Not only will it help your child avoid summer reading loss that results in lower levels of reading proficiency, but you will give your child an opportunity to explore new interests, develop new passions, and fight summer boredom. When they return to school in the Fall, they will be ready to increase their proficiency and will have lots of things to discuss with their new teacher and classmates.

Looking for additional ways to engage your child's reading this summer? Don't have any? No problem! Check out some of the amazing resources below:

Reading Rockets <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/top-10-resources-summer-reading>

Language Magazine <https://www.languagemagazine.com/2017/04/24/summer-literacy-resources/>



Book Source <https://www.booksource.com/summer-reading/>

Edutopia <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/summer-learning-resources-matt-davis>

Department of Defense (for military families) <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/recreation-travel-shopping/recreation/libraries/department-of-defense-morale-welfare-and-recreation-summer-reading-program>

National Center of Improving Literacy <https://improvingliteracy.org/kid-zone>

Special Education (IDEA) and Accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Parents of children with disabilities often ask for help in understanding the differences between special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504).

There are significant differences in who is eligible under each of the two laws. To be eligible for special education, a child must meet the criteria for one of fourteen disability categories **AND** require special education and related services because of the child's disability, while to be eligible for accommodations under Section 504 the definition of "disability" is much broader and there is no requirement that the child need special education services because of the disability. Also, the requirements under the IDEA for the special education and related services to which a child with a disability may be eligible, are much more specific and comprehensive than the requirements related to the accommodations that

must be made available for a child under Section 504.

For more detailed information about the differences between the two laws and how they affect your child, please see the following resources:

A Comparison of ADA, IDEA, and Section 504, a resource provided by the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund <https://dredf.org/legal-advocacy/laws/a-comparison-of-ada-idea-and-section-504/>

The Difference between IEPs and 504 Plans, a resource provided by Understood.org <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/special-services/504-plan/the-difference-between-ieps-and-504-plans>



The Parent Information Center of Delaware, Inc.

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A Word from PIC's Executive Director



Why it Matters...

"Without PICs help, I would not have been prepared for my son's IEP meeting. They met with me to review his IEP, and write down my con-

cerns so I was prepared to participate. I am now more confident and feel better prepared to participate in my son's meetings." These are just some of the ways parents, caregivers and professionals let us know how PIC has helped them advocate for children. Parent engagement has and will always be a critical factor in the success of our students. When families are informed, knowledgeable and valued, sustainable partnerships between families and schools can be realized. There's also no greater feeling for an educator than to see a child succeed, especially when he masters a breakthrough skill! Educators want and encourage feedback from families, because they understand it is only with a true partnership that our children are most successful. This is why we do what we do! For more than 35 years, PIC has been the go-to for families of children with disabilities, educators and the professionals who work with them, for information on special education, student and parent rights and family engagement. As Executive Director of Parent Information Center of

Delaware, it has been my mission to continue the work on improving the educational outcomes for all students, and supporting families as their child's best advocate. It will always be our goal to *Inform. Educate. & Advocate.* **Inform** parents about their rights in special education, and resources related to their child's disability. **Educate** on topics such as IDEA, student advocacy, 504, and effective communication with the school, and **Advocate** for improved outcomes for **all** students with disabilities and their families, such as increased funding of programs and legislative efforts supporting students with disabilities, and serving on committees to ensure students with disabilities and their families are represented. Let's face it, at the end of the day, families want their children to have access to quality education and every opportunity to succeed in school. They want to be informed partners in education, who are not only invited to the table, but whose voices are also counted. Both parents and educators want peace of mind, knowing when children arrive at school, they are ready to learn, and have the proper resources & accommodations to support learning in a safe and nurturing environment that prepares them to be productive citizens. It has been my honor serving students and families for 10 years, and I'm elated to serve in my new role! Without your continuous help, support and partnership, this would not be possible! Thank you!