

EXTRA SPECIAL EDITION

Parent Newsletter

Winter 2018-2019

Welcome to the **Winter Extra Special Edition Newsletter** for 2018-2019. Each issue contains information for parents and caregivers regarding children in the Exceptional Student Education (ESE) program in our district.

Exercise with Your Child

Parents who exercise with their children are not only teaching them **how to live a healthy lifestyle**, they are also **reinforcing the family bonds and creating wonderful family traditions**.

It's fantastic for super-busy parents who wouldn't get as much exercise as they need without incorporating their kids in the process.

In case you need some motivation here are some of the benefits:

- Improves sleep by promoting transition to deeper sleep stages
- Helps to keep blood sugar and appetite levels normal
- Aids in achieving & maintaining a healthy body composition, including lean muscle mass and reduced fat mass
- Boosts feelings of overall wellbeing and emotional health
- Has an anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory effect and therefore boasts anti-aging properties
- Assists to maintain a healthy immune system... essential when parent duties are in order



Florida Inclusion Network

What Does the Research Say About Inclusion? 30 years of research shows that students with mild to significant disabilities in inclusive settings:

- ◆ gain social and communication skills
- ◆ develop meaningful friendships and a sense of belonging
- ◆ increase participation and independence
- ◆ have more academic objectives in their IEPs
- ◆ increase academic achievement
- ◆ develop positive behaviors
- ◆ take part in more school activities
- ◆ have fewer absences
- ◆ better prepared for college, career and community living

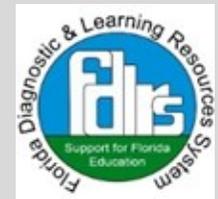
The Florida Inclusion Network offers many resources to assist parents. Visit the FIN website at www.FloridainclusionNetwork.com or contact your FIN Facilitators, Caren Prichard and Emily McCann, at 850-638-6131 x 2206 or email: caren.prichard@paec.org or emily.mccann@paec.org.

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"Set your goals high, and don't stop till you get there."
~Bo Jackson



Social Skills

In a world where social media and technology take over, it is important to look at the ways in which social interactions are changing. Below are a few ways to encourage and promote healthy social skills.

Practice social skills with your child. Provide social settings in which your child will be successful.

Role play self-introduction. How do you begin talking to someone you know nothing about? This is a fear that many children have. Role play with your child self-introductions; you be your child and allow them to be the 'new friend' you are meeting. This can open discussion to questions such as, "How do I join in a game that is already started? Or How do I invite someone over?"

Play a game of Emotions Charades. Children & young people who have limited face to face interactions with peers have the difficult challenge of reading other's emotional cues. In this game, write down on paper a few different emotions. Visibly express the emotion on your face. Then use other ways to express the emotion in terms of body language (ie feeling angry might be observed by clenched fists or tightly crossed arms across chest). Use this to discuss situations that could lead to the emotion.

Match tone of voice to an emotion. This can be done in numerous ways from charades, role play, voice recording, or finding examples from tv shows or movies. Help your child/young person identify an emotion being expressed through an individual's deliverance. (ie if someone is sad, they may talk in a quiet, low tone; if angry, they may talk in a loud, mean tone)

Practice taking turns. Taking turns and practicing patience are often difficult tasks. Try playing a game , completing a coloring sheet together by alternating turns, or having a conversation without interrupting each other.

Use the child's interests. If your child has a particular hobby or interest, use this as a tool to discuss social skills in the realm of what is important to them. (ie. If your child plays hockey, asking questions "How can your team work together?" "What can you do if you notice someone is having a bad game to help them feel better?")

Volunteer with your teen for a charity. Volunteering will create an opportunity for you and your teen to work together. They can rely on you to lead by example and show the appropriate etiquette in working with others whom may not be their peers.

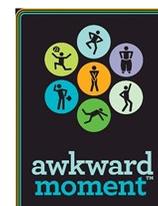
Play a game of Say Anything . Say Anything is a board game where you can respond to questions in any way you choose. This is a fun and lighthearted way of improving communication. You as the parent, can point out emotions you see in your teen when they share their response to the game. (ie. I can see by the way you were jumping up and down in your seat that you were really excited to share your response to the question, "What is the best movie of all time?"



Role play job interviewing skills. Many teens experience anxiety surrounding the topic of job interviewing. Providing your child with a list of interview questions and you being the interviewee allows your teen to have a visual example of the proper way to engage in interviewing scenarios.

Write a letter asking for help. Instead of just quickly giving your teen what they need, ask them to write a letter to ask for help. Often, writing out our feelings and/or needs allows us to step back from the situation that is causing us stress and focus on what we are feeling and what we need.

Engage in the card game Awkward Moment™. This is a fun and entertaining game made for teens. The game discusses uncomfortable scenarios where each player has to submit the best reaction card per case. This makes for a fun opportunity to discuss uncomfortable social situations.



Tips For Parents

- ◆ Tell your child with words and a hug at least once a day that you love him/her unconditionally.
- ◆ Have a regular “special” time for each child in the family.
- ◆ Think positively about discipline. Set limits. Knowing there are limits on behavior helps kids feel safe. Through limits they begin to understand that their actions, positive or negative, result in predictable consequences. Be consistent! By giving choices and consequences, parents provide a structure for good decision making.
- ◆ Consequences for inappropriate behavior should be immediate, brief, and appropriate for misbehavior.
- ◆ Talk positively. Tell what you want rather than what you do not want.
- ◆ Notice and praise your child’s good behavior. Use descriptive praise. Explain what your child did to deserve praise.
- ◆ Promote your child’s good self-esteem rather than tearing it down.
- ◆ Be sure to have your child’s full attention when giving instructions. Keep instructions simple and clear.
- ◆ When giving instructions or showing your child how to do something, use as many senses as you can. (Seeing, Hearing, Touching, etc.)
- ◆ Use hand signals to help your child pay attention.
- ◆ Assist your child with organizing tasks and provide plenty of time for tasks to be completed.
- ◆ Provide a routine at home.
- ◆ Control the amount of background noise and distractions in the home. Some people react negatively to loud &/or background noise in the environment.
- ◆ Provide frequent opportunities for physical activity.
- ◆ If your child has trouble with temper tantrums, provide a quiet, safe place in the house where he/she can calm down without too much stimulation.
- ◆ Keep your sense of humor! Keep your voice down, your anger under control, and talk positively. Walk away from the situation, count to 50, etc. to help you as the adult stay under control.
- ◆ Limit the number of decisions your child must make. Discuss the decision he/she makes using guidance to the best decision as needed.
- ◆ Limit the amount of screen time. Read to your child. Even older children like to be read to and they learn many skills by listening to you read aloud to them.
- ◆ Stay in close touch with your child’s teacher. Working together is a tremendous benefit to your child.



McKay Scholarship

Dear Parent or Guardian:

We would like to inform you that your child **may** be eligible to participate in the John M. McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program, commonly known as the McKay Scholarship Program. This program was created to provide educational options to parents of students with disabilities. Currently, more than 30,000 Florida students are participating in this program.

By participating in the McKay Scholarship Program, your student may be able to attend a different public school in your district, attend a public school in an adjacent district or receive a scholarship to attend a participating private school.

To be eligible for the McKay Scholarship Program, a student must apply for the program prior to withdrawing from public school. The student must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or 504 Accommodation Plan issued under s. 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (with duration of more than six months), and

- Have been enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school (Grades K-12) for the school year prior to applying for a scholarship (foster students may be exempt from this requirement); or
- Have been a pre-kindergarten student who was enrolled and reported for funding in a Florida public school during the school year prior to applying for a scholarship; or
- Have received specialized instructional services under the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program from an approved provider pursuant to s. 1002.66 during the previous school year; or
- Have attended the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind during the preceding school year's student membership surveys (Grades K-12).

To find out if your student is eligible, you may apply for the McKay Scholarship Program on the School Choice website at www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/ Select the **McKay Scholarships** link, then **Parents**, and then the link titled **Apply for a McKay Scholarship**.

To learn more about your child's educational options, please contact your school district's Parental Choice Office. You may also contact the Florida Department of Education, Office of Independent Education and Parental Choice Information Hotline at 1-800-447-1636, or visit the School Choice website at <http://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/> and click the **McKay Scholarships** link.

The McKay intent to participate for the 2019-2020 school year opens in February. To potentially be eligible for the full scholarship amount (100% of your state generated funding) at an approved private school, the intent must be filed by July 3, and the student must be enrolled online by August 2. For 75% - File by September 2, enroll by October 2. For 50% - File by December 3, enroll by January 2. For 25% - File by January 31, enroll by March 2.

Please note this serves to notify you that your child may be eligible to participate in the McKay Scholarship Program. **This does not guarantee your student's eligibility.**



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FLORIDA DIAGNOSTIC AND LEARNING RESOURCES SYSTEM

Panhandle Area Educational Consortium
753 West Boulevard Chipley, FL 32428
(850) 638-6131 ~ (877) 873-7232 ~ Fax: (850) 638-6142

website: www.paec.org

Serving Bay, Calhoun, Franklin, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Walton, and Washington counties



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