



NEWSLETTER

Summer, 2018

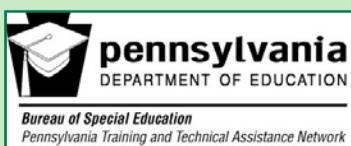
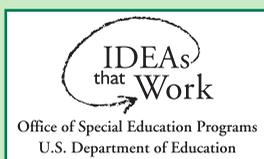
FAMILIES TO THE MAX (F2MAX) grew from Project MAX, a grant designed to increase opportunities for students with the most complex needs to learn the same school work as their classmates without disabilities. Since then, **FAMILIES TO THE MAX** has grown to include families maximizing the potential of all children receiving special education services.

Through family, educational, and community collaboration, we can overcome obstacles and promote change and expectations for all children. When we work together and presume competence (believe in the abilities of all students), everyone can learn and be proud of their accomplishments.

Our Mission: Leading change for children with diverse needs by maximizing opportunities in the home, classroom, and community.

Our Vision: Empower students, families, and communities to believe that all children can reach their maximum potential.

PROJECT MAX PARTNERS:



THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING INVOLVED

by Linda Carmona-Bell



Linda Carmona-Bell

“But I don’t have time to get involved. . .”

We as parents and guardians of children with disabilities hear constant appeals to get involved in groups and committees. We hear that more family participation is needed to give the family point of view. But who wants to speak in front of people? Who wants others to dive into their personal business? Let’s face it . . . Who has time?

You do! Family members of individuals with disabilities do have time to hear and learn more about things that will make your family members have a better quality of life. You do have time to find out things that you never knew before that could make your everyday life easier. Sometimes it is just giving your valuable opinion to a project that will impact thousands of individuals, including your family. Sometimes, it is using one hour of one day in a meeting to learn things that that will make your life easier.

School

When we hear “family involvement” in a school setting, it can mean showing up for a meeting, asking questions about grades or the topic being studied, or many other things. **When we participate in meetings such as our child’s IEP or 504 meeting, we become our child’s voice—their advocate—the person who is representing their needs.**

Research shows that family involvement absolutely increases student achievements for all students.

The Community

Family involvement in the community activities that affect your family member with disabilities has many forms. It may be:

- attending a meeting in your local area to learn new things
- asking questions about policies, decisions, or new programs
- providing your opinion to a committee so that your specific concerns can be considered



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It can mean so much more! No matter how you look at it, the benefits of being involved is worth it!

My Experience

I started getting involved when my 17 year-old was 4 years old. I have not stopped. I have learned more from other family members and by attending meetings at local and state levels than I would have ever learned from the school district. I have shared things I know with families. Better yet, the things I've learned have benefitted my child in school, work, and play by providing options that she would have never known. ***Isn't it worth a try?***

Where to Begin

Start small with a local group, or join the **FAMILIES TO THE MAX:** Statewide Family Network. Its mission is: Leading change for children with diverse needs by maximizing opportunities in the home, classroom, and community. The network's vision is to empower students, families, and communities to believe that all children can reach their maximum potential. Doesn't this sound awesome?

If I were a betting person, I would bet that by taking the step to be more involved in speaking up for your child, doors will open that you never knew were closed! You will be glad you took that first step!



SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE



The Branding & Marketing team of **FAMILIES TO THE MAX** is collecting stories from families, special education directors, principals, siblings, peers, teachers, etc. on observations and experiences in a child's home, school or community that have conveyed the maximizing principles of Presuming Competence and Fostering High Expectations. In

sharing these stories we expect to broaden the view of how we and others think of our children. Our collective stories will affirm, give hope and inspire others to promote and lead systems change.

Have a story? Feel free to email: Lorie at lbrew@pealcenter.org or Enid at max@huneinc.org. We look forward to hearing from you!



FAMILIES TO THE MAX NETWORK FALL 2017 GATHERING



In October 2017, active members in the Parent Network participated in a two-day sustainability and expansion workshop. Through the workshop, attendees established six workgroups that are committed to continue the tenets of Project MAX for students with complex needs.

One of the results of this workshop is the development of a new name for the network.

MEET THE PATTAN PARENT CONSULTANTS

The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) recognizes the importance of the parent perspective. The **FAMILIES TO THE MAX** network includes PaTTAN Parent Consultants who wear two hats. They work closely with professionals while providing crucial insight into the family experience.



Judy Baker in Western PA can be reached at: jbaker@pattan.net.



Jacqui DiDomenico in Eastern PA can be reached at: jdidomenico@pattan.net.



Linda Cartwright in Eastern PA can be reached at: lcartwright@pattan.net.