



Institute for Families and Communities of English/Multilingual Learners

Advocacy Skills for Parents

April 30, 2022

Presenters:
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IncludeNYC

In the chat:

- 1. Name**
- 2. Borough**
- 3. What is your preferred language?**

Purpose



- Learn about education advocacy and how to build strong parent-student-school connections
- Foster a cross-cultural community to develop meaningful relationships relevant to English learners and multilingual/multicultural students and families
- Hear from diverse families and community leaders on culture, language and identity

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Institute for Families and Communities of English/Multilingual Learners

WORKSHOP MENU

Date	Time	Topic	Organization
Tuesday, April 14	5:15pm - 6:30pm Hybrid	Centering Culture, Identity, Language in the Home and School	Division of Multilingual Learners Citywide Council on English Language Learners and Microsoft
Tuesday, April 26	5:30PM - 6:30PM	Supporting Undocumented Students and Families in K-12	Immschools
Thursday, April 28	5:30PM - 6:30PM Online	Special Education and English Language Learners	Advocates for Children
Saturday, April 30	10:30AM - 11:30AM Online	Advocacy Skills for Parents	IncludeNYC
Tuesday, May 17	5:30PM - 6:30PM Online	How to Prepare for the Annual ELL Parent Teacher Conference	New York State Association of Bilingual Education
Thursday, May 19	5:30PM - 6:30PM Online	Post-Secondary Oppotunities for Immigrant and Undocumented	Immschools
Saturday, May 21	10:30AM - 11:30AM Online	Title III and Family Engagement	Division of Multilingual Learners, NYCDOE
Thursday, June 2	5:30PM - 6:30PM Online	Parent Panel: Immigrant Community Leadership	Immschools
Saturday, June 4	10:30AM - 11:30AM Online	Starting Free Adult Education for ELLs in Your Community	Office of Adult Education, NYCDOE
Tuesday, June 7	5:30PM - 6:30PM Online	Supporting Bilingualism in the Home	Division of Multilingual Learners, NYCDOE
Saturday,July 16	11:00AM - 5:30PM In Person	Mini Workshops and End of Year Celebration	Division of Multilingual Learners and Microsoft

Agenda: Critical Skills for Effective Advocacy



- Understand systems and structures
- Know your rights and responsibilities
- Understand your child's special needs
- Practice good organization and clear effective communication
- Know how to resolve disagreements

Advocacy Activity/Tool



ADVOCACY SKILLS

An issue I am advocating for:

Skill 1: Understand the system you are dealing with

Skill 2: Know your rights and responsibilities

Skill 3: Understand...

...your child's disability	...your need
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ADVOCACY SKILLS

Skill 4: Practice good organization

Skill 5: Practice clear and effective communication

Skill 6: Know how to resolve disagreements

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What system or organization is it?

- Department of Education
- Public System (OPWDD, Medicaid)
- Medical Insurance Service Provider
- Other Type of Organization or Company

Plan for Success



- Identify the system (or systems) you will seek services from
- Identify your point of contact
- Identify key language and terminology
- Ask what steps must be taken to get the services for your child
- Set up online accounts
- Learn the requirements for eligibility
- Identify which documents you will need to present
- What is their method of resolution?
 - Mediation, hearing, arbitration, appeal
 - ***Tip: Read letters of rejection, contracts, benefit summaries, and “Family Guide to Special Education” to identify options***

****Immigraton
Status
Does Not
Matter!***

Example:

Seeking Special Education Services from the NYC Department of Education



- Eligibility is determined through evaluation process
 - The Department of Education must conduct evaluations in all areas of suspected disability.
 - Medical diagnosis of conditions that impact a child's education should be submitted to the school's education planning (IEP) team.
 - Independent evaluations by professionals may be submitted to the IEP team.
 - Information gathered is used to determine eligibility:
 - **Does the student meets the criteria for one or more disability classification?** Autism, Deafness, Deaf-Blindness, Emotional Disturbance, Hearing Impairment, Learning Disability, Intellectual Disability, Multiple Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Speech or Language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment
 - Does the student require special education programs and/or services because of the disability?

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Every System is Different



Example: All evaluations are not equal

Some NYC Department of Education evaluations don't meet the criteria required by other agencies or organizations, e.g. OPWDD

Know Your Rights and Responsibilities



- Attend workshops
- Read websites
- Read any available materials, including guides like the “Family Guide to Special Education Services,” and information mailed, emailed, or distributed
- Ask questions
- Join parent support groups
- Get involved - become a Parent Member

Understand your Child's Special Needs



Understanding your child's disability or your need helps you define describe, and communicate what you wish to obtain from a system or organization.

For example, **understanding your child's disability helps you:**

- Discuss your child's needs and strengths clearly
- Identify and advocate for the services, assistive technology, and accommodations your child needs
- Influence the type of educational, community, or medical services your child receives
- Teach others who may need to understand (e.g. family, friends, public)

Practice Good Organization



- Follow procedural steps
- Put it in writing
- Keep a communication log
- Keep records organized and in one place
- Save everything

Practice Clear and Effective WRITTEN Communication

- Send document to the person who can make necessary changes.
- Sign it, date it, and include your contact information.
- Clearly identify who you are advocating for (name, date of birth, ID number).
- Focus on one or two issues.
- Make sure your document is no longer than one page.
- ***Tip: Keep copies of all documents***

Practice Clear and Effective SPOKEN Communication

- Rehearse what you want to say
- Listen and ask questions
- Speak clearly
- Show respect and expect it from others
- Rephrase for clarification
- Problem solve together
- Use phrases such as “my child will benefit from...” or “he needs...” rather than “I want...”
- ***Tip: Write a follow up letter to clarify or correct information, and to create a paper trail.***

Know How to Resolve Disagreements



- Talk to people you know first
- There may be a simple way to solve a problem that is effective
- USE YOUR OTHER ADVOCACY SKILLS - Identify the steps to solve the problem, then continue step by step, documenting as you go
- Know that there is almost always another step you can take

Formal Dispute Resolution



Use the right tool for the job.

- Next steps for formal dispute resolution depend on the organization you are dealing with and what types of resolution are used:
 - Mediation
 - Impartial Hearings
 - Fair hearings
 - Complaints
 - Appeals

Skills Checklist



- What have you learned?
- Is there a skill you hope to improve?
- Is there a strategy that you plan to try?

“The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”

- Alice Walker

Before you go!



- Complete the Exit Survey - ***Exit survey link in Chat***
- Tell a colleague about the next session with NYSABE, NYC Delegation Region II on How to Prepare for the Annual ELL Parent Teacher Conference on Tuesday, May 17, 2022 at 5:30PM

We're always happy to hear from you!

Email us at DML@schools.nyc.gov