

**Difficult
People, Places,
& Things**






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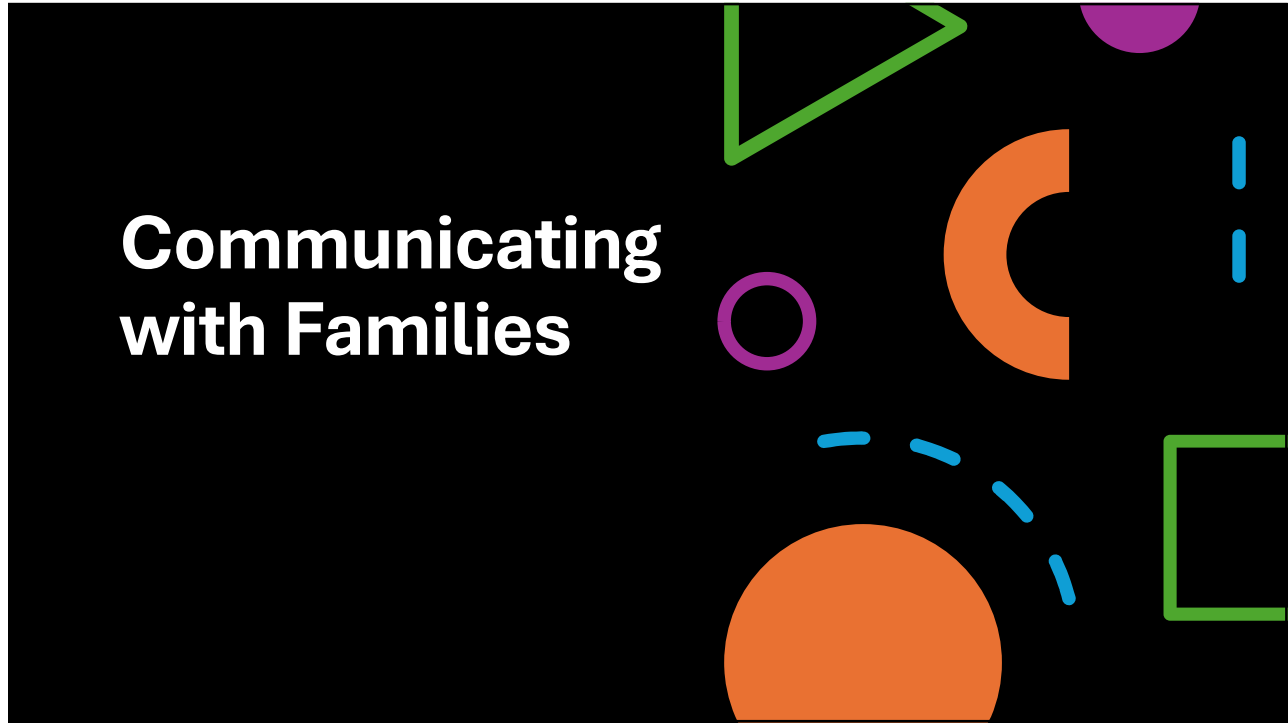
MASE Best Practices Conference
May 14, 2026

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Agenda

-  Communicating with Families
-  Conducting Effective Meetings
-  Responding to Family Requests
-  Staff Dynamics
-  Q & A

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Communicating with Families

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Navigating Custodial Disputes

- PARENT RIGHTS & DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY**
- IEP TEAM MEETING ATTENDANCE**
- NAVIGATING DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN PARENTS**

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When to Consider a Communication Plan

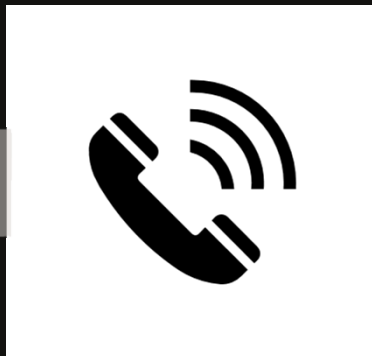
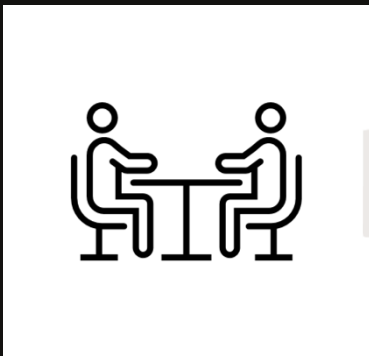
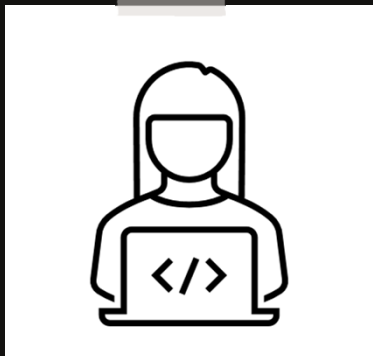


EXCESSIVE
COMMUNICATION?



INAPPROPRIATE OR HOSTILE
COMMUNICATIONS?

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Forest Grove Sch. Dist. v. Student (D. Or. 2018)

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Other Examples of Communication Plans

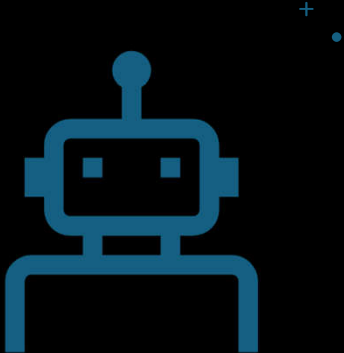
Broward Cty. (FL) Sch. Dist. (OCR 2018)

Flagstaff (AZ) Junior Academy (OCR 2016)

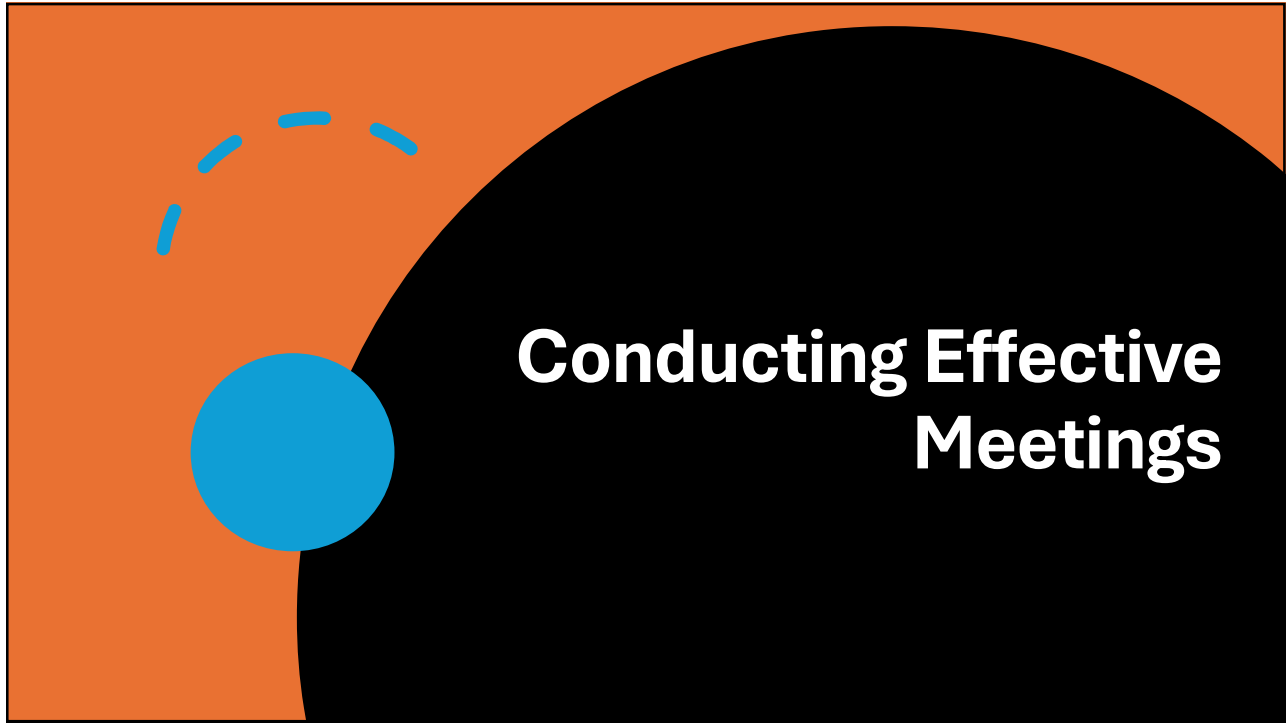
Ringwood (NJ) Sch. Dist., 80 IDELR 232 (OCR 2021)

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Responding to AI-Generated Family Communications



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Best Practices for Conducting Effective Meetings

Be Planful

Create an Agenda

Consider the Space/Environment

Everyone Brings Their Expertise

Focus (and re-focus) on the Student

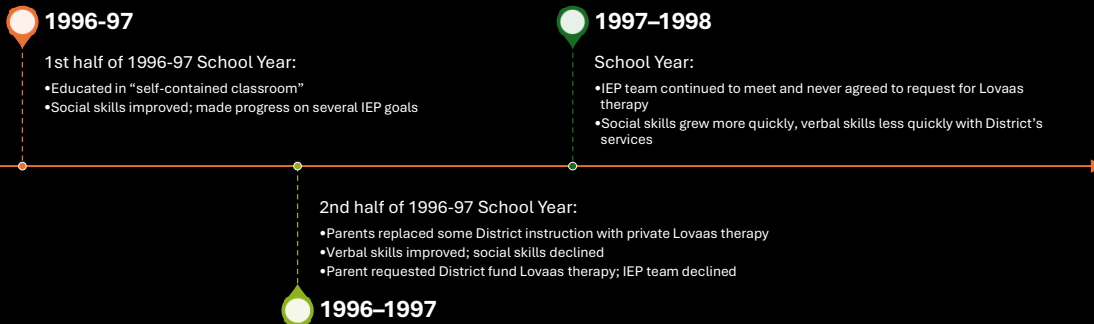
Set Boundaries When Needed

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Responding to Family Requests regarding Providers and Methodology

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Gill v. Columbia 93 Sch. Dist. (8th Cir. 2000)



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Deal v. Hamilton Cty. Bd Educ. (6th Cir.)

District and Zachary

- District invested in TEACCH program and used it for all students with ASD
- Zachary, student with ASD, was placed for part of the school day in a regular education classroom

IEP Meetings

- Modifications were made to IEPs based on parent input
- Regular education teachers did not attend all the IEP meetings

Disputes that Lead to Rejection of IEP

- Parents wanted Zachary to spend more time in the regular education classroom
- Parents wanted Zachary to be instructed with ABA therapy, which was denied based on cost even though all parties agreed it was appropriate for Zachary

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*A.M. v. N.Y.
City Dep't of
Educ (2d Cir.
2017)*

- IDEA-eligible Student with ASD
- All outside evaluators and educators familiar with the Student believed he needed 1:1 ABA therapy to make progress
- The School was “bound, at a minimum, to require some level of ABA support in a 1:1 classroom setting”

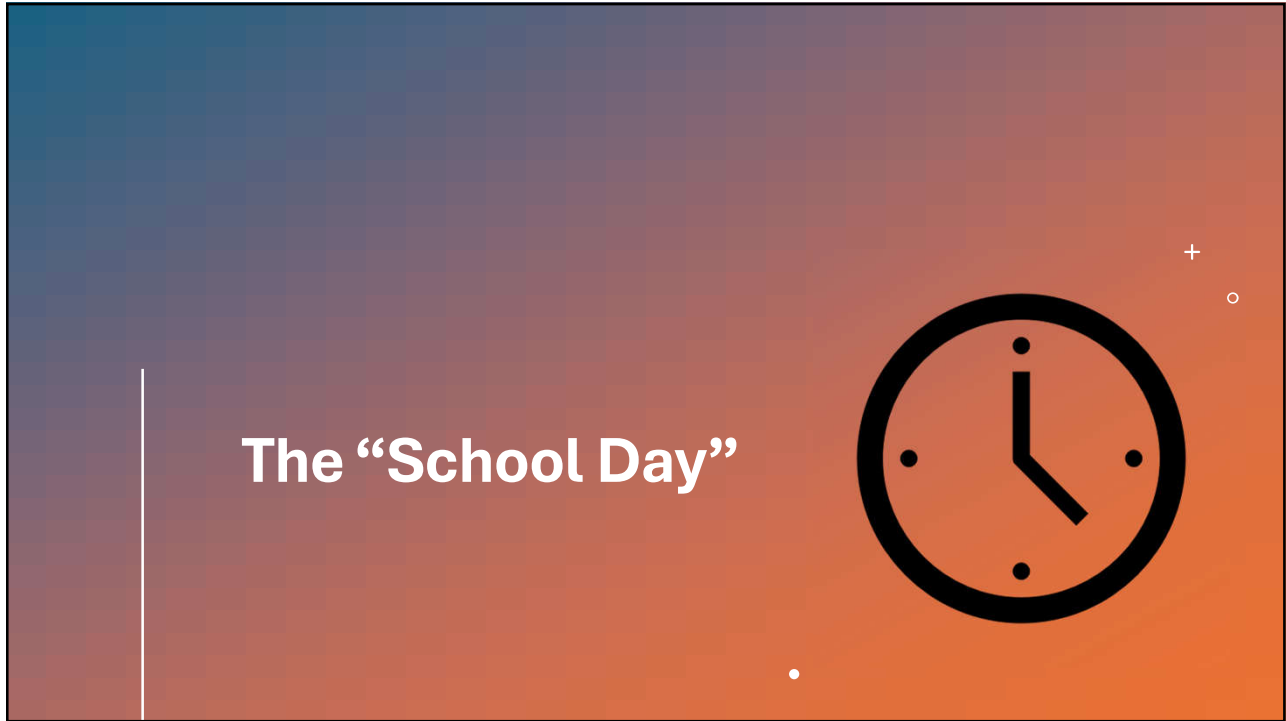
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Outside Providers

At School?

Outside of
School?

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D.L. ex rel. Landon v. St. Louis City Sch. Dist. (8th Cir. 2020)

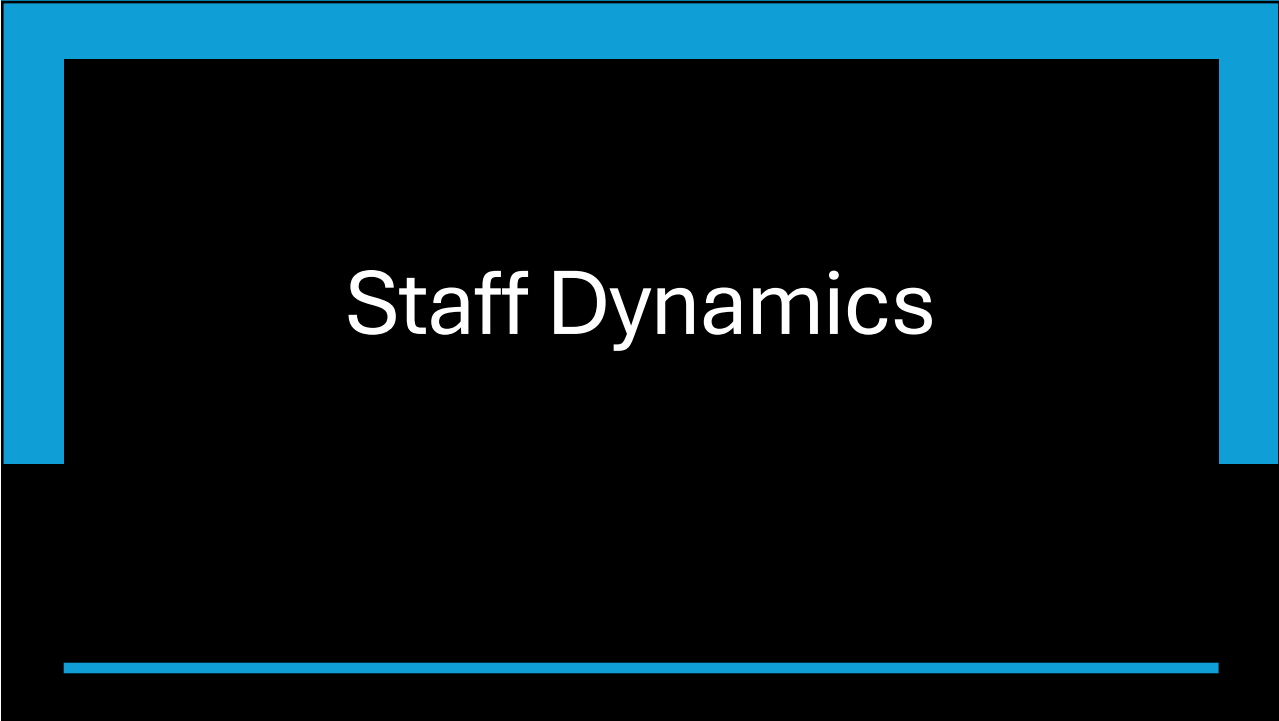
- Student with ASD had special education toileting and behavioral needs
- Student's prior District school no longer had space
- District proposed placement at a new District school:
 - No students with ASD nor ASD-specific resources;
 - Staff lacked experience with toileting issues; &
 - Only beneficial for students who could control their behavior.
- Parents sought reimbursement for private school placement at a school:
 - ASD-focused resources and experienced staff; &
 - That produced progress.

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Thompson ex rel. M.C. v. Lakeville Area Schs. (D. Minn. 2024)

- The Parent requested that a DCD classroom be developed at the Student's neighborhood school
- The District declined the request because:
 - It was "unworkable;"
 - An individualized assessment of the Student's needs; &
 - Another District school's DCD program was more appropriate for the Student.

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Staff Dynamics

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General Education & Special Education Staff

- Communication and Mindset
- Data Practices
- Implementation

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Q & A

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