



Concurrent Session: Collaboration Compass: Engaging Parents on a Path to PROGRESS Transcript

Alex Marken: And with that we'll go ahead and get started on the presentation. We'll begin by just briefly introducing ourselves. And my name is Alex Marken and I'm a researcher here at AIR and a technical assistance provider for the PROGRESS Center. I work with two of our partnership sites located in Rhode Island, and I'm also involved in developing the modules and some other resources that you may have heard about during the conference thus far. And Stacy would you like to introduce yourself?

Stacy Hirt: Sure. Hello, hi! I'm Stacy Hirt based out of Columbia, Missouri. I also work with AIR and I serve as a knowledge development researcher, a mouthful, for the PROGRESS Center so really helping get that research to practice. Excited to be here.

Alex Marken: And Nicole is our other presenter today. Will you please introduce yourself?

Nicole Bucka: Hi Nicole Bucka. I'm here as PROGRESS Center advisor. In my professional role I do MTSS implementation work and support, that is supporting educators and administrators in Rhode Island, and as you might have noticed earlier, I'm also a parent of 2 children with IEPs.

Alex Marken: Thank you Nicole, we're thrilled that you've been able to join us today. And for our session our outcomes are to increase knowledge and awareness of some challenges that families experience in navigating the IEP process and to share some tools that schools and districts can use to increase that family caregiver knowledge and confidence, and how families can support the development and implementation of high-quality educational programs for their child with a disability.

And then we'll also spotlight how Rhode Island is working to help local educators improve family engagement. So, we've introduced ourselves, and we would love to hear more about who's been joining us this afternoon. So, we're going to launch a poll and if you could please include what's your current role that led you to the session? So are you a special educator, a general educator, an administrator, parent, or if you have another role and go ahead and put that in the chat.

Let's see the results, so similar to our last session actually, about half of everyone in the room are special educators a couple of administrators, and we have some others, including nonprofit, teacher education and programs, paraprofessional, teachers aid, school psychologist, special education consultants and parent. And so welcome!

We are so thrilled to have so many different diverse roles and perspective joining us today. And we're also going to do quick breakout session. So, we'll be putting you all into groups of 2 to 3. And during that time, take a moment to briefly introduce yourself, and a prompt to consider is sharing a strategy that has worked for you to help enhance parent and school collaboration.



So, in those various different experiences that we just referenced, if there's any strategies that you found to be particularly successful or helpful to make that collaboration, and communication better? We would love to hear that and when we come back, we'll put it all in the chat so that everybody can learn from one another and share those strategies. With that Stephanie is going to go ahead and put us in breakout.

We would love to hear what types of strategies you all talked about in your breakout session. So go ahead and put in the put in the chat. Any strategies that you found to be particularly effective, or that anyone else in your group shared that you think others would like to learn from? We can always use more strategies.

I see Nicole said, being a good listener, having common goals, having informal conversations. Less intimidating early questionnaires, being community oriented as opposed to hierarchical. Yeah. For those that have just joined us as we come back from our breakout rooms, we would just love to hear what types of strategies you all discuss in your breakout session.

So, if you could add them to the chat so that everyone has the benefit of learning from you, that would be wonderful. I'm seeing couple of additions, empowering parents because they know their child best, absolutely.

I need to give a shout out to Julie who's taught 30 years. She frames the IEP as an annual celebration. They don't even really call it an IEP and she said just by that simple tweak of language, she said it's just more inviting and families get really excited to come.

That was super cool. Absolutely thanks for sharing that. Great, well as we continue on feel free to add some more things in the chats that everyone is able to hear and learn from one another.

And now we're going to turn to highlight some different parent perspective and experiences that we've learned from PROGRESS Center focus groups as well as highlighting some of the different tools and resources we've created that address some of those various different challenges. So Stacy I'll turn it over to you.

Stacy Hirt: Yes, and I love the IEP, the piece for party. Love it. So. Yes, I'm going to share some of the executive summary. Again, I'm a researcher with the PROGRESS Center and we partnered with the progress, I'm sorry within NCLD and SPAN a parent advocacy network to launch focus groups last summer where we interviewed 35 families to hear about their perspectives and experience it's going through the IEP process.

So, our goal was to hear about just the development and implementation successes and challenges, the extent to which they felt the IEP contributed to their child success, and then also if the IEP met their child's needs. So, our next goal was just to share the learning with schools to support the development of future implementation of high-quality educational programming. This is why, we're here and again so Alex, Nicole, myself we're going to use the session to share just 3 tips, I'm not going to share all of them, that were identified from our focus group findings. We'll then share two progress

tools develop for our parents to use, and then resource spotlighted from Rhode Island, so Nicole will get into that.

So first up. So, this tool to the left you're going to see an IEP teaming resource for parents and then to the right an IEP tip sheet for parents. So, both of these are in development. They're not live on our site yet, but they will be, coming soon. So, we are working as you participate in the session, if you have feedback for these tools, they are fluid. Just drop your thoughts in the chat, and we will update them because we do hope to leverage these to all districts. To get this tool you will need to sign up at the Progress Center website and it will come in the newsletter for you to access when it goes live.

So next slide, so to promote meaningful engagement, this is actually our first tip of 3. On the following slides you are going to see graphs spotlighting some data. Okay, so we have split it with colors. Next slide, please. For each statement parents were asked, do you disagree, I'm sorry, strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree with the following statement. So as we go through the survey responses, just notice the chart split on the far left will be strongly disagreed. On the far right, the purple, represents strongly agreed.

So, for the first statement, just hold on this slide for a second, for promoting meaningful engagement, parents were asked, I was meaningfully involved in the development of my child's IEP. I then shared. For example, I feel or felt free to ask questions or offer suggestions as the IEP discussed goals, strengths, supports, and needs of my child. Again, agree or disagree. So what we collected, our response is, the majority actually felt that they were meaningfully involved. But if you do, the math, 37% did not feel meaningfully involved, which means one out of three parents did not feel that connection.

So, one parent actually noted and quoted that she received test scores twice per year as per the testing requirement each quarter for the IEP report card, and then monthly, with the attached data charts to support the info. She said at no time did she receive communication, a phone call, an email, maybe just face to face contact to share a translation of the data. Just simply, it was printed, mailed and sent to the home. So tip number one—and as I share these tips from our progress parents—please share tips from your own experience as in what tips for progress do you have for meaningful engagement.

So, this is what our parents said. It's communicate and collaborate often. The IEP meeting should not be the only time that the team collaborates with parents. Number 2, just ask for parent input so a couple of weeks prior to the IEP meeting, which I'm sure a lot of you have coming up to launch the school year, the team should reach out and just ask the parent for information whether it be strengths, weaknesses, anything that they want to share with you to help support the IEP development and last ensure, parents are ready to participate. So, prior to the IEP meeting, designate at least one teacher to reach out to the parent and just provided overview of the structure, what to expect as far as time, who's going to be there, you don't want to have like 10 people sitting at the table without giving the family the heads up, just kind of what to expect. And next Alex is going to share and IEP tip sheet, and how it relates to the IEP team.

Alex Marken: Absolutely. So, one of the tips was ensuring that parents are ready to participate in the IEP meeting. So, we've developed a couple of resources to help support them in that. One of these resources is one that can be shared prior to the meeting and parents which overviews the roles and members of the IEP team in family friendly language, and this tool also emphasizes the importance of parents being on the IEP team and is designed to empower them to feel like they can be effective partners in the development of their child's IEP. So that's one such resource.

And then the next resource also can be shared prior to the IEP team meeting, and this is designed to help parents prepare for their child's upcoming meeting. And it is a template that gives families an opportunity to reflect on and document their child's strengths and needs, identify goals and priorities, and brainstorm how the school can support their child. And families can bring this document to reference during the IEP team meeting as well as share with the team members prior to the meeting. And then we also created a complementary resource to gather the students input on their own strengths and needs. Again, they can be looked at prior to the if team meeting. And this connects to the discussion that you may have heard during the general session at the start of this morning about empowering students to advocate for themselves.

So that is another resource that we've been developing. And to answer Julie, your question about if it's being developed. It is. All of these resources are currently being developed, and right now they're being tested from some parents as well as the partnership sites. They're not yet ready but will be hopefully very soon and will be posted on our website once they are. And now we're going to watch a quick story from the classroom video, where Dr. David Bateman shares a story of an IEP meeting that serves as a reminder of how important that family input and perspective is to the development and implementation of an IEP that meets the student's needs. And so, with that Stephanie if you could go ahead and launch that video, please.

Video introduction: Stories from the Classroom: Hearing Parents' Priorities. David Bateman relays a story from an IEP meeting where the IEP team shifts focus based on parent input. It serves as a reminder that the team's purpose is to address all of the individual needs of the child.

David Bateman: I attended a meeting, two years ago, in the old days, when we actually had face-to-face meetings. And it was, basically we set up a very good reading IEP for a child. I'd gone through, I'd gone through with all the t's were crossed all the i's were dotted, everything was good and it was about third, fourth week into September, about this, and things like this. And we said, Parent, tell me about your child. It was a third-grade girl. I remember this very specifically, because the parent says, I know we're here to talk about reading, but my daughter has no friends. No one sits, no one sits with my daughter. No one interacts with my daughter. My daughter's nine years of age and she doesn't want to come to school anymore. So we changed the focus of the meeting, luckily we had her, child, the child's teacher there. We started ordering more group activities, more peer groups, more shared activities, kinds of things. What can we do to force all interactions? Not just with one but rotating throughout the classroom. We reconvened the IEP meeting three weeks later and we asked, so how are things going? And the mother said, things are much better. There's someone who sits with my

daughter at the playground someone invited her to sit with her on the bus, someone plays with her at lunch, things like this. My daughter now wants to come to school. Let's talk about reading now. Okay, and you have to, you have to pay attention to the needs of the child. And pay attention to what the parents are heading, things like this. And I understand there's times you have timelines you have to get these things, but that was, that was a very real need that we had to address. And you have to these things, because you're not going to address reading if the kid is not coming to school. So, but it forces me to, it reminds me. We're there to talk about a child. We're not there to talk about a paperwork compliance document. We're there to talk about a child, so.

Video closing: David Bateman is a PROGRESS Center advisor who brings extensive expertise in special education law and working with schools and districts to support students with disabilities.

Alex Marken: Keeping an eye on the chat and it looks like this video is resonated with, which is great. And we also thought that it was a good example of how, had the team been able to ask the parent in advance of the meeting for some input that they could have received that information earlier and it might have improved the efficiency of the response even more. And so, we just think that that also highlights some of the need for some of these resources. And I saw in the chat that some of you have similar things that you already utilized. But if you don't these resources will be coming soon for you to use in your school or district. With that we'll turn to our next tip, Stacy

Stacy Hirt: Hi, yeah. So, David Bateman's video first of all I love David, but it it's a perfect segue into tip number 2, which is engage families in determining individualization of supports, right or just listening. So, when our parents were given the statement—overall, I found the academic, behavioral, and social emotional supports my child, received helped facilitate their success in school.

The answers were—Stephanie do you mind—the results indicated that less than half or 43% of the parents and caregivers found the academic, behavioral or social emotional supports their child received facilitated school success. Way less than half where some parents noted the support their child received did not match their child's disability or academic needs. So many families commented that it was just kind of like a cookie cutter generic support plan. They also shared that many accommodations were based on what was available at the district, not necessarily what was appropriate. The next slide couple of families shared a couple of their experiences, one being, I would agree that the school does not understand his disability and does not have appropriate methodologies to meet his needs. Another parent was quoted as saying, special education is not meant to be a lifelong sentence it is a support service to build and improve skill deficits. Students shouldn't exit, special education. Special education is too focused on being compliant for procedures versus providing FAPE.

So many of our families, their main point was that they had a child that they were sending to school every day, and schools tend to focus on the compliance, and the IEP not necessarily their child. So really opening up that communication with families and engaging families to determine supports is necessary. So, on the next slide, as I share our progress parents, what they said, their tips, will you please drop in the chat what is working for your districts as far as engaging families.

So, our progress parents shared that ask parents. Just ask the parents what services and supports have worked for your child, what supports have not worked, and just ask them, what do you suggest? What should we try and try a few things, as you know? You can implement interventions, and what works for one kid may not work for another and last help families understand how services are individualized and designed based on their child's unique needs. So, parents are not a fan of blanket plans.

We know we have all this beautiful software to help with IEP goals and doing progress monitoring. The families really want data and goals that match their child's needs. So now Alex is going to share how this pairs with the IEP team meeting guide for parents.

Alex Marken: So, on your screen is a screenshot of our parent meeting guide for families, and one of the tips that Stacy just discussed was the importance of getting that parent input. And that also connects to the stories from the classroom video that we watched with David Bateman. And the meeting guide is intended to empower parents to share their thoughts, questions and feedback during the IEP meeting. So, it helps provide a family member, a place for notes for the meeting that they can share as well as include some prompting questions that they can ask during the meeting and also helps to bridge that complex education language by linking throughout the guide some different resources that families can access if they have questions about a particular component or element of their child's IEP.

And this next slide provides one such example. And so, you may have seen these referenced during, over the course of the conference. This is an example of one of our IEP tip sheets and this one's talking specifically about the overview of statement of services and aids, and it describes for parents that so they can see what IDEA says about each of the components of the IEP. But it uses some more family friendly language about what that actually means so that they're able to better understand what that component of their child's IEP is about and we'll take a look at that pre meeting guide one of those subsections in a couple of moments.

Stacy Hirt: Which brings us to tip number 3, and we talk a lot about data, but provide regular and meaningful access to progress data. So, for this question we asked parents—I regularly receive data how my child was progressing towards his or her IEP goals. So less than 34 percent of the respondents share that they were regularly received data about their child's progress, which means, right less than 34%, that's one in 3. So, one parent noted progress monitor was lacking. It was often anecdotal or observational. Thus, it was not meaningful.

So, I'm going to share tips from our progress parents, and as I share, please drop in some ideas from your own district of what's working for you. With our parent progress tips are one establish a standardized schedule for updating parents that outlines the format and frequency of sharing data.

So, we hope this is not just during the IEP or party or celebration, and we do hope it's more than just 4 times a year. So, when I was in the classroom, I had a systematic schedule, where I actually talk to my families almost weekly, but I had a set block of time monthly that I had as optional if families wanted to come in or we would engage in you know Zoom, or some type of. They had that block of time if they wanted to meet. So just establish that schedule for the year and know that your door is always open.

Next is ensure that parents understand the data and what it means. We just can't just give them the data and expect them to translate all the acronyms and all the terminology throughout. But like, walk through that that first couple of times, and, you know, ask, do you have any questions? You know. Keep it informal the IEPs are pretty intimidating, but just keeping if they have any questions be there to answer it.

So, Alex is going to share how this bridges to the IEP team meeting guide for parents.

Alex Marken: So, in the team meeting guide one of the types of spaces was around, ensuring that parents understand the data and how it's being shared and what it means. So, within the meeting guide for families, one of the sections focuses on measurable annual goals, and how progress will be measured. So this section gives some questions for parents to consider asking during their child's IEP meeting such as how will I know if my child's making progress towards their goals and how often and in what format will I be informed of my child's progress, and then they can take some notes during that meeting as well so that they can make sure that they're understanding and the school can make sure that they're, the parents understanding, what types of data they'll be looking at and how it will be shared.

And then if the parents still have some questions, they could click on one of those hyperlinks in the in the guide there which will bring them to our tip sheets. And so, this is another example talking about measuring progress towards annual goals. And so, this tip sheet talks again about what IDEA requires, and that includes some tips for implementation that both families and staff could benefit from referring to. And so, you could things to do and then things to avoid on this particular tip sheet, and it could again help bridge that gap in common language, thinking about that Federal level to the IEP team.

And so, this is a resource that is directly linked with in the meeting guide itself. Examples that people had, and Stacy to your question about this. And so, one person talked about sitting with parents to go over report cards and progress notes and being able to look at the data together. And knowing that, you know paperwork and data can be daunting to educators and even more sort of for parents who perhaps have less of that foundational knowledge.

And so that's a nice opportunity to both see what educators understand, and what the parents understand. Having that collaborative conversation so I just wanted to highlight that as a tip from the field. And with that we're going to turn and hear about how a state has gone about supporting their district in this work, and so Nicole's going to talk about all the fantastic work they're doing in Rhode Island.

Nicole Bucka: Thank you Alex. So, Nicole Bucka, that's my name, and you know so far, our presentation has really been a lot about how we support parents, which of course, we do need to support parents, but my role in Rhode Island is that I support educators and administrators with making this vision a reality. How do we? How do we make supporting parents a global scaleupable reality in our state?

Stephanie, if you could move to the next slide. Okay.

So, in our work we align to a body of research that has been conceptualized into what they call the dual capacity framework, and I can sum it up pretty simply. What it says is that when we look into the research as to why we struggle with family engagement with schools, what we find that we have a dual capacity problem, right?

That it's not just families over here on the right-hand column of the visual that we have some barriers for, and we know families sometimes haven't seen models of strong family engagement. We know some families have a negative history of engagement with their schools and educators or may maybe even their own childhood of school was not a positive experience. They also might have already had experiences in your school district that were negative before they even came to you—where they felt unheard or disrespected.

So, we know that's one side of the coin but that another side of the coin here on the left-hand side is that educators equally have the same struggles in their ability to engage. And I don't just mean teachers I mean the entire team and administrators and their ability to engage with families. Pre-service training, administrative training doesn't have enough family engagement aspects to it.

When we train a lot of times, it's a very, it's very much about either just the family or just the educators without sort of putting the two pieces together. And I think this bottom ball here is really important —that culturally sometimes our field has developed a real deficit mindset about families for whom kids have the most complex profiles.

And I think that has a lot to do with our inability here in the dual capacity, right. That when two sides both struggle to do something, it's very, it's very natural to sort of see the other one, as the problem.

So, I think that what we're doing in our platform of supporting administrators is trying to address both of these things.

So, I'd like to show you that if you could move to the next slide. So, we have moved our training and technical assistance to a blended model, and in our blended model we have courses online supporting our educators. So, the course you are seeing in front of you, on our Rhode Island State website called Bridge RI, is a tier 3 systems course. It's teaming for intensive intervention. In our State, as we hope yours is, students with IEPs, it's not a place it's not a tier, their serviced everywhere and that in intensive intervention meeting can be about a student with an IEP as well as it can be about a student who doesn't have an IEP.

So, in this course, Stephanie, if you could go to the next slide. we have a section of the course that's specific to family engagement. So, after we've taught, teachers and team members their roles we've acknowledged that parents are an active role on the team as well, we then go into trying to support that dual capacity.

So here in this page right here of a book that you're seeing, we're sharing with the staff that we really want to look at our families as assets. They are vessels of strength. Okay, and that many parents report not feeling that way. And so, this is an empathy interview from the PACER center with a parent named Maria, who is also new to the country. She's an immigrant, and she also experiences a little bit of

struggle with the language. And so, in this really short video. What we're doing is we're training our staff to think about what it's like to be on the other side of the table.

And this parent does a really lovely job in this interview saying that not only is the culture of American schools very different than the culture of the schools from her native country, but that in addition she's trying to learn about this culture without translated resources without a translator present, without the ability to bridge the language barrier.

And then we go into what she offered as ideas for that. And so, Stephanie, if you can go to the next slide. So, as we're helping educators in our training and administrators understand parents a little better. Right dual capacity. We then try to give them templates of tools and resources, so that every district does not have to reinvent the wheel. So here you can see the intensive intervention, infographic overview from the National Center, and we have it in English, Spanish. And since this screenshot we have also produced it in Portuguese, in Chinese, because these are some of the top languages in our State, and we tend to provide it in a format that it can be adapted for each school district as well. So share the parent perspective, help the educators, relate, give them tools and resources to support families.

If you go to the next slide Stephanie, now we're moving into another parent. And this parent is also a PACER center short video where this parent has two children with disabilities and he basically starts by saying, okay five years in, what have you learned? What advice would you give to other families? And this gentleman did a really great job of saying, you know, when I was new to this country, and I was new to this American school system, and having a child with a disability, he said in my culture, I do home, right. The family the parent is in charge of home and educators are in charge of school and to be respectful, you respect that boundary, right. That that's culturally what he was taught.

And you know he, in this video in 2 min, really nicely describes that you know what you would say to parents now is that's wrong from his experience in the sense that he said, I have come to learn that the school can't really know, my child as deeply unless I'm engaging with them and really sharing that piece. And that it's not keep them separate, it's really respect each other, but bring them together. And so from there, Stephanie, if you want to promote, we again provide the educators resources as templates to make this a reality.

So if I'm having a meeting on a student with an IEP, who maybe the progress on their goal hasn't been exactly where we want it to be, and let's say, I have that parent that was in that last video you can see that the agenda that I can share in advance so that they can process it in advance of the meeting, clearly outlines what's going to happen in the meeting. It says at the at the top the child and family role, if the child's present as well, and in very parent friendly language states what the parent could be doing at each step of the meeting process.

And so again, we provide it in translated versions for the most common languages. Again, try to support the schools and educators, to not have to reinvent the wheel. We are helping both families and educators to have the ability to collaborate.

Stephanie if you could promote the next one. And then we have the issue of working parents and parents who cannot make a meeting, you know, during a contractual workday, which is a very common issue. And another support that we created that's a template because the field needed it was you know I would say, okay? Well, if the parent can't come, can we do a pre-meeting phone call? Okay, and what I came to learn was that besides the fact that teachers aren't given a lot of time or educators time to make phone calls—that's a whole other problem—but was that actually the educators were intimidated by phone calls as much as the parents. Similar to the parents, a lot of educators had had poor experiences, right—where we didn't build the relationship first. We didn't have a positive contact first and then we called home because there was a problem now. The family who's used to only getting phone calls when there is a problem is not very receptive to that phone call, and maybe it doesn't go well.

So, in this parent phone call template that is in the training that I was just describing to you, you know we explain that there are best practices with family engagement, and that this tool lays some of them out. You can see on the left-hand side of it, says very clearly—it makes a point of your first communication always being a positive one. Start early in the year. Some people do a postcard. Some people do a phone call, you know, one per Wednesday per week in the beginning. Make it a schedule. You could do a letter, you could do a variety of things, but that we want to make sure the first time we reach out it's not a problem. Then on the right-hand side, you can see that when we're reaching out because we're actually having a Tier 3 or intensive intervention meeting or a progress meeting for a child with an IEP, we are calling because there's kind of a problem and where we're wanting the parent's input because we're problem solving.

So this script lays out the best practices again, right? State your name, make sure you're asking if it's a good time to talk right—so we're showing respect for the family that this might be a bad time. We're going to make sure we share a little something about the student that's personal. That shows that, you know we really know their child and then we're going to state the challenge objectively. right?

So there's no deficit mindset there's no judgment of the family absences has been a problem with our, you know our ability to instruct here. Okay, there's no, why aren't you getting your child to school right? So we're very we're very objective and then we move into you can see where it says, being objective. I feel strongly that your input and expertise is really important. You know your child best. Have you seen this before? What worked?

And I think that what's happening is that using a phone call script like this, be it whatever professional in the building, really just promotes some communicative, best practices to ensure that the other person feels heard and respected so that the communication is a strong one, and it doesn't become this. Stephanie if you can promote the next slide, so I hope that you enjoyed you know, an illustration of how Rhode Island is really striving to support the educators and administrators in how to make this empowerment of families and positive interactions with families, quality ones, recognizing that both families need support, and so do our educators.

Thank you.



Alex Marken: Thank you Nicole and if you'd like some links to get the copy of that agenda and the phone script template that Nicole just shared those are also in the chat so you'll just have to scroll up a little bit but they're right in there for you, and as Stacy mentioned, please feel free to make copies of those and to modified then to best fit your context. And with that we want to give an opportunity to answer some of your questions. So take a moment and think if there's any questions that you would like to get some input on from our team, then feel free to add those in the chat we'll take a moment to look at those and discuss those together.

And I want to highlight, while everyone's thinking about that too, we added in the chat about the 10 dimensions of belongingness, and how that connects to what we're talking about here in terms of engaging with families and students and the everyone's working with the same goal and I think that that is such a wonderful takeaway and connection. So thank you for adding that to the chat.

Nicole Bucka: You know something that we discussed in the last session, but for the benefit of the current participants that weren't there, was also a lot about how you know whatever is that common end goal and you mentioned it earlier when you said the David Bateman example, is just making sure that we have that pre-shared can really reduce a whole lot of the just not being on the same page and getting a little bit of a lost in translation moment.

Alex Marken: And similarly, Nicole, there's no new questions yet, but one that we did discuss in our last session perhaps we could discuss again here, for those who may have a similar question, was around any strategies or tips for communicating with families where it's hard to get in contact with so any tips for that situation?

Nicole Bucka: Well, I was, I was sharing last session that you know home visits are a chronically underutilized and very effective approach, and you know that my first teaching profession was—my first teaching job was in a very impoverished area that had a lot of unique challenges, people were evicted frequently, phone numbers were not updated, there were a lot of times where you could not get a hold of a parent. And so obviously one of the first things I would do was ask the student. Sometimes the student, because I taught high school, sometimes a student could tell me how to better reach their parent.

But the next thing I would do would be a home visit, and you know, back then I used to do it on my own. Now I would recommend just bring somebody else with you, but I would say I have had nothing but positive experiences from that in several situations. Not only did I always find the family very receptive to me, which I think there's a fear that you won't be well received. I was well received, and on top of that I learned a lot about the child that I would have never known. And I had some very, I had a one family that had very negative experiences K through 9 before they met me, who completely turned around. Once I took the time to go into their space, and to just be human with them and to you know, just talk with them. And from then on out they came to the building and they were communicative and connecting with me and I just I just can't stress enough the importance of meeting them where they're at. And if that's their home, if that's out in the community, the library, a coffee

shop, well, then, you know, I think it's an important part of our job. And I do recognize that it was above and beyond. But I would just say it was very effective.

Alex Marken: A follow up question, and Stacy I'm sure you may have something to add, but how do you find the time, knowing that the importance of those home visits? How do you? How do you find the time to make them?

Nicole Bucka: That's a that's a really fair question, I mean in both of those examples, I did not yet have children, and I was a young educator, and I really my job was very much, you know, so I do respect that. What you're saying is a true challenge, that point in my life I had more time, but I did go right after school on my way home. I think that nowadays, you know if I think about fast forwarding to where I'm at now, I actually find administrators in most of the buildings that I worked in in my career, if I had approached them and said I needed coverage to go do something of that matter, I actually think that they would try to identify how to do that. I'm not sure. I really asked for what I needed sometimes, but yeah, you're right though, it's a fair, it's a fair question. And also, I think that there are some schools in our state that are charter schools that serve vulnerable populations like that is their target audience, and for them they actually built-in home visit days so I do understand what you're saying and I agree with you that I'm not sure I have great answers there.

Stacy Hirt: Yeah, this probably isn't the best answer, but I did have a kid when I was doing home visits, and I designated one evening a month, and I would stack my home visits. There were 4 that were not optional. I needed to put in that time. And honestly, I got that time back, I would say, like during the day with the kid because the child saw that I was taking the time to visit their family. And I would say I just made gains in the classroom and got that evening back. And I don't know if there's really a way around it, but I would just kind of delegate and get coverage with my own family members to cover my son while I was taking the time to meet with you know other people's children.

Participant: I do think it's important I say something really quick, or am I not allowed to talk?

No go ahead.

Participant: So I actually have, like the beginning of my career, I did have children already, but I did do it, and I found it exactly like all of you are saying. I mean it was very beneficial but I was also working in a high, intensive unit, so I only have like 8 kids, but when you talk about having you know 12, 15, I mean depending on what your case load is like, it's just it's a lot harder. I feel like to get to all those people. It's like you said some people are open to it. Some people don't even want it. If they don't want it, you're not going to force it so I want to figure out how to do it because I do feel like I knew the kids better. I mean, I have to be very honest. You just you see them in a different way.

You know their preferences, especially the lower kids. So thank you guys very important. you did help me just remember how much it helps you in the room when you have the kid in the classroom.

Nicole Bucka: Thank you. And the only thing I would say, which I'm sure you're probably already doing, but for the benefit of there are people in the room that might be newer, right, is it's almost like if you think about the home piece also as a communicative multi-tiered system.

Right, so when we're talking about a home visit while in a perfect world, we would love that to be tier one, something that we do for every child on our case load, every child that we serve, realistically we probably can't do that. So, what is the data that we used to identify a student for whom our lower intensity methods have not been effective or just have not worked and really, you know, to Stacy's point made those 3 non-negotiable. I have to visit those 3, or those 2, whereas the other ones maybe you know, we could. Because I definitely didn't home visit every one of my students, like this was, these were unique situations and but man if I could have if I could have home visited more, I would have. It was very valuable, but you're right, I mean realistically, but making sure that we're doing it with the ones for whom it was the most in needed and most urgent.

Alex Marken: We had another question earlier in the chat that there's been a back and forth within, but I planned to highlight in case there is something else that we'd like to discuss as a group, and that's about that balance between involving parents and also bogging them down. So, when you need a lot of information from that questionnaire, and there's lots of meetings and things like that, how do we kind of balance the need to keep informed, but not overwhelming them.

Nicole Bucka: Oh, my gosh! I just want to say, whoever put that forth like love you. I am a full-time working mom, I'm a school board member on top of that, the number of emails and emails.

Oh, God, the number of emails I get in any given day from wraparound providers, home based therapists, doctors, IEPs, I mean, it is it is unreal, you know. I think that all I can offer is a validation that you are so right and thank you so much for bringing that up. And B is that, you know, as a school board member and someone who's trying to be influential in my own district, I have really tried to encourage people to look at our communication from the perspective of the parent and the family, right.

It's very easy for me, school psychologists to say I need this, right. Case manager needs this, principal needs this, right, and not to say how many things did we just send at that one parent in this one period of time, right?

And did we really use it, or is this just a formality?

And I think that the more we can take that perspective and streamline it, you know there are things I receive every year that I'm confident, not a soul looks at. I'm confident gets put in a file or why can't it be electronic? And if there's no changes, click a box here, you know what I mean like, I think that those are systems issues and their systems issues that technology can really assist us with.

And I think that you need the perspective from the parent lens. What we could do to reduce those things.

Alex Marken: Nicole to that point about thinking of how to how to make it easier for parents, one person added in the chat a tip that they did was potentially you know, taking that time to fill out any forms or questionnaires with the parent over the phone if needed, if it's difficult for them to find that time, you know, doing that together, and kind of dedicating that that moment to completing those paperwork.

That can also be helpful resource. That was another tip that I wanted to highlight from chat.

Nicole Bucka: And I've never seen anybody do this, but I think they should, is like a communication calendar. I mean how many of you, I literally take off the first 2 days of school from my job, because the number of things that are sent home times 2 kids with IEPs in the first 2 days is so ungodly. Like the first year I got it all done, I was like, Huh! I'm like Mom of the year over here right

But I think that even if you could just space things out a little differently, why does everything have to happen in the first 2 weeks at school? You know what I mean? When, as it is I'm trying to get my kid to get up for the first time, since you know two weeks into August.

Alex Marken: Well, these were great questions, great comments and at fantastic tips that have been in the chat. So, if you haven't been able to keep up with the with the chat, I encourage you to take a quick look at that, because there's some wonderful strategies that people have used in their classrooms that I think are really helpful. We're going to turn it just wrapping up here as we come up to the end of our presentation— some additional resources that I wanted to highlight for you. And so, you can find some of these different resources that we've been talking about today on our PROGRESS Center website.

Specifically, the development tab has section for each component of the IEP and from there you can access tip sheets that we've referenced already over the course of our conversation, as well as some modules and things like that that might be helpful. So, I highly suggest that you check those out if you're interested and then you can always find your parents center at parentcenterhub.org.

If you would some additional resources. And I know that we've talked about some tools that we're developing that aren't quite ready yet, so again, if you would like to access those once they are, you can sign up to join our mailing list—I saw that some of you have already done that over the course of our conversation, which is fantastic— just go to the PROGRESS center website and then you can put in your email address and as resources are available, we will be posting about those as well, those upcoming events.

We typically, over the course of this school year, have several different webinars and things like that on various topics that you may be interested in. So, sign up for that so you can continue to be involved in the PROGRESS Center and a disclaimer that the materials for this session have been produced under the U.S. Department of Education, but the views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. None of the products, commodity, services, or enterprises mentioned have been officially endorsed, and should not be inferred as being endorsed.

But with that we thank you all so much for spending your afternoon with us, and we hope that you've gotten some tools and some strategies that might be helpful, and we wish you the very best.