



Inside this Edition

Family-School Partnerships.....2
Healthy Lunch Ideas....2
Special Ed. Apps.....3
Youth Corner.....4

Mission

The mission of AJE is to educate parents, youth, and the community about the laws governing public education, specifically for children with special needs. We seek to empower youth and parents to be effective advocates and youth to self advocate to ensure that children receive an appropriate education. It is also our mission to make the public aware of the consequences of institutional negligence of children with or without disabilities to promote school accountability.

About AJE

AJE is home to the Parent Training and Information Center, DC Parent Information Network, and the DC Health Information Center.

V: (202) 678-8060
F: (202) 678-8062
TF: (888) 327-8060
W: www.aje-dc.org
E: information@aje-dc.org

25 E Street, NW, 4th Floor
 Washington, DC 20001
 Hours: 9am - 5pm (Mon - Fri)

3912 Georgia Avenue, NW
 (Mary's Center)
 Washington, DC 20011
 Hours: 9am - 3pm (Tues. & Thurs.)

School Discipline: Know Your Rights!



Right to Public Education

In the District of Columbia, students are entitled to a meaningful public education. By law students, ages five through their eighteenth birthday, are required to attend school. This means that before a student can be excluded from receiving public education they must be afforded due process.

What is Due Process?

Students facing suspension or expulsion from public school are entitled to: (1) notice of the charges against them and (2) an opportunity to be heard. The notice and opportunity for a hearing should occur before a student is removed from school.

What are the Procedural Rights of Parents/Students?

All public school students in D.C. are entitled to receive basic due process as explained above. However the specific procedures schools must follow vary between D.C. Public Schools and each D.C. public charter school.

In DCPS students are entitled to: (1) a conference with the school administrator; (2) verifiable written notice (email, certified mail, hand-delivered, etc.) of the proposed disciplinary action; (3) to remain in school until a final decision is made if no grounds for an emergency exist; (4) to a hearing for a long-term suspension (11-90 days) or an expulsion; (5) to appeal a short-term (1-5 days) or medium-term suspension (6-10 days); (6) to have an educational plan that will allow the student to make up any missed work and exams without penalty when the suspension is less than 11 days; and (7) to attend an alternative educational setting when the suspension is more than 11 days.

DCPS cannot: (1) use involuntary transfers for discipline; (2) suspend for violations of a school uniform policy; (3) suspend for tardiness/absences (4) suspend more than twice in a semester without the Chancellor's designee's (Instructional Superintendent) approval.

As for D.C. public charter schools, each charter school has its own discipline procedures, including appeal rights, that differ from DCPS's procedures and differ from charter school to charter school. Each charter school must follow the procedures outlined in its handbook.

What if a Student has or is suspected of having a Disability?

In both DCPS and D.C. public charter schools, students with a disability or suspected of having disability, are entitled to a manifestation determination review meeting within ten (10) school days of a decision to remove the student from school for more than ten (10) school days. The purpose of the review is to determine if the alleged behavior was caused by the student's disability. If the behavior is determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability, then the student cannot be disciplined and must generally return to the same school. If the behavior is determined not to be a manifestation of the student's disability, then the student can be disciplined like any other non-disabled student.

Key Things to Remember

- Parents/students are entitled to timely notice of student infractions, disciplinary action and to be informed of their rights to review such action.
- For DCPS, obtain a copy of the disciplinary procedures.
- For charter schools, obtain a copy of the student and/or parent handbook.
- Document each class/school removal.
- Keep a copy of everything.
- Disciplinary issues are time sensitive and require immediate attention.

For Assistance call or visit AJE! 25 E Street, NW, 4th Floor, Washington, D.C. 20001, (202) 678-8060.

The Importance of Family-School Partnerships



Family-school partnership is important to student success. Developing a positive relationship with your child's school will make it easier for you to share your child's successes and challenges with school staff. A positive relationship will also improve your partnership with the school to identify solutions to support your child to be successful in school. Below are tips to cultivate a positive partnership with your child's school:

1. **Introduce yourself to your child's teachers, principal, and other key staff.** If possible, meet with them at the beginning of the school year or sooner. If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan, you should provide a copy to the Special Education Coordinator/LEA representative and your child's teachers. You may also want to share other information about your child such as hobbies,

learning style, interests and other important information that will help the teacher to better engage your child in their learning.

2. **Open the line of communication.** Find out the best contact method for communicating with your child's teachers. Also, make sure the school has your current contact information. It is also a good idea to arrange regular check-in meetings with your child's teachers. When there is an open line of communication, students tend to have higher academic engagement and success.
3. **Work towards your shared goals.** Parents and professionals can be partners. You have a shared interest with your child's teachers to see your child succeed. Share your goals for your child. Develop a plan to help support your child's learning. If something isn't working well, collaborate with the teacher to brainstorm better solutions. Be flexible in your approach towards resolution.
4. **Get Involved!** Whenever possible show up for back-to-school events, parent-teacher conferences, field trips, etc. This will demonstrate that you are a part of the school community and committed to your child's academic success.
5. **"Thank You" goes a long way!** Express appreciation and respect for your child's teachers and/or administrators when necessary. Cards, thank you emails or voicemails go a long way towards building positive relationships.

Adapted from "8 Tips for Building a Good Relationship With Your Child's Teacher" by Geri Coleman Tucker. www.understood.org

Back-to-School Savings: Affordable and Healthy Lunch Ideas

If you're a parent who prefers to prepare your child's lunch as opposed to lunches at school, below are nutritious and inexpensive lunch ideas. These lunch ideas will supply your child with the energy he/she needs to get through the day, and keep more money in your pockets! With a little planning, some imagination, and feedback from your child, you can pack a lunch that they will enjoy.

Creative options for school lunch:

Sandwiches: When it's time for more than peanut butter and jelly, try these options:

- Low-fat lunch meats, cheeses, chicken, tuna, grilled vegetables, and egg salad;
- Sliced bread alternatives like bagels, rolls, pita and English muffins;
- Fill a reusable food container with fun, tri-color pasta salad;
- Roll meat, cheese and vegetables together in a tortilla or pita and slice them into pinwheels;
- Soups, stews and chili in an insulated container make hearty lunches.

Fruits, nuts and vegetables: Easy ways to pack more vitamins into your child's lunch:

- Toss sliced apples and pears or strawberries and grapes into a sandwich bag;

- Pack baby carrots, celery sticks, green, red or yellow pepper wheels, and zucchini or cucumber slices include low-fat ranch dressing, hummus or a salsa for dipping;
- If your kid isn't wild about vegetables, try sneaking some lettuce into a pinwheel roll or mixing a little spinach or arugula into pasta salad;
- Healthier alternatives to cookies or chips include nuts or dried fruit.

Healthy Beverages: An easy way to increase the health-factor of your child's school lunch is choosing a healthy beverage option:

- Milk provides essential nutrients, including protein, potassium, Vitamin D, and calcium;
- Yogurt drinks provide many of the nutritional benefits of yogurt in a drinkable form that doesn't taste or feel too much like yogurt - so they're good even for picky eaters;
- A bottle of plain old water may not be glamorous but it is the best option for your child to replenish fluid loss from sweat during physical activities;
- Pack juices that contain 100% juice, as stated on the label. If the container doesn't say 100% juice, it probably contains preservatives, sweetening agents, and even oil!

Strategies for Reducing Homework Stress



- **Set up a study area:** A place dedicated only to homework and studying is the most important aspect of reducing homework stress for your child. An area clear of chaos makes it easier for your child to focus and feel calm while doing homework.
- **Involve yourself:** Not all children are able to handle homework independently. Some need assistance. So if you find your child overwhelmed by homework, support them with understanding and completing assignments. You should not complete the homework

for your child but rather provide support so that they know how to complete the assignment.

- **Break the homework down into small parts:** Set smaller goals towards completing the assignments. Allow your child to take breaks in-between goals. Also, allow your child to set a timer to alert them when the break is over so that they can get back to work again. Frequent breaks will help to reduce homework stress.
- **Teach your child to relax.** Difficult homework assignments and the pressure to complete multiple projects can cause anxiety, frustration, and even anger in children. Teach your child a few stress management techniques, such as meditation and listening to music so that they can manage stress better.
- **Be an honest supporter to your child.** If you feel that your child is overwhelmed or overloaded by homework and it is affecting their quality of life, speak to your child's teacher. The teacher will surely be more than happy to address your concern.

Special Education Apps

Technology advancements have changed the way we learn and function. New applications and programs have increased student's opportunities to learn new concepts at an individualized level. We have identified several applications to support students with varying disabilities.



Tap to Talk This app turns an iPhone™, iPad™ or iPod touch® into an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device. Tap To Talk makes communication easy by tapping a picture to communicate.



First Then Visual Schedule is an application designed for caregivers to provide positive behavior support. This app is useful for individuals with communication needs, developmental delays, Autism or those who benefit from a structured environment; visual schedules serve to increase independence and lower anxiety.



Talk Assist is an alternative speech aid that provides a voice for people who cannot speak for themselves. Using Text to Speech technology, anything you type in will be spoken out loud for others to hear.



Sōsh is a mobile app designed to help 'tweens, teens and young adults improve social skills. It is especially designed to be used by individuals with Asperger's Syndrome. **Sōsh Lite** allows you to try the full version of the **Sōsh™** app for 7 days from the date of download.



QuickCues is a social script app that helps teens and young adults on the autism spectrum to handle new situations and learn new skills. Social scripts have been used successfully for years, but QuickCues makes these tools mobile and easy to use in everyday situations.



The Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs is a leading electronic special education journal now available on your iPad and iPhone. This journal offers stimulating, high-impact mixture of research on special educational needs, and covers all levels of education from pre-k through college/post-school.



Verbally is an easy-to-use, comprehensive Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) app for the iPad. Verbally brings speech to those without and enables real conversation with its simple, intuitive design. Just tap in what you want to say and Verbally speaks for you.



IEP Checklist is a tool for parents and teachers to consider as they develop the IEP. Not every item on the checklist is required by special education regulations. For more information, consult the Federal regulations and other information that can be found at <http://idea.ed.gov>.



Youth Corner: Overcoming Obstacles



My name is Leonard Stevens and I'm 26 years old. I work at AJE as a Youth Advocate, providing advice to youth and advocating for their needs in the community. I also help to coordinate a monthly youth support group.

There are a lot of people that have Autism and managed to keep it hidden in fear of being judged or frowned upon, due to the stigma of disability in our society. However, I want

to share my hardships as a result of my disability and my successes to increase awareness and acceptance of others with disabilities. Even with learning and social challenges, I have learned that you can still be a true hero and share your extraordinary gifts with the world.

I was the youngest of three brothers and was raised by my grandparents. I was the first in my immediate family to graduate from high school as a salutatorian. As a kid, I would look at stop signs and street names throughout the city. I had a "peculiar" vibe that my immediate family did not notice because I was smart as a whip! While growing up in Washington DC, none of my family members knew about Autism or whether I had a disability. It was not until I saw several therapists and they said to my grandmother that I had a condition called "Asperger - Autism." At first, I did not know about

the condition until I read about it online. I read that it was a neurological disorder. I had coped with my condition and managed to keep it safe because of fear that if anyone found out about it I would have been shunned. I didn't make any friends except for when I was in a special education classroom in elementary and middle school. I graduated from every school I attended while being in the National Honor Society. I maintained a GPA around 3.7. I experienced challenges at one of my former school when they didn't want me to do my speech because of "possible bad publicity" for the school. I decided to practice so that I wouldn't be nervous speaking to hundreds of people. In my speech, I shared information about my disability, as a way to give them a first look about how other people can overcome the hardships that I went through.

In middle and high school, I tried not to be sociable because I feared humiliation. Now, I'm in college and will be graduating soon with a bachelor's degree in Secondary Foreign Languages. I want to encourage other youth with disabilities to not be afraid of societal stigma. Every person with a disability has a gift to share with the world and they can increase awareness by teaching their friends about their condition. I would encourage all youth to learn how to be a better self-advocate by coming to our monthly support group. Please call (202) 678-8060 to get more information about our upcoming youth support group meeting.