



Concurrent Session: Creative Ways to Engage Families and Community Members: Lessons From Co-creating Resources With Families to Demystify Special Education

Donna Sacco: Welcome to Creative Ways to Engage Families and Community Members: Lessons from Co-creating Resources with Families to Demystify Special Education. Welcome again everyone. I'm Donna Sacco and I am a senior technical assistance consultant the American Institutes for Research. I am so thrilled to join our team today. Kathleen Donovan from the Parent Resource Center in Arlington Virginia, Arlington Public Schools will be joining us. Gina Argotti was hopefully going to join us, but she had a last-minute emergency and Monica Lozano Caldera hopefully she'll be able to join us. She was in our last session and I accidentally kicked her out, so now we're having trouble getting her back in, but hopefully she will be here with us as well. And it just gives me great pleasure to welcome this group from Arlington Public Schools. Full disclosure, it is where I served as a special educator and English as a second language teacher for 12 years, so Arlington Virginia is very near and dear to my heart. I'm going to turn it over to Kathleen and let her walk you through La Sopa de la Abuela, Grandma's soup. Welcome Kathleen!

Kathleen Donovan: Thank you so much Donna. It's such an honor to be here and hopefully my colleague Monica will be back shortly. She's working really hard to get back into the meeting and we are just thrilled to be here with the PROGRESS Center community today. We thank Donna and the organization for their kind invitation and for coordinating this session. We're very excited to share, I think probably a project that I expect will be the highlight of my career, La Sopa de la Abuela. On the next slide, our learning objectives today, are to really explain, you know, how and why we created the telenovela, share how we think the telenovela can support families and staff in collaboratively navigating that special education process together, hopefully provide you with some new tools ideas and resources to prepare families to navigate the process and advocate for their children, and to reflect on the power of the incredible power of collaborative approach is when we work together with families.

Just a little bit about our team—I love that alphabetically Gina Argotti is the first member of our team and she will be presenting virtually today, we have some video clips to share. Gina Argotti is an amazing parent leader. She is the parent of three children, two of whom receive special education support in Arlington Public Schools. She has just been an incredible support to our community

especially of families who speak Spanish and Gina joined me and three or four other folks as a member of the initial design team that created La Sopa de la Abuela. My colleague Monica who hopefully will be here shortly, is a diversity equity and inclusion coordinator. She has a background in counseling and mental health and it's just an incredible and dynamic educator who works closely with students and staff. And finally, I am also a veteran educator. I started my career in pre-k special education and also worked at the elementary level. I was a child find coordinator and very happily landed at the Arlington Public Schools Parent Resource Center about 20 years ago and I've stayed because I love the work and I find it gratifying every single day. I love getting to work with families and to learn with and from families. So that's a little bit about our team.

One of the things we always do when we are hosting parent sessions is giving parents a chance to connect with one another and with us. My dear colleague, Dr. Rosa Briceno who was one of our fellow design team members, was really masterful in using family engagement strategies during family learning sessions and she always opened, she taught me a new word called *Conociéndonos*, which means getting to know each other. So, we'll keep going, but we'd invite you now, even though we're virtual, to share a little bit about yourself in the chat and we can find out who is here in our virtual space. So please feel free in the chat to add your name your role and district and organization and what brings you to the session.

And just to be efficient we'll keep moving while you do that and we'll tell you a little bit—I think when we're working with colleagues across the country, like we have the privilege of doing today—you know some of us might be in rural districts some of us might be in urban districts, so we wanted to give you a little bit of information about our community and you know who we are, which I think led to why we created this project. So, we are located just across the beautiful Potomac River from Washington DC. We're the 13th largest of Virginia's 132 school districts and in our 26 square miles we have 26 elementary, six middle, four high schools. We also have six additional secondary programs and a K-12 virtual learning program. We also have Pre-K programs as part of many of our elementary schools as well um we really pride ourselves on our amazing and wonderful diversity. Our students hail from 142 Nations and speak 115 different languages. And you can see from the pie chart on the screen that we are a richly diverse community. So, I'll let you take a look at that. We also have about 32 percent of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch. On the next slide this gives you a just a glimpse of what percentage of students come from families who speak a language other than English at home. So, we have almost 30 percent of our families speak a language other than English at home and you know 29, but of that percentage 32, so almost a third of our families who speak a language other than English at home have children who are also receiving special education services, so they're dually identified.

We were very proud that our school board gave us a mandate to actually adopt a family and community engagement policy several years ago. And this really aligns our FACE (family and community engagement) policy, aligns with the dual capacity framework's organization and process



conditions—so what are the conditions that are present in a school district that really help robust and authentic family engagement and we base our FACE work on those as well as the National PTA standards and these policies really led the foundation for how La Sopa de la Abuela came to be.

Here in APS, we always believe it's important to start with why we do the work we do. To focus and identify our “why” for this project was simple but very compelling. We know that both parents and staff care very deeply about outcomes for students. We know, as you do, that family engagement positively impacts those outcomes and we also know that the regulations that govern special education require family engagement. So that's a big part of our why, because what we also know and I'm sure you do as well is that this process can be very emotional for families and it can be very complex.

I think the word I hear most often is that it's overwhelming and I hear that from families who speak English as well as other languages, but trying to then also navigate this process in a language that is not your native language you know obviously you know significantly makes things more complicated harder and more overwhelming. So, with conversations between my colleagues and with families we clarified a very significant need in our community, which was how could we help families who are speaking other languages navigate this process in the way that the federal and state laws expect them to do so which means from a place of informed consent and knowledge. So, at this point on the next slide, I'd love you to hear from my dear friend and my co-design team member and also the star of our telenovela Gina Argotti.

Gina Argotti (Video): Thank you, Kathleen. Well, when I arrived at the United States with my three kids, my two kids they are in special education. I knew for sure that they were going to need, they need help. They need support. So when I approached the school and I got the first, the first letter, I got very, very stressed and it was difficult for me because even though I know a little bit of English and I understand a little bit, it was difficult for me because all the language that they use for the letters all the language that they use at the meetings were difficult to understand. For all the acronyms that they use. All the language that they use. It was it was like listening to, uh like another and another planet conversation. It was so weird and also with all the emotions because you don't understand all the terminology, the regular terminology that they use for all the, you know, for the delays and all that kind of stuff. And also, you know it's painful for the parents, try to get it into in into your soul that your son is really is really need of help that he is behind that he is going to need support forever. That gives you like sad, sad feeling and being and being in those meetings all by yourself with all those people—I know that they are there for help, to help you but at that time you feel like everybody's talking about your son, right and it's very difficult. I didn't get all the steps. What is going on, what is going to happen? It was very, very difficult. I think that something that really helped me was when I went to your office and you sat down with me and my husband and you explain to us all the process everything that you were going to do, because otherwise you don't get anything about that meeting. That meeting



is just a lot of nervous. You just say yes for whatever they say. Or you just close your mind and say no I don't want to hear you. I don't want to do anything. My son is good. And after approaching you it's been like, like okay I know what I what I have to do. I know the steps that I have to do. I know that I can fight for my daughter. I know that I can tell them that I don't agree with something, because I know now, I know that I have the right. I know that I have the voice. I don't feel like this little person that's with everybody who knows about everything.

Kathleen Donovan: Thank you. I'm so glad you had a chance to hear from Gina and I think that that really, you know, her story really does underscore our why. She really helped us and honestly her story was a compass almost for the work that, that drove the, our production. So that was a little bit about the why and I think you know next, now that we've talked about the why, was how do we respond to the need.

And as we considered the various options available to us, our team was drawn to principles of both adult education and also a concept that actually I was not familiar with called popular education that was pioneered by Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator and philosopher, who became a leading figure in this critical, critical pedagogy across the world. And he developed, a what is really called a problem-posing approach that continues to inspire educators today and it recognizes the crucial role of dialogue and adult learning and the necessity to base any teaching that we do on the learner's own lives and lived experiences.

So, the telenovela really served the format as a type of a cultural code, where people could see themselves reflected and could focus their attention in a real life problem that they faced. So, the first, I think, you know, one of the things, I'm most proud of about the work is that we didn't do it for parents, we did it with parents. And that changed everything. As we considered our FACE policy and the dual capacity framework, we've recognized immediately that we couldn't just make a video that shared what we thought parents should know, but rather we really needed to co-create this work with families.

So, the design team started by creating a script. We you know kind of rolled out the script and fleshed it out. Dr Briceno brought her knowledge of family and community engagement, I tried to bring my decades of special education experience and work with families and then the parents brought their stories. And they brought, you know, culturally what resonated and what would you know be reflective of their lived and authentic experiences. So, we worked together and then we did some focus groups to kind of you know test the waters and see whether or not the messages we were trying to convey actually resonated and then we went back to the drawing board and kept working and working so it was a collaborative process throughout.



And then fortunately we were able to work with an amazing team at Arlington Educational Television team to begin pre-production. And on the next slide you can see some great photos of how we started our pre-production. I think we're on slide 18. When we get to that, there we go, and the AETV team really helped us take our story and learn how to take it from written words into actual moving images. They really worked with us. I'll always remember them saying you have to show your story, not just tell your story. So, we did that.

We tried to work with them and then we you know just as you would I guess making any you know video production we put out a call for auditions. All of the cast members that you'll see in our telenovela are either parents in our community, we have a couple of our students in from our community, as well as staff members. We initially, like one example of how we kind of continue to collaborate throughout the pre-production process was, we initially didn't have grandparents in the script and when two of our colleagues showed up for auditions. They were a little troubled that they didn't think there were any you know roles for more mature adults and we kind of had them just talk and pretend they were grandparents and then when we saw the magic that happened with the two of them on screen, we realized we had to go back to the drawing board again and create more you know more roles for a family and we also recognize that many of us are living in transgenerational households so we were very thrilled to be able to add a richness to the home life that you'll see in the telenovela.

The video production happened. We filmed with a four-person team from our Arlington Educational Television group and we filmed, either we filmed in several of our schools as well as our administrative central office where my Parent Resource Center space is located as well as in Dr Rosa Briceno's home. So, you'll see a lot of, you know a lot of different scenes and environments throughout the telenovela. Our AETV colleagues said that they actually went back and watched a lot of telenovelas so that they could understand more about the drama and the style of Spanish language telenovelas. We were disheartened a little bit that Covid kind of shut down our operation so this this has been a project that has been literally years in the making. But we were completely shut down for two years because we couldn't get our amazing crew into their space and connected with their technology.

But we continued during the pandemic to try to work on things like subtitling, realizing that we wanted this to be accessible not just to folks who speak Spanish, but to anybody who would like to watch it, especially staff members too who might not speak Spanish. So that's a little bit about our production. And without any further ado I'd like to give you an opportunity to watch episode one. This is a series of five episodes and episode one is called "What's going on with my child?" and we hope you'll grab your popcorn and dim your lights and enjoy La Sopa de la Abuela.

[video plays with speakers in Spanish. English subtitles provided on video. Transcript available within video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1ZH3oFr61g>.]



Donna Sacco: Monica has joined us.

Kathleen Donovan: I know I'm so excited. I'll give Monica a moment to just get caught up. We hope you enjoyed episode one and we hope we left you with a with a little bit of a cliffhanger about whether or not her husband will read the paperwork, visit the Parent Resource Center. What's he going to do next?

So, we tried to follow the telenovela style and have a little cliffhanger at the end of each one, but we'll give you a little sneak peek with a preview of what's coming up in the rest of our episodes. So, in episode two the husband, the husband and wife do indeed come to visit the Parent Resource Center to begin accessing information and support and to figure out what they need to know to navigate the process. In episode three, we bring, we film in one of our school conference rooms and tried to make it very much like what we call a student support team process.

And I'll pause here. We used to call these students study committee meetings, but I'm guessing that most of you are in districts that have some type of a special education cyclical process that works through referral evaluation and determination of eligibility and then leads to an IEP, annual IEPs, and then three-year re-evaluations following those federal guidelines, so this is the kind of the first meeting where they bring the family and the team together to discuss concerns about our little friend Pedro.

And this team does determine indeed to go ahead and refer the child for a special education evaluation. And during episode three we also tried to use the episode as a way to help families understand what happens during each different evaluation and we have video clips and footage of you know the child being observed in a classroom, the child working with the school psychologist, because you know, you know one of the things I think many families are confused about is why are there so many tests and what do they all mean. So that's a little bit of what happens in episode three.

In episode four Pedro is diagnosed as having, or is identified I should say, is identified as having a learning disability. And you know, we see the family deal with a little bit of grief around that. We see the family deal with some feelings of guilt, you know questioning whether they did something wrong. We also see the family turn to, especially Lucia turned to her friend Karina— who, whose name is actually really Karina. Karina was one of the other amazing parents that co-created this project with us. We know that many of us, when we're dealing with a challenge, might you know in addition to turning to our feelings, we may turn to close and trusted friends. And you know in this situation, Karina really mentored Gina and helped connect her to resources. So, we wanted to feature that a little bit as well as like how the whole family pulls together to think about the next steps and move forward. So, we get to see lots of great scenes at home as well.



And then finally in episode five Pedro's been identified and you know has been found eligible and the family is now preparing to actively engage with the IEP team and we show an actual IEP meeting. And one of the things we wanted to feature here was how sometimes parents and staff might have disagreements. We really wanted to, you know, normalize that process. Prepare parents that, to know that they do have a right to disagree, they have a right to ask questions, they have a right to you know take some time and mull things over, but we also tried to emphasize how much sometimes we get a better outcome when we take time to further discuss and dive you know dive a little deeper into a parent question or concern and keep talking and keep collaborating. So, episode 5 talks about what happens when you disagree and how you move forward.

So that's a little bit of the synopsis and now it's my great privilege and thrill to welcome my colleague Monica to the session. And she's going to tell you a little bit about, now that we have the telenovela, how— oh I'm sorry before I introduce Monica, I'm going to let Monica take another minute—we're going to let Gina come back and talk a little bit about how as a parent she thinks the telenovela would be helpful and then you'll get to meet my friend Monica.

Gina Argotti (Video): I think that the telenovela is such a great tool because it gives the perspective to the family of what really is going to happen. You really know the steps of all the meetings, what you're going to find in every single meeting, why you are going to every single meeting.

You also see the perspectives of the family. The feelings. The real feelings that you go through learning all the process, but also I think that the telenovela is such a great tool because it's going also to give the staff and teachers the perspectives of what is going on in the minds and in the families because they don't know that they don't know. That what they are all the phrases all the all the all the words that they use that, that maybe for them is quite normal, is the right way to approach, is there the right way to do they maybe don't understand how the parent is feeling at that time.

If the parent is understanding what they are saying. If using the very, very you know academic language or the acronyms that they use is affecting the family. When they, when they are having the meeting, I think that that is an important message. So, they can really feel and be in the shoes of the family and I think that telenovela is showing that it's showing the pain behind you know the meeting. Behind the meeting is a family. It's a person. It's a mom. It's a dad. So, I think that is the most important message that the telenovela has given something that also that is important for me.

Kathleen, is like when we show in the telenovela that we go to the meeting to the to the PRC and how the mom changes with the information. Because information is powerful because when she when she gets the information from the from the PRC, when she get all the language that they're going to use, when she gets prepared for the next meeting, when she knows what they are going to talk about in the next meeting, when she writes down okay I'm going to tell them this, I want them to take care of this,

and I want them to realize that this is happening, that gives the parent the strong voice to know, okay I have I have the power to talk for my son. I can encourage other parents to do the same for their kids. So that gives also the parent you know the ability to say okay, I don't agree with you and maybe I'm going to think about this. I'm not being afraid to say no.

Monica Lozano Caldera: Thank you, Kathleen, and thank you everyone and my apologies for the problem with the connections. I'm happy to be here today and excited from Colombia with my coffee here, making sure we are connected and supporting families everywhere in the world. Something that Gina mentioned in the different occasion is the voice of the parents. We believe that telenovela is an equity tool.

We believe that by showing the telenovela and providing the parents with the information and giving them the power, we really close the gap that exists for parents who are second language learners, but also that are receiving service and special education. We know by experience that sometimes these parents sign papers they don't know what really, they say. They sign or accept services that they are not really what the child needed. Then it's important for us to empower them to you know educate, advocate and celebrate the parents' participation and any process related to the special education.

With that I will, happy to share how we are moving forward with this work, the work that, the work that we are going to do is also very parent and staff conversations. We know where we need it and now, we are figuring out the way that it gets to the parents. The way that they need it and they want it. Or the way that we think is it. Then at first, we have two ways to use the novella with the parents.

The first one is an independent web-based learning. What every parent and every one of you can access to the four the five episodes free in our web page. You can access to this these episodes and just watch it in your own pace or use it as much as you can with the community that you work with as an educational tool.

Another way that we are also using this, is by developing, we are already running some of in-person workshops and we are using a resource guide that we have for each one of the chapters. Then over the episodes, we watch the episode and we take the key messages for each one of them and do some activities with the parents and making sure they not only understand but they are um practicing the skills that we want the parents to develop. Every one of these workshops in person is co-facilitated with a parent. We are not doing anything as staff running this. This is the parents and the staff is helping and collaborating with the parent to run these workshops.

Unfortunately, because Covid, when we have the novella ready to go, Covid came. Then we did a virtual, virtual launch. It was very elegant and the whole thing we wanted to make it the red carpet, and the whole thing at the beginning, but we were able to run a wonderful co-facilitation with a parent

workshop online. We had a lot of participation. It was amazing and we have some and Kathleen will share a little bit about the result of this way that we did it. We also did an in person one day workshop, but we're hoping to work to with the parents to run five sessions or something like that. Something that really gave us the space the time and the love for the parents to use it in the way that benefit the whole community.

These are the two ways that we work with parents with the novella and we finally we know that because we work on the dual capacity framework that we get the teachers and the staff also access to it that is why you see that every episode is subtitled in English to give the information the understanding of what is going on. And Gina said beautifully, we want the staff and the teachers to know what happens with the parent, what are the emotions, what are the fears, what are the power of the parents during those sessions. And opening space for us as a staff not only to understand but intentionally to do something about it. Having the conversation, explaining step by step, giving the resources, etc. etc. I think with that we really want um the tool to be used.

The novella as a tool to be used for everyone who needs it and who can access to it. Another thing is that, now that you know all the parents who get to know the novella, they and you become a powerful tool for others. You can be the person who can inform, who can share the information, who can um clarify some questions, etc. etc. Now we really are hoping that the novella is just everywhere, in the way that is needed in the community that you are. I will share with you in the next slide a little bit about um our guide. I love this because the guides are also very interactive.

Every episode has the booklet that will tell you exactly what to do. When we work with the parents, in the parent session. And one of the activities that we have is, for example this one, where we asked the by table and group of parents with the staff to share or to match the role of the person that is talking with the person that is doing it. Then they match the role of the student support team members and they tell us exactly which what is one of them will do when they are working with the child. Another activity that Kathleen love is the roulette. La famosa rouletta en Espanol. We love this one because the parents in the big group are invited to you know play the roulette and they will tell us which one of these team members do what and they will be in their own words and understanding for understanding to figure out they know exactly what this person does when they are working on the team around your child success.

And another one that I love is how we are able to talk about all those feelings and also the fears that are happening then after we watch some of the episodes, we ask the people about you know what they observe and stuff like that and something that we always notice is the reaction when the people see the word stigma or stereotype. It's only a kind of face change, people react to that, and they express how this word um especially in the Latino community—and I talk about my own experience in our countries they support for special education is very limited and it's very stereotyped. Then there's



children or the students who are in the special education or need special education services are um seen in a different way and sometimes discriminated by because of that. Then we open the conversation with these words that wherever you are in the world means something to you, then we have the conversation about them to this very intentional question during the process. Since we see it here, when we talk about the stigma share your reflection in the group about when what is the stigma for you, what happened when the people see these in your country or in your community, etc. And now we'll ask back to Kathleen and sharing a little bit about what happened in our pilot. It was amazing and she will share with you a little bit more about the results of these sessions.

Kathleen Donovan: Thanks Monica. So as Monica said, she and I, along with Gina and my colleague Emma at our Parent Resource Center facilitated the first session virtually and then this past November we held our first Saturday learning seminar. It was funded by our diversity equity and inclusion department that Monica works with so that we could provide lunch and spend the whole day together.

The episodes all are pretty short, you know between 7 and 10 minutes or so, so we were able to go through each episode and then have, you know Monica mentioned our learning guides. We have learning facilitation guides for each episode to do all of these activities and we had great results.

On the next slide you can see that we showed an increase, you know we did pre-tests and post-tests, and the results indicated that that more parents indicated that they understood all of the steps in the special education process, they understood that their consent was required for all special education decisions, and they also felt more knowledgeable about the roles of the various special education team members that they would be collaborating with. We had a decrease in parents who reported that they felt unfamiliar with the process or were still not sure on how to advocate for their child. So, we were thrilled, you know the things we saw improve improved and the things we wanted to see decrease which was the sense of confusion and not knowing what to do, we did see some decrease, as a result of by our parents, so we're very excited about that.

So, circling back to where we started, to our why. When we conceived the project, we really wanted to ensure that families were connected with the information and the resources that they needed to navigate the special education process. We also wanted to ensure that they had the resources and the understanding to address the emotions that come along with it. You know and I always tell families, you know I wish I had a magic wand so that we could minimize you know how emotional this process is, and of course none of us have that, but information is a bit of a magic wand because it does certainly temper the emotions and leaves our space in our brain. You know, instead of trying to manage our emotions during a meeting, if we already know what to expect we're able to just be more knowledgeable and I think that in essence does also help the process become a little bit less emotional. We wanted families to know that, you know, to have the knowledge that they needed to make informed decisions and provide informed consent and also to develop positive and collaborative



relationships with the other members of their child's educational team, because we know that those partnerships are what really do change outcomes for kids.

You know when families and staff work together, children do better in school, so most importantly this benefits our students that we all care so much about. So, we hope that this series is a great resource for our community, but also for your communities. We hope that you can use this tool and we encourage you to watch it with intentionality for the key messages that we tried to build in that you can see here on the screen. And I won't read through these because I want to make sure we have some time to get you to these resources, but you can look through that on them. I'm sure they'll send a PDF out.

We're also getting a little bit close to the end so you may not want to take time now but I would encourage you to reflect on what you've learned today and you know not just in this session, but all of our sessions. We know that our brains as adults learn best while we provide ourselves time with that reflection. So, we'd like you to think about the needs of the families in your school districts and consider whether some of the experiences and the resources we're sharing today might strengthen your practices. We would encourage you to as you think about family outreach to co-create and to do things not just for families, but with families. That made all the difference for us and I think made this project as powerful as we believe that it is.

We also as Monica mentioned, whenever we're you know facilitating learning sessions, we always co-facilitate with a parent, as well, usually with Gina. So, the next slide shows you how you can find the rest of the series. I was excited somebody wrote in the chat that they are eager to see episode two and we hope that you enjoy them. On our telenovela homepage, you'll see links to all of the episodes that are posted in YouTube. Also wanted to mention that you can turn on, because they're in YouTube families and staff can turn on language captioning in other languages, as well. Probably not perfect, but it can hopefully make it a little bit more accessible. So, you can go to our [apsva.us slash backslash PRC](https://apsva.us/backslash_PRC) URL or use the QR code to get to the telenovela homepage which will provide you with links to each episode as well as a description of each episode.

If you want to learn more about our work or about the telenovela, I'm happy to field questions. So, you can reach me by phone or email at the link above and then we mentioned our facilitation guides. I'm still, one of my summer projects to get these in a more nice-looking state so I'm hoping that those will be available shortly to share with you as PDFs and we welcome you to use and adapt this and spread the word and share it. We put a lot of love and effort into this and we love the idea that it's being shared not just in Arlington Virginia but across the country. Monica's even brought it to Puerto Rico, I think. Great, Monica. Okay so that's a little bit about the telenovela and I'll turn this back over to Donna. Donna, I don't know if you want to wrap up and then open for questions but we have a few extra moments.



Donna Sacco: Sorry thank you so much Kathleen and yes, I've been asking for questions in the in the chat box. Please feel free to ask us questions there. I've posted contact info for Kathleen there and you know I think those guides are going to be wonderful for people to be able to use.

We did as stories from the classroom on this telenovela with Gina and Kathleen and if you would like to you know show your schools what this telenovela is all about you can go to promotingprogress.org and in this link resources and tools you'll see the drop down has stories from the classroom and the very first one you'll see is the one on the telenovela. I put the link to that page in the chat there and you know bring it to your schools. I love that you know Kathleen and Monica are saying you know we want everyone around the country to be able to see these and utilize them. The next project is going to be to be adding different languages, right. Use the same script or similar script in different languages would be awesome. Missy says just wonderful info, really looking forward to checking out the website. Yay, yes, all five and you know they're in nice bite-sized pieces and no one feels overwhelmed, you know, around 10 minutes and I think the discussion guides will be useful. Did you have a question? I see feel free to open your mic, if you have a question too.

Missy: No, you just mentioned my name so I wanted them to actually see that, who was here.

Donna Sacco: So, thank you Missy.

Missy: But thank you, it was it was excellent, excellent.

Donna Sacco: Yay, if anyone else has questions feel free, we have a couple more minutes. Is there a grade or age that you would recommend including the student in the meetings to begin understanding the journey and build self-efficacy skills. I'd love to speak to that.

Kathleen Donovan: So, I would say, as young as possible. We encourage even Pre-K and kindergarten, first grade, or early elementary students to participate in some way. To know that there's a team that families and staff are working together to figure out how their brains like to learn. And you know whether it's just joining the meeting, to invite you know parents to their teachers. Or you know we work a lot with the I'm determined project in Virginia. It's, I'll put it in the chat. It's called I'm determined dot org. And they've got some great templates, if you're outside of Virginia that are accessible to anybody, that talk about, like you know, my best day and really helping to build self-advocacy skills.

So, we think it really is helpful for families you know to start talking with teachers about how can we incorporate our child to the extent that they're able and ready. Certainly, by middle school you know we want kids to understand a little bit about how their brains work and what strategies are effective



for them. I think having a student actually in the room changes the tone of the meeting a lot, sometimes for the better. We encourage families to bring you know a binder with like pictures of their child so that we're all focused on you know not just the 27 pages of boxes that we need to check off, but actually the human being that we're talking about. But one of my colleagues—

Donna Sacco: I was wondering if you also recommend parent I mean person-centered language, you know program that—

Kathleen Donovan: Yeah, we do. One of our colleagues has really worked on a self-determination project in Arlington to really have by high school students leading their IEP meeting so we are big fans of that.

Monica Lozano Caldera: But then also if I may, we are using this, a lot. I am in the high school and Arlington Tech and I encourage the student not only because they are transitioning into your, their post-secondary education and they need to know, they are educating themselves about the whole process. Sometimes they are part of the process and they don't really know what is the role.

Then this is not only for the parents, we really encourage the parents to know when their children are younger, but as soon um I am noticing how the students are learning from this novella and they are embracing and celebrating disability and advocating for themselves because sometimes they don't have the opportunity to speak up and say well this is not working anymore or this is need to work this way then we are really inviting the students to be part of the process and using the novella with them too. Especially for second language, it's a connection, it's so funny when the students were watching the telenovela with the parents it was a connection then between them. Because sometimes this child speaks English the parents Spanish and it's a gap and it's kind of everyone in their own way watching the novella laughing about it, identify themselves, and everyone in the process really make a connection and that empower the family to continue their journey together. And especially after they finish high school and they have to advocate in their colleges or any post-secondary plan and say you know if it's possible these are the supports that I need.

Donna Sacco: Someone was asking about Parent Resource Centers, I'm going to put a link in the in the chat here about a National Center for Parent Information and Resources and you can find, I believe every state has a parent resource center by state. There Amy did the same thing, I did. I didn't see yours at the same time. Thanks for doing that.

Kathleen Donovan: Great it sounds as though there was a question about parent guides.

Amy Peterson: There was a question about accessing, where the discussion guides could be found. I don't know if you want to just go back and I can go back to the slide Kathleen.



Kathleen Donovan: Yeah, thanks so much, so right now they are on my desk. We're hoping to get them online somewhere. We're trying to figure out. I think what we're going to likely do is to put them into a Google doc that we can then share so that anybody who wants them can do that. They're just, they're not quite publish published ready yet, but they are coming. We're hoping by the end of the summer we'll have those. So, if you want to request them use that link that Amy has popped back up there. You can either use the bitly or that QR code and we will be glad to send you a link to all of the facilitation guides.