

# The Role of Families in Personnel Preparation

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# Parent Involvement in Higher Education Programs Research

(Center for Policy and Practice in Personnel Preparation for Early Intervention and Preschool Education, 2008)

## *Parent Involvement in Higher Education Programs Research*

- Parents with children with special needs were involved in 30 % of programs.
- Of those programs, 30% reported that parents were most likely to participate by teaching or co-teaching a single class session, and 21% of programs reported parents were involved by teaching or co-teaching an entire semester course.
- Most parents participated as unpaid volunteers (65%).

The Center to Inform **Personnel Preparation Policy and Practice** In Early Intervention & Preschool Education *At A Glance...Volume 2, No.1* October 2007

Study II: The Higher Education Survey for Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education Personnel Preparation

- The results of this study offers comprehensive information related to higher education programs preparing early intervention/ early childhood special education providers under IDEA. Many facets of higher education were examined in the 62 item survey. Administrators and faculty members from all 50 states and the District of Columbia completed the survey (n=1,131 programs). Participants represented associate, undergraduate, and graduate programs of various sizes

# Moving forward – Where to begin to involve Parents in Higher Education Preservice Programs?

- Look at the resource list
- Hire a family liaison to oversee this component
- Conduct a needs assessment to determine the need for family stories/family panel presenters
- Recruit families to address the information determined in needs assessment
- Consider the Five Step Model for Involving Families

# Things to consider:

## Hire a Family Liaison to support the family presenters

### Role:

Identify and collaborate with families who have children with cultural linguistic diversity and/or disabilities to participate in various aspects of the program (e.g., guest presenters, panel members, field placements), in order to better prepare personnel to provide services to young children and their families.

# Five-Step Model for Involving Families

1. Identification of family roles in planning, implementing and evaluating curriculum
2. Develop a family directory
3. Standardization of communication process with families and students
4. Support for family participants (what can be provided? Stipend, gift card, etc.)
5. Evaluation by family participants and students

# Step One: Identification of Family Roles

1. Advisory board members
2. Assistance with field experiences
3. Guest presenters
4. Panel presenters
5. Program evaluators

# Step Two: Directory of Family Participants and Roles

1. Develop contacts through community programs (e.g., early intervention, school systems, Head Start) and review the *resource list provided*
2. Conduct needs assessment with potential family participants
3. Develop and maintain an electronic directory

# Step Three: Standardize the Communication Process with Families and Students

1. Develop e-mails and letters specific to different types of involvement
2. Establish timeframe for sending e-mails and letters
3. Develop standard materials and timelines to prepare students for family panel presentations and field experiences
4. Assist students in developing biographies for field experience placements



# Step Four: Support Family Members

1. Consistent communication with family member in planning for presentations and field experiences
2. Facilitation of panels by a family member
3. Coordination of evaluation by family member
4. Incentives – stipends, thank-you cards, “gifts”

# Step Five: Evaluation by Family Participants and Students

1. Evaluation completed after each panel presentation by students and families
2. Evaluation completed by students and families after field experience
3. Family member coordinates completion by families

# Why host family panels?

- Allows you to gain an understanding of the experiences that the family encounters.
- Informs you of the families greatest concerns and the things that were the most comforting while working with early childhood professionals.
- Helps you to develop empathy for the family as you hear the trials and tribulations that their family went through when learning about their child's diagnosis.
- Able to see the different stages that families go through when learning and understanding their child's diagnosis.
- Families are honest on the services that they thought were beneficial and the services that they did not.
- Wide variety of families: families that had just learned of their child's diagnosis and families that had adult children. This fact also allows students to see how times have changed and are changing.

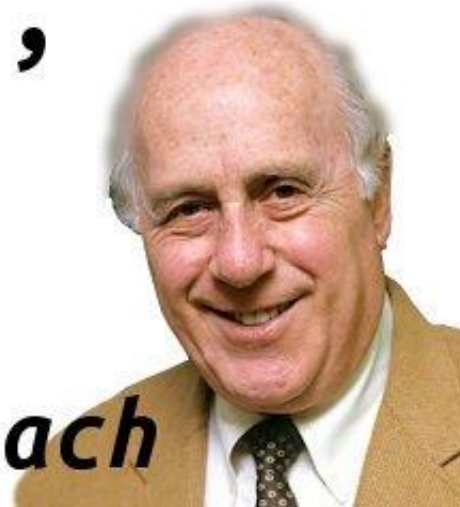
# Things to think about when working with families

- Make sure that families have all the information they need to be able to make informed choices and decisions
- When asking families to advocate they need all the most accurate information to be able to
  - Accurate timely information
  - Able to put it into their context of their own story
  - Appropriately prepared and appropriately supported (e.g. Part C public hearing specific to application to US DOE, committee or a council or an individual meeting where policy decisions are influenced)

# What you say and what families hear sometimes differ

**“It's not  
what you say,  
it's what  
they hear.”**

**– Red Auerbach**



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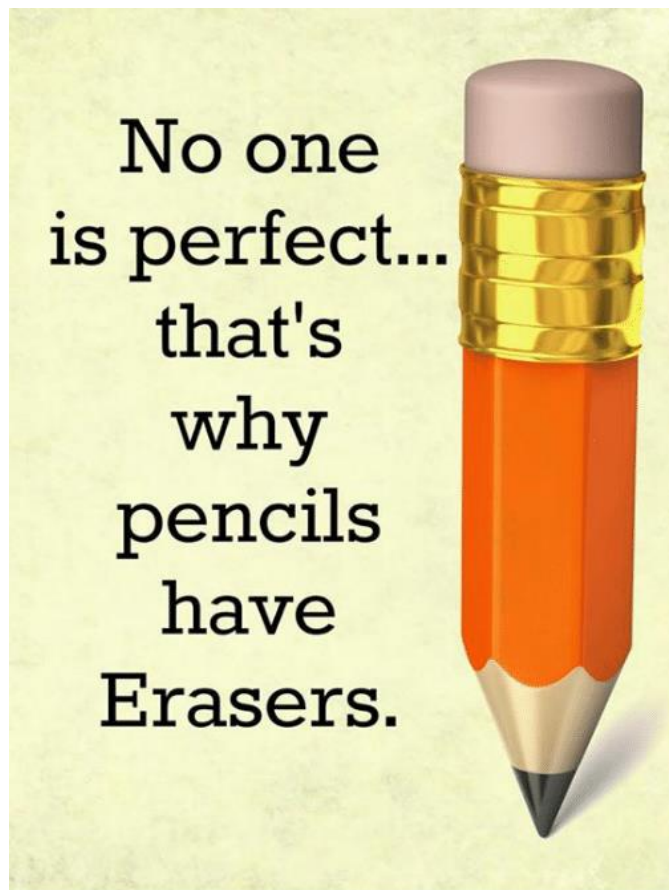
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# You are not alone



But often times it feels like we are all alone

# You aren't perfect—and that's ok!



No one expects you to be perfect and know everything, sometimes we need to be reminded

You are a superhero.



But I just want  
to be a parent



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# Therapy is play. Play is therapy



Help me  
understand

# Make time to enjoy your kids



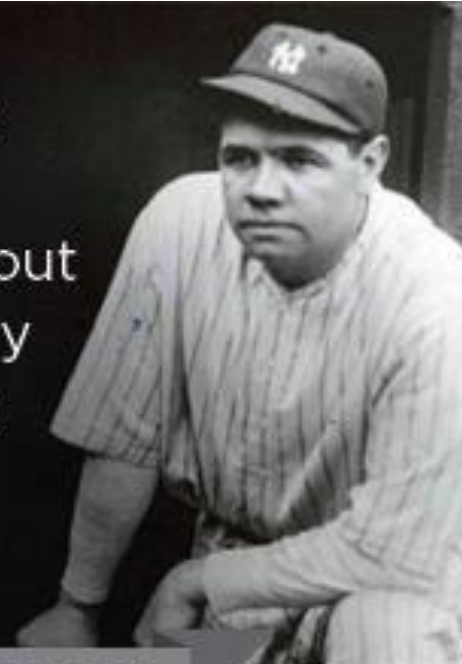
But I need help prioritizing

You will be obligated to make heart wrenching decisions.



# You won't always get it right.

**BABE RUTH** held the record for strikeouts for decades. When asked about this, he simply said, "Every strike brings me closer to the next home run."



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Forgive yourself and forgive others – don't hold a grudge, it gets in the way



Being a parent is hard. Being a parent to a child with extra needs is *extra* hard.



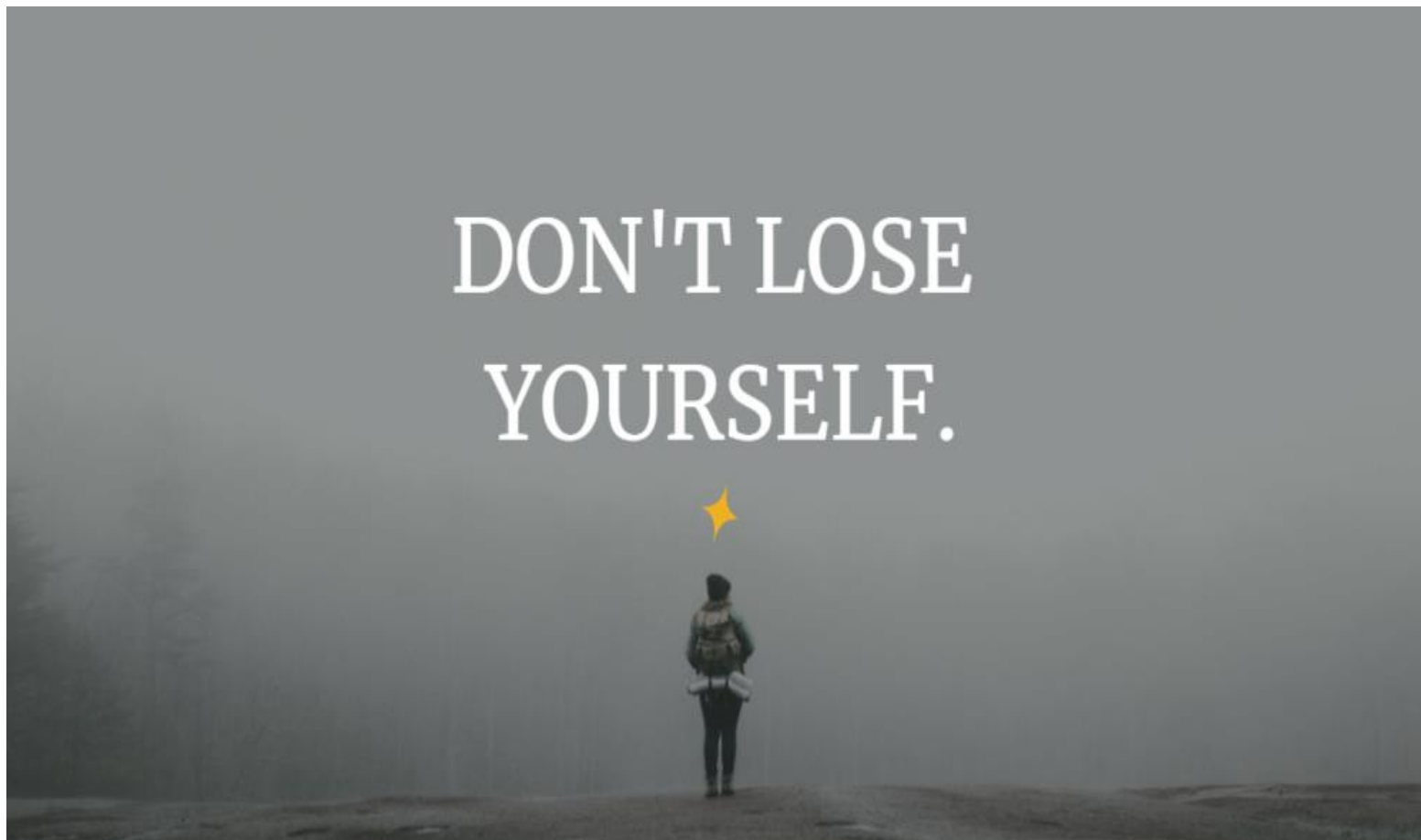
We know this, and we do not **need** to be reminded of it.

# Parenting a child with extra needs is like a marathon.



Need to learn to  
pace yourself

# Don't lose yourself.



Ask for help, it is okay



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# Keep your sense of humor.



*Every time you are able  
to find some humor in a  
difficult situation, you win.*



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# Celebrate the little things!



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No two children or families are the same so  
don't compare



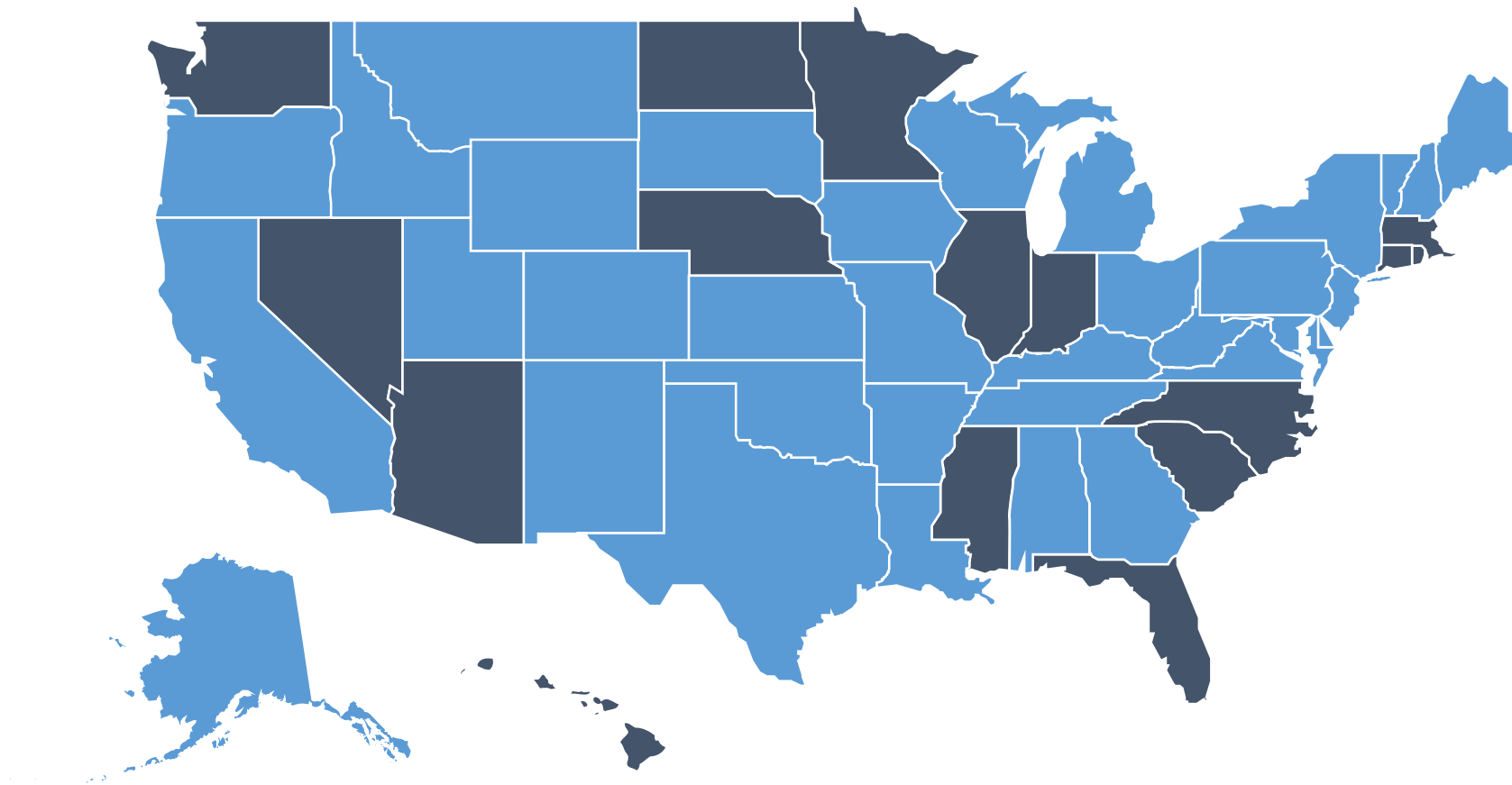
# Make time for your marriage or your relationships



# Resources

- Resource list of family organizations to recruit families
- Do's and Don'ts to support families to tell their story
- Template to support recruitment of families – list of questions to consider
- What additional resources would be helpful for you?

# Families from Cohort 1 – are you connected?



# Contact information

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