

A quarterly publication from Families Together, Inc., the Parent Training and Information and Health Information Center for the State of Kansas



## We're Here to Help!

A lot of things have changed over the past months, but one thing remains the same: Families Together, Inc. is here for you! As your family transitions back into the school year, know that we have staff available to assist you and answer any questions you may have. You're not in this alone!

[contactus@families-together-inc.org](mailto:contactus@families-together-inc.org)

## Navigating Change: Kansas' Guide to Learning and School Safety Operations

Covid-19 has made things difficult for families across the state. After school closings, continuous learning options and cancelled summer plans, many families are eagerly anticipating the return to school. Others may have doubts, not knowing exactly what the school year will bring. Thankfully, the Kansas State Board of Education has released guidance to help support schools as they formulate their plans for re-entry into the new school year. Nearly 1,000 Kansas stakeholders worked to develop this guidance document, with two questions in mind: 1.) How do we keep students, educators, and community members as safe as possible, and 2.) How do we ensure each student is learning and being supported regardless of the learning environment? Regardless of how those environments are tailored, the State Board of Education stresses that rigor and accountability must be maintained throughout the year. Students will be expected to learn and progress as they would in a typical school year. In place of state standards for each grade level, grades have been banded together in age groups. Each grade band has a set of competencies containing age appropriate benchmarks, along with possible activities, lessons, and different learning strategies.

The Navigating Change: Guide to Learning and School Safety Operations is meant to help guide local districts as they develop a plan for their students and staff, not to prescribe what must be done. As a parent, it is important to refer to your child's district for any policies or procedures they are adopting during this unprecedented time.

You can find the full document at <https://www.ksde.org/Teaching-Learning/Resources/Navigating-Change-Kansas-Guide-to-Learning-and-School-Safety-Operations>.

## KSDE Guidance: Compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act for Reopening Schools

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act require school districts to provide special education and related services to students with exceptionalities. The Kansas State Department of Education's (KSDE) Special Education and Title Services (SETS) team created this document to provide a response to questions they are receiving in a uniform and consistent manner. As we all know, this is a rapidly changing situation, and this document will be continually revised to provide the most up to date information. You can find the most recent version of the guidance at <https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/Announcements/COVID-SpEd-FAQ.pdf>.



## Opening Keynote:

### Whew! Is it 2021 Yet?

Lee Stickle is the Director of Kansas State Department of Education's Technical Assistance Support Network (TASN) Autism & Tertiary Supports and School Mental Health Initiative. Without a doubt, the Spring of 2020 was the beginning of a challenge each of us never imagined. We experienced disruption after disruption to our homes, communities and country. Yet, here we are, standing on wobbly legs, staring toward a future that can be bright. How do we create certainty in uncertain times, and how do we emerge with greater strength and confidence? Come listen to what we have learned about resiliency and how to build it in yourself so that you can share it with your children!



## Followed by a Questions & Answers Session with Lee!

## Breakout Sessions:

- **Navigating Special Education Law During a Global Pandemic**
- **Trauma, Toxic Stress, & Caregiver Well-Being**
- **The Future Starts NOW: Transition to Adulthood**
- **Telehealth Tips: Navigating a New Normal in Times of Change**
- **Discover Strategies to Prevent and De-escalate Challenging Behaviors**
- **Engaging & Navigating Early Childhood**

**For conference details visit**  
[www.familiestogetherinc.org/2020twclvirtual](http://www.familiestogetherinc.org/2020twclvirtual)

Individuals who are registered for the conference will have access to pre-recorded breakout sessions, **available on-demand until** from September 30, 2020.

Have questions about the conference? Email [leia@familiestogetherinc.org](mailto:leia@familiestogetherinc.org).

PTI Award Number H328M150027 — HIC Award Number H84MC09487



## September 12, 2020

**Online - FREE**

## Closing Keynote:

### Advocacy Lessons for Envable Lives!

Ann Turnbull was on the faculty at KU and is a "forever fan" of Families Together. She has been around since its inception. She has been a professor, researcher, and advocate for individuals with disabilities and their families for almost five decades. She has authored 37 books and over 350 articles and chapters. Ann and her husband, Rud, were selected by the National Historic Preservation Trust on Developmental Disabilities as two of 36 individuals who "changed the course of history for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the 20th Century." Ann is quick to say that her "best professor" was her son, Jay (1967-2009), who experienced multiple disabilities and had an "enviable life," for which she will be forever grateful. His enviable life required lots of advocacy, and every minute was worth it!



**Thank you to  
our partners**



**Fort Riley**

## Our IEP Mentor Program

Tammy called Families Together this past fall. Her 14 year old daughter with autism was struggling at school. Tammy had always been involved in her daughter's education and IEP meetings, and she had been happy with her daughter's services and education. But, now in high school and after a recent move, things were not going well.

Tammy made an appointment with one of our IEP Mentors. Together they went through her daughter's IEP. They discussed what was working and what was not working. Tammy explained what she would like for her daughter in school, at home, and in life. The IEP Mentor helped Tammy and her daughter identify strategies and supports that lead to the dream they had for her.

At the IEP meeting, Tammy was prepared to discuss her daughter's new struggles. The IEP Mentor was with her to support her when communicating her dreams and requesting strategies and supports. It was a thorough and productive meeting, resulting in an IEP that addressed her daughter's current struggles, while moving her closer to the good life Tammy had dreamt for her.

Our IEP Mentor Program provides intensive support to families to develop a vision for a good life for their child. It is designed to encourage, educate, and empower parents to be powerful advocates for their child through the IEP process. Contact us for more information.

## Programa De Mentores Del IEP

Tammy llamó a Familias Unidos el otoño pasado. Su hija de 14 años con autismo estaba luchando en la escuela. Tammy siempre había estado involucrada en la educación de su hija y en las reuniones del IEP, y estaba feliz con los servicios y la educación de su hija. Pero, ahora en la escuela secundaria y una mudanza reciente, las cosas no iban bien.

Tammy hizo una cita con uno de nuestros mentores del IEP. Juntos revisaron el IEP de su hija. Hablaron sobre lo que estaba funcionando y lo que no estaba funcionando.

Tammy explicó lo que le gustaría para su hija en la escuela, en el hogar y en la vida. El mentor del IEP ayudó a Tammy a identificar estrategias y apoyos que la llevaron al sueño que tenía para su hija.

En la reunión del IEP, Tammy estaba preparada para discutir las nuevas luchas de su hija.

El mentor del IEP estaba con ella para apoyarla cuando comunicaba sus sueños y solicitaba estrategias y apoyos.

Fue una reunión larga y productiva, que resultó en un IEP que dirigió las luchas actuales de su hija, mientras la acercaba a la vida mejor que Tammy había soñado para ella.

Nuestro Programa de Mentores del IEP brinda apoyo intenso a las familias para que desarrollen una visión de una buena vida para sus hijos. Está diseñado para alentar, educar y capacitar a los padres para que sean poderosos defensores de sus hijos a través del proceso del IEP. Contáctenos para más información.



***For more resources, visit [www.familiestogetherinc.org](http://www.familiestogetherinc.org)***

## Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

In basic terms, least restrictive environment (LRE) refers to the setting where a child with a disability can receive an appropriate education designed to meet his or her educational needs, alongside peers without disabilities to the maximum extent appropriate.

The core of IDEA requires that each public agency must ensure that—

- (i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and
- (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

The group that determines the educational placement for a child with a disability must include individuals with specific expertise or knowledge:

- the child's parents;
- personnel who know the variety of placement options available to meet the child's needs, and
- individuals who understand the significance of the data used to develop the child's IEP.

Often, *but not always*, this may be the same group of people comprising the IEP team. Although the parents of the child are part of the group determining the child's placement and are likely to be well informed as to the placement decision, schools must still provide parents with prior written notice about the placement decision a reasonable time before it implements that decision.

*A resource from National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)*

***Para más recursos, visite [www.facebook.com/FamiliasUnidasKansas](https://www.facebook.com/FamiliasUnidasKansas)***

## La Definición de Ambiente Menos Restrictivo (LRE)

Bajo IDEA, la ley federal de educación especial en los Estados Unidos, el concepto del "ambiente menos restrictivo" es muy importante en determinar la ubicación de cada niño con una discapacidad recibiendo esta ayuda especial. En inglés, "ambiente menos restrictivo" es "least restrictive environment" o LRE (por sus siglas en inglés).

¿Cómo se define LRE bajo IDEA?

Las provisiones de IDEA con respecto a LRE no constituyen una "definición" en sí; sin embargo, su conocimiento es muy importante. Estas provisiones aparecen en las regulaciones finales de la Parte B en §§300.114 hasta 300.120, como parte de las provisiones de IDEA que se refieren a la "Elegibilidad del Estado."

Las Provisiones de IDEA

(a) *General.*

(1) Excepto como se dispone en §300.324(d) (2) (con relación a los niños con discapacidades en prisiones de adultos), el Estado deberá tener en efecto políticas y procedimientos para asegurar que las agencias públicas en el Estado cumplan con los requisitos de LRE de esta sección y §§300.115 hasta 300.120.

(2) Cada agencia pública deberá asegurar que—

(i) Al máximo de la extensión apropiada, los niños con discapacidades, incluidos los niños en instituciones públicas o privadas u otras facilidades de cuidado, sean educados con niños sin discapacidades; y

(ii) Las clases especiales, la enseñanza separada u otra remoción de niños con discapacidades del ambiente educacional regular ocurra sólo cuando la naturaleza o severidad de la discapacidad es tal que la educación en salas de clase regulares no puede ser lograda satisfactoriamente con el uso de auxilios y servicios suplementarios.

*Un recurso transferido de National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)*

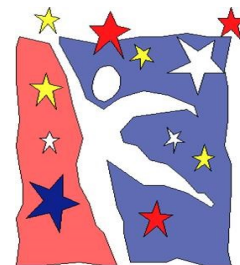


## Starting the School Year Off Right

Here are a few suggestions for education advocates as we start back to school.

1. Understand what school will look like for your student(s). Is it remote, hybrid or on-site?
2. Based on that, does the student's IEP need to be adjusted to ensure your student can still receive a free appropriate public education?
3. Expect to hear from your student's district to have a meeting prior to school starting to make some possible changes and contingencies to his/her IEP.
4. Ask questions. If you need an explanation about how instruction or a service will be delivered on days students aren't in the building, ask!
5. Make sure your student's teachers and team members understand your role and when to notify you of meetings, discipline issues, progress or lack of progress, and where to send grades and official progress notes.
6. Consider arranging a time to touch base each week. Perhaps you ask to have behavior data sheets sent to you on Friday afternoons or you decide on a quick email exchange to see how the week is going every Wednesday during the teacher's plan time. This keeps you informed so you can make good decisions.
7. Make sure you are registered as a parent on your student's parent portal system. This allows you to track grades, attendance and tardies, discipline referrals, and graduation progress if applicable.
8. Don't wait for the school to contact you. Good communication is a two-way street.
9. Contact Families Together if your student has a change in schools or placements.
10. Please remember to assert your rights and find ways to stay involved with your student's education!
11. Enjoy this school year!

As always, thank you for your time and efforts on behalf of Kansas kids!



***Find us on Facebook! [www.facebook.com/FamiliesTogetherInc](http://www.facebook.com/FamiliesTogetherInc)***



# Workshops

Our workshops, trainings and conferences are offered to parents, education advocates, general educators, special educators, para-professionals, administrators, service providers, and other individuals who care for and about children/youth who have disabilities. For more information and to register, visit [famielstogetherinc.org/events/](http://famielstogetherinc.org/events/).

## Transition to Adulthood

### SHIFT Transition to Adulthood TEC

This conference is for youth (ages 14-21) who have disabilities and their families. The conference will include resources and the steps to take before and after leaving school including attending college, employment and living as independently as possible. This is a 3-day virtual training.

- **Online SHIFT**  
**September 14, 2020** – The Road to the Good Life  
**September 15, 2020** – The Road to Careers and Employment  
**September 17, 2020** – The Road to Independence and Interdependence
- **Wichita SHIFT** - *more information to come*  
**October 2020**
- **Kansas City SHIFT** - *more information to come*  
**November 2020**

### Family Employment Awareness Training

A two-day training designed for families, their young adults who have significant support needs, and the professionals who support them.

The goals of FEAT are to increase expectations for competitive employment of the young adult with a disability and increase knowledge of state and federal resources to support the employment of the young adult.

*You must attend Part 1 to attend Part 2.*

- **Shawnee Mission FEAT**  
**October 24 & 30, 2020**  
**9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

*"I attended the conference thinking I had a fairly good grasp on services available, but I left with the knowledge of so much more that I did not know. I also think it was wonderful that my son got the opportunity to hear about these services. I especially think it was beneficial for him to hear about advocacy and having a voice for himself."*

*-Parent Attendee*

## Together We Can Learn

### 2020 Virtual Conference

Join us for our keynote kickoff and a live Q & A with Lee Stickle. Afterwards, individuals who are registered for the conference will have access to pre-recorded breakout sessions, **available on-demand for two weeks** from September 12-26, 2020.

- **Virtual Keynote**  
**September 12, 2020**  
**9:00 a.m.**

## Education Advocate

Families Together will offer eight training opportunities to become an education advocate this school year. Until further notice, trainings are being offered virtually and by region. Interested persons should notify Darla at [darla@famielstogetherinc.org](mailto:darla@famielstogetherinc.org) to be put on our notification list.

## Contact Us

**Topeka**  
[topeka@famielstogetherinc.org](mailto:topeka@famielstogetherinc.org)  
785-233-4777  
1-800-264-6343

**Wichita**  
[wichita@famielstogetherinc.org](mailto:wichita@famielstogetherinc.org)  
316-945-7747  
1-888-815-6364

**Garden City**  
[gardencity@famielstogetherinc.org](mailto:gardencity@famielstogetherinc.org)  
620-276-6364  
1-888-820-6364

**[FamiliesTogetherInc.org](http://FamiliesTogetherInc.org)**

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## IEP Q & A

**Q: What are the overarching principles to keep in mind if a school district offers students alternative options for accessing the general education curriculum, such as the Navigating Change “learning environment” examples (onsite, remote, hybrid), as well as virtual school?**

**A:** 1. A student’s IEP is developed by the student’s IEP Team.

2. The IEP developed by the IEP team is the district’s offer of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) (typically in a school building) for a particular child.

3. The district’s offer of FAPE (especially in a school building) should not be permanently changed to fit circumstances arising from a parent’s unilateral alternative option choice.

4. When a district makes multiple alternative “learning environment” options available to all students (such as remote learning, hybrid learning, or virtual school), children with disabilities have a right to choose to participate in those alternative options.

*From the [KSDE School Year 2020-21 Compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the Kansas Special Education for Exceptional Children Act for Reopening Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)*

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## Staff Spotlight

### **How long have you been with Families Together?**

I have been on staff for almost five years.

### **What programs do you work on?**

I work primarily as a Bilingual Parent Assistant, providing families and youth with one-to-one assistance, training, resources and tools related to education and helping to build family-school partnerships.

I also work as part of our Family-to-Family Health Information Center (F2F). We provide guidance and support for families of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN). I am an active part of the Medically Complex Clinic, a coalition of KU Wichita Pediatrics/Wesley Children’s Hospital, Kansas Special Health Care Needs, and other partners, that brings together professionals with the necessary experience to positively impact care.

### **Tell us about your family!**

I have five children, two girls and three boys. (One son who went to serve the Lord in Heaven after his bout with leukemia at a tender age of 18.) I adopted my youngest who just turned 12, who has all the energy of a child with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. I also have a fur baby, CC, my cat. These two are still in my home. I have a daughter and son who live in Kansas City. My son, who is married, blessed me with a granddaughter and two step children. My daughter, who works with children at risk due to Human Trafficking, blessed me with a fur baby, a dog named Koa. My other daughter, who has a disability, has a family in Wichita. She has blessed me with four beautiful and talented grandchildren. They have blessed me with 11 great-grand children.

### **When you’re not serving families, what do you like to do?**

I love listening to my Norteña music, swimming, discussing social events with my children, working on a game I’m developing, as well as working on three books that I am writing.

### **What do you like most about working at Families Together?**

I enjoy the diversity of families we serve, and seeing the families when they are able to accomplish their goals and learn that they can advocate for their children. I also love sharing resources for families with various language needs.



**Lola Loreda**

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### What's Inside:

- 1 New Kansas Guidance for Reopening
- 2 Together We Can Learn Conference
- 3 Our IEP Mentor Program  
Programa de Mentores del IEP
- 4 Least Restrictive Environment  
La Definicion de Ambiente Menos  
Restrictive (LRE)
- 5 Education Advocate
- 6 Workshops and Trainings
- 7 IEP Q & A  
Staff Spotlight : Meet Our Team

## Welcome to the Families Together, Inc. Newsletter

Families Together, Inc. provides assistance and guidance to help parents and youth become partners in decision-making. Our non-profit is the Parent Training Information Center as well as the Family-to-Family Health Information Center for Kansas.

### What's Inside?

In this edition of our newsletter, we look at some of the guidelines in place for the new school year. We highlight our programs and how Families Together, Inc. can help you and your children. You'll also find information about our upcoming workshops and trainings.

Nosotros hablamos español 1.800.499.9443

### Want to stay up-to-date?

Consider subscribing to our newsletter electronically! Not only will you receive the quarterly newsletter, you will also receive our biweekly Monday Memo which is full of relevant articles and resources.

You'll also help us save trees and reduce printing costs! Let us know you're interested by emailing [topeka@famielstoegetherinc.org](mailto:topeka@famielstoegetherinc.org).

