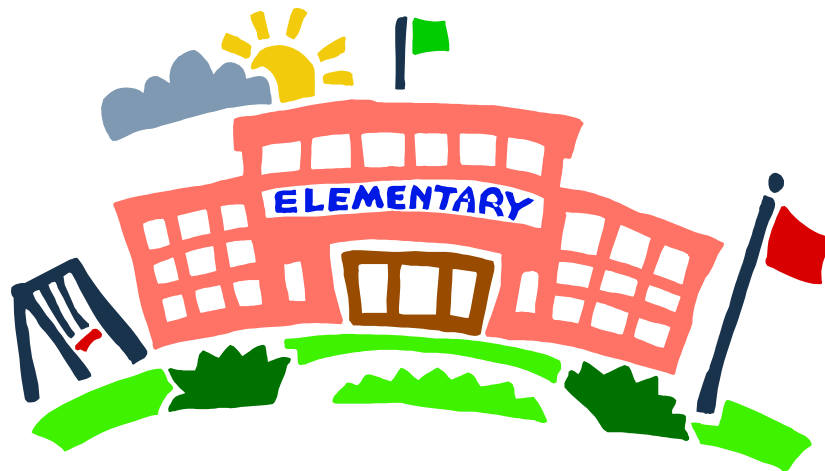


“THE TEN ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL YEAR”



Kerry Headley
Mary K. Ziccardi
October 13, 2010

OR, Otherwise titled...
The Most Common Reasons Families and
Schools ask for HELP!



1. Physical Environment

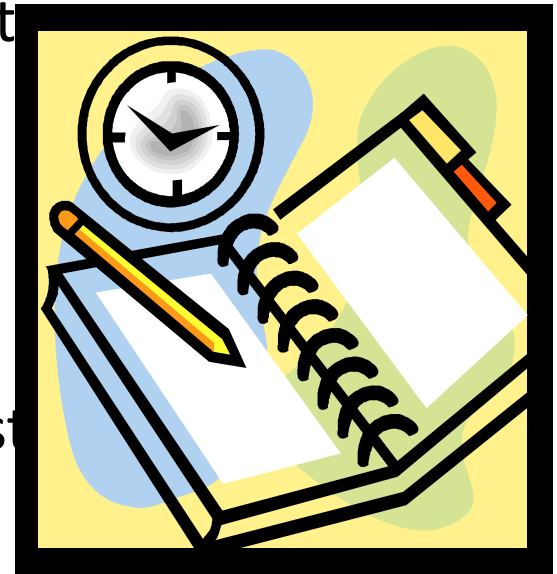
- School location
- Location of classrooms and other areas where instruction and activities occur
- Classroom environmental factors

If it is overwhelming to us, it probably is overwhelming to the student, also.

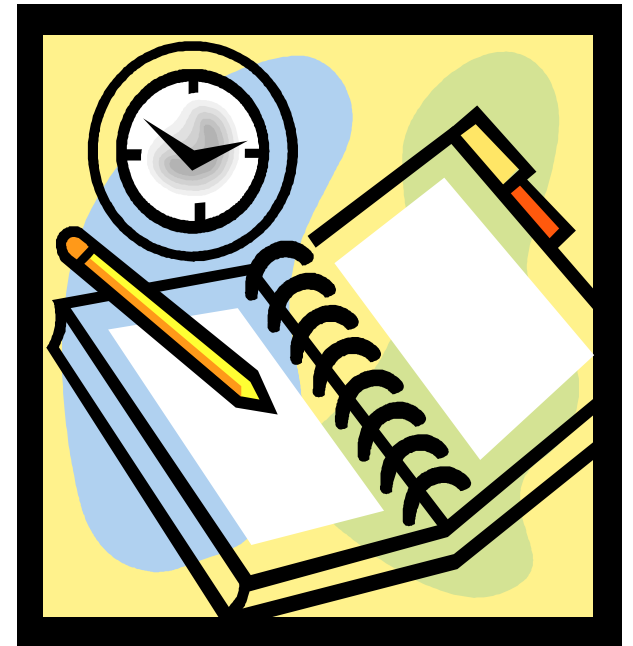


2. Creation of a Schedule and Moving Through the Daily Routine

- Work with the school staff to understand the intensity with which the day needs to be scheduled.
- Build schedules and choices within the larger schedules.
- Use visual schedules and cues.
- Having a schedule is not enough- it must be implemented and supported efficiently.



- Be aware of excessive and unnecessary auditory input and instruction. Too many words slows understanding and can delay, instead of prompt, responses.
- Use “now” and “next” when discussing activities and events.



3. Management of Transitions



- Aide's role is invaluable when transitioning.
- Use visual transition cues instead of verbal prompts.
- Establish the teacher's place as the head of the classroom.
- The teacher is responsible for the IEP implementation & meeting the goals set by the team.



4.Overall Knowledge/Interest/Commitment of All School Personnel

- The commitment from the top level of administration (Superintendent, Director of Special Education, Principal) is critical to set the tone and expectations.
 - It is very important for the parents and school staff to establish and continue a cooperative tone.
- Matching teacher(s) and aide(s) to students needs.
- Use of 1 : 1 Paraprofessional

In most cases, this level of attention is absolutely essential both to provide security and to help the student move through the day.

- When **everything** has truly been tried and has failed, don't be afraid to request a change.
- Most often there **is** a match for the student –don't give up!

- Are all school staff open to learning about the unique considerations of PWS, or do they present that they “have always done it this way” or “have worked with kids just like this before”?
- Please consider adding specific training about PWS and your child annually as a related service in the IEP.



4a. Knowledge in Action

The following is a presentation given each year to all school personnel by Kerry Headley, a parent of an elementary school-age child who has Prader-Willi syndrome

- School staff do benefit from ongoing support and updated information.
- Everyone makes mistakes. Both parents and school personnel who can admit it, both to the student and the team, will gain credibility.
- Identify and build a rapport with the student's "go-to" person.
 - This becomes a very important factor when problems and conflicts arise!
- Build a relationship of mutual trust between the family and school personnel.

5. Supervision

- The type and amount of supervision in every situation needs to be clearly defined.
 - Visual, auditory, proximal?
 - When and where?
 - Be specific in the IEP.
- Thoroughly discuss and define the team’s views of “independence” and LRE addressing the students prior experiences and outcomes.
 - Identify the “weakest link”!



- Encourage the use of direct hands-on instruction, avoiding subtle social cues.
 - “Follow the teacher’s directions” is too vague & not an appropriate IEP goal for most students.
 - Establish and refer to school rules and classroom rules.
- Work as a team to vigilantly search for gaps in the supervisory plan.



6. Food Security

- Teachers must participate in overall classroom food security to ensure the student's safety.
- Advocate for no food in the classroom....not as teaching tools, not as reinforcers.
- Emphasize that the student should only eat what the parent sends in or expressly approves.
- Establish a plan to provide supervision around tasks where food may be accessible.
- Monitor and secure trash cans.

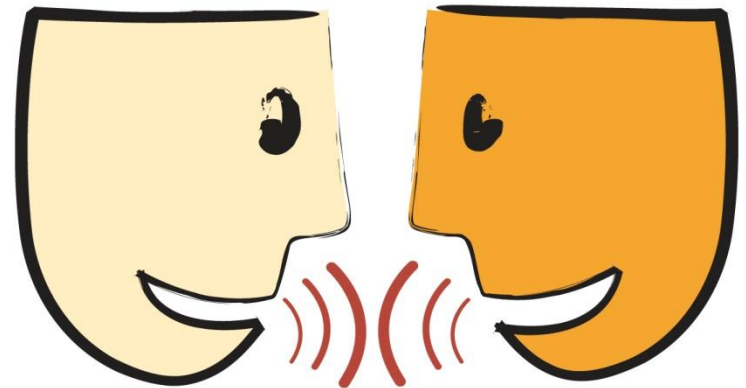


- Impress upon the school staff that food security will both keep the student safe and reduce the school's risks.
- Encourage and promote celebrations that do not involve food.
- The “just this once” phenomenon
- It's not (all about) the food...
it's (all about) the anxiety!

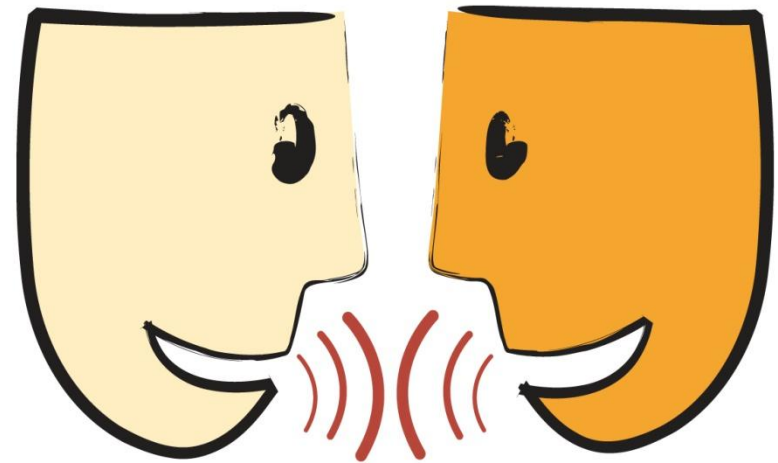


7. Communication With Parents

- The PWSA (USA) crisis team is frequently asked to mediate issues related to communication between the school and family.
- As early as possible, establish what the parents want to know
 - via an immediate phone call?
 - in an email at the end of the day?
 - written in the student's communication log?
- Once agreed, write the communication plan in the IEP.



- Determine what the strategy will be when the teacher and/or aide is absent.
 - Will there be a list of trained substitutes to call?
 - Have a substitute packet prepared for a quick review of your child's needs.
 - Ask the school to assign the next most experienced staff to your student on these days.



8. Challenging Behaviors and Responses

- Some of the most common behavioral concerns reported by schools are
 - interruptive and perseverative behavior
 - meltdowns and tantrums
 - avoiding academic tasks and “stuck” behaviors
 - aggressive behaviors and running away



Work with the school to perform a behavior management analysis



- Is the student trying to tell me something?
- Is the student bored or not understanding the material?
- Is the environment one in which negative behavior is being rewarded?

Other factors to consider....



- Is the student simply saying “no”?
- Is the behavior harmful (are health & safety at risk) or is it simply inconvenient to the school staff?
- Is the behavior simply an idiosyncrasy?

Request a Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA)

- This is a widely accepted, formalized process used to identify the purpose behind why a behavior occurs.
- An FBA will assess when the behavior does (and, as importantly, does not) occur.
- An FBA will involve use of direct and indirect observations and interviews.



What works?

- A positive behavior strategy which is used consistently and enthusiastically with follow-through of predetermined, preferred reinforcers will work!



More strategies to reduce problem behaviors...

- Use incentives to move the student through their day.
- Mix preferred & non preferred activities to create a daily structured plan.
- Get the student to buy in to the plan... “we have to get these things done each day and I want you to help me with that.”
- Have the student assist with very important “jobs” around the school.



9. Transportation

- Getting to and from school can be a very vulnerable time of the day for students with PWS.
 - Concerns are food security, trained supervision (if supervised at all), & overall safety.
- A plan that includes more supervision and/or less students, a transportation aide, lunches (and leftover lunches) kept at the front of the bus, and training of all transportation personnel is optimal.
- Consider adding the bus driver and transportation aide to the IEP team.



10. Student's Overall Health

- The school staff are often concerned and confused about skin picking, sores and blood. Day time sleepiness is another area that may need addressed.
 - Should a rest period be built into the schedule?
- Work with all relevant school personnel on common PWS-related health issues.
- Provide the school with copies of the Medical Alert booklet and other important publications.
- Include medical information about the child in the substitute's packet.



Questions to Consider and Resolve Before Placing a Student with PWS in Any Environment...

1. Is the staff committed and competently trained?
2. Is there structure and predictability in the schedule of the student with PWS?
3. Is there appropriate and meaningful supervision?
4. Is there food security?

