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# **C.A.F.E. DIALOGUES**

## **School, Family & Community Stakeholders Meeting to Increase Student Achievement**

**Georgia Department of Education  
Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports  
1870 Twin Towers East  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334**



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# **C.A.F.E. DIALOGUES CIRCLES OF ADULTS FOCUSING ON EDUCATION**

**A Georgia team facilitation process based on the  
IDEA Partnership Dialogue Guides**

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**Manchester Middle School**

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# Speaking from Experience....

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**Where have all the families gone?**



# Evidence-based/ Focused/Sustainable

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*The Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports, Georgia Department of Education, practices a family engagement strategy:*

**To develop local action teams –  
that include parents of the students  
identified for potential dropout - to  
assist in finding solutions to meet  
one of the IDEA performance goals**

**A new way to look at things.....**

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**YOUR**

**PARENTS AS**

**LEADERS**

# Evidence-based/ Focused/Sustainable

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***Georgia Department of Education practices  
a family engagement strategy:***

**To develop local action teams –  
*that include parents of the students  
identified for potential dropout* – that will  
assist in finding solutions to meet  
one of the IDEA performance goals.**

# We Learned This From The Work Of The Georgia Parent Mentor Partnership

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- **80 parents, raising a child with a disability, work for one of 69 local school systems in Georgia.**
- **The Parent Mentors, along with their special education directors, strive to bridge the communication gap between home and school and lead family engagement initiatives embedded in school improvement initiatives.**

**Six years of work developed the strategy**



Lessons Learned ....

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# Training



**PARENTS MUST RECEIVE  
TRAINING AND SUPPORT!**



***Henderson and Mapp (2002) suggest the following action steps to establish effective family engagement programs:***

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- **Recognize that all parents, regardless of income, education level, or cultural background are involved in their children's education and want their children to do well in school;**
- **Link family and community engagement efforts to student learning**

# Where are they?

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**Family** Welcoming Factor:  
What does it mean to achievement?

# Common Sense Tells Us:

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**Parents  
need to  
be part  
of the  
solution**



***National Dropout Prevention  
Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD) Tells Us:***

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**Key risk factors predictive of  
school dropout are:**

- ✓ **Problem behaviors coupled with academic difficulties.**
- ✓ **Repeated use of exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension.**
  - ✓ **High absenteeism and retention.**

# NDPC-SD Tells us:

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## The Consequences

- Dropouts are more likely to be unemployed or employed in low-skilled, lower-paying positions.
- Dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to need the support of living with parents in early adulthood, experience health problems, engage in criminal activities, and become dependent on welfare and other government programs.
- Dropouts are more likely to commit crimes as compared to students who complete school. Three to five years after dropping out, the cumulative arrest rate for youth with SED is 73%.

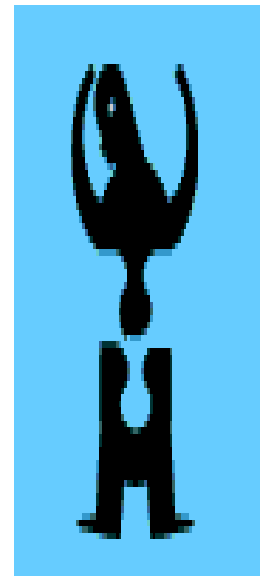
# GA State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)

Teams learned the  
solution is similar to a puzzle

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## Lot of pieces that need to fit:

- School policies & procedures
  - Discipline, grading, standards, retention
- Structure & class assignment
  - School size, transitions, tracking
- Course content & instruction
  - Boredom, curriculum quality
- Climate & relationships
  - Alienation, negative interactions




# SPDG STEPS LED BY NDPC- SD

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- **Established a leadership team to coordinate implementation of dropout prevention efforts**
- **Set up systems for routine monitoring of risk indicators associated with dropout**
- **Created a local action team to analyze data and address dropout prevention at the local level**
- **Increased family engagement and school involvement by placing a parent on the teams**
- **Focused on creating school environments that are inviting, safe, and supportive**
- **Set up plans based on the data**
- **Targeted Math and Positive Behavior Supports to increase effective instruction**
- **Used proven practices**



A group of seven diverse graduates in black caps and gowns standing together against a light background. The graduates are of various ethnicities and are smiling or looking towards the camera. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

**So how was the SPDG going to develop School, Family and Community Partnerships that would produce shared meaning and results?**

# Circle of Adults Focusing on Education What's in a Name?

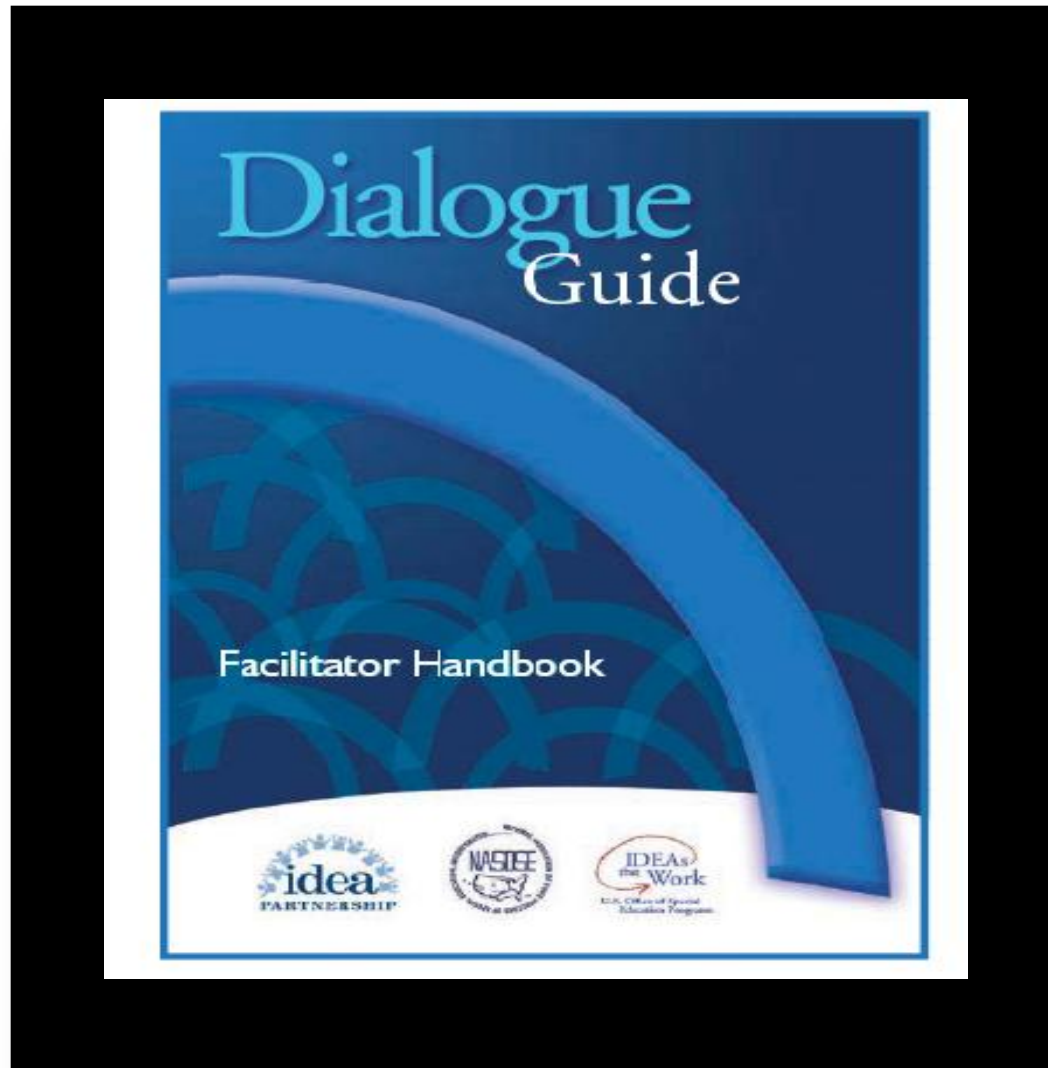
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- Implies that there are issues that we can understand and impact if we come together around our interests
- Implies that many groups of adults can contribute to supporting current strategies and finding new ones
- Implies that these adults need to engage with each other, communicate effectively and move to action.

***C.A.F.E. and Dialogue: What a Match!***

# Facilitation for Results

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# What Do We Mean by *Dialogue*?

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<b>Debate</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Dialogue</b>
Accepts assumptions as truth	Surfaces various assumptions	<b>Examines/ questions assumptions</b>
Point – Counterpoint	Majority rules; agree to disagree	<b>Seeks common ground; consensus</b>
Persuasive	Informative	<b>Reflective</b>

# Dialogue Guides: Bridging Differences in Knowledge and Perspective

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- Move from *'getting' information* to *'using' information*
- Build *'personal meaning'* from information
- *Communicate* different perspectives respectfully
- Appreciate *differences* in the way issues impact various groups
- Build *connections* around shared interests

# Lessons Learned so far.....

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## Lots of prework....

- **Training emerging parent leaders as well as entire team on attitudes and cultural acceptance.**
- **Data collection to know where the team is heading**
- **Creating a diverse team with decision makers.**

# HOW DOES A C.A.F.É. WORK?

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- **Agree on the basic information**
- **Generate *Reaction Questions* that will permit stakeholders to express their perspective.**
- **Generate *Application Questions* that will build new understanding or take action on an issue.**

# Let's try a C.A.F.E. DIALOGUE on the lack of Parent Surveys

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- **Assign your table members to represent a stakeholder member including school decision makers, community gate keepers and family members. Assign a facilitator, a note taker and a time keeper.**
- **Begin C.A.F.E. DIALOGUE** (*Dialogues on Tables*)
  - Look at the state APR on Family Engagement
  - Try one of the Welcoming Activities
  - Facilitator Ask Reaction Questions
  - Facilitator Ask Application Questions
  - Facilitator lead list of roadblocks
  - Group begins Solution Process and Mapping



# References

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Henderson, A., & Mapp, K. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Mapp, K. (2004). Family engagement. In F. P. Schargel & J. Smink (Eds), *Helping students graduate: A strategic approach to dropout prevention*. Larchmont, NY: [Eye on Education](#).

National PTA. (1998). *National standards for parent/family involvement programs*. Chicago, IL: National PTA.

# References:

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[The National Network of Partnership Schools](#) at Johns Hopkins University provides professional development training, tools, and materials on school, family, and community partnerships. The Web site ([www.partnershipschools.org](http://www.partnershipschools.org))

[Joyce L. Epstein](#) ([jepstein@csos.jhu.edu](mailto:jepstein@csos.jhu.edu)) is Director, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and the National Network of Partnership Schools at Johns Hopkins University, 3003 N. Charles St., Ste. 200, Baltimore, MD 21218; (410) 516-8800.



**Acknowledgements**  
**[www.ndpc-sd.org](http://www.ndpc-sd.org)**  
**[www.dropoutprevention.org](http://www.dropoutprevention.org)**



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**To Learn more about Family  
Engagement in Action**

**[www.parentmentors.org](http://www.parentmentors.org)**

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