

Education Series: Navigating the Special Education System

Panelists: Tanya Jewell, Nilanjan Ray & Lynn Ziraldo

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AutismONTARIO

Disclaimers & Statements

General Disclaimer

- Opinions are of the presenters
- Make informed decisions

Language

- Identity-first (e.g., autistic person)
- Person-first (e.g., person with autism)

Professional Disclaimer

- Specific questions
- Additional Resources

Meet the Panelists



Tanya Jewell, BA.

Parent and Self Advocate
Subject Matter Expert: Education,
Autism Ontario



Nilanjan Ray, MBA.

Parent and Advocate
Banker, RBC



Lynn Ziraldo

Parent and Advocate
SEAC Consultant, Autism Ontario
Chair, YRDSB Special Education Advisory
Committee

Agenda



**Positive Advocacy:
How to advocate?**



**Education Rights:
What are my rights?**

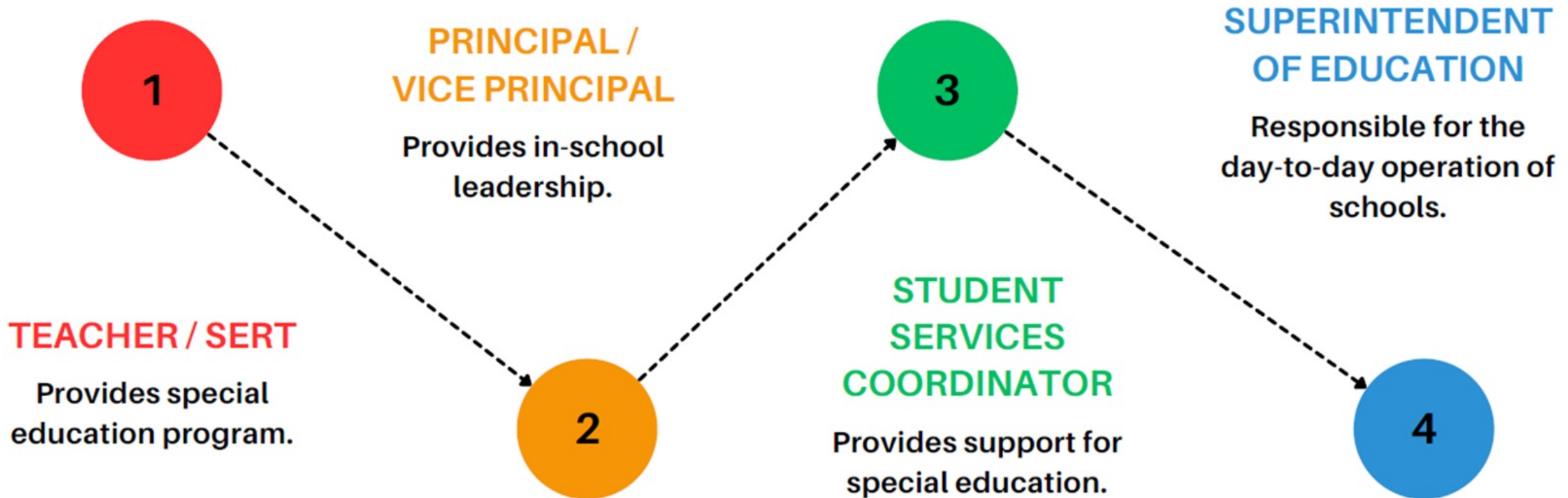


**Effective
Communication**

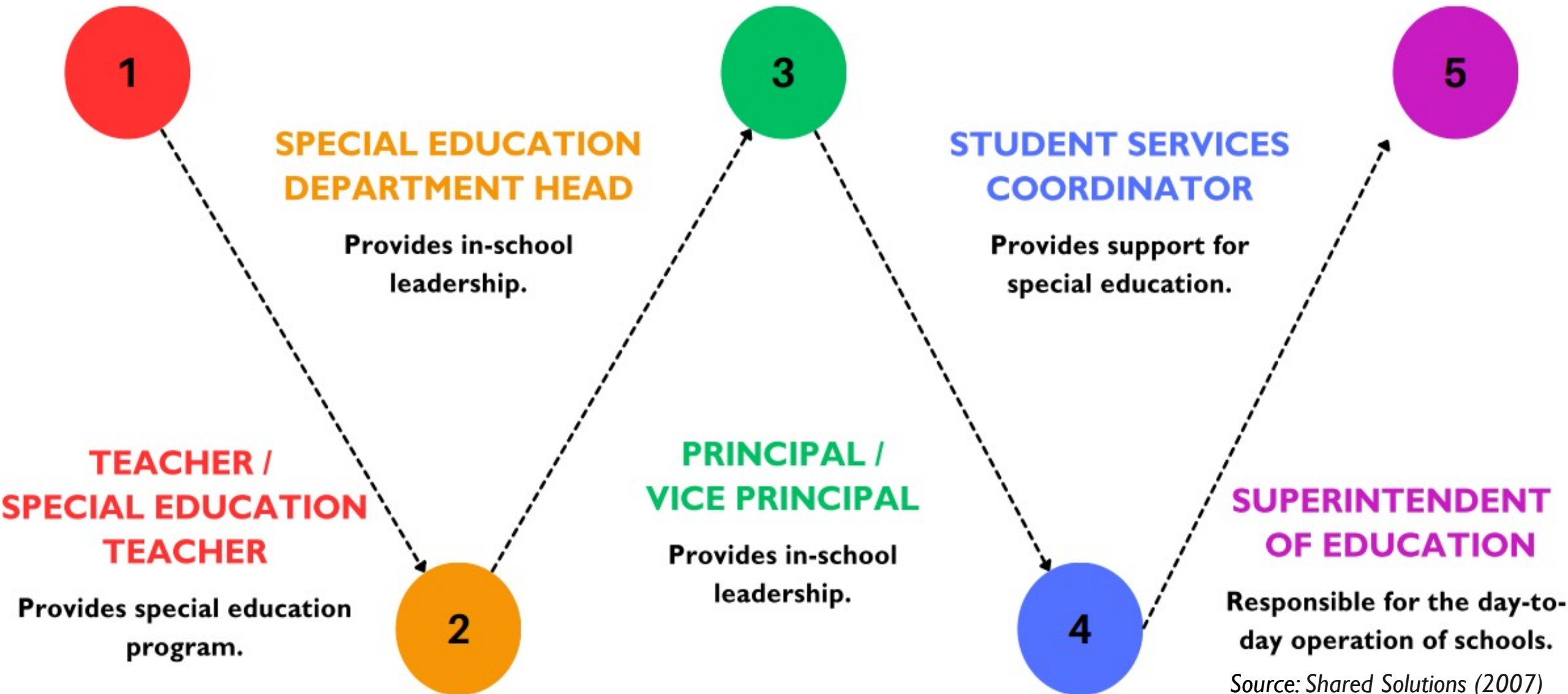
Your Rights

1. **Your child has the right to attend school.**
2. Your child has the right to **receive supports and placements** at school.
3. You have the right to request and have an **Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC)** meeting.
4. You have the right to have **a representative support** you at an IPRC meeting.
5. You have the right to **review your child's Ontario Student Record (OSR)** in its entirety.

Problem Solving Communication Pathway: Elementary Schools



Problem Solving Communication Pathway: Secondary Schools



Positive Advocacy:

How to advocate?

SECTION I

What is Advocacy?

- Advocacy is about securing, protecting and advancing the rights of oneself or others.
- Autistic people have rights. The system has enacted legislation and regulations to support the needs of children, youth and adults on the autism spectrum.
- All programs and services must be in compliance with the current legislation and regulations.
 - Parents and self-advocates may have to strongly advocate to ensure that their rights or their child's rights are met.

Tips for Parents

- 1. You are your child's best and most consistent advocate.**
- 2. Put it in writing and keep a copy.**
- 3. Try to solve problems at the lowest level but never hesitate to appeal to higher authority if necessary.**
- 4. Keep records.**

For all tip sheets, please see the appendices at the end of the slide deck PDF

Tips for Advocacy



Take time to be with each other and to listen carefully



Treat each other as integral parts of the planning and decision making team



Trust each other's judgment by allowing each person to express opinions and give suggestions



Approach disagreements in a manner that encourages mutual problem solving.



Encourage a second opinion when there is unresolved disagreement or when there is no answer to a difficult situation

What You Need To Know To Be an Effective Advocate

Know your rights.

Know what resources are available.

Ask questions, “Help me understand?”

Repeat a question until it is satisfactorily answered.

Recognize personal values which may shadow your judgements.

Observe and listen.

Prepare materials.

Be aware of your feelings about the situation.

Education Rights:

What are my rights?

SECTION 2

TIP

It is not what you say,
It is how you say it!



Education Act

1980 - Bill 82

- Requirement that the publicly-funded school system in Ontario be responsible for the education of all Ontario students and must provide special education programs and services for exceptional pupils.

Education Act

- Responsibility of school boards to provide education for all.
- Definition of a special education programs and services that **meets the needs of the exceptional pupil**.
- Responsibility of the Minister.

Key Rights within IPRC Process

Request	Request IPRC Referral
Provide	Provide parental inputs for IPRC Referral Note
Attend	Attend IPRC (in person or virtually)
Decide	Accept / Decline / Seek alternate positions post IPRC decision
Refer	Refer to Appeals Committee

Additional Rights – Outside IPRC Framework

Parents have the right to request the following services/supports:

**School
Psychological
Assessment**

**Individual
Education
Plan (IEP)**

**In School
Review
Committee**

Safety Plan

Additional Rights – Outside IPRC Framework

Parents have the right to request **referrals** to the following services/ supports:

**Itinerant
Teacher**

**Occupational
Therapist (OT)**

**Speech and
Language
Pathologist
(SLP)**

**Augmentative
and Alternative
Communication
(AAC) Devices**

**School Board
Summer
Programs**

Effective Communication & Team Building

SECTION 3

Steps for Effective Communication

- 1. Focus on the problem, not the people.**
- 2. Focus on “why I want” not “what I want”.**
- 3. Generate a variety of solutions.**
- 4. Agree upon objective criteria.**
- 5. Seek to understand the other person’s world.**
- 6. Listen actively.**
- 7. Level with the other person about:**
 - What are you feeling?
 - What would you like to see happen?
 - What are you willing to do?
- 8. Build on strengths: make challenges irrelevant.**
- 9. Turn intentions into actions.**

Benefits of Building Positive Relationships

Positive Relationships lead to:

- Effective communication
- Student success
- Holistic support
- Tailored strategies
- Modeling positive attitudes
- Conflict resolution
- Longterm benefits



Remember...

“Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”

- Rita Pierson

Questions

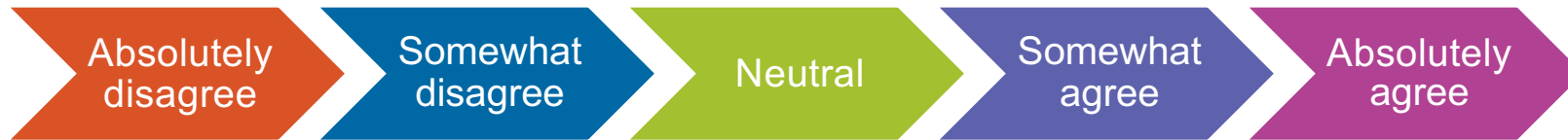


The Power of One

I AM ONLY ONE,
BUT STILL I AM ONE.
I CANNOT DO EVERYTHING,
BUT STILL I CAN DO SOMETHING;
AND BECAUSE I CANNOT DO EVERYTHING
I WILL NOT REFUSE TO DO
THE SOMETHING THAT I CAN DO

Feedback Survey

- Please answer each question in the survey
- The questions include items with:
 - A Likert scale (i.e., a 5-point scale with a range of responses)



- Selecting only one answer (single answer)
- Selecting all answers that might apply (multiple selections)
- Text boxes where you type your answer

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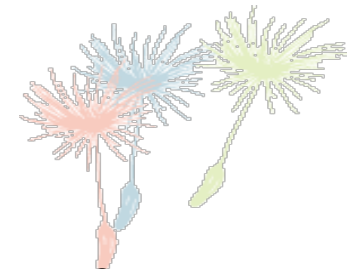


youtube.com/user/autismontario

Appendices:

Appendix I: I I Tips for Parents

1. You are your child's best and most consistent advocate
2. You have valuable information about your child, share it!
3. Put it in writing and keep a copy
4. Try to solve problems at the lowest level but never hesitate to appeal to higher authority if necessary
5. Keep records
6. Seek out information when necessary
7. Take time to digest information before making a decision
8. Allow yourself to be less than perfect
9. Do not become a martyr
10. Maintain a sense of humor
11. Remember to tell people when they do a good job



Source: Lynn Ziraldo

Appendix II: Shared Solutions on the Go

Tips for reaching a shared solution:

Listen actively and intently.

Acknowledge the other party's position

Acknowledge the validity of the other party's feelings

Apologize if it seems appropriate to do so

Use humor

Change the timing on the meeting or take a break

Use "Yes...and" instead of "Yes...but"

Ask questions

Change language from "you" to "us"

Agree on a shared, mutually acceptable solution

Source: Shared Solutions, Ministry of Education

Appendix III: Positive Communication Tips

DOs

- ✓ Be Clear and Concise
- ✓ Use Polite and Respectful Language
- ✓ Provide Relevant Information
- ✓ Check Communication Guidelines
- ✓ Be Timely
- ✓ Stay Calm
- ✓ Listen Actively
- ✓ Respect Their Time
- ✓ Follow Up

DON'Ts

- ✗ Assume
- ✗ Use Negative Language
- ✗ Be Dismissive or Demanding
- ✗ Share Personal Conflicts Publicly
- ✗ Communicate During High-Stress Times
- ✗ Engage in Blame
- ✗ Overwhelm with Information
- ✗ Disregard School Policies