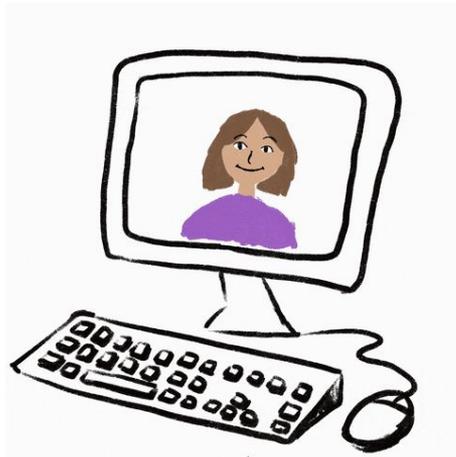


Technology in Special Education Advocacy



Coalition of Texans
with Disabilities





WELCOME

How are you?

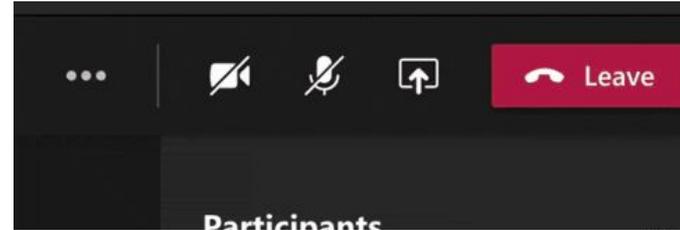


Who we are...

Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD) envisions a future where all Texans with all disabilities may work, live, learn, play, and participate fully in the community of their choice. We focus on the areas of governmental advocacy, public awareness activities, and professional disability consulting to fulfill our mission.

VELA Families' vision has been to create a community where all families of children with disabilities thrive. Through our programming, VELA gives families knowledge, empowerment, resilience and community to create their brightest futures. Through the parent, for the child.

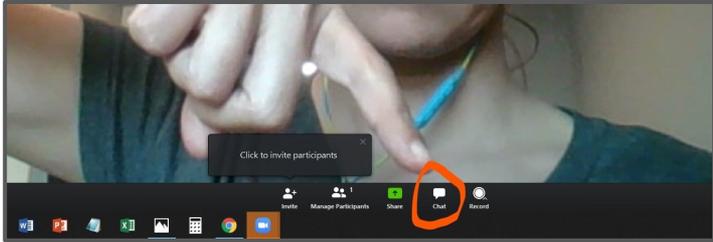
Zoom Call Orientation



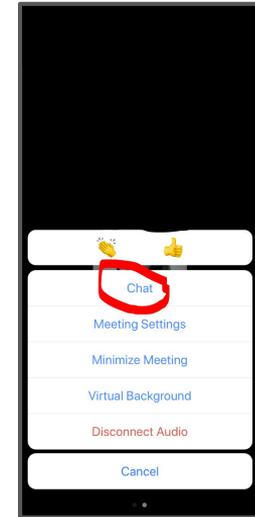
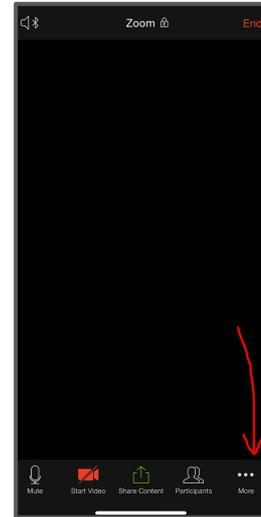
- Everyone put yourself on mute during the presentation
- Video on/ off - whatever makes you most comfortable to participate!
- Tech help is available! You can use the chat for help, or unmute to ask for help if you do not have access to chat.
- This training will be recorded- we will let you know when recording begins.

The chat is very useful to participate in zoom!

Computer

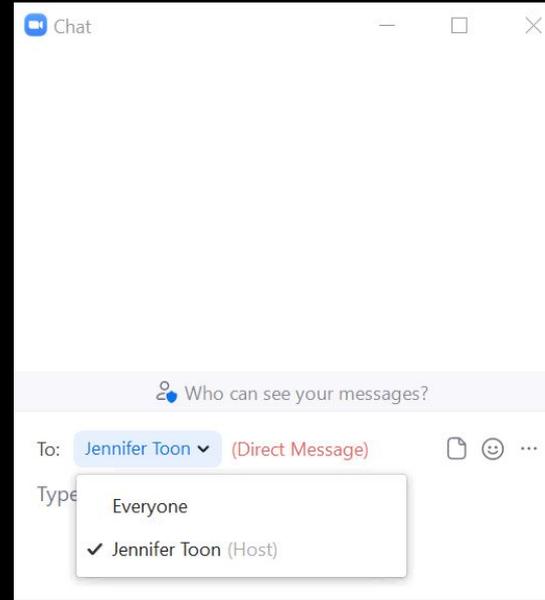
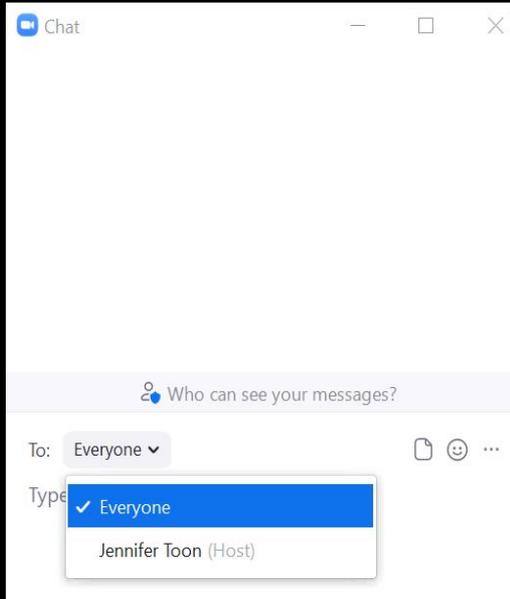


Phone



Place questions in chat: we will stop to answer questions throughout

You can send a chat message to the entire group, to the facilitator to ask for clarification or tech help, or directly to another participant.



Let's Practice!

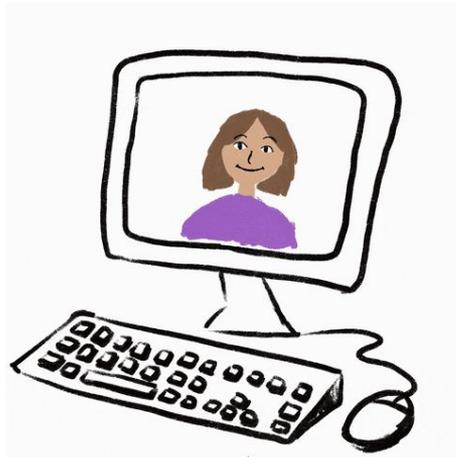


If you could have a
superpower, what would it be?
(Enter your answer in the chat)

Technology in Special Education Advocacy



Coalition of Texans
with Disabilities



Why is technology important in Special Education Advocacy?

Communication! Communication! Communication!

Effective advocacy is about communication. Assertive communication is the style we find most effective when advocating for our children. Communication will look different based on:

- The audience/ receiver
- Purpose of the communication
- The tool used to communicate: in-person, phone, email, virtual

But COVID-19 disrupted the way we used to communicate with the school. It may have made it harder to receive and send important information to our child's team. It has forced us to learn on the spot how to do virtual learning, and many families were left behind.

Did you experience this?

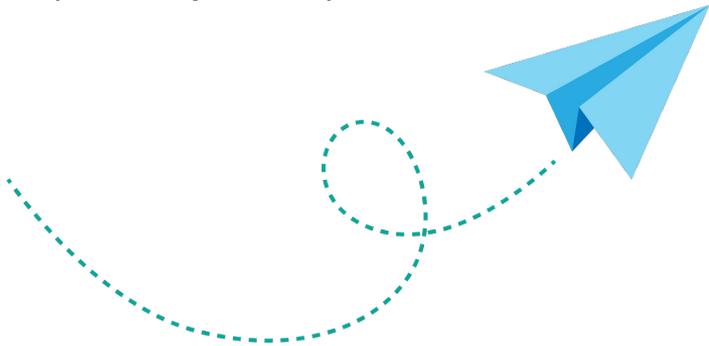
Technology can improve communication

- You can use email outside of regular school hours to send and respond to questions/ suggestions when it's most convenient to you.
- You can safely attend virtual meetings at YOUR convenience without arranging for child care, transportation, work schedules, etc.
- You can communicate with more than one person at a time.
- It gives you a record of the conversations.



Electronic Communication

Communication carried by wire that is sent from one place to a specific person/ people who can then continue communication by replying. Information is sent and received back and forth (email, phone)



Virtual Communication

As we know it today, virtual communication is using a platform that all parties can access in real time via video/audio conferencing without physically being in the same place (zoom, google meet)



What are the challenges?



- Access to a device (phone, computer, tablet)
- Access to reliable internet or phone service
- Setting up an email account.
- Navigating different virtual platforms (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, etc.)
- Virtual meetings and privacy
- Basic understanding of technology
- Language
- Time and space

How to break the Access Barrier

How can you obtain a device?

- Check with your school district or other service provider (therapist, service coordinator, etc.)
- Straight Talk and other prepaid services offer low-cost devices.
- Lifeline/ Linkup (Federal Program)
- Refurbished computers are offered at some second hand stores

Are there any discounted/free services?

- SSES grants through TEA*
- Some internet providers provide discounts*
- Community financial assistance*

How can you access alternative WiFi options?

Local libraries, free hotspots at coffee shops, bookstores, cafes and even fast food places

* See Resources at the end of presentation/flyer





Use a computer to do almost anything!

Choose a course below to start learning or search courses.

If you are new to computers, haven't used them for a while, are a little unsure and uncomfortable, or just need a bit of a refresher, we have the tools to help you tackle technology at your own pace and gain the confidence you need to succeed.

Starting Out

Why Use a Computer?

Reasons why you should take the time to learn about computers.

🕒 15 mins

Getting Started on a Computer

What a computer is and how to use a mouse and keyboard.

🕒 15 mins

Using a PC (Windows 10)

Learn the basics of using a PC with the Windows 10 Operating System.

🕒 13 mins

Navigating a Website

Learn your way around websites.

🕒 5 mins

Intro to Email

Get started with email.

🕒 14 mins

Intro to Email 2: Beyond the Basics

Learn more than the basics of navigating your email account.

🕒 20 mins

Basic Search

Learn about search engines and get started searching the internet.

🕒 7 mins

Using a PC (Windows 7)

Use a PC with the Windows 7 Operating System.

🕒 14 mins

Using a Mac (OS X)

Using a Mac (Apple) computer with the OS X Operating System.

🕒 14 mins

Introduction to Google Maps

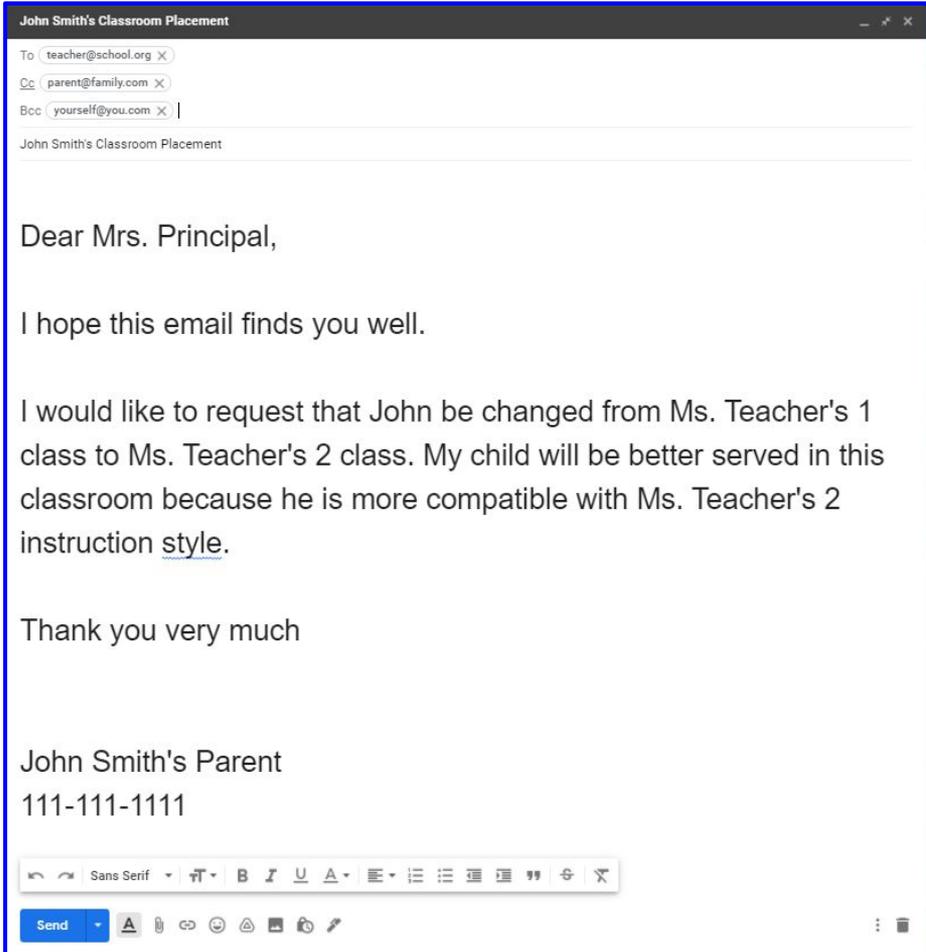
Intro to Searching Videos on YouTube



CRASH COURSE ON EMAIL



How do I use email to communicate with school staff?



- Who do you need to contact?
 - Obtain correct Emails (from business cards, websites, other emails)
- Cc/ Bc: What are they?
- Subject line
- Greeting
- Drafting in the text box
- Signature with preferred contact info
- When to use Reply/ Reply All
- How to Forward (include attachments)
- Do not delete!

Communication in Special Education

Even though schools have returned to in-person learning, most ARD/IEP meetings are still being held virtually. Communicating our requests and needs remotely looks different. We don't have the same impact as being in person.



ARD MEETINGS



Tips for Effective Communication

We all want to feel heard. Here are some tips to improve our communications:

- Know the appropriate person to contact (case manager, speech therapist, general education teacher, etc.) Not sure who? Ask your teacher *who is the best person to...?*
- Address individuals by their name (“Good morning, Ms. Toon...”)
- Emphasize “the team” and make it known that you are part of it!
- Be respectful, but direct
- Clearly state concerns and/or questions:
 - “Sam is not getting resource instruction from a certified teacher. How can we ensure that is happening as outlined in the IEP?”
 - “Can you tell me how Alice is being accommodated in P.E.?”
- Make sure all your questions are answered, have your questions written down beforehand
- Take notes!
- If a conversation happens outside of an ARD meeting, put it in writing
- Thank them for their time *teacher, counselor, ARD committee) and let them know you will follow up
- Share your contact information and best way/time to get in touch with you

Safety and Privacy Tips during Virtual Calls



- Make sure you are comfortable with the date and time of the meeting because you will be in your personal space instead of a meeting room on campus. Is there a quiet space? Are others around? Do you have headphones?
- Stay on mute until you are speaking. This will protect your privacy by not allowing others to hear private conversations in your home.
- Same for video! Is having your video on distracting or does it make you anxious? Are there others in the room whose privacy you want to protect? (other young children, partner, providers, etc.)
- Ask each person to introduce themselves and what their role is in the meeting.
- Everything typed in the chat box is part of the official meeting transcript. This includes private messages from 1 person to another.

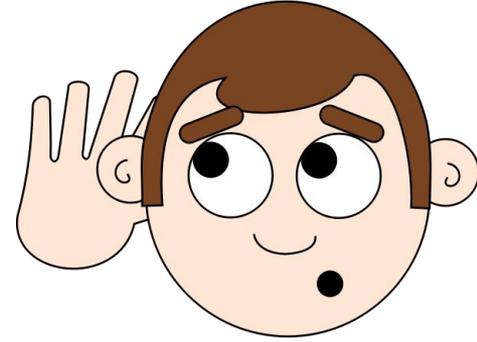
BEFORE...

- The school must still send you the official ARD invitation, just like before COVID. You can then indicate if you would like a virtual ARD or a phone ARD. A paper copy of the invitation can be sent home with your child or sent by email.
- If you choose to have a virtual ARD, make sure the school sends the link to join the meeting well in advance.
- Confirm what kind of platform the school will use for the meeting (Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Webex? etc.) Are you familiar with this? Is it accessible? If not, ask questions.
- Do you need to download something to access the platform? Do you need an accommodation to participate (ASL, captioning, translation/interpretation, et.)? Ask the case manager to help with this!
- Ask for a copy of your child's draft IEP to be sent home BEFORE the meeting so you can review it on your own or with someone else.
- If you are joining by phone, ask the case manager to read thoroughly anything shared on the "screen" that you are unable to see.
- You can bring someone with you to the meeting!

DURING

- Establish a plan if you are accidentally dropped from the meeting (call back, log back in, text for support, etc.)
- Who is the primary contact?
- Ask if the school has a technical support person in attendance and how to communicate with them if there is a hiccup during the meeting.
- Ask to record the meeting so you can watch/ listen to it later.
- You may also ask for the transcript of the ARD, including a printout of any chat messages.
- At the end of the meeting, ask to review the final IEP BEFORE signing. You have 5 days to do this, just as before COVID. The timelines haven't changed.
- Know that you are the expert on your child and your full participation is crucial. Don't feel rushed! Ask as many questions as you need.

What if something is unclear?



It's OK to speak up!

- “Can you please back up and say that again?”
- “That is not something I’m familiar with. Please explain that”
- “I need some more time to do that.”
- “Is there another option?”
- “I don’t have access to that online, can you send a hard copy?”
- “I don’t see the image you are sharing. Can you please read it/describe it?”

AFTER...

- Follow up with the school to request any additional information that was requested during the ARD. Put it in writing!
- Review recording and notes.
- Is your IEP translated, if needed?
- Ask for someone to help review the IEP with you.
- Was there a date to implement something, collect data, hold another meeting? Put it on your calendar and follow up to make sure that deadline is met.
- Do you disagree with the IEP? Reach out to VELA. We can help with next steps!

Follow up in writing after a verbal conversation

Why is this important?

Document that you had the conversation - if call/video chat, send a follow up email with bullet points of what was discussed/agreed to.

CC (include) anyone that is relevant- therapist, general education teacher, evaluator, etc.

“Thank you for your time today...Based on our call/ conversation, You will be observing James and collecting data for 4 weeks to determine if he may benefit from a 1:1 aid in Math. Then we will meet again to discuss. Thank you again”

It is important to have a written account of all verbal communication so there is a record of what should be happening and when.

Progress Monitoring

How can I track my child's progress outside of an ARD meeting? What can I ask? What should the school be doing?

- Stay connected with the school- this shows that you are engaged
- Document your observations- What is working? What is not?
- Review report cards and progress summaries and send questions/ comments in writing.
- Establish a communication notebook or other system so you have ongoing feedback from the school
- Does your school have a student or parent portal that gives you access to assignments, grades, events, & announcements? Is this accessible to you? If not, ask for a different way to get this information.
- Progress reports and feedback should be 100% accessible to you! Do you need translation, interpretation, or other accommodations to access this information?

Q & A



Resources

Who can I contact if I need more individualized support, assistance, or information?

- Ask your case manager at school
- Do you have a service coordinator outside of school? This may be through a local agency, health insurance, or Medicaid plan
- Your wireless provider may offer free or discounted plans
<https://www.everyoneon.org/find-offers?partner=everyoneon.org>
- [Texas Technology Access Program](#)
- Contact your local [Education Service Center \(ESC\)](#)
- Easterseals Texas [Double-Click Program](#)
- Information on email basics <https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/email101/>
- Digital learn courses <https://www.digitallearn.org/courses>
- Reach out to CTD or VELA!

Questions?

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