



# Circuit

*From the Desk of the Executive Director*

*Carla Miller*

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## Summer 2020

Welcome to this edition of the Circuit. The Circuit is a periodic newsletter distributed by South Dakota Parent Connection highlighting news and information for parents and professionals about SD Parent Connection and the work we do helping families connect to important resources and supports.



While the Covid-19 Virus has disrupted all our schedules – whether that be work, school, or opportunities to engage with others such as extended family and friends throughout our communities, SD Parent Connection has remained available to individuals and families seeking information and support during this trying time. Our offices may not have been open, but we have continued to be present through phone calls, emails, and many zoom meetings and chats.

## What have we heard and learned in the last several months? A lot!

Parents and schools have worked hard to figure out a new way of doing school and staying connected. The degree to which those efforts have worked to meet the needs of students with disabilities has varied greatly across the state.

We have learned a lot about barriers families encountered in trying to do school at home. Some of these have included:

- Lack of or limited access to the internet
- Multiple children in the home needing support thus stretching parent's capacity to meet all their children's needs regarding homework and instruction
- Parents working during the day experienced fatigue due to the pressures of helping everyone when they got home in the evening
- Older children had to take care of younger children while the parents worked. For families who have children with significant disabilities, this presented quite a challenge.
- Modifications or accommodations needed were not always within the parent's skill set.
- Financial concerns because of reduced or no income may have taken priority over meeting education needs.

## Staff

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- Work sent home for students with more significant learning challenges and delays were not always at their learning level and/or instruction was vague on how parents could use the resources for instruction with their child.

In visiting with organizations such as SDPC from other states, we have learned that parents and providers in South Dakota were not alone in the struggles and triumphs experienced because of the Covid-19 interruptions to school. And, everyone is working hard to figure out what is next.

### **What are we hearing now?**

Schools are beginning to put together plans for the fall. Across the state there appears to be a variety of re-entry options being explored. Some schools are planning on going back as usual with added measures for safety such as checking temperatures and increased cleaning and disinfecting measures. Other schools appear to be looking at staggered schedules of some type. Some are giving advanced warning that families should be prepared to start with school at home in the fall.

While we are hearing from some parents that they have received communication from their school about what to expect come fall, parents are encouraged to reach out to their school principal if they have not heard from them. Likewise, we encourage schools to keep parents informed so they can be best prepared when the school year starts. Some administrators may not be in their offices during the month of July, but typically are back to school full time in August.

We do know that school will look and feel different in the fall. Working together to get ready will be important as we move through the summer.

### **What can parents do to get ready?**

Parents are in a strong position to provide information to school teams about how their child(ren) have fared while learning at home. We encourage parents to:

- Write down what worked and what did not work about teaching at home. Be specific. Was the work sent home too much? Were the directions clear? Did your child do better when the work was assigned through the computer or sent home in a paper pencil version? Did you feel the work addressed the goals you felt were prioritized on your child's IEP?
- What did you provide for your child that helped him/her be successful? For example, did you break the work down in smaller chunks? Did you work for a certain length of time before taking a break? Did you fit in some rewards or motivators to help him or her sustain effort towards getting the work done? All these supports could be considered when addressing accommodations or modifications that might help your child be successful in school.
- Did your child master or improve in any skills being addressed on the IEP? Did they regress on any skills, including behavior, because of the lack of structure and routine that is so important to them?

Information such as this will be very helpful when you meet with your child's school team to discuss what needs and supports, goals and objectives will be addressed in the next school year.

## Upcoming Training Opportunities:

South Dakota Parent Connection, in conjunction with the Dept. of Special Education will be offering a series of parent education webinars to help families with reentry to school. Be watching for more information about the following opportunities:

Month	Topic	Format
July	Getting Ready for Re-Entry	Webinar
August	IEPs and Evaluations:Where Are We Now?	Webinar
August	IEP Process: Let's Review	Webinar
September	Health, Safety, and Trauma: Reminders and Redflags	Webinar
October	Keeping the Lines of Communication Open: It's All About Relationships	Webinar
November	Procedural Safeguards: A Review	Webinar

SDPC will also be hosting several topical series starting in the month of September. These series are co-produced between SDPC and the South Dakota Family Engagement Center:

Month	Topic	Format
September	Transition	Webinar
October	Social Emotional Development of Young Children	Webinar
October	IEP Topics	Webinar
November	Understanding Reading, Challenges, and Dyslexia	Webinar

Finally, be watching for our Lunch and Learn series to begin starting in September. This year our focus will be on reacquainting families to services and supports around the state.



### You can support us a number of ways

- Send us a donation in the enclosed envelope.
- Give online or set up a recurring gift using our secure Donate button at [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org)
- Does your employer have an Employee Match Program? Use it to make your gift grow!
- Are you a Thrivent Financial member? Support SDPC with Thrivent Choice!
- Do you purchase from Amazon? Designate a donation using Amazon Smile Program!
- We would love to meet you so you could also stop by one of our 3 offices and meet our staff.

**Thank You for Supporting Families of Children and Youth with Special Needs!**

Watch our website, WeConnect and Facebook pages for upcoming events. Sign up to receive our newsletter via email by emailing [sdpc@sdparent.org](mailto:sdpc@sdparent.org).



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