

**Teacher and Parent Relationships**

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**Government of Alberta**

The FASD Learning Series is part of the Alberta government's commitment to programs and services for people affected by FASD and those who support them.

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**Learning Objectives**

- Explore effective educational strategies from the perspectives of a student, a parent and a teacher
- Discuss strategies for effective collaboration between teachers, parents and students
- Highlight practices that have been successful within a collaborative framework to maximize student success

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***"Everyone who got where he is has had to begin where he was."***

*- Robert Louis Stevenson*

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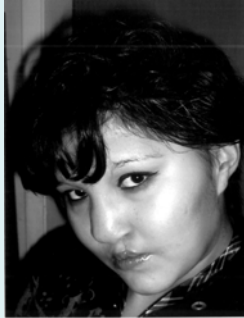
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### **Charlene's Path**



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### **Parent-Teacher Collaboration: A Parent's Perspective**

- Foundation – Diagnosis (The Beginning)
  - Perception
- Understanding the Challenges
- Expectations not Limited by the Challenges
  - Educational Path
  - Finding the Right School
- Inclusive vs Segregated Environments
  - Successful Strategies
  - Challenges to Overcome

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### **Foundation – Diagnosis (The Beginning)**

#### **Specialists**

- Being able to find appropriate doctor
- Having both the pediatrician and family doctor on the same page as you are
- Finding a counselor that supports your philosophy
- The earlier the diagnosis the greater chance for success for your child

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### **Foundation – Diagnosis (The Beginning)**

#### **Information and Community Support**

- Gathering information to deal with the diagnosis
- Understanding the challenges for the future
- Arm yourself with as much information as possible realizing that each child is unique and not everything fits every child

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### **Foundation – Diagnosis (The Beginning)**

#### **Emotions**

- After getting the diagnosis, how as a parent do we deal with our emotions and keep things in perspective?
- Remember that you can not change the past, only the future
- Allow yourself to feel the emotion of frustration and pain but then to move away from it and turn it into a drive to help your child succeed

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### **Perception**

#### **Assets and Possibilities vs. Limitations**

- Understanding the challenges
- Expectations not limited by the challenges

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### ***Understanding the Challenges***

- A good understanding of what the challenges are for your child allows you to
  - Focus on what can be achieved
  - Then explore various avenues to reach this goal
- Realizing that even though there are challenges positive results can still be obtained - the challenge is finding a different way to get there

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### ***Expectations not Limited by the Challenges***

- One of the key realizations is understanding that the goal may not necessarily be reached in a time structure that the school system acknowledges or that society dictates should happen
- Each child has a different time schedule
- We need to learn to work within the child's time schedule

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### ***Expectations not Limited by the Challenges***

- The ultimate goals are the same, for example completing Grade 12
  - May take longer to achieve than the 12 years a child without FASD would take
  - The time frame is not as important as the goal is (ex. if it takes 14 years or more)
- This can be broken down further, like having a child learn to read
- Perseverance is the key

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**Educational Path**

- Early Intervention (Segregated)
- Elementary (Segregated and Integrated)
- Junior High / Senior High (Segregated)
- Continuing Education (Integrated)

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**Early Intervention**

- Being diagnosed at an early age, we were able to get involved with the early intervention program at the age of three years
- Early intervention program created the beginning of what some of the suggested limitations were going to be
- Being able to access various specialists on a daily / weekly basis was critical

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***Finding the right school for your child at the right stage of your child's development requires extensive research***

***Not all schools are right for all children***

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### ***Finding the Right School***

- Interview the principal, administration and staff
  - Be diligent in feeling comfortable that you have made the right decision
- Know your rights as a parent and the rights of the teacher, and most of all the rights of your child – every child has the right to an education

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### ***Inclusive vs Segregated Environments***

There are positives to both inclusive and segregated environments dependant on the teacher

Being in an inclusive situation only works if the teacher is extremely aware of the children under their care

- This requires being able to read between the actions and words
- The teacher at times becomes the parent as does the parent at times become the teacher

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### ***Inclusive vs Segregated Environments***

The positives to an inclusive environment are

- Charlene is exposed to the real world and is able to bond with all types of people
- The ability to model her life after a typical child, as opposed to a challenged child, has definite advantages

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### ***Inclusive vs Segregated Environments***

Being in an inclusive environment also exposes them to

- Much lower level of acceptance; prejudices occur often
- Challenged individuals get taken advantage of and they don't even know it
- Bullying
- Lack of understanding
- Specialized teaching

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### ***Inclusive vs Segregated Environments***

The segregated environment has its advantages

- There is less bullying
- More acceptance
- Typically more knowledgeable teaching staff

The disadvantages are

- It is not the real world
- Friendships made are not necessarily in her neighborhood creating hardships for close bonds

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### ***Successful Strategies***

- Honesty between the parent / teacher is a key component to the success of the child
  - Builds the respect for each other's expertise and knowledge of skill sets and the child
  - Reinforcing the skills taught at school and those at home became key
  - Parent monitoring of homework is needed to reinforce structure and importance

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### Successful Strategies

- Understanding that the child has challenges and respecting the teacher's limits in responding to those challenges
  - Understanding that the teacher has more than one child in the classroom is key
  - Working as a team is imperative to the partnership between the teacher and the parent, and to the success of the child

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### Successful Strategies

- Having a positive relationship with a teacher reinforces a successful atmosphere for learning
- Attending parent-teacher night maintains a visual connection and reinforces the relationship in front of the child
- Also reinforces the importance of an education. This is the common "do as I do" rather than "do as I say"

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### Successful Strategies

- Utilizing the community to access resources
  - Taking advantage of aides
  - Pushing as a parent for proper funding for your child to help aid the teacher and the rest of the children in / outside the classroom
- Reinforcing positive outcomes from school at home

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### Successful Strategies

- Addressing academic deficits through home support
  - Ensuring Charlene had enough sleep every night (maintained strict bedtime) was critical in ensuring her ability to learn at school
  - Encouraging good self esteem is essential to creating a good learner

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### Successful Strategies

- Rewarding a job done with effort rather than "a mark"
- The task was never looked at as a failure. We have an opportunity to succeed later as long as the effort was honest
  - Received mark of 40% on test meant 40% knowledge gained rather than 60% knowledge lost
  - The goal was to increase the knowledge

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### Successful Strategies

- Focusing on different ways of learning rather than always focusing on the challenge
- Checking in with teacher/parent to find out what is/is not working and providing constructive feedback
- If something works at home or school academically, the technique should be shared to help eliminate frustration for everyone
  - Not taking offense, having hurt feelings or pride
  - Remembering the child's success is the goal

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### Successful Strategies

- Preparation from the parents' side
- If extra work is required from the child, a commitment from the parent is needed to ensure the opportunities are made available for the child to do the extra work
  - Be it homework with no interruptions
  - The parent helping find a solution
  - Going to the library together

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### Successful Strategies

- Homework was something that we found worked in our home. It allowed us to:
  - Reinforce daily lessons
  - Build on the day to day communication between parent and child
- As important as it is for the teacher to prepare classes, it is equally important for the parent to prepare as much information as possible for the teachers so they are better prepared to help teach your child

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### Successful Strategies

- It is important for parents to understand that they need to be an active part of the child's education
  - One way is parent volunteering when necessary
- IQ verses EQ: working with the one you can change
- Unconditional love and acceptance

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### Challenges to Overcome

- Relationship between teacher and parent
  - Some teachers maintain a “disconnected relationship – what happens at school stays at school and visa versa”
  - Some teachers took offence to being questioned about various techniques being used and took it as a personal attack
  - Some teachers honestly did not understand the success possible with a FASD student and how to help with that potential

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### Challenges to Overcome

- Understanding from administrative support
  - Support will be required
  - Need a direct line of information/ communication between the office, the teacher, the student and the parent
  - Understanding that home life and prior school situations that have occurred may affect current situation
  - A partnership is needed to ensure honest, trustworthy respect

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### Challenges to Overcome

- School climate
  - When the school was not open to a parent wanting / becoming a partner in education
  - Having to get involved in these situations created many hours of unnecessary road blocks for everyone involved

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### Challenges to Overcome

- Perception
  - Teachers had perception that IQ was at a certain level
- EQ and IQ significance
  - Charlene's EQ has had a lot to do with her success despite IQ
  - School is based on IQ

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### Challenges to Overcome

- Social / peer challenge
  - Maintaining friends versus getting taken advantage of
  - If social opportunities arose Charlene was given an opportunity to participate

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### Parent-Teacher Collaboration: A Teacher's Perspective

- General Tips for Increasing Collaboration
  - Merging Goals
  - General Principles
  - Building Positive Social and Academic Narratives
- Scientific / Curious Approach to Learning
  - Explicit Skill Instruction

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*What we see depends mainly on what we look for.*

*- Sir John Lubbock*

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**General Tips for Increasing Collaboration**

- “Dear Teacher” letter from parent/caregiver
- Discipline plan
  - Including expectations for behaviour and assignment completion
  - Clear and consistent expectations for all children

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**General Tips for Increasing Collaboration**

- Provide periodic updates of assignments, activities, and subjects studied through:
  - Agendas
  - Newsletters
  - Computer

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### General Tips For Increasing Collaboration

- Sponsor learning opportunities to help parents support their children at home
- Presentations
- Workshops
- Homework guides
- Provide a way for parents to contact you with questions
- E-mail
- Agenda

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### General Tips for Increasing Collaboration

- COLLABORATE
  - Communication should not involve attacking or defending
  - Keep in mind both the teacher and parent have the child's best interest at heart
- Ask questions
  - What works best in the classroom and at home

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### Merging Goals

Both teacher and parent had the goal of providing Charlene with the opportunity to feel

- Accepted
- Capable
- Confident

not only as a student but as a peer and classmate

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### **General Principles**

- **Social vs. Individual identity**
  - **Narrative**
- **Scientific / Curious approach to learning**
- **Explicit skills taught to all class members**
- **Use evidence based interventions**
- **Incorporate strategies for different learning styles in all activities**

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***Our identities are shaped when we connect discrete experiences, and essentially, form a story about our lives***

***- Michael White, Dulwich Centre***

***The art of teaching is helping students develop capable, positive stories about their lives and abilities.***

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### **Building Positive Social and Academic Narratives**

- **Stories: Strengthening assets**
- **Externalizing challenges and approaching them with curiosity**
- **Asset-building language**
- **Consider the individual within the social environment, not just in isolation**
- **Create a positive social identity and social connections**

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### Scientific / Curious Approach to Learning

In the scientific approach to learning – mistakes are detoxified

- Everyone is expected to be successful sometimes, and not successful other times
- All students see each other as having strengths and challenges, and everyone's strengths and challenges are different
- We can help each other
- Students do not feel stigmatized when they do not understand; they realize that all learning is experimental

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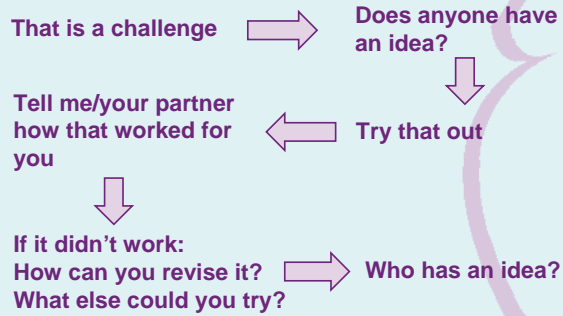
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### Example of Scientific / Curious Approach to Learning



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### Example of Scientific / Curious Approach to Learning

Who do you think would be a good resource to help you/us with this? (Community building)

Who can help me explain this concept with

- Words
- Pictures
- Diagrams
- Models
- Actions
- Etc.

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### **Explicit Skill Instruction**

- Use evidence based strategies
- Incorporate strategies for all learning styles when introducing concepts
  - Use the students to help!
- Provide opportunities for lots of PRACTICE
  - Good homework assignments
- Think aloud
- Use of rubrics
  - Helps child to stay on task and feel independent

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### **Explicit Skill Instruction**

- Power of the classroom
  - Not removed from context of daily life
- Classroom Meetings
  - Problem Solving Strategy
  - Moral Reasoning
  - Conflict Resolution Strategy
  - Goal Setting

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*Each second we live is a new and unique moment of the universe, a moment that will never be again...and what do we teach our children?*

*We teach them that two and two make four, and that Paris is the capital of France. When will we also teach them what they are?*

*We should say to each of them: Do you know what you are?*

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***You are a marvel. You are unique. In all the years that have passed, there has never been another child like you.***

***Your legs, your arms, your clever fingers, the way you move. You may become a Shakespeare, a Michelangelo, a Beethoven***

***You have the capacity for anything. Yes, you are a marvel.***

Pablo Casals

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### ***Charlene's Perspective***

- **Successes**
- **Challenges**
  - **Results**
  - **The Future**

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### ***Successes***



- **“ Graduating with the equivalent of a high school diploma”**
- **Being able to meet new friends and learning how to make friends in a safe place**

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**Successes**

- Getting to learn in a fun way
  - Learning by working in groups
  - Watching movies after reading the novels
  - Doing activities that reinforced the lesson learned
  - Doing presentations
  - Field trips
  - Reading the assignments out loud and read to each other

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**Successes**

- Having teachers that I trusted and I could go to and ask questions no matter what the subject
  - The teachers that meant the most to me were the ones that took the extra time to tell me that I was a good person and that I could do what ever I set my mind to do
  - They believed in me and they were cool teachers
  - Having teachers understand what my challenges were but helping me get through them to succeed

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**Successes**

- Received an art award and had my picture hung in the Edmonton Public School Board Head Office
- Received many merit and citizen awards for being a good person – this made me feel good inside and want to keep being a good person
- Having Mom involved with my school assignments

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### Challenges

- Individual projects
- Sometimes I would feel stupid because I don't understand what the teacher asked me to do and then I would get frustrated and sit there and wonder what to do and would not ask what they had said
- I was scared that people would not want to keep repeating the direction
- Sometimes the kids were mean and I did not want to participate with them

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### Challenges

- Hard to concentrate on homework
- Understanding the assignments one day and then the next not remembering the assignment directions
- Memory was a big challenge
- Being sick and away from school and having to do extra homework to catch up
- I felt I was judged a lot because I physically looked different than most people

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### Challenges

- I kept my feelings inside and did not let anyone know if I was hurt
- Having teachers that did not understand what my challenges and not helping me to find a way to succeed
- Making friends was hard because I trusted everyone and most of the kids took advantage of me and hurt my feelings all time

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### Results

- I am learning that talking about my feelings is okay
- I learned how to do math
- I got my high school diploma
- I learned that I like to learn
- I learned that I want to keep on learning
- I found talents and strengths that helped me realize my dream career – being a secretary

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### The Future

- I got two scholarships
- I am applying for entrance into a secondary education institution
- I learned that if I try and try and be patient that eventually I will be able to succeed, it may just take me a little longer than everyone else but it is nothing to be ashamed of
- I want to be treated like everyone else. Just give me a chance

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### Charlene's Closing Message

The message I want to make sure that everyone understands is that women should not drink when they are pregnant so that their children don't have to go through what I am going through. It is not fair.

If you have a child that has FAS or you are someone that has FAS just remember to never give up and always try your best because you can make a difference and succeed in your own way.

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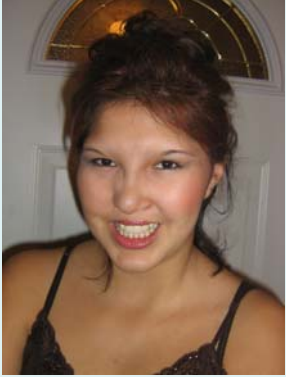
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*Hope + Help + Success = The Future*



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*Reference*

➤ **Contact Information**

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