**A Parent’s Guide: How to Talk to Your Child About Their Disability**

**Meet your child where he or she is….**

* + - **Has he/she asked questions or noticed similarities with others who have disabilities**
    - **Have age appropriate conversations that build overtime.**

**Focus on the child, not the disability…..**

* + - **Love and cherish your child and his/her unique characteristics.**
    - **Recognize that your child is more like his/her peers than different.**
    - **Use people first language and language that they understand.**

**Be knowledgeable about your child……..**

* + - **Begin discussion by talking about their strengths, talents, gifts, interests and learning differences.**
      * **Everyone has things they do well, what gifts and strengths do they bring to the family?**
    - **Talk to your child about their challenges, just like you talk to them about how tall they are or the color of their eyes.**
    - **Everyone has challenges but it does not define who they are.**
    - **Normalizing differences with honesty, support and love will help your child reach their own dreams!**

**Educate don’t excuse……….**

* + - **Discuss role models**
    - **Stress coping and learning strategies**
    - **Know that the expectations that you have for your child greatly influence their achievements for themselves**
    - **Children with disabilities may be unmotivated due to feelings of failure, frustration and false labels (crazy, lazy, dumb)**
    - **Let them know that you feel that they can achieve!**

**Provide feedback for your child…………..**

* + - **Praise progress and effort as well as results**
    - **Give honest and specific compliments**
    - **Your child will need to know how to correct the things that go wrong. Point out the problem and decision they made, them help them come up with better solutions.**
    - **Help them think through positive and negative consequences.**

***Don’t use a Diagnosis to Make Excuses for your Child / Use a Diagnosis***

***to better understand him/her.***

**ASPIRE -- Active Student Participation Inspires Real Engagement**

**ASPIRE supports the development of self-determination and self-advocacy skills by teaching students to: become active participants in the development of their IEP’s, increase their roles in making decisions based on strengths, challenges and desired goals and help plan for their transition to post-secondary education, career and independent living.**