

Suffolk Region



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**Special Education Report**  
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**“Back to school”** ~ This year, that phrase has certainly taken on a unique meaning. For so many families, the return to school has been a time of much confusion and concern. For special needs families, there are many additional variables to consider: “Will my child be able to tolerate wearing a mask all day?”, “How will my child’s IEP be followed if they are not in school every day?”, “What can I do to support my child academically and emotionally in their new learning environment?” These are just a few of the important issues families are facing this school year.

In an effort to identify specific areas of concern amongst our members and their families, our Suffolk Region PTA Advocacy Team is developing a member survey. Our hope is that thru this survey, we can develop a targeted team plan of action for our advocacy efforts. Which in turn, will help provide appropriate resources and outreach to our members. Please stay tuned!

In the meantime, please take a moment to think about what the word **advocacy** means to you. A recent article in Parenting Special Needs Magazine, posed this as a question to its readers. The takeaway from the article is that advocacy can look and mean something different to each of us. Whether it’s learning more about your child’s disability, supporting them in their education and/or their social-emotional needs, teaching them to become self-advocates or all of the above. Parents and guardians play a vital role in the world of advocacy and we must do what we can to support each other.

One way to help achieve your advocacy goals, is to join your local Special Education PTA/PTSA (“SEPTA/SEPTSA”). SEPTA/SEPTSA’s are a wonderful source of support. They can offer much-needed social opportunities and education in the form of workshops focused on various topics within the special needs community. If you need help identifying your local SEPTA or SEPTSA, please feel free to email me.

**Attention SEPTA’s and SEPTSA’s:** *If you are in need of virtual workshop ideas, I am compiling a list of organizations currently offering virtual workshops (i.e., Supports and Services thru OPWDD, Organizing Educational Records, Guardianship, Special Needs Trusts). Please email me for more information.*

Be safe and be well everyone!

Ref: Gianetti, M. “Advocacy: What does that word mean to you?” *Parenting Special Needs Magazine*, September/October 2020, <https://magazine.parentingspecialneeds.org/archive/?p1=13847>