



PEAK
Parent Center



Better Together

PARTNERING FOR INCLUSION

PEAK Parent Center Conference on Inclusive Education

Keynote & Breakout Descriptions



List of Sessions

(Click the session title to go directly to description)

Keynote Presentations

**Empowering Advocacy for Families & Students with Disabilities
Through the use of Advanced Technologies**

Joe LaBelle, Director of Programs Impact, Family Network on Disabilities

Forget the Fairytale and Find the Hero

Melissa Wiley, Deputy Town Manager, Erie, CO

Breakout Sessions

Interactive Advocacy: Hands-On Exploration of Advanced Technologies & AI Tools

Joe LaBelle, Director of Programs Impact, Family Network on Disabilities

Making Inclusion Happen: Mindsets, Practices and Outcomes

Michael McSheehan, Owner and Lead Consultant, Evolve & Effect, LLC

Partnering for Inclusion: Building Positive Partnerships With All Stakeholders

Marc Purchin, Owner, Purchin Consulting

College Inclusion: A Pathway to Success

Christi Kasa, Ph.D., Professor for the Department of Teaching & Learning and

Director of the Office of Inclusive Services at UCCS

Shayna Laing, Community Engagement Manager, IN! Pathways to Inclusive Higher Education

**How Trauma Shows Up In The Learning Environment
and Practical Strategies for Professionals and Families**

Debi Grebenik, Founder & CEO, Trauma Training Institute (Presenting at UCCS)

Jae McQueen, LCSW, Assistant Director of Mental Health, Cherry Creek School District (Presenting at UNC)

Transitioning from High School to Post-Secondary School: Rights & Resources

Emily Harvey, Esq. & Sara Pielsticker, Attorneys, Disability Law Colorado

Overview of the ADA with a focus on Employment Rights

Emily Harvey, Esq. & Sara Pielsticker, Attorneys, Disability Law Colorado

Building Communities of Belonging, Together

Jackie Joseph, PhD., Research Associate Professor, University of Denver, PELE

Creating Connections: Building Personal Support Networks for Young People with Disabilities

Rebecca Pauls, Executive Director, Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)

You Had Me at Self-Care: A Guide for Educators and Families.

Dr. Laura Trapp, School of Special Ed., University of Northern Colorado

Fostering Friendship Inside and Outside the Classroom

Erin Camper, RN, BSN, Parent Advisor, PEAK Parent Center





Keynote Sessions

Empowering Advocacy for Families and Students with Disabilities Through the use of Advanced Technologies

Joe LaBelle, Director of Programs Impact, Family Network on Disabilities

In an era of rapid technological advancement, families and students with disabilities have unprecedented opportunities to enhance advocacy through various advanced technologies. This presentation will delve into how tools like artificial intelligence (AI) and digital communication platforms can empower families to better navigate educational systems and access essential resources. We will explore practical applications, from AI-driven learning aids and assistive technologies to online communities and advocacy tools that streamline communication with educators and professionals.

The session will also highlight how students can harness these technologies to advocate for their own needs, fostering greater independence and self-empowerment. By integrating AI for personalized learning and digital tools for organizing and expressing their needs, students can become more active participants in their education. This presentation aims to equip families and educators with a comprehensive understanding of the potential these technologies hold, providing actionable insights and resources to enhance advocacy and support for children with disabilities.

Forget the Fairytale and Find the Hero

Melissa Wiley, Deputy Town Manager, Erie, CO

In this closing keynote session, Melissa Wiley will share her story of navigating disability from childhood through adulthood and her mission to redefine beauty. She will incorporate best practices in child brain development and trauma to help families understand a child's experience of disability and the strength of storytelling and community in fostering transformative outcomes.





Breakout Sessions

Interactive Advocacy: Hands-On Exploration of Advanced Technologies & AI Tools

Joe LaBelle, Director of Programs Impact, Family Network on Disabilities

Join us for an interactive breakout session where we delve deeper into the practical applications of advanced technologies and AI for advocacy. In this hands-on workshop, participants will engage in real-world scenarios, exploring how these tools can be leveraged to support families and students with disabilities. Through guided activities, attendees will learn to navigate AI-driven platforms, use digital tools for personalized learning and communication, and practice strategies for effective advocacy.

This session is designed to provide a dynamic, experiential learning environment where participants can directly interact with the technologies discussed. By the end of the workshop, attendees will have gained practical skills and insights, enabling them to confidently implement these tools in their advocacy efforts. Whether you're a parent, educator, or advocate, this session offers a unique opportunity to see firsthand how advanced technologies can transform the way we support children with disabilities.

Making Inclusion Happen: Mindsets, Practices and Outcomes

Michael McSheehan, Owner and Lead Consultant, Evolve & Effect, LLC

Using film, photos, and real-life examples, this session will increase participants' understanding of mindsets, practices, and outcomes of inclusive education. The content is drawn from classes, schools, and districts across the United States. Participants will explore PRACTICAL and USABLE resources, tools, and guides to make inclusion happen!

These will include:

Placement Decision Checklist, Individual Student Supports Planning Guide, School and District Inclusive Education Practice Indicators, Family-School partnership tips, Research summaries, and Google document with links to LOTS of additional helpful resources!

Partnering for Inclusion: Building Positive Partnerships With All Stakeholders

Marc Purchin, Owner, Purchin Consulting

Whether you're a parent, guardian, individual, school district, regional center, or a medical team, building inclusion and true belonging is a shared responsibility and must be taken seriously. No matter what your role, each ONE of us, as part of a team, shares ONE mission: to serve the best interests of students. Therefore, step ONE is to build positive collaboration among all team members. This results in less stress, fewer conflicts, better morale and more successful student outcomes!





College Inclusion: A Pathway to Success

Christi Kasa, Ph.D.

Professor for the Department of Teaching and Learning, UCCS
Director of the Office of Inclusive Services at UCCS

Shayna Laing

Community Engagement Manager, IN! Pathways to Inclusive Higher Education


At the University of Colorado Colorado Springs (UCCS), the Office of Inclusive Services is dedicated to assisting students with intellectual disabilities to engage in academics, social activities, independent living, and career development throughout their four years at UCCS. Participants will gain valuable insights into the diverse and enriching experiences of UCCS students with intellectual disabilities (ID) as shared by both current students and alumni. Additionally, staff from the Office of Inclusive Services and IN! Pathways to Inclusive Higher Education will offer recommendations for special educators, general educators, and parents to collaboratively prepare their students with ID for postsecondary success. Discover how you can help pave the way to college inclusion for all students.

How Trauma Shows Up In The Learning Environment & Practical Strategies for Professionals and Families.

Debi Grebenik (Presenting at UCCS)
Founder & CEO, Trauma Training Institute

Jae McQueen (Presenting at UNC)
Assistant Director of Mental Health, Cherry Creek School District

This workshop will look at how developmental trauma impacts brain development which results in learning and behavioral challenges in the learning and home environments. Additionally, discussion will center on behavioral responses that students may exhibit due to their trauma histories. Tangible ideas on specific responses will be provided that focus on how educators can respond in a trauma competent manner. The session will look at the educator as the tool in creating healing interactions and environments. Strategies are also applicable for parents. The strategies focus on creating inclusion and a sense of belonging for children and youth.





Transitioning from High School to Post-Secondary School: Rights & Resources

Emily Harvey, Esq.
Attorney, Disability Law Colorado

Sara Pielsticker
Attorney, Disability Law Colorado

This presentation will provide a look at key rights of students in high school and then highlight how these rights are different once you move into post-secondary education settings. In high school, students are protected by the IDEA, ADA, and Section 504. Once transitioned to post-secondary education, however, the IDEA no longer applies, and the ADA and Section 504 provide different coverage than in the high school context. This presentation will provide an overview of this information to help participants better understand the rights of students in both contexts. We will also highlight resources available to support students during this transition.

Overview of the ADA with a focus on Employment Rights

Emily Harvey, Esq.
Attorney, Disability Law Colorado


Sara Pielsticker
Attorney, Disability Law Colorado

This presentation will provide a broad overview of the ADA, including how disability is defined, what entities the ADA covers, and the legal analysis for reasonable accommodations and effective communication. After the overview, we will dive more specifically into rights in the context of employment. We will also highlight resources available to people with disabilities seeking or wanting to maintain or advance in employment.

Building Communities of Belonging, Together

Jackie Joseph, Ph.D.
Research Associate Professor, University of Denver, PELE

This session will explore how inclusion fosters belonging. Participants will examine common barriers and strategies for creating inclusive communities and spaces and will identify practical steps to promote greater belonging within their own spheres of influence.





Creating Connections: Building Personal Support Networks for Young People with Disabilities

Rebecca Pauls

Executive Director, Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network (PLAN)

"Creating Connections" is an immersive workshop designed to guide participants in building effective personal support networks for young people with disabilities. The workshop emphasizes the crucial role of personal networks that extend beyond traditional support systems, advocating for a proactive approach to fostering inclusion from an early age. Participants will learn how to establish and nurture these networks, involving family, friends, educators, and community members to form a robust circle of support around young individuals. Through interactive activities, guided discussions, and real-life examples, attendees will gain practical skills and insights into creating lasting connections. The workshop will provide strategies for engaging community members, maintaining connections, and leveraging local resources to enhance the support network.

You Had Me at Self-Care: A Guide for Educators and Families

Dr. Laura Trapp

School of Special Education, University of Northern Colorado

Participants will learn the importance of self-care and its impact on personal and professional well-being. The session will provide practical strategies for creating individualized self-care plans tailored to meet the unique needs of both educators and families. Attendees will engage in interactive activities and discussions to develop sustainable self-care routines that promote balance and resilience in everyday life.

Fostering Friendship Inside and Outside the Classroom

Erin Camper, RN, BSN

Parent Advisor, PEAK Parent Center

Meaningful friendships are an advantage of inclusive education for both children with disabilities as well as their typically developing peers. This session will provide practical tips that both educators and parents can use to foster and develop positive peer relationships and true friendships inside and outside the classroom.

