

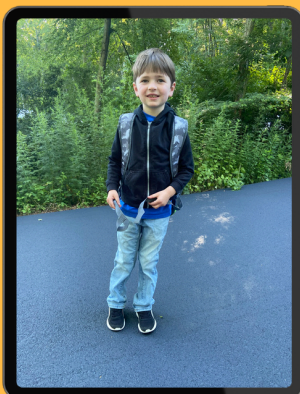
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HEATHER CASTIMORE

Parent Advocate of the Month
September 2026

WHAT MADE YOU ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION?

I think most parents would do anything for their child(ren) that could better their lives. As time goes on I have become a strong believer that every child deserves to live in this world as they are regardless of how their brain works. Having a solid education is one pillar to support growth and when I felt like my son Jason deserved better is when I became more involved.



WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES?

I found there to be a lot of information online and tended to get overwhelmed. I narrowed down to a handful of websites, organizations, professionals, and individuals that from my perspective are proficient and trustworthy. I try to attend a presentation or webinar weekly to further my education and sometimes that is just listening in on a podcast while cooking dinner. I also think it's helpful to realize this is a long journey but small steps can make lasting impact.



WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER FAMILIES ADVOCATING FOR THEIR CHILD'S RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION?

You are not going to know everything overnight. It is a process but be proud for the steps you do take to better the space your child holds in special education. As best you can, stay involved with the school system whether that is attending SEPAG discussions, going to BOE meetings, volunteering, and most importantly, stay inquisitive with a collaborative spirit. Try to network with others who "get it" and who truly care for your child. The envelope of love and support you will feel can get you through some of your most difficult days.



WHAT DOES BEING YOUR CHILD'S BEST ADVOCATE MEAN TO YOU?

My expectations had to change for my son once I understood his challenges however I try to always assume competence and believe he will accomplish all that he can. To me, advocacy means being a researcher, a networker, an observer, a seeker of knowledge from professionals or families who have passed or know your current stage of life, to sharing any information you think may be helpful to others.