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Relocating Families with Children with Special Needs: an IEP for Global Mobility

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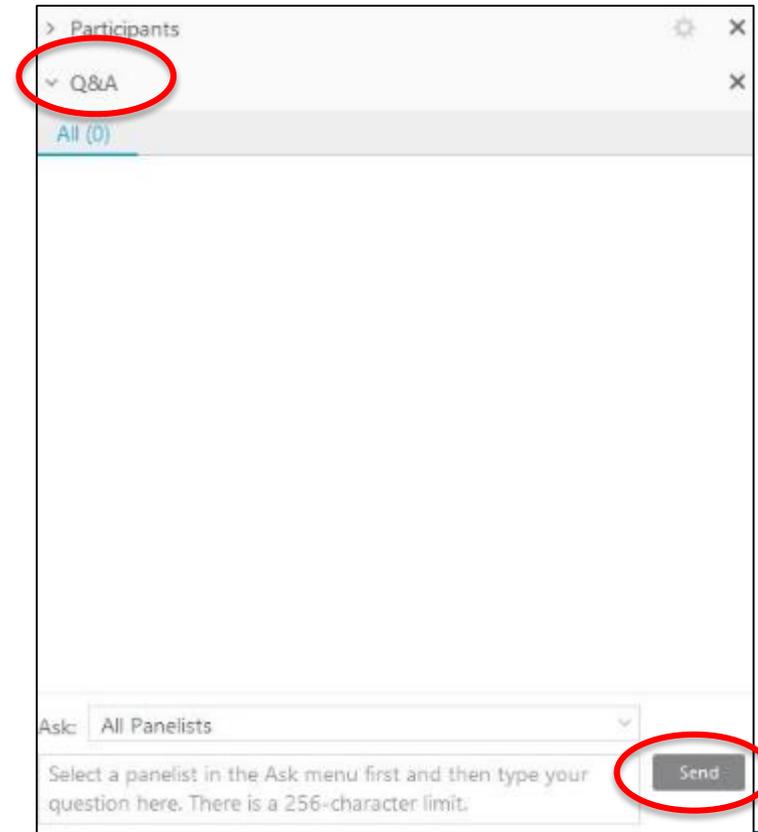
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Today's Presenter

Elizabeth Sawyer
CEO

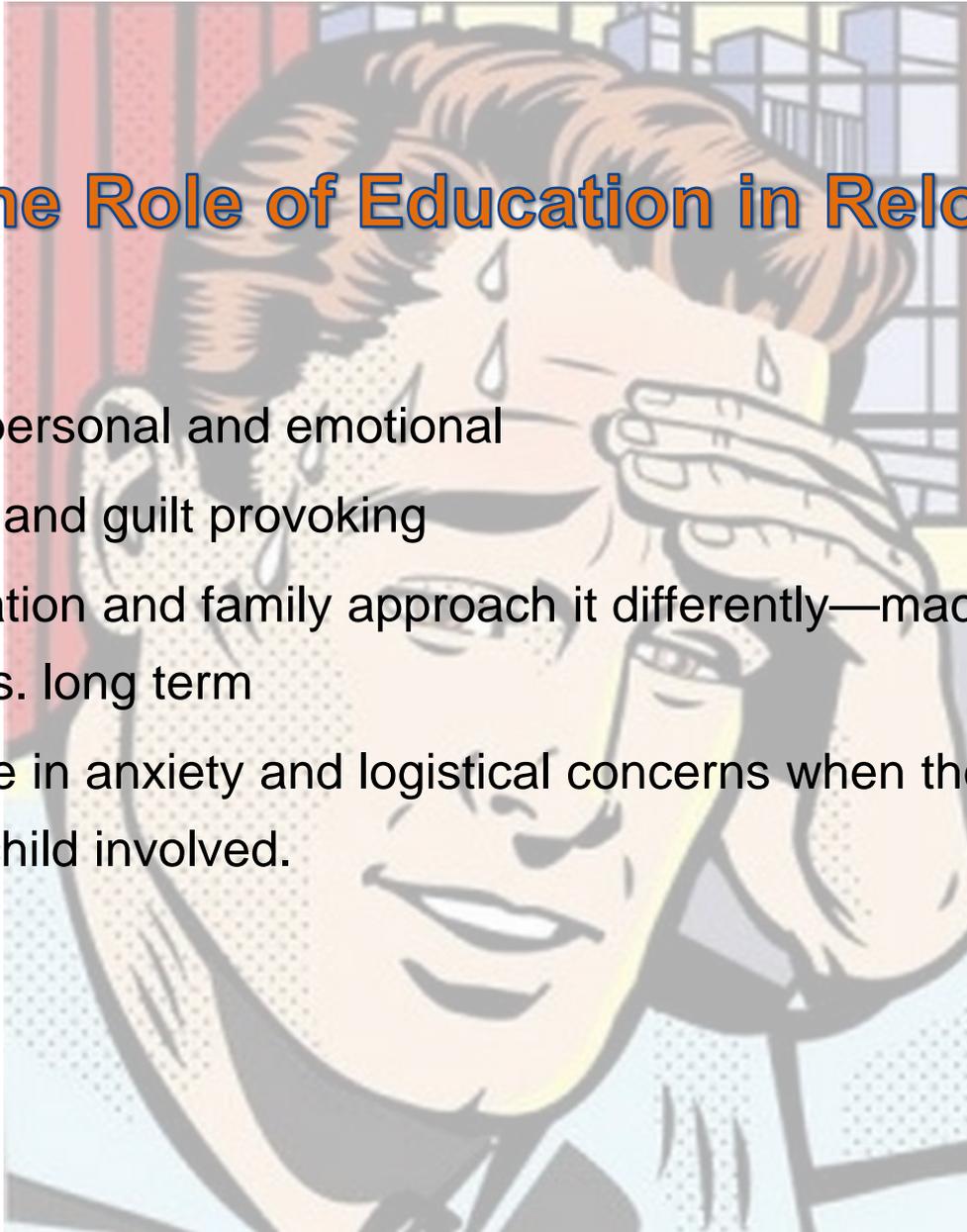
[Bennett Schoolplacement Worldwide, Inc.](#)

An international hybrid and former high school teacher, Elizabeth leads a team of 20 highly experienced education consultants who support families relocating anywhere in the world.



The Role of Education in Relocation

- Highly personal and emotional
- Anxiety and guilt provoking
- Corporation and family approach it differently—macro vs. micro, short-terms vs. long term
- Increase in anxiety and logistical concerns when there is a special needs child involved.



IDEA—Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

- Enacted in 1975, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), mandates the provision of a free and appropriate public school education for eligible children and youth ages 3–21. Eligible children and youth are those identified by a team of professionals as having a disability that adversely affects academic performance and as being in need of special education and related services. Data collection activities to monitor compliance with IDEA began in 1976. (National Center for Education Statistics)

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp



What do we Mean by “Special Needs”?

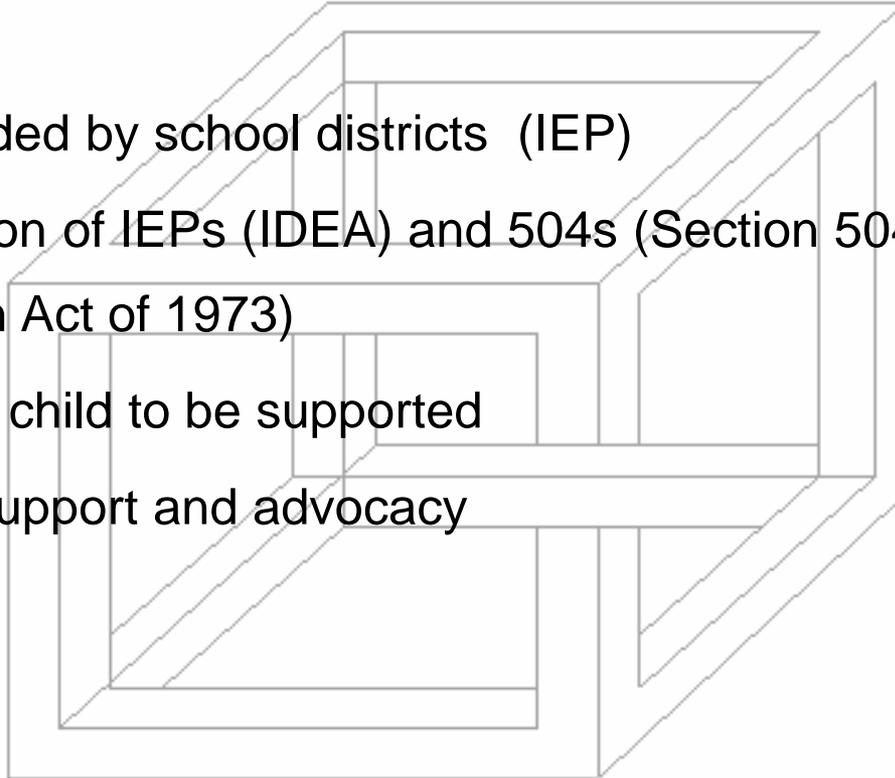
IDEA covers 13 different conditions that warrant special education:

- “SLDs” (Specific Learning Disabilities) such as Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, Dyslexia, Auditory Processing Disorder, NVLDs. A learning disability is a neurological condition that interferes with an individual’s ability to store, process, or produce information. <https://ldaamerica.org/support/new-to-ld/> (LD America)
- Health Impairments (e.g. ADD and ADHD)
- Intellectual Disability (e.g. Down Syndrome)
- ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder)
- Emotional Disturbance (e.g. depression or anxiety)
- Speech or Language Impairment, Vision Impairment, Deafness, Hearing Impairment, Deaf-Blindness, Orthopedic Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Multiple Disabilities



The Process and Culture of Supporting Special Needs Children in the U.S.

- Testing provided by school districts (IEP)
- Implementation of IEPs (IDEA) and 504s (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973)
- Legal right of child to be supported
- A culture of support and advocacy



Increase in Diagnoses of Children with Special Needs

- According to the National Center for Learning Disabilities, 1 in 5 children in the U.S. has a learning disability
- According to APA (American Psychiatric Association), 5% of U.S. children have ADHD. According to CDC, 11% are afflicted, an increase of 42% in 8 years.
- According to the CDC, 1 in 68 children born in the U.S. is afflicted with Autism. The prevalence is 1 in 42 boys and 1 in 189 girls. This is up from 1 in 150 children in 2000.



Increase in Rate of Autism in the U.S.

Identified Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder

ADDM Network 2000 – 2012

Combing Data from All Sites

Surveillance Year	Birth Year	Number of ADDM Sites Reporting	Prevalence per 1,000 Children (Range)	This is about 1 in X children...
2000	1992	6	6.7 (4.5–9.9)	1 in 150
2002	1994	14	6.6 (3.3–10.6)	1 in 150
2004	1996	8	8.0 (4.6–9.8)	1 in 125
2006	1998	11	9.0 (4.2–12.1)	1 in 110
2008	2000	14	11.3 (4.8–21.2)	1 in 88
2010	2002	11	14.7 (5.7–21.9)	1 in 68
2012	2004	11	14.6 (8.2–24.6)	1 in 68



Cultural Component to Approach to Special Needs

- In the U.S., an open conversation with much advocacy and medication
- Other countries may diagnose differently—e.g. France claims only 3.5% of children have ADHD (vs. 11% in the U.S.) and medicates only .5% of them, with the belief that ADHD is “situational” versus physiological.
<http://www.collective-evolution.com/2016/10/28/almost-no-children-in-france-are-medicated-for-adhd-heres-how-they-define-treat-it/>
- Different attitudes towards medication: Iceland (12 in 1000), Finland (1 in 1,000), Norway (5 in 1000) etc. <http://sciencenordic.com/large-differences-adhd-treatment>. Many countries mirroring the U.S.
- Stigmatization and desire for privacy and even to deny a learning disability.



Special Needs Support Internationally

- Other countries have their own version of IDEA: China—Compulsory Education Law (1986); Mexico, General Education Law, 1993; South Africa—1996 constitution, with new efforts in 2013 (UNESCO push towards “inclusion” as the universal model).
- International school world is a different world from most local systems; nonetheless, support has typically been very limited.



A Changing Landscape

- International schools offering increased support for students with special needs; there is not yet a norm—each one is different.
- More online options available to support children who can't access appropriate resources locally.
- Caution point: special needs support has become big business. Newly-created programs in locations of high-demand should be carefully vetted. Likewise, online or remote services should be vetted.



So, How to Support Families Relocating With Special Needs Children?

Allow time for the pre-decision stage of an assignment so that they may research:

- Appropriate schools—discussion with special needs coordinators who have looked at testing and narratives and potentially spoken with current teachers
- Resources outside of schools—local providers of different therapies



Providing Support--Continued

No Longer at Pre-decision Stage? Now provide:

- Support by a professional in the school search process *before a family chooses a residence*; discourage parents from trying to hide a child's disability!
- Orientation by an expert on the culture and resources available in the host location and the process by which supports can be accessed.
- Support during the transition months; don't forget about what a family may be going through.



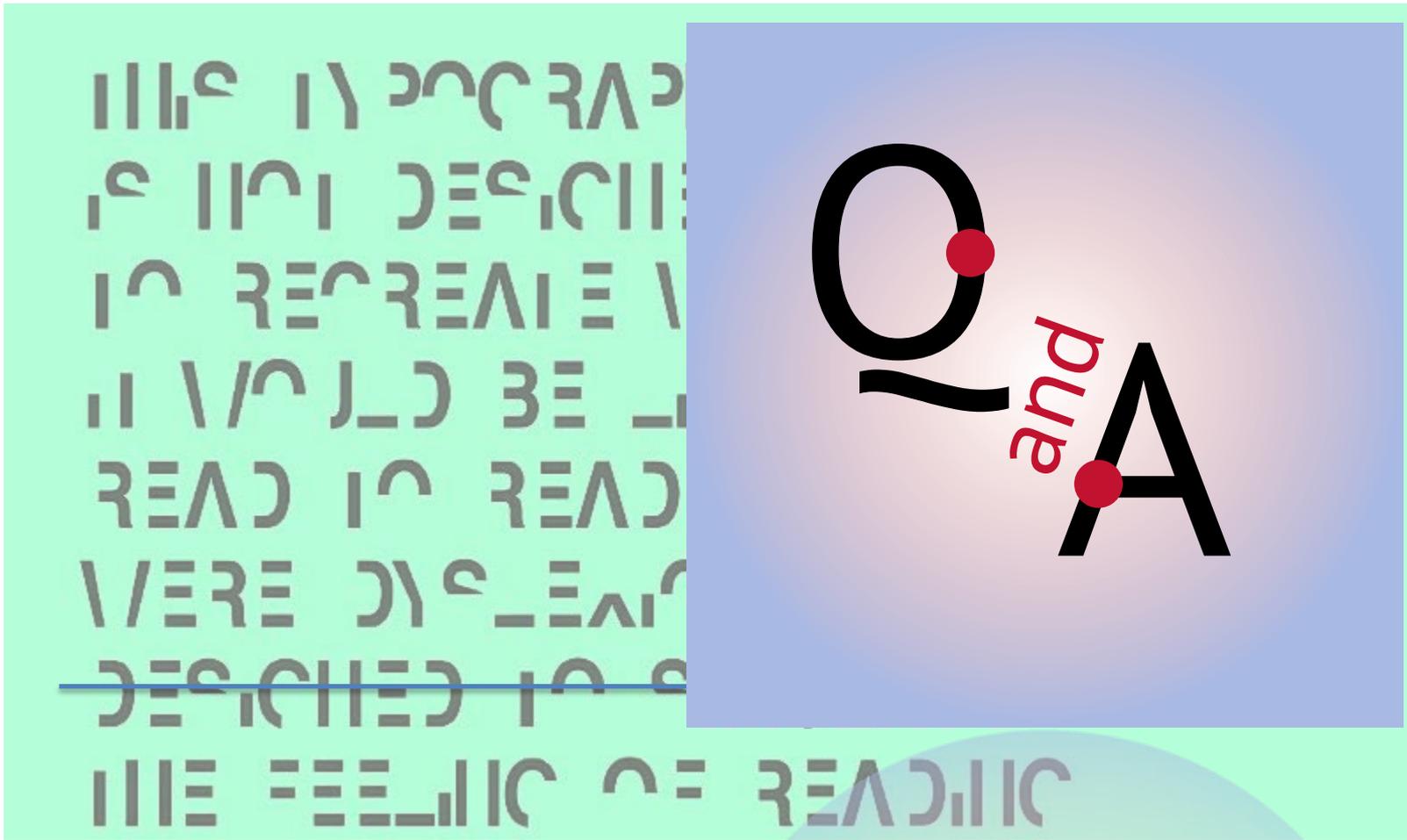
Providing Support--Continued

Policy Development Surrounding Special Needs

- Is it clear to the corporation and the family what kinds of programs and services will be supported when a special needs child goes on assignment?
- Do families have a venue where they can discuss comfortably and confidentially their concerns about a special needs child going on assignment?



Questions & Answers



Thank you for attending!

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