Susan Reynolds
Field Organizer for NCLD

- Parent to child with ADHD and Processing Disorder
- Military Family Advocate (in a previous life)
- Adult with 2 diagnosed learning disabilities and ADHD

Dylan Davis
Pennsylvania Parent Leader

- Lawyer turned special education teacher
- Taught in Philadelphia Public Schools
- Raising a daughter with learning difficulties
In the chat, please introduce yourself!

- Your Name
- Why You’re Here
- What You Hope to Learn
- Experiences with Advocacy
Your State: Pennsylvania
State Government – State Departments of Education and Legislature

Decision Makers:
Secretary of Education
Department Staff
State Representatives
Governor

Influenced By:
U.S. Department of Education
Statewide & Local
Stakeholders & Organizations
Local Government Entities
YOU
Universities - University Governing Boards

Decision Makers:
President of University
Deans
PA State System of Higher Education

Influenced By:
U.S. Department of Education
State Dept of Education
Statewide & Local Stakeholders & Organizations
Governor
YOU
Who’s Who in the Pennsylvania State Senate:

- Sen. Judy Ward, Chair of Senate Committee on Aging & Youth
- Sen. Patrick M. Browne, Chair of Senate Committee on Appropriations
- Sen. Scott Martin, Chair of Senate Committee on Education
- Sen. Camera Bartolotta, Chair of Senate Committee on Labor & Industry
- Sen. Mike Regan, Chair of the Senate Committee on Law & Justice
Who’s Who in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives:

- Rep. Curtis G. Sonney, *Chair of House Committee on Education*
- Rep. Mark Longietti, *Vice-Chair of House Committee on Education*
- Rep. Sheryl M. Delozier, *Chair of House Committee on Children & Youth*
- Rep. Pamela A. DeLissio, *Vice-Chair of House Committee on Children & Youth*
- Rep. Stan Saylor, *Chair of House Committee on Appropriations*
- Rep. Matthew D. Bradford, *Vice-chair of House Committee on Appropriations*
Relevant Bills in the General Assembly:

- Allowing Waivers of State-Mandated Education Policies (SB 1286)
- School Voucher Bill (HB 2696)
- Limit School District Liability Bill (HB 2352)
- Professional Development for Teachers on Dyslexia (HB 2784)
- Additional Year of School to Make Up for the Loss of Instruction and Competition (HB 2788):
- Educator Evaluation Law (SB 751)
- Disability Rights Curriculum Bill (HB 2785)
$11B Budget Package Passed by PA General Assembly in Nov 2020 & signed by Gov Wolf.

Gov Wolf said, “COVID-19 has left Pennsylvania in a difficult financial situation, and this budget protects against furloughs and deeps cuts to critical programs.”

This [link](#) has the full PA budget broken down by department. Education, Health, Human Services, and Labor and Industry are some of the areas that impact people with disabilities.

Learning more about the budget, how money is dispersed, helps with your advocacy.
The Policy & Advocacy Process: Turning Problems into Solutions
The Advocacy Process:

Turning Problems into Solutions:

1. Identifying the Issue
2. Research & Data
   a. Research Policy & Decision Makers
   b. Collect Data on the Issue
   c. Finding Allies & Mobilizing Others
3. Your Story
4. Communicating with Others
For Example:

**Issue:** Special education funding is not equitable across the state.
- Why? (Understanding why will help with your advocacy process)

**Research & Data Collection:**
- Research: How many other families are experiencing something similar in the school district?
- Who would I speak with about this issue?
  - School board member
  - School District
  - County/City Officials
Example Continued:

- How do I find others going through something similar?
  - Social Media?
  - PTA?

My Story:
- How does my story show impact on the issue?

Communication:
- I will communicate via email with my elected officials.
- I'm going to ask questions in social media groups to find other families going through similar issues.
Plan Your Strategy

Brainstorm Solutions

1. Possible Solution: 

Action steps to address the problem: 

Laws and rules that might be impacted: 

Possible consequences: 

All Advocacy Starts with YOUR Story.
Story of Self: Components of a Story

Characters

Who are the main players in your story?

Plot

What is the purpose of your story?

Challenge

What is the obstacle?

Resolution

What decision did you make?

Theme

What is the takeaway?
For Example:

My Story: Susan's Story

Players in the Story: My son, my family, and local school.

Purpose of my Story: Inform state and local officials about the use of a fictitious special education policy and how using it has discriminated against countless children.

Obstacle: Pushback from the elementary school. Officials have both denied the existence of the “policy” while using the “policy” to deny special education evaluation and supports.
Decisions that I Made: After a contentious IEP process, which I am still in the middle of, my husband and I decided to elevate this issue. We are contacting our local elected officials, and state officials. We are also filing an OCR complaint through the US Dept of Education.

Takeaway: My family is not alone. This “policy” has been used against children in our school district for years. The “policy” is not based on any special education law. Our goal is to eliminate the use of this fictional policy and uphold the laws that already exist.
Resources and Linked Information
National Resources

➢ National Center for Learning Disabilities
➢ ADA Center of the Mid-Atlantic
➢ Partners in Policymaking (Online Course)
➢ ADA National Network
➢ The ARC
➢ The American Academy of Pediatrics
State Resources & Links

➢ Commonwealth Budget
➢ Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education
➢ PA Department of Education: Colleges & Universities
➢ PA Department of Education
➢ Pennsylvania General Assembly
➢ NCLD Parent Advocacy Toolkit
State Resources

➢ PA General Assembly: Find Your Legislator

➢ Plan Your Advocacy Worksheet

➢ Pennsylvania Training & Technical Assistance Network

➢ NCLD PA State Political Landscape Review (will be emailed as a PDF attachment)

➢ Parent’s Guide to Local Advocacy
Please be sure to:

- Follow us on social media:
  - @ncldorg and @LD_Advocate
  - facebook.com/NCLD.org/
  - instagram.com/ncldorg/ and @ncldorg

- For general information questions: info@ncld.org

- For policy questions: policy@ncld.org
Advocate Academy 101 Series

Advocate Academies 101:

- An Introduction to IDEA and Section 504
- Assistive Technology. What is it?
- How to Prepare for an IEP Meeting
- How to Prepare for a 504 Plan Meeting
- Transition Planning
Advocate Academies 201: In Jan/March 2021

- **State and Local Advocacy**
  (will include how to research, fact check, understand policies, and how to share your personal story)

- **Federal Advocacy**
  (will include how to research, fact check, understand policies, and how to share your personal story)
Thank you!