



Post Adoption Resource Center Newsletter Oakland and Macomb Counties

How To Be An Advocate

By: Chelsee Scherz

There is a level of anticipation that starts to build just before a new school year. New classrooms, new school supplies, sometimes a new outfit or pair of shoes, and it all starts to mingle with the anticipation of new friends and new experiences. For some families, though, the start of a new school year can bring with it anxiety, fear and dread. Classrooms are, unfortunately, not designed for every child. It is for that reason that state and federal guidelines have been created to ensure that schools accommodate students that need extra help in the classroom. Many factors can impact a child's ability to learn in school. Difficulty in school has been linked to health and prenatal care, nutrition, availability of a dependable care giver, nurturance after birth, emotional interaction, language exposure, and physical stimulation during a child's formative years. It is common for children who have experienced trauma, or experienced grief and loss to experience developmental delays, and language or learning disabilities. Does any of this sound like the child you adopted? Your child may require Special Education or related services. Adoptive parents get to not only worry about the usual things such as their child excelling in the classroom, test scores, saving for college, getting enough extra-curriculars, making friends and behaving, but many adoptive parents must also ensure that their school is truly meeting their child's needs. Parents will need to be involved in their child's education from day one and it can be a daunting task. Since your children cannot step up for what they need, your role as an advocate is more important than ever before. Where do you start? It can sometimes seem like the whole system is designed to confuse and intimidate you. When in doubt ask questions. Parental involvement in school is one of the biggest predictors of academic success. Just knowing that can create a lot of pressure and stress. The good thing is, you don't have to do it alone. Call your Post Adoption Resource Center worker and let them help you be the best advocate you can be. Additionally, we have put together a list of five things that effective parent advocates have been found to do.

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Orchards
Children's Services
September 2018
Volume , 6 Issue 4

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Post Adoption
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The Post Adoption Resource Center is operated by Orchards Children's Services and funded by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

5 Things That Effective Advocates Do

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Build Relationships/Communicate-

Get to know your child's teachers, and service providers such as therapists, speech therapists, social workers and school psychologists. Building strong relationships with these individuals can help to keep the lines of communication open and make it easier to ask questions when you need. Attend regular meetings with your child's teacher to monitor progress, or exchange emails. Communicate with your child. No one knows your child better than you do. Ensure that you are continuing to learn their strengths and needs .

Ask Questions/Be Informed-

Find out what resources are available in your community. Educate yourself on the process. Here is a quick rundown of how the process works. When a child is identified as having a need or a disability, an evaluation must be done to find out what services are needed. The school might ask for an evaluation, or the parent can request one. Once a parent gives consent for the evaluation, the evaluation is completed and reviewed for eligibility. When a child is found eligible for services, an Individualized Education Plan or 'IEP' meeting must be scheduled within 30 days by the school. At this meeting the IEP Team (made up of teachers, social workers, advocates, parents, students when appropriate, etc) will determine what services will be offered and the IEP is completed. Once the IEP is completed services can begin. Services will be reviewed and progress will be reported to parents. Every year, the IEP will be reviewed for any needed changes, and at least every three years the child must be re-evaluated.

Know Your Child's Rights-

There are federal, state and local laws that dictate how the process will work. Educating yourself about these laws will help you to be an effective advocate for your child's education. Here are some excellent resources available to help you find out about your child's rights:

Michigan Protection & Advocacy Service- www.mpas.org

Department of Education, IDEA - <https://sites.ed.gov/idea>

Michigan Department of Education - <https://www.michigan.gov/mde>

Michigan Alliance For Families- www.michiganallianceforfamilies.org

Keep Organized-

Keep copies of report cards, progress reports, multidisciplinary evaluations, IEPs, medical records and samples of homework assignments or tests. These documents can provide valuable insight into how your child is progressing. Keep everything in one place, in a folder or binder that is easily accessible.

Stay Team Oriented-

Identify those that are on your team. Social Workers (contact your Post Adoption Resource Center (PARC) worker, and ask as many questions as you need to), doctors, therapists and teachers are all great resources and key members of your child's team. Your unconditional love will keep you motivated, and at times your emotions will guide you, but your team of professionals will offer you support, documentation and a level-headed approach to help guide you through communicating your child's needs. Join a support group. There is nothing better than learning from other parent advocates about what has worked from them- or even just to vent and recharge.

Adoption at the



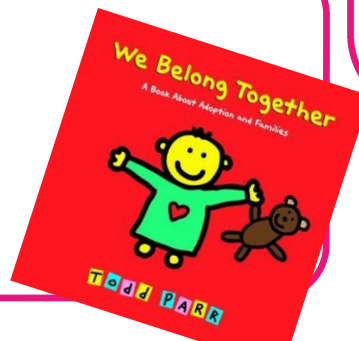
My New Mom & Me by Renata Galindo

This story follows a puppy who is nervous about his new Mom, and coming into a new home. A great book for younger readers, and families that may not look alike.



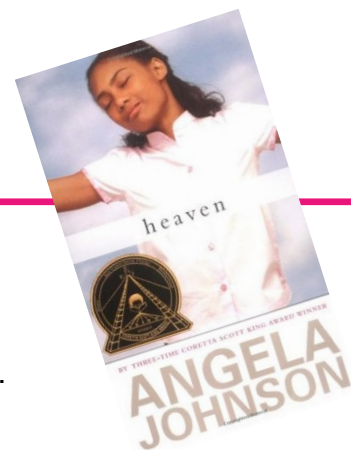
We Belong Together by Todd Parr

This book is aimed at children ages 3-6, but Todd Parr's colorful images and sunny positive affirmations will make children and adults of any age smile.



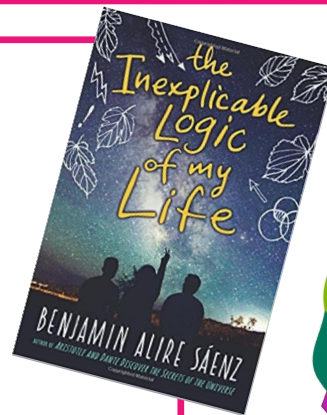
Heaven by Angela Johnson

Marley loves her life in Heaven, OH. She finds out at age 14 that she was adopted and starts to question, everything. This is a great book for pre-teens/young adults starting to explore their feelings surrounding being adopted. Teens can follow Marley through all the feelings of grief, loss, confusion and wondering who to trust as she navigates the realization that she is an adoptee.



The Inexplicable Logic of my Life by Benjamin Alire Saenz

Sal is an adoptee who has always been comfortable with his life and himself. In his senior year of high school, things start to unravel and he starts to question who he is, and who he wants to be. This a must read for teens, as Sal struggles with issues of finding his identity, being there for a friend, and confronts other issues such as faith, loss and grief. It's a beautiful story full of rich, meaningful characters.



Adoption at the Library (continued)

The Mercy Rule by Perri Klass

Dr. Lucy Weiss is a mother and a pediatrician. She also grew up in foster care. As she moves from worrying about her son being labeled with a diagnosis to worrying about parents struggling with drugs and impossible living situations at her job—Lucy must judge herself as a parent, critique other parents, and also deal with the echoes of her childhood. An honest and refreshing portrayal of parenting.



Chasing Kites By Rachel McCracken

Follow one mother's journey through infertility, adoption and foster care. Rachel McCracken masters the art of conveying the grief, love, joy, and struggles of navigating adoption and foster care. Anyone who has been through this process can appreciate this book, but even more than that, it's an uplifting and hopeful narrative that just about anyone with a heart can get into.



Upcoming Trainings & Support Groups

Sept. 11 Macomb County, Support Group 6:00pm—8:00 pm

Sept. 13 Wayne County, Support Group 5:00pm—8:00pm

Sept. 17 Oakland County, Support Group 5:30pm—7:30pm

Oct. 9 Macomb County, Support Group 6:00pm—8:00 pm

Oct. 10 Parent Training / Transracial Adoption—6:00 pm—8:00 pm

Oct. 11 Wayne County, Support Group 5:00pm—8:00pm

Oct. 15 Oakland County, Support Group 5:30pm—7:30pm

Nov. 6 Adoptive Parent Training 5:30pm—7:30pm

Nov. 6 Teen Support Group 5:30pm—7:30pm

Nov. 13 Macomb County, Support Group 6:00pm—8:00 pm

Nov. 15 Wayne County, Support Group 5:00pm—8:00pm

Dec. 4 Adoptive Parent Training 5:30pm—7:30pm

Dec. 4 Teen Support Group 5:30pm—7:30pm

Dec. 11 Macomb County, Support Group 6:00pm—8:00 pm

Dec. 13 Wayne County, Support Group 5:00pm—8:00pm

Dec. 17 Oakland County, Support Group 5:30pm—7:30pm

**For more details, including location, and to RSVP for any of our events, please contact Jennifer Harmon at 248-530-5381.*