

SEPTAs: What They Are and Why They Are Needed

All parents know that raising a child is quite a challenge. The challenge is even greater, however, when you are a parent of a child with special needs. Special Education PTAs, or SEPTAs, are a unique type of PTA that supports parents and teachers of children with special needs. The parents, in particular, have their own unique needs. They need to learn about the special education process, about their child's particular issues, and how to be an effective advocate for their child. In addition, parents of special needs children need each other. They need to talk with people who know what they are going through, to share their experiences and to support each other.

Although SEPTAs are similar in many ways to traditional PTAs, there are some differences. One difference is a focus on parent education. While many issues are common to all parents, parents of special needs children are sometimes required to be knowledgeable in areas they might never have imagined before they became parents. When Advocating for a special needs child, it is crucial for parents to know what their child's rights are and to be familiar with laws such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Parents also need to become expert in their child's diagnosis and knowledgeable about the services that are available to them. SEPTAs help parents accomplish these goals.

One common misconception about SEPTAs is that they seek to separate parents of children with special needs from other parents. This is not the case at all. SEPTAs should not be thought of as a replacement for traditional PTAs but rather as an additional source of information, friendship, and support. SEPTA members care about all children just like other PTA members. They are advocates for all children and supportive of all parents and all teachers. SEPTAs do not seem to exclude anyone, but to include everyone. The additional level of support that SEPTAs provide makes PTA an even stronger voice for every child.

Many SEPTAs also work with other SEPTAs to share information, to participate in each other's programs, to socialize together, and to support each other.

If anyone would like more information about starting a SEPTA in their town please contact Candy Fredericks, Special Education Chairman for the Ocean County Council PTA. My email address is Johnjoncandi@aol.com or my phone number is 732-920-0183.