

★ Welcome ★

Breakout sessions are provided by presenters who have volunteered to share their knowledge and experience with us today at the 2025 Family Summit.

Please remember that the information and experiences shared are understandings and perspectives of the presenters.



Find Your Way on the Road Less Travelled



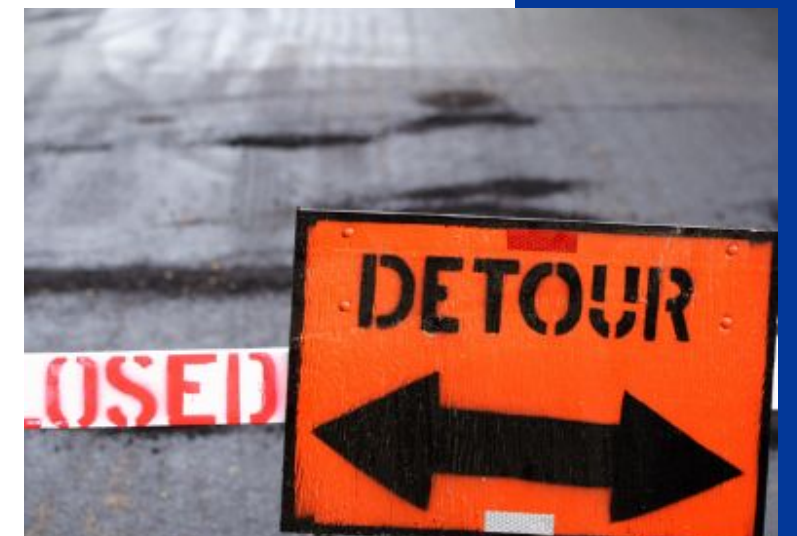
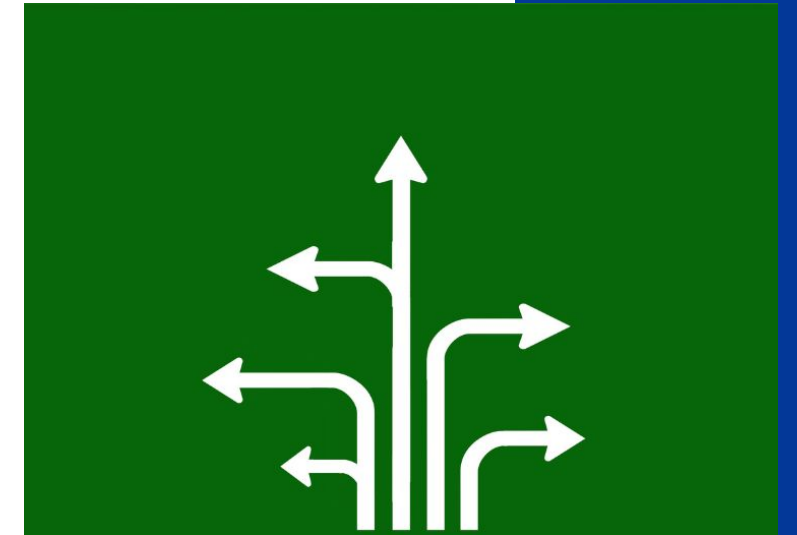
Presented by:
Michelle Cades & Diane Cooper-Gould



Preparation & Planning

Maintaining a Safe Journey

Breakdowns & Detours



Preparation & Planning



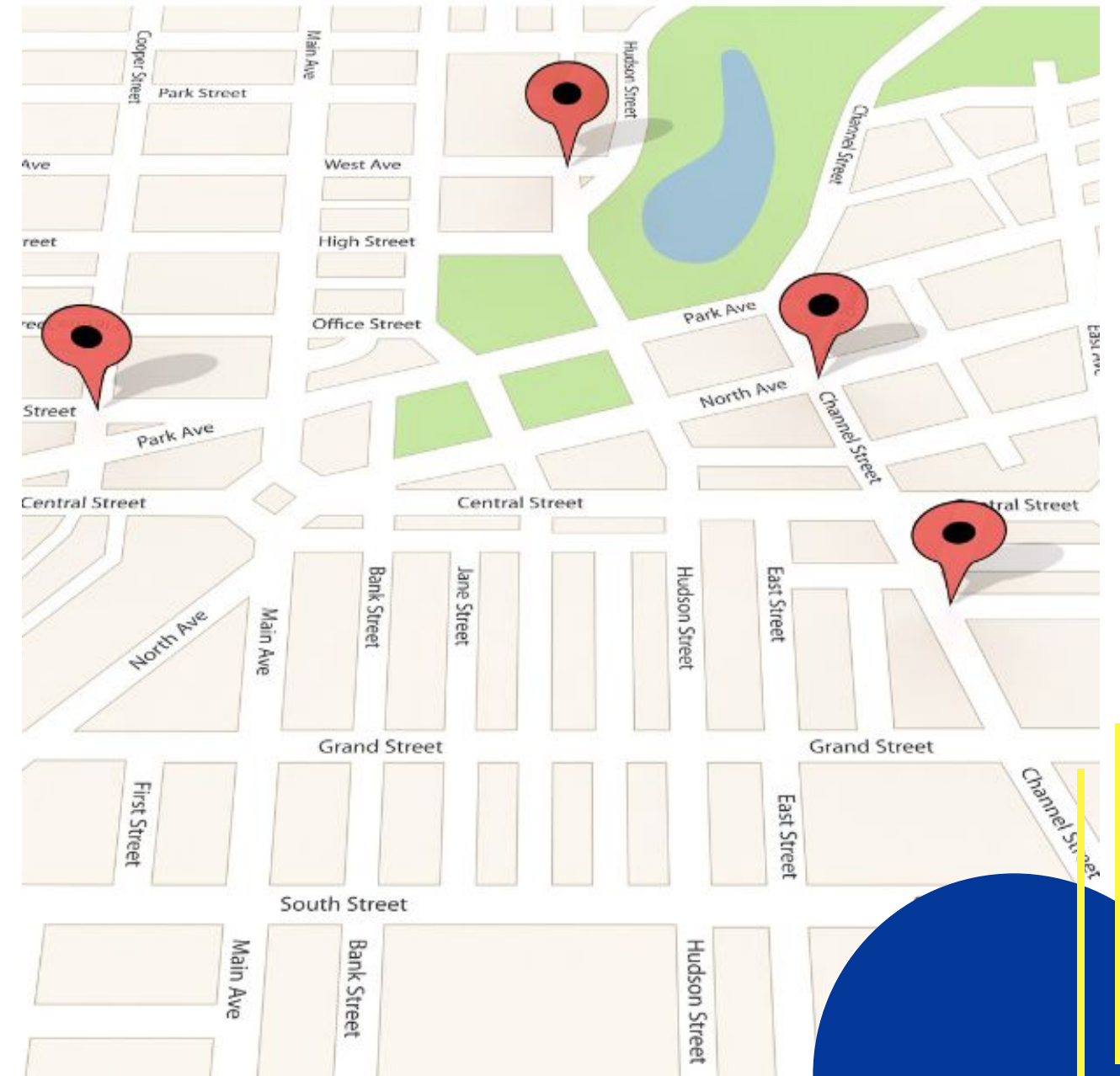


Check your gas tank:

Take stock of your resources

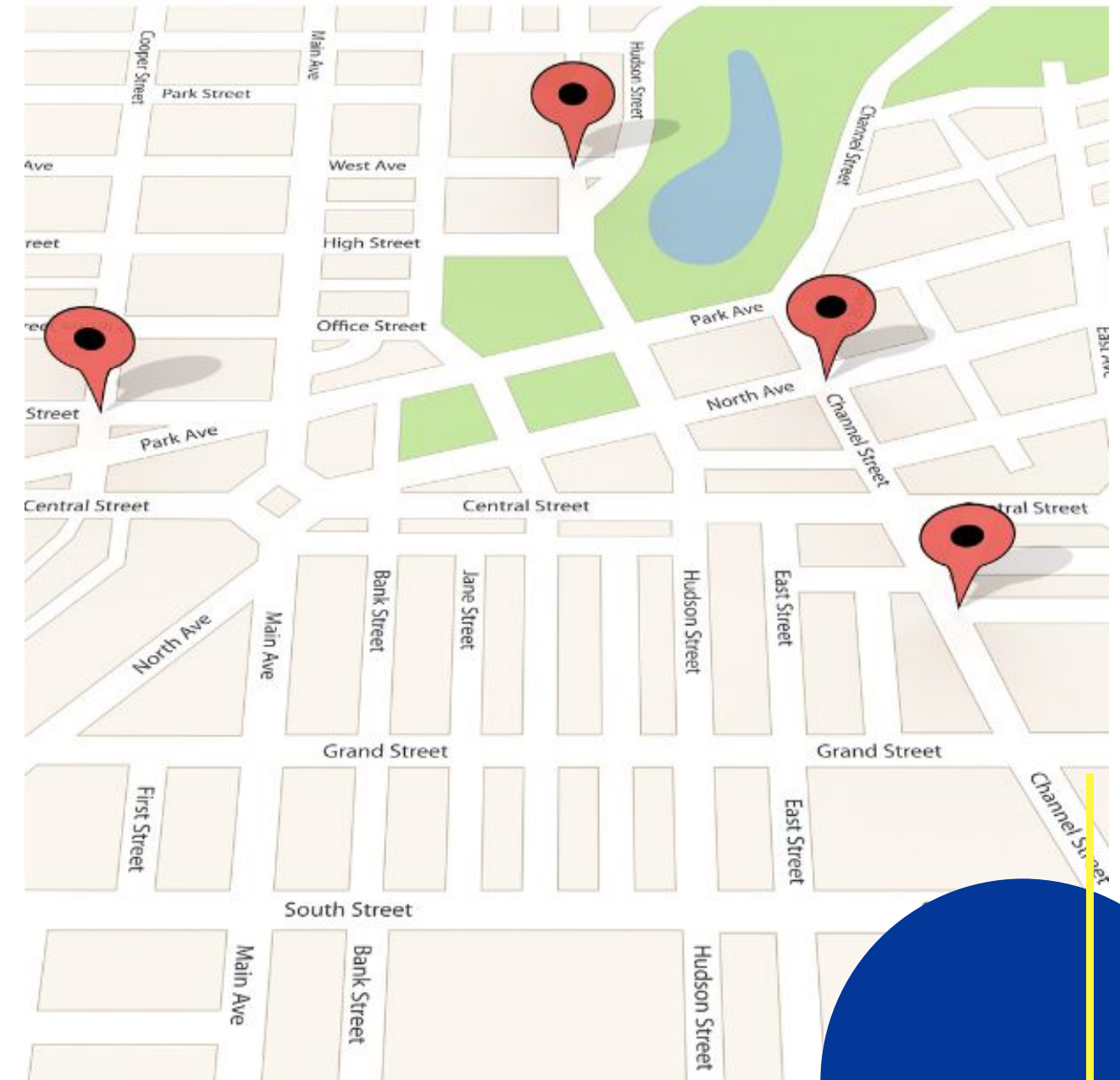
Destination:

Keep post-secondary goals in mind when planning your journey



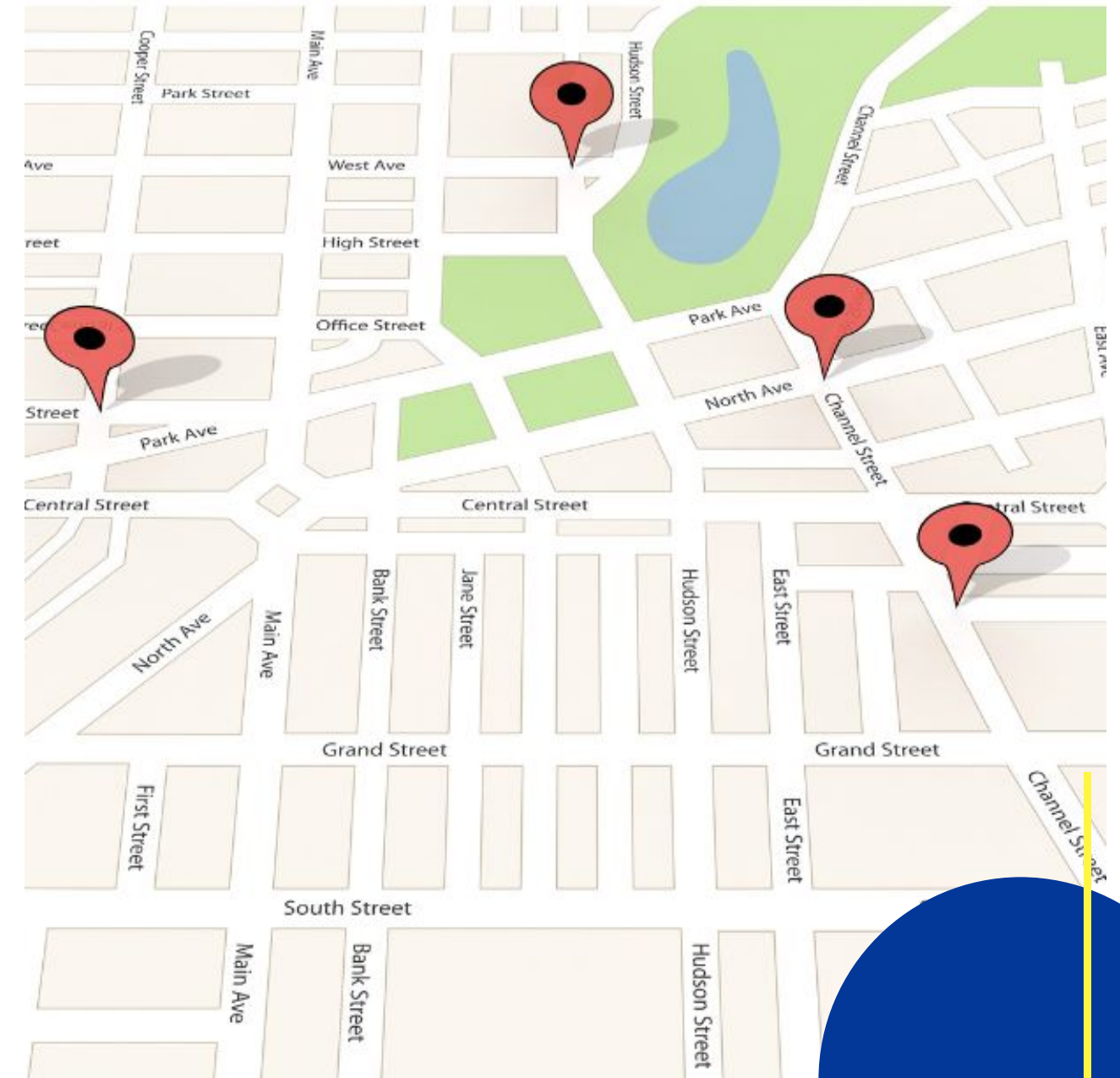
Elementary:

- State Funding
 - medicaid waiver
- Financial Planning
 - special needs trust
 - ABLE account
- IEP Goals for Transition
 - academic
 - independence
 - employment
- Diploma Options
 - advanced
 - standard
 - applied studies



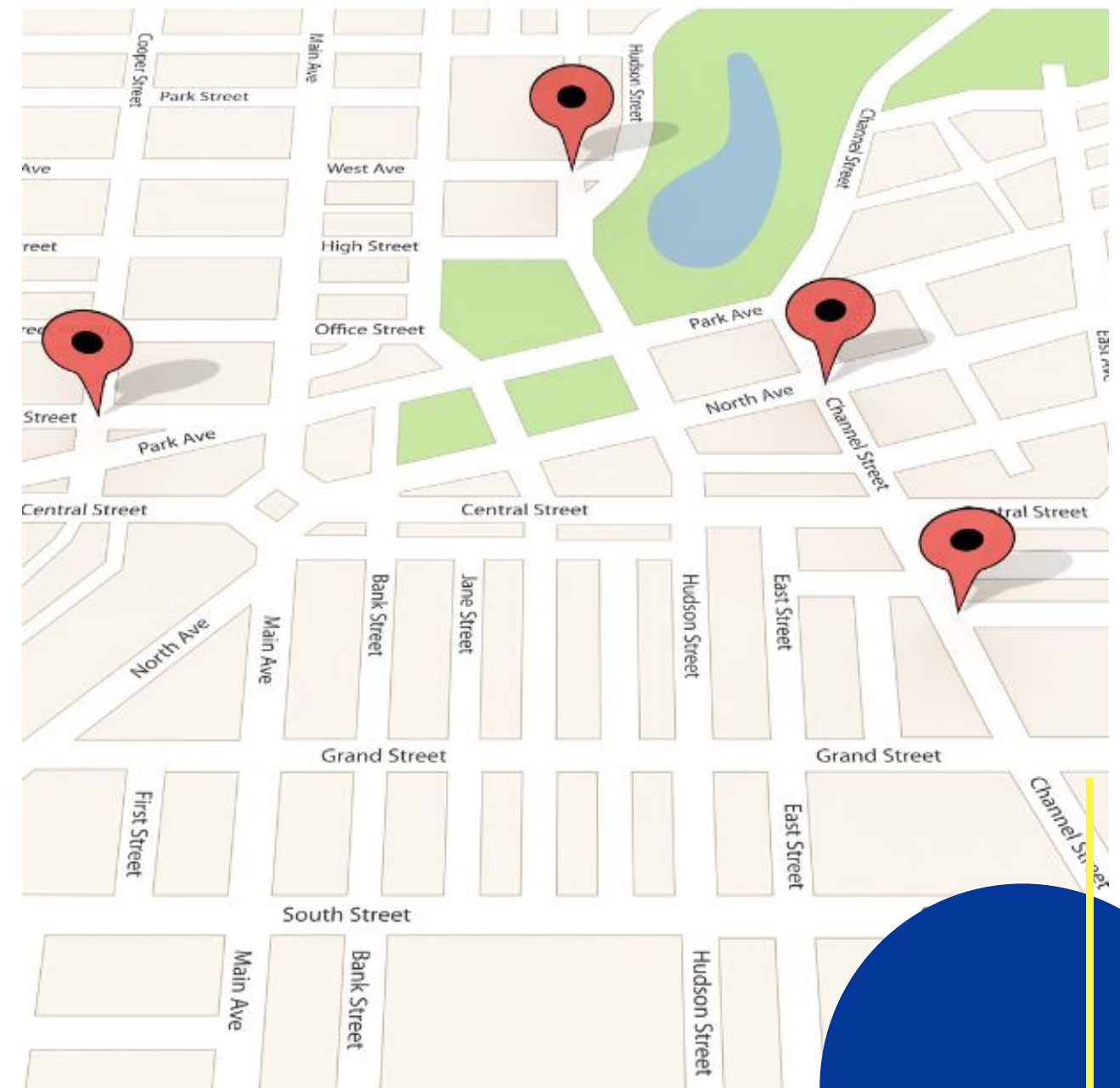
Secondary:

- Career & Technical Education (CTE)
 - workplace certification
 - academy classes
- Career & Transition Services
 - work awareness & transition (WAT)
 - employment & transition representative (ETR)
- The College Board



Post-Secondary:

- Department for Aging & Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
- Community Services Board (CSB)
- College Disability Services Offices



Packing the Car:

- Understanding needs accurately
- Building positive relationships & open communication
- Child attending IEP meetings





Safety & Emergency Tool Kit:

Resources to Prevent & Address
Crises



FCPS Handbooks

- [Special Education Parent Handbook](#)
- [2e \(Twice-Exceptional\) Handbook](#)
- [Dyslexia Handbook](#)



School-Based Staff:

- Social Workers, Psychologists, Counselors
- School Based Technology Specialists (SBTS)
- Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP), Occupational/Physical Therapists (OT/PT)
- Advanced Academics Resource Teachers (AART)
- Instructional Assistants (IA)



Non-School-Based Staff:

- High/Low Incidence Specialists
- Assistive Technology Specialists (ATS)
- Behavior Intervention Teachers (BIT)
- Adapted PE (APE)

A close-up, slightly blurred image of a silver 'HYBRID' badge mounted on a dark car body. The letters are raised and metallic.A large blue circle on the left side of the slide, with two horizontal yellow lines extending from its right edge.

Twice Exceptional (2e) Identification & Services

- Read the handbook & share with staff
- Communicate with both AART & special education staff
- Advocate for needs
 - not mutually exclusive

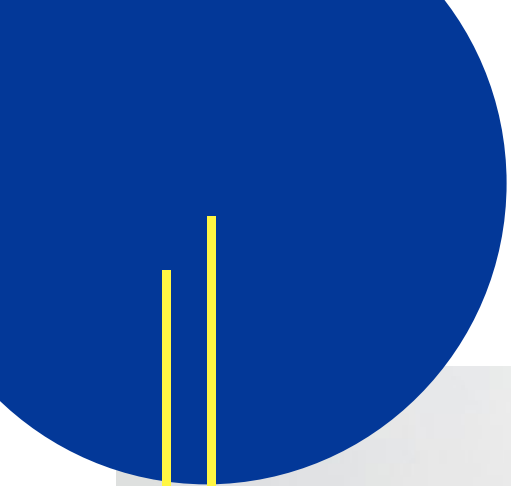
Maintaining a Safe Journey



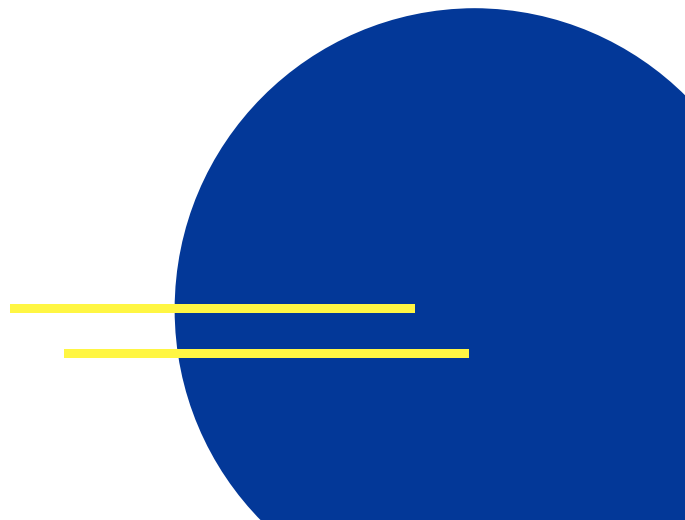


Check your gas tank:

Take stock of your resources



**Make
time
for
fun!**



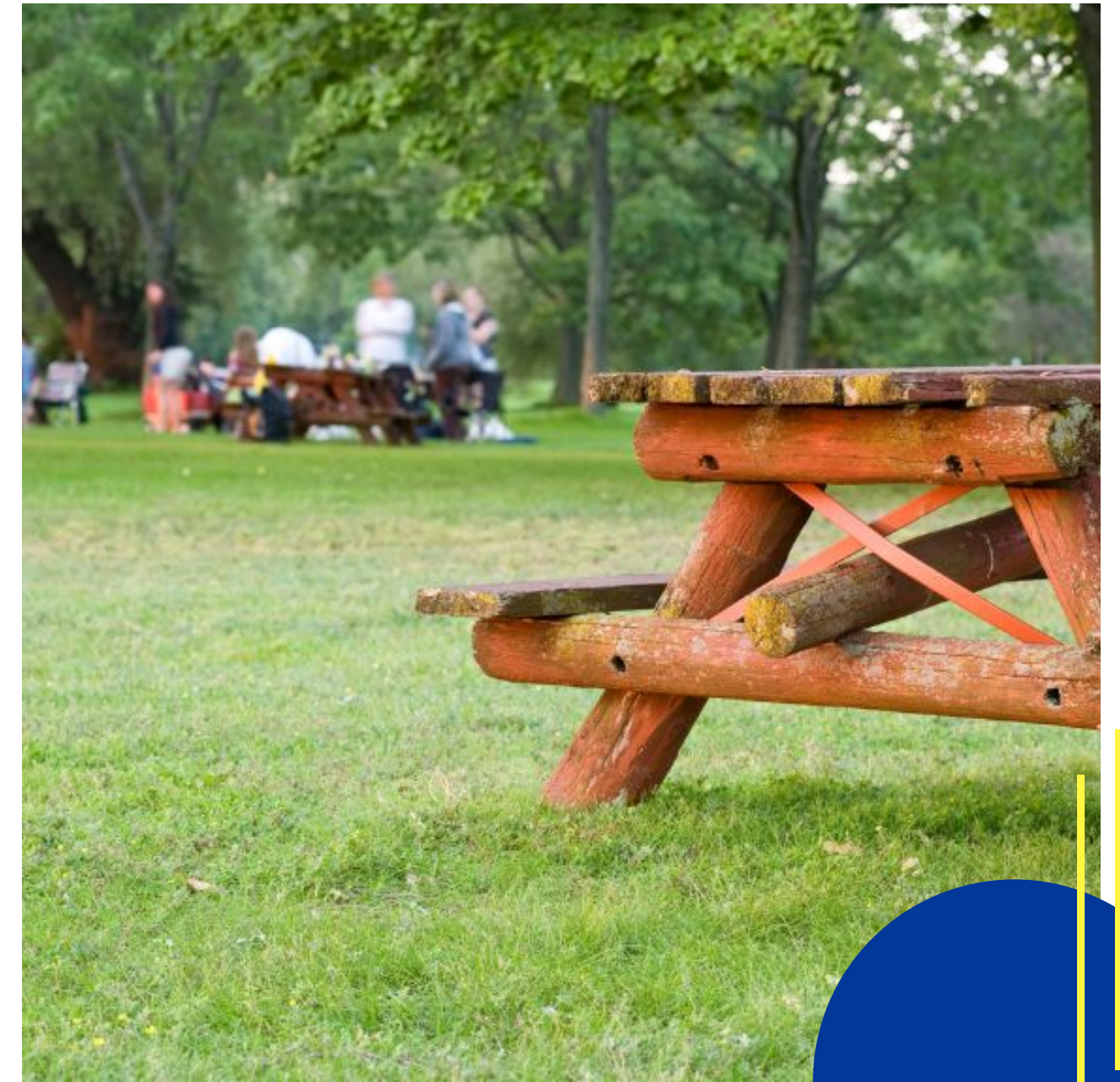
Make Adjustments (Accommodations) as Needed

- Voice to text
- Spell check & no spelling penalties
- Copy of teacher notes
- Keyboarding
- Audio books
- Small group testing
- Extended time
- Hard copies of textbooks



Refuel the Sensory System

- Noise cancelling headphones
- Stand/pace/move during class
- Specific seating needs
 - wobble stool, location
- Gum, water bottle, snacks
- Advance notice of fire & other drills
- Flash pass
- Quiet space for breaks
- Alternate location for lunch
- Early/late access to locker room





Go, you! Collaborate!

- Always first approach
- Share information
 - allow communication between school & private providers
- Communicate concerns & agenda topics in advance of meetings



Yellow before red!

- Ask questions
- Seek clarification
- Presume positive intent
- Consider alternatives

Breakdowns & Detours:

Fixing what is broken
or
choosing a different path?





Check your gas tank:

Take stock of your resources



Hazard Ahead!

How to recognize signs of trouble and what to do about it





Hazard Sign:

Change in child's affect, attitude or behavior

- at home, during social activities or at school

What to Do:

- Talk to your child
- Contact:
 - Teacher
 - School counselor
 - School social worker
 - School psychologist
 - High school - Hazel Mental Health



Hazard Sign:

Change in responsiveness from school

What to Do:

- **Copy additional people on your emails**
- **Contact:**
 - Teacher
 - Department chairs
 - School administration & if needed, progress up the admin chain to:
 - Executive Principals (by Pyramid)
 - Regional Assistant Superintendents (by Region)
 - Central Office Specialists
 - Ombudsman's office



Hazard Sign:

Increase in disciplinary concerns

(note: monitor SIS notifications)



What to Do:

- **Keep a discipline log of all communications, dates, and event details**
- **Refer to FCPS SR&R**
- **Contact school staff:**
 - Teacher
 - Case manager
 - Administration
- **Determine if there are unmet needs, lagging skills, bullying or other concerns**

Hazard Sign:

Increase in disciplinary concerns, *continued*



What to Do:

- Consider a Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA)
- Seek help from a Behavior Intervention Teacher (BIT)
 - BITs are central office specialists trained in behavior and problem solving
 - Every school has a BIT assigned to them
 - BITs can be requested by the school team or parent
- Develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) with the IEP or 504 team
- Always be aware that BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION
 - What is your child trying to tell you?





Hazard Sign:

Missing data or disagreements about progress reports

What to Do:

- **Contact case manager**
 - Request data records
- **Request a meeting to discuss progress reports**
- **Put your concerns in writing and address them to the case manager**

Common Roadblocks



Common Roadblocks

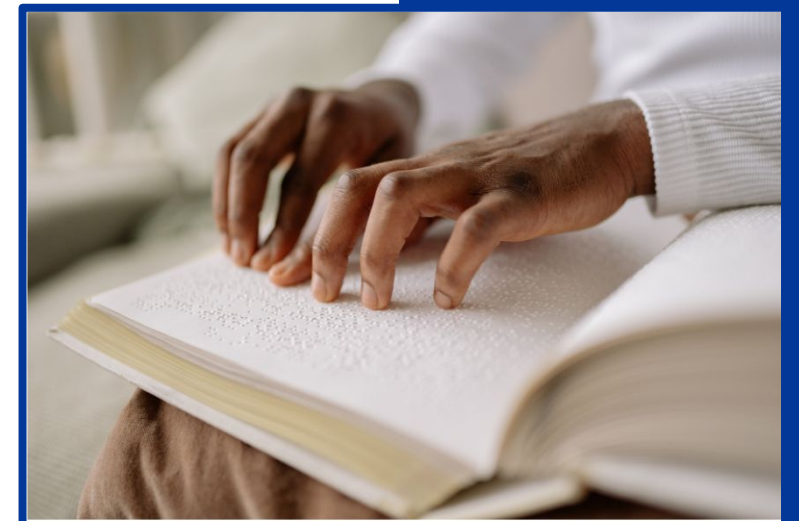
Do ALL instructors know about IEP or 504 & accommodations?



Remember: specials teachers , elective teachers, discipline staff, administrators & others...



Student- or parent-developed 1-pager



Common Roadblocks

Recess – unstructured, social setting



Lunch – volume, smell, taste, crowd, setting, social, lack of structure and guidance



PE – competition, sensory processing, overwhelm, locker room, dressing out, fine motor skills



Common Roadblocks

Specials & Electives



Extracurriculars & Athletics

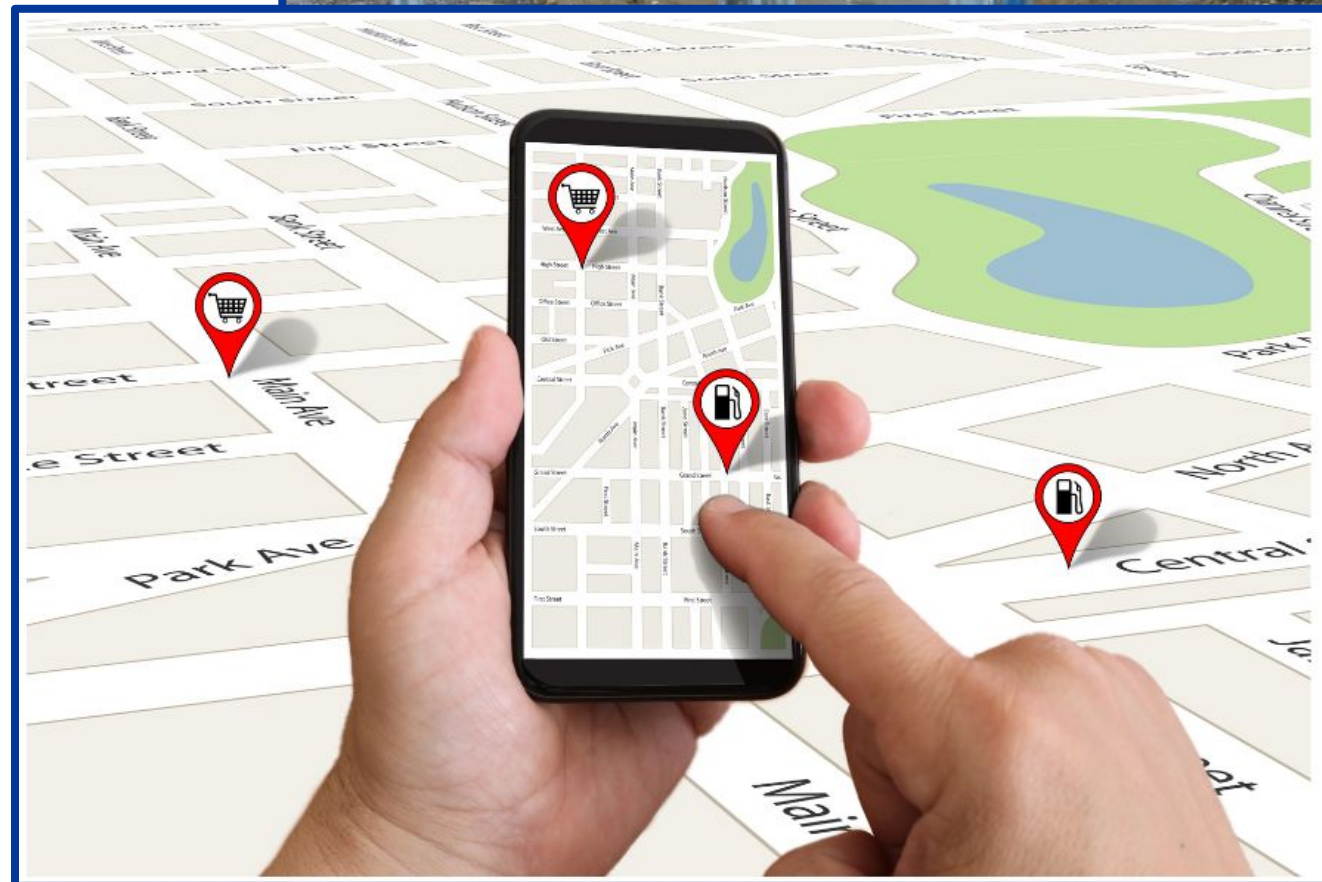
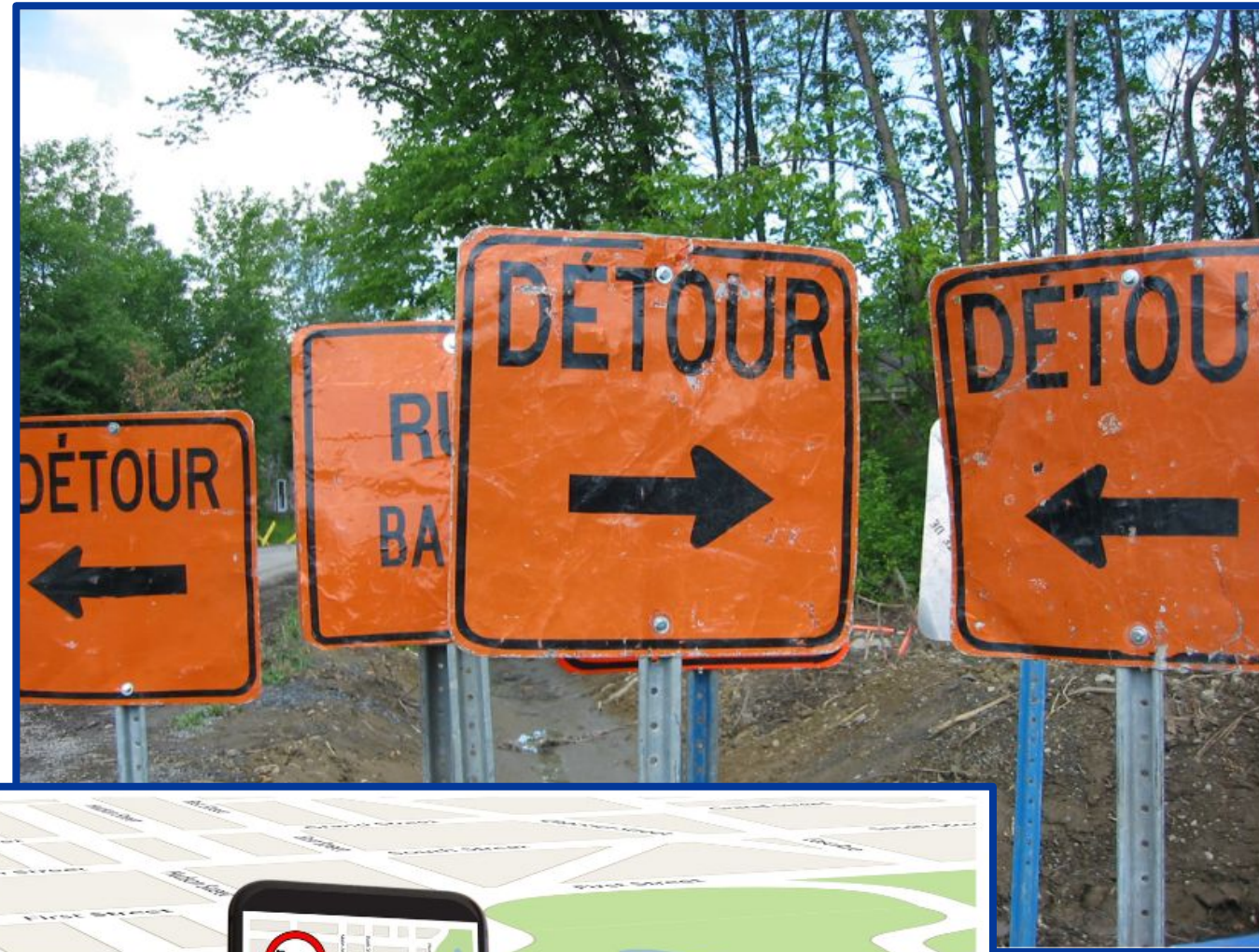


Executive Functioning Challenges



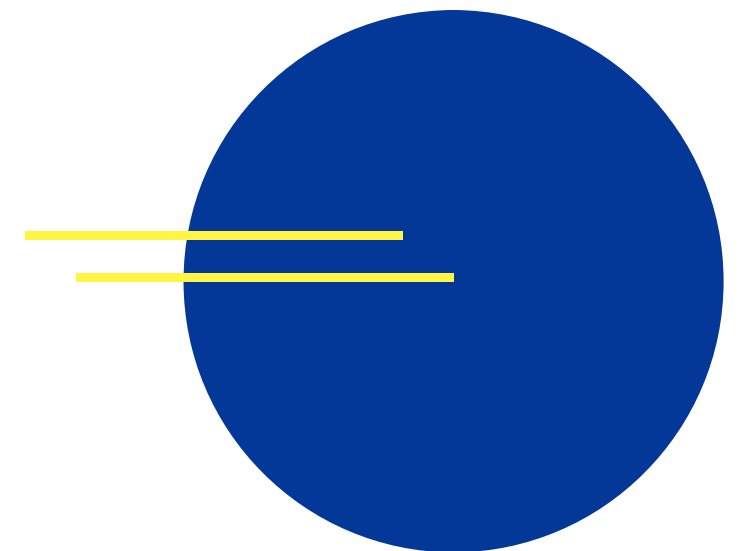
Twice Exceptional (2e)





Detours & GPS

- Keep an open mind
- Brainstorm creative solutions





Check your gas tank:

Take stock of your resources

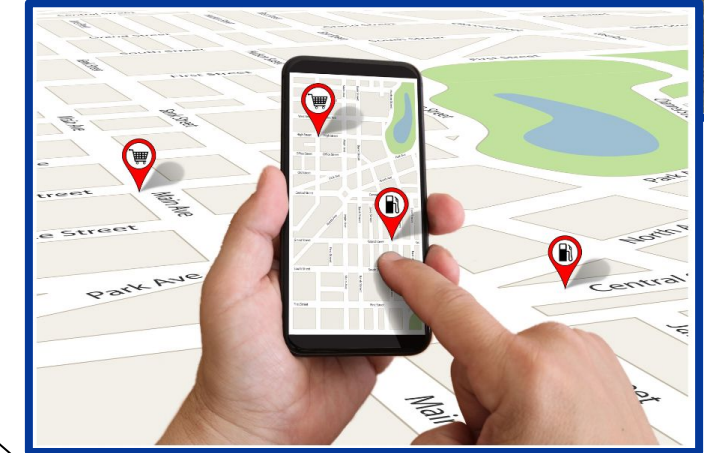
Detours & GPS – CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING !

- Identify the need first
- Creatively brainstorm
 - Stay open-minded!
 - Keep trying!
 - Don't get stuck on one solution!
- Just because it hasn't been done before doesn't mean it can't be done!



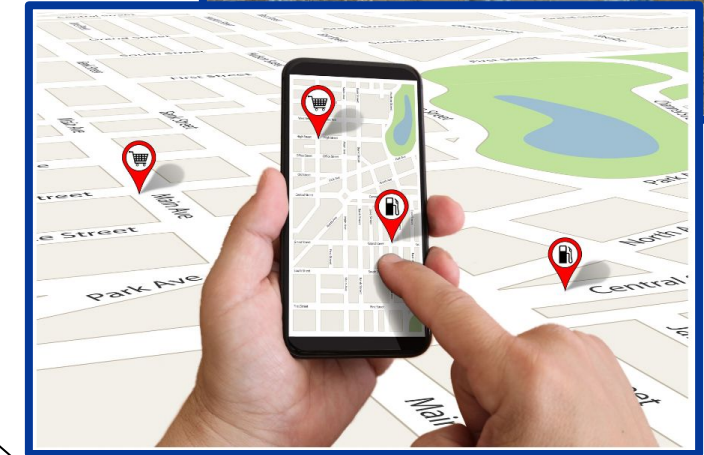
Detours & GPS: LESS COMMON ROADS

- Counseling groups
- Lunch bunches
- Alternative spaces & “safe zones”
- Secondary - use “flex period” (intervention period)



Detours & GPS: School Placement Options

- General education at base school
- Special education at base school
 - push-in & pull-out
- Comprehensive Services Site (CSS)
- Self-contained special education programs
- Public day programs
- Private day programs
- Residential programs



Detours & GPS: WILD CARD SOLUTIONS!

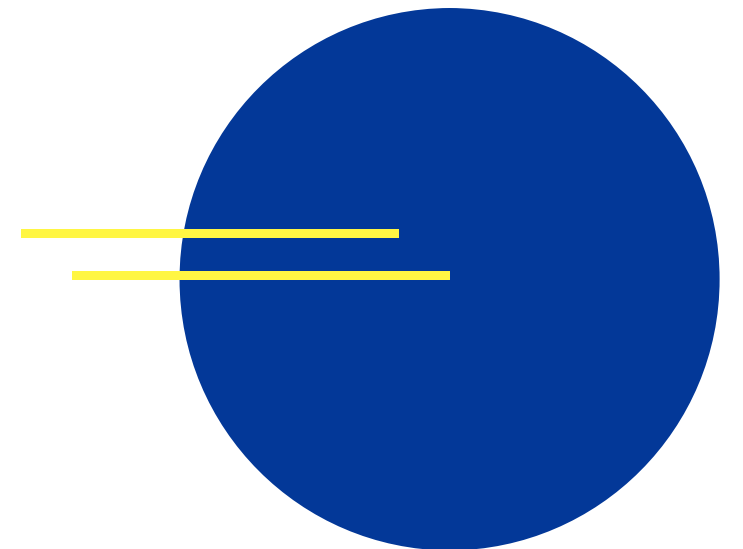
- **Homebound & Home-Based Services**
 - with teacher
 - via Edmentum
 - partial or full-time
- **Hybrid Programs**
 - splitting day between programs (CSS & general education)
- **Private Options**
 - schools
 - online (e.g. Virginia Virtual Academy (VAVA), Virtual Virginia)
- **Opting Out**
 - GED, unschooling, etc.





Rules of the Road

**Chain of Command and
Parental Rights**





Administration Chain of Command

At School:

Special Ed Case Manager ➡ Special Ed Department Chair ➡ Principal

Above School:

Executive Principal ➡ Regional Assistant Superintendent ➡ Superintendent



Special Education Chain of Command

Top: Terri Edmunds-Heard,
Assistant Superintendent of the Department of Special Services

Due Process:

[Due Process Contact Information](#)

1. PSL - by Pyramid
2. Coordinator Procedural Support,
Kristina Roman
3. Director, Office of Special Education
Procedural Support, Dawn Schaeffer

Special Education Instruction:

[Special Education Instruction Contact Information](#)

1. Low/High Incidence Specialists
2. Coordinators and Program Managers
*see next slide
1. Director, Office of Special Education
Instruction, Mike Bloom



Special Education Central Office Coordinators and Program Managers

Special Education Instruction Contact Information

Adapted PE

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

Extended School Year (ESY)

Assistive Technology (AT)

Behavior Intervention Services (BIS)

Career and Transition Services

Communication Disorders

Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)/Vision Impairment (VI)

Early Childhood Identification and Services

PreK-12 Special Education Instruction

Special Education Curriculum

Special Education Teacher Support

Special Education Therapy Services

Therapy Services (PT/OT)



RULES
AND
REGULATIONS

Know Your Rights!

Important Resources

- [FCPS Special Education Handbook for Parents](#)
- [FCPS Family Resource Center](#)
- [Virginia Procedural Safeguards Notice](#)
- [Virginia Family Guide to Special Education](#)
- [Parent Education Advocacy Training Center \(PEATC\)](#)

Calling for Help:

**Specialized
Support to Solve
Problems**



FCPS Resources:

- [Procedural Support Liaison](#) (PSL)
- Specialists – Dyslexia, 2e, Neurodiversity
- Parent Handbooks – [Special Ed](#), [Dyslexia](#), [2e](#)
- [Office of Ombuds](#)
- [Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities](#) (ACSD)
- High/Low Incidence Specialists



State & Federal Resources:

- Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)
 - Virginia Family's Guide to Special Education (also in 5 other languages)
 - Critical Decision Points for Families of Children with Disabilities
 - Ombudsman for Special Education
 - File a State Special Education Complaint
- US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR)
 - File a Discrimination Complaint



Community Resources:

- Fairfax County Special Education PTA (SEPTA)
 - [Website](#)
 - [Facebook Group](#)
 - [YouTube Channel](#)
- The ARC of Northern Virginia
 - [Information & Referral](#)
- Formed Families Forward
 - [Northern Virginia Resource Directory](#)
- Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center
 - ([PEATC](#))



Closing:

Building Community &
Enjoying the Journey!





Remember:

- Life is a journey
- Grieve the journey you anticipated
- Embrace the beauty & wonder
- Connect with others
- Stop at the overlooks
- Snack & go to bed



Contact Us:

Diane Cooper-Gould & Michelle Cades,
SEPTA Advocacy Co-chairs

advocacy@fairfaxcountysepta.org



Full workshop presentation on YouTube





FACEBOOK

[www.facebook.com/Fairfax CountySEPTA](https://www.facebook.com/FairfaxCountySEPTA)

www.facebook.com/groups/FairfaxCountySEPTA



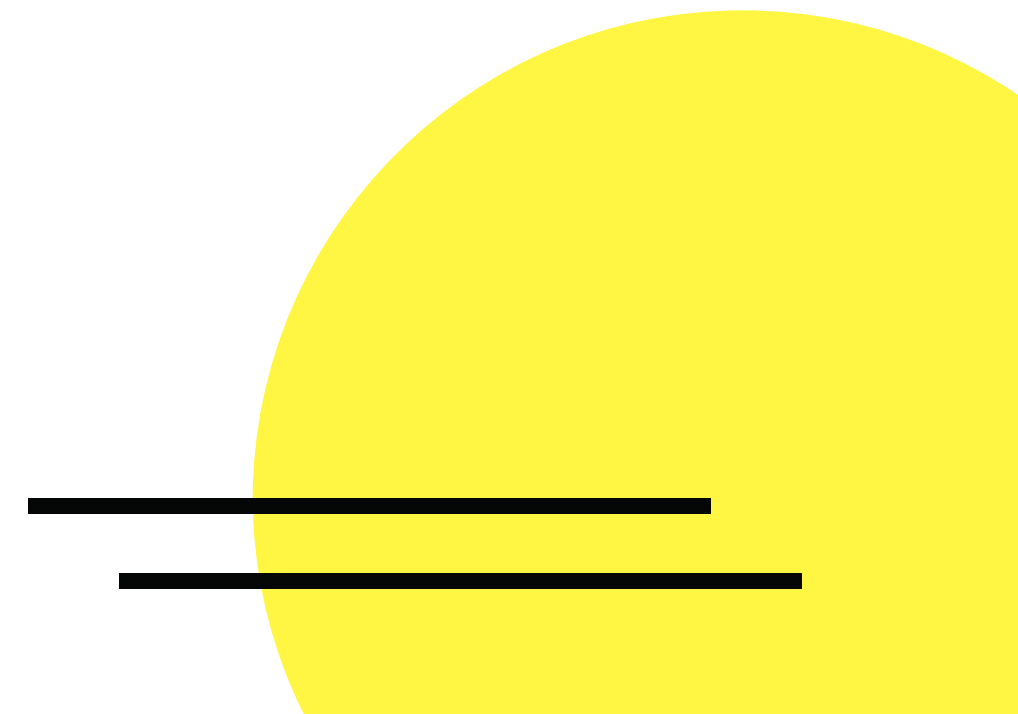
YOUTUBE

<https://www.youtube.com/c/fairfaxcountyspecialeducationpta>



WEBSITE

www.FairfaxCountySEPTA.org





Thank you!

