

00:00.91

Sasha Long

Hello, I am so excited to have Dr. Annie McLaughlin on the podcast today. Thank you so much for joining us, Dr. Annie.

00:08.05

Annie McLaughlin

Yeah, thanks so much for having me here, Sasha. I'm so happy to be here.

00:11.28

Sasha Long

I think this is going to be a really helpful topic. Today, we're going to talk about collaborative advocacy. And no matter the role you were in, whether you're a teacher, clinician, or parent, we've been in those IEP meetings where maybe an advocate's been there, and maybe there's been great scenarios and maybe not as great scenarios. But the goal is always to have this.

00:30.19

Sasha Long

collaborative, cohesive team. To you, what does collaborative advocacy actually look like?

00:36.98

Annie McLaughlin

Sure. So I love that we're starting with kind of defining what collaborative advocacy is, because I really believe that it's not about being agreeable. Right. So you're not just saying yes to everything that is suggested, but it's really about.

00:51.75

Annie McLaughlin

Creating the clarity? around the discussion. So you're helping the team, the parent, however you are showing up, whatever your role is in that meeting to make.

01:03.45

Annie McLaughlin

all better decisions for the student based on either the data you have, the data you don't have, um while also being able to name disagreements so that you can then continue to clarify.

01:18.71

Annie McLaughlin

where you do agree and where you don't agree and what you could do around the disagreements and the agreements.

01:25.47

Sasha Long

Because, I mean, when we have that many people at a table. disagreements can happen and that shouldn't necessarily be the goal to avoid it, right?

01:33.63

Annie McLaughlin

Absolutely. I really love the IEP team process. I really truly like believe it deep within my body because we all have different.

01:45.54

Annie McLaughlin

viewpoints, lived experiences, trainings. I think about all the related service providers, being able to come to the table and have that discussion around a student is so powerful and we can absolutely.

01:58.35

Annie McLaughlin

I think the healthiest teams disagree. even among the school team members, if you will, like that it's not always parent versus school team.

02:05.80

Sasha Long

Yeah.

02:08.85

Sasha Long

Yeah. For sure. And I think. Maybe that like... Urge to avoid a disagreement comes from this like some people have a natural tendency to avoid conflict I'm probably one of those people and we're like putting this lens on a disagreement that it's conflict when it Doesn't have to be.

02:24.92

Annie McLaughlin

Absolutely. you know I actually also feel like I lean away from disagreement. um unless it's kind of in the job and it's really about naming it.

02:35.96

Annie McLaughlin

And I think it's also helped me in my personal life. If I'm honest, I'm like, wait, why am I upset here? Right? Like what is actually happening?

02:40.30

Sasha Long

Yeah.

02:42.27

Annie McLaughlin

naming the challenge to then be able to have a full discussion around it.

02:47.01

Sasha Long

Yeah, that's a good point. it's like You can ride both, you know. Parts of being collaborative while still naming that we're not in agreement on something How does this phrase of like being collaborative kind of get misunderstood sometimes by? either parents or school teams.

03:05.88

Annie McLaughlin

Yeah, I think the idea is that... collaborative would be, I don't know, again, the opposite of disagreeing that you would just say yes to everything, right?

03:11.76

Sasha Long

Yeah.

03:13.47

Annie McLaughlin

Of like, oh, okay. Yes. That sounds good. That sounds good. But... I think that, and I do this actually when I'm talking to parents initially is to talk about, I practice collaborative advocacy to name it for them so that.

03:28.45

Annie McLaughlin

They know I really am not going in there. blaming the individuals who are showing up at the table because I also believe that we have to separate the challenge that we might disagree.

03:41.31

Annie McLaughlin

on from the person or the people there or even sometimes the system so that collaboration can help everybody understand the situation, whether it's the parent, the school team, the child, that it's not just a passive oh okay but it's also not combative where you would say something like you don't understand a you don't understand the situation or you don't care about the student but more that um inquisitive ah

04:09.00

Annie McLaughlin

questioning really around understanding the team and the decisions.

04:13.22

Sasha Long

When you were saying that, it kind of made me think about, like, you know, separating the behavior from the child. And it it feels kind of similar. and I think in sometimes meetings, if there is a disagreement. It's easy for people to take things personally. So if we can take it away from that person and onto the situation, that could help alleviate that.

04:31.37

Annie McLaughlin
Absolutely.

04:32.77

Sasha Long

Can you give me talk to me? I like this idea of naming the problem. Can you talk me through an example of what that could look like?

04:38.38

Annie McLaughlin

Oh sure. It happens often, right? And it even happens in...

04:41.08

Sasha Long
Yeah.

04:42.100

Annie McLaughlin

very friendly collaborative, cohesive. um meetings. And actually, I i love to give you know specific examples, but removing all you know identifying information. But really, it's A specific one that comes up a lot is talking about...

05:01.06

Annie McLaughlin

progress, right? About saying, oh, you know, my child's not making progress. or even if the school says he's not making progress and really I understand we have to label that in some states very specifically in order to you know trigger other.

05:18.18

Annie McLaughlin

kind of procedural things. But I think then asking. Hmm. Where? What domain are they not making progress in?

05:25.97

Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

05:26.04

Annie McLaughlin

What data do we have to say they're not making progress? And what actually is that baseline for the VCBA's listening and special ed teachers? You know, I think also starting from.

05:37.93

Annie McLaughlin

What data do we have to then say he's not making progress? If we just are looking at two data points or three data points? Do we have enough to really forecast the level of progress that they should be making? and being able to discuss the, I think progress from where is he, where do we want him to go? And then how are we going to get there and then have all of those things.

06:06.48

Annie McLaughlin

that we thought were in the IEP and thought in the plan. actually been implemented because I think sometimes things get skipped where you know we're busy people are busy or you forget to teach an objective or something along those lines so really being able to talk about the progress.

06:22.00

Annie McLaughlin

and um naming, you know, where were the hiccups, what went well and what didn't, and how can we work together to fix them.

06:28.89

Sasha Long

And I like that example because right away, like. you can start thinking of solutions. Well, if I know what domain there's ah ah a challenge in or lack lack of progress, if I know what the data looks like. it gets us hopefully to a solution quick more quickly.

06:43.62

Annie McLaughlin

Absolutely. And that's where, you know, coming to the table is if the special education teacher is saying, you know, oh, there's not progress in reading, you know, there might be a speech pathologist at the table who might have an idea, right? Or the parent might have.

06:58.21

Annie McLaughlin

hired a tutor who had an idea and so that if if you can disconnect the progress from the level of effort that the individual is trying at the table, that teacher, especially teachers doing everything they know how to usually, right?

07:13.28

Annie McLaughlin

Like showing up, working long hours, using that curriculum they were

just trained in, getting coaching.

07:13.78

Sasha Long

Yeah.

07:18.77

Annie McLaughlin

I mean, it is so much. And, you know, it's okay to be able to say this isn't. affecting the student the way we want it to and you know let's kind of brainstorm what else we could do.

07:32.39

Annie McLaughlin

But this is where I also really like to... Make sure advocacy is not always about adding But what can we take away too? Like if that teacher is running a... 45-minute reading group that's not effective.

07:46.23

Annie McLaughlin

Let's use that 45 minutes in a different way so that everybody.

07:48.92

Sasha Long

Yeah.

07:50.15

Annie McLaughlin

you know, is a little bit. um it's easier and simpler to you know show up to their job and make it more purposeful.

07:58.23

Sasha Long

Yeah. And I think. this whole process you've been talking about of like defining the problem obviously maybe speaks to you coming into advocacy from a behavior analytic analytic lens which i think is really cool that you can bring those skills as a bcba into advocacy how do you think that changes how you do your role as an advocate.

08:18.88

Annie McLaughlin

You know, the definition of a – or I say the – The answer about the role is always one that BCBAs ask me a lot about because many BCBAs are In.

08:32.97

Annie McLaughlin

IEPs in different roles. And if you're an advocate and you're working as a VCBA with families, I really Again, I know this sounds it's going to sound a little repetitive, but we're defining it, right?

08:46.74

Annie McLaughlin

That function-based thinking, rather than, you know, this isn't working, we'll ask, why isn't it working? What variables are...

08:53.22

Sasha Long

Mm-hmm.

08:54.17

Annie McLaughlin

affecting that performance. We're using that operational definition that we know how to do so well.

09:01.07

Sasha Long

Yeah.

09:01.52

Annie McLaughlin

um Database decision-making. And then you know the curiosity component that they're looking around. the environment to you know identify what's working or what's not.

09:15.39

Annie McLaughlin

And then I really also... Like... bringing in the need to reflect on our own behavior and how that influences the team so that You know, we're not kind of labeling this team as being difficult.

09:31.19

Annie McLaughlin

but what is happening in this interaction that am I contributing to it or how else can we kind of have more of a collaborative. meeting so that we can again continue to move and keep focused on the student.

09:46.74

Annie McLaughlin

And using kind of those behavior analytic observational skills of people in the meeting and their language and their body language um to apply it to your communication with the rest of the team.

09:59.42

Sasha Long

I think that's so cool. And it's interesting to think about because I've never thought about this in an IEP meeting. like i've only I've only typically sat in, most of the time I've been in an IEP meeting, I've been the teacher. Sometimes the BCBA, never the advocate. but Thinking about. how people are acting in that meeting.

10:17.09

Sasha Long

gives you a lot of information on how you can shift your own responses. um Talk to me a little bit about how you are kind of observing people in the room. things you notice, how that makes you maybe shift your own response.

10:32.20

Annie McLaughlin

Oh, absolutely. It's one of my favorite things to do. um is to watch the people in the room when you ask a question who answers it so if you're asking An instructional question, usually you would imagine the teacher would answer it, right? So either the general educator or special educator.

10:52.56

Annie McLaughlin

But if there's an administrator who might be... speaking first or not allowing their teacher to speak as much you can infer right you don't have the direct data there but maybe there's um some supervision pieces or they're unsure what the teacher is going to say so you're kind of looking at who's talking who's over talking um Who answers which questions? So again, if you're asking...

11:17.98

Annie McLaughlin

a um I was actually asking a question just this week about the reading intervention and how often it was happening. and I would have thought the reading specialist was going to answer that question. And instead,

11:31.41

Annie McLaughlin

the principal jumped in and said, we run those four days a week. at 30 minutes. um a day. And so we had some question about that. And so ah redirecting that conversation.

11:44.32

Annie McLaughlin

back gently to the teacher of then saying, oh, okay, so is that before or after lunch? Because We've noticed some challenges around eating or something along those lines to be able to give the teacher an ability to to talk if they're over-talked.

11:59.80

Annie McLaughlin

um as well as Watching the responses to parent concerns is one of my favorite. um times in the meeting. And when parents bring something up,

12:13.54

Annie McLaughlin

how the school addresses it. Do they validate it? Do they discount it? Do they immediately jump to interventions? And watching that verbal language among the team is also very helpful for explaining.

12:28.75

Annie McLaughlin

you know who's the doer, right? Oftentimes special ed teachers and BCBA's will jump straight to. Oh, you have a concern about behavior? Well, we can do this checklist, right? You're like, okay, hold on. Sometimes I pause and say,

12:41.35

Annie McLaughlin

Is that, you know, were you looking for a solution or did you just want to kind of share your input and really based on what the parent wants to provide? and what they were looking for can kind of shift that conversation rather than you know just needing an immediate solution.

12:57.65

Sasha Long

Yes. I like can see that scenario happening too, where you're like, wait, I had other things I wanted to say too, but now we're jumping to a solution on my first point.

13:06.57

Annie McLaughlin

Exactly.

13:07.52

Sasha Long

And I think that's such a good point too. look at how the team is responding to the parent concerns because like I think that often sets the tone for the meeting.

13:17.89

Annie McLaughlin

Absolutely. and When I'm getting a parent ready as an advocate for a meeting, they might have 15. um, points that they want to make, right? Or that they are discussing their concerns with me.

13:27.58

Sasha Long

Yeah.

13:30.62

Annie McLaughlin

and there's This is not a database decision I'm going to tell you, but

I try to put everything in three buckets, as I call them. So listen to their concerns. I'm taking notes and then I try to...

13:42.05

Annie McLaughlin

put them together so that we can, you know, talk about communication or we can talk about behavior. or We can talk about academics and, you know, or we can talk about math, whatever the.

13:52.74

Annie McLaughlin

um buckets are And then. Do we have the data? What are we asking for? And being very clear about what the requests are. Or if it's just more information, that's also fine. so that parents can feel heard and can feel included in the process.

14:11.92

Annie McLaughlin

without also feeling like they have to be defensive on what's happening at home or how things are going in school. to prepare those parents for.

14:23.77

Annie McLaughlin

actively participating and being able to ask questions without You know, I would say accidentally insulting somebody and that, you know, it can feel like a line of questioning when it's not really meant to be.

14:32.07

Sasha Long

hey Yeah.

14:37.91

Annie McLaughlin

It's just more about clarity in the question.

14:41.18

Sasha Long

I think. Because it's... can be such an emotional job. Like I've always thought, I mean, when you're a special ed teacher, you're teaching. you know, a child how to make friends and go to the bathroom and and eat their lunch. So, I mean, just sometimes to me feels like the stakes are.

14:56.51

Sasha Long

or higher, just more emotional. And I know obviously parents' roles in this is very emotional. So I think people can get. defensive very quickly. When you're in a meeting and you see someone getting

defensive, what are some tips you have for kind of defusing that or moving forward?

15:13.28

Annie McLaughlin

Yeah, I think it's ah such a... important topic. I often will slow down. That is my absolute number one strategy when people are getting defensive is really to almost give everybody in the room a little bit of time to self-regulate and even hopefully notice their own defensiveness. Now Not everybody's that self-aware, but slowing down can kind of help.

15:39.72

Annie McLaughlin

Um, that clarity come through without people. you know Of course, I don't want to be the advocate that slows everything down, but usually when I'm slowing things down, I will say, hold on one second, please. I just want to make sure I can restate what I heard. and so Restating that concern is called mirroring, but you're using that

16:03.46

Annie McLaughlin

um defensive point or that discussion point kind of back to the team so that people can either clarify or provide more information, ask another question. um But really, sometimes even then.

16:20.30

Annie McLaughlin

Listening very carefully to. the words that they choose to also. acknowledge, right? I actually made a BCBA cry in a meeting the other day, and I did not mean to. And I actually paused and said,

16:35.81

Annie McLaughlin

I know how hard you're working. I know how hard this job is. She had just written out a two-page toileting plan that I ended up telling her. i thought we should do something even simpler she kind of jumped to this very detailed plan um And I think she'd put so much work into it, right, that I was kind of like, oh, that didn't go well. um So then I needed to stop and validate how hard people are working, how much they're showing up.

17:01.06

Annie McLaughlin

how communicative they are with the parents, whatever the positives are, is to make sure you are talking about the decision and the challenge in front of you, not the person. Because, you know, trying to depersonalize any challenges can also be a really...

17:17.75

Annie McLaughlin

helpful strategy. And also the very last thing that I will do is if I'm noticing that when I'm talking. That the responses are met.

17:29.12

Annie McLaughlin

either abruptly or with a little bit of a tone that may not be as friendly. I will sometimes communicate with the parents. Usually we're doing actually a lot of virtual IEP meetings.

17:39.68

Annie McLaughlin

um I think it's important that if you have a question you speak up. so that we can shift the number of times that an ah adversarial tone might be heard in the meeting, which can help. So I might get a little quiet even if we're having some sort of defensive or stuckness so that the tone of the meeting can change. which actually does help.

18:03.69

Annie McLaughlin

along the way and you know that's individual some parents feel okay with that some parents don't and usually we're prepped um Along the way, but usually if we know a team that might be a strategy we'll use if there's um you know just that adversarial tone, the fewer times you hear it, maybe the.

18:19.65

Annie McLaughlin

more agreeable everybody will be in kind of having a full discussion.

18:24.10

Sasha Long

Yeah, for sure. Cause you kind of match to like. the tone of the group if someone else jumps in they're more likely to speak in that adversarial tone if everyone else has been.

18:33.75

Annie McLaughlin

Exactly.

18:34.75

Sasha Long

So you've talked a little bit about the prep that happens before, like you know prepping parents before. What are some things that can be done either from on the parent side or on the school team side to prepare for hopefully a very smooth collaborative meeting. And maybe we're thinking of these as like our antecedent-based interventions here.

18:57.15

Annie McLaughlin

Yeah, absolutely. So I I think it's really important to know, and right I'm not an attorney, I don't practice law, but i'll I'll comment on the law here for a second, that the law, right and this is IDEA, special education law, and interpreted in states.

19:15.02

Annie McLaughlin

requires parents to be a part of the IEP. process. not just the meeting. And I think that is such an... important. noted difference. The process is before, during, and after. and so The school team... Meeting with the parents to explain the process.

19:35.72

Annie McLaughlin

Outside of the IEP. um itself can be so powerful. And I know it's another time suck, but, you know, spending 15 to 20 minutes with the parent one-on-one to describe that process could mean 10 people don't have to show up to two IEP meetings. We could just show up to one.

19:53.19

Sasha Long

True.

19:53.49

Annie McLaughlin

um And that, I mean, you think about just the process of the reevaluation and eligibility and how hard that is to understand.

20:01.31

Sasha Long

Yeah.

20:02.03

Annie McLaughlin

Wait, my kid has autism. Why are we talking about testing him again for autism in three years? We just did that. Um, It is really, can be very confusing. So making sure before the meeting, parents understand.

20:16.60

Annie McLaughlin

What is the meeting even for? Why are we meeting again? Didn't we just have the annual? um or also making sure the parents know they can have an IEP meeting outside of the annual.

20:28.31

Annie McLaughlin

That's something that's... come up a lot. Not necessarily. I'm in Maryland. um But I've heard from other BCBAs. is that they're saying that The parents are only are told they can only have one IEP meeting.

and The law is very clear on that, right? If you have parental concerns, you can have the IP meeting. And so making sure everybody knows what you're there for.

20:50.68

Annie McLaughlin

And then... um both from the school team, but also the parents being clear on what they're asks for and then what their questions are, reading the document if they can ahead of time.

21:05.63

Annie McLaughlin

And one little thing I think that can help parents. that I've seen with the schools is to try to make sure wrong names aren't used or wrong grades that can really feel impersonal and that

21:17.76

Sasha Long

Yes.

21:18.66

Annie McLaughlin

You know, but again, I know what you're right. I did it too. I was a special ed teacher. um You have a good goal that you wrote on somebody else's. And so you're copying and pasting it because you know that that's an appropriate skill for that child to work on. So. I think that preparation.

21:33.17

Annie McLaughlin

in the process before, during, and after to make sure the parent doesn't just feel like they're showing up to the IEP meeting.

21:41.42

Sasha Long

yeah the i the name thing i totally see both sides of because yes you have a good goal you use it for a few kids but yeah it also looks really bad and like i think ai is making it worse too um So I think it's like taking that, those.

21:55.24

Sasha Long

few minutes to proofread and double check does make a difference big difference.

22:01.08

Annie McLaughlin

I... 100 % agree. And some states require drafts to be sent home. Some say you can't, you know, I think understanding even if you can't send a draft home or um you're running behind to really make sure that

parental input is received not just as a statement. but actually used throughout the IEP.

22:23.37

Sasha Long

Yeah, and it... You know, it's it's so hard because... School cultures, I think, impact this a lot, you know even within the same state. And I've talked to a lot of younger teachers or new to the building that are like, well, this is how the case manager says we have to do it. And I think sometimes it requires.

22:41.39

Sasha Long

advocating for yourself as a teacher for, hey, no, this isn't the right way to do it. And this is how we have to do it.

22:48.18

Annie McLaughlin

Absolutely. Which can be you know risky and scary, right?

22:51.53

Sasha Long

Yeah.

22:52.31

Annie McLaughlin

It's your mentor teacher telling you do not, you know, send this draft home and you're like, but they saw the draft, you know.

22:56.03

Sasha Long

Yeah. I think we're supposed to.

22:58.76

Annie McLaughlin

Um,

22:59.41

Sasha Long

like

22:59.95

Annie McLaughlin

Yep.

23:00.93

Sasha Long

Yeah. Let's talk a little bit about data because I know. This can become, I think, a sticky thing within IEP meetings, but obviously something you have a lot of expertise at. We always want data to drive

our goals and our present levels and things like that. When there's a mismatch between...

23:19.59

Sasha Long

data taken at school and data taken with the in-home BCBA or what the family's experience is. How do you navigate this? So it doesn't become. a challenge.

23:31.65

Annie McLaughlin

Yeah, this happens a lot. um And I think it, we have to remember context that the behavior that, you know, behavior doesn't just happen in a vacuum, right? It is happening.

23:43.100

Annie McLaughlin

in different contexts, but to also really avoid choosing one as the truth, right? So the school might say something's happening and home isn't seeing it or vice versa.

23:56.40

Annie McLaughlin

And. Ideally, we are coming back to the data. to Define it. right What are we actually looking at? i This happens a lot, even with, we think, well-defined behavior definitions, that there's some more clarity we could have.

24:14.45

Annie McLaughlin

you know, but also I think actually having my own children has helped me understand this, that there are different expectations in different settings. And just because a behavior is happening in one setting and not the other.

24:28.74

Annie McLaughlin

Are we able to talk about, is it interfering with They're. access to, you know, education or a less restrictive environment or friends, like how is it actually impacting the child? And so rather than seeing it. one or the other. basically looking holistically at that. child or student.

24:51.97

Annie McLaughlin

You know, parents can see something after school that doesn't happen at school. and I think when I was teaching, i I don't know that I really believed this, but...

25:01.91

Sasha Long
Yeah.

25:03.30

Annie McLaughlin

I have a child who... was the sweetest. most thoughtful student at school and he would come home and lose it.

25:13.92

Annie McLaughlin

And I say lose it mostly just with eye rolls and door slams and I'm not doing that.

25:14.14

Sasha Long
Yeah.

25:18.15

Annie McLaughlin

and I was just like, surely you're also doing this at school. And school said they literally didn't see it. um And I think making sure we're understanding some kids holding it together or masking at school um or vice versa, actually, and being able to define the concern.

25:35.100

Annie McLaughlin

ask how they're measuring it. and make sure that eatton That challenge, if it is one, is met with curiosity so that we could really determine Do we need additional data, different scales, different measurement criteria?

25:51.41

Annie McLaughlin

Who's taking the measure? You know, is it one person actually needs different training? And then. Rather than relying on kind of some vague stories, but help use that behavior analytics skill to really talk about.

26:04.95

Annie McLaughlin

the experience. And. making sure if we get to the point of they're not matching, can we say why they're not matching? And. understanding the expectation too that schools are you know mandated to teach certain things in certain ways and how do we collaborate as BCBAs in in that fashion.

26:28.80

Sasha Long

I like that approach a lot because it goes back to what you said about like validating, you know. all of the members of the team that like

yes mom I know that you see this at home and yes teacher I know that you see this at school and those two things can be true like we're not telling one person that they're right or wrong

26:45.48

Annie McLaughlin

Yep. Exactly.

26:47.20

Sasha Long

So you talked about this, like. process, which is such a good, I mean, we'd like say IEP p all the time, but everyone thinks of just the meeting, not like the before beginning and after like. immediately IEP, I think of just the meeting. But so we talked a little about the four and what happens during the meeting. Can you talk a little bit about what happens after the meeting and how we can kind of.

27:05.86

Sasha Long

continue this collaborative. cohesive team and how collaborative advocacy can happen after the IEP meeting.

27:13.62

Annie McLaughlin

Absolutely. When I'm working with parents, we I would say sometimes the parents feel like they get through the meeting, right? It's like say's like build big buildup of like, oh, that's done. Thank goodness. And from there, I'm the little person going.

27:28.99

Annie McLaughlin

Yes, and? Send me the completed document when they send it to you and send me the prior written notice or the PWN. Some people call that um you know meeting notes or meeting process where they should keep.

27:42.37

Annie McLaughlin

um a discussion in the data including the data on agreements and disagreements. And. That... is step one of the post-IEP meeting follow-up, but the step two is also really making sure that when you're looking at those notes in the IEP that everything you agreed upon in the IEP is documented.

28:04.73

Annie McLaughlin

It does not matter if it was said in the IEP meeting unless it made it in the IEP. And so I have a lot of parents who will get upset. before they find me that you know the team told me they would do X, Y, and Z.

28:18.54

Annie McLaughlin

And I'm looking at the document and i'm it's not in here. So where are we putting it? And that's also during the meeting a great question that when we have a discussion to say, where is that going? Where are we actually writing that down? I know we're agreeing to this, but where in the document is that going can help. But making sure that things don't fall through the cracks.

28:39.84

Annie McLaughlin

Who is doing what? When are things starting? What? requests were addressed and not addressed. you know Is there going to be an evaluation that needs to be done? Do parents need to sign consent?

28:53.32

Annie McLaughlin

Amen. where they're materials that need to be obtained. I think oftentimes I'll hear from occupational therapists that they want to you know trial an accommodation of some sort. And, you know. that might

29:06.35

Annie McLaughlin

I've heard. ordering things can take, you know, three months. So do we need to make sure we all agree that we're going to wait the three months or do we need to try something in the meantime? So really making sure that post-meeting, I call it a post-meeting debrief with the parents so that we can talk through all of those pieces. connecting with the team.

29:26.52

Annie McLaughlin

And now I take notes when we're going through, almost like I'm sending a follow-up email two weeks after the meeting of like, we agreed to this and how's this going and checking in so that the parent can send it or I can send it, just to make sure that things didn't fall through the cracks.

29:42.00

Annie McLaughlin

um as we all talked about it during the the meeting itself

29:45.55

Sasha Long

I think that's such good advice that like. Parents might not know or forget about but having it making sure it's written because yeah there's like well-intended things that are said. But then if it's not in there. suddenly that strategy no longer exists. And it's hard to find in the document between like a behavior plan and the IEP. It's hard.

30:04.74

Sasha Long

It could be easy to... miss that it's not in there.

30:09.73

Annie McLaughlin

Absolutely. And parents often don't know where to look in the document either. And so that's why sometimes if I have 10 things I need to find in the document, I can usually look pretty quickly and make sure it's in there. But parents...

30:22.62

Annie McLaughlin

But we talked about it for 20 minutes. you know What do you mean it's not in there?

30:25.16

Sasha Long

Yeah.

30:26.80

Annie McLaughlin

And so that builds you know a little bit of distrust. And it could have just been a typo oversight. So it really helps. Continue that collaborative.

30:38.21

Annie McLaughlin

relationship between the school and the parent to check to make sure that everything that we agreed upon actually ended up in the document. And that's where I like, that's my collaboration mindset throughout it all is.

30:51.14

Annie McLaughlin

um I really want to be the advocate that the team wants me to show up. to the meeting and to help this parent um And i have I'll tell you, I've had plenty of school members look at me before and after and say, we're glad you're here.

31:06.10

Annie McLaughlin

um or

31:06.15

Sasha Long

Oh, good.

31:07.36

Annie McLaughlin

I need to tell you off the record, I'm going to send you a family because, you know, they need more support than we can provide or, um you know, we need... We need to make sure we can kind of all work together.

31:19.13

Sasha Long

I mean... Advocates have gotten, unfortunately, like a negative learning history with many educators or school-based teams because Sometimes they're brought in, you know, it's typically maybe a ah combative situation and it is it's an upward battle to like you know recondition what that that response to this person

31:41.50

Annie McLaughlin

It is. And you know, it's why my signature in my email doesn't say advocate.

31:47.40

Sasha Long

Yeah.

31:48.84

Annie McLaughlin

Um.

31:48.52

Sasha Long

I honestly feel that way sometimes about being a BCBA. like It's like, oh, okay, you're the BCBA. And I'm like, oh, come on. like We're good sometimes. like

31:57.22

Annie McLaughlin

Yes. Yes. I agree. I agree. I say educational consultant.

32:01.70

Sasha Long

Yes, yeah.

32:02.14

Annie McLaughlin

um Yeah.

32:03.57

Sasha Long

More palatable. Oh my gosh.

32:05.12

Annie McLaughlin
Yeah.

32:05.02

Sasha Long

I could chat about this forever, but let's wrap it up here. There's so much good information, whether you're on the school side or the parent side, a lot of really actionable tips. So thank you so much for sharing. Where can people go to learn more from you?

32:17.86

Annie McLaughlin

Sure. Yeah. You can find me on Instagram. at IEP? Advocate Annie. And then also for your listeners for this session, I put together a special.

32:31.13

Annie McLaughlin

guide called the Collaborative Advocacy Guide. And that... um can be found at [www. IEP advocacy training doc. Calm.](http://www.IEPadvocacytraining.com)

32:43.82

Sasha Long

And I'll link that in the show notes.

32:44.12

Annie McLaughlin

so

32:45.09

Sasha Long

So if you don't write it.

32:45.14

Annie McLaughlin

Okay, great. Yeah.

32:45.87

Sasha Long

yes Yeah.

32:45.90

Annie McLaughlin

Slash collaboration.

32:46.02

Sasha Long

Yeah.

32:47.04

Annie McLaughlin
I need to put that the last one in there.

32:47.59
Sasha Long
Oh perfect. Yeah. No.

32:49.61
Annie McLaughlin
um And that's where they can find me.

32:49.37
Sasha Long
Yeah. Sorry. I interrupted you. Yeah. We'll, we'll link that. And I so appreciate you making a handout.

32:52.33
Annie McLaughlin
Great.

32:54.29
Sasha Long
Cause that is like, I love a podcast. Obviously we've been doing this forever, but I like a visual. So I love that you made a handout for everyone. And you take virtual.

33:01.97
Annie McLaughlin
Awesome.

33:03.06
Sasha Long
um parent, clients.

33:06.38
Annie McLaughlin
I do. I do. You know what I've been doing actually much more of, and that's what that Instagram is, training behavior analysts. on how to be advocates. So I really love the fact that behavior analysts are Many of them, what I call IEP adjacent, right?

33:14.77
Sasha Long
oh

33:19.92
Annie McLaughlin
They're they're attending IEPs, whether it's school-based or clinic and home-based, and helping them develop this. mindset and skill set to be a collaborative advocate to help their families.

33:32.60

Sasha Long

Love that. Alright, well thank you so much for joining.

33:35.43

Annie McLaughlin

Awesome. Thanks Sasha. I appreciate being on.