

*"Doctors have a tendency to dismiss parents, but really parents should be your allies because they know their kids the best. An excellent assignment - this really opened my eyes. Before this, I had never interacted with a family who had a child with special needs."*



*"It strengthened my belief that families of children with special health care needs are unique trailblazers and creators of a new normal, in which disability does not hamper experiences."*



## Changing Hearts, Changing Minds



**Parents Reaching Out**  
*Your One Stop Resource for a Stronger Family*

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**PARENTS REACHING  
OUT**

*Your one stop resource for a  
stronger family.*

## Families as Faculty



***When systems listen to  
families, outcomes for  
children improve.***

***Families as Faculty starts the  
process at the beginning - with  
the students who will become  
the leaders in the education and  
health care fields.***

# FAMILIES AS FACULTY (FAF)

## Talking, Listening, Learning

At Parents Reaching Out, our Families as Faculty (FAF) program brings together families of children with disabilities and future educators and health care professionals by providing a framework for professionals to learn from families.

As part of the students' required curriculum, FAF gives credibility to the voices of



families. Families meet with university students to share their experiences, both positive and negative, with the education and health care systems. During this exchange, families are the faculty - the instructors. They are the experts on the parent perspective.

The students learn how they, as future professionals, can work in partnership with families to improve systems, services, and outcomes for children with disabilities. They listen. They find out what daily life is like for a family who has a child with a disability. Through FAF, students see the child with a disability as a member of a family - as someone who is loved, has interests, conflicts, and needs, just like any other child.



*"Being in the home reminds me that kids are kids first, who just happen to have disability in their lives."*

During their visit, the students discover how the systems that are supposed to help families sometimes let them down. Students tell us that the family visit changes their perspective as no textbook or lecture ever could. Their hearts are touched and they feel inspired to be professionals

who will advocate for children with disabilities and their families.

In the last year, evaluations showed that 99% of the students thought the FAF program was a positive and relevant experience, and 98% stated that the FAF experience will impact their future relationships with families.



*"Without this experience, I am afraid I would have been a teacher who turned my back on children with special needs."*



## Expected Outcomes

It is our expectation that students will come away from their family visit with:

- \* An understanding that all children and families are different, each with unique strengths, values, beliefs, and challenges.
- \* A view of families as resources with whom they can partner and learn from in order to achieve better outcomes for children.
- \* A consideration of their own personal beliefs, values, and attitudes about children, families, the educational and medical systems, and their capacity to effect positive change.

*"I am dedicated to educating others about his greatness while helping them see beyond his disability."*

## For Families

Families as Faculty enables families to change the systems that serve them two students at a time. Parents feel empowered as they see that their feelings, opinions, and experiences are valued. Our FAF parents know that the time they spend opening their hearts and homes is productive. Their words make a difference in the lives of the students they meet.