



# Special Education in Action



Engaging Stakeholders through Promising Practices and Program Development

The Power of Self-Advocacy:  
How To Start the Conversation

Matthew Kane  
Dare to Dream Student Leadership Conference  
Rowan University  
November 3, 2023



## The Dare to Dream Conference: Spotlighting the Student Experience with Matthew Kane

### About the Dare to Dream Conference

Dare to Dream is a positive and empowering experience that highlights strategies to promote self-advocacy skills for middle and high school students with disabilities. Each conference will feature keynote presentations from accomplished students from local educational agencies (LEAs) across the state and presentations from young adults with disabilities who have demonstrated exemplary self-advocacy and leadership skills.

### The Student Experience: Told by Matthew Kane

"I am a brother ... a teammate ... a volunteer. I like spending time with friends, riding my bike, and playing video games. But as a student in your class, you should also know that I'm color blind, have some hearing loss, and am dyslexic and dysgraphic." Every September since the third grade, Matthew Kane, now a sophomore at Montgomery High School, shares a video he created with his teachers the day before school begins. It provides information about his learning disabilities, proposed classroom accommodations, and how he learns best. "It's a way to introduce myself and start the conversation about my learning needs. When I walk into class on the first day of school, I am more than just a name on an IEP or 504."



During November 2023's Dare to Dream Leadership Conference at Rowan University, Matthew used the content from his 2023-2024 video to facilitate a discussion about the power of self-advocacy and how to start the conversation with your teachers. He shared stories about his struggles inside and outside the classroom and encouraged others to share their experiences. "Understand the accommodations available to you and how you learn best," Matthew encouraged the audience. "Your teachers are there to help you, but they can't if they don't know you are struggling. You need to take the first step. Talk to them. Self-advocate. Starting the conversation is the key to success."

### About Matthew

- Matthew Kane is a sophomore. He plays basketball and throws shot put and discus for his high school teams.
- He is a strong student who self-advocates for the accommodations that he needs to be successful in his classes.
- He identified with dyslexia in second grade.
- Since the age of 8, Matthew has served as a friend and mentor to other students with learning disabilities, helping them to self-advocate and succeed with their learning style.
- Starting at age 11, Matthew has presented at local, regional, and national conferences sharing his journey with dyslexia and dysgraphia with teachers, parents, and students. His goal is to educate on the power of self-advocacy, share the value of accommodations and assistive technology to level the playfield, and to help to remove the stigma associated with learning disabilities.

Click on the icons, images and text for direct access to updates, spotlights and opportunities.

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### Guidance and Updates

- [Clarification of the Timeline for Conducting Special Education Due Process Hearings](#)
- [Guidance and Resources for the Child Outcome Summary \(COS\) Process](#)

### Resources

UPDATED! [Free and Low-Cost Advocacy Services \(2024\)](#)



[Accountability and Quality Improvement \(monitoring\) website](#)

[Data and Resources website](#)



### IEP Toolkits

For families, child study teams, and teachers



[Topic 1: Premeeting Preparation](#)



[Topic 2: Developing Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance \(PLAAPFs\)](#)

[Topic 3: Writing Goals and Objectives](#)



### Save the Date

#### 2023-2024 Dare to Dream Conference

Upcoming: March 22, 2024 (revised date)

### Professional Development Opportunities



[Office of Special Education Engagement Webpage](#)



[NJDOE Calendar of Events and Registration](#)

## The Family Connections Corner "Stronger Together"



[Archived Parent and Family Trainings in English and Spanish](#)



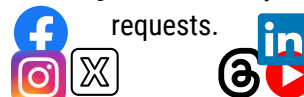
[Parent and Family Events](#)

(including the SEPAG Support Clinic)



### Planning technical assistance for 2024?

[Click here](#) to review our offerings and submit your requests.



### Coming Soon

- Special Education Determinations
- Emotional and Behavioral Program Quality Indicators
- 18-21 Year Old Program Quality Indicators