

Better Together:

Powerful Partnerships to
Promote Student Success



Kate Small, Education Consultant



empowerED School Solutions

About empowerED

- Founded in 2020 by Dr. Jenna Mancini Rufo with a mission to lead inclusive change!
- We work with schools, organizations, and families across the country and beyond to transform our educational system into one that is accessible, engaging, and meaningful for **ALL** students.



“Parents are a child's first and most important teachers.”



—U.S. Department of Education
Parent Power: Build the Bridge to Success (2010)

When we operate
from this mindset, we
are able to avoid...



Competing Factors

Competing factors are the differing priorities, and perspectives that make it difficult for schools and families to align on decisions about a student.

These differing lenses can create tension, leading to miscommunication and disagreement on what success looks like for the student.



Caregivers



School Teams

And establish...



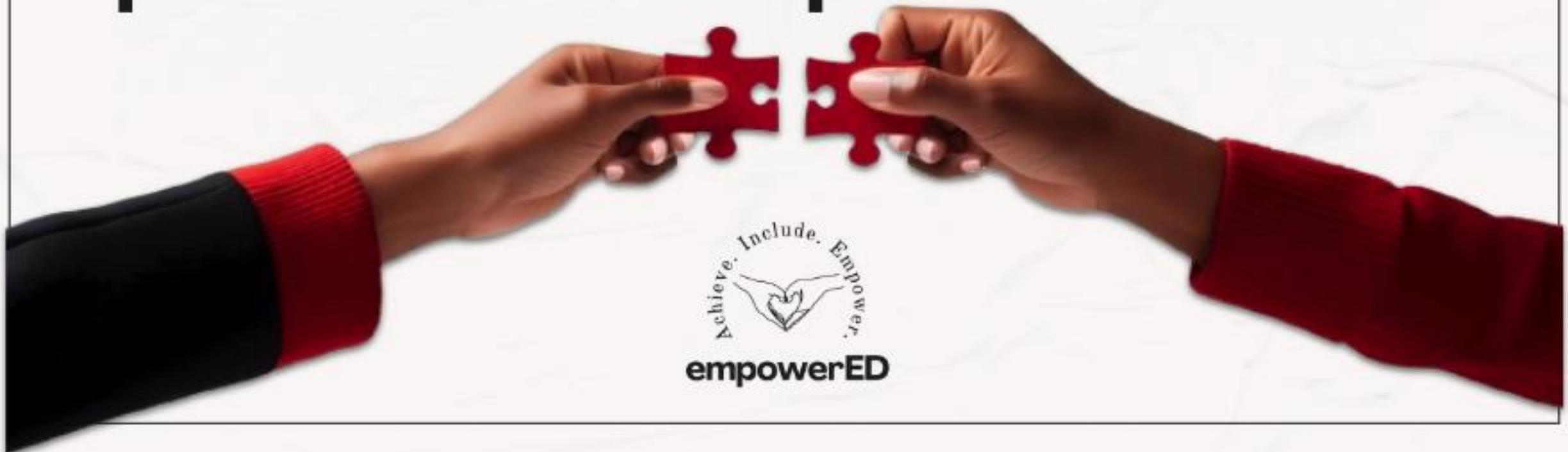
Complementary Forces

Complementary forces are the shared strengths caregivers and schools bring when working together. Caregivers contribute deep knowledge of the child across many settings, while schools offer professional expertise and resources. When aligned, these perspectives create a fuller picture and stronger support for student success.



**To serve as Complementary Forces,
partnerships must be...**

polite and productive



Polite Partnerships

- Assume good intentions
- Listen actively
- Use language that is familiar (and respectful) to all
- Express gratitude
- Set clear boundaries



Productive Partnerships

- Begin with strengths
- Set shared priorities
- Establish short check ins
- Bring evidence
- Agree on action steps
- Circle back quickly



In preparation for a
formal meeting
school teams can...



Level the Playing Field

Provide accessible pre-planning materials so parents can participate meaningfully.

Open the meeting by allowing the parent to share a vision statement as well as observed strengths of their child.

**Establish and review an agenda
allow parents to select priority points**

**Invite the parent to serve as a
“co-observer” of the student**



In preparation for a
formal meeting
caregivers can...



Utilize Home Field Advantage

Review recent progress reports to understand which goals were met and where barriers remain

Create or update vision statement

Work with child to develop an overview of who they are as a learner

Draft questions and email them to the team in advance





Collaboration *is the strategy*



THANK YOU!



www.empoweredschool.org

Feel free to keep in touch!



Kate@empoweredschool.org



[@ChoosinInclusion](https://www.instagram.com/ChoosinInclusion)

