Special Ed Basics for Children with Attachment Trauma

Interview with Wendy Klimbal, MS, Special Educator & Advocate, North Georgia Advocates

Interviewed by Julie Beem, Executive Director of Attachment & Trauma Network

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Julie: Hello, everyone! This is Julie Beem, the Executive Director the Attachment and Trauma Network and we’re here today with another interview from the Educating Traumatized Children Summit: An online gathering of expert voices on how to provide trauma-sensitive school experiences to children.

This summit has been created by the Attachment and Trauma Network, known as ATN, and we’re pleased today to have Wendy Klimbal with us today to talk about Special Ed and the basics that we need to know as parents about Special Education.

Welcome, Wendy!

Wendy: Thank you, Julie.

Julie: Let me tell you a little bit about Wendy before we get started today. She is an educational consultant and advocate and attained her Master’s Degree in Special Education at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York. She spent eight years teaching Elementary Special Education in the Rochester City School District and during that time, she taught children with a wide range of disabilities but many were classified as emotional behavior disorders and almost all of them were touched by trauma. Along with her experience in the classroom, Wendy has served on the Board of Directors for Beyond Trauma and Attachment, an organization for families that can be found at www.momsfindhealing.com.

Six years ago, Wendy decided that it was time to become a parent. She was a single foster parent to two beautiful boys, not knowing about the true impact of traumas, Wendy was along for quite a ride as many of us parents can relate to. So it was through these parenting experiences that she’s learned so much about what our kids need and specifically, what they need in schools. She formally adopted the boys in 2011 and is a passionate mom and is also passionate about reaching out to other families to help them.
Wendy’s family recently moved to Georgia and she has started a consultancy and advocacy practice known as North Georgia Advocates and the URL to that is www.northgaadvocates.com. Wendy’s unique perspective both as a mom and a teacher is going to be an interesting perspective that she brings to us today as we talk about what Special Ed basics parents need to know, specifically in light of dealing with our traumatized children.

So welcome, Wendy. As I said before, we’re glad to have you here. To get started, let me say that a lot of these parents are really confused and anxious about what to do at school with their children, especially the children coming with attachment and trauma issues. They recognize, because they have had the children at home with them for a while, that issues may not be clearly understood. So can you start by giving the parents some insight into how to communicate with schools?

Wendy: Absolutely. To start, I would say that if you can, as a parent, meet proactively with the school team - the teachers, the principal, the Special Education directors, if you can set up a meeting ahead of time to talk about your child’s specific needs, that’s always really helpful because before the school year even starts, they’re seeing your face, they’re hearing your words. If you come prepared with documentation or articles about trauma and specifically, things that your child is struggling with, that’s also very helpful.

Julie: Do you find that they are open to meeting with you early or not? I mean, are they available, if you call up and say, “My child will be coming here next year or starting here in a month or so, can I meet with you,” do you find that they’re open to that?

Wendy: Once you develop a relationship, they are, but getting that relationship is a little tricky. It can be a little difficult, you have to kind of reach out to the right people. Obviously, if you’re new to the school, it’s going to be a little bit more difficult say, you never had a kid in school there, to figure out which teacher it is and who to talk to is really tricky.

If you already have a kid who’s classified though, the best resource I found has been the Special Education department at the District level because they can kind of direct you out to the key people in all the schools because most schools have not just a teacher, but they also have a lead teacher for Special Ed, so there’s someone who can help facilitate and direct. If you’re talking about a kid who isn’t classified yet, it’s the teacher and the principal is where you want to start.

Julie: Can you walk us just briefly through? As you’re talking, I’m thinking that maybe parents out there who are parents of very young children or children that haven’t been classified yet. They don’t really know whether they’re child should be getting Special
Education services or not. Can you talk through just a brief step of what happens in that case?

Wendy: Sure. Okay, so if you have a child that’s new to school, there are so many different scenarios here, so let’s go with the basic. Your child starts school and you notice that they may be aren’t reading. They don’t know how to read and they’re supposed to know how to read by now. Or they’re not able to write or they’re coming home and raging.

Julie: Yes, that’s a lot more typical with our family. They’re coming home raging or they’re terrified, they may have anxiety or sensory trigger things happening, all of those things.

Wendy: And that’s a big one for my kids. They would be “fine at school” and they would come home just a hot mess, raging, arguing, rude, just awful. So that is an indicator that something is not right. Something is not set up right. Something’s not flowing right. Get in touch with the teacher, find out what’s going on. They’re going to tell you maybe they’re having problems in school, maybe they’re not. They may say, so and so is cutting up all the time and they are the kids that get in trouble a lot at school.

It comes out so many different ways with our kids. The first point of contact is get with the teacher and find out what’s going on. Doing it in an email is the best way because you have the documentation. As you start communicating with the school, you need to build a file. You need to show what you communicated because it is so tricky communicating our kids’ needs that you need to have the documentation because when they say, “Oh, everything’s fine,” or, “They look normal,” but you can see at home that things aren’t normal, there is something going on, then you can compare that and you can go back with them.

Now, at the school level, if they see problems happening, they’re going to work to do response to intervention, is generally how they start that in schools these days. Response to intervention means that your child is lagging on academic subjects somewhere and so they’re going to put in some sort of different interventions depending on the level of need and they’re going to try different strategies to see what would help. So they should have all that documented as well. If your school is telling you that your child is not performing, then you can ask them, “Okay, what have you done? What response to intervention have you tried?”

Julie: Right. So, if you notice any of those things, the best first step, as you’re saying, is to contact the teacher. The best way to communicate with the teacher in school is in a way that you can document so it would be on an email that you can then save and have that as part of your file.

3- Klimbal, Wendy
Wendy: Yeah, that’s what I’m saying. Really, for our kids, the file that you’re building is going to be a binder that contains, not just their educational piece but a lot of our kids are in therapy or have been evaluated by a psychiatrist in many instances so you’re going to have a medical section, an educational section and a psychiatric section. Anything about court records, you’re going to put all in this file because all of that stuff kind of works together to create our whole child. So you want to have all that stuff with you whenever you meet with the school team. Do you know what I’m saying?

Julie: Okay. Yeah and that leads me to the next question I have. A lot of parents ask, especially parents getting started in communicating with the school, how much they should tell the school because some of our children have come from very significantly, traumatizing backgrounds and the details that we have on those traumas can be overwhelming. How much information do we share with the schools?

Wendy: Well, I think it’s really important for the schools to understand trauma. Schools are, I think, moving towards working hard to understand trauma. They’re hearing it. Medicaid is recognizing complex trauma as a significant piece of these children’s being. In communicating with the schools, I think it’s important to give them as much information as you can, without getting into the graphic details.

Julie: So, explaining the trauma but maybe not talking in details about the actual, what you might know through court records as the actual abuses that occurred and those types of things.

Wendy: Exactly. I worked with a family who has their children has suffered severe sexual abuse. It’s not important for the school to know the details of that but they can hear that these children did suffer severe sexual abuse which means some of them are going to have certain behaviors and this is how you can help them.

Julie: Right.

Wendy: They need to be supervised. We need to work with them.

Julie: Right. So tying that in to potential behaviors like the child should probably not go the bathroom alone because of the way they might engage other children in the bathroom or the child might show fears because this is one of their triggers, drawing that, explaining just enough of their background so that the educator, it will make sense to them. Is that what you’re saying?
Wendy: That’s exactly what I’m saying. For my son, in particular, he was classified early on as ADHD. Well that trauma can create hyper-vigilance so he was constantly up and moving and unable to focus and it wasn’t because he necessarily had ADHD, it was because he didn’t feel safe.

So instead of letting him roam around the classroom, you have to be very specific with your rules and your structure and you have to hold those. So on my website, in my blog, I actually attached some of the paperwork that I took to his teachers that help explain, it was a Reactive Attachment Disorder, some of the symptoms of Reactive Attachment Disorder but is tied right to trauma and I took it to the teachers and said, “This is what’s happening. He doesn’t feel safe so he’s getting up and he’s going to test your rules. He’s going to try to get away with being but if you set clearer boundaries and you hold him to that, you’re going to show him that you got him. He’s going to be safe and he can then start focusing on his learning.”

Julie: Right.

Wendy: And it made a big difference for them.

Julie: So just a little education of them is really what that information is for. I know sometimes parents are really concerned about that, they’re concerned about it becoming a part of a public record as well. In the Special Education realm, those records are protected, right?

Wendy: Yes, absolutely. They are.

Julie: So my child is in school, starts school in a general classroom and I know that they’re struggling in some way. They come home and they’re acting out, they seem to be falling behind or there’s a lot of anxiety built up or maybe they cry before they go to school, whatever it is. I’ve talked to the teacher, the teacher seems to think that everything seems to be going along okay but things just seem to be escalating. What can I do to get things started in terms of steps to pursue Special Education at that point?

Wendy: Okay, well, that would be requesting a Special Education evaluation. What you want to do before you request your evaluation is, every state has slightly different procedural safeguards. Even though it’s all guided through federal law, every state is different.

So if you go out to your state specific education website, you can see the state procedural safeguards or it’s called the Parent Special Education Resource Guide. Review that just to see what your state requirements are and then make sure you have
gathered documentation regarding any of the medical diagnosis, any communication to and from the school regarding any behavior or academic difficulties, notes and things that you get from the teacher or notes and their agenda, if you can scan those into your flash drive, that’s a good way to keep your records.

You want to have test scores, report cards, not just from the school year but historically, you want to have as much data as you can. Then, it’s a good idea to review the visibility categories and the eligibility criteria so you can kind of get an idea what you’re thinking so that we go in and talk the talk of the educator a little bit.

Julie: Okay, yeah.

Wendy: When you actually want to request the evaluation, you have to write a formal letter and send it to the classroom’s principal. Sometimes, I copy in the Special Ed Directors as well because that helps to make sure everybody is on the same page because that communication isn’t always there. Generally, there are 60 days or so between the time you sign consent for them to evaluate your child which happens after you send the letter saying you want your child to be evaluated. Every state is a little bit different but then you’ll know within 60 days if you’ll have another meeting to talk about what they can do or what your child might qualify for.

Julie: Okay. So if I’m sensing something’s up and I want to find out if they qualify for Special Education, that’s exactly what you just outlined. I send a letter, obviously, it’s in writing and send it to the classroom teacher, the principal and you recommend the Special Education Director as well.

Wendy: Yes. In the letter, you want to say why you’re requesting the evaluation, you want to talk about what’s already been done in school or out of school to help your child and then you want to make a request to get the consent for evaluation and then give them a way to contact you and a timeline to get back to you.

Julie: Okay.

Wendy: You really want to make sure that this letter is delivered. So if you send it by certified mail or someway where you can acknowledge that they did receive it, that way, nothing gets lost.

Wendy: Exactly.

Julie: Now the other way could be that the teacher also decides that the child has some needs and she could request that evaluation as well, right?
Wendy: Yes, that is true.

Julie: Well, the goal is to get to an evaluation and get to signing off on giving permission to have your child evaluated. That’s the very first step of getting into Special Ed services, right?

Wendy: Yes. The best way do that is for you to request it yourself.

Julie: Okay.

Wendy: I’ve had experiences where I worked with schools and it seems like they were going to be working with me and I have no doubt that they were working in the child’s best interest. But everything in Special Education is time-stamped so the minute you write your letter and you say, “I’m requesting this in writing,” it goes by that time-stamp. Everything kind of starts then. So if you’re just going back and forth, kind of casually working with the school and you’re stating that there’s an issue, they could drag it out a little bit.

Julie: Right, either intentionally or not intentionally or whatever, there are a lot of kids with a lot of needs. You can speed that process up for your child by speaking up, is what you’re saying, by initiating it.

Wendy: Yes.

Julie: Great advice. The other thing I wanted to ask you and clarify for our listeners is that a lot of parents are told by the school, either before they request the evaluation or even as the evaluations are going along, they’re told that their child is doesn’t qualify for services because they’re doing fine academically. They’re making good enough grades, they’re passing the subjects. Is that the only criteria for qualifying for services in Special Education?

Wendy: Oh, no. That’s not it at all, that’s not the only criteria because actually, there are two different kinds of laws that help guide Special Education. There’s IDEA, from IDEA, the child receives an IEP, an Individual Education Plan that’s determined.

The IEP is more for kids who are seeing the academic impact so they have a disability that’s impacting their academic performance. So you have a child who maybe has really high anxiety but does do well on tests and does do well in school, there might be certain accommodations.
So the 504 plan, Americans with Disabilities Act, covers them so if they have a disability and it doesn’t impact their academic performance but it does impact their ability to be in school, I’ve worked with a lot of kids whose anxiety is so high they can’t even stay in school. So we have to work on a 504 plan to help support them so they can get to school. They can be successful in school.

Once they’re there, they’re doing well in their classes so it’s not impacting their academics but it’s impacting their ability to be in school. That would be a 504 plan. If a child is struggling in any way in school, whether it’s getting there or staying there or certain conditions of their disability require specialty services or something, it can be addressed either through IDEA or Americans with Disabilities Act, either way, generally speaking. You have to have documentation from a medical doctor or psychiatrist.

Julie: For all of these conditions or specifically, to go after the 504 plan?

Wendy: Specifically after the 504 plan. That documentation from your medical doctor or from your psychiatrist, I guess both, that’s going to solidify your case when you have that professional saying that. The IEP is a little bit easier to show your child’s disability when they have lagging academic performance. You don’t necessarily need it for that although it’s good to have if you have it already. Everything builds the case.

Julie: Right. So I requested an evaluation and sent a letter to the school and the school does the evaluation. They call a meeting and what do I expect in that meeting?

Wendy: Lots of people.

Julie: So what should I know then, what should I be doing?

Wendy: Generally, the team, the Committee on Special Education team that meets after your child has been evaluated, consists of the school psychologist, the regular education teacher, the Special Education teacher, sometimes there’s a note-taker there. There can be ten people in the room. Sometimes it’s the whole team of teachers so it’s going to be very overwhelming to go into the meeting when it’s just you.

Julie: Okay.

Wendy: One thing you may want to do is to get somebody to go with you. Either find a friend or your spouse or at least another person, or an advocate if you feel more comfortable with that, but just having numbers on your side is helpful in those meetings, because doing it alone is kind of scary.
Julie: Right.

Wendy: That’s really scary, let’s be honest. I’ve done it from both sides myself, as a parent and even as a Special Education teacher, going as a parent and as a team, it’s a little intimidating.

Julie: It is a little intimidating when you’re on one side of the table and ten other people are on the other end of the table, right?

Wendy: Yes. In a lot of times, honestly, the school and the school team have all discussed this beforehand.

Julie: So you come into the meeting and walk in the middle of a conversation.

Wendy: Kind of.

Julie: They already know what they’re thinking and doing. So they explain to you what the evaluation says, right? I mean, that’s the first step that they usually go to.

Wendy: Yes, they usually go over the report. You can ask, when you know the meeting’s coming, they have to give you seven days notice before the meeting, generally. So you can ask before the meeting if you can have a copy of the psychological evaluation. Some schools do it, some schools don’t. Some psychologists don’t prefer to give it out because they don’t think you’ll understand it but I think it’s a good idea just to kind of look over it.

Julie: Right.

Wendy: If you can. They sit in the meeting and they go over that first.

Julie: Exactly. Just so parents will know, I know you’re going to reference this resource later, I’m pretty sure, and we would definitely put a link in our website but Rights Law has a great book about figuring out what evaluations mean.

I know with my daughter and her complexities that even though I am not a Special Educator, I am also not a psychologist or anybody who understands anything about statistics and testing but I’ve become pretty aware of how to read the evaluation data because it’s complex.

A lot of times what happens when the school psychologist or anybody explains to you what the findings are, they’re explaining to you their interpretation of the findings and sometimes, it’s good just to look at the scores and understand what those mean. Rights
Law has got actually two chapters in there, Emotions to Advocacy book that sort of give you a basic evaluation primer, if you will, on how to learn how to read those.

Wendy: Exactly.

Julie: That might be a good place to go and if you have the data, the report beforehand, you can compare it to what Rights Law says that those tests mean and come a little bit better prepared. The questions you ask can be better questions because it is overwhelming. And it’s also emotional isn’t it, Wendy? When people tell you that your child is two standard deviations off the mean or this is low or this is impaired, there’s an emotional part of that as a mom, isn’t there?

Wendy: There is. For me, it wasn’t just that, it’s the daily dealings at home. The constant struggles with our kids that we have already, and then the whole school piece adds a whole other level. So when you hear that your kid is behind, it can be very overwhelming and very emotional. I think one of the things to keep in mind when you’re working with the school team is, even though it is very emotional, it is very heart wrenching as a parent to try to figure all this out, you got to try to keep the school on your side. You have to leave off your anxiety, because as a parent, you’re going to have your own anxiety but go in politely and calmly because this is a lifelong relationship.

Julie: Right. You’re trying to build a good bridge.

Wendy: Yeah.

Julie: They’re going to have your child for a big piece of the day too so you want to have that open line of communication.

Wendy: And that can be tricky.

Julie: What happens when things don’t go quite that way and at what point, I know parents call in and ask folks at ATN a lot, “At what point do I need to look into hiring an advocate or an attorney? And does that make me adversarial if I do that?”

Wendy: Let me just speak to this because advocacy has really taken a crazy turn in terms of state testing and common core and teacher evaluations. So, I think it’s really important to keep in mind, and I’m going to say this with my educator hat on, it’s really important to keep in mind that the teachers have a lot on their plate. They have a lot of responsibility, they have a lot to do. Now, that’s not saying that your kid isn’t important, your kid is definitely important, but I met certain parents who expect change immediately. In the schools, it’s not going to change immediately. If you meet with a
teacher you got to give it some time. Actually, a good idea to do, a good thing to set up is when you meet and talk about your child, determine how long you’re going to wait to follow up. We’re going to try a week or let’s see how things are in two weeks or whatever the follow up is going to be, that is so critical.

Now, you can tell if the school team is not including you. If you’re not being included as an equal member, because you are an equal member, or they just expect you to blindly trust them or they just dismiss your concerns, those are the times that you want to consider getting an advocate. I’ve actually had parents just say, if you don’t hear me out on this, I will come with an advocate. That’s been enough to just get the school to cooperate.

Another situation is maybe there’s a huge difference of opinions between what the school is advocating and what you believe is needed for your child. So if you guys, the schools and the parents aren’t on the same page, that’s another good time to call an advocate.

Julie: That can happen with our families a lot because what we’re seeing at home can be very different than what they see at school and so sometimes, it’s hard for a parent to really communicate and convince the school that the needs are as severe as they are.

Wendy: Definitely. So it’s always good to have a third party there.

Julie: A third party. Just because an advocate comes, that doesn’t necessarily mean that my working relationship with the school is broken, in fact, the opposite should happen, right?

Wendy: Oh, it’s true, the opposite does happen in pretty much all my cases. We bring an advocate, they generally bring somebody from the central office, so somebody from the Special Ed department will come, a different level of working. But really, it’s not meant to be intimidating to the school, it’s not meant to threaten them or anything, it’s working together because you know your kid better than anybody else. If they’re not going to listen to you, then you need to find a way to get them to listen to you. So sometimes, the best way to do that, even for myself, I’ve been to meetings for my own child, I brought another person with me just to kind of help because I’m getting a little emotional because I don’t think they understand that we don’t have a lot of time with this kid and we got to get this figured out now.

Julie: Right, and there’s a truth to that. He’s only got so many years there. Exactly.
Wendy: Our kids, a lot of them come from really rough starts that nobody really understands. They don’t get the whole story and they’re probably never going to, but we can get them to try and understand bits and pieces of it but they’re never going to understand the whole thing because they don’t live it, you don’t understand it until you really live it. I think they are more open to hearing people out and it does help, even if you don’t hire an advocate, even if you bring somebody who knows your kid and is articulate, when you’re emotional, it will help to just to get a little balance.

Julie: Right. So let’s talk just really briefly about what the differences between an advocate an attorney and at what point that you might make a decision that it’s time for an attorney. I think in some parents’ minds, that’s interchangeable that you hire an advocate or an attorney and the school generally does respond differently to those two types of people, right?

Wendy: Okay. I have not had to get an attorney involved in any of my cases yet so that’s a good thing. But yes, they are different. An advocate kind of just goes in and helps mediate.

Julie: Right.

Wendy: Whereas the lawyer, the attorney can go in and actually threaten lawsuits especially if your child’s rights are being violated and the school is not upholding what they’re supposed to be doing legally.

Julie: Right.

Wendy: Especially what is guided by law. So it is a different level definitely.

Julie: When the attorney comes in, the school sort of senses that and now we’re in a situation where this could become some sort of a legal action and so they start responding a little bit differently.

Wendy: That could create some hostility, don’t you think?

Julie: Yes, I think so.

Wendy: We want to try to avoid that if you can avoid that. If they’re going to be so headstrong and they’re not going to open up and learn and listen, then you’re going to have to take it to that level. It takes a lot of time and a lot of documentation, I think, before you get to that level. There are a lot of things that you can do. I even have success with the OCR complaints, Office of Civil Rights, if your child’s rights are being violated you can file an OCR complaint yourself.
Julie: Right, okay.

Wendy: You can file an Office of Civil Rights complaint. It’s all done on email or the web nowadays, everything’s all techy. From there, that alerts the state to investigate what’s going on. We were able to get some processes really cleaned up here because we filed an OCR. It needed to be done and everybody’s on the same page now and we’re moving forward with a good, positive relationship with the school so there are ways to do it, for sure.

Julie: Awesome. Our time is running long but there is a big topic that we really haven’t talked about yet so I’m just going to let us extend this because I want parents to hear a little bit about how to handle behaviors, the issue of behaviors at school and how that gets handled through Special Ed systems or how it should be handled with Special Education. Really, the understanding of what should happen discipline-wise. I mean a lot of our children qualify, the way that they’re qualifying for Special Education will be through eligibilities that are related to emotional disability type things and so by that very nature, their behaviors can get them into trouble. How does the Special Ed either protects the child and what steps should be done to make sure that the IEP is helping the child in that realm?

Wendy: Okay. It’s good to know that with a child who is classified with special needs has an IEP that child has got to be in their school setting, they can’t be suspended longer than ten days. So, they can’t be out of their placement for longer than ten days. So generally, when kids are classified and they have behaviors and they get suspended or something like that, there is a manifestation determination hearing to determine if their behavior was a manifestation of their disability. Parents are always invited and they determine if the behavior was related to the disability. So depending on how they determine that, if it’s part of the disability, they can’t be punished for it, If it is part of their disability, you work it into the regular program. If they determine that it’s not part of their disability, they can still not be suspended longer than ten days. There’s that.

The whole behavior piece, I mean it’s really important to know that your child. I hear parents whose kids are sitting in ISS, which is in school suspension day after day after day. That’s a violation of a legal document and the legal document is the child’s IEP. So if you have a child with an IEP, they cannot be sitting in another setting. They have to be educated based on their IEP. So what their IEP says they need in school is what they should have. A day or two is one thing but if it’s a regular basis, then your child is sting in school suspension, ISS room, then that’s a problem.
Now, most kids that are classified with the emotional behavioral disability are going to have a functional behavioral analysis which then leads to the behavior intervention plan.

Julie: Okay.

Wendy: Because if a child is having a lot of behaviors at school, there’s a reason why the child is having a lot of behavior at school and there’s a plan that has to be developed. Most districts these days have a behavioral analyst that goes in and observes the child at certain periods and they look for certain behaviors and they see when those behaviors are happening so they can try to determine why the behavior is happening.

Parents can give a lot of good input with that. Once they determine that, they can create the behavior intervention plan and the behavior intervention plan is a plan signed by the parents and tells what the possible strategies are going to be, program modifications, any support or aids that the child needs and what’s going to make sure that the child is educated in the least restrictive environment, the environment that they’re supposed to be in.

Julie: Right.

Wendy: Then that behavior intervention plan is supposed to be looked at and reviewed on a regular basis, thirty days or quarterly or whatever it is. So however the team decides to evaluate it and the parents can have input on that. If the behavior’s increasing, obviously, you need to have another meeting.

Julie: Figure out what new strategies need to be attempted. I think you said something really important for parents to understand in terms of what the behavior intervention plan needs to be. You said it needed to have positive intervention strategies, it needed to, I wish I can remember exactly what words you used.

Wendy: Oh no, that’s okay, it was positive strategies, program modification or any aids or support, be it a paraprofessional to help them walk through transitions or things like that the school can provide to help make sure that the child is successful. It’s not about tossing them M&M’s.

Julie: Right.

Wendy: That’s not what we want to be doing with our kids at all.
Wendy: Right, exactly. I think a lot of times both the teachers and the parents get caught up in that sort of reward and consequence point systems, all of those kinds of things as being what they do and put it in the behavior intervention plan.

What you’re saying is positive intervention and program modifications which means changing the situation or doing something that makes it more conducive so that the child is less likely to have the behavior and that’s all determined based on what you get through your functional behavioral analysis, right? Whether it’s an exemplary thing or whether it’s trouble with transition or whatever, the hyper vigilance anxiety, the reasons behind why the kid does what they do, right?

Wendy: Exactly. On the same level, you have to consider if your child is misbehaving or having trouble in school with behavior, and they don’t have a behavior plan but the teacher utilizes a class behavior plan, like red-yellow-green or something to that effect, those aren’t exactly effective for our kids because they don’t necessarily see the big picture. They get to red and it’s all over.

Julie: Yeah, they’re assuming they’re going to red so they might as well go there anyway.

Wendy: Exactly. It’s not necessarily all the time just looking at the kid’s behavior, it’s looking at the environment like what is triggering this behavior, maybe that’s part of it. I think parents should really be clued into how the teacher manages the classroom because in particular, our kids from trauma, I mean it’s really common-sensical, you don’t need all the bells and whistles. Just keep it simple. The red-yellow-green, a lot of teachers are moving away from that I’m actually surprised to see it’s still out there. It’s not effective for our kids because they do automatically go to might as well go straight to red.

Julie: Right. They may respond however they respond to their anxiety whether it’s shutting down or lashing out or all of those things.

Wendy: It’s very shaming too.

Julie: It can be and that’s a piece that teachers don’t always necessarily see is that that shame is building in our traumatized kids.

Fortunately for our listeners, there are several interviews that talk about some very positive supports and positive strategies that teachers can use and even parents listening to those interviews to learn about those can then make that kind of a suggestion to a classroom teacher if there’s a lot of the behavior mod point system, red-yellow-green types of things going on that seem to be problematic for our kiddos.

15- Klimbal, Wendy
Well, Wendy, this has been enlightening and when we started this interview, before we got on the tape, we both decided that there’s no way that we can cover Special Education in 45 minutes. The resources that parents should pick up are obviously, the Rights Law website which we’ll put on our webpage under this recording. Can families contact you to ask questions?

Wendy: Oh, absolutely! I live in Georgia but really, Special Education, even though it differs by state, it’s guided by federal law so I am more than happy to answer questions or guide people in the right direction, however I can help. I have a website, as you said before, its northgaadvocate.com. I’m on Facebook too so you can look me up on Facebook. Those are the best ways to contact me.

Julie: Terrific! Well we will definitely point families to your direction and I appreciate you spending some time with us today talking about the basics of Special Ed and especially how it applies to our kiddos of trauma. Thank you for being here.

Wendy: Julie, thank you for having me, it was an honor to work with you.

Julie: Sure. Closing this out, this is Julie Beem and this is another recoding of the ATN Traumatized Children summit. There will be at least 20 interviews that are part of this summit.

If you’ve missed some of these or you want a complete set to listen to over and over again, there will be an opportunity to purchase recordings of the summit or recordings and transcripts and at the end of this summit, will be able to be downloaded. You can check that information out at www.attachu.org, go to the “events” and under there you’ll see the summit.

At the Attachment and Trauma Network, we’re committed to helping traumatized children and their families.

If you want to learn more specifically about what ATN does and support education and advocacy, you can find out more at our main website which is www.attachtrauma.org.

Thank you all for listening today and we look forward to having you join us with the other interviews.

***End***