

Laura A. Athens
Attorney and Mediator, PLC
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EDUCATION

Washington University School of Law

St. Louis, Missouri

Juris Doctor 1987

Academic Honors and Activities

Class Standing: Top 5 percent

Order of the Coif

Washington University Law Quarterly

American Jurisprudence Awards: Contracts, Remedies

Philip Gallop Award: Real Estate Transactions

University of Wisconsin

Madison, Wisconsin

Masters of Science in Social Work 1980

University of Michigan

Ann Arbor, Michigan

Bachelors in Psychology 1978

Academic Honors: Magna Cum Laude

Honors in Psychology

LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Attorney and Mediator, Farmington Hills, Michigan

1994-2014

- Represent special education students and parents at Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team Meetings, Behavior Intervention Planning Meetings, Manifestation Determination Reviews, Mediation and Resolution Sessions
- Represent students and parents in Special Education Due Process Hearings
- Represent students and parents in Federal Court
- Represent students in danger of suspension and expulsion at disciplinary evidentiary hearings
- Draft and review settlement agreements
- File civil rights complaints with state and federal agencies
- Mediate special education and vocational rehabilitation disputes
- File petitions for guardianship of developmentally disabled individuals
- Prepare Durable Powers of Attorney and Patient Advocate Designations
- Advocate for policy and legislative reform through public comment and public hearings.
- Provide presentations to attorneys, school district personnel and parents on education issues and alternative dispute resolution

- Publish articles on education, mediation and arbitration

Special Education Hearing Officer

1995-2006

- Managed pre-hearing conferences
- Ruled on pre-hearing motions
- Conducted mediation sessions
- Presided over special education due process hearings
- Issued Decisions with Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

Michigan Rehabilitation Services Hearing Officer and Mediator

2002-2011

- Conducted pre-hearing conferences
- Facilitated mediation sessions
- Presided over vocational rehabilitation hearings
- Issued Decisions with Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law

Adjunct Professor, Wayne State University School of Law

1993-2003

- Taught Education Law course focusing on the legal rights of teachers and students, including discipline, academic freedom, freedom of speech and religion, separation of church and state, due process, equal protection, collective bargaining, teacher tenure and special education
- Taught Health law course and Bioethics seminar focusing on health care regulation, insurance, managed care, hospital and physician liability, tort reform, organ transplantation, termination of life support, genetic engineering and human reproductive technology
- Obtained grant for interdisciplinary research project on legal and policy implications of employment of individuals with disabilities
- Conducted research with a Professor of Engineering and published article in connection with the interdisciplinary project

Visiting Assistant Professor, Washington University School of Law – Full-time position

1989-1992

- Taught Legal Research and Writing courses focusing on analysis and interpretation of statutes and regulations, synthesis of case law, legal research, preparation of memoranda, trial and appellate briefs, oral argument, negotiation, advocacy and professional ethics

Judicial Clerk to Chief Judge John F. Nangle, United States District Court of Eastern Missouri

1987-1989

- Managed hundreds of cases involving civil rights, labor union, employment, corporate, product liability, patents, social security, environmental and criminal matters
- Conducted legal research
- Prepared memoranda on legal issues
- Drafted decisions on motions and opinions in non-jury trials

Adjunct Professor, Washington University School of Law – Part-time position
1987-1989 Taught Legal Research and Writing course

PUBLICATIONS

Bullying and Harassment in the Schools: The Prevalence, Parameters and Proactive Solutions, submitted for publication on October 14, 2014 to the Michigan Bar Journal.

Overcoming Reluctance to Engage in Mediation, Oakland County Legal News (March 2014).

Confidentiality Does not Automatically Extend to Pre-Mediation Resolution Sessions, Laches (May 2010).

Creating Parameters for Arbitration, Laches 23 (May 2009).

ADR in Special Education Matters Benefits Parents and School Districts, Michigan Lawyers Weekly, (October 20, 2008).

Arbitration: Have It Your Way: Customizing the Dispute Resolution Process To Your Unique Needs, PREM Newsletter, (September 2008).

Alternative Dispute Resolution in Special Education, Laches 11 (May 2005).

Maintaining Balance in the World of Law Practice, Laches 13 (May 2003).

Is the Wall Between Church and State Crumbling? United States Supreme Court Upholds School Vouchers Primarily Benefiting Religious Schools in Zellman v. Simmons-Harris, Michigan Bar Journal (Sept. 2002).

Special Protections for Students with Disabilities, Laches 13 (March 2001).

A Victory for Employees with Disabilities: SSDI Benefits Do Not Preclude Employment Discrimination Claims under the ADA, 79 Mich. Bar. J. 830 (July 2000).

Come to the "Inn", Laches 30 (March 2000).

Mediation of Special Education Disputes, Laches 17 (February 1999).

Solo Networking, Laches 26 (August 1998).

Mediation: An Option to Consider, Laches 18 (October 1997).

The Case for Specialization, Laches 26 (October 1996).

Adapting the Judicial Approach to Medical Malpractice Claims Against Physicians to Reflect Medicare Cost Containment Measures, 62 U. Colo. L. Rev. 287 (1991).

Recent Development, The Urgent Need for Surrogate Motherhood Legislation, 65 Wash. U. L. Q. 488 (1987).

Comment, Constitutionality of Limitations on Attorneys' Fees in Medical Malpractice Actions, 64 Wash. U. L. Q. 635 (1986).

PRESENTATIONS

Michigan's New Business Courts, moderator for judicial panel for seminar sponsored by Professional Resolution Experts of Michigan (PREMi) - September 2014

Mediating Bullying and Harassment Disputes in the School Setting, teleseminar sponsored by the State Bar of Michigan Alternative Dispute (ADR) Section - August 2014

Legal Rights of Students with Disabilities: Innovative Strategies and Approaches to Resolving Disputes, sponsored by UM Investing in Ability at the Ann Arbor District Library – October 2013

The School Social Worker's Role: A Proactive Approach to Special Education Issues, presentation to The Michigan Association of School Social Workers for Wayne RESA Professional Development Day- November 2012

Working with Diverse Populations and DisABILITIES, Panel Member, seminar sponsored by Southeast Michigan Career Development Facilitator Association at Oakland Schools - May 2012

Representing the Children, Roles and Responsibilities of a Juvenile GAL, Panel Member at seminar sponsored by Oakland County Bar Association - October 2011

Special Education Mediation: A Proactive Approach to Resolving School Conflict, Guest on "Texas Conflict Coach" radio program <http://www.texasconflictcoach.com> - August 2011

Bully and Harassment in the Schools, Guest on "Practical Law" Bloomfield Community Television program, <http://vimeo.com/25558013> - June 2011

Managing School-Related Conflicts, presented at Advanced Negotiation and Dispute Resolution Institute (ANDRI) sponsored by Institute for Continuing Legal Education and Michigan Autism Partnership - March 2011

Special Education and Alternative Dispute Resolution, Guest Lecturer, University of Detroit College of Law - November 2009

Special Protections for Students with Disabilities, Guest on "Practical Law" cable television Program -April 2009

Conflict Resolution in the School Setting, PREMi training provided to Lake Orion Community Schools–August 2008

School Law, Guest on "Due Process" television program - February 2008

Selected Special Education Topics, presented to Ann Arbor FACES at Washtenaw Intermediate School District – May 2008

School Law Discipline Issues, presented to Michigan Network for Youth and Families at State Bar of Michigan – March 2007

Extended School Year Programs and Services, presented to Everyone Together Macomb County -January 2006

IDEA in a Nutshell, presented to Autism Society of America, Oakland County Chapter - March 2005

The Special Education Mandate for Inclusion, presented to Everyone Together Oakland County - Nov. 2004

Extended School Year, presented to Washtenaw County Parent Advisory Committee - May 2004

Alternative Dispute Resolution: Everyone wins with ADR in Special Education, sponsored by CHADD of Eastern Wayne and Macomb Counties - March 2004

Alternative Dispute Resolution, panel presentation at State-of-the-Law Day, sponsored by Standard Federal Wealth Management - Sept. 2003

Demystifying Education Law: Special Education and the Due Process Hearing, sponsored by the Student Advocacy Center and Young Lawyers Section of the Washtenaw County Bar Association - Sept. 2003

Real Law for Real People, panel presentation to the Administrative Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan - May 2003

Transitioning to Kindergarten, presented to The Village Educational Center staff and parents - March 2003

Use of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Special Education Matters, presented to Oakland County Bar Association Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee - December 2002

IDEA and Section 504, sponsored by CHADD of Eastern Wayne and Macomb Counties - November 2002

A Teacher's Role in Special Education under IDEA and Section 504, sponsored by Wayne State University Council for Exceptional Children - June 2002

Student Discipline, sponsored by Lorman Education Services - April 2002

Special Education Law, Guest Lecturer, Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Education Law course March 2002

Discipline of Special Needs Students in Michigan, sponsored by Lorman Education Services Presented to Jackson County Intermediate School District - December 2001

Special Education Law in Michigan — Transition Services, sponsored by Professional Development Network, in Ann Arbor, Michigan - November 2001

A Teacher's Role in Special Education under IDEA and Section 504, presented to Eastern Michigan University Graduate Students - May 2001

Special Considerations for Students with Asperger's, Pervasive Developmental Delay and High Functioning Autism, Fourth Annual Conference of The Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates (COPAA), in Washington D.C., co-presented with Sally Bloch-Rosen, Ph.D. - March 2001

New Administrators Workshop II, panel presentation to Michigan Council of Administrators of Special Education, subdivision of Council for Exceptional Children - February 2001

Extended School Year, Grosse Pointe Public Schools Special Education Advisory Committee – November 2000

Special Education under IDEA and Section 504, Friends of Different Learners, Birmingham Public Schools – November 2000

Special Education Issues, presented to the Mental Disability Law Committee of State Bar of Michigan - January 2000

Alternative Dispute Resolution, addressed Michigan Supreme Court during public administrative hearings on the proposed Michigan Court Rules regarding Alternative Dispute Resolution - January 2000

Legal Advocacy in the Schools, sponsored by CHADD of Eastern Wayne and Macomb Counties - November 1999

Special Education School Placement, presented to Autism Society of America, Oakland County Chapter - August 1999

Case Management Special Populations School Age Children with Disabilities, Guest Lecturer, Detroit College of Business - March 1999

Detroit Public Schools Special Education Seminar, presented to Special Education Supervisors - August 1998

Legal Rights of Children with Disabilities, Guest on “Practical Law” cable television program - May 1998

Special Education Law, Disability Rights Conference sponsored by Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service - October 1997

Alternative Dispute Resolution, Guest Panelist on “Due Process” television program - March 1997

Conflict Resolution Workshop for Special Education Administrators, Supervisors, Teachers, School Principals, Parents and Advocates, presented to Oakland Schools - January 1997

Head Start and IDEA, sponsored by Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency Head Start Program - Nov. 1996

The Americans with Disabilities Act and You, presented to Brain Injury Association of Michigan - April 1996

Special Education Law, Annual Guest Lecturer, Wayne State University Law School - 1994-1999

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS/TRAININGS

State Bar of Michigan

The Missouri Bar

Board of Social Work, Master's Social Worker, Clinical and Macro License

Professional Resolution Experts of Michigan (PREMi) 2007-2014

State Bar of Michigan, ADR Council 2007-2013

Oakland County Bar Association: Solo and Small Firm Committee, Chairperson 1998-99

Oakland County Bar Association: Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, Chairperson 2004-05

Inn of Court 1997-2003

Association for Conflict Resolution, Michigan Southeast Chapter 2007- 2013

State Bar of Michigan, Character & Fitness, District I Committee, 2007-2009

Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Magistrate Referent Group 2003

Divorce Mediation 40 hour training: Mediation Training and Consultant Institute 1995

Teachers, Lawyers and Children Program 1996-97

Conflict Resolution in the Schools Project 1997-98

Advanced Mediator Training: Understanding and Managing Difficult Conflicts 2003

Dialogue on Mediation Services, sponsored by State Court Administrative Office and ADR Section 2007

Unlocking the Mysteries of Federal Court June 2007

Advanced Negotiation & Dispute Resolution Institute (ANDRI), sponsored by ICLE March 2008-2014

Restorative Justice, sponsored by Association for Conflict Resolution March 2008

Alternative Dispute Resolution Section Annual Meeting, Advanced Mediation Training 2008-2014

Marketing Your Way to a Successful Mediation Practice, sponsored by Association for Conflict Resolution Oct 2009

Professional Resolution Experts of Michigan, Med-Arb trainings 2012, 2013
