The evening will feature a fabulous silent auction, inspiring entertainment, and a host of honorees who will be recognized for their efforts on behalf of families of children with special needs. This year the Federation is delighted to honor Dr. David K. Urion, Director of the Learning Disabilities and Behavioral Neurology Program at Children's Hospital Boston, with The Martha H. Ziegler Founders Award for his lifelong dedication to improving educational opportunities for children with special needs. Our President’s Award will be presented to Ms. Betsy Anderson, one of the Federation’s founders and current Family Voices Project Director. Ms. Robin Foley will be awarded the Patricia Blake Advocacy Award for her advocacy work on behalf of students with special needs and their families. The evening’s entertainment, which will include jazz and ensemble performances by students from the Berkshire Hills Music Academy and the music of singer/songwriter and guitarist Natalia Zukerman, will be emceed by award-winning talk show host and former state legislator Marjorie Clapprood.

Visit www.fcsn.org for event updates. If you are interested in helping sponsor the event, donating to the silent auction, purchasing individual tickets or a table, or advertising in the event’s program book please contact Maureen Jerz, Director of Development at 617-236-7210, ext. 374 or e-mail mjerz@fcsn.org. We hope to see you there!

Teachers Who Advocate: Protections and Suggestions

By Robert K. Crabtree, Esquire

Recently, a new special education teacher asked if I had any guidance for a teacher who wants to advocate for students with disabilities and also keep her job. A good answer includes information about:

1) Legal protections for teachers when they speak up for students with disabilities (addressed below), and

2) Suggestions on navigating the school environment with regard for one’s own well-being (to be published in the May 2011 issue of Newsline).

Be advised, there are “costs” to accessing the legal protections outlined here. It may be easier to continue on page 6.
The Federation is pleased to have a new partner to help raise awareness about our work and the families and professionals we serve. Susan Werner is a singer, songwriter, and the family member of a child with special needs. Susan’s hauntingly beautiful new song “My Different Son” captures the essence of the emotional journey experienced by many families of children with special needs as they struggle with the uncertainty of their child’s future. Susan spoke with the Federation and described her song as, “a photograph of a parent at the exact moment in the parenting journey when the parent realizes that their child is really different, is always going to face certain challenges in the world, and wonders what will become of that child and how the parent can help the child find his way in the world.” Susan became increasingly aware of, “how difficult it can be for kids with special needs to earn a place in the world, especially the world of education.” She recognizes the fundamental shift that takes place, “the reset point” as she calls it, that changes parents. It’s the moment when they know they must be “the parent that a child needs you to be” as opposed to “the parent they want to be.” And at this moment Susan feels that there is a message, a gift that children with special needs can give to all of us, which is that life should be less about “steering the outcome and more about enjoying the movie.”

Susan gets many inquiries about “My Different Son” when she performs it in concert. “The applause for this song goes on a little longer. People are just in it, they are thinking about someone.” Often, audience members approach her afterwards, eager to show photos of their sons and daughters. “They want to talk about their child. And then people start talking to each other. Parents who have kids with special needs are so open to talking with other parents of children with special needs, even if the needs are totally different. They have all been through that reset point.”

“From my observation, it can be a very isolating experience to have a child with special needs,” she says. “Parents need to know that they are not alone, that they are not the only ones who have felt this way, and that it’s ok to feel this way. It’s unjust to say that parents should carry this all themselves.” As an artist, Susan feels that the song can help parents know that they are not alone. “You feel very useful as a songwriter when you can be helpful in bringing people together in that way. When you have a child with special needs, your world becomes just a little bit bigger. If we all open our hearts enough, we can make more conversations that encourage parents to reach out and get in touch, and not be isolated.” Susan and the Federation share this goal - to help families connect with each other, and with a variety of services and supports.

Susan graciously offers this song as a gift to all families who are raising a child with special needs (as well as others). Download “My Different Son” at www.susanwerner.com/mds.html. Additionally, Susan is helping to raise awareness about the work we do at the Federation by including information about the Federation on her Web site. We are grateful to partner with Susan, a true friend of the Federation and the families we serve, in raising awareness about the challenges and joys families experience in raising a child with special needs.
From the Executive Director

Many states, including Massachusetts, are facing a difficult budget season due to the “Great Recession” and the end of federal stimulus dollars, which have helped fund services for the past two years. The Governor’s Office has let us know to expect significant reductions in funding. These reductions will likely affect all municipal services, many human service programs, and schools, including special education. In an effort to be proactive about the impact of these changes, the Federation has been paying close attention to special education funding and the “Circuit Breaker” account. This article provides information about the circuit breaker account, the Massachusetts Coalition to Restore Special Education Funding, and how families can help ensure a secure future for special education.

Background: In Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, the Commonwealth’s state aid circuit breaker account 7061-0012 for special education funding to local school districts was $230 million dollars. At this level, school districts were reimbursed 72% of special education costs per student in excess of four times the FY ‘09 statewide per pupil foundation amount of $9,332. Under state special education law Chapter 71B, section 5A, special education expenditures are to be reimbursed by the Commonwealth, subject to appropriation, at 75% of per student costs over four times the per pupil foundation amount.

Due to the current economic crisis, state and local funding for public education has been cut. The special education circuit breaker account was reduced in the FY ’10 state budget to $140 million. Funding was further reduced to $133 million in the FY ’11 budget. The cuts total $97 million. Federal stimulus funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act replaced cuts in both special and general education. However, federal stimulus dollars will run out, leaving a funding gap in FY ’12.

Mission Statement: In September 2010, the Federation joined a newly formed coalition known as the Massachusetts Coalition to Restore Special Education Funding. The mission of the Coalition is to restore funding to the Commonwealth’s special education circuit breaker account to the FY ’09 appropriation amount of $230 million dollars. The other Coalition member organizations include: Children’s League of Massachusetts, Disability Law Center, Massachusetts Administrators for Special Education, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Massachusetts Association of School Committees, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents, Massachusetts Association of Special Education Advisory Councils, Massachusetts Association of 766 Approved Private Schools, and the Parent Professional Advocacy League.

The Federation supports Circuit Breaker funding for special education for four key reasons:

1. The funding eliminated for the circuit breaker program in the last two years was due to dire economic circumstances with the knowledge that federal stimulus money would fill much of that gap. With the end of stimulus money, there will be a massive funding gap in FY’12. Local school budgets will not be able to fill this gap. The FY’09 level of funding must be restored.

2. IDEA, the Federal special education law, requires states not to supplant funding for special education programs and local schools must maintain their existing level of service. This is called “maintenance of effort” or MOE. When the stimulus money ends, if circuit breaker funds are not restored, MOE will be nearly impossible. This means students may not be able to stay in their current programs or receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

3. Students and families who depend upon special education services do not generally have the resources or ability to fight school districts that, without circuit breaker funding, will not be able to sustain their current programs. The legal costs required to appeal a change of placement decision will be astronomical. Schools and families need to maintain their resources for education rather than for litigation.

4. One of the original purposes of circuit breaker funding was to ensure that local school districts are not overwhelmed by the costs associated with services necessary for students with significant disabilities who deserve FAPE in the least restrictive environment.

Though circuit breaker is frequently associated only with the costs for students placed “out of district,” in fact, this funding supports the needs of any student – in district or out - who requires intensive levels of support to succeed academically. The original purpose of this funding was to ensure student were appropriately served in any setting. It is the mechanism which ensures that the necessary “continuum of services” is maintained. School districts have come to depend upon this funding to ensure a high quality education for all students.

As the state budget process unfolds throughout the spring, please introduce yourself to state legislators. Help them understand the importance of a high quality education for your student and all students with disabilities. Real stories illustrating real needs remind all of us that in difficult times we can survive if we work together. Stay alert, Stay involved, Work for success.

Best wishes,

Rich Robison
Executive Director

Learn more about circuit breaker funding, state budget implications, and special education services at http://fcsn.org/circuit_breaker.pdf, call 617-725-4005, or e-mail constituent.services@state.ma.us. Find contact information for your state legislators at www.wheredoivotema.com.
Have you ever had the following types of thoughts and wondered if there was a place to call for help? “This is really hard.” “I can’t take one more minute of this life.” “I really can’t do this by myself any more.” “I don’t feel in control.” The answer is, call Family TIES of Massachusetts.

Family TIES has a Parent-to-Parent Program that provides support to families of children with disabilities, special health care needs, and chronic illnesses. Parents who participate in our Parent-to-Parent Program can talk with another parent who truly understands the daily challenges and difficult moments in time when caring for some aspect of their child’s needs just seems too much to bear. At these critical times of need, it is so important to know you are not alone!

To start the Parent-to-Parent Match process, call your Regional Coordinator at 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or download and complete the Match Request form, available in English and Spanish, on our Web site at www.massfamilyties.org/p2p/p2p.php. Simply complete the form and return it to the address on the form. Our Parent-to-Parent Coordinator will review your request, and your Regional Coordinator will call you to follow up and provide additional resources and information that may be helpful to your child and family. Once we identify a Match, a trained volunteer Support Parent will contact you and provide emotional support, and assure you that like them, you will get through this challenging moment in your life. And, like them, you will see there are many blessings that come out of difficult days. With these conversations comes a revitalized sense of hope for your child and yourself.

In today’s fast-paced society, it seems like there is no time to just sit and chat. However, for the families we serve and for ourselves, as parents of children with special needs, there is no greater gift than making time to sit and chat – to process the emotional side of meeting the many needs in our lives, including those of our children with special needs. In making the time to understand and share those feelings with another parent who is on this same road, you will see that all of us have special needs. By talking with another parent, you are also meeting your own needs.

Family TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide parent-to-parent information and support network for families of children with disabilities, special healthcare needs, or chronic illnesses. We are an Alliance Member of Parent to Parent USA, a national organization that provides technical assistance to parent-to-parent programs across the country. For more information about Family TIES, call 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or visit www.massfamilyties.org.
In September 2010, Massachusetts received a three-year grant from the federal Health and Human Services Administration on Aging to:

- Further develop a statewide respite coalition consisting of family caregivers, respite providers, and members of the aging, disability, and health services network.
- Improve statewide dissemination and coordination of respite care by developing a comprehensive, accessible directory of services.
- Enhance and expand the availability of Lifespan Respite Services in Massachusetts by improving training and recruitment of providers, and developing a strategic plan and List of Policy Recommendations.

By the end of the three years, the coalition will produce:

1) A three-year plan for the development of a Lifespan Respite Services Program;
2) A written assessment of respite services in Massachusetts;
3) A web- and print-based directory of respite services in Massachusetts;
4) A dedicated Web site;
5) A set of quality and safety guidelines for respite providers;
6) A toolkit for replication of a statewide respite program, including a cost analysis;
7) A training curriculum for workers and volunteers; and
8) A list of policy recommendations

The Board of Directors is the governing body of the coalition. It sets the coalition’s direction, establishes committees as needed, helps recruit coalition members, and develops annual goals.

The committee members will be responsible for the main work of the coalition. The Grant Advisory committee consisting of representatives from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Department of Developmental Services, the Multiple Sclerosis Society, MassHealth, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Aging and Disability Resource Centers, and the original respite coalition will monitor the grant activities, ensuring the goals and objectives are being met.

There are five subcommittees: needs assessment, training curriculum, resource development, public information/outreach, and sustainability. These subcommittees will carry out the grant’s objectives. A part time coordinator will staff the coalition and committees.

To join the coalition, one of the committees or subcommittees, or for more information, contact Mike Oliver at moliver6@verizon.net or Amy Nazaire, Director of Family Support and Children’s Services for the Northeast Region of DDS at 978-774-5000 ext. 386 or via e-mail at amy.nazaire@state.ma.us.
“move on” than to incur the emotional cost of suing a school district. Litigation is always uncertain. You will be subject to delays, insults, and time-consuming discovery. Moreover, the financial costs of pursuing a lawsuit, unless your union or another entity takes up the case, may be prohibitive.

Teachers with tenure (in Massachusetts this status applies after three years of employment if a teacher is employed for a fourth year, see M.G.L. c 71, sec. 41), cannot be dismissed, except as part of a general reduction in force, without good cause, defined in M.G.L. c 71, sec. 42 as “inefficiency, incompetency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher, insubordination or failure on the part of the teacher to satisfy teacher performance standards.” A court or arbitrator would be unlikely to find a teacher’s advocacy for special needs students to be “good cause” for termination.

Massachusetts teachers without tenure who have taught for at least ninety calendar days are entitled to notice and written reasons if the school seeks to dismiss them. They also have limited rights to present their side of the case to a principal or superintendent, but they are considered “at will” employees and can still be fired for any legal reason. However, even at will employees may not suffer dismissal or adverse work conditions imposed for an illegal reason, such as retaliation for advocating for a person with disabilities. Case law in Massachusetts also suggests that an employee cannot be terminated or suffer adverse changes in job conditions for a reason that violates public policy – policy that is grounded in a statute or constitutional provision. Presumably, the policies embodied in IDEA, state special education statutes, and in the Massachusetts Constitution Amendment Article 114 (akin to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act) would qualify as “public policy” for these purposes.

In addition, teachers and school employees who belong to a collective bargaining unit may enjoy protections built in to their contracts. When employees feel the school district has unfairly or illegally dismissed them or changed their work conditions, the first stop should be a meeting with the union representative.

The primary federal protections for a person who faces adverse consequences for advocating for kids with disabilities arise under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For example, in Barker v. Riverside County Office of Education, 584 F.3d 821 (9th Cir. 2009), an experienced special education resource teacher had joined another teacher in filing a complaint at the federal Office for Civil Rights.
(OCR) claiming that her employer had violated students’ rights under IDEA. She later alleged in a lawsuit under Section 504 and the ADA that, because of her complaint to OCR, she was forced to leave her job due to arbitrary and intolerable changes the school district made in her work conditions. The district argued that she had no right to sue under those discrimination laws because she was not disabled herself. However, the court rejected that argument, pointing out that Section 504 protects those who speak up for persons with disabilities as certainly as it protects those with disabilities.

Whether a teacher or other school employee enjoys Free Speech protection under the First Amendment for speaking up on behalf of students with disabilities has been complicated by the Supreme Court’s decision in Garcetti v. Ceballos, 547 U.S. 410 (2006), in which the Court held that there was no First Amendment protection when a public employee speaks pursuant to her official duties rather than as a private citizen. However, if an employee’s comments are not exactly part of her job requirements, she could potentially be seen as speaking as a private citizen. For example, in Reinhardt v. Albuquerque Public Schools Board of Education, 595 F.3d 1126 (10th Cir. 2010), a speech-language pathologist complained that her caseload was lower than it should be and that students were being denied services they were entitled to under IDEA. The court said that reporting wrongdoing was not part of the employee’s official job requirements, which were only to provide speech services. As such, her complaints were protected by the First Amendment, despite the holding in Garcetti.

So, protections may exist under tenure laws, public policy, Section 504 and the ADA, and perhaps under the First Amendment. That said, here are two cautionary suggestions:

1) Even if an employee can show that termination or another adverse job change happened for a wrongful reason, if an employer can demonstrate other, non-discriminatory, real reasons for the action, the employer wins. Thus, an employee who wishes to be an effective advocate must always behave professionally – in tone of voice, use of language, behavior under stress, and attitude toward administrators, peers, parents, and students – so that a school district has no reason to punish the employee for poor behavior.

2) Effective advocates should document everything. Keep a journal. Make entries regarding important communications about particular students, school policies, and efforts to obtain different or better resources. Entries should be objective, factual, and record who said what, when, and in whose earshot. Having a record of this kind can be immensely helpful if relations break down and the teacher needs to prove that it was his or her advocacy that led to adverse employment consequences and not some other reason.

Robert Crabtree is a partner at Kotin, Crabtree, and Strong, LLP, a general practice law firm in Boston, MA. He concentrates in special education and disability law.

Need help staying in your home?
The Home Modification Loan Program provides loans to make access and/or safety modifications to the homes of elders and individuals with disabilities

- Providing loans up to $30,000
- Is not based on credit history
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The Sibling Experience: What Parents Need to Know

By Janet Thibeau, Massachusetts Sibling Support Network

What’s it like to be a sibling who has a brother or sister with a disability? The good news is many develop into happy, compassionate, and insightful individuals. However, it can be difficult for a parent to know and anticipate all of the challenges involved in supporting their children who have brothers or sisters with disabilities. At times, siblings may feel confused, angry, and disconnected from their families.

How you respond to your child’s disability will directly influence how your other children respond. Supporting siblings helps them grow into well-adjusted individuals, develop strong family and community ties, and have the skills to become an advocate for themselves and their brothers and sisters. Often parents have a vision for each family member’s role. At times, the role a parent has defined for a sibling is not the role that sibling wants to take. It’s important to recognize siblings need a voice within their family.

Here are some ideas for parents to support their children who have brothers and sisters with disabilities.

Parents can help young siblings:

• Develop positive relationships with their brother and sister
• Explain their brother/sister’s disability to friends
• Explore friendships outside their family

Parents can help older siblings:

• Continue to explore their interests and goals
• Seek opportunities to connect with other siblings
• Balance their own lives and their role as a sibling
• Have opportunities to provide input about their role within the family, and if they want to be involved in their brother/sister’s care
• Navigate a world that defines “family” as “parents” and often leaves out siblings
• Understand the medical, legal, and financial issues associated with their brother/sister’s care.

It’s important to give siblings a voice in these decisions, and also let them know they can change their minds as they grow up.

Massachusetts Sibling Support Network (MSSN)

Supporting siblings can seem overwhelming; however, you don’t need to do it alone. The goal of the MSSN is to support siblings of individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts. We

• Educate siblings about their role in the family and as caregiver
• Create communities for siblings that support them through their lifespan
• Improve access to existing sibling services
• Work to expand the range of sibling services

The MSSN presented a topical conference call for the Federation’s Family-to-Family Health Information Center. If you were unable to join this call, you can listen to the recording about The Sibling Experience and download more information at www.massfamilyvoices.org/Topical_Calls.html.

Additional Sibling Support Resources

SibParent – a listserv for parents to talk about their “other” kids at www.siblingsupport.org/connect/sibparent-a-listserv-just-for-parents.

Sibling Leadership Network – a national network that provides information, support, advocacy tools, and more at www.siblingleadership.org.

Janet is the Vice President of Strategic Planning for the Massachusetts Sibling Support Network. She is also an adult sibling and mother of five children. To learn more about the MSSN, call 617-807-0558 or e-mail info@masiblingsupport.org.

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“And then there’s Massachusetts... the state that has led the nation in achievement gains over the past decade, thanks in large part to its excellent standards—and their serious implementation.” Thus begins a paragraph in “State of the State Standards—and the Common Core—in 2010,” a July 2010 report by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute on the progress of a national movement toward adoption of nationally agreed upon, high quality educational standards by the states.

Why a “Common Core”?
On July 21, 2010, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education voted unanimously to adopt the “Common Core Standards,” in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. Teachers, administrators, civil rights groups, disability advocates, and other experts from across the nation developed the Common Core standards in response to the inconsistencies in educational expectations from state to state. Prior to this, students in one state could be deemed “proficient” whereas in another state the same level of learning could be barely passing. The goal of common standards is to provide a clear, consistent roadmap for preparing children for college and the workforce. Massachusetts played a leading role in the development of the national Common Core Standards.

States that adopt the Common Core Standards may modify them up to 15% with their own standards to enhance or customize them to state needs. In late summer, the ELA and mathematics Curriculum Framework revision panels began work to identify Massachusetts standards that would be added to strengthen the Common Core standards. The augmented Common Core standards were submitted to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and adopted in December 2010. The new standards are titled the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy, Incorporating the Common Core State Standards, and the new Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Mathematics, Incorporating the Common Core State Standards.

What Will the Common Core Standards Mean for Testing in Massachusetts?
At a Curriculum Summit convened in December 2010 by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Dr. Julia Phelps of the DESE laid out the overall plan for implementing the new standards in Massachusetts. Attendees learned that no changes to the curriculum standards are to be implemented this year. The spring 2011 state assessments, known as MCAS, will not reflect Common Core standards. In early 2011, the Massachusetts DESE expects to have a document laying out where the Common Core and our existing standards (the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks) coincide. Districts and schools will be using this document as a planning tool for incorporating the new standards into the schools’ curricula.

The spring 2012 MCAS tests will reflect standards that are shared by Massachusetts Curriculum Guidelines and the national Common Core Standards. By the 2013-2014 school year, Massachusetts will shift completely to the new standards and assessments, according to Dr. Phelps. Massachusetts is now leading a consortium of states to design a standardized testing system that would replace the variety of tests currently used by individual states.

Over the next two years, schools and districts will be taking a serious look at the knowledge and skills that are being taught and learned in order to best prepare all students for the state assessments that will be based on the new Curriculum Frameworks.

Resources
Learn more about Common Core Standards at www.corestandards.org.

For background on Massachusetts’ adoption of the Common Core State Standards, visit www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/1210/item1.html.
The Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides funding for 50 Family-to-Family Health Information Centers. There is one Center in each state; all are family-run. The Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Information Center is a project at the Federation for Children with Special Needs.

Each Center provides free, confidential assistance to families raising children and youth with special health care needs (CY-SHCN), professionals, and interested others around six national performance measures. The Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) established these six measures to ensure CY-SHCN have access to family-centered, community-based, coordinated systems of care. These measures or outcomes are:

1) Family/professional partnership at all levels of decision-making.
2) Access to comprehensive health and related services through a medical home.
3) Early and continuous screening, evaluation, and diagnosis.
4) Adequate public and/or private financing of needed services.
5) Organization of community services so that families can use them easily.
6) Successful transition to all aspects of adult health care, work, and independence.

The MCHB also funds national centers that provide technical assistance to the Family-to-Family Centers (F2Fs) and others to help them work towards each outcome. This article provides an overview of the national technical assistance centers and the information and resources each provides around one or more of the performance measures.

The National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships, a project of Family Voices, helps the F2Fs and others work toward family/professional partnerships to ensure families can partner in decision-making at all levels and will be satisfied with the services they receive. This center also compiles the data collected by all the F2Fs and creates reports that show progress towards each of the

Their Quality of Life is at the Center of Our Family Supports

When you have a loved one with a disability, the support you receive makes all the difference in the quality of life for your loved one and your family. At Seven Hills Family Services’ Family Support Centers, you and your loved one will receive all the support you need to live full and rewarding lives, including:

- Information & Referral
- Trainings in English & Spanish
- Comprehensive Education & Training Library
- Family Support Specialists
- Respite Care

For more information, please contact Robin Foley at 508.796.1860 or rfoley@sevenhills.org.
outcome measures, numbers of families served, and how the data can be used to advance policy and program initiatives to improve systems of care for CYSHCN and their families. Publications include family stories that “illustrate” the work of each F2F to highlight a particular success and to keep families at the center of children’s healthcare. This center also publishes Friday’s Child, a monthly e-newsletter that features leadership in the states, provides legislative updates, and news of other partnership organizations. Learn more at www.familyvoices.org/projects?id=0002.

The National Center for Medical Home Implementation, a project of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), helps ensure all children, including CYSHCN, have access to a medical home. Learn about national and state-specific medical home initiatives, and access a variety of tools families can use to organize medical information about their CYSHCN. There are links to other resources, including the AAP’s Healthy Children. This family-friendly Web site provides information about child development and health by age/stage. Learn more at www.medicalhomeinfo.org.

Technical assistance around early and continuous screening is provided by the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management, based at Utah State University. This center provides information and training to families and professionals, and works to expand hearing screening programs. There are links to programs in each state, information about the types of testing used to screen for and identify hearing loss, and family support resources. Learn more at www.infanthearing.org.

The Catalyst Center works to improve health care financing for CYSHCN. This national center is based out of the Boston University School of Public Health. They work with states and other partners to expand health insurance coverage for CYSHCN, close insurance gaps due to underinsurance, and develop and share innovative financing strategies at the state and national level. Please note, they do not provide individual assistance to families around health care financing, but will connect you with the F2F in your state. The Web site includes a wide variety of publications, videos, and presentations about healthcare financing issues. In addition, the center has developed a State-at-a-Glance Chartbook. If you are thinking of moving and want to learn about health coverage in other states, this is a great resource. Learn more at www.hdwg.org/catalyst.

[Note: If you want information about how national health reform – the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act – will affect health care for CYSHCN in Massachusetts, listen to the playback of a topical conference call the Catalyst Center presented for the Massachusetts F2F at www.massfamilyvoices.org/Topical_Calls.html.]

The Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at UMass-Boston, is the National Center for Community-Based Services. They will create materials for and work with Title V directors, service providers, and families of CYSHCN to ensure community-based services are easy to access. Visit the ICI Web site to learn about all their projects at www.communityinclusion.org.

Got Transition? is the name of the National Health Care Transition Center, located at the Center for Medical Home Improvement (CMHI) at Crotched Mountain Foundation. This newly funded center will work to create health care transition policies, initiatives, and health care transitions tools for professionals, youth, and families to make sure youth and their families receive the support they need to plan for and successfully move from pediatric to adult systems of care. Learn more at www.gottransition.org.

While not a separate performance measure, cultural competence is part of the work of all the F2Fs. The National Center for Cultural Competence (NCCC) at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. assists the F2Fs, and others, to help ensure programs are designed and implemented to deliver culturally competent services to families with children and youth with special health care needs. Visit the NCCC Web site to learn about their projects, and access resources and tools. Of particular interest are the self-assessment checklists for providers, which families can also use as a starting point to develop questions to ask potential providers and to assess the physical environment of the office to see if the practice will be a welcoming place and that the provider will be a good match for their child. Learn more at www.nccc.georgetown.edu.

Contact the Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Information Center at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 301 for free, confidential, individualized assistance around these six national performance measures. Learn more at www.massfamilyvoices.org.
Las normas nacionales de aprendizaje común y Massachusetts
Por Janet Vohs, Director of Publications, Mass PIRC

“Y luego tenemos el caso de Massachusetts... un estado líder a nivel nacional por sus logros en materia de rendimiento escolar durante la última década, en buena medida gracias a sus excelentes normas y a la cuidadosa implementación de las mismas.” Así comienza un breve párrafo introductorio en el informe del Instituto Thomas B. Fordham titulado “Situación de las normas estatales y el aprendizaje común en 2010”, que detalla el avance del esfuerzo nacional por adoptar normas comunes que establezcan expectativas altas en todos los estados.

¿Por qué un aprendizaje común?
El 21 de julio de 2010, el Consejo de Educación Primaria y Secundaria de Massachusetts votó unánimemente que se adoptaran “normas de aprendizaje común” (Common Core Standards) en las materias de Inglés (English Language Arts, ELA) y Matemáticas. Estas normas fueron desarrolladas por maestros, administradores, grupos de derechos civiles y de apoyo a personas con discapacidades, así como expertos de todo el país, en respuesta a las diferentes expectativas en torno a la educación en los diferentes estados. El nivel de aprendizaje que en algunos estados se consideraba “competente”, en otros era apenas suficiente para pasar de grado. El objetivo de las normas es establecer un plan claro y coherente para preparar a los niños para la universidad y el empleo. Massachusetts desempeñó un papel de liderazgo en el desarrollo de las normas nacionales de aprendizaje común.

Los estados que adopten las normas nacionales de aprendizaje común podrán ajustarlas luego hasta un 15% de acuerdo a sus propias normas, a fin de mejorarlo o adaptarlo a sus propias necesidades. A finales del verano, los paneles de revisión de las estructuras curriculares para las materias de Inglés (ELA) y Matemáticas comenzaron a identificar las normas de Massachusetts que podrían agregarse para reforzar las normas de aprendizaje común. Las normas aumentadas de aprendizaje común se presentaron al Consejo de Educación Primaria y Secundaria de Massachusetts y se aprobaron el 21 de diciembre. Los títulos formales de las nuevas normas son: “Estructura curricular de Massachusetts para Inglés y Alfabetismo, que incorpora las normas estatales de aprendizaje común” y la nueva “Estructura curricular de Massachusetts para Matemáticas, que incorpora las normas estatales de aprendizaje común” (Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy, Incorporating the Common Core State Standards, y Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Mathematics, Incorporating the Common Core State Standards).

¿Qué implican las normas de aprendizaje común para las pruebas de Massachusetts?
En una reunión cumbre sobre planes de estudio celebrada en diciembre de 2010 por el Departamento de Educación Primaria y Secundaria de Massachusetts, la Dra. Julia Phelps expuso el plan general para poner en práctica las normas nuevas en nuestro estado. Los asistentes se enteraron de que este año no se implementarán cambios en las estructuras curriculares. Las evaluaciones estatales de primavera de 2011, conocidas como MCAS, no reflejarán las normas de aprendizaje básico. El Departamento de Educación Primaria y Secundaria de Massachusetts espera tener un documento que explica los puntos de coincidencia entre las normas de aprendizaje común y las normas existentes (las estructuras curriculares de Massachusetts) para principios de 2011. Los distritos y las escuelas usarán este documento como herramienta de planificación para incorporar las nuevas normas a los planes de estudio.

Las pruebas del MCAS primavera de 2012 reflejarán las normas comunes a las estructuras curriculares de Massachusetts y las normas nacionales de aprendizaje común. Según la Dra. Phelps, Massachusetts habrá adoptado por completo las nuevas normas y evaluaciones para el año escolar 2013-2014. Massachusetts lidera actualmente un consorcio de varios estados que buscan diseñar un sistema de evaluación estandarizado que sustituiría la variedad de pruebas utilizadas actualmente por cada estado.

Durante los próximos dos años las escuelas y los distritos examinarán detenidamente los conocimientos y habilidades que se enseñan y aprenden a fin de preparar mejor a los estudiantes para las evaluaciones estatales basadas en las nuevas estructuras curriculares.

Recursos
Para obtener más información sobre las normas de aprendizaje común y descargar copias, visite la página web www.corestandards.org

Para más información sobre el papel de Massachusetts en el desarrollo de las normas de aprendizaje común, lea el memorando del 10 de diciembre de 2010 del Comisionado Mitchell Chester al Departamento de Educación Primaria y Secundaria de Massachusetts: www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/1210/item1.html

El centro de recursos e información para padres de Massachusetts (Mass PIRC) es un proyecto de la federación dedicado a ayudar padres de todos los niño ser socios iguales con educadores en la educación de sus niños. Llámense al 1-877-471-0980 o visiten en nuestra pagina Web www.masspirc.org.
Chances are your family has already discovered the entertainment factor of YouTube (www.YouTube.com). Children and adults alike can browse amateur and professional short videos at no cost.

While you can search and watch YouTube videos without registering on the site, if you create your own account, which is easy to do and free, you can bookmark and organize videos of interest. You can also subscribe to channels to receive updates about new videos. YouTube will also recommend related videos based on your viewing history. So, what does this have to do with assistive technology (AT)?

Researching AT Products
YouTube is a way you can share AT products or ideas with your child’s IEP team, family members or others. Enter “assistive technology” into the YouTube Search box to find videos about AT in the special education classroom, for daily living, or disability-specific AT such as visual impairment, cerebral palsy, or autism. Sort the results by “view count” to find the most popular videos. This is a great way to learn about products that can benefit your child both at school and at home. Here are some suggestions to find AT products:

- Search by product name or manufacturer. For example, Dynavox Technologies and Don Johnson Inc. have dozens of professional videos you can watch on YouTube. You’ll also find tutorials and demonstrations of popular products like Dragon Naturally Speaking that can help you decide if this technology is appropriate for your child.

- Search by product type or category, such as electric wheelchairs, adapted vans, or smartpens.

- Browse Channels. Cambium Learning Technologies has its own channel where you can find tutorials on their Classroom Suite and Kurzweil products. Other channels that highlight AT products include MassMATCH AT Video Channel, YourSpecialChild, LivingWellwithAutism, AbleNet, and Enabling Devices.

Viewing AT in Action
Video is a great way to watch children using AT in school and home settings. There are informational videos about changing g-tubes. You can see children using standers, gait trainers, or talking with augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices by eye-gaze. Teacher and parent-made videos about using visual schedules and picture exchange communication systems (PECS) showcase ideas you may want to try with your children.

Be Inspired to Advocate
Seeing is believing. YouTube has dozens of video clips of children and adults using AT to achieve their personal, academic and self-determination goals. Search for “Taking Charge 3” or the “AssistiveWare Channel” to see the examples of how AT helps children make the most of their abilities. These will inspire you and help you advocate for your child’s needs.

Watch the video “The Case Against Assistive Technology,” and you’ll be motivated to continue advocating for the use of new technologies to help all our children who learn differently.

Randi is the parent of a child with cerebral palsy who relies on assistive technology for mobility, communication, and daily living. Randi is also a member of the Federation’s Board of Directors, and the MassMATCH Assistive Technology Advisory Committee. Learn more about MassMATCH at www.massmatch.org. And, if you haven’t visited the Federation’s YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/fcsnvideos, please do. You can watch conference video, Gala presentations, and more.

Assistive Technology Corner...
Seeing Is Believing – Using YouTube for Assistive Technology Information and Inspiration
By Randi Sargent
Padrões Comuns para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico e Massachusetts

Por Janet Vohs, Director of Publications, Mass PIRC

“E então em Massachusetts, . . . o estado que liderou a nação nos ganhos de desempenho escolar durante a década passada, graças em grande parte, aos seus excelentes padrões – e a sua implementação séria.” Assim, inicia um parágrafo curto no “Estado dos Padrões Estaduais” – e Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico – em 2010”, um relatório de julho de 2010, apresentado pelo Instituto Thomas B. Fordham sobre o progresso de um movimento nacional em direção à adoção aprovada nacionalmente nos altos padrões a nível estadual.

Por que um “Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico”? Em 21 de julho de 2010, o Conselho de Educação Elementar e Secundária de Massachusetts votou com unanimidade na adoção dos “Padrões para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico” (Common Core Standards), em “Língua Inglesa (ELA) e Matemática. Os professores, administradores, grupos de direitos civis, defensores de deficientes, e outros especialistas através de toda a nação desenvolveram os padrões para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico em resposta à inconsistência das expectativas educacionais de estado a estado. Baseados nos padrões estaduais, os estudantes em um estado poderiam ser sensatamente julgados “proficientes” considerando-se que, em um outro estado, o mesmo nível de ensino poderia ser considerado como passar de ano raso. O objetivo dos programas de padrões para o conteúdo curricular do ensino básico é o de prover um roteiro claro e consistente para preparar as crianças e a força de trabalho. O estado de Massachusetts desempenhou um papel de liderança no desenvolvimento nacional dos Padrões para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico.

Os estados que adotam os padrões para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico podem então alterá-los em 15% com seus próprios padrões para melhorá-los ou alterá-los de acordo com as necessidades do estado. No final do verão, os painéis próprios padrões para melhorá-los ou alterá-los de acordo com as necessidades do estado. No final do verão, os painéis do Conselho de Educação Elementar e Secundária e adotados em 21 de dezembro. Os novos padrões estão atualmente entitulados de Estruturas Curriculares de Massachusetts para Língua Inglesa - Leitura e Escrita, Incorporando os Padrões Estaduais para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico, e as novas Estruturas Curriculares de Massachusetts para Matemática, Incorporando os Padrões Estaduais para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico.

O Que os Padrões Comuns para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico Significam para os Testes em Massachusetts? Em uma Conferência Curricular, convocada em dezembro de 2010, pelo Departamento de Educação Elementar e Secundária (ESE), de Massachusetts, a Dra. Julia Phelps do ESE de Mass., expôs o plano global para a implementação dos novos padrões em Massachusetts. Os participantes foram informados de que nenhuma mudança dos padrões curriculares seriam implementados este ano. As avaliações estaduais, da primavera de 2011, conhecidas como MCAS, não refletirão os padrões comuns para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico. No início de 2011, o ESE de Massachusetts espera ter um documento esquematizando onde os padrões para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico e os que já temos (Estruturas Curriculares de Massachusetts) coincidem. Os distritos e as escolas estarão usando estes documentos como uma ferramenta de planejamento para incorporar os novos padrões nos currículos escolares.

Os testes de primavera do MCAS de 2012, refletirão os padrões que são compartilhados pelas Normas Curriculares de Massachusetts e os Padrões Comuns para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico. Até o ano letivo de 2013-2014, de acordo com a Dra. Phelps, o estado de Massachusetts fará a mudança completa para os novos padrões e avaliações. O estado de Massachusetts está agora liderando uma associação de estados para planejar um sistema de teste padronizado que substituiriam a quantidade de testes usados atualmente em cada específico estado.

Nos próximos dois anos, será a hora em que as escolas e os distritos darão uma olhada séria no conhecimento e capacidades que estão sendo ensinados e aprendidos para que com isto possam preparar melhor todos os estudantes para as avaliações estaduais que serão baseadas nas novas Estruturas Curriculares.

Fontes

Para histórico informativo sobre os Padrões Comuns para o Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico, “Common Core Standards” e para obter as cópias do programa, por favor veja o www.corestandards.org

Para acompanhamento sobre a participação de Massachusetts no Conteúdo Curricular do Ensino Básico, por favor veja: Memorandum do Delegado de Ensino do ESE Mitchell Chester, de 10/12/10, ao Conselho do ESE no www.doe.mass.edu/boe/docs/1210/item1.html

O Centro de Recursos e Informação aos Pais de Massachussetts e (Mass PIRC) é um projeto da Federação dedicado a ajudar os pais de todas as crianças a estabelecer uma parceria com os educadores de seus filhos. Ligue para 1-877-471-0980 ou visite o site www.masspirc.org.
**Managing My Money: Banking and Budgeting Basics**

By Natalie Hale. Woodbine House 2010. 175 pp

Natalie Hale created this workbook and CD to help teens and adults with special needs learn to manage money. As a parent of an adult with Down syndrome, Ms. Hale knows first hand that learning to manage money is an essential life skill. As a reading consultant, she is expert at developing tools families and educators can use to teach individuals with learning disabilities or developmental delays the skills they need to live independently. While written at a third to fourth grade level, each lesson was designed for an individual working with a parent, teacher, or other adult.

There are three sections: Keeping Records, Keeping a Budget, and Keeping a Checking Account. Each section has separate lessons. A first grade reading and writing level is recommended. Students will also need a calculator. The type size is large, color-coded, and the graphics are colorful and engaging.

**Assistive Technology for Young Children: Creating Inclusive Learning Environments**

By Kathleen Curry Sadao and Nancy B. Robinson. Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. 2010. 327 pp

The authors, both early childhood specialists, created this book to support the efforts of professionals and families in identifying assistive technology (AT) that will help young children, birth through 5 years old, meet developmental and educational goals identified on their IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan for early intervention) or IEP (Individualized Education Program) in school.

They define AT as “any tool, device, or adaptation that allows [young children] more ways to gain access to the people, places, and settings where they can be exposed to typical developmental activities.”

This book is based on research and the four federal laws that provide individuals with disabilities full access to AT and services. These are:

1) The Technology-Related Assistance of Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988 (the Tech Act)
2) Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
3) Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)
4) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Each chapter provides information about AT options, evaluations, strategies for overcoming any barriers, and how to use the AT to help a child’s functional development such as fostering early literacy skills, play, and social interactions to support inclusion. There is an emphasis on the importance of family partnerships. The resources mentioned throughout the book are categorized by chapter in a separate section at the end. Many of the resources provide free stories, adapted books, and Boardmaker downloads. A CD-ROM is included as well. It contains printable forms for evaluating a child’s AT needs, guidance for choosing AT strategies, and toolkits that can be customized to help each child meet developmental goals through the use of AT. It also includes case studies.
SAVE-THE-DATE

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**Gala 2011 - Celebrating Every Child**
Seaport Hotel • Boston, MA
Friday, May 13, 2011
Annual Celebration
6:00 pm - 10:00 pm

**Parent Consultant Training Institute**
The Federation Office • Boston, MA
Fridays from April 29 – June 17, 2011
9:00 am – 4:00 pm each day
Applications will be accepted from April 1 through April 22.