Representative Barbara L’Italien highlighted one of the most powerful tools families of children and youth with special health care needs can use to effect systems change—family stories.

The Family Voice
by Beth Dworetzky, Mass Family Voices

Joining Voices is an annual conference hosted by the Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center, a project of Mass Family Voices, Federation for Children with Special Needs. The goal of this event is to provide a training opportunity that highlights strategies parents of children and youth with special health care needs can use to influence policy development around health care services.

Sixty-four parents and professionals from throughout the Commonwealth attended the Joining Voices conference at the UCC Conference Center in Framingham on December 1, 2005. They enjoyed an opportunity to network and to attend breakout sessions about communication styles, MassHealth, Chapter 171, legislative advocacy and health care financing. A Real Choice Systems Change Grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to Mass Family Voices made it possible to waive a registration fee for all attendees. Our thanks to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health for providing additional funding which was used to help families defray the costs associated with travel to and from the conference and childcare.

This year, Representative Barbara L’Italien, 18th Essex District, delivered an inspirational keynote address that highlighted one of the most powerful tools families of children and youth with special health care needs can use to effect systems change—family stories. Using her own family’s story as an ‘illustration’, Representative L’Italien left her audience realizing they do not need to hold elective office in order to effect change. In fact, Ms. L’Italien refers to herself as an “accidental legislator.” She loved politics in high school but until redistricting created a new legislative seat for her town, she had never run for any office.

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Welcome Amanda Green
We welcome Amanda Green, the newest member of our Parent Training and Information staff. She has three boys, ages 15, 11, and 9, the eldest of whom has disabilities. For six years, Amanda served as Co-Chair of Belmont’s special education parent advisory council and was a member of several school district committees. Amanda holds a Master’s degree in English literature and has taught 7th and 8th grade English, as well as ESL (English as a Second Language) and GED (General Education Development Exam to receive a high school equivalency diploma). At the Federation, Amanda works part-time, helping to coordinate workshops and monitoring the new PAC Chair Information Listserve. She is extremely excited to be working for an organization she has admired for years and is grateful to have terrific co-workers!

Elba’s Story
Please join us in welcoming our newest Parents’ PLACE staff member, Elba Vargas, the Statewide Trainer and Outreach Specialist for Spanish Speaking families. Even before joining the Federation staff, Elba was familiar with the Federation’s mission, and had traveled throughout the state, attending every workshop offered by the Federation projects. Elba was on a mission of her own. She was concerned about her second child and wanted to act quickly. He was not learning many words, and by the time he was 18 months old, he completely stopped talking. Despite consolation from others that this was a phase her child would outgrow, Elba instinctively knew something was wrong. Using the yellow pages of the area phone book as a resource, she called anyone and everyone to find out about childhood learning delays.

At 21 months old, her son was diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD), and later was given a diagnosis of High Functioning Autism and Hyperlexia. Elba grieved the “loss of her perfect baby.” Fortunately, her developmental pediatrician gave her a packet of materials that had a list of resources and groups and wisely advised her, “don’t do this alone, seek the support of others.” Elba heeded those words and took action. In addition to the help she received from her area early intervention program, she explored therapeutic and fun community activities for her child. A “very patient” staff at the local YMCA toddler program worked for six months alongside Elba to get her son fully integrated into gymnastics and swimming. Later on, Elba became a “Y” volunteer and worked with staff on ways to include children with disabilities in their programs. Elba now advocates for full inclusion of children with disabilities in programs and social groups. It can change a “child’s life forever” and leads to greater humanity, compassion, and empathy for the most vulnerable people.

Elba’s energy and enthusiasm led to her involvement with the Preschool Council, Community Partnerships for Children, the ARC, Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, the Special Education Parent Advisory Council at her son’s school, Family TIES of Massachusetts and other Federation for Children with Special Needs projects.

During one of her many visits to the Federation website (www.fcsn.org), Elba noticed a posting for a bilingual Trainer and Outreach Specialist to Spanish Speaking families. Elba applied and the rest, as they say, is history.

Now Elba teaches other families how to work in partnership with schools to make sure their children, with and without disabilities, have the best education possible.

Elba can be contacted at 1-877-471-0980, ext. 332 or via e-mail at evargas@fcsn.org.

Crossing Frontiers

by Sara Diaz

In December 2005, I went on vacation to Colombia, my native country. Not only was this a vacation, but also an opportunity to advance my personal mission - providing guidance to Latino families whose children have special needs. This opportunity, to help the people in my country, was very satisfying to me. I offered a presentation at the Down Syndrome Corporation in Bogota, Colombia. Eighty parents of children with Down syndrome attended. It was wonderful to visit this organization that provides support to parents of children with Down syndrome, and to see how well the parents support each other. My presentation was very well received. I was proud to talk about the mission of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, my role at the Federation and my enriching experience as a mother of a child with Down syndrome in this country. I also spoke about the special education laws in the United States as well as the educational process in Massachusetts. I am very happy that there are no barriers that limit the orientation and help given to families of children with special needs.
This year’s Federation Conference was very exciting. Our keynote speaker was a Massachusetts mom who has succeeded in telling her powerful story of parenting a child with autism. Susan Senator has done what most of us have probably said we would like to do. How many times has something happened in your family’s life and you responded with the statement, “Someday I’m going to write a book!” Well, Susan did write a book, and she has graciously agreed to come to the conference and tell part of her story.

Stories—our stories, as parents and family members of children with disabilities are among the most powerful advocacy tools we possess. Each of our stories is unique, but at the same time touches something deeper that connects us as a community. The struggles our children and families face are seemingly insurmountable at times. At other times our stories illustrate the irony and the humor of our lives. From them we discover that we are not alone in facing the challenges of each day and we gain a perspective that empowers us to keep on going.

Stories—our stories, as parents and family members of children with disabilities are among the most powerful advocacy tools we possess. From them we discover that we are not alone in facing the challenges of each day and we gain a perspective that empowers us to keep on going.

The “zero reject” policy of IDEA has been decried and challenged and pushed to its limits, but it holds fast as the premier disability policy of our land. Under this law, no child with a disability can be pushed away, kept out or rejected. That is not to say that the law is being perfectly implemented or that some children aren’t falling through the cracks of our systems. We know all those things are happening and parents must fight at times to assert their rights. The important point is that we have rights and as a result our children with disabilities are able to take their rightful place in our schools and communities.

Susan’s story, my story, your story are the stories that can change our world. When we come together as a community, as we did at our annual conference on March 4th, the world seems to become a different and a better place. I enjoyed seeing you at the conference and hearing your stories.

Rich Robison

From the Executive Director

Story Time—Family Stories as Tools for Change

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Parents’ PLACE in the Media

By Jessica Krywosa

Parents’ PLACE has been very busy criss-crossing the state with media outreach efforts. Recently, you could hear Parents’ PLACE trainers being interviewed on WAQY radio in Springfield, see Parents’ PLACE trainers on Spanish-language TV in Worcester, or read about Parents’ PLACE in newspapers in Boston, Worcester, Springfield and elsewhere! This media coverage has kept the Parents’ PLACE very busy with workshops, outreach, dissemination and many, many phone calls.

Parents’ PLACE (Parents Learning About Children’s Education) is a Federation project that helps families understand their rights under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Supplemental Educational Services, school accountability, teacher qualifications, and school choice are just a few of the NCLB provisions that many families have yet to learn about. Parents’ PLACE has been busy spreading the word across the state. Workshops and several hundreds of thousands of publications are helping many families better understand how they can navigate the complex school system to advocate for the best education for their child. Parents’ PLACE also works with educators and schools to help them create school environments that are family-friendly and welcoming.

For more information, contact Jessica Krywosa by telephone at 617-399-8343 or via email at Jessica@fcsn.org.

[Editor’s Note: Read the latest Parents’ Place Bulletin, in English, Spanish and Portuguese, included in this issue and visit www.pplace.org for a listing of Parents’ PLACE workshops.]

News from the PTI

Spring and Summer Parent Consultant Training Institutes

The Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) at the Federation for Children with Special Needs is pleased to announce the Spring and Summer Parent Consultant Training Institute schedule. The purpose of these Training Institutes is to produce parents and professionals who are knowledgeable, skilled and able to make a sustained commitment to represent their children, other parents of children with special needs and/or persons with special needs in matters relating to special education. Depending on the location, the program consists of three to eight daylong sessions with the option to do a 50-hour internship. Topics include: special education laws, negotiation, mediation, inclusion, transition, communication skills, and parent professional partnerships. Class size is limited to 30.

Fee: $325.00 for parents, $425.00 for professionals. The fee covers tuition and materials; a limited number of scholarships are available. Parents of children with developmental disabilities can also apply to the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council for Consumer Empowerment Funds, but you must apply at least 10 days in advance of the Institute you want to attend. The application is available on-line at: http://www.mass.gov/mddc/cefp/ or by calling 617-770-7676, ext. 115.

Plymouth: Meeting dates are: March 17, 20, 24, 27, 31, April 3, 7, and 10. The first five sessions will be held at the Plymouth Public Library; the location of the final three sessions will be announced. Each session will run from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., depending on the length of that day’s presentation. For more information, please contact Phyllis Sneirson at 617-236-7210 or e-mail phyllis@fcsn.org.

West: Meeting dates are March 30, 31, and April 1, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. This 3-day training will be held at UCP, 208 West Street in Pittsfield. Continuing education opportunities will be held the first Monday of every month for May, June, September, October, November and December. For an application and more information, please contact: Julie Sinclair at 413-323-0681 or sinclair@fcsn.org.

Central: Meetings will be at Clark University, on consecutive Fridays from May 5 – June 23. Each session will run from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, please contact Mary Loughlin at 508-798-0531 or e-mail mloughlin@fcsn.org.

Boston: Meetings dates are on consecutive days, June 26 – 30, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and will be held at the Federation Offices, 1135 Tremont St., Suite 420, in Boston. For more information, please contact Phyllis Sneirson at 617-236-7210 or e-mail phyllis@fcsn.org.
The Family Voice, continued from page 1

Representative L'Italien's journey into the world of special needs began with her son's diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome. It was difficult to find the right school placement for her child and she quickly realized the importance of getting actively involved in the school system. She became the vice president of the special education parent advisory council at her son's school, and realizing that "networking is a Godsend" and that "no matter where you are in your journey there is always someone behind you looking for information and support" she started a local Asperger's support group. Ms. L'Italien expanded her support efforts regionally and began to arrange conferences and trainings for both parents and professionals. These activities were instrumental in establishing the New England Chapter of the Aspergers Association (AANE). This group had only a small amount of funding, but they set up a phone line to provide information to parents, other advocates, physicians, and school personnel. AANE is now a national model for supporting families whose children have Aspergers and the professionals who serve them.

When the new legislative seat was created, despite having four children, Barbara L'Italien decided to run; she wanted "to give a voice to the folks who didn't have one, especially seniors and the disabled." Once elected, she brought her 'momness' to her job. She invited representatives from the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR), and the Department of Mental Health to her office. She realized her personal story was a powerful advocacy tool and, along with homemade baked goods and coffee, shared it with state agency personnel to build a base of support. This was instrumental in creating the Autism Division within the DMR.

Representative L'Italien encouraged others to share their family's stories; these stories can be an effective way to establish rapport with elected representatives. Once you've used a story to help someone understand your problem, you can ask for help, and even provide options. The important thing is to "be realistic. Change is incremental, but can happen."

Mass Family Voices Listserv
If you have a family story, resource, support or other information you'd like to share (or learn about), please consider en'listing' in the Mass Family Voices listserv. This list is an on-line opportunity for parents and professionals to build partnerships, exchange resources and information, ask questions and hear from the collective expertise of our diverse and growing membership as we support each other in our advocacy efforts on behalf of children and youth with special health care needs. For more information about the Mass Family Voices listserv or about our state chapter of Family Voices, visit www.massfamilyvoices.org, call 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210 or e-mail assfv@fcsn.org.

The Family Opportunity Act, continued from page 1

for a family of 4) in order to maintain Medicaid eligibility for their children with severe medical needs. If their family incomes were higher, their children would lose the comprehensive health care services provided by Medicaid and they would not be able to afford the health care their children needed without this benefit. The other option was for families to place their children in institutional settings in order to keep their Medicaid eligibility.

On February 1, 2006, after six years of lobbying, Congress finally passed the Family Opportunity Act (FOA). This legislation has three important parts that will benefit families with children and youth with special health needs (including mental/behavioral and emotional health needs).

1) States now have the option of creating a Medicaid buy-in for families who were previously ineligible for Medicaid because their family incomes were too high. Families with children with disabilities who earn up to 300% FPL ($60,000/year for a family of 4) may now buy into their state's Medicaid program to supplement the health care services not provided by their primary health insurance. Families may now earn more than FPL and still have Medicaid eligibility for their children with complex health care needs. [Note: This benefit is modeled on the Massachusetts MassHealth/Common-Health program. For more information about CommonHealth, call the phone number at the end of this article.]

2) The FOA provides funding for ten states to establish demonstration projects to evaluate the effectiveness of treating Medicaid-eligible children with complex mental health needs in their homes and communities rather than in psychiatric institutions.

3) Each state will establish a Family-to-Family Health Care Information and Education Center. It is hoped these Centers will be part of a national family-to-family system that provides guidance on programs and services available to families with children and youth with special health care needs and help families determine their future needs. Massachusetts has a Family-to-Family Center, funded by a grant from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to Mass Family Voices @ Federation for Children with Special Needs. Families that need help accessing public benefits can contact the Mass Family-to-Family Center for assistance and help. Phone: 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210. E-mail: massfv@fcsn.org.

Ask the Expert

The IEP Vision Statement

By Julie Sinclair

What is a vision statement?
The vision statement is a key section of the IEP (Individualized Educational Program). This is where YOU, the parent, can express your hopes and dreams for your child’s future. Your vision should guide the Team throughout the entire IEP development process, and result in the creation of a program that will bring your child closer to that vision in a meaningful way. This includes the planning of your child’s schedule at school and choice of classes, as well as the planning of supports and services for access to academic and non-academic activities.

Why should I write a vision statement?
Without a vision you can end up in a place that you don’t recognize or a place that was not part of what you planned for your child!

• Your child’s vision could be written by professionals who have an understanding of the disability characteristics but do not have a full understanding of how the disability affects your child.

• If the vision is written only by professionals it may not match your expectations for your child’s future.

Does my vision have to be realistic?
Dare to dream! The important piece about vision is that it is a description that draws a picture of what your child’s desired outcomes will be for the future. Children, teens and young adults will discover their passions, interests, skills and preferences along the way. School is a time of self-discovery for all children, with and without disabilities. Remember that your family’s vision should not be viewed as binding. Your vision can change and mature over time just as your child’s interests will change and mature.

How should vision statements change as my child gets older?
• When your child is only 3 or 4 years old, you may be just learning about the disability. Think about what you would like to see your child being able to do five years from now. At this age, your child needs to be building important skills in the areas of communication and social/emotional development.

• As your child enters elementary school, your vision may include a desire for your child to gain the skills needed to be successful in academic and social environments. If your child is provided with the supports to gain knowledge of facts and figures, and to successfully communicate with peers, she will be well on her way to a full and meaningful life after school.

• As your child prepares to enter middle school, you may want to take some time to summarize your journey thus far. Ask your child and yourself, “What have we learned about your learning style, talents, and interests?” Does your child understand how his disability impacts learning or assessments? Would middle school be a time to explore that further?

• Upon reaching high school, the vision focus should largely be planned and voiced by your student. All students entering high school begin to think about their future and what it will look like. Your child may ask herself: Where will I live? Will I attend college? Where will I work? Who will help support me? What kind of community memberships and/or activities will I participate in? What will I do for fun? Your child is beginning to identify his passions, interests, learning style and preferences based on life experiences. In high school, your child’s success will depend on his/her ability to explain these to teachers, friends and future employers.

How can my “vision” be woven throughout the IEP?
• IEP page 1 Student Strengths and Key Evaluation Results Summary. This is a great opportunity to share your child’s interests, preferences and personal accomplishments.

• IEP page 1 Vision Statement is designed by you and or your child. It is a description of what the desired outcome for the future can hold. It is written with high expectations with the hope of fruition.

• IEP page 2 Present Levels of Education Performance A: General Curriculum: Think of how your child is accessing the general education curriculum and how the general curriculum can support the designed vision outcome. Share accommodations that can be used in a variety of settings.

• IEP page 3 Present Levels of Education Performance B: Other Educational Needs: Check all considerations that could support the vision outcome. Be sure to look at extra curricular activities, nonacademic activities, behavior needs, travel training or other related services.

• IEP page 4 Current Performance Level/Measurable Annual Goals: Think about the skills your child needs to build in order to achieve the goals set in their vision and how your child could be supported through the measurable goals in the least restrictive environment.

• IEP page 5 Service Delivery: Make sure the service delivery page reflects the support services and personnel expertise that is imperative for a positive vision outcome for your child.

• IEP page 6 Schedule Modification: Does your child’s vision outcome require a shorter school day, longer day, shorter school year or longer year?
Gift Fund Brightens the Holiday Season
For Children in DSS Custody

By Andrea Watson

For the past seven years, Parents for Residential Reform (PFRR) and the Federation for Children with Special Needs have raised money to ensure that young people with disabilities in the care and custody of the Department of Social Services are not forgotten during the holiday season. These funds are used to purchase age-appropriate holiday gifts for children who live in residential, group home, pediatric nursing home, hospital, and shelter care, and who have little or no family involvement.

Since its inception, the Children's Holiday Gift Fund has provided holiday gifts for thousands of young people; without this fund, these kids would be left behind during the holidays. In addition to PFRR and Federation fundraising efforts, which include an annual silent auction and dinner dance, we have a compassionate member of the press helping us out. For the past two years, Adrian Walker, a columnist for the Boston Globe, has brought the importance of the Gift Fund into the public eye by writing amazing columns about these kids and how the Fund helps. [Read the column at www.pfrr.org/Goble-article-05.htm]. This support has helped us get a lot closer to achieving our goal of "no child left behind" during the holiday season.

One of this year's most heartfelt donations was a $400.00 check from a group of students at the Dr. Franklin Perkins School in Lancaster, MA. The students, as part of their residential special education program, host a yearly arts and crafts sale. The money they earn is given back to the community in various ways; this year, the Children's Holiday Gift Fund was one of their recipients.

PFRR was proud to be able to spend part of the holidays with some of these same young students, thanks to the help of the Wahlberg Family and the Mark Wahlberg Foundation. Through the efforts of actor Bob Wahlberg, and his brother Jim, PFRR was able to host some young people at the Wahlberg Holiday Party. We loved the opportunity to meet these kids, and the kids had a much-deserved good time. We thought we were going to surprise the kids with the party, but the kids ended up surprising us when they presented us with their donation!

Save the date for our 8th Annual Silent Auction and Dinner Dance, to be held on Friday, September 29th, 2006, at the Park Plaza Hotel. Our Powerful Friends Awardees will be Emmy-nominated actress and former foster child Victoria Rowell, along with Ernie Boch Jr., known for his entertaining automobile ads and his charitable works.

The Marsels, who keep us on the dance floor every year, will be joined by Grammy winners John Ford Coley, formerly of England Dan and John Ford Coley, and Terry Sylvester, former lead singer for the Hollies. Visit our website at http://www.pfrr.org for updates. We look forward to seeing you on September 29th and thank you for your continued support.

Ask the Expert: The IEP Vision Statement, continued

* IEP page 7 State or District-Wide Assessment: How will your child take standardized tests including MCAS? Your child can take MCAS three ways: without accommodations, with accommodations or through a portfolio of your child's best work.

* IEP page 8 Additional Information: Any part of the vision outcome that was not supported in another part of the IEP document can be added here, for example: assistive technology, common planning time, communication log, etc. . . .

Can I change my vision?
Yes. Visions are living, breathing statements that can take on many forms throughout the years. The important thing is to create a meaningful vision with high expectations for success!
Family TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide information and support network for families of children with special needs. It is a project at the Federation for Children with Special Needs, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division for Perinatal Health, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs. Families of children with special needs can receive information, referrals, direct parent-to-parent support, and training from Family TIES.

Federation Conference: This year, the Federation’s Annual Conference was held on Saturday, March 4 at the World Trade Center in Boston. The Federation conference is always a great opportunity for the Family TIES staff to meet many of the parents who have called us, and having connected in person, inspires new calls as well. We appreciated all the people that took time to stop by our exhibit table in the Main Lobby and to visit our resource tables in the Exhibit Hall. Additionally, our staff presented two conference sessions: Practical Parenting Tips for Young Children with Autism and Preparing Your Family’s Emergency Plan. We enjoyed seeing you in Boston!

Resource Directories: The 2006 edition of the Family TIES of Massachusetts Directory of Resources for Families of Children with Special Needs was unveiled at the Conference, and conference attendees got one first! For those who could not attend, the new edition will be available on-line at www.massfamilyties.org and Regional Coordinators will have copies to distribute soon.

Staff Updates: We are delighted to welcome Linea Luck Pearson as the Parent-to-Parent Coordinator for Family TIES. Some of you may remember Linea, who was among the first parents hired by Family TIES. She returns with her warmth and enthusiasm, and a strong desire to bring together parents who are seeking support from other parents. Please call Linea at the Central Regional Health Office (508-792-7880, Ext. 2175) to talk about arranging a parent match or becoming a support parent.

Parent-To-Parent Program: The mission of the Parent-to-Parent Program is to bring together parents facing similar challenges in raising their children with special needs. We believe that sharing experiences provides strength and support for each other. This volunteer-based program provides opportunities for all parents to share, on both sides of the conversation. Parents contact us in search of a listening ear—another parent who has faced some of the same issues and concerns as they now face. This may be in response to a new diagnosis or a new challenge, a transition in the child’s life, or just to recharge their batteries. Parents seeking this kind of support can contact Family TIES through the Regional Coordinators or our toll-free number, 1-800-905-TIES (8437), or call Linea directly. If you’re anxious to get started, the forms needed to begin the match process are available on our website. Visit the Parent-to-Parent section at www.massfamilyties.org.

Have you enjoyed the support of another parent when facing a challenge around your child’s special needs? Can you share that same kind of support with another parent? To date we have approximately 150 parents who have been trained to fill that role - and we are always happy to have more. We are especially in need of parents of children with complex medical conditions. Our Regional Coordinators are working with Linea to set up a training schedule for parents in their regions. Please contact your local Regional Coordinator or call our toll-free number if you are interested in joining us for a two-hour training. Afterwards, you will be able to offer a listening ear to another parent in need.

Family TIES Regional Coordinators

Greater Boston: Roxanne Hoke-Chandler 617-541-2875
Southeast: Karen Douglass 781-774-6749
Metrowest: Lisa Mayer 781-774-6602
Northeast: Kathie Dell’Arciprete 978-851-7261, Ext. 4018
Central: Barbara Donati 508-792-7880, Ext. 2337
Western: Mary Castro Summers 781-774-6736

Summer Fun 2006

Every year, the Federation for Children with Special Needs prepares a listing of day and residential summer camp programs. The 2006 Summer Fun Camp Directory is now available. To receive a free copy (one per family please), call the Federation at 1-800-331-0688, and press “0” or e-mail wmorton@fcsn.org.
Operation House Call
The Family is In

Have you ever wondered how medical students get the parent perspective on raising a child with special needs? They don’t turn to textbooks for this type of information. They turn to the resident experts – families with children with special needs.

Operation House Call is a nationally recognized program that required for all third year medical students at Boston University School of Medicine. The program is an opportunity for these students to learn about the joys and challenges that families experience while raising a child with special needs. It promotes sensitivity and acceptance of these families and their children, and allows young doctors to experience a ‘day’ in the life of a child with special needs, making them better prepared to deal with the ‘snapshots’ they’ll see of the child during well-child examinations or sick child visits. Ultimately, these students will be better health care providers, and more willing to collaborate with families in ensuring the health of their children with special needs. In fact, many students have written to Operation House Call to share how the program changed their perspective and practice by giving valuable insight into the needs of individuals with special challenges and their families.

Operation House Call is recruiting families to participate in this invaluable program. Families must fill out a short family profile form, and be willing to host a pair of medical students in their home for a 1.5 to 2 hour visit, at a time that is convenient for both the family and the students. The students do not provide care; they are there to learn from the family. Students ask questions, play with the child and his/her siblings and listen to the parent/caregiver. The visit is casual and may include a snack, a pizza dinner, or a walk to the park. Some families enjoy hosting students several times a year; others prefer a visit from students only once or twice a year. The program is voluntary and families only host students at their convenience.

Because the students travel to families’ homes, this unique opportunity is limited to families living in the greater Boston area, or near one of the two Boston University Hospital sites on the North or South Shore.

If you are interested in participating, or have questions and would like additional information, contact Susanna Peyton, Coordinator of Operation House Call, at johnsusanna@rcn.com or call 781-861-3770. Don’t miss this great opportunity to help shape the medical community of tomorrow.

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2. Ask for matching gifts forms for all the members of your team.
3. Review the requirements of your matching gifts program carefully—each program has its own policies.

Go to www.fcsn.org for more ways to give.
Thank You for Your Support in 2005

The Federation’s mission is to provide parent-centered information and support to families whose children have special needs. Our services are tailored to each family; while some require simple resource referral, others may need a more complex set of supports involving numerous agencies. We are grateful for the generosity of our Friends, Foundations and Companies who provide the much needed funding to sustain the work of the Federation. This list includes donors who gave during 2005. Gala contributors were acknowledged in our Summer 2005 issue of NewsLine.

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Helping with Homework

Research has proven the point: children succeed in learning when their families actively support them. Helping your child with homework is a powerful way to improve your child’s chances of doing well in school and in life. Your interest in your children’s education sparks their enthusiasm for learning.

However, helping with homework isn’t always easy! This Bulletin gives some practical ideas for parents, family members, and others who are helping children in elementary and middle school with homework.

Why Do Teachers Assign Homework?
Homework gives students a chance to practice what they are learning in class, and helps students get ready for the next day’s classes. Teachers also give homework to help students:
• learn to use resources, such as libraries and computer Web sites;
• explore subjects more fully than class time permits;
• use skills they already have in new situations; and
• apply many different skills to a single task, such in a science project.

Homework also helps students develop good study habits and positive attitudes.

What’s the Right Amount of Homework?
The right amount of homework depends on the age and skills of the child. Experts suggest that:

• In kindergarten through second grade children can benefit from 10 to 20 minutes of homework each school day,
• In third through sixth grades children can benefit from 30 to 60 minutes a school day, and
• In seventh through ninth grades students can benefit from spending more time on homework and the amount may vary from night to night.

If your child has problems focusing, writes slowly or has other special needs, homework can take longer. This may also be true for students who are learning to speak English as a second language. If you keep track of how long it really takes your child to do his homework, you can share this information with his teachers. The teacher may have some ideas for how to help your child succeed with homework. Sometimes an understanding and sympathetic ear helps a lot.

NCLB Increases Options for Parents
The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the main education law in the United States, gives important options and rights to parents. It gives two special options to parents whose children are in schools that are “in need of improvement”:

School Choice Options: Parents have the right to transfer their children out of schools that have not met state improvement goals (also called “adequate yearly progress” or AYP) for two years, as long as there is space available in a school that is making adequate progress. Schools must pay the transportation fees for a child who chooses to transfer.

Supplemental Educational Services (SES) Option: Schools that have not met state improvement goals (AYP) for three years must provide free tutoring services that take place outside of school time. A student may be eligible for SES if he or she qualifies for free and reduced-price lunch.

Parents’ PLACE has easy-to-read information about both of these options in English, Spanish, and Portuguese. We are also eager to speak with parents who feel their child may benefit from these options.

1. Please note: In this Bulletin, we refer to a child as “him” in some places and “her” in others. We do this to make it easier to read. Please understand, however, that every point we make is the same for girls and boys unless otherwise stated.
Helping with Homework, continued from previous page

How to Help
Children need to know that their family members think homework is important. If they know you care, children have a good reason to complete assignments and to turn them in on time. Here are some things you can do to show your child that you value education and homework.

Set a Regular Time for Homework.
Work with your child to make a schedule. Put the schedule in a place where you’ll see it often, such as on the refrigerator door.

Pick a Place. The study area doesn’t have to be fancy. It should have good lighting and be fairly quiet. Wherever your child works, you should be able to check to see if she’s sticking to the task, and to offer encouragement.

Remove Distractions. Turn off the TV and discourage social phone calls during homework time. (A call to a classmate about an assignment may be helpful.) If distractions can’t be avoided, your child may want to complete assignments in the local library. Some libraries have homework centers and may offer individual assistance.

Make a “Homework Survival Kit.”
Include pencils, pens, erasers, writing paper, a dictionary, and other things your child might need. Keep this kit in the study area so your child doesn’t have to search for supplies every day.

Talk about the Assignments. Talking and asking questions can help your child to think through an assignment and break it down into small parts that are easier to manage. Ask your child to explain in her own words what the assignment is about. If neither you nor your child understands an assignment, call one of her classmates or get in touch with the teacher.

Give Practice Tests. When your child is studying for a test, offer to quiz him using the book or other materials the teacher has provided.

Ask the Teacher. If you don’t know how to help with an assignment, ask the teacher for extra material or information that will help you. Early in the year, ask your child’s teacher about any rules or guidelines that students are expected to follow as they complete homework. Talk with the teacher about your role in helping with homework. The basic rule is, “Don’t do the assignments yourself.” It’s not your homework—it’s your child’s. Also, you may want to ask your child’s teacher about the use of computers for homework. Computers are great learning and homework tools. Some schools may offer after-school programs that allow students to use the school computers. And many public libraries make computers available to children.

Look over Completed Assignments.
It’s usually a good idea to check to see that your elementary school child has finished her assignments. If your middle-school student is having trouble finishing assignments, check his work, too. After the teacher returns completed homework, read the comments to see if your child has done the assignment satisfactorily.

Use the Great Motivator—Praise!
“You’ve done a great job” can go a long way toward motivating your child to complete assignments. Also, use incentives, such as a shopping outing, time with you or a favorite friend, or some other treat of your child’s choice to reward completed work. Children also need to know when they haven’t done their best work. When a paper could be neater, you could say, “The teacher will understand your ideas better if you use your best handwriting.” Then give praise for the neat version.


“Avoiding Homework Wars,” by Diana Browning Wright. Available online at www.schwablearning.org.

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Parents’ PLACE Bulletin is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, Grant #U310A030443. The views and opinions herein do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, and author if indicated. © Federation for Children with Special Needs, 2005
Aprendizado dos Pais Sobre a Educação de Seus Filhos

Boletim

Centro Estadual de Informação e Recursos para os Pais de Massachusetts (PIRC)

Disponível no site www.pplace.org, em Inglês, Espanhol e Português

As pesquisas têm provado que: os alunos são bem sucedidos em seu aprendizado quando recebem ajuda de suas famílias. Ajudar o seu filho com o dever de casa é uma maneira poderosa para aumentar as vantagens de que ele tenha melhores resultados na escola e na vida. Seu interesse na educação de seu filho aguçar seu entusiasmo pelo aprendizado.

Contudo, ajudar com o dever de casa não é sempre uma tarefa fácil! Este Boletim dá algumas ideias práticas aos pais, membros da família ou quem mais estiver ajudando seus filhos com o dever de casa, em todas as séries do 1º grau e do ginásio.

Por que os Professores Dão Dever de Casa?

O dever de casa dá aos alunos a oportunidade de praticar o que estão aprendendo na aula e ajuda os alunos para que se PREPEM melhor para as aulas do dia seguinte. Os professores também dão dever de casa para ajudar os alunos a:

• aprender a usar os recursos como as bibliotecas e as websites nos computadores;
• explorar as matérias com mais profundidade que o tempo permitido durante a aula;
• usar a capacidade que já adquiriram em novas situações e;
• aplicar estas diferentes capacidades em um único trabalho, como em um projeto de ciências.

O dever de casa também ajuda os alunos a desenvolverem bons hábitos de estudo e atitudes positivas.

Qual é a Quantidade Certa de Dever de Casa?

A quantidade certa de dever de casa depende da idade e da capacidade do aluno. Os especialistas sugerem que:

• Do Jardim-de-Infância até a 2a. série primária, os alunos podem se beneficiar de 10 a 20 minutos de dever de casa em cada dia de aula;
• Da 3a. até a 6a. série, os alunos podem se beneficiar de 30 a 60 minutos por dia de aula e
• Da 7a. até a 9a. série, os estudantes podem se beneficiar de passar mais tempo fazendo deveres de casa e a quantidade pode variar à cada noite.

Se seu filho tem problemas de concentração, escreve devagar, ou tem alguma outra necessidade especial, o dever de casa pode tomar mais tempo. Isso também pode ser verdadeiro em relação aos alunos que estão aprendendo Inglês como uma segunda língua. Se você se mantiver informado(a) da quantidade de tempo que seu filho necessita para fazer seu dever de casa, poderá compartilhar desta informação com seus professores. O professor poderá ter algumas ideias em como ajudar seu filho a ser bem sucedido com seu dever de casa. Às vezes, compreensão e ouvidos bem intencionados ajudam bastante.

Como Ajudar

Os alunos deverão saber que os membros de suas famílias acham que o dever de casa

1 Nota importante: Neste Boletim nós nos referimos a um aluno como “ele” em alguns lugares e “ela” em outros. Fazemos isto para que a leitura seja mais fácil. Contudo, por favor entenda que cada observação que fazemos serve tanto para meninos como para meninas.

A NCLB Aumenta a Opção Dada aos Pais

A lei Nenhuma Criança Será Deixada Para Trás (NCLB), a lei principal de educação dos Estados Unidos, dá importantes opções e direitos para os pais. Dá duas opções especiais para os pais cujas crianças frequentam escolas que “necessitam melhoramentos”:

A Opção de Escolha da Escola: Os pais têm direito de transferir seus filhos das escolas que não tiverem alcançado, por dois anos, as metas de melhoramentos exigidas pelo estado (também chamado de “Projeto Anual Adequado” ou AYP em inglês), contanto que exista vaga disponível na escola que estiver tendo um progresso adequado. As escolas devem pagar o vale transporte para o aluno que escolher a transferência.

Opção dos Serviços Educacionais Suplementares (SES): As escolas que não tiverem alcançado, por três anos, as metas exigidas pelo estado (AYP) deverão prover serviços gratuitos de aulas particulares que deverão ser dadas fora do horário escolar. Um aluno será qualificado para o SES, se ele ou ela se qualificar para o almoço gratuito ou de preço reduzido.

O Clube dos Pais tem uma informação resumida sobre estas duas opções em Inglês, Espanhol e Português. Também temos enorme interesse em conversar com os pais que sentirem que seus filhos possam vir a se beneficiar destas opções.

O Clube dos Pais é um projeto da Federação para Crianças com Necessidades Especiais

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**Ajudando com o Dever de Casa**

**continuação da primeira página**

é importante. Se perceberem que vocês se preocupam, terão uma boa razão para completar as tarefas e devolvê-las dentro do prazo determinado. Damos alguns exemplos de como você poderá mostrar a seu filho o quanto valoriza a educação e o dever de casa.

**Estabeleça um Horário Habitual para o Dever de Casa.** Programe um horário com seu filho. Coloque o horário em um lugar onde poderá vé-lo com frequência, como por exemplo, na porta da geladeira.

**Escolha Um Lugar.** O local de estudo não precisa ser especial. Deverá ser provido de boa luminozidade e ser bastante tranquilo. Onde quer que seu filho trabalhe, você deverá ser capaz de observá-lo para ver se ele está realmente fazendo o dever e poder assim encorajá-lo.

**Remova as Distrações.** Desligue a TV e desencoraje a fazer ligações telefônicas durante o tempo que estiver fazendo o dever de casa (uma ligação para um colega sobre o dever de casa poderá ser de grande ajuda). Se as distrações não puderem ser evitadas, seu filho poderá querer terminar o trabalho em uma biblioteca do bairro. Algumas bibliotecas têm centros para dever de casa e poderão fornecer assistência individual.

**Faça uma “Caixinha para o Dever de Casa.”** Inclua lápis, canetas, borrachas, folhas de papel, um dicionário e outras coisas que seu filho possa necessitar. Man-

**Converse Sobre os Trabalhos.** Conversar e fazer perguntas poderá ajudar seu filho a pensar sobre um trabalho. Dividi-lo em pequenas partes poderá fazer com que o trabalho fique mais fácil. Peça a seu filho que lhe explique em suas próprias palavras do que se trata o trabalho. Se nem você ou seu filho entenderem o trabalho, telefone para algum colega da classe de seu filho ou entre em contato com o professor.

**Administre Provas de Preparação.** Quando seu filho estiver estudando para uma prova, oferça fazer-lhe perguntas usando o livro ou outros materiais proporcionados pelo professor.

**Pergunte ao Professor.** Se você não souber como ajudar com um trabalho peça que o professor forneça algum material extra ou informação que poderá ajudá-lo(la). No início do ano peça ao professor de seu filho sobre algumas regras ou normas que esperam que os alunos sigam quando terminarem o dever de casa. Fale com o professor sobre o seu papel ao ajudar com o dever de casa. A regra básica é, “Não faça os trabalhos você mesmo(a)”. O dever não é seu - é de seu filho. Você também poderá querer perguntar ao professor de seu filho sobre o uso dos computadores ao fazer o dever de casa. Os computadores são muito úteis para o aprendizado e para o dever de casa. Algumas escolas poderão oferecer programas depois do horário escolar que permita aos alunos usar os computadores da escola. Em muitas bibliotecas públicas, computadores estão disponíveis para as crianças.

**Dé uma Olhada nos Trabalhos Terminados.** Geralmente é uma boa idéia revisar para ver se seu filho que está cursando uma escola da 1a. a 5a. série (primário), terminou seus trabalhos. Se seu filho, cursando da 6a. a 8a. série (nível médio) está tendo problemas para terminar seus trabalhos, verifique seu trabalho também. Depois que o professor devolver os trabalhos, leia os comentários para ver se seu filho fez os trabalhos satisfatoriamente.

**Use o Grande Motivador — O elogio!** “Você fez um excelente trabalho”, poderá vir a refletir muito na motivação que seu filho necessita para completar seus trabalhos. Use também incentivos como sair para fazer compras, tempo especial com você ou com seu melhor amigo(a) ou alguma outra coisa que seu filho escolha como recompensa pelo término de seu trabalho. As crianças também precisam saber quando não fizeram o melhor trabalho. Quando um trabalho poderá ser mais limpo, você poderia dizer, “O professor entenderá melhor suas idéias se você tiver uma melhor caligrafia”. Depois elogie a versão mais limpa.

**SEJA O PODER!** Pais, para maiores informações em como poder usar a lei Nenhuma Criança Sera Deixada Para Trás, para se tornar o poder atrás da educação de seu filho, ligue hoje mesmo para o Clube dos Pais.

**CANALIZE O PODER!** Escolas, para ajudar em como canalizar o poder dos pais na ajuda de que sua escola seja bem sucedida, ligue hoje mesmo para o Clube dos Pais.

**O CLUBE DOS PAIS ESTÁ PRONTO E ANSIOSO EM AJUDAR.** Nós oferecemos ajuda aos familiares e funcionários da escola através de nossos materiais impressos, treinamentos e assistência telefônica — tudo disponível em inglês, espanhol e português.

Room with a View. Workshop participants enjoy the spacious new conference room space a the Federation offices in Boston.
Ayude a su Niño con la Tarea

Los estudios lo comprueban: Los niños tienen éxito en el aprendizaje cuando sus familias los apoyan constantemente. Ayudando a su niño con la tarea escolar es una manera muy importante de aumentar la probabilidad de que a su niño le vaya bien en la escuela y en la vida. Su interés en la educación de sus niños motiva el entusiasmo de ellos por aprender.

¡Ayudando a su niño con la tarea no es siempre fácil! Este Boletín ofrece ideas prácticas para los padres, miembros de la familia y demás personas que están ayudando a los niños con la tarea en la escuela elemental y secundaria.

¿Por qué los maestros asignan tareas?
La tarea les da la oportunidad a los estudiantes de practicar lo que están aprendiendo en la escuela y los ayuda a estar preparados para las clases del día siguiente. Los maestros también asignan tareas para ayudar a los estudiantes a:

• aprender a usar recursos tales como las bibliotecas y las computadoras (sitios en la Internet)

• explorar los temas más allá de lo que permite el horario de clase

• usar las habilidades que tienen para resolver situaciones nuevas y

• usar muchas habilidades diferentes para hacer un trabajo, como un proyecto de ciencias.

La tarea también ayuda a los estudiantes a desarrollar buenos hábitos de estudio y actitudes positivas.

¿Cuál es la cantidad apropiada de tarea?
La cantidad apropiada de tarea depende de la edad y las habilidades del niño. Los expertos sugieren que:

• Del Jardín Infantil a segundo grado, los niños pueden beneficiarse de 10 a 20 minutos de tarea por cada día escolar

• De tercero a sexto grado, los niños pueden beneficiarse de 30 a 60 minutos por cada día escolar

• De séptimo a noveno grado, los estudiantes pueden beneficiarse de pasar más tiempo haciendo las tareas, y la cantidad de tiempo haciéndolas puede variar de noche a noche.

Si su niño tiene problemas de concentración, escribe despacio o tiene otras necesidades especiales, la tarea puede tomarle más tiempo. Esto también puede pasárseles a los estudiantes que están aprendiendo a hablar inglés como segundo idioma. Si mantiene un archivo de cuánto tiempo realmente le toma a su niño hacer la tarea, usted puede comparar esta información con sus maestros. Los maestros pueden tener algunas ideas de cómo ayudar a su niño a tener éxito con la tarea. Algunas veces una persona que entienda la situación de su niño puede ayudarle mucho.

¿Cómo puede ayudar?
Los niños necesitan saber que sus familias piensan que la tarea escolar es importante. Si ellos saben que le interesas que ellos

continúa en la página 2

NCLB aumenta las opciones para los padres
La Ley Que Ningún Niño Quede Atrás (NCLB por sus siglas en inglés), es la ley principal de educación en los Estados Unidos, que da opciones y derechos importantes a los padres. Esta ley ofrece dos opciones especiales a los padres cuyos niños están en escuelas bajo la categoría de “necesita mejorar”:

La opción de escoger la escuela: Los padres tienen la opción de trasladar a sus niños fuera de las escuelas que no han alcanzado las metas de mejora del estado por dos años (también llamadas “progreso anual adecuado” o AYP), si hay lugar disponible en una escuela que está teniendo un progreso adecuado. Las escuelas tienen que pagar la transportación de un niño que escoja transferirse.

La opción de Servicios Educativos Suplementarios (SES): Las escuelas que no han alcanzado las metas de mejora del estado (AYP) por tres años tienen que proveer servicios de tutoría gratuita, que se llevaran a cabo fuera del horario escolar. Un estudiante puede ser elegible para recibir SES, si califica para el programa de almuerzo gratis o de precio reducido.

El Club de los Padres tiene información fácil de leer acerca de estas dos opciones en inglés, español y portugués. También deseamos hablar con padres que piensan que su niño se puede beneficiar de estas opciones.
Ayude con la Tarea
viene de la página 1

hagan la tarea, ellos tendrán una buena razón para terminar sus asignaciones y entregarlas a tiempo. A continuación encontrará algunas cosas que puede hacer para demostrarle a su niño que usted valora la educación y la tarea escolar.

Tenga un horario fi jo para hacer la tarea. Desarrolle un horario con su niño. Ponga el horario en un lugar donde lo pueda ver a menudo, por ejemplo en la puerta del refrigerador.

Escoja un lugar. El área de estudio no tiene que ser elegante. Debe tener buena luz y ser bastante tranquila. Donde sea que su niño trabaje, usted debe poder comprobar que esta haciendo la tarea y darle ánimo.

No permita distracciones. Apague la televisión y no permita llamadas telefónicas durante la hora de tareas. (Sin embargo, una llamada a una compañera de clase acerca de una asignación o tarea puede ser de ayuda.) Si no se pueden evitar las distracciones, su niño puede terminar las asignaciones en la biblioteca local. Algunas bibliotecas tienen centros para las tareas y pueden ofrecer ayuda individual.

Haga un “caja de materiales para la tarea.” Ponga en la caja lapiceros, lápices, borradores, hojas para escribir, un diccionario y otras cosas que su niño pueda necesitar. Mantenga esta caja en el área de estudio para que su niño no tenga que buscar materiales todos los días.

Hable sobre las asignaciones. Hablando y haciéndole preguntas a su niño sobre una asignación o tarea, puede ayudarlo a pensar más clara y detalladamente. Para que sea más fácil de realizar puede dividirla en pequeñas partes. Pidale a su niño que explique en sus propias palabras de que trata la asignación. Si usted ni su niño entienden la asignación, llame a uno de sus compañeros o comuníquese con la maestra.

Realice exámenes para practicar. Cuando su niño este estudiando para un examen, ofrezcale hacer un examen usando el libro o otros materiales que el maestro ha proporcionado.

Pregúntele al maestro. Si no sabe como ayudar a su niño con una asignación, pidale al maestro material adicional o información que le ayudará. Al principio del año escolar, pregúntele al maestro de su niño sobre las reglas o guías que se espera que los estudiantes sigan cuando ellos terminan la tarea. Hable con el maestro sobre su rol en ayudar a su niño con la tarea. La regla básica es: “No haga usted la tarea.” No es su tarea, es de su niño. También puede preguntarle al maestro de su niño acerca del uso de las computadoras para hacer la tarea. Las computadoras son buenas herramientas para aprender y para hacer la tarea.

Algunas escuelas ofrecen programas después de la escuela que permiten a los estudiantes usar las computadoras de la escuela. Muchas bibliotecas públicas también tienen computadoras disponibles para los niños.

Revise las tareas terminadas. Es una buena idea revisar que su niño en la escuela elemental ha terminado sus tareas. Si el estudiante en la escuela media (6°–8° grado) esta teniendo problemas para finalizar las tareas, revise su tarea también. Una vez que la maestra revise y devuelva las tareas, lea los comentarios para ver si su niño ha hecho la tarea satisfactoriamente.

¡Use un buen motivador—Alábelos y felíctele! “Has hecho muy buen trabajo” esta frase puede motivar mucho a su niño para que complete sus tareas. También puede usar incentivos tales como ir de compras, tener tiempo con usted o su amigo favorito, o alguna otra cosa especial que escoja su niño, para premiarlo por completar la tarea. Los niños también necesitan saber cuándo no han hecho un buen trabajo. Cuando un trabajo pudo ser mejor escrito, usted puede decir, “La maestra entenderá mejor tus ideas si escribes más claramente.” Luego, prémie por escribir la versión más fácil de leer.


“Avoiding Homework Wars,” por Diana Browning Wright. Disponible en la Internet en www.schwalearning.org.
La Historia de Elba

Por favor únase a nosotros a darle la bienvenida a nuestra nueva empleada del Club de los Padres, Elba Vargas, la Entrenadora Estatal y Especialista de Alcance en Español. Aún antes de unirse al personal de la Federación, Elba conocía la misión de la Federación y había viajado a través del estado, asistiendo a cada taller ofrecido por los proyectos de la Federación. Elba estaba en una misión personal. Ella estaba preocupada por su segundo niño y quiso actuar rápidamente. Su niño no hablaba muchas palabras, y a los 18 meses, paró completamente de hablar. A pesar del consuelo que otras personas le daban a Elba de que ésta era simplemente una fase que su niño crecería, Elba supo instintivamente que algo andaba mal con su hijo. Utilizando las páginas amarillas de la guía telefónica de su área como recurso, ella llamó a todos y cada uno de los números relacionados con demoras de aprendizaje en la niñez para encontrar recursos e información.

A los 21 meses, su hijo fue diagnosticado con el Trastorno Generalizado del Desarrollo (PDD), y luego con un diagnóstico del Trastorno de Autismo de Alto Funcionamiento e Hyperlexia. Elba sufrió mucho “la pérdida de su bebé perfecto”. Afortunadamente, su Pediatra de Desarrollo le dió un paquete de materiales que tenían una lista de recursos y grupos de soporte, y sabiéndolo se aconsejó: “no hagas esto sola, busca el apoyo de otros.” Elba hizo caso de esas palabras y tomó acción inmediatamente. Además de la ayuda que recibió del Programa de Intervención Temprana en su área, ella exploró las actividades terapéuticas y divertidas en la comunidad en las que su niño pudiera participar. Un personal “muy paciente” en el programa local de la YMCA trabajó junto a Elba con ahínco por seis meses para lograr que su hijo fuera completamente integrado en los programas de gimnasia y natación. Más tarde, Elba se convirtió en voluntaria de la YMCA y trabajó con el personal en buscar maneras de incluir a niños con incapacidades en sus programas. Ahora Elba aboga por la inclusión de los niños con discapacidades en programas y grupos sociales generales. Puede cambiar un “la vida de niño para siempre” y nos lleva a tener más humanidad, más compasión y más empatía por las personas más vulnerables.

La energía y entusiasmo de Elba le llevaron a su participación en el Concilio Preescolar, en las Asociaciones de la Comunidad para los Niños (Community Partnership for Children), la Asociación para Personas con Discapacidades (ARC), las Familias de Massachusetts Organizadas para el Cambio (Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change), el Concilio de Padres para Asesoría en Educación Especial (Special Education Parent Advisory Council) en la escuela de su hijo, Vínculos para Familias de Massachusetts (Family TIES) y con otros proyectos de la Federación para Niños con Necesidades Especiales.

Durante una de sus muchas visitas a la página Web de la Federación (www.fcsn.org), Elba notó una posición disponible para Entrenador y Especialista de Alcance Bilingüe. Elba aplicó a la posición y lo demás, como dicen, es historia.

Ahora Elba enseña a otras familias cómo trabajar en conjunto con las escuelas para asegurarse que sus niños, con o sin discapacidades, tienen la mejor educación posible.

Elba puede ser contactada al 1-877-471-0980, ext. 332 o vía correo electrónico a evargas@fcsn.org.

Cruzando Fronteras

by Sara Diaz

El pasado mes de Diciembre, con ocasión de mi viaje de vacaciones a mi nativa tierra “Colombia,” tuve la oportunidad de continuar cumpliendo con mi misión de impartir orientación a las familias latinas; esta oportunidad, fue para mí una gran satisfacción al hacerlo con la gente de mi tierra y ofrecer una charla en la Corporación Síndrome de Down en Bogota que contó con la asistencia de 80 padres de niños con Síndrome de Down, algo que me impactó fue la gran acogida que tuvo esta charla, así como también me impresionó la enorme organización y apoyo que se les brinda a los padres allí; al igual que el soporte mutuo que se brindan los padres entre sí. La charla abarco diferentes tópicos como fueron: hacer orgullosamente una presentación acerca de la misión de la Federación de Niños con Necesidades Especiales y mi rol dentro de esta institución, mi experiencia enriquecedora como madre de un niño con Síndrome de Down en este país, otro tópico fue hablar de las leyes de educación especial vigentes en los Estados Unidos, así como también el proceso educativo en Massachusetts.

Es una gran alegría saber que no hay fronteras que limiten la orientación y ayuda a las familias de niños con necesidades especiales.
Book Reviews

by Beth Dworetzky, Mass Family Voices

This issue of Newsline highlights the importance of family stories. Below are two books that help parents facilitate their children's communication skills so they can share their own stories.

Teach Me How to Say it Right: Helping your child with articulation problems
By Dorothy P. Dougherty, MA, CCC-SLP

Words like articulation, phonology, and disfluency, while hard to say, are not difficult to understand after reading Teach Me How to Say it Right. Ms. Dougherty thoroughly explains these technical terms and discusses the reasons why some children have difficulty saying words clearly and correctly. Moreover, if you are the type of person who wants to know why, she cites the research about how children learn speech and language.

You don't have to be a speech and language pathologist to help your child overcome articulation problems or to learn to talk. This book has many family-friendly suggestions for creating language-rich experiences for your child in your home and in your community. As examples, the author talks about using bath time to name each body part. During meal preparation, she suggests that you narrate what you are doing. A trip to the grocery store is a great opportunity to talk about how big a watermelon is, or how small cherries are. Count aloud as you fill a bag with potatoes and talk about the colors and shapes of other items. In addition, do not forget to read to your child. Reading not only helps children learn to listen, it helps them learn to make sounds, words, and eventually sentences.

This book does not replace the need for speech and language therapy for a child who is not developing speech and language skills as expected. This book does help parents understand speech-related problems, know when to seek help, and be more prepared to talk to their child's primary care physician, early intervention provider(s) and/or speech and language pathologist. In fact, there is an excellent chapter on when and how to find professional help, the licensing and other qualifications a professional should have, and questions to ask a potential therapist, including his/her prior experience with children. There are also clear explanations of the types of evaluations a child should have, how to prepare your child and yourself for the evaluation and, depending on the results, what to expect at speech therapy sessions.

New Harbinger has donated a copy of Teach Me to Say it Right to the Federation's library. Call 1-800-331-0688 to arrange to borrow it. For more information about New Harbinger, noted publisher of self-help books, visit www.newharbinger.com, or call 1-800-748-6273.

Teaching by Design: Using Your Computer to Create Materials for Students with Learning Differences

I opened this book with every intention of giving it a cursory look and putting it aside for later. However, Ms. Voss's family story about the birth of her daughter Ashley, her subsequent diagnosis of Down syndrome and associated congenital heart defects, and the devastating complications that resulted from the cardiac surgeries that followed, was so compelling, I read the entire book in one sitting. Ms. Voss was well aware of Ashley's right to receive an education; however, she quickly realized that this did not ensure that her daughter would have the specialized materials she needed in order to learn. Ms. Voss set about transforming herself from a self-described “technophobe” to “technophile” and used her computer to create materials that would help Ashley learn. She shares her expertise in this fabulous book. The associated CD-ROM (included in the back of the book) has the templates for each project.

Each chapter includes a discussion of strategies and practical applications to teach children with learning differences visual perception, math, language, communication, reading, handwriting and self-help skills. There are many illustrations and pictures of each finished project, a list of materials, and the tools needed to make each, accompanied by clear, easy-to-follow written directions. In addition to a computer and printer, you will need some supplies like card stock, tape, scissors, and a hole punch; these are readily available at office supply stores or even the supermarket. If you are looking for specialized images or photos, Ms. Voss provides a comprehensive listing of public domain clip art and photos that are available on the Internet. The resource section also includes places to purchase specialized craft materials.

Woodbine House has donated a copy of this book, and other books from their Special Needs Collection, to the Federation. Call 1-800-331-0688 to see if the book you want is available and to arrange to borrow it. For more information about the Woodbine House Special Needs Collection, and to receive a catalog, call 1-800-843-7323 or visit www.woodbinehouse.com.

Link to Amazon.com through the Federation website at www.fcsn.org and a percentage of your purchase will help support the mission of the Federation.
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Please join us for our Annual Gala Celebration!

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