On May 2, 2008, friends, families and staff convened at the Seaport Hotel in Boston to celebrate and support the work of the Federation for Children with Special Needs at their annual Gala event - Belonging and Becoming.

While we are happy we met our fundraising goal, the Gala is much more than a fundraising event. It is a celebration of the accomplishments and achievements of children, families and professionals in the special education and special health needs communities. It is a time to reflect, to recognize how far we have come, and a time to look ahead and envision a future where special education laws and school systems really work for and with the family, and all children and families have access to affordable health care.

Andy Hiller, political reporter and analyst for Channel 7 News, was our emcee for the evening. The evening began with a silent auction set to a background of jazz provided by the locally renowned Tough Love Trio. The Madrigal Singers from Worcester’s Doherty High School gave a beautiful a cappella performance while guests enjoyed a wonderful dinner. The evening was topped off by local actor, comedienne and founder of Boston Casting, Angela Peri, who performed a touching and humorous monologue.

The evening’s honorees included Connie Rizoli, Dr. Margaret Bauman and Ed DeNoble. Connie received the Patricia Blake Advocacy Award for her many years of work on local and state levels, and for the advocacy that strongly impacted her own family, which serves as a model for all of us. Connie is a champion of change and an example of what the Federation strives to be.

Dr. Bauman was the gracious and humble recipient of the Martha H. Ziegler Founder’s Award. While Dr. Bauman is a hero to those in the autism community, she thinks of herself as “just a doctor.” However, her dedication to improving the lives of children with autism and other neurological disorders, which resulted in the LADDERS program, her novel ideas regarding autism symptoms and treatments, and strong research practices, has patients and their families believing that the phrase “just a doctor” has no place where Dr. Margaret Bauman is concerned.

Our President’s Award, given to Ed DeNoble, honored him for his strong commitment to supporting the mission of the Federation. Through Ed’s many years of support, the Federation has been able to continue working toward educating and empowering all...
Parent Consultant Training Institutes

Do you wish you knew more about state and federal special education laws that support your student?

The Federation’s Parent Consultant Training Institutes offer Massachusetts parents and professionals the opportunity to learn more about special education laws and processes. We believe that educated parents and professionals are better able to collaborate effectively to develop supports and services that enable students with disabilities to succeed.

Tuition for parents is $325, professionals $425. Limited scholarships are available for parents. Family members may also contact the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) at 617-770-7676 to apply for Consumer Empowerment Funds.

For more information about the Boston and Central MA trainings, contact Dotty Robison at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 315 or drobison@fcsn.org. For information about Western MA trainings contact Julie Sinclair at 1-866-323-0681 or sinclair@fcsn.org.

Boston, MA - Fall 2008: Tuesdays, 9 am - 4 pm, beginning 9/16 at the Federation, 1135 Tremont St., Suite 420, Boston, MA 02120. No class on 9/30 or 11/11; the last class is 11/18. Deadline for applications is Friday, September 5.

Winter 2009: Tuesdays, 9 am - 4 pm, beginning 2/3/09 at the Federation, 1135 Tremont St., Suite 420, Boston, MA 02120. No class on 2/17; the last class is 3/31. Applications may be submitted between Monday, December 15, 2008 and Friday, January 23, 2009.

Central MA - Spring 2009: Thursdays, beginning 4/2/09. Location and meeting times to be announced. No class on 4/23; last class is 5/28. Applications may be submitted between Monday, February 16 and Friday, March 20, 2009.

Summer 2009: Monday through Friday, June 22 – June 26, 2009, 9 am – 4 pm each day. Location to be announced.

Western MA - Fall 2008: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 am -3 pm beginning Tuesday, 10/21 at SCAN 360, 111 Wilbraham Road, Springfield, MA. No class on Tuesday, 11/11; last class is Tuesday, 11/18.

For more information, and to download the application, visit http://fcsn.org/pti/advocacy/becomeanadvocate.php.
A Name Change: Long Overdue

After a dozen years of advocacy, self-advocates in Massachusetts have scored a major victory. The Massachusetts Legislature has agreed to formally change the name of the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This may not sound like a big win, but it has been a life long mission for self-advocates like John Anton, a person with Down syndrome, and Chair of the self-advocacy organization Mass Advocates Standing Strong (M.A.S.S.).

The impetus for this change came from self-advocates, families and individuals who receive services from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The use of the words “mental retardation” was hurtful and offensive to both individuals and advocacy organizations. Additionally, for many families served by DDS (formerly DMR), the term was simply not accurate.

Massachusetts is not the first to make this change. In July 2003, President Bush signed an executive order changing the name of the President’s Committee on Mental Retardation to the President’s Committee on People with Intellectual Disabilities. In 2005, the ARC of the United States removed the words “mental retardation” from its mission statement. In 2008, the American Association on Mental Retardation became the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Last year, Connecticut switched its state agency name to become the Department of Developmental Services. In fact, only 10 states in the country still use the word “retardation” in the name of its agency or division which serves individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

As a parent of two young adults with Down syndrome, I recognize that not everyone who uses the term “retardation” intends insult. However, the stigma attached to the term, which according to Wikipedia has acquired “pejorative and shameful” connotations and is frequently used as a bullying taunt, convinces me this name change was long overdue.

Congratulations to M.A.S.S. and all the advocates who fought for what is right, and to the lawmakers who heard their message and acted on their behalf.

May we all be inspired by this example!

Best wishes,

Rich Robison
Push to MCAS Proficiency Brings Change to High School Graduation Requirements: At-Risk Students to Receive Support through Educational Proficiency Plans (EPP)

By Janet Vohs, Director of Publications, Massachusetts Parent Information & Resource Center

Important changes to high school graduation requirements will begin to be implemented this coming school year. Massachusetts students must still (1) meet all their local school district’s graduation requirements, and (2) they must earn a Competency Determination in order to receive a high school diploma. The changes affect what students must do in order to earn their Competency Determination.

What is a Competency Determination?
Students earn a Competency Determination (CD) based solely on their performance on the 10th grade English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and, for the class of 2010, Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) MCAS tests. The criteria students must meet in order to achieve a CD are changing.

What are the changes to the Competency Determination?
In October 2006, the Massachusetts Board of Education voted to raise the requirements for high school students to earn a CD. Previously, students could earn a CD by meeting or exceeding the Needs Improvement score of 220 on both the ELA and Mathematics MCAS Grade 10 tests or retests. Beginning with the graduating class of 2010, this year’s 10th grade students, students must meet one of the following two conditions:

1. Students must meet or exceed the Proficient (grade-level) score of 240 on both the ELA and Mathematics grade 10 MCAS tests, OR
2. Students must meet or exceed the Needs Improvement score of 220 on both the ELA and Mathematics grade 10 MCAS tests and fulfill the requirements of an Educational Proficiency Plan (EPP).

In addition, students in the Class of 2010 and beyond must also meet or exceed the Needs Improvement score of 220 on one of the high school Science and Technology/Engineering (STE) MCAS tests (Biology, Chemistry, Introductory Physics, or Technology/Engineering). Students in the class of 2012 must meet or exceed the Needs Improvement score on the high school U.S. History test.

Who should have an Educational Proficiency Plan?
Schools are required to develop EPPs for high school students who have not met the Proficiency level on both the ELA and Mathematics 10th grade MCAS tests. Schools must develop EPPs for 10th grade students in the subject area or areas in which they did not achieve a score of at least 240 on the MCAS tests.

What’s an Educational Proficiency Plan?
An EPP is a planning tool schools must use to address the subject areas (ELA and Mathematics) where students do not achieve the 240 Proficiency level. The purpose of the EPP is to help make sure that students gain the knowledge and skills they need to be ready for higher education and/or careers after high school.

Each EPP must include:

1. A review of the student’s strengths and weaknesses based on MCAS and other assessment results, coursework, grades, and teacher input.
2. A list of the courses in the relevant content areas that the student must take and complete successfully in grades 11 and 12.
3. A description of the assessments the school will use at least yearly to make sure that the student is making progress toward proficiency.

The assessments noted in the EPP will be a determining factor whether or not the student has attained or is making sufficient progress toward proficiency and can receive the CD. However, the school principal has the final word on whether or not the student has successfully
completed the EPP. In short, a student may still qualify for the CD as long as the student is making sufficient progress toward proficiency.

What’s a parent to do?
Parents and students have important roles; they must work with the school to develop the EPP. Remember that the EPP is just one part of an overall plan that is based on the student’s identified career and educational goals. It is an opportunity for the student, parents, and educators to work together to plan for success during and after high school. Parents of high school students who have been scoring below the 240 Proficiency level on the ELA and Mathematics MCAS tests should speak with the school principal to discuss an EPP for their child. Parents may also want to seek guidance on how they can best support their child to qualify for a CD and graduate with a high school diploma.

The EPP does not replace the IEP (Individualized Education Program) for students with disabilities. In fact, EPPs present a way for students with disabilities and their parents to work more closely with general education teachers who may not be present at IEP meetings. The IEP should help shape the EPP, and the EPP should reflect the teaching strategies and other considerations addressed in the IEP.

Massachusetts has designated state funding for schools to develop and fulfill the requirements of the EPP. In addition, parents may certainly request extra services to help their child meet the EPP requirements.

What must a student do to complete an EPP?
To successfully complete an EPP students must:
• Take courses in grades 11 and 12 in the subject areas in which they did not achieve Proficiency (an MCAS score of 240 or higher)

and

• Take an annual assessment to determine whether they have attained or are making progress toward Proficiency.

For more information, contact the Massachusetts PIRC at 1-877-471-0980 and visit www.masspirc.org for a calendar of Mass PIRC workshops and events.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is encouraging schools to provide EPPs to 8th grade students who are struggling to achieve Proficiency as well. But as it now stands, only students who have failed to achieve Proficiency on the required 10th grade MCAS tests must have an EPP.

For more about how you can support your child’s education, please visit our website at www.masspirc.org, or call us toll-free at 1-877-471-0980.

Telephone assistance, the website, and print resources are available in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Para más de cómo usted puede apoyar la educación de sus hijos, favor de visitar nuestra página web al www.masspirc.org, o llámenos gratuitamente al 1-877-471-0980. Asistencia telefónica, la página web, y recursos impresos están disponibles en inglés, español y portugués.


Joining Voices Conference for Families with Children & Youth with Special Health Needs

Information from the MA Family-to-Family Health Information Center

The Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Information Center, a project of Mass Family Voices at the Federation, will host its annual Joining Voices conference on Wednesday, November 5, 2008 at Indian Meadows in Westborough. Dr. Charles Homer, CEO of the National Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality (NICHQ), will give the keynote address. Dr. Homer will discuss components of pediatric quality of care, access to healthcare coverage and providers, family-centered clinical encounters, and more.

Afternoon workshops include skill-building sessions where families can learn strategies to advocate for needed medical services and supports for their children and youth with special health needs so they can be effective partners in decision-making with health care providers, other providers, systems of care, and with policymakers.

This is a free day of learning and networking for families with children and youth with special healthcare needs (including mental, behavioral, emotional needs). The conference brochure and registration materials will be available by September 15, 2008. For more information, call the Family-to-Family Center at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210, e-mail massfv@fcsn.org or visit www.massfamilyvoices.org.
Voices 2008, the annual AIDS Alliance Conference, hosted by the AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth and Families, was held in Arlington, Virginia on May 16 – 19, 2008. The theme of this year’s conference was defining change and improving the overall quality of life for individuals infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS. Five MassCARE staff and six consumers, two of whom were teens, attended from Massachusetts. It was the second Voices conference for three of the consumers, and they provided mentorship to the three first-time attendees, who were expanding the circle of consumer leadership around this important health issue.

They enjoyed the opportunity to attend workshops, which focused on HIV care and prevention, as well as advocacy. This included self-advocacy as well as advocacy for better services and systems of care.

On Tuesday, May 20, attendees had a chance to try out their advocacy skills during Advocacy Day. They traveled to Capitol Hill and met with Congressional staff and aides. This was an opportunity for consumers to share their stories, and advocate for increased funding for Part D, Title IV of the Ryan White Care Act. Part D funds direct services, such as medical care, psychosocial services, as well as outreach and prevention. A participant noted, “The experience gave me a sense of empowerment, a chance to share my story and to be politically active. It allowed my voice to be heard.”

Consumers who attended will share information with other consumers by writing an article for the MassCARE newsletter, and co-facilitating at a FAN (Family Advisory Network) or TAN (Teen Advisory Network) meeting.

TeenFest 2

On April 20, 2008, Dorchester was the site of a collaborative TeenFest event. MassCARE, in collaboration with the Latino Health Institute, Boston Pediatrics Family and AIDS program at Dimock and Justice Resource Institute, hosted 21 teens and young adults for a day of learning and networking.

Kevin Cranston, Director of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health HIV/AIDS Bureau, gave an inspirational keynote presentation. He spoke on a personal level, and talked about services needed in their communities. Then, three participants shared their stories, how they were infected, and some of the issues with which they struggle.

One outcome of the meeting is that Mr. Cranston is going to try to put together a statewide teen and young adult forum for educational and leadership opportunities. Another outcome was the creation of a buddy system, where participants from one program keep in touch by phone with participants from other programs.

MassCARE staff hopes to do more collaborative teen and young adult events that involve other AIDS service organizations as a way to give youth the opportunity to socialize, learn and build relationships with each other.

For more information about MassCARE, and to learn how you can be involved, call Delores Qualls or Linda Spinner at 1-617-236-7210 or e-mail dqualls@fcsn.org or lspinner@fcsn.org.

Making Social Connections for Kids with Disabilities

Making social connections in high school can be challenging for kids with disabilities. How can we help our kids learn conversation conventions? How can they develop and maintain a social network? Here’s an idea that worked for one family.

Writers often study horoscopes to create believable, multi-dimensional characters. One of the things I do to promote social intelligence in my children is to read the daily horoscopes with my middle and high school kids. This is a quick, fun way to talk about difficult concepts like personality traits. Reading horoscopes fosters the idea that people have ‘observable’ strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities. It introduces vocabulary that models ways children can express feelings and talk about insights into their own and others’ behavior. You’ll know you’re winning the game when your kids say things like, “I think my teacher is a Leo because...” or, “that does sound like Dad.” Best of all this ‘game’ is very typical of interactions that take place while hanging out in the lunchroom, in college dorms, at the water cooler, etc.

Do you have an idea that’s helped your teen learn the art of conversation and develop a social network? Let us know, and we’ll share your tips in the next issue of Newsline and on our website at www.fcsn.org. Send your ideas to Amanda Green at agreen@fcsn.org.
Finding a Support Group That Works For You

By Kathie Dell’Arciprete, Northeast Regional Coordinator, Family TIES of Massachusetts

When parents learn their child has special needs, they experience a wide range of emotions and often need support. Finding a good support group is like finding a good pair of jeans. Either they look great when you first put them on, and after the initial trial period, you break them in, or you look for another pair. Just like jeans, support groups come in many shapes and sizes. Sometimes the support you get from family, friends, colleagues, and places of worship is enough, while others prefer online support. Charlene, the mother of a child with mental health issues, found support groups difficult. “For me, support was easier on the phone or through on-line chats. My child’s condition sometimes prevents me from attending scheduled groups.”

At other times, it may be more beneficial and helpful to find comfort amongst people who know exactly what you are going through because they also have a child with special needs. Gail, the mother of a child with Down syndrome, loves support groups. “I’ve been known to be involved with 2 or 3 groups at a time. It gets me out and keeps me grounded!”

There are many different types of groups; it’s an individual decision about the type that will best meet your needs for support. Peer groups are made up of individuals facing similar challenges; for example, everyone in the group is the parent of a child with special needs. Professional groups are led by a psychologist, rehabilitation counselor or social worker in group therapy fashion. Discussion groups offer an educational component, followed by a general open forum.

Logistics are important. For some, meeting weekly or every other week works well. For others, this might be too intense. When getting to the group becomes stressful, it is time to reassess and ask, “Have I outgrown the group? Should I be in the market for another?” If you are on a tight schedule and concerned about time, look for a group with an open-door policy so you can drop in as needed.

So what do you do if you still can’t find a support group that’s a good fit? Just like a pair of jeans, support can be custom-made! For more information about how to start your own support group, visit www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/General/Selfhelp.html or contact Family TIES of Massachustts. We can help you get started, or help you connect with a disability-specific or general support group in your area. Call your Regional Coordinator at 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or visit www.massfamilyties.org. And, if you would like to talk to another parent whose child has a similar diagnosis call Linea Luck Pearson, our Parent-to-Parent Coordinator. She will find a parent match for you so you can benefit from the unique type of sharing and support between two parents who experience similar life situations. Linea is available at 508-792-7880 or e-mail famtiesp2p@fcsn.org.

Smart Choices, Bright Futures

The Seven Hills Academies at Devens & Groton

Smart choices about the education of children and young adults with life challenges foster their abilities to reach their full potential. The Seven Hills Academies open the doors of opportunity that lead to brighter futures.

Seven Hills Academy at Devens provides DOE-approved academic and behavioral education to children and young adults, ages 22 years and under, with autism spectrum disorders, dual diagnosis, mental retardation, and severely challenging behaviors. The Academy is operated by Seven Hills Clinical Associates, an Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation.

Seven Hills Academy at Groton is located in a state-of-the-art facility at Seven Hills Pediatric Center, an Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation. The Academy is a DOE-approved, private, special education school for children and young adults, ages 22 years and under, who are developmentally delayed and have complex medical needs.

At the Seven Hills Academies, there is an individualized educational program to brighten your child’s future. Call today to schedule a tour, or visit our web site at www.sevenhills.org for more information.
families in Massachusetts, to teaching them how to advocate for their children, and to helping ensure their children’s places as active and contributing members of their communities.

Rhea Tavares, an inspirational woman we are proud to call our colleague and friend, told the story of how she met Tim Svensek, a young boy from Slovenia who has the same rare disorder she does. Using a webcam and an Internet connection, Rhea has given much of her time to teaching Tim skills he can use in his daily life, therefore improving his quality of life, and instilling in him the self-confidence and knowledge that will enable him to become an empowered self-advocate. We hope that one day soon Rhea will be on a plane to visit Tim and his family!

Belonging and Becoming would not have been a success without the contributions and participation of our many guests and supporters. We heartily thank our sponsors: JP Morgan Chase; Highfields Capital; David and Michelle Mittelman; Holt Lunsford Commercial; John Hancock; John and Lynn Reichenbach; Ed and Allyson DeNoble; Maurice and Luly Samuels; Jim and Diane Whalen; Child Development and Education; Cushman & Wakefield of NJ; Charlesbank Capital Partners; Robert and Dyan Cutro; Manny and Andrea Alves; Integrated Center for Child Development; Public Consulting Group; Chicago Title Insurance Company; Colliers, Bennett & Kahnweiler; Stutzman, Bromberg, Esserman & Plifka; The Alsan Group; Trinity Partners; Kotin, Crabtree & Strong; NES-CA; PricewaterhouseCoopers; Tom Hehir; CB Richard Ellis; Peter and Jennifer Brennan; Patricia and Bob Schram; Catlin Donnelly; and Giving Greetings.

A very special thank you to our Gala planner, Anne Wettengel, our photographer Ricky Sheaves, and to all of our generous silent auction donors, and to our friends, families and supporters for helping make this year’s Gala a memorable event!

**The 2008 Patricia Blake Advocacy Award Recipient: A Mother/Daughter Story**

Becky Rizoli, a Federation staff person, introduced the recipient of this year’s Patricia Blake Advocacy Award. Becky noted her close relationship with the award recipient Connie Kaufman Rizoli, who is also her mother. Becky recalled, “Most of my mother’s time was committed to raising her children.” And, when Becky was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, her mother “was able to apply her professional knowledge to her personal life. My mother was able to work through every step of the IEP process for me, using the guidelines set up in the regulations that she and others helped to create. It wasn’t until I came to work at the Federation that I truly could appreciate all the work that my mother did for me. Her knowledge of special education was a valuable asset in obtaining the services I needed to succeed in school.”

And succeed she did. Becky completed both high school and college in the same four year time frame as her peers, and has a bachelor’s degree in psychology. She now works with the Parent Training and Information Project and the Massachusetts PIRC at the Federation.
Opportunities for All • Spring Gala 2008

Excerpts from Connie Rizoli’s acceptance remarks for the Patricia Blake Advocacy Award

Ms. Rizoli stated she “could not begin to tell how much this recognition from the Federation for Children with Special Needs means to me. Since its creation, the Federation has been, to me, a source of inspiration. To be honored by an organization so highly respected is perhaps the highest honor one can receive. For this honor I give you my sincere thanks.”

Ms. Rizoli recounted how she first became involved with special education as a staff person for then Speaker of the House David Bartley. The Director of Research for the Education Committee, Robert Crabtree, told her Representative Daly was interested in co-filing legislation with the Speaker that would expand existing special education laws. Mr. Crabtree asked her to run the idea by the Speaker.

Speaker Bartley responded, “Great idea. Let’s file.” From that point on, special education law, and the concept of equal educational opportunities for children with special needs became Ms. Rizoli’s professional passion.

Several years later, when her daughter Becky was diagnosed with ADD and learning disabilities, special education became her “personal passion” as well. Ms. Rizoli shared, “Becky taught me so much as I watched her work so hard battling the stereotypes of her peers and teachers, all the while paving the way for future students’ successes. I became a better advocate for special education as a result. Thank you, Becky, for teaching me so much.”

“I would like to leave you with one thought tonight. Parent advocacy counts. It counts when you learn the intricacies of the special education law; it counts when you become an active partner in the development of your child’s education plan. It counts when issues regarding special education are being discussed before your school committees and the state legislature. Do not ever underestimate the power that we and our children have to create and sustain good special education law, good special education plans, and good public understanding of the rights of all, including children with special needs. Think of the thousands and thousands of children in Massachusetts who have grown to adulthood empowered through their education to become productive, proud members of society.”

Ms. Rizoli asked the audience to look around the “full ballroom and see what an impact the Federation continues to have, 34 years after the signing of Chapter 766, due to the leadership of Rich Robison and his dedicated staff,” while reminding every Gala attendee, “each of us can have such an impact. Together we are unstoppable.”

Later in the evening, when people were congratulating Connie on her award, Connie was struck by the number of people who commented on Becky’s introductory remarks. Connie was pleased to see people acknowledge her daughter’s accomplishments, rather than her own, as she knew she had done her job well, modeling the skills her daughter would need to ultimately advocate for services and supports so she could be successful in school, participate in her community and have the opportunity to do meaningful work.
Medications & Choices: What Parents and Children Say about Psychiatric Medications

If you’ve ever struggled with the decision about the use of psychiatric medications for your child with mental health needs, there is now a fabulous resource to help guide you through the process.

The Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PAL) and the Institute for Community Health (ICH) have written Medications and Choices: The Perspective of Families and Youth, a family-driven research study about the decision making process families go through when they choose to use psychotropic medication to treat their child’s mental health needs. Survey data from 274 parents and more than 80 youth document many common experiences such as the search for reliable information, the trials of alternative treatments, and concerns about financial costs.

Over the past several years, there has been a great deal of heated discussion about the rising use of psychiatric medications to treat children and adolescents. Many parents feel like the media has not accurately portrayed their experiences. Although each family’s experience is unique, many common elements and key values emerged in this study. Most strikingly, parents feel caught between their own experience of the effectiveness of medication and their concerns that medications may be stigmatizing or risky. Read the report at http://ppal.net/default/Portals/0/WhatsNew/M&C%20Booklet(2).pdf or call PAL at 617-542-7860 for more information.
The Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment initiative, known as I.C.E., is an exciting demonstration project funded by the Commonwealth in collaboration with the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, the Institute for Community Inclusion, and the Federation for Children with Special Needs. I.C.E. gives students with severe disabilities, ages 18 – 22, who have not passed the MCAS the opportunity to participate in inclusive college coursework. There are approximately 4,000 students with severe disabilities in Massachusetts who meet the eligibility criteria for participation in the I.C.E. initiative.

After four years in high school, most students move on to higher education or work. Inclusive post-secondary learning opportunities promote the development of self-advocacy and self-determination skills; work/career related skills; improved academic, social, and other functional and independent living skills. Research shows that for every semester a student participates in college, their future hourly earnings increase by $.50.

I.C.E. fosters partnerships between public high schools and institutions of higher education, paving the way for students to participate in the life of a college community with age appropriate peers to increase school and work success. Currently, 23 high schools participate in I.C.E.: Ashburnham, Berlin, Belchertown, Boston, Boylston, Chicopee, Fall River, Fitchburg, Gardner, Leicester, Monson, Newton, Old Rochester, Palmer, Quincy, Somerset, Springfield, Taunton, West Boylston, Westfield Westminster, West Springfield, Worcester. There are six participating community colleges: Bristol, Holyoke, Mass Bay, Mount Wachusett, Quinsigamond, and UMass/Bunker Hill.

**Students who have participated in I.C.E. report they “love being part of the college scene.” Parents report that their young adult has “a better sense of independence and maturity.”**

Families who live in any of the participating communities, and would like their student to participate in I.C.E. should call their Special Education Department. For support or technical assistance about I.C.E. or other programming options for Transition age students (15-22) who receive special education services anywhere in Massachusetts, contact Terri McLaughlin at the Federation at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 336 or tmclaugh@fcsn.org.

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**En la pagina Web**

El Centro de Entrenamiento e Información para Los Padres (PTI) proporciona información, apoya, ayuda técnica y talleres—gratuitamente en Massachusetts para las familias de niños con discapacidades y los profesionales que trabajan con ellos. Creemos que los niños benefician cuando los padres y los profesionales trabajan juntos para la educación de los niños.

Los servicios del PTI incluyen:

- La información práctica e individualizada, relacionada a la ley de educación, el apoyo, los recursos de la comunidad, los programas de la escuela, las discapacidades y más.
- Los talleres son de varios temas en las comunidades locales sobre los derechos de la educación, el apoyo y la colaboración.
- Un programa de entrenamiento completo para las personas que los quieren apoyar y asistir a los padres con problemas de educación especial.
- Hay muchos servicios disponibles en Español.

Aprenda más visitando al www.fcsn.org/pti/espanol/index.php

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**Na Web**

O Centro de Informação e Treinamento aos Pais fornece informação gratuita, apoio, auxílio técnico e palestras às famílias de Massachusetts que tem crianças com necessidades especiais e também aos profissionais que trabalham com essas crianças. Acreditamos que as crianças beneficiam-se mais de sua educação quando pais e profissionais trabalham em parceria.

Serviços do PTI incluem:

- Informação prática e individualizada relacionada a lei de educação, advocacia, palestras, recursos à comunidade, programas escolares, informação sobre deficiências e outras áreas de interesse.
- Uma variedade de palestras em comunidades locais sobre direitos educacionais e questões relacionadas, a advocacia e colaboração.
- Um programa compreensivo de treinamento em advocacia para aqueles que desejam ajudar pais com problemas em educação especial.
- Por ser um projeto da Federação, esses serviços prestados pelo PTI estão disponíveis através de escritórios localizados em Boston, área central e ocidental de Massachusetts. Esses serviços estão também disponíveis em Português.

Aprenda mais no www.fcsn.org/pti/portuguese/index.php
MassHealth Building New Behavioral Health Services for Children

Information from the Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative, EOHHS

Over the next year there will be significant changes in behavioral health services for MassHealth-enrolled children and youth up to age 21. These changes include improvements in behavioral health assessment practices and the development of new behavioral health services.

In December 2007, MassHealth began requiring primary care providers to offer standardized behavioral health screens for MassHealth-enrolled children and youth at every “well-child” visit. Primary care providers will provide or refer MassHealth-enrolled children to needed assessment, diagnosis and treatment services. Parents should feel free to ask their primary care provider questions about the screening tools and to play an active role in well-child visits to better understand their child’s strengths and needs and decide if the child needs further assessment, diagnosis, or follow-up care from a behavioral health provider.

Behavioral Health Clinicians & Further Assessment: Beginning November 30, 2008, MassHealth will require certain behavioral health clinicians offering assessment services to MassHealth-enrolled children and youth to use the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strength (CANS) tool to record and communicate information gathered during those assessments.

For several years, the Commonwealth’s Department of Social Services (DSS) has used a version of the CANS with favorable results. In the future, DSS may use the new MassHealth CANS as will the Departments of Mental Health and Youth Services.

CANS is a tool created by John Lyons, Ph.D. It provides a uniform organization of clinical information and increases ease of communication among treatment team providers. CANS helps clinicians, in collaboration with families, identify and assess the child’s behavioral health strengths and needs. It provides decision support for service planning, and helps clinicians monitor a child’s progress over time. CANS is not a diagnostic tool. The CANS is a part of the clinical assessment. It does not take the place of the clinical assessment.

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Interview with a Principal: Communication, Summer Planning & Keys to Success

By Selena Sheaves

As a parent of a child with special needs, I was excited to sit down with Janelle Bradshaw, who just completed her first year as principal of Cambridge’s Haggerty School. She shared her ideas about key elements that help ensure a successful school year.

Q: How do you advise parents to communicate with their children’s teachers so they can stay informed about their child’s academic, social and emotional strengths and weaknesses in the classroom, without feeling intrusive?

A: When it is your child, you are never intrusive, particularly if your child has special needs. Teachers have to be available to parents and parents have the right to ask questions or raise concerns at any time. Our teachers are always available – parents can see them at school, e-mail them or call them at home.

Q: How do you encourage parent involvement?

A: There is a strong correlation between parent involvement and their child’s success in school. We do outreach to families and will extend our outreach program next year. As an example, we hold Parent Coffees which offer parents an opportunity to connect, to talk about their children, the school, and life in general.

Q: How do you encourage communication among your staff?

A: We hold brainstorming sessions, which encourage all staff to discuss ideas to determine the best way to proceed with a particular child. But we talk about all the kids – the class as a whole. This gives us the ability to individualize and implement strategies that benefit everyone.

Q: What’s an example of a special education modification that benefits the class as a whole?

A: Visual signals and the use of Smart Boards. If a child has trouble with auditory processing and must have a visual aid, all students will benefit from both the auditory and visual signals. We used them in the 5th and 6th grade classrooms and saw academic improvement, so we are implementing the use of Smart Boards in our 3rd and 4th grade classrooms next year, and plan to eventually have them in all classrooms. Generally, by doing what’s best for special education students, we’re doing what’s best for all students.

Q: I can only imagine the challenges a teacher faces when they have many special needs children in a classroom. How do you support your teachers so they are well-equipped to teach children with special needs?

A: When people ask me how many children in our school have special needs I say “100%”. All children have unique ways of learning. We implement tools such as the Smart Boards that not only benefit students, but teachers as well. Technology is a key. Technology can be a tool for teaching as much as it is an aid for learning.

Professional development is also a key. Teachers need continued in-depth special education training. We have regular meetings to determine where we are as a staff, where we want to go, and how to build the scaffolding that will get us there.

There is also a structure - the frameworks – that we follow, and I feel it is important for the teachers to have some freedom for flexibility and creativity within that structure to provide the best learning environment for their students.

Q: You taught for five years in Boston and were an assistant principal for two years before coming to Haggerty. How did you prepare for this year and what will you do differently to prepare for next year?

A: This year I was coming into the school as the new principal. What I really wanted to do was get to know the staff and the community. I did a lot of listening and asked a lot of questions. It was important to hear from the teachers about what they thought worked, and what they thought could be improved.

For next year I plan to concentrate on organization; streamlining and implementing systems for better use of space and time, looking at what works and expanding those systems. We hope to achieve uniformity throughout the school by using the same systems in each classroom. This will ease transitions, help calm anxieties and help the children comfortably settle into the school year.

Q: What advice do you have for parents about how to prepare their children for the next school year?

A: Enjoy summer! Expose children to learning opportunities. For children who do not attend camp, there are many opportunities for rich, educational experiences. The library is one of the best resources we have. There are programs with incentives for reading, library events, and they’re free! Take family field trips; attend museums, fairs, outdoor markets, visit the zoo. Ask the new teacher what themes, books or ideas will be studied in the upcoming year and incorporate those into your field trips and outings. This will give your child a head start on the material for the year and give them confidence in the classroom.

Meeting the child’s new teacher is possibly the single most important thing the parents can do. Connect with the teacher before the end of the school year and have contact over the summer. Doing so will ease the anxieties that always accompany the start of a new year at school, and will help your child settle in more easily.
MassHealth developed two forms of the CANS tool in consultation with Dr. Lyons: one version for children ages birth through age 4, the other for children and youth ages 5 through 21. Each version covers multiple domains of child and family needs and strengths, including Life Domain Functioning, Child Behavioral/Emotional Needs, Child Risk Behaviors, Child Strengths, Acculturation, Transition to Adulthood, and Caregiver Strengths and Needs. There are several items within each domain, 68 in total, which the behavioral health clinician rates on a scale of 0 to 3.

For symptoms, functioning, and risk factors, 0 indicates no evidence or reason for concern, 1 indicates that there is a history, a need for monitoring, and possible preventive action, 2 indicates a need for action, and 3 indicates urgent action is required. Higher scores indicate a more urgent need for action. For strengths, 0 represents a major strength that could form the centerpiece of a treatment plan, 1 indicates a significant strength that could be a strong component of the treatment plan, 2 represents a strength that could be developed, and 3 indicates no identified strength in this area.

The CANS tool will not be required for certain services such as psychopharmacology evaluations and psychological/neuropsychological testing. MassHealth will provide a final list of behavioral health services and settings in which the CANS will be required.

**CANS Training and Certification:**
Behavioral health clinicians who are required to use the CANS tool must complete CANS training and receive certification. Recertification will be required every two years.

**Massachusetts is currently offering face-to-face CANS certification training for behavioral health staff.**

The University of Massachusetts Medical School is providing this training free of charge, including free continuing education units (CEUs). Beginning August 1, 2008, behavioral health clinicians will also have the option to participate in web-based distance learning. Upon successful completion of either training, providers must take a web-based exam to be certified to use the Massachusetts CANS for two years.

For more information about CBHI, visit their website at www.mass.gov/masshealth/childbehavioralhealth.
When it comes to diagnostic assessment of Asperger’s Syndrome (AS), the ratio of males to females is around 10:1 in clinical settings. Yet, epidemiological research suggests that the ratio should be 4:1. Are females less likely than males to be born with Asperger’s Syndrome? Why are females less likely to be diagnosed with AS? Where are the female students with AS? Are we setting the standards for educating students with AS based solely on the experience of boys?

These are some of the questions being explored in this collection of essays by well known researchers in Asperger’s Syndrome.

The book provides valuable information and advice relevant to girls and women on the spectrum. Particularly helpful to mothers and daughters is the essay by Lisa Iland on friendship, bullying and “fitting in.” Mary Wrobel provides tips for addressing personal safety, teaching sex education, and understanding all of the physical, mental and emotional changes of puberty. A married woman with AS provides advice about dating, relationships and marriage.

Practical studies addressing the Asperger experience among females are few and far between. As more children are being diagnosed within the spectrum, it is time that experts started focusing on the obvious differences between girls and boys with AS. This book is a welcomed step in that direction.

My Up & Down & All Around Book

Written & photographed by Marjorie W. Pitzer
Woodbine House Special Needs Collection, 2008

This engaging, colorful board book is designed to help young children learn prepositions. It’s ‘illustrated’ with wonderful photographs of children, many with Down syndrome. The facing pages are color coded and show children engaged in various, fun ‘before’ and ‘after’ activities. For example, a child is up on the slide on the left hand page, and down on the facing page; behind a tree and then in front of a tree. The last page, written by a speech and language pathologist, has suggestions to help children combine words into phrases. In addition, the Woodbine House website (www.woodbinehouse.com) has a companion page with additional ideas for teaching children to use prepositions. Regardless of how you use this delightful book, it’s one you and your children will want to read over and over again.

Woodbine House has donated a copy of this book, and other titles from their Special Needs Collection, to the Federation. Call 617-236-7210 to make arrangements to borrow a book. Review the entire Woodbine House catalogue at www.woodbinehouse.com or call 1-800-843-7323.
Mark your calendars for these upcoming Events

**Joining Voices Conference**
Indian Meadows • Westborough, MA  
November 5, 2008

**Inclusive Schools Week**
8th Annual Celebration • National  
December 1-5, 2008  
Please visit www.inclusiveschools.org for details and merchandise.

**Visions of Community Conference**
Seaport World Trade Center • Boston, MA  
March 14, 2009

For more information on these or any other Federation events, please call us at 617-236-7210 or email fcsninfo@fcsn.org

INFORMING, EDUCATING, EMPOWERING FAMILIES