If a family tells you they had a “transformational experience,” and had an opportunity to, “learn about IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), resources and more,” you can safely assume they were talking about Visions of Community, the annual conference hosted by the Federation for Children with Special Needs. On March 14, 2009, more than 800 families raising children with special needs, their professional partners and exhibitors filled the World Trade Center. They had all come, as one family remarked, “to learn about the possibilities they never knew existed for their kids.” Another family, in reflecting on the day, commented, “Every year here [at the conference] is the best ever!”

Dr. Richard Robison, the Executive Director at the Federation was, “pleased to welcome everyone to the conference,” and said,

“The Federation will continue to use the name Visions of Community until the ‘vision’ becomes a reality and people of all abilities are welcome everywhere.”

In addition to thanking everyone for attending, Dr. Robison introduced the Federation’s state agency partners, noting, “These are lean times. It’s important to acknowledge the leadership of individuals so vested in our families and providing services.” Ron Benham, the Bureau Director at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health said he was pleased to be at the conference and he knew everyone would have a great day. Jane Tewksbury, Commissioner of the Department of Youth Services (DYS), thanked the Federation for including DYS. She also provided information about the strong partnership between DYS, and the Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE) to better support the educational needs of youth offenders. Larry Tummino from the Department of Mental Retardation was happy to announce that as of June 30, 2009, his agency’s new name would be the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Pat Cameron, from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) said it was a pleasure to be at the conference as a partner. She stated, “The Department exists to serve all children and families in the Commonwealth. They are working to create more opportunities for children with disabilities and fully integrate them into the community.”
The Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers’ (MAPS) is a non-profit agency. They provide social and health services to the Portuguese-speaking communities in eastern Massachusetts. On May 9, 2009, they hosted their Annual Awards Gala. Rhea Tavares, Coordinator of Portuguese Outreach at the Federation for Children with Special Needs was one of the award recipients. She was one of three individuals to receive the MAPS Jorge Fidalgo Community Service award for her enormous contributions to Portuguese-speaking communities in Massachusetts.

Upon accepting the award, Rhea, who has her own physical challenges, thanked all those who had helped her. She also noted she is proud to be at the Federation, where she can reach out to other families and provide services, supports and assistance to help them help their children with special needs. Read more about MAPS and the other awardees at http://www.maps-inc.org.

Robin Foley, Director of Special Education Projects at the Federation, received a 2009 Katharine Forbes Erskine Award for her efforts to make a difference in the lives of women, children and families. This award honors individuals for their commitment to their profession, community, and the mission of the YWCA. For 20 years, Robin has not only worked to advance the rights of families raising children with special needs, but also worked to help them become effective advocates for their children, thus advancing social justice and equality.

Please join the Federation in acknowledging the achievements of these two exceptional staff people. We are proud of their accomplishments.

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From the Executive Director

Change has come to America. We have a new President, a new Congress, new respect for our country at home and abroad, and renewed hopes and dreams. We welcome these developments.

We are also in the midst of a national economic crisis. So, while it is a time filled with hope, it is also a time of insecurity. Many of us are experiencing the uncertainty associated with job loss, loss of health insurance, and cuts in social services, especially those that affect our children with special needs. These reductions limit our new dreams from becoming a reality, and show a lack of respect for the supports our families need to remain together. Many of you are familiar with the timeless song, R-E-S-P-E-C-T, by Aretha Franklin. One lyric in particular strikes me as applicable to this situation, “R-E-S-P-E-C-T…Find out what it means to me.” In the midst of shrinking budgets and services, it feels like RESPECT was one of the first cuts.

In March, during an appearance on the Jay Leno show, the President compared his lack of bowling ability to the “Special Olympics.” We are so hopeful about this new leader and the very positive vision he has for our country and our world. We are so disappointed that he made a joke at the expense of individuals with disabilities. He apologized. We believed him. However, it reminds us that no matter who you are, or how progressive you might be, until you have spent time supporting a family member or other individual with special needs, you can’t imagine the challenges it brings.

Commonwealth Magazine recently featured an article about Special Education, its costs and controversies. Reading this article is like traveling 10 years back in time when Special Education was under attack by our State Legislature. Filled with innuendo, misstatement and half-truth, the article undermines any positive accomplishments of Special Education and the opportunities it affords students with special needs.

It is notable that when times get tough, our culture puts pressure on the most vulnerable, accusing them of costing us precious resources as though individuals with disabilities caused our lack of awareness, tolerance and economic woes.

To echo the words of Aretha Franklin, all we’re asking for is a little RESPECT, topped off with some compassion and basic civility. Let us unite our voices as a community of diverse and caring people.

Respectfully,

Rich Robison

Executive Director
Promoting Summer Learning for Students with Learning Disabilities

By Becky Rizoli, Parent Training and Information Project

For students with learning disabilities, school can be extremely stressful. While they are just as capable of learning and succeeding academically as other students are, they often take longer to process information and arrive at the correct answers. As a result, they may feel frustrated, and even intimidated by other students. They may falsely believe that they aren’t as smart as their peers.

Imagine if your daughter or son were the first student in class to raise her or his hand on the first day of school. Just think about how great that would be for your child’s self esteem! Here are some fun ideas to help your child learn over the summer and provide a head start for the next school year.

Review the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Curriculum Frameworks at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html. This is a listing of what schools will be teaching in each subject area in every grade. You can also call your school district and request a copy of the curriculum. During the summer, you can use the framework as a guide to “pre-teach” the lessons your child will be studying in school.

You may worry that your child will protest. Summertime learning does not have to be boring. In fact, it can be interesting and fun, because you can take learning out of the classroom, let your children pursue their interests at their own pace, and tailor material to your child’s learning style. Summer learning is also a chance to explore the many fun and interactive museums all around the state. Many libraries loan museum and aquarium passes to families, and many of these destinations relate to topics that your child will study in school. For instance, if your child is going into third grade in the fall, he will learn about the Pilgrims in social studies. A day trip to Plymouth, where you can visit Plimoth Plantation and the Mayflower, will be a fun and exciting adventure for your child. If you have time afterwards, take a walk along the jetty or the harbor, browse the many gift shops, or get an ice cream cone. Your children will have so much fun; they won’t even realize it’s educational! On the way home, talk about the things you saw and learned.

Continues next page
Are you the parent of a soon-to-be fifth grader? Fifth graders learn about the American Revolution. Give your student a head start with a visit to Concord and Lexington, where you can visit the battlefields and walk the path that Paul Revere rode on his horse. Concord is also a great location for older children who will be studying the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Nathaniel Hawthorne in English classes. Take them on a tour of the Old Manse and Emerson’s house, where they can learn about these authors and the Transcendentalist movement. Top off the day with a hike around Walden Pond, where Thoreau lived and wrote Walden.

Incoming seventh graders can prepare for Ancient History by visiting the Egyptian, Greek, and Roman galleries at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts, which is also a fun and helpful museum for students who will be taking art or art history.

Fourth graders will be studying whales in science class, and high school juniors will be reading Moby Dick. Visit the Whaling Museum in New Bedford. Is The Crucible, The Witch of Blackbird Pond, or The House of The Seven Gables on your child’s reading list? A trip to Salem is a great idea. If your child will be studying the solar system, go to the Hayden Planetarium at Boston’s Museum of Science.

If you can’t make it to any of these museums this summer, there are still plenty of fun and interesting ways to pre-teach your child before school starts. Visit your public library and borrow books, audio books, or DVD’s on the subjects your children will be studying in school. Students with IEP services are eligible for books on tape or in digital formats that can be played on a computer or an MP3 player. This is a service of the Talking Books Library (learn more at http://mblc.state.ma.us/libraries/braille/index.php) or Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (learn more at www.rfbd.org). Many students listen to books downloaded from www.audible.com or www.bookshare.org on their iPod or computer.

Another great resource is the American Library Association. Visit www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/index.cfm for a list of “Great Web sites for Kids.” There, you will find a wide variety of Web sites listed by subject and topic. Check out the ones that are related to the subjects your children will be studying in school. These Web sites are a fun and interactive way to promote learning over the summer.

Remember, even though school is out for the summer, you can still promote learning outside of the classroom, and it can be fun!

Summer Science: Promoting Learning at Home
By Janet Vohs, Director of Publications, Mass Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC)

“Science is all about questioning assumptions, testing theories, and analyzing facts. These basic skills prepare kids not just for the lab— but also for life. We’re doing kids a disservice if we don’t teach them how to ask tough and challenging questions.”
~ Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education, National Science Teachers Association Conference, March 20, 2009

Why is the sky blue? Where do mountains come from? Why? Parents are used to tough questions. Our children’s curiosity is a valuable asset that will motivate them for a lifetime of learning. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist in order to support your children’s interests, answer their questions and help them foster a love of science. Here are some tips to help you help your child learn science:

1) **Your attitude sets the stage for learning and helps your children be enthusiastic.** Encourage their questions, help them find the answers, and further explore their interests. Avoid negative statements such as, “I never liked science.”

2) **Science is really about solving everyday problems; therefore, science is for everyone.** Many of us grew up believing that only some people were good at science. Today, thanks to research, we know that kids’ beliefs about their abilities make a big difference in how they succeed. Effort and hard work are what matter most. When you see your child wrestling with a problem, praise that effort.

3) **Help children explore the science around them.** Summer time is a great time to ‘think science.’ Play games and choose activities that help them become familiar with scientific concepts and thinking. In addition to the ideas below, The U.S. Department of Education has a list of activities to do at home and in the community at www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/science/index.html (English and Spanish).

4) **Help children observe objects carefully.** Noticing details can help children learn to classify or group things based on their characteristics. You can help your child develop observation skills by asking questions about an object’s size, shape, color, how it moves, and how it might change over time. Encourage your child to record these observations.

5) **Encourage children to ask questions, and listen to their ideas and explanations.** Curiosity is the essential trait of a scientist. Learning to ask questions, propose answers, and test them out are keys to learning in all academic disciplines.

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6) **If possible, have your children explore different environments.** Beaches, swamps, parks, as well as kitchens, bathrooms, and backyards are good places to discuss science. Look for situations that encourage playful exploration.

7) **Toys can also spark discovery and learning.** It’s not the number of toys that is important, but the kind of toys. The more things a child can do with a toy, the more likely it is to be educational.

8) **Seize the teachable moments.** If your child sees a beautiful flower and asks about it, take the opportunity to discuss flowers and bulbs. You can follow up by planting bulbs or flower seeds in the garden or in the house and watching them grow.

9) **The best way to develop an understanding of how science works is through hands-on science experiences.** Not only are hands-on experiences a great way to learn, but they are also a great way to get children excited about science. Science begins for children when they discover that they can learn about the world through their own actions, such as blowing soap bubbles, or adding a block that causes a structure to collapse.

10) **There are many movies, television specials, magazines, newspapers, books, and computer programs about science-related topics.** Talk with your children about the science they see. Was it interesting to them, and why? What did they learn?

**Getting Familiar with the Standards**
In Massachusetts, the education standards are known as “Curriculum Frameworks.” These describe what all students should know and be able to do at different grades in each academic subject area. Schools districts use these standards as the “framework” for what they teach. Each spring, statewide MCAS tests assess how well students have learned the standards. Read the current curriculum frameworks for all grades and subject areas at www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html. Parents can use the Frameworks as a guide for activities to do at home.
Summertime is fast approaching, and parents are searching for summer programs and funding assistance for their children with special needs. In light of this difficult economic climate, many sources for summer camp funds are not available this year. Here are some ideas that may help:

1. Does your child qualify for Extended School Year (ESY), which could translate into school-coordinated summer activities? Call the Parent Training & Information Center (PTI) at 1-800-331-0688 or visit http://www.doe.mass.edu/pqa/ta/esyp_qa.html to learn more about ESY services.

2. Many community-based programs like your town recreation department, nearby YMCA camps, and those run by communities of faith offer weeklong programs that may be able to accommodate your child’s special needs.

3. Many non-profit organizations run special programs, including some family camps, which are available for specific communities of children with special needs (some at no cost). Some include Camp Sunshine (http://www.campsunshine.org/) in Maine, The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp (http://www.holeinthewallgang.org/) in Connecticut, Easter Seals (http://ma.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=MADR_Camp), and Dream Day at the Beach on Cape Cod (http://www.dreamdayoncapecod.org/forms/capecodlife.pdf), to name a few. Ask your child’s specialists if there are programs for which your child qualifies.

4. There are still several sources of camp scholarships. Call Family TIES (contact information below) for the scholarship list, and for a flyer about fun family activities you can do to raise money to help defray the cost of summer camp expenses.


Family TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide information and parent-to-parent support project for families of children with special needs and chronic illness. It is administered by parent coordinators housed in each of the regional offices of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Contact your parent coordinator at 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or visit us at www.massfamilyties.org.
In introducing the first of two keynote speakers, Dr. Robison noted another agency name change. The Department of Education is now the Department of Early and Secondary Education (DESE). He observed, “Acronyms change, but the reality is the same. The Department strives for improved educational opportunities for all children.” With that, he introduced Dr. Mitchell Chester, the new DESE Commissioner.

Dr. Chester began by thanking the Federation for its work, and said he appreciates the advocacy and resources it offers. He admitted that schools don’t always see a child’s needs the same way a parent does. The negotiation process is complex, and rules and procedures are not always easy to navigate. He’s glad the Federation is there to help parents with the process.

Dr. Chester also acknowledged the work of the audience – the state agency partners, the administrators, teachers, and the parents – especially the parents. He knows, “It’s hard work to support our kids, navigate services and at the same time promote their independence.”

Earlier in the week, President Obama gave an education speech, and cited Massachusetts for having high educational expectations for its students. The press asked Dr. Chester if he was surprised the Commonwealth was recognized as a leader in education. He was not surprised. “Massachusetts is a top-performing state. There’s a lot that’s going well,” and, “there’s lots of opportunity for improvement.” Top on Dr. Chester’s list is closing the achievement gap for race and disability. Second on his list is correcting the downward trend in literacy in the early grades, as, “Literacy is core to all other areas of learning.” Framing his remarks around No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Dr. Chester said this federal law, “forced people to think about outcomes and results,” and to find new ways to address “outcomes for students with special needs.” Some schools serve children with special needs better than others. DESE will work to identify and share best practices, and implement the strategies that work.

In closing, Dr. Chester, acknowledged the changes in the economy and the federal stimulus funding for education. He will work to, “make a tangible difference to the children schools serve.”

The second keynote speaker, Sara Vasquez, an energetic and empowered young woman, wrapped up the morning session with humorous, poignant and inspirational stories about her experiences as an individual with cerebral palsy (CP). She set the tone for the rest of the day, and every member of the audience left filled with new hopes and dreams for what children with special needs and disabilities can achieve.

Sara was born in Puerto Rico, “where the streets are unpaved and when you walked, you got rocks in your shoes.” By the time she was 4 years old, she was not walking or talking. At that time, there was no medical treatment in Puerto Rico, so her mom moved them to New Jersey because she, “didn’t want CP to be the rock her in
A Day of Learning, Networking and Celebration

daughter’s shoe.” Sara’s mom asked the doctor what her daughter would need to get better. The doctor replied, “She needs an education.”

So, Sara’s mom had and continues to have many roles in her life. She was her daughter’s educator, and taught her to take care of herself. She was Sara’s partner and taught her to believe in herself. She was Sara’s advocate and taught her to advocate for herself. Sara said of her mother, “She was the advocate of her self-advocacy.”

Sara’s mother also taught her to dream, supported her dreams, and never told her a dream was impossible. In high school, Sara decided she wanted to become the class valedictorian. Sara admitted this was improbable, as she wasn’t the best of students. She did not become the valedictorian, however, Sara exclaimed, “A dream that may seem impossible can lead to something bigger that can impact the world.” Striving to become valedictorian let Sara discover what she was meant to be. Today she is a motivational speaker and author. Sara cautioned everyone to help children find their voices, and to encourage them that, “there are no impossible dreams.”

Community Partnership Awards

Each year, the Federation gives Community Partnership Awards to recognize the “unsung heroes” – those parents, educators, advocates, health professionals and community leaders, who have made a significant impact for children with special needs. These awards are the Federation’s way of acknowledging what individuals contribute not only to families, but also to communities. Their efforts enrich the entire community and make it a more accepting place. This year’s Community Partnership Award recipients were:

Kathy Deasy, a special education teacher in an inclusive kindergarten classroom at North Falmouth Elementary School, not only teaches each of her students to accept each other, but also encourages them to learn from each other. This mutual learning happens because Kathy has a unique way of enabling her students to see themselves as learners. This unique gift, which she imparts to each child in her classroom, gives them the confidence to tackle new subjects and skills, some of which were initially difficult. Kathy is indeed an exceptionally special teacher.

Balancing the fiscal needs and special education needs of a school district can be daunting, but Dr. Denise Messina has found the right balance. She has been the Special Education Director at Monson Public School District since 2006. In that time, she has helped the school district develop cost-effective special education programs that make it possible for more students to be educated within the district. This helps the students feel connected to their school and community, and meet their full potentials. These expanded, inclusive special education programs more fully support each student’s transition from one school to the next. Dr. Messina realizes parents are important partners to the special education process, and has helped revitalize the district’s PAC (Parent Advisory Committee). They work together to develop services that are both educationally sound and fiscally solid.

Suzanne Russell’s students will not make the honor roll this year. It’s not that her students get bad grades; the Haggerty Elementary School in Cambridge does not have an honor roll. After teaching in various settings, Suzanne, a general education teacher, was drawn to the school because inclusion was not just something that happened in one or two classrooms. The entire school culture is based on inclusion. Parents who send their children to this school believe in the power of inclusion and reinforce what their children learn at school at home.

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Suzanne not only teaches her students their 5th grade curriculum. She also teaches them to respect and accept one another. Working with two assistant teachers, she teaches students to work independently when they can, to ask for help when they have questions, and to seek additional instruction when they need it. This differentiated learning model enables every student to learn according to his or her own abilities. Everyone is different, yet everyone belongs; Suzanne makes sure of that.

**Barbara Ricci**'s journey as a parent advocate and leader was typical, but her accomplishments are anything but typical. When her son Danny was diagnosed with PDD/NOS in 2003, she realized she had a lot to learn. She also had a lot to contribute. In 2005, Barbara helped start, and has since chaired, the Webster SEPAC (Special Education Parent Advisory Committee). She participated in the Federation’s Parent Consultant Training in 2006. She then used her natural leadership ability and her new advocacy skills to build bridges with parents, school staff and the community. Barbara teaches other Webster parents to advocate for their children, and encourages them to be part of the community. In fact, each year, SEPAC members march in the Webster Memorial Day Parade. The SEPAC has also organized fundraising campaigns to fund speakers, and to provide parents with scholarships to attend local and statewide conferences. Barbara not only successfully advocates for her son, but also generously shares her knowledge with her community, so that everyone in Webster benefits.

In many ways, **Tiffany Gundler** is a typical high school junior: she takes honors classes; she likes to hang out with friends; she plays soccer and softball; she bowls and figure skates. Tiffany is also profoundly deaf. She attended the Clarke School for the Deaf for 13 years, where she learned the importance of self-advocacy skills. When she started attending her local high school, she brought those skills with her. Before the start of each school year, Tiffany meets with her teachers to tell them about herself, her deafness, the types of supports she needs, and how to use her FM system. She attends and runs her Team meetings, and speaks up in classes and during activities when she needs something. After high school, Tiffany plans to attend college. No doubt, her remarkable self-advocacy skills will help her succeed.

The school playground in Scott and **Julie Young**’s town of Rockport is a popular gathering place. Their daughter Amelia loved to swing there, while watching her brother Nate and sister Anna play. Like most children in wheelchairs, Amelia could not easily access many of the playground activities that are available to other children. After Amelia’s sudden death in 2006, Julie turned her grief into a vision. She wanted to create a playground in Amelia’s memory. Family, friends, and their community raised 1/3 of the funds within the first year. To ensure that it was built in time for her other children to enjoy it, Julie donated the rest of the money. The Amelia Grace Place was completed in November 2008. It is filled with whimsical items that would make Amelia smile, and it is the only inclusive playground on Cape Ann. Nate and Anna play there, and children and adults with disabilities can also play there, as everyone can make it to the top of the 8-foot tower.

**Support the Federation for Children with Special Needs**

Please help the Federation continue to inform, educate and empower families of children with special education and special health care needs!

To make a donation, please send your check, payable to the Federation for Children with Special Needs, to 1135 Tremont Street, Suite 420, Boston MA 02120 or make a secure donation on line at https://fcsn.org/giving_events/donate.php.

From all of us at the Federation and the families we serve, thank you for your support!
Cómo promover la educación durante el verano para estudiantes con dificultades de aprendizaje

Por Becky Rizoli, Proyecto de Información y Capacitación de Padres

Para los estudiantes con dificultades de aprendizaje, la escuela puede ser algo extremadamente estresante. Aunque tienen la misma capacidad de aprender y tener éxito académico que los demás estudiantes, a menudo tardan más en procesar la información y encontrar las respuestas correctas. Como resultado, pueden sentirse frustrados e incluso intimidados por los otros alumnos. Tal vez piensen, equivocadamente, que no son tan inteligentes como sus compañeros.

Imagínese si su hija o hijo es el primer estudiante del aula en levantar la mano el primer día de clases en respuesta a una pregunta del maestro. ¡Piense en lo bueno que será para su autoestima! Aquí hay algunas sugerencias para ayudarle a aprender durante el verano y darle una ventaja durante el próximo año escolar.

Repase las estructuras curriculares (Curriculum Frameworks, en inglés) del Departamento de Educación Primaria y Secundaria de Massachusetts en http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html. Allí encontrará una lista de lo que las escuelas enseñarán en cada materia en los diferentes grados. También puede llamar a su distrito escolar y pedir una copia del plan de estudios. Durante el verano, puede usar estas estructuras curriculares como guía para enseñarle a su niño lo que estudiará en la escuela.

Tal vez piense que su niño protestará. Pero el aprendizaje durante el verano no tiene por qué ser aburrido. Muy por el contrario, puede ser interesante y divertido porque el conocimiento puede adquirirse fuera del aula, permitiendo que sus hijos exploren sus intereses a su propio ritmo y adaptando el material a su estilo de aprendizaje. Aprender durante el verano es también una oportunidad de explorar la gran variedad de museos interesantes e interactivos que nuestro estado ofrece. Muchas bibliotecas dan a las familias pases a museos y al acuario, y muchos de estos sitios están relacionados con temas que se estudiarán en la escuela. Por ejemplo, si su niño acaba de pasar a tercer grado, en Ciencias Sociales (Social Studies) aprenderá sobre los primeros colonizadores de Nueva Inglaterra (Pilgrims o peregrinos). De modo que, una excursión a Plymouth —donde se puede visitar la Colonia de Plymouth (Plymouth Plantation) y el barco Mayflower— será una aventura divertida e interesante. Después, si tienen tiempo, caminen por el embarcadero o el puerto, visiten las tiendas de regalos o disfruten de un sabroso helado. Sus niños se divertirán tanto que ¡ni se darán cuenta de que han hecho un viaje educativo! De regreso, hablen sobre lo que han visto y aprendido.

¿Su hijo o hija acaba de terminar cuarto grado? En quinto grado aprenderá sobre Guerra de la Independencia de los Estados Unidos. Dele la ventaja de visitar Concord y Lexington, donde podrán visitar los campos de batalla y caminar por el sendero recorrido por Paul Revere con su caballo. Concord es también un lugar ideal para niños mayores que estudiarán la obra de Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau y Nathaniel Hawthorne en la clase de inglés. Lleve a su hijo o hija a recorrer la histórica casa parroquial Old Manse y el hogar de Emerson, donde podrá aprender sobre estos autores y el trascendentalismo. Para coronar el día, caminen alrededor del Walden Pond, donde Thoreau vivió y escribió el ensayo titulado Walden.

Los futuros estudiantes de séptimo grado pueden prepararse para la clase de Historia Antigua visitando las galerías de arte egipcio, griego y romano en el Museo de Bellas Artes de Boston (Museum of Fine Arts) —útil y divertido también para quienes tomarán clases de arte o historia del arte.

En cuarto grado se estudiará sobre las ballenas en la clase de ciencias, y en onceavo grado se leerá Moby Dick. Entonces, visiten el museo de caza de ballenas (Whaling Museum) en New Bedford. Si a su niño le han asignado la lectura de The Crucible (Las brujas de Salem), The Witch of Blackbird Pond (El estanque del mirlo) o The House of The Seven Gables (La casa de los siete tejados), entonces una excursión a Salem es una gran idea. Y si aprenderá sobre el sistema solar, nada mejor que una visita al planetario del Museo de Ciencias de Boston (Hayden Planetarium in el Museum of Science).

Y aun si no puede ir a estos museos durante el verano, hay muchas maneras divertidas e interesantes de enseñarle a su niño antes de que las clases empiecen. Visite su biblioteca local y saque prestados libros, libros grabados en audio o DVD sobre temas que su hijo estudiará en la escuela. Los estudiantes con planes educativos individualizados (IEP, por sus siglas en inglés) tienen derecho a libros grabados o en formatos digitales que puedan reproducir en una computadora o reproductor MP3. Éste es un servicio ofrecido por Talking Books Library (ver: http://mblc.state.ma.us/libraries/braille/index.php) y Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (ver: http://www.rfbd.org). Muchos estudiantes escuchan libros en su computadora o iPod, que descargan de http://www.audible.com o de http://www.bookshare.org.

Otro recurso excelente es la Asociación de Bibliotecas Estadounidenses (American Library Association). Y en http://www.ala.org/alacity/divs/alsc/index.cfm encontrará una amplia gama de páginas web recomendadas para niños, clasificadas por tema y materia. Preste atención a las páginas relacionadas con temas que su niño estudiará en la escuela. Estos sitios web son una manera divertida e interactiva de promover el aprendizaje durante el verano.

Y recuerde: aunque su escuela esté cerrada este verano, usted puede promover el aprendizaje fuera del aula, ¡y esto puede ser algo muy divertido!
When you have a child or youth with special health-care needs, your health insurer is an important partner. Below are some tips to help ensure your child is receiving the maximum amount of health services covered by your insurance.

1. **Read the materials you receive from your health plan or employer.** These may include your service benefit plan, a directory of network providers and other information. Some private health insurers send newsletters and health promotion materials. These can help you understand your benefits and maximize the services your child and family are entitled to receive.

2. **Know your health plan’s mission, vision and/or core values statements.** These statements generally include phrases about providing members with affordable, accessible care, forming working partnerships and ensuring a member’s peace of mind. These statements can work to your advantage when you are advocating for a service and/or having problems getting a service covered. It is powerful to frame your argument in the words your insurer has provided.

3. **If your child has special health needs, ask your insurer for a case manager.** This is a free service and can provide a single “go to” person who can help you understand your benefits and make the referral or pre-approval process easier and faster.

4. **Review every EOB (Explanation of Benefits) you receive from your health insurer.** Check the dates of services, service provider, amount paid and any co-payments you must pay. This helps avoid billing mistakes. It is also a good way to make sure you are not paying for services your child did not receive or for services that your policy should cover.

5. **When speaking with customer service personnel or case managers, be polite.** It is easier to enlist help when you’re cooperative and pleasant; no one wants to help someone who is rude or disrespectful. Even if the person is not able to help you, thank them for their time.

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6. **Work your way up the ladder:** If customer service or your case manager can’t help, ask to speak to the person who can, such as a supervisor or department head.

7. **Keep a written record of calls you make and copies of all letters you send to your health insurer.** Write down the names and numbers of the people you speak with and a short summary of your discussion. If you have a problem getting a service covered, it is more effective to say, “I spoke with Ms. Smith on May 1, and she approved ....” Rather than saying, “I called a while ago and spoke with someone who told me.....”

8. **Insurance companies look at the bottom line: what is the cost?** For example, tell your insurer, “If you pay for speech and language therapy now, 52 visits will cost X dollars. If you don’t provide this service, augmentative communication/assistive technology will cost X dollars more in five years when this therapy is no longer an option for my child.

9. **Frame your requests around medical necessity.** There are tips for writing letters of medical necessity and samples letters at www.medicalhomeportal.org/issue/writing-letters-of-medical-necessity.

10. **Once you have exhausted the appeals process, you can get help from the Office of Patient Protection (OPP).** An ombudsman helps families understand their insurance benefits and work through external grievances with Massachusetts-based health plans. Learn more by calling the OPP at 1-800-436-7757 or visiting www.state.ma.us/dph/opp.

Do you have a health insurance advocacy strategy to share? Contact the Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Information Center at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210, e-mail massfy@fcsn.org, or visit us on-line at www.massfamilyvoices.org.
Promovendo o Aprendizado de Verão para os Estudantes com Deficiências de Aprendizado

Por Becky Rizoli, Projeto de Informação e Treinamento para os Pais

Para os estudantes com deficiências de aprendizado, a escola pode ser extremamente estressante. Embora eles sejam tão capazes de aprender e ser bem sucedidos academicamente quanto são os outros estudantes, eles geralmente levam mais tempo para processar a informação e chegar a encontrar as respostas corretas. Como resultado disso, eles podem se sentir frustrados e até mesmo intimidados pelos outros estudantes. Eles podem acreditar falsamente que não são tão inteligentes quanto os seus companheiros.

Imagine se sua filha ou seu filho fosse o primeiro estudante da classe a levantar a sua mão no primeiro dia de aula. Pense somente em como isso seria maravilhoso para a auto-estima de seu filho/sua filha! Aqui vão algumas idéias para ajudar seu filho/sua filha a aprender durante o período do verão e oferecê-la uma vantagem inicial para o próximo ano letivo.

Reveja as Estruturas Curriculares do Departamento de Educação Elementar e Secundária de Massachusetts, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Curriculum Frameworks no www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html. Esta é uma lista do que as escolas estarão ensinando em cada área da matéria de cada série. Você também poderá entrar em contato com o seu distrito escolar e pedir uma cópia do currículo. Durante o verão, você poderá usar as estruturas como um guia para “pré-ensinar” as lições que seu filho/sua filha estará estudando na escola.

Vocês poderão se preocupar com o fato de que seu filho/sua filha poderá protestar. O aprendizado durante o verão não precisa ser chato. De fato, pode ser interessante e divertido porque você pode tirar o aprendizado das sala de aula, deixar seus filhos/suas filhas irem de encontro aos seus interesses em seu próprio passo e adaptar material para o estilo de aprendizado de seu filho/sua filha. O aprendizado de verão também é uma chance para explorar os muitos museus divertidos e interativos que se encontram por todo o estado. Muitas bibliotecas oferecem passos para museus e aquirários e muitas outras destinações relacionadas aos tópicos que o seu filho/sua filha estudará na escola. Por exemplo, se o seu filho/sua filha estiver indo para a terceira série no outono, ele/ela aprenderá sobre os Peregrinos na classe de Ciências.

Um passeio de um dia à Plymouth, onde você poderá visitar a Plantação de Plymouth, Plimoth Plantation e o Mayflower, será uma aventura divertida e emocionante para o seu filho/sua filha. Se tiver mais tempo depois, faça um passeio ao longo da beira do mar ou da baía. Dê uma olhada nas várias lojas de souvenir ou compre um sorvete. Seus filhos/suas filhas se divertirão bastante; eles não irão nem mesmo perceber que isto é educativo! No caminho de volta para casa, converse sobre as coisas que você viu e aprendeu.

Vocês são os pais de uma criança que brevemente-estarão-na-quinta série? Os alunos da quinta série aprendem sobre a Revolução Americana. Dê ao seu aluno uma vantagem inicial visitando as cidades de Concord e Lexington, onde poderá visitar os campos de batalha e andar pelo caminho que Paul Revere fez, montado em seu cavalo. Concord é também um grande local para as crianças mais velhas que irão estudar nas aulas de inglês os trabalhos de Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau e Nathaniel Hawthorne. Leve-as para fazer um tour do Old Manse e da casa de Emerson, onde elas poderão aprender sobre estes autores e o movimento Transcendentalista. Como ponto culminante do dia, dê uma andada em volta de Walden Pond, onde Thoreau viveu e escreveu Walden.

Aqueles que estarão iniciando a sétima série, poderão se preparar para a História Antiga visitando as galerias dos Egípcios, Gregos e Romanos no Museu de Belas Artes de Bostom, que também é um museu divertido e útil para os estudantes que irão ter aula de arte ou história da arte.

Os alunos da quarta série irão estudar as baleias na aula de ciências e os do primeiro ano do curso secundário irão ler Moby Dick. Visite o Museu da Baleia em New Bedford. Os livros The Crucible, Witch of Blackbird Pon ou The House of The Seven Gables, que se encontram na lista de leitura de seu filho/sua filha? Uma viagem à cidade de Salem é uma grande idéia. Seu filho/sua filha for estudar o sistema solar, vá ao Planetário no Museu de Ciências de Bostom.

Casos não possa ir a nenhum destes museus durante o verão, ainda existem muita maneiras divertidas e interessantes de “pré-ensinar” o seu filho/sua filha antes de que as aulas se iniciem. Visite a sua biblioteca pública e pegue emprestado livros, livros em áudio ou DVDs nas matérias que seus filhos/suas filhas irão estudar na escola. Os estudantes que recebem os serviços IEP estão capacitados para os livros gravados ou em formato digital, que poderão ser assistidos através de um computador ou de um aparelho de som MP3. Este é um serviço da Biblioteca dos Livros Falados, Talking Books Library (aprenda mais no http://mlbce.state.ma.us/libraries/braille/index.php) ou nas Gravações para os Cegos e Disléxicos, Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (aprenda mais no www.rfbd.org). Muitos estudantes ouvem livros que são carregados do programa www.audible.com ou www.bookshare.org no seu iPod ou computador.

Um outro grande recurso é a Associação da Biblioteca Americana, American Library Association. Visite www.al.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/index.cfm para obter uma lista de “Grandes Websites para Crianças”, “Great Web sites for Kids”. Lá, você poderá encontrar uma grande variedade de websites que estão listadas por matéria e tópico. Averigüe aquelas que se relacionem com as matérias que seus filhos/suas filhas estarão estudando na escola. Estes websites são uma maneira divertida e interativa para promover o aprendizado durante o período de verão.

Lembre-se de que, apesar da escola não funcionar no verão, você ainda pode promover o aprendizado fora da sala de aula e este pode ser divertido!
Book Review

Universal Design for Transition, A Roadmap for Planning and Instruction

By Colleen A. Thoma, Christina C. Bartholomew and LeRon A. Scott

Reviewed by Amanda Green, Parent Training and Information Project

If you have a child with disabilities who is 14 – 22 years old, you know it can be difficult for your school to find the right balance in teaching academic, independent living, work, and community participation skills. There just doesn’t seem to be enough time in the day, for example, to work on both reading comprehension and job skills, or math computation and social skills.

A brilliant answer to this dilemma is found in a new book entitled Universal Design for Transition: A Roadmap for Planning and Instruction. This book could and should be the Transition guide for every teacher, parent, service provider, and advocate. Universally designed classrooms and lessons are not retrofitted with accommodations and modifications. Instead, they are designed from the beginning to make education accessible for every student. In the same way that curb cuts make sidewalks accessible not only to wheelchairs but to baby carriages, delivery dollies, and roller skates, a universally designed classroom makes education available to every student.

Universal Design for Transition walks the reader through the curriculum planning and lesson design process in a clear and stepwise fashion, illustrating that any given academic subject – from history to meteorology – can be universally designed to address different learning styles and to teach real academic content, living, work, and community skills, as well as self-determination. Although the students used as examples in this book are taught in a substantially separate classroom, these universal design principles could be utilized in any setting.

Universal Design for Transition is a highly readable and easy-to-use book, with charts and checklists, and stories about actual students. If you have a child in middle or high school, buy a copy for yourself and for your child’s teacher.

amazon.com
Link to Amazon through our Web site at fcsn.org and up to 6% of your purchase will help support the Federation.
Mark your calendars for these upcoming Events

Joining Voices Conference
A free day of learning and networking for families raising children & youth with special healthcare needs.
Wednesday, November 4, 2009
Hoagland-Pincus Conference Center
Shrewsbury, MA
For more information, call the MA Family-to-Family Health Information Center at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210, e-mail massfv@fcsn.org or visit www.massfamilyvoices.org

PLAN EARLY...
Visions of Community Conference
Seaport World Trade Center • Boston, MA
March 13, 2010

INFORMING, EDUCATING, EMPOWERING FAMILIES