Save the Date: Visions of Community 2010

The Federation for Children with Special Needs will host its annual Visions of Community Conference on Saturday, March 13, 2010, at the World Trade Center in Boston. Participants at the last conference told us, “Every year here is the best ever!” The conference planning committee is working to ensure families can provide that same feedback for the upcoming conference. We want Visions of Community 2010 to be the best ever.

Highlights for the 2010 conference include a keynote address by Beth Harry, Professor of Special Education at the University of Miami. Dr. Harry will talk about her teaching experience and research related to disability and multicultural issues. In addition, she speaks about family issues from her own experience as a parent of a daughter with cerebral palsy who passed away at 5 ½ years of age. Dr. Harry has written “Melanie: Bird with a Broken Wing,” a self-published book, about her daughter.

Conference attendees will be able to attend workshop sessions (many presented and/or translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Cantonese) about Early Childhood, Special Education, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Health Care for Children with Special Needs, Transition, Social/Recreation Opportunities and more. This is also a great time to network with other families and pick up free resources from our more than 70 exhibitors.

Nominations Needed: 2010 Community Partnership Awards

Do you know a parent, student, health provider, teacher, administrator, coach, neighbor or other individual who has worked to create and support the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in your community? Each year, the Federation awards Community Partnership Awards to individuals in Massachusetts who have demonstrated outstanding efforts at creating a ‘vision of community’ where everyone, regardless of ability, feels welcome, and has opportunities to participate. Award categories include Community Outreach, Inclusive Recreation, Educators (Inclusive and Special Education classrooms), Parent Advocacy, and Self-Advocacy.

Think about the people you know who have made a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities, and nominate that person for a Community Partnership Award. The Federation will present the 2010 Community Partnership Awards at the Visions of Community Conference on March 13, 2010.

Submit your nominations on-line, through e-mail, or snail mail. Find everything you need to nominate that extraordinary individual at http://fcsn.org/conference2010/cpa_nominations.php.

The nomination deadline is January 8, 2010.
FEDERATION FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Federation Expands Web Presence

The Federation’s web presence has taken on a new dimension. We are pleased to be able to offer families, professionals, and others the opportunity to follow us on Twitter and YouTube.

Twitter: While ‘twitter’ does refer to the sound of nervous laughter, and tweets are the sounds made by some birds, twitter is also a social networking site where you can receive short messages about need-to-know resources that may be helpful to families raising children with special needs. If you don’t already have a twitter account, create one for free at www.twitter.com and come follow us at fcsn.

YouTube: If you missed the keynote presentations at Visions of Community 2009 conference, want to hear the acceptance speeches of award recipients at the Federation’s Gala Celebration, or would like to learn more about inclusion, you can now see and hear these events from the comfort of your home or office. Go to www.youtube.com/fcsnvideos to watch the latest happenings at the Federation.

Going Green: Saving Green: e-Newsline

The Federation for Children with Special Needs has launched a Going Green to Save Green campaign. Like many families, the Federation must also adjust its budget to get through these difficult economic times. Rather than cut back on the direct technical assistance services we provide to families, we have decided to reduce the printing and mailing costs for Newsline.

For many years, Newsline has been available on-line in portable document format (pdf). The last two issues (Spring and Summer 2009) are also available as web page content. This format increases ease of navigation, as the table of contents is available on every page. Readers can link directly to articles of interest, rather than having to scroll through the issue to read a specific article. An additional advantage of the new format is that you do not have to download the file. We invite you to check out e-Newsline at www.fcsn.org. When you opt to receive Newsline electronically, you support the environment by helping us reduce the use of paper resources, and help us save on printing and mailing costs so we can reappropriate funds to direct technical assistance so we can help more families.

Sign Up for e-Newsline: If you want to receive Newsline electronically, we need to update your Federation database record and make sure it includes your e-mail address. To subscribe go to http://fcsn.org.
From the Executive Director and Board President

If the Federation has made a difference in your family’s life, please participate in an opportunity to help the Federation continue to make a difference in the lives of other families raising children with special needs.

**We need 1000 people to donate $50 each to keep the Federation strong!**  
**Please help us reach our $50,000 goal!**

Here’s how we have helped:

- “I am very grateful for your help because my child is doing better in school.”  Spanish-speaking mother who needed help with her child’s IEP.

- “I truly appreciated your calm voice and support the other day. I was almost in tears before I called you.”  Mother struggling to understand health care financing options.

- “The Federation helped me a lot. They referred me to the right agencies. We needed more services for my child and we were successful.”  Portuguese-speaking mom whose 3 year old has many complex health needs.

- “I felt very comfortable when I called. They [the Federation staff] helped me a lot and educated me in many areas. There should be more help like this for families.”  Parent whose son was suspended from school.

- “With the Federation’s support, my grandson’s school placement was changed.”  A grandparent from Lawrence whose 9 year old grandson, with 5 different diagnoses, was placed at a school that was not able to meet his needs.

These are only a few of the stories of the people we help because of you. As school and human service budgets are cut, our calls increase dramatically, and our resources are stretched to the maximum. More than ever, we need your support. A gift of $50, $75, $100 or more helps children with special needs in these difficult times. Please become one of a thousand donors this year.

Donate on-line through our secure server at https://fcsn.org/giving_events/donate.php or mail a check made out to the Federation for Children with Special Needs, to: Federation for Children with Special Needs, 1135 Tremont Street, Suite 420, Boston, MA 02120.

We thank you for the difference you will make in the lives of the thousands of families.

Sincerely,

Rich Robison  
Executive Director

James Whalen  
President

We're well on our way to reaching our goal of 1,000 donations by December 31st. Please help!

Inclusive Schools Week

The 9th annual Inclusive Schools Week, an annual event hosted by the Inclusive Schools Network at the Education Development Center, Inc. was celebrated December 7 – 11, 2009.

This year’s theme was “Inclusive Technologies.” It highlighted efforts by schools, families and communities to promote inclusive education and improve educational quality and outcomes for all students. Visit www.inclusiveschools.org to get tips and resources for promoting inclusive practices in your school.

The Federation was once again proud to be a partner organization in these efforts and was the official on-line store for purchasing celebration kits and other merchandise. Learn more at http://fcsn.org/inclusiveschools/index.html.

Visit www.inclusiveschools.org to get tips and resources for promoting inclusive practices in your school.
Massachusetts special education law mandates every school district to have a Special Education Parent Advisory Committee or PAC. One of the goals of the Advancing Parent/Professional Leadership in Education (APPLE) project has been to help PAC members develop leadership skills and strategies to increase the effectiveness of their organizations. These strategies include:

- **Capitalizing on Parents’ Strengths to Build PAC Organizational Capacity** - Find out the strengths, skills, and interests of each PAC member, and recruit new members with particular skills. People enjoy having their talents recognized and are more likely to participate and contribute if you say, “I hear you are a fabulous database manager. We’d love some help setting up a mailing list for our PAC. Can you assist?”

- **Reach Out and Engage Parents, Including Parents from Diverse Backgrounds** - You send flyers, post meeting dates on Web sites, and make phone calls to invite people to meetings. However, your outreach is not reaching out to all families. While it’s important to know who’s at your meetings, it’s just as important to know who’s not in attendance. Do the single parents need childcare? Do families have language barriers and need translation? Are families from diverse backgrounds hesitant to attend an event where they may not know anyone else? Are families new to this country and unfamiliar with their rights to participate in their child’s education? Reciprocal outreach is a good strategy to use to recruit diverse families. Are there restaurants, coffee shops, faith-based organizations, parks or other places in your school district where families from different backgrounds meet? Visit and extend a personal invitation to make them feel welcome. Ask them what their concerns are and include them on the PAC agenda.

- **Support Parents with Information, Advocacy and Resources** - While the PACs’ purpose is to advise the school district about its special education program, most parents attend PAC meetings to get information and connect with a supportive group of parents who understand the challenges of having children with special needs. Meetings are a time for PAC business, but should also include time for presentations from outside speakers, or draw on the expertise of the group. Volunteers play a large role in keeping PACs active. They need ideas, strategies, and support to make their efforts pay off for all families in their district.


The APPLE project will be recruiting school district Special Education PACs for a May 2010 Institute. For more information, contact Marilyn Gutierrez or Barbara Popper at 617-236-7210.

**MassCARE Activities**

The “One Love: No Longer Voiceless” conference was an opportunity for young people throughout New England living with HIV to participate in leadership, skill-building and peer-support activities. MassCARE teens and staff assisted in the planning and implementation of this 5-day event, held in August, at Babson College. They will continue to be involved as this group works together to give young people with HIV a voice in treatment and public policy that affects individuals living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

The MassCARE Family Support Initiative hosted their annual Family Networking Day at the Fessenden School Campus in Newton on August 22, 2009. More than 100 consumers and staff, from seven sites throughout the state, enjoyed numerous educational, social and networking activities.

The morning rain did not interfere with anyone’s enjoyment of the day. A nutritionist from the Lawrence Community Health Center spoke about healthy snacks. There were indoor activities, and a covered pavilion where participants did arts and crafts, got tattoos, and enjoyed a magic show. When the sun came out, people swam, danced, played outdoor games, and ate barbecue.

To learn more about MassCARE Family Support Initiatives contact Delores Qualls at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 311 or e-mail dqualls@fcsn.org.
Wife, mother, grandmother, teacher, advocate, colleague, mentor, friend - these are just a few of the roles that Barbara Popper fulfills in the lives of her family, friends, colleagues, and for all families raising children and youth with special needs. For these reasons, and many more, Barbara was awarded a Maternal Children Health (MCH) Director’s Award for her more than 40 years of commitment to promoting the health of women and children.

Barbara entered the advocacy arena when she found herself in the hospital with one of her four children. The hospital’s restrictive visitation policies did not make sense and treated parents as adversaries, rather than allies in their children’s care. To promote the parent’s role in the care of their hospitalized children, she started Children In Hospitals (CIH), a non-profit, volunteer educational and advocacy organization. CIH conducted a survey of visitation policies at other hospitals, and used the information to advocate for 24-hour family visitation policies at Massachusetts hospitals. Families have Barbara to thank for being able to room in with their hospitalized children.

Barbara continued her activism and advocacy. When Boston Children’s Hospital placed a public advertisement in the paper indicating its plans to build a new building, Barbara joined other parents at the Federation. They requested a meeting with the hospital to discuss the building plans. This effort grew into a Family Advisory Group that met with members of the hospital staff and administration throughout the planning and building process, having significant impact on the building itself and on family policies. After completion of the hospital building, the committee became a standing Family Advisory Committee for the new hospital.

Promoting health and wellness is another of Barbara’s passions. She’s the first to urge people to take a walk at lunch time, and bring healthy snacks. She is a long time member of La Leche League, and a certified lactation consultant. As part of Family Voices, Barbara contributed to the creation of the Bright Futures for Families Pocket Guide, and is currently contributing to the updated version. She gathered information from families and professionals about their telehealth and telemedicine experiences to create a booklet, Family Voices in SCHIP Telehealth/Telemedicine Report to Families: Bridges Not Boundaries, The Value and Use of Telemedicine for Children and Youth with Special Needs. Barbara was also the lead investigator for the Family Matters project, a multi-state research study about health and wellness for families raising children and youth with special health care needs. In addition, as a staff member at the Federation, Barbara helps direct the APPLE project, which assists parents of children with special needs in developing their leadership skills in the education system.

Please join us in congratulating Barbara on her well-deserved award.

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Corporate card orders accepted.
**High Quality Education for All**

All students in the United States have a right to a high quality education. Federal and state laws recognize the importance of educating children with special needs in classrooms with their peers. This practice is commonly referred to as “inclusion.” The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) cites more than 30 years of research that shows that students with disabilities who participate in general education classrooms—with proper special education supports, language supports, and accommodations—dramatically improve their performance. Therefore, inclusion has become part of what it means to have a “high-quality” education.

In updating IDEA in 2004, Congress found that the education of students with disabilities had been impeded by “low expectations.” These low expectations occurred because students with disabilities were often placed into separate classrooms where they did not have the opportunity to learn the same academic content that all other students were learning. Today, ELL students with disabilities often face low expectations, segregation, and insufficient opportunities to learn academic content.

**What is Inclusion?**

Inclusion not only means being educated in regular education classes. It also refers to a sense of belonging to a school community as an equally valued member. Students who are “included”:

- Participate in age-appropriate general education classes with access to the physical environments and routines of the school.
- Have opportunities for social interactions and relationships with their peers.
- Participate meaningfully in the general education curriculum to the maximum extent possible with the supports and services they need to make progress.
- Are held to the same high academic standards that Massachusetts has set for all children.

Schools with proven records of success in educating ELL students with disabilities provide an environment of belonging and academic support where all students can learn.

**Challenges ELL Students Face**

Families of ELL students with disabilities may confront extraordinary challenges in their efforts to ensure their children receive a high quality, inclusive education. They may not be familiar with U.S. schools or proficient in English. One particularly difficult issue is the misidentification of ELL students.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, misidentification of ELL students results in both under-identification and over-identification of ELL students as disabled. For example, a student who needs special education may not get it because that student’s school district may not have the specific specialist needed, such as a psychologist, in the child’s native language. Students in another district may need help learning English, but if the district does not have resources to help, that student may be referred to special education. ELL students with poor school achievement may also be mistakenly identified as needing special education because their language and cultural differences are interpreted as a disability.

Once a student is identified as being an ELL with a disability, the main issue often becomes access to grade-level academic content. Without access to the regular education classroom, access to the general curriculum is difficult. A balance must be achieved between learning English and learning academic subjects. Often, the best place to create that balance is in the regular classroom.

**Parents are Crucial**

Because of the diversity among students who are disabled and who are English language learners, parents play a vital role. They can provide important information about their children’s cultural and language issues, as well as explain their child’s learning strengths and needs. Parents may need to take courageous steps to ask for the language support they need to stay in touch with the teachers and to participate in IEP team meetings. Schools should provide translators as necessary to support families’ communication needs.

Mass PIRC has updated two publications, “English Learners and State Assessments.” and “Rights of English Language Learners.” Both will be available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Albanian, Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Russian, Somali, and Vietnamese. For copies, additional resources, or to learn more about the rights of ELL students, contact Mass PIRC at 1-877-471-0980 or visit www.masspirc.org.
Contrary to popular belief, children with challenging behaviors do not behave badly to get or avoid things they want or don’t want, or because they have ‘bad’ parents. Some kids act inappropriately because they lack the skills to solve problems, to be flexible, and to cope with frustration. This is a type of learning disability or executive function weakness that affects a child’s capacity to handle life’s social, emotional, and behavioral challenges.

While a reward or punishment may control a child’s behavior to a certain extent, it does not teach the child the thinking skills he will need to successfully deal with the increasingly complex situations he will face as he gets older. Think:Kids—Rethinking Challenging Kids, is a type of behavior modification program based on the book “Treating Explosive Kids: The Collaborative, Problem-Solving Approach” by Ross W. Green and J. Stuart Ablon. However, rather than modifying the child’s behavior, parents and other adults are taught how to change their behavior towards their child. Parents learn to:

- Understand how their child feels,
- Identify situations that trigger certain behaviors, and
- Work with their child to figure out appropriate responses and resolve conflicts.

The Think:Kids Web site at www.thinkkids.org has a great parent section. It includes an overview of the approach, a description of the model, and videos that demonstrate how the model works. There is also a Thinking Skills Inventory tool. This six-page worksheet helps parents identify situations that trigger problem behaviors, and then literally “assign” blame to a particular executive function skill. This not only helps parents identify weaknesses, but also profiles their child’s strengths.

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. Coordinators maintain lists of support groups in their regions, which are available on the Web site (Information & Resources section). If you are looking for a local group to support your emotional needs or can share news of one, contact our staff at 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or visit www.massfamilyties.org.
Finding the right health care provider for a child with special health needs takes time. Finding a dental health provider for children with special health needs can be particularly challenging. Unlike medical specialty health providers, such as neurologists, cardiologists, or orthopedists, whose expertise is treating individuals with complex medical conditions, dental health providers do not always understand how special health needs impact oral health. And, they do not always know how to accommodate the unique behaviors an individual with special health needs may have, especially while undergoing invasive procedures in their mouths.

Children with special health care needs are subject to the same secondary health issues as their peers. While it is important to eat nutritious foods and engage in appropriate physical activities to keep their bodies healthy, it’s equally important to take good care of their teeth. As Patti Hackett, the co-director of the Healthy and Ready to Work National Resource Center says, “...the teeth are the gateway to health.”

Even if you are fortunate to have a wonderful dentist or dental hygienist, it can be a challenge to teach children and youth with special health needs good oral health habits. Families and dentists shared the following tips to help promote children’s oral health at home:

- **Read books about tooth brushing and visiting the dentist.** If you need a book suggestion, read the fun, interactive story at [www.ada.org/public/games/story.asp](http://www.ada.org/public/games/story.asp).
- **Parents should brush their teeth at the same time as their children to model good dental health habits.**
- **If it’s difficult for your child to hold a toothbrush, there are many adaptive grips that may make it easier.**
- **Some children find it uncomfortable to tilt their heads back so a parent or other caregiver can floss their teeth. Consider having your child lay down on a couch or bed for flossing and then move to the bathroom for brushing.**
- **In general, if a child can tie her shoelaces, she can brush her own teeth. If your child can’t brush her own teeth, stand behind her and have her rest her head against you, as opposed to facing the child. You can also sit on the floor and have the child sit in your lap facing out with her head resting against you.**
- **If your child can’t tolerate the toothbrush bristles, try wrapping gauze around a popsicle stick and wiping the surfaces of his teeth.**
- **Make tooth brushing part of your child’s bedtime routine. Sing a song while you or your child brushes. When the song is over, the child knows brushing is finished.**
- **If it’s too hard for your child to spit into the sink, let him spit into the bathtub. It’s a bigger and lower target and easier to clean than the floor.**
- **Many toothbrushes come with gimmicks children enjoy, such as glow in the dark, blinking lights, or spinning bristle heads.**

Learn more about the oral health needs of children with special health needs at [http://mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_oralhealth.html#Special](http://mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_oralhealth.html#Special).

If you have a strategy to share, contact the Massachusetts Family-to-Family Health Information Center at 1-800-331-0688, ext. 210 or e-mail massfv@fcsn.org. We’ll add your tip to our list.
In 1974, Massachusetts passed a law designed to protect the rights of students with disabilities and their parents. In 1975, Congress passed a similar law. Both laws, with their accompanying regulations, describe the family’s right to an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE).

**What is an IEE? It is an evaluation conducted by a person or persons who are not employed by the school district.**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal special education law, says that parents have the right to obtain an IEE whenever they have a disagreement with an evaluation conducted by the school district, but no more than one per year in each area of suspected disability. Districts can inquire as to the nature of the parent’s disagreement but cannot “unreasonably delay” in responding to a request for an IEE. The district must agree to either pay for the IEE or initiate a due process hearing to demonstrate that its own evaluation is “appropriate.” Massachusetts regulations require school districts to respond to the parent’s request for an IEE within five school days. If the district’s evaluation is found to be “appropriate” the parents are still entitled to an IEE but not at public expense. If parents ask for referrals for outside evaluators, the school district must provide a list of qualified evaluators. The list must include all qualified evaluators within the geographic area. However, parents do not have to use an evaluator on the list. They can choose any qualified evaluator to conduct the IEE.

Massachusetts special education law and regulations provide additional requirements for IEEs that are not included in federal regulations. These include:

- **Language about a “sliding scale.”** Parents may disclose financial information about income, but it is a “voluntary” decision. If the parents choose not to disclose financial information, the school district must still consider the request and decide if their evaluations are adequate.

- **A provision for state rate setting.** This means that the school district will only have to pay the independent evaluator the fee set by the state. However, the regulations note that parents may be able to demonstrate that unique circumstances may justify a parent utilizing the services of an independent educational evaluator who does not accept the Massachusetts rates.

Continues on page 11
**Principiantes da Língua Inglesa (ELL) Portadores de Deficiência**

*Por Janet Vohs, Diretora de Publicações, Centro de Informação & Recursos para os Pais*

**Educação de Alta Qualidade para Todos**

Todos os estudantes nos Estados Unidos têm o direito a uma educação de alta qualidade. As leis federais e estaduais reconhecem a importância de se educar as crianças com necessidades especiais em salas de aula juntamente com seus colegas. Esta prática é geralmente denominada de “inclusão”. A Lei de Educação para Indivíduos Portadores de Deficiência (IDEA), cita mais de 30 anos de pesquisa que mostra que os estudantes com deficiência que participam em salas de aula de educação regular —com apoios educacionais especiais apropriados, apoios relacionados com a língua e as acomodações— melhoram dramaticamente o seu desempenho. Portanto, a inclusão tornou-se parte importante do significado de se ter uma educação de “alta qualidade”.

Durante a atualização da IDEA em 2004, o Congresso verificou que a educação dos estudantes com deficiência tem sido impedida por causas das “baixas expectativas”. Estas baixas expectativas ocorreram pelo fato de que os estudantes com deficiência eram colocados em salas de aula separadas, onde não tinham a oportunidade de aprender o mesmo conteúdo acadêmico que todos os outros estudantes estavam aprendendo. Hoje em dia, os estudantes ELL portadores de deficiência têm que enfrentar frequentemente as baixas expectativas, a segregação e as oportunidades insuficientes para aprender o conteúdo acadêmico.

**O Que é a Inclusão?**

A inclusão não significa somente ser educado em classes de educação regular. Também refere-se a ter um sentido de se pertencer a uma comunidade escolar como um membro de igual valor. Os estudantes que são considerados “incluídos”:

- Participam em classes de educação regular para idades-appropriadas, com acesso a ambientes físicos e rotinas da escola.
- Têm oportunidades para as interações sociais e os relacionamentos com seus colegas.
- Participam de maneira significativa no currículo educacional regular, em grande parte possível, por causa dos apoios e serviços dos quais necessitam para que progridam.
- São considerados através dos mesmos altos padrões acadêmicos que o estado de Massachusetts espera de todas as crianças.

As escolas com históricos escolares que demonstram sucesso na educação para os estudantes ELL portadores de deficiência, que oferecem um ambiente onde se sentem parte e o apoio acadêmico com o qual todos os estudantes podem aprender.

**Desafios que os Estudantes ELL Enfrentam**

As famílias dos estudantes ELL com deficiência poderão enfrentar desafios extraordinários em seus esforços para poderem assegurar que seus filhos recebam uma alta qualidade, inclusive de educação. Eles poderão não estar familiarizados com as escolas dos Estados Unidos ou com a proficiência em inglês. Uma questão particularmente difícil é a da identificação incorreta dos estudantes.

De acordo com Joseph Dow no Escritório de Aquisição da Língua e do Desempenho Acadêmico do Departamento de Educação Elementar e Secundária de Massachusetts, a identificação incorreta dos estudantes ELL em Massachusetts, resulta tanto na identificação-fraca como na identificação-exagerada dos estudantes ELL como sendo deficientes. Por exemplo, um estudante que necessita de educação especial poderá não recebê-la porque aquele distrito escolar poderá não ter os especialistas específicos que são necessários, tais como um psicólogo, na língua materna da criança. Os estudantes em um outro distrito poderão necessitar ajudar para aprender inglês mas se o distrito não possuir os recursos para ajudá-lo, aquele estudante poderá ser encaminhado para receber uma educação especial. Os estudantes ELL com um pobre desempenho acadêmico poderão ser identificados incorretamente, como necessitando de educação especial pelo motivo de que suas diferenças de língua e de cultura foram interpretadas como sendo uma deficiência.

Tão logo um estudante seja identificado como sendo um ELL portador de uma deficiência, a questão mais importante e frequente será o acesso ao conteúdo acadêmico do nível da série. Um equilíbrio deverá ser alcançado entre o aprendizado de inglês e o aprendizado das matérias acadêmicas. Geralmente este equilíbrio será alcançado de uma melhor forma em uma sala de aula regular.

**Os Pais são Cruciais**

Por causa da diversidade entre os estudantes com deficiência que são principiantes da língua inglesa, os pais têm um papel vital ao fornecer informação importante sobre os problemas de língua e de cultura de seus filhos. Os pais necessitam tomar passos corajosos para solicitar o apoio da língua que necessitam, mantendo contato com os professores e participando nos encontros da equipe do IEP. As escolas deverão fornecer os tradutores que forem necessários para apoiar as necessidades de comunicação das famílias.

O PIRC de Mass. tem duas publicações, Principiantes de Inglês e Avaliações Estaduais e Direitos dos Principiantes da Língua Inglesa, English Learners and State Assessments and Rights of English Language Learners, disponíveis em inglês, espanhol e português. Para cópias, recursos adicionais ou para compreender mais sobre os direitos dos estudantes ELL, entre em contato com o PIRC de Mass. no 1-877-471-0980.
Overview of Massachusetts Regulations on Independent Educational Evaluations (continued from page 9)

- A statement that a publically funded IEE, “continues for 16 months from the date of the evaluation with which the parent disagrees.” If it has been more than 16 months since the district evaluated the student, the district can ask the parents to allow the district to reevaluate, before agreeing to pay for an IEE.

- That an independent evaluation report should be completed within 30 days from the time that the parents have requested an IEE, “whenever possible.”

- A provision that a Team meeting must occur within 10 school days after the district and the parents receive a copy of the evaluation report to consider whether a new or modified IEP would be appropriate. While the district is able to have 10 school days to review an IEE prior to a Team meeting, parents only have two days to review an evaluation conducted by a school district. This occurs only in situations where the parent requested in writing to receive copies of the school district’s evaluations prior to the meeting.

- That an IEE report may include a recommendation about the type of placement that will address a child’s needs but not a specific placement, per se.

- That the IEE report will summarize procedures, assessments, results and diagnostic impressions as well as relevant recommendations for meeting the student’s needs.

The protection offered by the Massachusetts regulations on IEEs relative to the five school day rule is very positive because it requires districts to respond to parental requests for a publically funded IEE in a timely manner. Provisions relative to confidential information on income, state rate setting requirements and the 16-month window for requesting an IEE seem to include requirements that go beyond what the federal regulations require for publically funded IEEs.

Learn more about IDEA and read the federal special education regulations at http://idea.ed.gov/. Learn more about Massachusetts Special Education laws and regulations at http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/laws.html. For additional help understanding IEEs, or with navigating special education services and supports, call the Massachusetts Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) at 1-800-331-0688 or visit www.fcsn.org/pti.
Los estudiantes con discapacidades que están aprendiendo inglés

Por Janet Vohs, Directora de Publicaciones, Centro de Información y Recursos para Padres de Massachusetts (Mass PIRC)

Educación de alta calidad para todos
En los Estados Unidos, todos los estudiantes tienen derecho a una educación de alta calidad. Las leyes federales y estatales reconocen la importancia de educar a los niños con necesidades especiales en las mismas aulas que sus compañeros. Esta práctica se conoce comúnmente como “inclusión”. La Ley Federal de Educación para Personas con Discapacidades (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act o IDEA) cita las conclusiones de más de 30 años de investigación que muestran que los estudiantes con discapacidades que participan en las aulas de educación general —con apoyos apropiados de educación especial, idioma y adaptaciones — mejoran de forma impresionante su rendimiento. Por lo tanto, la inclusión se ha convertido en sinónimo de una educación “de alta calidad”.

Al actualizar la ley IDEA en 2004, el Congreso encontró que la educación de los estudiantes con discapacidades había sido frenada por las “bajas expectativas”, que ocurrían porque a menudo eran colocados en aulas separadas, donde no tenían la oportunidad de aprender lo mismo que sus compañeros. Actualmente, las expectativas para los estudiantes con discapacidades que están aprendiendo inglés suelen ser bajas, además de ser segregados y de tener pocas oportunidades para aprender el contenido académico.

¿Qué es la inclusión?
Inclusión no sólo significa aprender en las aulas generales. También se refiere a la sensación de pertenecer a una comunidad escolar y de ser valorado igual que los demás. Los estudiantes que son “incluidos”:

• Participan en clases de educación general apropiadas para su edad con acceso a los ambientes y las rutinas de la escuela.
• Tienen oportunidades de interacción social y de establecer relaciones con sus compañeros.
• Participan de forma significativa en el plan general de estudios en todo lo posible, con los apoyos y servicios que necesitan para progresar.
• Deben cumplir las mismas normas académicas altas que Massachusetts ha fijado para todos los niños.

Las escuelas con antecedentes comprobados de éxito en la educación de los estudiantes con discapacidades que están aprendiendo inglés, ofrecen un ambiente de pertenencia y apoyo académico en el que todos pueden aprender.

Retos que enfrentan los estudiantes que están aprendiendo inglés
Las familias de los estudiantes que además de tener discapacidades están aprendiendo inglés suelen afrontar retos formidables al tratar de asegurar que sus niños reciban una educación inclusiva y de alta calidad. Generalmente no conocen bien el sistema escolar estadounidense o no dominan el inglés. Una dificultad especialmente importante es la identificación incorrecta de estos estudiantes.

Según Joseph Dow, de la Oficina de Adquisición del Lenguaje y Desempeño Académico del Departamento de Educación Primaria y Secundaria de Massachusetts, en nuestro estado esta falla tiene dos caras, o bien las discapacidades pasan desapercibidas, o se interpreta que como los niños no dominan el idioma, están discapacitados. Puede haber estudiantes que necesitan educación especial y no la consigan porque su distrito escolar no cuenta con el especialista necesario en el idioma del niño —por ejemplo, un psicólogo. O puede haber niños que necesitan ayuda para aprender inglés, pero el distrito no tiene los recursos y terminan por ser enviados a recibir educación especial. Los estudiantes que están aprendiendo inglés con rendimiento escolar pobre también pueden ser identificados erróneamente como candidatos para la educación especial porque su idioma y sus diferencias culturales se interpreten como una discapacidad.

Una vez que se ha determinado que un estudiante está aprendiendo inglés y tiene una discapacidad, la dificultad principal suele ser el acceso al contenido académico al nivel de su grado. Al no poder estar en el aula de educación general, es difícil acceder al plan general de estudios. Se debe lograr un equilibrio entre aprender inglés y las diferentes materias académicas. Y ese equilibrio se suele lograr en forma óptima en el aula de educación general.

Los padres son juegan un papel fundamental
Dada la gran diversidad que hay entre los estudiantes con discapacidades que están aprendiendo inglés, los padres juegan un papel fundamental porque pueden aportar información sobre la cultura y las dificultades de sus hijos con el idioma, así como sobre sus fortalezas y necesidades. Los padres necesitan un gran valor para pedir el apoyo que les hace falta con el inglés, para poder mantenerse en contacto con los maestros y participar en las reuniones del equipo de cargo del plan educativo individualizado (IEP). Las escuelas deben ofrecer traductores según sea necesario para responder a las necesidades de comunicación de las familias.

Mass PIRC tiene dos publicaciones, “Los aprendices de inglés y las evaluaciones estatales” (English Language Learners and State Assessments) y “Derechos de los estudiantes que están aprendiendo inglés” (Rights of English Language Learners); ambas están disponibles en inglés, español y portugués. Para pedir copias, recursos adicionales o para aprender más sobre los derechos de los aprendices de inglés, llame a Mass PIRC al 1-877-471-0980.
How to Choose Meaningful Holiday Gifts for your Child with Special Needs

By Randi Sargent

As we approach the holidays, well-meaning family and friends will likely ask for gift suggestions for your child with special needs. This can be a tough question, but if you don't make a specific request, your child may receive an inappropriate gift. Every year, our family approaches gift giving for our son by asking two essential questions: What are his current interests? How can his interests be met in a meaningful, accessible and age appropriate way?

Several excellent, online resources provide reviews of play products. Experts at the National Lekotek Center evaluate toys and rate them for appropriateness for children with physical, sensory, communicative and/or cognitive disabilities. These ratings are available on the Able Play Web site, where there is a description of the toy as well as a list of the skills the item promotes, benefits and play ideas. Parents can purchase toys directly from the manufacturer or add them to a handy Wish List to make it easy for others to purchase the products you recommend for your child.

Another great resource from the National Lekotek Center is the Toys R Us’ Toy Guide for Differently-Abled Kids. This free, family-friendly guide features specially selected toys that promote the development of children with physical and cognitive disabilities in the areas of auditory processing, language, visual, fine motor, thinking and social skills. Each toy has one or more symbols that indicate the specific skill so parents can easily identify items best suited for their child’s needs. This year’s guide is available online, and of course, all the toys can be purchased at Toys R Us saving the extra shipping costs.

Should your child need specially modified toys, Enabling Devices and Dragonfly Toys are great sources for switch-adapted and universal access toys and games. Happy shopping!

Additional Resources


AblePlay: www.ableplay.org

Adaptive Toys Guide: www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/At/Adaptive-toys.html

Dragonfly Toys: www.dragonflytoys.com

Enabling Devices: www.enablingdevices.com

Infintec’s Section on Play: www.infintec.org/play/shopping/toys.htm


Randi is the parent of a child with cerebral palsy who relies on assistive technology for mobility, communication and daily living. Randi is also a member of the Federation’s Board of Directors and member of the MassMATCH Advisory Committee. Learn more about MassMATCH (Massachusetts’s Initiative to Maximize Assistive Technology in Consumer’s Hands) at http://www.massmatch.org/.
It’s 10:05 on Monday morning and I’m on my way to my neighbor’s house to walk their four dogs. This isn’t the first job I’ve had. I tried other jobs, but I didn’t like most of them. I wanted to work in a video store, because my favorite hobby is watching movies. I tried it one day, but I didn’t like it because instead of watching movies I had to clean the shelves.

In 2004, I had a job coach who helped me figure out what I wanted to do and develop job goals. Now I have my own dog-walking business named K9 to 5. This is the best job because I’m my own boss. I like working with dogs because their schedules are like my schedule... they’re fed at the same time every day and need to go out at the same time.

The owners of these particular dogs are Jean and Angie. They help other adults with disabilities find jobs. Jean works for PRIDE, Inc. and Angie works for the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

When the leaves start to fall, I do yard work for Jean and Angie, and some other neighbors. I blow leaves, bag them, and put them out to the curb for pick up. I make a lot more money during the fall, which means I can buy more movies. In addition to watching movies, I like to watch TV shows that rate new movies. I go to Best Buy on Tuesday mornings when the new movies are released. The manager told me that I’m helpful to the other customers because I let them know the best movies to buy.

Having a job coach helped me figure out what I like to do, and turn it into a job. It’s great not to be stuck doing work I don’t like. If you don’t like your job, you should see about getting a job coach to help you figure out what you do like and how to make it into a job. Now I have money to do the things I like. I also participate in community events. Every year, I volunteer at the James Joyce Ramble Children’s Race. I help lead the runners around the racecourse. I like it because I get a free t-shirt.

I hope one day to have a larger business so that I can make more money, buy a new bike, and get an apartment.

Learn more about job coaching at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (www.mass.gov/mrc/) and at PRIDE, Inc. (www.prideinc.org).
**Book Reviews**
Reviewed by Miriam Scrivener, Family TIES of Massachusetts

**Babies with Down Syndrome. A New Parents Guide.**
Edited by Susan J. Skallerup

The third edition of Babies with Down Syndrome was written by parents, professionals and parent-professionals, as a guide for families of children with Down syndrome, from birth until five years of age. The book contains basic information about the syndrome, tips about daily care of the baby, early intervention, learning and education, and legal rights. At the end of each chapter there is a section with impressions and commentaries from parents. Parents and family members will find these statements useful and inspiring.

Even though it is a guide written mostly for parents, the book also provides valuable information for professionals who are working with the child and the family, in particular, the chapter on the development of babies with Down syndrome. Recent research in this field has revealed important information on development and the factors that influence progress. This section contains knowledge that would help parents, therapists and educators set up more effective environments and learning opportunities for babies and toddlers with Down syndrome, so that they can reach their full potential and lead productive lives.

The general tone of the guide is compassionate and hopeful. However, new parents may find that chapters One and Three, which describe the syndrome and the possible medical concerns, contain genetic and medical information too detailed to digest. Moreover, the tone of these chapters is sometimes pessimistic. It might be helpful for parents read these chapters later, or as consultation guides.

Finally, there is a useful, up-to-date resource guide. Families will find these resources helpful in their daily lives.

**Bebes Con Sindrome De Down. Nueva Guía para Padres.**
Compilado por Susan J. Skallerup

La tercera edición de “Bebés con Síndrome de Down” es una guía escrita por padres, profesionales y padres-profesionales, para acompañar a las familias de niños con síndrome de Down desde el nacimiento hasta los cinco años. El libro contiene información básica con respecto al síndrome, el cuidado diario del bebé, la importancia de la intervención temprana, el aprendizaje y los derechos legales. Se incluye al final de cada capítulo una sección con impresiones y comentarios de padres. Los padres y otros miembros de la familia encontrarán estas impresiones de gran utilidad e inspiración.

Si bien es una guía destinada principalmente a los padres, este libro contiene también información pertinente para los profesionales que trabajan con los niños y sus familias. Particularmente útil resulta el capítulo acerca del desarrollo del bebé con síndrome de Down, debido a que investigaciones recientes han revelado más información sobre el desarrollo y sus factores de influencia. En esta sección se ofrecen conocimientos que permitirán a padres, terapeutas, y educadores ofrecer ambientes y oportunidades de aprendizaje que ayudarán a los niños a realizar su potencial.

El tono general de la guía es alentador y compasivo. No obstante, los padres novatos encontrarán que los capítulos Primero y Tercero, que describen el síndrome y sus complicaciones médicas, contienen información genética y médica muy detallada, difícil de absorber, y a veces un tanto pesimista con respecto al desarrollo físico del niño. Probablemente sería de ayuda que estos padres dejen la lectura de estos capítulos para el final del libro o como consulta.

Finalmente, la guía ofrece datos de utilidad a través de una sección detallada de recursos que ha sido actualizada a la impresión del libro. Las familias usarán estos recursos constantemente ahora con la ventaja de encontrarlos en español.

Woodbine House has donated copies of these books to the Federation, which you can borrow by calling 617-236-7210. Learn more about the Special Needs Collection at www.woodbinehouse.com.
SAVE-THE-DATE

Visit fcsn.org for more details about these and other events...

PLAN EARLY...

Visions of Community Conference
Seaport World Trade Center • Boston, MA
March 13, 2010
8:30 am - 5:00 pm
Registration opens at 7:30 am

Gala 2010
Seaport Hotel • Boston, MA
May 21, 2010
Awards Dinner and Silent Auction
6:00 pm - 10:00 pm