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Plan Now to “Walk, Roll, Shobble*, Stroll” with us in September!

With summer upon us the fall and a new school year are probably the furthest things from your mind. But here at the Federation, we are already hard at work planning our annual Family Fun Walk, “Walk, Roll, Shobble*, Stroll for Children with Special Needs”. This year’s event will be held on Sunday, September 21st, from noon – 3pm (rain or shine) at the Nature Trail on the grounds of the Massachusetts Hospital School, 3 Randolph Street, Canton, MA.

Last year’s event (our first ever walk!) was a huge success, raising over $14,000 to support the Federation’s work! We hope you will join us this year, and help us meet this year’s fundraising goal of $20,000!

This is a fun and easy way to support the Federation, and here is how you can participate! We ask each walker to commit to raising $100; that’s just 10 friends who will each “sponsor” you as a walker at $10 each! Or put together a team of walkers, with each team member committed to raising $100!

So plan now to put together a team of family, friends, and colleagues, and come join Federation staff and other families for a great day of networking, family activities, food, music, games and prizes (and of course the Walk!) all to support children with special needs and their families. Registration is open now! Visit www.fcsn.org for more details.

*Shobble: “when a shuffle meets a hobble”
(Definition by Chelsey Kendig, self-advocate)
I was privileged to speak at the Braintree SEPAC’s sixth annual Community Inclusion Awards about the importance of inclusion. The Braintree Community Inclusion Awards for 2014 were presented to Mary Ford-Clark, the program director of Super Saturdays, a recreation program for all students, Amy Valle dance instructor and owner of Amy’s Dynamic Dance, and Principal Stacey Soto of the Flaherty Elementary School representing the entire 5th grade. Each student was individually recognized and awarded an “inclusion medal” because of how they accept each other and make sure that everyone is a part of the class.

SEPAC co-chairperson and event organizer, Kristen Zechello said the purpose of these awards is to recognize members of the community who support community inclusion in their town and provide opportunities for all children to fully participate in town activities and develop meaningful relationships outside of their families. Mayor Joseph Sullivan, who hosted the ceremony, stated “Everyone is remarkable. Everyone has a gift. Everyone can contribute to our community and we see inclusion in Braintree every day. Inclusion is a priority of our town.”

Several years ago, the Braintree SEPAC attended the Federation’s APPLE Institute where their Team committed to re-energizing their SEPAC and began thinking about how to celebrate the inclusion of all children within their community. Their first event, held in 2009, was quite modest compared to now. As one of the leaders told me, “I remember we were looking around the school kitchen to find extra coffee creamers for our coffee.” This year’s event was sponsored by several community groups with donated catering, an honorary committee of state, town and school officials and an audience of several hundred that overfilled the room.

All of our APPLE participants are asked to imagine at least two years into the future and describe their vision when it is “wildly successful”. Frequently the participating Teams will describe a vision of the inclusion and acceptance of their children with disabilities that seems only an idealistic dream. One wonders if such a dream could ever come true. The Braintree SEPAC has demonstrated that the wildest dream can come true. Celebrate Inclusion wherever you are, and make a dream come true!

Rich Robison

From the Executive Director:
Celebrating Community Inclusion!

Rich Robison

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The Guild for Human Services is a day and residential school for students with intellectual disabilities and behavioral challenges.

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- Intellectual Disabilities (ID),
- Autism Spectrum Disorders,
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Applied Behavior Analysis, educational services, residential services, clinical services, vocational services and routine community experiences ensure consistent, effective progress and generalization of newly learned skills to students’ daily lives.

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Visions of Community 2014 Conference in Pictures...

What do you want to be or do as an adult? For many teens the typical response is, “I have no idea”. If a VISION for the future is essential to the Transition planning process; what can you do to help?

A Transition Portfolio might help you to illustrate the future you wish to create. Or if you have already defined your hopes and dreams, you might want to illustrate them visually in a Transition Portfolio.

In her recent book, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor shares her thoughts on the importance of an individual’s vision. “Experience has taught me that you cannot value dreams according to the odds of their coming true. Their real value is in stirring within us the will to aspire.” This is the essence of a vision.

To create a Transition Portfolio, take a 3-ring binder with plastic sleeves. Find images that represent the experiences, feelings, people and possessions you want to be part of your life. Have fun! Use photographs, magazine cutouts, pictures from the Internet--whatever inspires you. Include not only pictures, but anything that speaks to you or about you. Use words and images that best show who you are, your ideal future, and your interests to inspire positive emotions within you. Consider including a picture of yourself in your book; one that was taken in a happy moment. Or use a ‘caricature’ or something visual that reflects YOU.

There are also a number of Web 2.0 apps that teachers are using with students to help them to create digital portfolios: The Google Sites/Digital Portfolio Tutorial Series at www.mscomputerteacher.com/google-sites-and-digital-portfolios.html. You can find more information on digital portfolio apps on www.teachthought.com/technology/8-educational-apps-to-create-digital-portfolios.html.

You can use your Transition Portfolio to depict preferences and interests in all areas of your life experience. It can be your best school work, a club activity, an award, sports, movie or music star, your favorite teacher or coach, summer camp, a church or community event. Be selective about what you place in your Transition Portfolio, but be creative too! Do you see music, art, theater in your future? Include video, YouTube, CD or PowerPoint to share at your IEP meeting.

The Portfolio affords you the opportunity for self-awareness and self-reflection. Don’t remove the pictures or images from your Transition Portfolio that represent the goals you’ve reached. IMAGINE and VISUALIZE your dreams. Your accomplishments are powerful reminders of what you have deliberately achieved or attracted to your life and journey.

- Look at your Transition Portfolio often.
- Read the motivating words out loud.
- See yourself living in that job or community.
- Feel yourself in the future you have designed.
- Recognize your accomplishments.
- Identify the changes you have seen and felt.
- Celebrate your life!

Transition Portfolio – Inspiration

As you explore and grow, your dreams may change and the portfolio will be a record of your experience, to document this personal Transition journey from year to year. Your Transition Portfolio is a voyage of growth and achievements on your individual passage from school into adulthood. Follow your hopes and dreams; keep them stirring within you!

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Elizabeth Russell, Director of Admissions, erussell@cotting.org
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“How can I learn more about the special education laws and process so that I can advocate for my child?” Every day parents are asking themselves this very question. Understanding the special education laws, your child’s educational rights and the special education process can be confusing and overwhelming. Learning how to advocate for your child can be even more daunting. Over 30 years ago the Federation for Children with Special Needs recognized the need for parents to have the opportunity to learn about the special education laws that protect their children and how to advocate on behalf of their children. What started as a small lay advocacy project in the mid 1970’s has become what is known today as the Parent Consultant Training Institute. Each year the Federation trains almost 150 parents and professionals through this program, empowering participants with the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to navigate the special education system in Massachusetts.

The Parent Consultant Training Institute, also known as the “PCTI program”, is an intensive special education advocacy course offered by the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Unique to Massachusetts, the PCTI program is open to both parents of children with special needs as well as the professionals that support them. Sessions are held several times each year at various locations throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The course provides over 40 hours of classroom instruction and training. Topics covered include Basic Rights in Special Education, Federal and State Special Education Laws and Regulations, IEP Development, Writing Measureable IEP Goals, Transition Planning for Middle and High School Students, School Discipline, Neuro-psychological Evaluations, 504 Plans, Medicaid Behavioral Health Entitlements (also known as the Children’s Behavioral Health Initiative or “CBHI”), Supporting Students with Complex Healthcare Needs, Families and Culture, Effective Communication, Building Parent and Professional Partnerships, Special Education Advocacy, Special Education Compliance and Resolving Differences with the School. Workshops are taught by Federation staff members, attorneys, distinguished professionals and staff from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and the Bureau of Special Education Appeals (BSEA).

After completing the 40 hours of classroom instruction, all PCTI participants are invited to participate in an optional internship. The internship is an additional opportunity for PCTI participants to practice applying the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom by helping other families along their special education journey. During the internship, PCTI participants volunteer for 25 hours in our Call Center located at the Federation office in Boston. There they offer telephone support to families and professionals who call the Federation with questions about everything from special education law and process to suggestions for summer camps. Federation staff members work closely with volunteers to ensure that callers receive the most relevant and accurate information. As part of the internship PCTI participants also agree to provide a total of 25 hours of free (also called “pro bono”) advocacy assistance to families who cannot afford to pay for a special education advocate. For many families, this free advocacy assistance can result in not only more supports and services for a child on an IEP but also increased collaboration and partnership between the school and the parents.

The goal of the PCTI program is simple: to continue creating a pool of informed and empowered individuals who can share their knowledge and skills with other parents to help protect the rights of all children with disabilities. For many PCTI participants, the PCTI program provides an opportunity to pursue a new career interest in the field of special education advocacy; for others, the PCTI program is an opportunity to learn about the laws and the process so that they can be better advocates for their own children. For all PCTI participants, the PCTI program offers a unique opportunity to connect with experts and leaders in the field of special education. For the Federation, the PCTI program enables us to partner with new volunteers who are able to help us achieve our mission of providing information, support, and assistance to all parents of children with disabilities, their professional partners, and their communities.

Applications to the PCTI program are accepted throughout the year, with preference given to parents and caregivers of children with disabilities.

Applications to the PCTI program are accepted throughout the year, with preference given to parents and caregivers of children with disabilities. The current tuition for the program is $325 for parents and $425 for professionals. Limited scholarships are offered through the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) on a first come first serve basis. Fall and winter sessions are currently being scheduled. For more information on our PCTI program or the scholarships available through the MDDC you can visit our website at www.fcsn.org or contact the program administrator, Laura Yellick, at lyellick@fcsn.org.
The Stress of Poverty on Early Brain Development

By Jane Crecco, Training and Support Specialist - Recruitment Training and Support Center (FCSN)

The first Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study was conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Health Plan between 1995 and 1997. Since then, it has become widely accepted that stressful and traumatic childhood experiences are indicators of social, emotional, and cognitive impairments. Recent breakthroughs in neurobiology have confirmed that ACEs disrupt and alter the early development of a child’s “brain architecture.” In the long-term ACEs impact a number of health outcomes and increasingly negative social fallout.

In the last couple of years, new risk factors have been added to the list of specific adverse family experiences (see, in particular, the National Survey of Children’s Health1). Perceived discrimination, being a witness or victim of neighborhood violence, and socioeconomic hardship were all added to the ACE survey questions. The data collected are troubling and profound.

New research in epigenetics is also adding to the mix of distress for children with multiple ACEs. Epigenetics is the process by which outside experiences alter gene expression. Recent research shows that a stressful upbringing changes the structure of multiple genes. This change is passed on to subsequent generations, even those without ACEs. This can negatively impact the stress response of developing children.2

A new policy brief published by The Future of Children: Princeton-Brookings3 discusses some promising new programs aimed at helping families facing chronic stress, particularly those in areas of high poverty or homelessness. The data show that this is necessary. In 2012, more than six million (22%) of children under age six in the United States lived in poverty. Almost 50% of all children lived in low-income families (income less than 200% of the federal poverty level).

These programs embrace a safe and supportive early environment for children at risk for ACEs. Home-visitation programs, starting during early pregnancy, offer great hope. Pediatricians can establish their offices as “medical homes” to ensure that young families have a primary source of care in which periodic health and behavioral assessments take place. Money is needed – ongoing federal assistance can significantly ease the financial stress of young families. High quality child care is also essential. Head Start-Trauma Smart, a new initiative being piloted in Kansas City, is showing tremendous success by providing at-risk kids access to warm, responsive, child-centered teachers who provide safe, supportive and predictable environments in early learning.

These programs demonstrate the views of one of the original ACE study researchers. Robert Anda recently commented on new findings based on his work, stating that, “until now, the persistent effects [of ACEs] were ‘hidden’ from the view of both neuroscientists and public health researchers. This is no longer the case. In fact, with this information comes the responsibility to use it.”4

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1The NSCH is a telephone survey conducted by the National Center of Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control under the direction and sponsorship of the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau. Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (2013). “What’s new in the 2011/12 National Survey of Children’s Health?” Data Resource Center, supported by Cooperative Agreement 1-U59-MC06980-01 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration.


Following dinner, the program honored the lives and work of Robert H. Audette and Barbara Popper, both of whom passed away in the last year. Audette was the Associate Commissioner of Special Education for the Massachusetts Department of Education after Chapter 766 was passed. He worked tirelessly to ensure the law was successfully implemented. Popper was a long-time employee of the Federation, working on a number of programs since the agency opened in 1974. Mary Ann Ziegler, daughter of Federation founder Martha Ziegler, sang “Amazing Grace” in memory of Audette and Popper. She was accompanied on the piano by her voice instructor, Robert Gartside.

The next item on the program was the awards ceremony. Jim Whalen, President of the Federation’s Board of Directors, introduced Dan Heffernan, this year’s recipient of the President’s Award. Heffernan is a lawyer working for Kotin, Crabtree & Strong and a current member and former president of the Board of Directors. Heffernan thanked his family, especially his son Brian. Brian has Down syndrome and was the keynote speaker at last year’s Federation conference. He also thanked Kotin, Crabtree & Strong and acknowledged Larry Kotin, who wrote the original draft of Chapter 766, along with his longtime legal partner Bob Crabtree and Connie Rizoli, former research analyst for then Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives David Bartley.

Rizoli then presented the Martha Ziegler Founders Award to Speaker Bartley. Rizoli praised Bartley for his tireless efforts to get Chapter 766 passed and forever change the education of children with special needs. In the tradition of the MA House of Representatives, she then said, “Mr. Speaker, please come to the rostrum to accept your award.”

Bartley began by saying that he couldn’t think of a better illustration of the effect of Chapter 766 than the Boston Ballet Adaptive dancers who had just performed. He also said that special education “is not a partisan issue. It affects Democrats, Republicans, the rich, middle-class, and poor. You never know if or when special education students will perhaps be in your family.” He thanked everyone who had worked so hard over the past 40 years to protect and maintain the rights of students with special needs.

The final award of the evening, the Patricia Blake Parent Advocacy Award, was presented by Susan Arndt, Chair of the Gala Committee, to Eustacia Cutler. Cutler is the mother of Temple Grandin, and she wrote a book about raising her daughter with autism in the 1950s. Cutler explained that Temple didn’t talk until she was two years old. With the help of a patient speech therapist who ran a preschool program, Grandin learned to talk and attended grade school at Dedham Country Day School. She went on to college and later got an advanced degree in animal science. Cutler said that it is our job to educate the mainstream about autism and other special needs.

After the awards ceremony, Wornick, dancer Sara, and Robinson’s daughter Amy closed the program. They once again introduced Calypso Hurricane, who Amy called “the best band since S Club 7!” For the rest of the evening, the crowd danced along with Boston Ballet Adaptive Dance, as Calypso Hurricane played favorites such as “The Banana Boat Song” and “Stir It Up.” All in all it was a successful evening, raising over $200,000 to support the work of the Federation!
Celebrating Every Child
40 years of Celebrating Families

Gala 2014

Marianne and Chris Cooper with emcee Susan Wornick, TV News Anchor and 3 time Emmy Awardee

Boston Ballet’s Adaptive Dance Troupe danced to “Happy” by Pharrell Williams

Mary Ann Ziegler and Robert Gartside inspired us with a musical tribute

FCSN Board Member Anne Howard with longtime FCSN supporter Ed DeNoble

Rich Robison acknowledges the work of the late Robert Audette, with sons Kenneth and Frank Audette

Barbara Popper’s family from left: Lee Popper, Aaron Prebluda, Sarah Popper with baby Benjamin Jacob, and Steven Popper

Dancer Isaiah Lombardo with his mom Angela

Brian Heffernan with MA State Rep. Tom Sannicandro

Maximus with Mom and FCSN Board Member Barbara Vanderwilden
It is sometimes called “vox populi.” The source for public comment can be traced to the Age of Enlightenment in Europe and the American Revolution. The tradition of the New England Town Hall is rooted in this concept, and it continues today in the workings of government at all levels.

A period of public comment is the chance for all interested parties to comment on planned government actions before they become final. This tradition played out in important ways when the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) released proposed regulations for the new Massachusetts discipline law, Chapter 222, in January 2014. DESE established a five-week period during which it would receive and review comments about the new rules. The Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) was scheduled to vote two weeks later.

Although the new law doesn’t change protections for special education students, these regulations will govern behavior management for all students not on an IEP, including students on 504 Plans, for years to come (see Newsline ed. December 2013 “From Zero Tolerance to Compassionate Accountability”).

Student suspension is very often a crisis moment for families. There may be blame, sadness, anger, stigma, and disappointment. Families are in need of information and support. Parents need a meaningful opportunity to participate in discussions about their child’s behavior in school, and to understand decisions made by the school and the reasons for those decisions. After reading the draft regulations, we joined the Massachusetts Advocates for Children, who led a coalition of advocates in support of enacting Chapter 222, in calling for increased parental participation under the new rules.

Chapter 222 advances school discipline in MA with the requirement that schools consider ways to reengage students in learning and avoid long-term suspension until other courses of action are tried. However, the proposed regulations for this provision contained only punitive options. The Federation along with other organizations suggested the inclusion of alternatives such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).

A provision for Emergency Removal also raised concerns. This allows a principal to immediately suspend a student before going through the new due process protections in the law, a concept that does not exist in the original text of Chapter 222. The terms of this practice were very controversial during the period of public comment.

DESE received comments from 36 organizations, including the Federation. In fact, the vote by BESE had to be postponed an entire month. Four days before the April vote, revised regulations were released, marked to show changes, along with memos describing the many changes that were made as a result of comments from the public and, for the changes that were not made, an explanation was also provided. Parents and other stakeholders welcomed the transparency of the process and were pleased with the revisions.

For example, added to the Purpose provision of the regulations, “to promote engagement of a student’s parent in discussion of the student’s misconduct, and options for responding to it.”

Parents were also given the opportunity to discuss their child’s conduct with the school before discipline was decided and offer information, including special circumstances, which the principal should consider in determining discipline for the student. This is valuable attention to the family voice.

As for Alternatives to Suspension, the original suggestions:

- Loss of privileges, detention, an apology, a student contract, restitution, and probation were removed completely and replaced with the following:
  - Evidence-based strategies such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and PBIS.

Emergency Removal remains a part of the rules. Due to objection in the public comments, the revision removed the most subjective language. However, at the April 29th meeting, a superintendent, principal and school attorney spoke strongly that the language was necessary to keep schools safe. A compromise was reached at the meeting and somewhat less subjective language was made part of the rule. It will be interesting to see how schools carry out this provision in the context of the overall changes under Chapter 222.

Parents will, in fact, have the opportunity to track a school’s progress under the law’s data reporting provisions. All MA
Reorientación de los canales: Las nuevas reglas de disciplina escolar

Por Paige Parisi, Director del Centro de Recrutamiento, (FCSN) Capacitación y Apoyo y Leslie M. Leslie, Coordinadora de MassPAC (FCSN)

A veces se le llama “vox populi”. El origen de recibir los comentarios del público se remonta a la época de la Ilustración en Europa y a la Revolución de la Independencia de Estados Unidos. La tradición del Ayuntamiento de Nueva Inglaterra se basa en este concepto y continúa actualmente en el funcionamiento del gobierno a todos los niveles.

Un período de comentario público es una oportunidad para que todas las partes interesadas opinen sobre medidas adoptadas por el gobierno antes de que se vuelvan definitivas. Esta tradición jugó un papel importante cuando en enero de 2014, el Departamento de Educación Primaria y Secundaria (DESE, por su sigla en inglés) publicó las reglas que proponía como parte de la nueva ley disciplinaria de Massachusetts, el Capítulo 222. El DESE estableció un plazo de cinco semanas para recibir y examinar los comentarios del público. Y programó que el Consejo de Educación Primaria y Secundaria (BESE, por su sigla en inglés) las sometiera a votación dos semanas más tarde.

Aunque la nueva ley no cambia las protecciones para los estudiantes de educación especial, estas reglas se aplicarán en años venideros al comportamiento de todos los estudiantes que no tengan un plan educativo individualizado, incluso los que tengan un plan 504 (ver la edición de diciembre de 2013 de Newsline “De Tolerancia Cero a Responsabilidad Compasiva”).

La suspensión de un estudiante suele ser un momento de crisis para las familias. Puede generar sentimientos de culpa, tristeza, enojo, estigma y decepción. Las familias necesitan información y apoyo. Los padres necesitan oportunidades reales de participar en las conversaciones sobre la conducta escolar de su hija o hijo, así como comprender las decisiones que la escuela ha tomado y las razones en que se basan. Después leer el proyecto de ley, nos sumamos a la organización Massachusetts Advocates for Children, que lideró una coalición de apoyo a la promulgación del Capítulo 222, para solicitar una mayor participación de los padres en la aplicación de las nuevas reglas.

El Capítulo 222 representa un paso adelante en la disciplina escolar de Massachusetts al exigir que las escuelas consideren formas de reincorporar a los estudiantes al aprendizaje y de evitar las suspensiones a largo plazo hasta que se intenten otros cursos de acción. Sin embargo, las reglas propuestas en esta cláusula tenían sólo medidas punitivas. La Federación, junto con otras organizaciones, sugirió incluir alternativas como intervenciones y apoyos conductuales positivos (PBIS, por sus siglas en inglés).

Una de las cláusulas, sobre suspensión de emergencia, también suscitó inquietudes. Permite que el director de una escuela suspenda inmediatamente a un estudiante sin aplicar las nuevas protecciones de proceso debido de la ley, un concepto que no existía en el texto original del Capítulo 222. Durante el período de comentarios públicos, los términos de esta práctica fueron muy polémicos.

El DESE recibió comentarios de 36 organizaciones, entre ellas, la Federación. De hecho, la votación del BESE tuvo aplazarse un mes entero. Cuatro días antes de la votación de abril, se publicaron reglas revisadas con los cambios marcados y notas que explicaban las muchas modificaciones hechas en respuesta a los comentarios del público, y por qué algunos cambios no se incorporaron. Los padres y demás partes interesadas recibieron con agrado la transparencia del proceso y estuvieron complacidos con los cambios.

Por ejemplo, a la cláusula sobre el propósito de las reglas, se añadió “promover la participación de los padres en la conversación sobre la conducta del alumno y las respuestas posibles”.

También se les dio a los padres la oportunidad de hablar con la escuela sobre el comportamiento del estudiante antes de decidir medidas disciplinarias, y de ofrecer información como circunstancias especiales que el director escolar debería tener en cuenta. Esto es de gran valor para la familia.

En cuanto a alternativas a la suspensión, las sugerencias originales:

• Pérdida de privilegios, sanciones, pedir que el alumno se disculpe, establecer un contrato con el estudiante, resar-
cimiento y periodo de prueba se eliminaron por completo y reemplazaron con lo siguiente:

• Estrategias basadas en la evidencia como mediación, resolución de conflictos, justicia restaurativa e intervenciones y apoyos conductuales positivos.

La suspensión de emergencia sigue siendo parte de las reglas. Debido a las objeciones expresadas en los comentarios del público, la revisión eliminó las partes más subjetivas del texto. Sin embargo, en la reunión del 29 de abril, un superintendente, un director y un abogado defendieron energéticamente este lenguaje argumentando que es necesario para mantener la seguridad escolar. Finalmente se llegó a una solución de compromiso introduciendo un lenguaje menos subjetivo como parte de la regla. Será interesante ver cómo la aplican las escuelas en el contexto de los cambios generales al Capítulo 222.

Los padres, de hecho, pueden seguir el progreso de la escuela según las cláusulas de informes de datos de la ley. Todas las escuelas de Massachusetts, incluso las experimentales (“charter schools”), tendrán que supervisar y presentar informes sobre sus prácticas disciplinarias. En el otoño de cada año, el DESE publicará esta información, desglosada por subgrupos como raza o etnia, sexo, situación socioeconómica y discapacidad. Y el Comisionado determinará anualmente qué escuelas
Redirecionar o Procedimento Usual: Os Novos Regulamentos da Disciplina Escolar

Por Paige Parisi, Diretora do Centro de Recrutamento, Treinamento e Apoio (FCSN) e Leslie M. Leslie, Coordenadora, MassPAC (FCSN)


Um período de comentário público, é a oportunidade para todas as partes interessadas de comentarem sobre as ações planejadas pelos governantes de se tornarem definitivas. Esta tradição teve desempenho de importantes maneiras quando o Departamento de Educação Elementar e Secundária (DESE) liberou proposta de regulamentações para a nova lei de disciplina de Massachusetts, Capítulo 222, em janeiro de 2014. O DESE estabeleceu um período de cinco semanas durante o qual receberia e revisaria os comentários sobre as novas regulamentações. O Conselho de Educação Elementar e Secundária (BESE) estava programado para votar duas semanas depois.

Embora a nova lei não mude as proteções para os estudantes em educação especial, estes regulamentos governarão o gerenciamento da conduta para todos os estudantes que não estiverem em um programa IEP, incluindo os estudantes nos Planos 504, nos anos vindouros (veja Boletim ed. dezembro de 2013 “De Tolerância Zero à Responsabilidade Mais Humana”).

A suspensão do estudante é muito frequentemente um momento de crise para as famílias. Pode haver acusação, tristeza, raiva, estigma, e desapontamento. As famílias estão necessitadas de informação e apoio. Os pais necessitam de uma oportunidade significativa para participarem das discussões sobre o comportamento de seu filho na escola, e para entenderem as decisões feitas pela escola e as razões para a tomada dessas decisões. Após a leitura da minuta dos regulamentos, nós nos juntamos ao Defensores para as Crianças de Massachusetts, Massachusetts Advocates for Children, que lideraram uma coligação que levou ao apoio da promulgação do Capítulo 222, em uníssono para o aumento da participação dos pais sob os novos regulamentos.

O Capítulo 222 avança a disciplina escolar em MA com os requisitos que as escolas consideram maneiras de reengajar os estudantes ao aprendizado e evitar uma suspensão a longo prazo até que outros mecanismos de ação sejam tentados. Entretanto, as regulamentações propostas para esta provisão continham somente opções punitivas. A Federação juntamente com outras organizações sugeriu a inclusão de alternativas, tais como as intervenções de comportamento positivo e de apoio (PBIS).

Uma provisão para a Remoção de Emergência também aumentou as preocupações. Isto permite que um diretor possa suspender imediatamente um estudante antes de analisar as novas proteções do devido processo dentro da lei, um conceito que não existe no texto original do Capítulo 222. Os termos desta prática foram muito controversos durante o período de comentário público.

O DESE recebeu comentários de 36 organizações, inclusive da Federação. De fato, a votação do BESE teve que ser adiada durante um mês inteiro. Quatro dias antes da votação do mês de abril, os regulamentos revistos foram liberados, assinalados para mostrar as mudanças, juntamente com os memorandos descrevendo as várias mudanças que foram feitas como resultado dos comentários do público e, para as mudanças que não foram feitas, foi fornecida também uma explanação. Os pais bem como outras partes interessadas acolheram a transparência do processo e ficaram felizes com as revisões.

Por exemplo, acrescido ao Objetivo desta provisão dos regulamentos, “promover o engajamento dos pais de um estudante na discussão da má conduta do estudante, e as opções para a sua resolução”.

Foi também dada aos pais a oportunidade de discutir com a escola sobre a conduta de seu filho, antes de que a disciplina fosse decidida e oferecer informação, incluindo circunstâncias especiais, as quais o diretor deveria considerar ao determinar a disciplina necessária para o estudante. Esta é uma atenção valiosa para a voz familiar.

Como Alternativas para Suspensão, as sugestões originais são:

• Perda dos privilégios, detenção, uma apologia, um contrato de estudante, restituição, e estágio probatório foram removidos completamente e substituídos pelo seguinte:

• Estratégias baseadas na evidência tais como a mediação, a resolução de conflito, a justiça reparadora, e PBIS.

A Remoção de Emergência permanece uma parte dos regulamentos. Devido à objeção nos comentários públicos, a revisão removeu a maioria da linguagem subjetiva. Entretanto, no encontro de 29 de abril, um superintendente, um diretor e um advogado escolar se pronunciaram enfaticamente que a linguagem era necessária para manter as escolas seguras. Um compromisso foi alcançado no encontro e de certa forma menos uso de linguagem subjetiva se tornou uma parte do regulamento. Será interessante ver como as escolas executarão esta provisão no contexto das mudanças globais sob o Capítulo 222.

Os pais irão, de fato, ter a oportunidade de encontrar um progresso escolar sob as provisões de relatório de dados da lei. Todas as escolas de MA, inclusive escolas cooperativas, charters, terão que monitorar e relatar sobre suas práticas disciplinares. No outono de cada ano, o DESE fará com que esta informação esteja disponível ao público, divididos em subgrupos, inclusive mas não limitada a, raça e etnia, sexo, estado socioeconômico e estudante com um estado de deficiência. Cada
Disciplina Escolar (continuação da página anterior)

While MA was making these advances, the federal government also took major steps to fight discrimination in school exclusion. The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights and the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division jointly released a broad set of guidance documents reminding schools of antidiscrimination laws and showing them how to identify, avoid and remedy discriminatory disciplinary policies. We join these Offices in urging schools to train teachers in classroom management and to ensure that teachers don’t rely on law enforcement for routine discipline.

Chapter 222 will require schools to revise their Codes of Conduct. Schools, parents and students are encouraged to collaborate on this project. Boston Public Schools was an early adopter of the new rules and adopted a new code of conduct last September, which is available online. The Model Code on Education and Dignity developed by the Dignity in Schools Campaign also offers online sample language for many provisions of Chapter 222.

Necesitan ayuda para reducir las suspensiones a largo plazo o las expulsiones. También identificará cada año las escuelas y distritos con desproporciones disciplinarias significativas en materia de raza y etnia o discapacidad. Y estas escuelas tendrán que implementar planes para responder a ello.

Mientras Massachusetts progresa de esta manera, el gobierno federal tomó medidas importantes para combatir la discriminación en la exclusión escolar. La Oficina de Derechos Civiles del Departamento de Educación y la División para Derechos Civiles del Departamento de Justicia publicaron conjuntamente una amplia serie de documentos de orientación recordándole a las escuelas las leyes contra la discriminación y mostrándoles cómo identificar, evitar y corregir las políticas disciplinarias discriminatorias. Conjuntamente con estas oficinas, instamos a las escuelas a que capaciten a los maestros en el manejo del aula y a que aseguren que no se recurra exclusivamente a medidas punitivas para la disciplina rutinaria.

El Capítulo 222 requiere que las escuelas reexaminen sus códigos de conducta. Alienta a las escuelas, los padres y los estudiantes a colaborar en este proyecto. El pasado mes de septiembre, las Escuelas Públicas de Boston fueron unas de las primeras en adoptar las nuevas reglas y un nuevo código de conducta, disponible en línea. El Código modelo de educación y dignidad elaborado como parte de la campaña “Dignidad en las escuelas” (“Dignity in Schools”) también ofrece muestras en línea de muchas de las cláusulas del Capítulo 222.

Reorientación de los canales: Las nuevas reglas dedisciplina escolar

Redireccionar o Procedimento Usual: Os Novos Regulamentos da Disciplina Escolar (continuação da página anterior)
Educational inclusion is a wonderful opportunity for students, teachers, and administrators to learn and enrich their lives. Ideally, this would be the case for every student with special needs and their local school. Unfortunately, a variety of factors may make this ideal unattainable in some circumstances.

Life was on the upswing when our social butterfly, Julia, attended integrated public preschool. Julia has Prader Willi Syndrome (PWS) and chronic hip dysplasia. Classes were small and quiet. Teachers connected with and motivated our daughter. She flourished. After preschool, the shift to mainstream public education was daunting. Her educational profile is complex. It includes poor short-term memory, impaired information processing and analytics, and cognitive delays. Her physical needs also warrant attention. Our district proposed a new program at her neighborhood elementary school. Even with aide support, Julia’s reactions to this over-stimulating environment were predictable. Even with professional trainings and countless progress meetings, her needs were misunderstood.

The administration repeatedly proposed an in-district behavioral program. Through years of cumulative classroom data, they demonstrated that no amount of rewards or consequences would ever change Julia’s genetic predisposition to react emotionally to the demands of a fast-paced classroom. Julia attended an integrated third grade classroom, but the writing was on the wall. Our vision for our daughter changed.

Failure to understand the full impact of a child’s medical diagnosis is stressful and may lead to dissension around school placement. In January 2014, our district expressed concern about their ability to meet Julia’s needs in-district. The district focused on Julia’s behavioral issues and proposed several schools. These schools mainly serve students with different needs than Julia, those who have experienced trauma, abuse, neglect, PTSD, and mental health challenges. These programs did not offer the therapeutic services or medical expertise that Julia requires.

The expression “the grass is always greener” comes to mind. We eventually realized that our greatest challenge was not obtaining an out-of-district placement, but finding the right school – one that was willing to give Julia a chance to prove herself!

The Steps We Took
We felt the full weight of finding the right school for Julia as the process dragged on. The district suggested homeschooling for Julia in September if programming was not in place. We broadened our search by talking with all of Julia’s care providers. We spoke with her doctors, therapists, neuropsychologist, advocate, DDS (Mass. Department of Developmental Services) liaison, support groups and parents. Prader Willi Syndrome National was invaluable in providing support and resources.

We visited three special education schools that have experience with PWS and two behavioral schools proposed by the district. We brought a list of questions we prepared to each visit in order to observe and collect information. The key to this process was creating a “data dump.” This was a chart listing each program and checking off the various components. That way, we were able to have an apples-to-apples comparison. We could hone in on the programs that met her highest-priority needs. This tool helped alleviate some of the stress of the process.

The comparison chart narrowed our selection to two schools, one recommended by her primary care physician and one by her DDS liaison. Both schools could support her academically and were interested in meeting Julia. After her interviews, we decided that one school offered a more rich and social school life for Julia. After last year’s tumultuous school experience, we held our breath during Julia’s trial week.

We bet on our understanding of Julia’s needs and found a school that understands her genetic condition and brings out the best in her. We are so grateful her new program was willing to give her a chance. Despite the tremendous financial and emotional toll it took to get here, Julia’s new school feels a bit like winning the lottery!

For a similar school comparison tool, visit http://maaps.org/for-parents/program-check-list.
As a long-time special education professional-turned-advocate I simply cannot say enough about the value of this book for parents. I recommend it to anyone who is going through the special education process for the first, or fiftieth, time.

Readers will quickly learn that Judith and Carson Graves’ book, Parents Have The Power To Make Special Education Work: An Insider’s Guide, stands in refreshing contrast to the ubiquitous jargon and bureaucratic double-speak that too many parents encounter during their special education journey.

With a robust Foreword by the well-regarded Robert K. Crabtree, Esq., this accessible gem gives beginner and veteran parents alike a simple, straightforward overview of federal and state special education laws and their relevance to common situations parents may encounter. More immediately, this book offers practical strategies for parents navigating the seemingly never-ending maze that has become special education in the United States. Main chapter topics include: understanding the perspective of school personnel and how and why conflicts of interest arise, understanding evaluation reports, writing measurable IEP goals, handling Team meetings, why keeping good written records is essential, the legal process, and planning for transition to adulthood.

Given the Graves’ at times maddening experiences with fighting for services for their now-grown son over many years, they could be forgiven for being bitter. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. To the contrary they have taken their experience as a family and turned it into something truly compelling and constructive and from which other parents, caregivers, and professionals can learn.

Chapter 7: Writing Effective IEP Goals in particular had me enthusiastically nodding with each paragraph and marking up the margins. With real examples of IEP goals and benchmarks this chapter alone is worth the cost of the book. Additionally I have not seen a better discussion elsewhere specifically for parents on the relevance of writing specific, measurable goals as it relates to tracking a child’s progress over time. I think parents will also find chapters 8 and 9 especially useful as they speak to the daily realities of meetings and paperwork and how to handle these situations effectively and productively.

I expect this book will be on my shelf for years to come not only as a go-to reference and strategy manual but as an eloquent reminder of an important and perhaps overlooked truth: Parents do indeed have the power to make special education work!
Join us on Sunday, September 21, 2014, 12-3 pm for our 2nd Annual Fundraising Walk!

Massachusetts Hospital School’s Nature Trail
3 Randolph Street • Canton, MA 02021

Registration Open Now!
Visit our website www.fcsn.org for details

**“When a shuffle meets a hobbie” (Definition by Chelsey Kendig, self-advocate)**