In summer, time seems to stretch out, giving us a chance to have some fun with our kids. It’s also a great time for all kinds of learning! Parents can help their kids keep learning alive. But how? The key to avoiding summer learning loss is to continue learning through the summer. When your children express an interest, encourage them to talk about it and to explore it further. Follow their passions.

**Seize the Moment**

Here are some suggestions based on studies that have discovered powerful ways for children to hold on to what they have learned during the school year and to even gain more skills and knowledge during the summer. These research findings can help point the way:

- The number of books read during the summer is consistently related to academic gains.
- Children in every income group who read six or more books over the summer are likely to gain more in reading skills than children who don’t.
- Children read more when they see other people reading. Parents can be models by letting their children see them reading for pleasure.
From the Executive Director:

Time for Transition!

My life as a parent of a child with special needs is taking a new course, and my work as the Executive Director of the Federation is nearly complete. Many of you know that my daughter has Down syndrome. Her advent into our world completely revised our family’s assumptions about life and its meaning in incredible and positive ways. Two years after her birth, our family was further enhanced with the adoption of our infant son, who also has Down syndrome. Today both of them are in their mid-thirties and thriving. What emerged from those early days has been an unimaginable journey that reshaped my career. It brought me first into state service at the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS) for six years and then on to the Federation for nearly 22 years.

I learned key lessons while advocating for my children, and was able to apply them to the needs of the families served by the Federation. The recurring theme was that the advocacy we did for our children was often hard, but also rewarding. We sensed that, for other families, accessing services would be nearly impossible without the support of peers and lessons learned. That is the model of the Federation: parents who have benefitted from life experience, though they may have struggled, are the best teachers for the next families in need.

Now, as “older” parents, we are supporting our adult children with Intellectual Disabilities to do their work, be part of the community, and continue to thrive. In addition, we have become grandparents on another unpredictable path, as our oldest daughter and her husband have adopted three teenagers, the oldest of whom has Down syndrome. Our newly expanded family is flourishing but demanding. They face some of the challenges of previous eras, but are also benefitting from innovation - the current emphasis on Transition Planning and providing learning opportunities for a new generation of students with Intellectual Disabilities.

My focus is changing, but not the Federation’s commitment to the families we serve. I am confident that the Federation will continue to provide families with the information, referrals, and training - but most of all, hope and inspiration - they need to thrive. The staff of the Federation are deeply committed to its mission and will work tirelessly to do what needs to be done. I am transitioning from Executive Director and the work will be carried, at least temporarily, by a new “Transitional Executive Director” Viv Swoboda. She too is passionate about the mission and brings tremendous experience and commitment to the work.

I thank each of you for your faithful support and abiding commitment to the Federation for these many years. Let us look forward to a strong and vital future for the next generation of families.

Sincerely,
Rich Robison
From the Transitional Executive Director:

A New Face at the Federation!

My name is Viv Swoboda and I am honored to be serving as the Transitional Executive Director for the Federation. I am leading the Federation until a permanent Executive Director is appointed. I am inspired by all the dedicated, hard-working people working at the Federation to support people with disabilities, their families and partners.

As a former special education teacher and elementary school principal, I have been able to join with families and communities in helping people with disabilities thrive. I cherish the opportunity to join everyone on the journey to discover all that is possible!

Viv Swoboda

Turn Summer Daze into Learning Days (Con’t)

Free or low-cost museum passes!

Massachusetts libraries are great summer resources. They give out free or low-cost passes to museums, the zoo, and other places of interest. Many sponsor reading or other learning programs, and many have suggested reading lists for kids of different ages.

Call your local branch for details.

Talk and Listen

Every summer day brings opportunities to talk with and listen to your children. In fact, did you know that just talking and listening are important to children’s success in life? Listening is really a child’s first experience with language and the beginning of literacy. Talk about everything. Use big words even when children are very young. Encourage your child to talk by listening.

Read! Read! Read!

Instead of losing reading skills, children who read during the summer actually gain skills. Reading aloud to young children is the most important way to get them started on the road to being a successful reader. Read to and with your child as often as possible. Read in the language of the home or whatever language you are comfortable using. Keep books, magazines, and newspapers in the home and be a reading role model. Visit your local library often. Take books home. Perhaps join a summertime reading program or attend storytelling sessions. Libraries also rent movies and CDs. A child who is a reluctant reader might be more interested in reading a book once he has seen the movie. Comic books are also a great way to get kids to read and build their vocabulary. With access to the Web, libraries can give older kids a great way to pursue an interest.

Studies have found that kids gain reading skills when they read any format they want, including comic books and teen romances. In fact, these reading gains were even better than those gained from direct reading instruction.

Encourage Math and Science

Talk about math and science during everyday activities. Cooking, gardening, sewing, using a calculator, playing board games, estimating distances and amounts, and patterns in design and music are all great ways to strengthen math and science skills. Keep events on a family size calendar to help reinforce learning about time and scheduling.

Encourage Writing

People who read more write better. The more people write, the better they get at writing. Find ways to build writing into everyday activities. You might encourage your child to:

• Keep a summer scrapbook. Fill it with postcards, ticket stubs, photos. Your child can write the captions and read them as you look over the book.
• Help write a grocery list.
• Start a journal. It can be about what happened during the day or week, or about a topic your child is interested in learning about

Be a Positive Role Model

Let your child see you enjoy reading and learning. Your joy of learning is catching! Keep learning alive during the summer so that

Continued on the next page
Did you know...

• The term “summer learning loss” was coined as early as 1906 to describe the undoing of school-year learning that happens in the summer.

• During the school year, all children learn basic skills at nearly the same rate.

• Summer learning loss affects nearly all young people. But losses are greater for children of families with lower income.

• Nearly all the differences in achievement happen because of unequal access to summer learning opportunities.

• Children who go to the library and take books home, go to museums, concerts and field trips, and take lessons such as swimming or gymnastics are most likely to avoid summer loss and make learning gains.

Source: John Hopkins University Center for Summer Learning: www.summerlearning.org

your children will return to school refreshed, energized, and ready to start the new school year.

Este verano, ¡refrésquese aprendiendo!

Ha escrito por FACET

Los padres pueden ayudar a sus hijos a que sigan aprendiendo. ¿Pero cómo? Durante el verano, la clave para evitar que olviden lo que les enseñaron en la escuela es que sigan aprendiendo. Y para esto, ¡el truco es convertir el aprendizaje en algo DIVERTIDO!

Aquí hay algunas sugerencias basadas en estudios que descubrieron maneras eficaces de lograr que en el verano, los niños retengan lo aprendido durante el año escolar e incluso adquieran habilidades y conocimientos nuevos:

• El número de libros leídos durante el verano guarda una estrecha relación con el rendimiento académico.

• En todos los grupos económicos, los niños que leen seis libros o más durante el verano aumentan más las destrezas en lectura que los que no lo hacen.

• Los niños leen más cuando ven a otra gente leyendo. Los padres dan un buen ejemplo si sus niños los ven leer por placer.

Aproveche las oportunidades

Cuando sus niños expresen un interés, animelos a que hablen de él y lo exploren en profundidad. Preste atención a lo que los entusiasma. Averigüe qué cosas los divierten, estimulan e inspiran. Busque actividades relacionadas con estos intereses. Las excursiones de verano pueden ofrecer oportunidades para aprender sobre historia, biografías de personas famosas y naturaleza. Aproveche esos momentos de aprendizaje para alentar a su niño a que escuche, lea, tome fotografías, añada postales a su colección — ¡incluso que lleve un diario! Busque en su departamento local de parques y recreación una lista de las próximas actividades.

Hable y escuche

Durante el verano, cada día ofrece oportunidades para hablar con sus niños y escuchar lo que tienen para contarle. De hecho, ¿sabía usted que el simple hecho de hablar y escuchar es un factor importante para su éxito en la vida? Escuchar es la primera experiencia del niño con el lenguaje y el comienzo del alfabetismo. Háblele de todo. Use palabras elegantes aunque sus niños sean muy pequeños. Anime a sus niños a que le hablen a usted, a través de su ejemplo de primeramente escucharlos.

¡LEA! ¡LEA! ¡LEA!

En lugar de retroceder en lectura, los niños que leen durante el verano adquieren habilidades nuevas. Leer en...
voz alta a los niños pequeños es la manera más importante de encaminarlos para que sean lectores exitosos. Lea a su niño y con su niño lo más posible. Hágalo en el idioma que se habla en el hogar o en el que le resulte más cómodo. Tenga libros, revistas y periódicos en su casa y dé el ejemplo de buen lector. Visite su biblioteca local a menudo. Lleve libros a su casa. Participé en un programa de lectura de verano o lleve a sus niños a ver a narradores de cuentos. Las bibliotecas tienen además películas y CD. Los niños poco entusiasmados por la lectura tal vez se interesen más en un libro después de ver la película. Las revistas de historietas son también una buena manera de lograr que los niños lean y aumenten su vocabulario. Las bibliotecas, al permitir que los niños más grandes accedan a la Internet, pueden ofrecerles un gran medio para explorar sus intereses.

¿Sabía usted que...

• La frase “pérdida de aprendizaje de verano” fue acuñada en 1906 para describir el retroceso durante esta estación de lo aprendido durante el año escolar
• Durante el año escolar, todos los niños aprenden habilidades básicas casi al mismo ritmo.
• La pérdida de aprendizaje de verano afecta a casi todos los niños. Pero los que más retroceden son los niños de familias de bajos ingresos
• Prácticamente todas las diferencias de rendimiento ocurren por el acceso desigual a las oportunidades de aprendizaje de verano.
• Los niños que van a la biblioteca y sacan libros prestados, van a museos, conciertos y excursiones, o toman lecciones de natación o gimnasia, son los que tienen más probabilidades de no retroceder y de adquirir conocimientos nuevos durante el verano.


Programa de Liderazgo para Padres Latinos (PLPL) fcsn.org/ptic/plpl

Si quiere comprender los derechos en educación especial, para responder mejor a las necesidades de su hija (o), este entrenamiento es para usted.

El Programa de Liderazgo para Padres Latinos (Latino Parent Leadership Program) es un entrenamiento intensivo de 30 horas de capacitación directa. Los presentadores incluyen abogados, expertos en el área de educación especial, líderes que trabajan directamente con la comunidad, personal de la Federación y un funcionario de audiencias de la Oficina de Apelaciones de Educación Especial (Bureau of Special Education Appeals).

Para más preguntas, contacte a nuestra Coordinadora de Familias Latinas Olga Lopez a olope@fcsn.org
Cultive las matemáticas y la ciencia

Aproveche sus actividades cotidianas. Puede apoyar las habilidades de su niño en matemáticas y ciencia mientras cocinan, trabajan en el jardín, cosen, usan una calculadora, juegan juegos de mesa, calculan distancias y cantidades, y reconocen patrones de diseño y música. Anoten sus actividades en un calendario familiar para reforzar el aprendizaje sobre el tiempo y los horarios.

Aliente la escritura

Las personas que más leen, mejor escriben. Y cuanto más escriben, mejor lo hacen. Busque maneras de incorporar la escritura a sus actividades cotidianas. Puede animar a su niño a:
- Preparar un álbum de recortes de verano y pegar en él tarjetas postales, boletos de entradas de espectáculos a los que hayan asistido, fotos, etc. Su niño puede escribir información bajo las imágenes y leérsela a usted cuando miren el álbum juntos.
- Ayudarle a escribir la lista de compras cuando vayan al supermercado.
- Llevar un diario. Puede escribir sobre lo que ocurrió ese día o esa semana o sobre un tema que le interese y desee explorar.

Dé el buen ejemplo

Muéstrele a su niño que usted disfruta de la lectura y la escritura. ¡El placer de aprender es contagioso! Ayude a que sus niños sigan aprendiendo durante el verano para que vuelvan a la escuela renovados, con energía y preparados para empezar el nuevo año escolar.

Aproveite os Dias de Verão para Aprender

Ha escrito por FACET

Os pais podem incentivar suas crianças a manterem uma aprendizagem viva. Mas como? A chave para evitar a perda de aprendizagem no verão é continuar com a aprendizagem durante todo o verão. A chave para querer aprender durante o verão é fazer com que essa aprendizagem seja DIVERTIDA!

Entradas para o museu gratuitas ou a baixo custo!
As bibliotecas de Massachusetts são grandes recursos durante o verão.
- Elas distribuem entradas gratuitas ou a baixo custo para museus, zoo e outros lugares interessantes.
- Muitas patrocinam a leitura ou outros programas deaprendizagem.
- Muitas sugeriram listas de leitura para crianças de diferentes idades.

Ligue para a biblioteca de sua localidade para obter os detalhes.

Estas sugestões foram baseadas em estudos que descobriram maneiras poderosas de fazerem com que as crianças fiquem cativas ao que aprenderam durante o ano escolar, como também para que ganhem, novas aptidões e conhecimentos durante o verão:
- O número de livros lidos durante o verão está consistentemente relacionado aos ganhos acadêmicos.
- As crianças de qualquer faixa de renda que leram seis ou mais livros durante todo o verão, ganharam mais através da realização com a leitura do que as crianças que não o fizeram.

As crianças lêem mais quando elas vêem outras pessoas lendo. Os pais podem ser modelos deixando que suas crianças os vejam lendo por prazer.

Aproveite o Momento

Quando seus filhos (suas filhas) demonstram um interesse, encoraje-os(as) para que falem e explorem o assunto mais a fundo. Siga suas paixões. Procure saber o que lhes interessa, diverte e inspira. Busque atividades que tenham a ver com os seus interesses. Os passeios de verão ao ar livre poderão trazer oportunidades para que seu filho(sua filha) aprenda sobre história, biografia e natureza. Aproveite estes momentos para ensinar e para encorajar seu filho(sua filha) a ouvir, ler, tirar uma foto, aumentar sua coleção de cartões-postais—até mesmo escrever em um diário! Procure o Departamento de Parques e Recreação de sua localidade para se informar sobre os próximos eventos.

Fale e ouça

Cada dia de verão traz oportunidades para que você fale e ouça seus filhos(suas filhas). Na verdade, você sabia que somente falar e ouvir são importantes para o sucesso de seu filho(sua filha)? Ouvir é realmente a primeira experiência de seu filho(sua filha) e o início de sua alfabetização. Fale sobre tudo. Use palavras grandes mesmo que seus filhos(suas filhas) sejam pequenos(as) e encoraje seu filho(sua filha) ouvindo-as.

LEIA! LEIA! LEIA!

Em vez de perder as aptidões de leitura, as crianças que lêem durante o verão geralmente ganham essas aptidões. Ler em voz alta para crianças pequenas é a maneira mais importante para fazer com que se iniciem no caminho para se tornarem...
Você sabia que...?

• O termo “perda de aprendizagem durante o verão”, “summer learning loss” foi inventado no início de 1906, para descrever a perda de aprendizagem do ano escolar que acontece no verão.
• Durante o ano letivo, todas as crianças aprendem as habilidades básicas quase que na mesma velocidade.
• A perda de aprendizagem no verão afeta a quase todos os jovens. Porém as perdas são maiores para as crianças provenientes de famílias de baixa renda.
• Quase todas as diferenças conquistadas acontecem por causa do acesso desigual às oportunidades de aprendizagem durante o verão.
• As crianças que vão à biblioteca e levam livros para casa, vão aos museus, concertos, passeios ao ar livre e têm aulas como natação ou ginástica, provavelmente evitarão a perda no verão e farão mais ganhos de aprendizagem.


leitoras de sucesso. Leia para e com seu filho(sua filha) o mais frequentemente que puder. Leia na língua falada em casa ou na língua com a qual se sentir mais confortável. Mantenha livros, revistas e jornais em sua casa e seja um exemplo de leitor a ser seguido. Visite a sua biblioteca com frequência. Leve livros para casa. Talvez associar-se a um programa de leitura para o verão ou fazer parte das sessões onde são contadas estórias. As bibliotecas também têm filmes e CDs para alugar. Uma criança que for uma leitora relutante, poderá estar mais interessada em ler um livro cuja estória já assistiu no cinema. Os livros cômicos também são uma grande forma de fazer com que as crianças leiam e aumentem o seu vocabulário. Com o acesso à internet, as bibliotecas podem oferecer às crianças uma ótima maneira de ir em busca de um interesse.

Estudos descobriram que as crianças ganham aptidões de leitura quando lêem qualquer tipo de livro ou leitura que quermem, inclusive livros cômicos e de romances para adolescentes. Na verdade, os resultados com estes livros foram até melhores do que aqueles resultados através de uma instrução de leitura direta.

Encoraje a matemática e as ciências.
Converse sobre matemática e ciências durante as atividades diárias. Cozinhar, fazer jardinagem, costurar, usar uma calculadora, jogar jogos de tabuleiro, fazer estimativas de distâncias e quantidades e reconhecer os moldes em desenho e música também são ótimas maneiras para fortalecer as aptidões para matemática e ciência. Mantenha os eventos em um calendário tamanho-família para ajudar a reforçar o aprendizado relacionado a tempo e a horário.

Encoraje a escrita
As pessoas que lêem mais, escrevem melhor. E quanto mais as pessoas escrevem, melhor se torna sua escrita. Encontre maneiras para trazer a escrita para as atividades diárias. Você poderá encorajar seu filho(sua filha) ao:
• Manter um álbum de recortes. Preencha-o de cartõespostais, entradas de eventos com fotos. Seu filho(sua filha) poderá escrever os títulos e lê-los enquanto vocês dão uma olhada no álbum.
• Ajudar a escrever uma lista de compras.
• Começar um diário. Pode ser sobre o que aconteceu durante o dia ou a semana ou sobre tópicos nos quais seu filho(sua filha) esteja interessado(a) em conhecer.

Seja um modelo a ser seguido
Deixe que seu filho(sua filha) veja você tendo prazer em ler e aprender. A sua alegria de aprender será contagiante! Mantenha vivo o aprendizado durante o verão pois desta maneira seus filhos(suas filhas) retornarão à escola preparados, cheios de energia e prontos para o início de um novo ano escolar.
Cultural Brokers & Collaboration: Welcoming the Somali Community at VOC 2018

By Oanh Thi Thu Bui, Vietnamese Outreach Specialist

The Visions of Community conference (VOC) brought together families from multiple cultures to share in a day of learning and support. Working with families from the Vietnamese, Arabic, Haitian, and Somali communities, a colleague wondered, “You don’t speak Somali and Arabic; how could you facilitate those groups?”

Understanding the importance of providing culturally relevant or culturally sensitive support, one can find ways to promote authentic collaboration and mutual partnership with the targeted communities,” I responded with a smile.

The method is simple: Connect with community leaders - cultural brokers who understand the community’s needs, what it takes to address those needs, and who should get involved. Then, our team creates and executes a concrete plan.

Asha Abdullah is a Diversity Fellow from the LEND program at Boston Children’s Hospital and a Somali refugee working with the Somali Development Center (SDC) in Boston. Asha said, “I am interested in increasing awareness, knowledge, and understanding of Intellectual Developmental Disability in the Somali community and facilitating access to early intervention services. Personally, as a family advocate, I am passionate about normalizing mental illness and educating my community about culturally sensitive mental health services in an effort to decrease the fear and stigma that surrounds it.” Therefore, she wanted to ensure that her community was present at VOC.

Here are a few of the steps we took to include our friends from the Somali community:

1. Collaborated on topics of interest.
2. Invited presenters based on community needs.
3. Reviewed materials for cultural and linguistic relevance.
4. Connected with a qualified interpreter who was familiar with disability-specific language, as certain concepts and vocabulary don’t have direct translations.
5. Conversed with presenters and an interpreter to discuss different cultural values.
6. Coordinated participant registration (including accommodations such as childcare, transportation and interpretation services).
7. Shared details with participants about what to expect at the conference.
8. Thanked our attendees and provided an opportunity for feedback.

We held workshops for parents and professionals on the topics of sibling support and post-diagnosis steps. Participants’ feedback was gratifying. “I am overwhelmed with the rich wealth of resources that I was not aware of,” said one participant. Asha told us, “The panel We’ve got the Diagnosis and the Recommendations, Now What? was eye-opening. This information was not widely known in my community due to language and cultural barriers. The challenges that my community faces place us at a disadvantage in receiving mental health and disability services. I feel this panel opened many doors for us, while increasing my confidence as a community case worker. As a result, I hope it will allow me to connect families of children with special needs to the appropriate services to have a better life.”

Laughter among participants warmed my heart, knowing that I was once one of them. Tears fell as I considered that many parents had just one day to learn and network.

Collectively, we can become catalysts for systems change.
Multicultural Groups at Visions of Community 2018

Vietnamese participants listen during a presentation

Outreach Specialist Olga Lopez’s Latino group

VOC group for Arabic families, led by Dr. Amel Alawami

Haitian Creole VOC participants

Members of the Chinese community enjoy lunch together

VOC participants from the Somali community
**MassHealth CommonHealth versus the Child Medical Security Plan (CMSP): There is a difference you should know about!**

By Patricia Nemia, Director, Massachusetts Family Voices

Did you know that your child may be eligible for MassHealth/CommonHealth based on their disability *not* your family income? Many families of children with special health care needs in Massachusetts apply for MassHealth CommonHealth.

MassHealth offers different types of insurance programs for Massachusetts families whose children have special health care needs. CommonHealth is offered to children with qualifying disabilities that are also insured by a private, primary insurance policy. CommonHealth is a supplemental insurance that covers copays and services not covered by the primary insurance for an eligible child. The application process involves two steps: first, the completion of an online MassHealth application:

http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/masshealth/membappforms/aca-3-english.pdf

and second, submission of the Child Disability Supplement Form:


The disability determination period can last up to 90 days, after which eligible children will receive CommonHealth coverage.

It is important for parents to understand their child’s eligibility and to ensure that they are, in fact, becoming eligible for the CommonHealth program when they apply. Recently, we have become aware that some children with special health care needs have mistakenly been assigned to the Child Medical Security Plan (or CMSP) instead of CommonHealth. CMSP is a primary insurance program offered by MassHealth for children that are uninsured, while CommonHealth is a supplemental insurance program for children with qualifying disabilities that are insured by their family’s private policy. Attempts to use CMSP for services for a child that should have CommonHealth will be denied. Therefore, if your child receives CMSP and you believe you are actually eligible for CommonHealth, you should call MassHealth immediately. Make sure to have your private insurance information available when you call.

If you are having difficulty with completing the MassHealth application process or have been assigned to the wrong insurance plan, call Mass Family Voices (1 800 331 0688) or email massfv@fcsn.org with a description of your situation. Currently Mass Family Voices/Family-to-Family Health Information Center is tracking these cases and working with MassHealth to correct the issue.
As a middle schooler, I failed my first class ever. I tried really hard and worked about seven hours a night on homework, but still, I was failing. My parents became concerned and met with my teachers to discuss whether or not I needed accommodations. The teachers and administrators were convinced everything was “fine” and that I was being “lazy” compared to the other students. They refused to test me, so my parents hired a private psychologist. I was finally diagnosed with ADHD, Extreme OCD, Severe Generalized Anxiety Disorder, Slow Processing Speed, and a learning disability. My parents presented my diagnoses to the school. However, I was only “awarded” a 504 Plan.

In high school, my teachers noticed that I was passionate about their classes but still failing. After getting a GPA of 1.82 my first semester, the school decided to offer testing. The Neuropsychological Testing reaffirmed my previous diagnoses. I was given an IEP, put into a Learning Skills program, and assigned a school psychologist for in-school therapy. After getting these accommodations, I started doing better in class. However, there were still teachers who weren’t comfortable with my accommodations. I decided that I needed to advocate for myself and open up to my teachers about my struggles. After being vulnerable and honest with them, they started to understand why I needed so many accommodations. By my senior year, my GPA had skyrocketed and I had become an L-S Scholar who was enrolled in honors and AP classes. After graduating from high school, I was accepted to UMass Amherst and I was thrilled!

Upon enrolling at UMass Amherst, I immediately applied to the Disability Services program in order to continue my support system. I was assigned a Consumer Manager and given the accommodations that I advocated for. During my first year at UMass, I was hospitalized six times with a “mysterious infection” and my grades started to fall. By March of Spring Semester, I was diagnosed with Neurological Lyme Disease and had to withdraw from the semester early in order to start intensive treatment. Luckily, my Consumer Manager stepped in to advocate for me - due to the infection affecting my brain, I was unable to write or speak. After receiving treatment, getting more accommodations for my new physical disability, and continuing to advocate for myself when I was able, I began to thrive again. I am now a rising senior on the Dean’s List who will be graduating in May 2019 with a B.S. in Psychology and a specialization in Developmental Disabilities and Human Services while on the Pre-Physician Assistant Track.

In the future, I hope to attend graduate school for a Masters in Physician Assistant Studies in order to become a Physician Assistant who specializes in children with Developmental Disabilities and special health care needs. Today, I proudly live with my disabilities and encourage others with disabilities to follow their passions. I am finally succeeding because I persevered, was a strong self-advocate, and never gave up. I truly believe that anyone is capable of anything that they put their mind to; if there’s a will, there’s a way.
Cultural Competency of Trauma in the Classroom
By Mary-Beth Landy, Training and Support Specialist, Recruitment, Training, and Support Center (RTSC)

I can still remember, as clear as day, when my oldest daughter was in the 4th grade. Her class was given a project to create and label a family tree. What we didn’t know until the next report card was that she never did the project. This was not completely a shock to us, as school was a major struggle for her. What was more surprising was the reason why she didn’t do the project. You see, she and her younger sister are adopted. And when asked to create a family tree, she didn’t know which family to use: her birth family, or her adoptive family. She felt that if she used her birth family, she would hurt our feelings, and if she used her adoptive family she would be betraying her birth family. So rather than struggle with all of the pain and discomfort that this caused, she just didn’t do the assignment.

For a child in custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), who has been removed from their parent(s), the loss is three-dimensional. They have lost their family, they have lost their childhood to trauma and/or neglect, and they have lost their trust in the world around them. Because each child experiences this situation differently, the effect of and their response to the loss will be different. One can’t understand, what a child knows or has experienced, and these experiences color how the child will approach a classroom and the educational experience. This is where the need for cultural competency comes in.

The best way to approach cultural competency in the classroom, with all students, is through effective and sensitive communication. Say perhaps, “today we are going to learn about slavery, and I think that this conversation is going to be heard differently by each of you. Let’s talk about this.” Ask all of the students to share their experience around this topic. Then, with trauma, we go one step further. We must consider any histories of traumatic loss. How would a child who has been separated from their families relate to Africans who were captured and taken away from their homes relate to this issue? How would a child who has had no control over what is happening in their lives relate to a person who was enslaved, who also had no control over their lives? A teacher can survey their students by getting to know them, considering their lived experiences, and shaping the work around that.

Kids respond well when you share that you don’t know their experience, but want to understand and help them. Of course you can’t understand where all students are coming from, but if the classroom practices cultural competence around trauma and loss, you won’t have to. The students will begin to come to you, because they feel safe and connected. And that’s all that you can ask for!

Make a Difference in a Student’s Life
Become a Special Education Surrogate Parent (SESP)

SESPs are special education decision makers for children in Massachusetts who are in the custody of a state agency.

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As a parent of two children, one born profoundly deaf, I was proud and excited to head to Denver, CO to the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Conference held on March 18th – 20th. This is a terrific conference that brings together parents and professionals from different states to share their experiences and learn from one another. We are all tied together by a common goal -- to improve the lives of deaf and hard of hearing children everywhere.

The first time I went to EHDI was several years ago when the conference was in Louisville, KY. I went as a parent representative on scholarship from the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program (UNHSP). I remember being so honored to be going and humbled by how much there was to learn. It was fun to attend different sessions of interest to me. I was so impressed with everyone I met, and remember being struck by how lucky we are in Massachusetts to have a wealth of supports and services for our deaf and hard of hearing kids. I met many parents from other states who told me how they wished they had similar places to turn for support.

This year was even better than before. There were five parents sent this year from the UNHSP. It was great getting to know the other MA parents and learning from them. They are all simply terrific. There was an event held the first night to help connect parents across the country, which turned into a dance/activity night. Putting my pride aside, I acted out the moves as best I could. I do wish I had brought other shoes (flats or tennis shoes preferred) – but that seems a pretty minor detail! Part of our group continued on afterwards and had fun sharing stories and experiences as parents of deaf and hard of hearing children. We could have talked all night long.

Individuals from Massachusetts presented at two sessions and had two poster presentations as well. Our own Dr. Amy Szarkowski from Children’s Hospital Boston presented at the opening session on day two. I was especially proud to co-present a session with Sarah Stone, the Director of the UNHSP. Our session was titled “Family Involvement and Leadership: Pathways to Success for Families with Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing.” I was extremely nervous to be sure – particularly when the powerpoint would not load in the room 30 minutes before the session! Thanks to the computer experts on hand (who I profusely thanked after the presentation), we were all set and ready to go when our time came. We presented what you, as parents, already know. Families who are engaged/active/involved have children who thrive. In our presentation we defined what family engagement is, gave examples, and talked about leadership opportunities. The importance of family is key. Our state does really well in part because the parent and family perspective is so included and valued.

Our state works hard to encourage, support, and develop parent leaders to make positive changes in our state and beyond. I can personally speak to this and am grateful for the opportunities that I have been given.

So, as I reflect on the conference this year I think about the importance of family. It is all about working together as centered around the family and our children. I was struck by one parent presenter sharing that by the time her daughter was 10 years old, she had worked with 34 different professionals related to her daughter’s hearing loss. This speaks to the power of the parent: both the knowledge that they have of their unique child and their knowledge of the systems that serve them. There is tremendous power in each one of us to harness this for the good of our children.

Conference highlights and presentations can be found at www.ehdimeeting.org. The national EHDI website can be found at www.infanthearing.org. Our state website is brand new as of March of this year. Please take a look! https://www.mass.gov/dph/newbornhearingscreening

If you would like to learn more about EHDI or have an interest in getting more involved, please feel free to reach out to our program or contact me directly at jennifer.fleming@state.ma.us.
Our 2018 Gala, *Celebrating Every Child*, was held on Friday, May 18, and included a special Kentucky Derby theme.

Guests were encouraged to accessorize with fascinators and hats, inkeeping with the race’s iconic style.

The evening also featured a well-stocked Silent Auction and FCSN’s first-ever wine pull.

Handmade silk scarves were among the many items available through the Silent Auction.

Just a few of the vintages offered in our wine pull!

Members of our Latino support group: dressed for success.

Director of Human Resources Jennetta Hyatt and her daughter Jennease.

FCSN Board Member Susan Arndt and guest
This year’s honorees were David and Margot Wizansky, founders of Specialized Housing; Ron Benham, celebrating a 35-year career in government service; and Bethany Van Delft Moffi, a mother, comedian, and advocate who got her start at our Parent Consultant Training Institute.

Thanks to every volunteer, staff member, attendee, and donor who made this event such a success! You can view pictures and video from the evening at:

fcsn.org/gala
Introducing the Latino Parent Leadership Program (PLPL)  

If you want to improve your understanding of special education rights so you can better address your child’s needs, this training is for you.

The Latino Parent Leadership Program is an intensive training program consisting of 30 hours of classroom instruction and exercises. Optional internships through the Federation are available to most who complete the classroom component. Presenters include leading attorneys and special education experts, Federation staff, and representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Bureau of Special Education Appeals.

Please contact our Latino Outreach Coordinator, Olga Lopez, with questions: olopez@fcsn.org