

SPEAK OUT

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc.

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The True Measure of Success

In the last issue of SPEAK OUT we touched on the legal framework for the education of children with disabilities. We discussed the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and the reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. *No Child Left Behind* is intended to reform America's educational system. The new law calls for dramatic changes in the way our public schools do business, but I don't believe that any of us understands the extent to which this "regular" education law will impact special education. We are already feeling its impact. As time goes by, it becomes clearer to us the importance of understanding *No Child Left Behind*, its influence on the reauthorization of *IDEA* and what it means to children with and without disabilities.

The greatest impact that *No Child Left Behind* has had thus far is in the area of accountability. We would all agree that accountability is important. For years, parents and communities have been voicing concerns that our education system has NOT been working well and that many children are not learning. *NCLB* is intended to bring some accountability to the educational arena. We know that it is important to have high expectations for all children, including children with disabilities, and to be able to measure whether or not they are making progress in the academic realm. Our concern at present, however, is that in trying to hold the system accountable for teaching our children, the focus has been shifted to those very children who have been overlooked in the past. We seem to be moving toward a "one-size-fits-all" approach for measuring the success of our schools – standardized testing of students.

Parents and advocacy groups fought long and hard to get where we are today. Along with access to the general education classroom and participation in the general education curriculum, we have argued for our children to be considered part of the larger community, both in and out of school. There is a depth and richness that comes through participation in both academic and extracurricular activities. It is important to remember that not all strengths, not all skills and successes, can be measured by standardized academic testing. Education plans should include objective methods for evaluating student outcomes related to changes in behavior and improvements in a student's quality of life - e.g. participation in integrated activities, improved social relationships, independence and self-sufficiency.¹ If we measure those skills we will have a more complete picture of our children. Only then will we be sure to leave no child behind.

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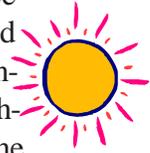
1. OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Information and Support, www.pbis.org

You may never know
what results come
from your actions.
But if you do
nothing, there will
be no results.

Ghandi

Summertime...

The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center will be closed from July 4th through July 11th, 2003 and will re-open for business as usual on Monday morning, July 14th. Summertime can give us all a much-needed break from the routine and pressures of the school year. It can also be a time for reflection and planning. Be sure to call or email (cpac@cpacing.org) the Center anytime if you have questions or concerns as you think ahead to next year. We're always here to help!



The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc.

is a statewide non-profit organization that offers information and support to parents of children with disabilities and the professionals who work with them. The center is staffed primarily by parents of children with disabilities who assist other parents in understanding how to participate more effectively in their children's education. A range of services is available, including telephone consultation, workshops and in-service presentations for parents, schools and service providers, a website, and a lending library of books and videotapes.

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We would like to thank John Kalinowski and Scott Waddell from EASTCONN for their technical expertise and support as we upgraded our agency computers. It is with their help that we were able to convert our database and develop a network within our office. Thank you, John and Scott!

Watch for CPAC Online!

The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center is committed to delivering accurate and timely information to the families we serve. In order to do that more effectively, we are redesigning our website. Our "new and improved" site will still be located on the web at www.cpacinc.org. You can find resources, upcoming workshops, legislative information and links to other terrific sites. We are also developing a "listserve" so that as information comes in to us, we can forward it electronically on to you. If you would like to join us, simply email your address to cpac@cpacinc.org.

Community Connections At Work



CPAC continues to participate in Southern New England Telephone's Community Connections Program. When you sign up for - or confirm that you're already using - SNET All Distance, the phone company will donate 5% of your monthly long distance bill to CPAC. Simply call 800-635-7638 and advise the SNET Representative that you wish to participate in the Community Connections Program and that CPAC is your non-profit of choice. Our code is #2240. Thanks to all of you who participate we have received over \$2,526.00 through this program of giving!

THANK YOU!

Connections in Connecticut: How Parents are Making a Difference

If you know of parent activities that you'd like to share with others, please let us know! We will be happy to add your information to our website, and publish it in our next issue of SPEAK OUT if space allows.

The Silence of Selective Mutism

SMG-CAN, the Selective Mutism Group – Childhood Anxiety Network, is an organization dedicated to supporting and providing information to parents and professionals dealing with children who have selective mutism and related childhood anxiety disorders. Children with Selective Mutism are often misdiagnosed and mismanaged simply because so little is known and so little information is available on SM. One of the goals for SMG-CAN is to build a network, in each state, for parents. Laurie Gorski, a CPAC Next STEPs graduate, is Connecticut's State Coordinator for the Selective Mutism Group. For more information, you can contact her at LRGorski@aol.com or call her at 860-267-0449. You can also learn more on the web at www.selectivemutism.org.

The **Special Education Support Network** is a new support group in the Norwich area. Its purpose is to bring parents of children with disabilities together for sharing information on community resources and special education issues. The group meets monthly at the Montville High School; new members are always welcome! For more information you can contact Robin Grondahl at 860-848-1959 or Susan Soldato at 860-691-0679.

LACASA

The Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association, Inc. (LACASA) is a non-profit partnership that was established in 2001 by a group of dedicated families and professionals. Lacasa was founded on the belief that no single person, professional, discipline or agency can meet the multiple and complex needs of individuals with autism and their families. For more information you can contact

Families United Networks

Families United for Children's Mental Health offers parent support! For more information on groups meeting in Wauregan, New Britain, Ansonia and/or Norwich, you can call Families United at 860-439-0710.



PARENT SUPPORT IN GROTON

The Department of Human Services for the town of Groton has started a parent support group for parents of children with special needs. The group meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month from 7:00 to 8:30pm at 2 Fort Hill Road and is facilitated by Cindy Mason-Jones, MSW. For more information call 860-441-6760.

New Parent Network in Naugatuck

There is a new parent group in Naugatuck for parents of children with disabilities. The purpose of this group is Parent Education, in the form of workshops, networking and sharing information and experience. Its goal is to help parents to become effective participants in planning their children's education. For meeting information, you can check the Citizen's News Calendar, or you can contact Eileen Coyle at 723-4305 with any questions.

What's New with the T.S.A.?

The Connecticut Chapter of the Tourette Syndrome Association has changed its address and phone number. You can reach them at 15B Talcott Avenue, Vernon, CT 06066, 203-912-7310 or by email at andrewvogel@earthlink.net.

A new support group for parents of children with T.S. meets the last Wednesday of every month at Laurel Gardens in Glastonbury. For more information, contact Lynn Siegel at 860-657-2287 or GlastonburyTS@cox.net. For more information on Tourette Syndrome or the Association, you can visit them on the web at www.tsact.org.

Wethersfield Special Kids...

...is a support group for parents of children with a variety of needs and abilities. The group meets monthly, usually on the second Wednesday evening of the month.



Wethersfield Special Kids will hold its last meeting of the school year in June, and will reconvene in September. For more information, you can contact Patti Silva at 860-529-7766 or email her at specialkids@cox.net.

Preschool Models and Children's Later Success in School

Noting that preschools are under increasing pressure to offer instruction in basic academic skills to improve the academic performance of American schoolchildren, researcher Rebecca Marcon of the University of North Florida sheds light on the continuing debate over teacher-directed versus child-centered preschool models in an article recently published in the Internet journal *Early Childhood Research & Practice*.

In a follow-up study of children in an urban school district, Marcon looked at these children as they prepared to leave the primary grades and again a year later when they were to enter fourth grade. Three grouping were selected as examples of the divergent preschool models operating in an urban school system: children who had (1) child development-oriented teachers who facilitated learning by allowing children to actively direct the focus of their learning, (2) more academically-oriented teachers who preferred direct instruction and teacher-directed learning experiences and (3) teachers whose beliefs and practices fell in between the other two contrasting models by endorsing a combination approach.

A complete copy of this article, which includes some interesting research findings, is available on the web at <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v4n1/marcon.html> or you can call CPAC at 800-445-2722 and we will be happy to send you a copy.

*ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education
(ERIC/EECE) National Parent Information Network,
the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.*

A Parent's Guide to Developing your Child's IEP



Being a parent is the most wonderful - and hardest - job in the world. If you have a child with special needs, your job can be more complicated. It is important for you to learn more about special education and how to be an effective partner with your child's school. This parent's guide, from the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities, can help you begin to learn what you need to know. For a copy, please send \$2.00 to cover the cost of postage and copying to CPAC at 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357.

NICHCY is a national information and referral center that provides information on disability-related issues. You can reach them at 800-695-0285 or visit them on the web at www.nichcy.org

Early Childhood Education and the L.R.E.



There is still some confusion about the requirements of the least restrictive environment (LRE) for 3- and 4-year olds with disabilities. In April of this year, Commissioner Theodore S. Sergi issued a circular letter to the Superintendents of Schools to clarify the requirements of IDEA '97 as it pertains to the LRE and preschool-aged children.

An eligible 3- or 4-year-old child with a disability is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE), as is the school-aged child with a disability. This includes the requirement that each child is to be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with children who are not disabled and that special classes, separate schooling or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular education environment occurs only when the nature or severity of the child's disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids or services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

There are a number of examples of meeting the LRE requirements, including tuitioning a child into a public or private early childhood program; placing classes for preschool children in the child's home school; and providing services to children at sites that include 50% or more of children without disabilities. For a copy of this Circular Letter, call CPAC at 800-445-2722.

It's OKay to be Different

by Todd Parr, published by Little, Brown and Company, 2001.

This children's book, filled with bright colors and silly scenes, cleverly delivers its important message of acceptance, understanding and confidence in a child-friendly package. "It's okay to have wheels...It's okay to have a different nose... It's okay to be proud of yourself... It's okay to be different . You are special and important just because of being who you are." The author's previous books have been praised as "reassuring and kindhearted" (*School Library Journal*) and "cheerful...with advice children love to read" (*Kirkus review*). CPAC has a copy of this kid's book available in our resource collection, along with a list of accompanying activities and discussion topics for teachers to use in the classroom. Call us to borrow the book.



Dear Parent Advocate,

I just got a note from my son's school saying that he may not be promoted to the third grade next year. I met with the teacher and then the principal at school. Both said that "their hands are tied", they can't recommend that Jerold be promoted

All of this came as a big surprise to me. My son was tested last winter and the school said that he was having problems learning to read. We worked on his reading at home, and I thought that he had caught up. Now all of a sudden the school is telling me that Jerold still can't read and that there's nothing that they can do. I don't have the money to pay for a tutor and I want my son to go into the third grade. Who has the final say as to whether or not he will be kept back?

In the Dark

Dear "In the Dark":

This is a problem that we are running into more and more these days. First of all, I would recommend that you get a copy of your school district's policy on retention. School policies govern these decisions. Not too long ago, parents often had a lot of influence in the area of retention and promotion. But things have changed, and now the school usually has the final say in making that decision.

The new law, "No Child Left Behind", is having a big impact on our schools (see page 1). Many changes have come about, and policies are being re-written to comply with that new federal legislation. Standardized testing is being used to judge student performance and mastery of educational goals. Connecticut Mastery and Academic Performance Tests (CMT's and CAPT's) are being used to determine the performance of the school district. In Title 1 schools, "No Child" provides for "Supplemental Educational Services" (in the form of tutoring and/or summer school) for students who are struggling. Your school may receive Title 1 funds; you can find out for certain by checking with your principal. If so, your child should be entitled to extra help at NO COST TO YOU. This is true for children with and without disabilities.

*CT Parents Plus has developed "Tip Sheets" for parents on **No Child Left Behind**. For a copy of "What Parents Need to Know About Supplementary Educational Services" you can call CPAC, or CT Parents Plus directly at 860-571-6052. You can also visit CT Parents Plus on the web at www.ctparentsplus.org*

The Reauthorization of IDEA

Every five years, Parts C and D of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be reauthorized. This means that these sections of the law will expire (in other words, not be in force) unless Congress passes them again (hence the word *reauthorization*). Part B was considered so important that it is permanently authorized. This means that it will not expire.

Even though Part B of the law does not have to be reauthorized, changes are made to it during each reauthorization. For example, during the 1997 reauthorization, mediation became a major strategy for resolving conflicts between schools and parents. Before that time, IDEA *allowed* mediation, but it was the 1997 reauthorization that *required* States to create a mediation system in which parents and schools could voluntarily take part.

Since the law was originally passed in 1975, many

other changes have been made during reauthorization. For example, during the 1986 reauthorization, the infant and toddler program was added. Before that reauthorization, children under 3 did not get services under the law. In the 1990 version of the law, transition planning became a requirement. This was added to help youth with disabilities prepare for leaving secondary school.

The IDEA was last reauthorized in 1997. So—a little more than 5 years later—it's time to reauthorize the IDEA again. To get ready for the reauthorization, both the Senate and the House of Representatives began to gather information about how the current IDEA is working and what people would like to see in its next version. They have both introduced bills to amend the current law. For more information on the current reauthorization and changes that are being proposed, please go to our Legislation section on pages 8 & 9.

From www.NICHCY.org



The Bookworm

A reminder...CPAC has an extensive resource collection of books and videotapes available to parents and professionals. You are welcome to visit our library during regular business hours, 8:00 to 4:00, Monday through Friday, or you may call and borrow materials through the mail. Please call CPAC to request the books and/or videos of interest to you, or for a listing of references in your area of concern.

A Mind at a Time: America's Top Learning Expert Shows How Every Child Can Succeed, by Mel Levine, M.D. Dr. Levine shows parents and others who care for children how to identify individual learning patterns. He explains how parents and teachers can encourage a child's strengths and bypass the child's weaknesses. Dr. Levine lists the eight fundamental components of learning that draw on a variety of neurodevelopmental capacities. Using examples from his own experience, Dr. Levine shows how parents and children can identify their strengths and weaknesses to determine their individual learning styles. He urges parents and teachers to recognize each child's learning style and thus maximize that child's learning potential. Simon & Schuster, New York, NY; 2002

From Emotions to Advocacy: The Special Education Survival Guide, by Pam & Pete Wright

If you're beginning to advocate for a child with a disability, this is the perfect book for you. Pam and Pete Wright teach you how to plan, prepare, organize and get quality special education services. You can learn about:

- your child's disability and education needs
- understanding parent-school conflict
- negotiating for special education services
- and many other valuable strategies for fulfilling your child's needs.

This user-friendly reference book includes hundreds of strategies, tips, references, warnings, and Internet resources that will help you help your child. Harbor House Law Press, Hartfield, VA; 2002

Managing Teens with ADHD, by Grad L. Flick, Ph.D. This comprehensive resource is packed with tested, up-to-date information and techniques to help teachers, counselors and parents understand and manage adolescents with attention deficit disorder, including step-by-step procedures for behavioral intervention at school and home and reproducible handouts, checklists and record keeping forms. The Cneter for Applied Research in Education, New York, NY; 2000.

Individualized Education Plans: Involved Effective Parents, by Alison B. Seyler and Barbara E. Buswell. This is an essential text for families and educator as they develop and implement Individual Education Plans. This book thoroughly explains what occurs before, during, and after the development of an IEP, and provides an innovative process for transferring information from year-to-year. Includes practical forms for parents and educators. Available in English and Spanish. PEAK Parent Center, Colorado Springs, CO

Opening Doors: Connecting Students to Curriculum, Classmates and Learning. PEAK Parent Center's book for teachers, parents and others about including all students in general eudcation classes and activities. It is a "how to" book that addresses the question: "How will I make this work?". It describes strategies that educators, therapists, principals and families have used to include students with disabilities. 2nd Edition, Published by PEAK ParentCenter; 1999



New Video Available

The IEP – A Tool for Realizing Possibilities. This instructional video highlights the importance and use of the IEP as the basic tool in designing and delivering supports and services for students with disabilities. This resource is excellent for both educators and families and is available in both English and Spanish. It is the Winner of the 1998 Communicator Award of Distinction. PEAK Parent Center in partnership with San Diego State University.

What is "KidCare"?

Connecticut Community **KidCare** is a statewide effort to reform the way children's behavioral health services are coordinated, financed and delivered to children and their families. KidCare is focused on improving the quality and availability of community-based services and supports. It is based on the principles that children should receive services in their community wherever possible and that parents are an integral part of the planning and decision making process.



The KidCare initiative began in October of 2000. Services are currently available in varying degrees but the types of behavioral health services available and the way in which they are delivered will continue to evolve. Services will include Inpatient and Outpatient Services; Home-Based Services; Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services, and Crisis Stabilization.

For a copy of "The Educator's Guide to Connecticut Community Kid Care" call CPAC at 800-445-2722. A detailed description of the program can be found by clicking on the KidCare icon at the Department of Children and Families website: www.state.ct.us/dcf

New ADHD Medication Approved by the FDA

In a long anticipated move, the FDA recently gave its stamp of approval to the first non-stimulant drug for the treatment of ADHD. Atomoxetine, manufactured by Eli Lilly and Company and sold under the brand name "Strattera", affects the brain chemical norepinephrine, which is believed to be an important factor in regulating attention, impulsivity and activity levels of children, teens and adults with ADHD.

Unlike stimulant drugs such as Ritalin, Adderall and Cylert, the non-stimulant Strattera cannot be used as a drug of abuse, according to researchers.

While head-to-head studies with the conventional drugs have yet to be carried out, Strattera appears to be as effective as Ritalin. In addition, Strattera does not appear to cause wakefulness, which might make it feasible to manage ADHD throughout the day without concerns that it may cause some children to have difficulty falling asleep.

Reprinted with permission from "Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities", Vol. 2 No. 16

Helping Teens Develop Healthy Social Skills and Relationships: What the Research Shows about Navigating Adolescence

Ask anyone who has ever lived with, known or been a teenager: adolescence is a time of dramatic change. With adolescence comes puberty, a new sense of self and identity and often new and increased expectations at school and work. Relationships with parents and peers change too. Social skills are called upon to form and maintain relationships. With these quality relationships come beneficial outcomes, such as improved performance in school and success in relationships as adults. The absence of such quality relationships is associated with negative outcomes, such as delinquency and psychological problems.

In order to better understand how adolescents gain the skills needed to maintain relationships, *Child Trends*, Washington, D.C., reviewed more than 360 research studies that examined the factors that lead to high-quality social relationships and good social skills. They found a number of intervention strategies that are effective.

For a complete copy of this Child Trends Research Brief, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to CPAC at 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357.

Juvenile Justice



Today, more children are being prosecuted for delinquent behavior than ever before. Many of these children have learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, behavior and emotional problems, brain injuries, and mild cognitive disabilities. Juvenile court proceedings are a minefield for all juveniles, but are particularly hazardous for children with disabilities. The parents of a child with a disability can often improve the outcome... by taking an active role in their child's case. (*ATTENTION! Winter, 1997*)

For a copy of **A Parent's Guide to the Juvenile Justice System** please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to CPAC at 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357.



The Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

On April 30th, 2003, the House of Representatives approved HR 1350, The Improving Education Results for Children with Disabilities Act," by a vote of 251 to 171. Advocacy and parent organizations were opposed to this bill, citing concerns that it would weaken the educational rights of children with disabilities. On June 12th, the Senate introduced its version of a bill to reauthorize IDEA, S. 1248. The following is only a very brief summary of some of the changes in that bill. It is not intended to be either comprehensive or verbatim. There are a number of changes (to IDEA) proposed in HR 1350 that appear in the Senate bill in similar if not exactly the same form that are not addressed here.

Senate Bill 1248:

IEP Benchmarks/short term objectives are replaced with "a statement of how the child's progress toward the annual goals... will be measured, including through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports, concurrent with issuance of report cards, that delineate the progress the child is making toward meeting the annual goals." 3 year IEP is an option **only after** the age of 18.

Due Process

NO VOLUNTARY BINDING ARBITRATION option is included in the Senate bill

Native language Requirement - The requirement that the procedural safeguards notice be in the parent's native language is the same as current law – "unless clearly not feasible to do so." The language in HR 1350 was weaker. Number of times that procedural due process notice is sent out is reduced, similar to the House bill.

"Preliminary Meeting"- Similar to HR 1350 but with some differences. Parents may not proceed to due process until the LEA has a 30 day opportunity to resolve the problem. The LEA shall convene a meeting with the parents and IEP team within 15 days of receiving the parent's due process hearing request, but the district's attorney may not be present at the meeting unless the parent is also accompanied by an attorney. Then the district has 15 days after the meeting to resolve the complaint. Parent's attorneys may not be reimbursed for time spent at this meeting, even if they are later determined to be prevailing parties.

Adds some requirements for the selection of hearing officers – includes a requirement that the h.o. have a fundamental understanding of the Act, have no personal or professional interest that conflicts with objectivity in the hearing, and is not an employee of the SEA or LEA in involved in the education or care of the child, among other things.

Issues may not be raised at due process that were not raised in the due process complaint notice. The notice requirement binds BOTH parties, not just parents. That notice must include:

- "...a description of the nature of the problem of the child relating to such proposed initiation or change, including facts relating to such problem" and
 - a proposed resolution of the problem to the extent known and available to the party at the time
- However, nothing prevents a parent from filing another due process hearing request on a separate issue at a later time.

A hearing officer may not rule that a child did not receive FAPE based on purely procedural violations unless the procedural inadequacies:

- compromised the child's right to an appropriate education
- seriously hampered the parent's opportunity to participate in the process,
- caused a deprivation of educational benefits.

A decision made by a hearing officer is enforceable in any state court of competent jurisdiction or a federal district court, unless either party appeals. A written mediation agreement is similarly enforceable.

Attorney Fees- Fees awarded to prevailing parties shall be based on rates prevailing in the community in which the action or proceeding arose for the kind and quality of service furnished.

Monitoring and Enforcement

The system of monitoring and enforcement in the Senate bill is quite different than that described in the House bill and in current law. Further analysis of this language is required before any conclusions may be drawn about it.

Discipline

A form of the manifestation determination review has been included in the Senate bill, as apparently has protection for students for whom the conduct was a manifestation of his or her disability. It is clearly an improvement over the House bill.

Legislation continued next column

Up to 10 days of suspension- same as current law.
10 days or more of suspension if the conduct is not a manifestation - same as current law,

Special Circumstances – “Serious Bodily Injury” has been added to weapons and drugs as a “stay put” exception. Hence LEAs may unilaterally place a child in an interim alternative educational setting (IAES) for up to 45 school days if the child’s conduct meets one of those three exceptions, whether or not it was a manifestation of his or her disability.

When the conduct is a manifestation- Not mentioned in the bill, so it appears that for removals of more than 10 days, the student is to return to the current placement, as under current law.

Manifestation Determination:

The IEP team must meet within 10 school days of the removal decision and review:

- all relevant information in the student’s file
 - any information provided by the parents
 - and teacher observations
- to determine whether:
- the conduct in question was the *result* of the student’s disability OR
 - the conduct in question resulted from the failure of the LEA to implement the IEP or to develop and implement behavioral interventions as required by the IEP

If EITHER of these is true, the conduct is considered a manifestation.

Transition/Rehab Act

There is a new section added that would provide funds to Vocational Rehab. agencies to: ATTEND TRANSITION IEP MEETINGS and facilitate transition to VR services. Transition services in the IEP begin at age 14, not 16.

•Service Provider Advocacy Procedures

American Federation of Teachers has advocated for a provision that would provide a documented dispute resolution process through which providers (teachers, related services providers, etc) could make complaints if they were retaliated against by LEAs for expressing concerns about the identification or provision of services to IDEA eligible students.

For a good explanation of how a bill becomes a law and why certain laws need to be "reauthorized", visit the NICHCY website at www.nichcy.org. To view the actual Senate Bill, you can go to <http://www.senate.gov>



Greater Expectations

Every five years, the State Board of Education develops a comprehensive plan for promoting educational improvement in Connecticut. The 1996-2000 Comprehensive Plan focused on expectations and student achievement. Connecticut’s vision for the next five years is on “Greater Expectations”. “The challenge is to close the achievement gaps between rich and poor, white and African-American and Hispanic students, boys and girls, native English speakers and limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities and those without...Our goal is to ensure that all Connecticut students achieve standards of excellence.”

One driving force behind every state’s educational planning is the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. The five NCLB goals are that: by 2013-2014, all students will be proficient at reading and math; all students will become proficient in English; all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers; all schools will be safe, drug-free and conducive to learning; and all students will graduate from high school. These goals are consistent with Connecticut’s Comprehensive Plan.

Copies of the updated version of Greater Expectations, Connecticut’s Comprehensive Plan for Education 2001-2005 are available from the SDE’s Public Information Office. You can reach them at 860-713-6548.



What's the C.I.P.?

Connecticut's State Department of Education and its Birth to Three System have released their joint Annual Report on Connecticut's **Continuous Improvement Plan** for early intervention and special education. You can find a copy of the report's summary on the Special Education Resource Center's website, www.ctserc.org

Entitlement vs. Eligibility How are services different?

The school is the sole provider of services for students and families until the student graduates with a regular education diploma, or ages out at age 21. Many families are unaware that, unlike the educational services, which are **entitlement services** through state and federal legislation, adult agencies are **eligibility services** and are not automatically available to individuals. Even if a young adult is eligible for an adult service agency, if resources (i.e. funding) do not exist, the agency is not mandated to provide services. In addition, the family is suddenly faced with an array of agencies, each with its own eligibility criteria and funding sources.

Here are some practical suggestions for enhancing interagency collaboration at the local level:

- Get to know the individuals who are responsible for coordinating transition efforts for each agency. Learn how each system works.

- Learn about the referral processes and eligibility criteria. What does each agency need from the school (i.e. evaluations) in order to determine eligibility? Who will be responsible to ensure that proper releases of information are signed and this information is transferred in a timely manner?

Collaboration with other agencies takes time and commitment. CPAC has fact sheets available from key state agencies that may support young adults with disabilities after they graduate from high school. Call the center at 800-445-2722 for copies.

When Do School Services End?

The Connecticut statutes define the school year as beginning July 1 and ending June 30 (Section 10-259). Connecticut regulations state that students with disabilities who require special education are eligible to receive special education and related services until receipt of a high school diploma or "until the end of the school year in the event that the child turns 21 during that school year" (10-76d-1(a)(7)), whichever occurs first. For example, a student eligible for special education and without a high school diploma who turns 21 between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004 is eligible to receive services, as recommended by the PPT and stated on the IEP, through June 30, 2004. If a student turns 21 prior to July 1, 2003, eligibility for services would end June 30, 2003.

SDE Update #32, March 26, 2003

New Publications Available from NCSET Supplemental Security Income: A Bridge to Work

This paper gives parents practical information about how their children can use Social Security work incentives to facilitate a gradual transition to partial or complete financial independence. Work incentives allow a recipient of SSI to earn wages while maintaining cash benefits and Medicaid. Background information, definitions and specific criteria for using SSI work incentives are included.

SSI: So You Have Decided to Apply

This parent brief provides a detailed description of the process for applying for Supplemental Security Income. It outlines four elements, including the specific steps in applying for benefits and the criteria that the Social Security Administration uses to determine eligibility.

You can get a copy of these publications from CPAC or on the web at www.necset.org.

Independent Living Centers provide four core services to adults with disabilities: information and referral; advocacy, peer counseling and independent living skills training. They are "consumer-controlled and community-based". They are not group homes or residences but a "hub" of activity. There are five Independent Living Centers in Connecticut, located in the communities of Hartford, Naugatuck, Norwich, Stratford and West Haven. Call CPAC for the name and phone number of the ILC closest to you, or visit them at www.ilusa.com

Transition to Adult Life Resource Expos a Great Success!

Earlier this school year, CPAC and the Special Education Administrators in Southeastern Connecticut held three *Transition to Adult Life Resource Expos*. Participants were given an introduction to transition planning, community organizations had the opportunity to describe their services, and parents and students got the chance to network and meet with individual agencies. Many parents commented that they had no idea so many agencies were available to support them with the transition process. If you are planning for the transition from school to adult life and would like a list of the agencies that participated in Southeastern Connecticut, or are interested in replicating a "Transition Expo" in your region, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to CPAC, 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357.

CONSOLIDATING SERVICES

Connecticut continues to face economic challenges. The Department of Mental Retardation is planning how to continue services in light of reductions to the allocation they will receive. The Department is trying to streamline their work so critical positions important to direct service and case management can be refilled. One change that will occur across all state human service agencies is a consolidation from five to three regions effective July 1, 2003. The three new regions will be:

West (a combination of Northwest and Southwest regions) 866-274-3888

North (a combination of the North Central and part of the Eastern regions) 800-558-9527

South (a combination of the South Central and part of the Eastern regions) 888-263-4445

Each region will be sending out more specific information over the course of the summer.

Our Children, Our Schools

A Family Resource Guide to Connecticut's Public Schools

This guide, developed by the CT Policy and Education Council in partnership with the CT Association of Boards of Education, is for parents and others who care for students in Connecticut. In it you will find lots of information, including 10 questions to ask at a parent-teacher conference, 10 ways to judge school quality and information on the latest research on child development. You can access this guide on the web at www.schoolguide.org or call CPAC for a free copy.

Equipment Needed!

To help accommodate students in their district, the Enfield Public School System is looking for Rifton chairs. They need medium-size chairs, two with low backs and two with high backs that tilt. If you have chairs you no longer use, please contact Andrea Brunnelle in Enfield at 860-253-4709.

CPAC has three PC's that we would like to donate to another 501(c)3 non-profit agency. If you can use them, please contact the Center at 800-445-2722.



Project Participate

provides families and educators simple strategies to increase the active participation of students with disabilities in school programs. Supported by a U.S. Department of Education grant, Project Participate facilitates collaboration and communication in the classroom. CPAC has three of their "tip sheets" available. **Ten Tips for General Educators** offers ideas to help students with disabilities participate and succeed in the classroom. **Ten Tips for Special Educators** helps teachers collaborate, communicate and promote the participation of students with disabilities. Finally, **Ten Tips for Caregivers** suggests ways that parents and other caregivers can encourage teamwork and communication to benefit their child. Call CPAC at 800-445-2722 for a copy of one or all three of these fact sheets, or you can visit Project Participate on the web at www.projectparticipate.org

How's Your Child Doing in School? Ten Research-Based Ways to Find Out

Although hot educational topics come and go, parents will always need to know the answer to the question: How is my child doing in school? The following tips are based largely on information from federally-funded educational research. This article focuses on elementary school children, but many of the suggestions apply to students of all ages.

- 1) Know what is expected
- 2) Know how well your child is reading
- 3) Understand test scores
- 4) Solicit teacher feedback
- 5) Familiarize yourself with your child's homework
- 6) Use a report card to identify overall progress
- 7) Stay attuned to social skills
- 8) Evaluate technology skills
- 9) Listen to your child
- 10) Put it all together

For a complete copy of this article by Ronald Dietel, Director of Communications at National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, UCLA, please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to CPAC at 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357.

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Please share this newsletter with others!

SPEAK OUT is received by over 9,500 parents and professionals in Connecticut.

If you would like to receive SPEAK OUT via email, please let us know!

Save the Date!

- July 21 & 22, 2003 **"The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) 2 Day Training Workshop";**
Crowne Plaza Hartford Downtown- Hartford, CT
- August 8, 2003 **"Teaching 9 Critical Communication Skills Workshop: Promoting Functional
Communication for those with Disabilities";** Holiday Inn, North Haven, CT Designed
by Pyramid Educational Consultants, Inc. for SLPs, Special Ed. Teachers, Administrators,
Behavior Analysts, and Parents.
 For more information on either of these communication skills workshops,
 you can visit www.pecs.com or contact sbuswell@pecs.com
- October 11, 2003 CT Down Syndrome Congress (CDSC) 18th Annual Convention **"Down Syndrome: Celebrate
the Differences"** Farmington-Marrriott Conference Center Keynote speaker: Dr. Richard Villa ,
internationally recognized author and lecturer on inclusive practices, co-teaching, and curriculum
adaptation. For more info contact Ken Cholewinski at 860-663-2676.
- October 25, 2003 **"Inclusive Education: Promising Practices Conference";** Saxe Middle School, 468 South
Avenue, New Canaan, CT Primarily for professionals, this conference will focus on a range of
topics, including curriculum modifications and paraprofessional issues. Please direct any
inquiries to Beth Lurie, Conference Chair, at lurie@optonline.net.
- November 1, 2003 CACLD ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE, **"Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficits Through
the Lifespan";** Keynote Speaker: Larry Silver, M.D. author of *THE MISUNDERSTOOD CHILD*.
For more information, contact CACLD at 203-838-5010.

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