

# SPEAK OUT

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc.

Volume 20 Number 2 • Fall 2003

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## How to Help Your Child In School

Learning doesn't just happen. Good education takes three partners: students, teachers and parents. The focus of our work at the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center has always been to strengthen relationships between schools and parents by helping them learn how they can more effectively participate in the education of their children with disabilities. We also know that relationship-building is a two-way street and that parents must be welcomed if they are to participate. With that in mind, as we begin another school year, we offer some suggestions from some outstanding educators as to how you can help your child succeed in school.

- ◆ Meet your child's teacher(s) at the beginning of the year. Go to open houses, visit the classroom, participate in special activities. Know what is being taught and what is expected of your child.
- ◆ Send your child to school every day unless he or she is ill. Try to schedule appointments after school. Making attendance a priority sends a message that school is important.
- ◆ Be positive. A good rule: "EVERY CHILD SHOULD EXPERIENCE SOME SUCCESS EVERY DAY". Pay attention to what your child does well. Notice the smallest improvements and be generous with praise. Never use humiliation and ridicule.

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- ◆ Show interest. If you ask, "What did you do in school today?" and your child answers "nothing," ask more specific questions. Even if you don't get much information, you are telling him/her that you care about his/her day at school.
- ◆ Children learn best from someone they respect. Avoid putting down the teacher in front of your child. Don't say the teacher is "too strict" or "too demanding." If you aren't comfortable with the teacher's teaching methods, talk to the teacher. If that doesn't work, request an appointment with the principal or assistant principal to discuss the problem.
- ◆ Be sure to inform the teacher of any new situations that might impact your child. Examples might include an illness, death in the family, divorce, or loss of a job.
- ◆ You will get to know your child's strengths and weaknesses. Set goals that he or she can meet successfully. Lots of small goals, which a child can reach one by one, work better than one large goal.
- ◆ Use rewards rather than punishments. If you reward your child for an athletic achievement, be sure to do so for an academic accomplishment.
- ◆ Children do as their parents do, not as they say. If you get excited about new books and ideas, your child will too. If you act as if anything worth doing is worth doing well, your child will do the same.
- ◆ Teach your child to ask questions as he or she reads, listens to stories or participates in general conversations. Encourage your child to draw conclusions.

Can parents help their children do well in school? The answer is a definite "YES!"

*Adapted from an article by Richard Spindler-Virgin, Director of the Regional Multicultural Magnet School, New London, CT. For a copy of the complete article, in English or in Spanish, call CPAC at 800-445-2722.*

CPAC is pleased to  announce that we have been awarded an equipment grant from IBM to support our technology planning project. It is through generous donations such as this that we are able to continue to improve the quality and scope of our work on behalf of parents in Connecticut.

THANK YOU IBM!



**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.

**SPEAK OUT** is published by Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc.  
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This newsletter is funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education; CT Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education; and by private contributions. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the funding sources. CPAC does not endorse any product, service or theory referred to in SPEAK OUT. Articles, announcements and resources are included for information only.

**CPAC Says Goodbye...**

CPAC was fortunate to have had Erin Galligan on staff this past year. Erin played a significant role in coordinating the statewide parent training mandated by the LRE Initiative, and was instrumental in helping us move ahead technologically - all the while answering the phones and keeping a terrific sense of humor and compassion. Erin has returned to school and is now working on her MBA at Yale. We miss Erin, but wish her every success as she moves ahead in her career.



**and Hello!**

We are happy to have Annie Stockton join CPAC to take over where Erin left off. Annie recently graduated from the University of Connecticut with her BS in Human Development. She will coordinate the ongoing statewide parent training for the State Department of Education's Least Restrictive Environment Initiative, and we are hoping that she will continue to improve CPAC's data collection system. As we look forward to the new year, we look forward to working with Annie.

**PLAN AHEAD FOR FREE WORKSHOPS!**



As you plan for the year ahead, remember that CPAC offers a variety of *free* workshops! From "Modifications and Accommodations for Children with Learning Disabilities", to a two-part presentation on the IEP, our consultants would be happy to address your group. Get involved! Consider coordinating a workshop at your child's school! Call us at 800-445-2722 for an updated workshop brochure, to schedule a presentation, or to brainstorm ways to reach parents and professionals in your community.

**SPEAK OUT ONLINE!**

You can help us to save printing and postage costs by ordering SPEAK OUT as a free e-newsletter! Just send your email address to [speakout@cpacinc.org](mailto:speakout@cpacinc.org), or you can log on to our "new and improved" website, [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org), and click on to "Newsletter."

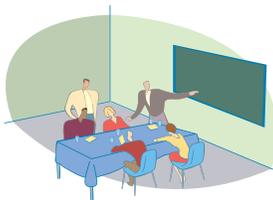
Thank you for helping us stretch our budget dollars!

CPAC is pleased to announce that the Savings Bank of Manchester Charitable Foundation has made a generous contribution to fund the reprinting of an updated version of our popular resource guide, *Connecting Connecticut*. We thank the foundation for their strong support of our efforts to provide up-to-date information about community-based services!

## 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.

At CPAC, we are always trying to connect parents with the support they need. One feature on our new website that we think is terrific is our listing of parent support groups. Sign on to [www.epacinc.org](http://www.epacinc.org), click onto "Resources," and then click onto "Parent Support Groups." You will see a map of Connecticut divided into regions, and can click onto any region for a listing of local support groups! If you know of groups that are not listed PLEASE CONTACT US via phone or email. We hope to keep this site as accurate and inclusive as possible!



### SUPPORT FOR DOWN SYNDROME

The Connecticut Down Syndrome Congress is a statewide organization of families, professionals and friends with a common interest – improving the lives of persons with Down Syndrome. CDSC provides information to new parents, an annual convention, a newsletter and other services and activities. They can be reached toll-free at 888-486-8537 or you can visit them on the web at [www.ctdownsyndrome.org](http://www.ctdownsyndrome.org)

### The Greater Hartford LICC

The Greater Hartford Local Interagency Coordinating Council (LICC) is a group of parents and professionals who work together on behalf of infants and toddlers with disabilities. LICC's were created to foster collaboration and improve services for young children. They advise the Birth to Three System by providing direction and identifying gaps in services and areas of need. For more information or to join the GH-LICC you can contact Carol Feliciano, Co-chair, at 860-644-9493.

### Newly Formed Special Education PTA Invites New Members

The SEPTA Network is designed to be a resource and support for parents and teachers of children who receive special education services in the towns of Stratford, Milford, Trumbull, Shelton, Orange, West Haven and others. The Network is a member of the national PTA, with a dedicated focus of advancing the quality and delivery of special education services in our schools. The SEPTA Network meets on the last Wednesday of the month from 7 - 9:00 pm at the Margaret Eagen Center in Milford. For more information, you can contact Douglas Sharafanowich at [DSharaf@juno.com](mailto:DSharaf@juno.com)

**OOPS!** In our last issue of SPEAK OUT, we inadvertently omitted the contact information for Lacasa (the Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association, Inc.) They can be reached by contacting Lisa at 860-489-8190 or John at 860-489-2790, or you can email them at [lacasa@snet.net](mailto:lacasa@snet.net).

We apologize for the error!

### Caregivers' Corner: Parent Support in Salem

After a summer recess, this parent support group will reconvene in September. The group meets on the first Monday of every month at Therapy Works in Salem to share information and support. Every other month there is a speaker, addressing such topics as sensory processing, the impact of diet, and educational advocacy. For more information, you can contact Therapy Works at 860-859-2391.

**The Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center, Inc.** (ASRC) has published the "State of Connecticut Resource Guide." This 226-page guide is a comprehensive manual for families and professionals involved with the autism spectrum. The price of the Guide is \$25.00, plus \$5.00 to cover shipping.

The ASRC is also presenting a **Parenting Series** beginning this fall. If you are not feeling sure of your child's program, or confident in the choices you are making, this series of workshops is designed for you, the parent of a child on the Autism Spectrum. Topics include: "Where Do I Begin?," "How the Diagnosis Impacts the Entire Family," "How to Manage Challenging Behaviors" and more. Workshops will be held one Saturday morning per month, at the ACES Staff Development Building in Hamden.

For more information about the Resource Guide or the Parenting Series, please contact the Autism Spectrum Resource Center at 203-248-5222.

## Learning to Read, Reading to Learn

Approximately 80% of students identified as having learning disabilities have problems in the area of reading. However, "most reading problems ... might have been avoided or resolved in their early childhood years if appropriate instruction and preventative measures had been provided." (Lyon, 1996) Thus, many children may be struggling in school not because they are "learning disabled," but because they have not, in fact, received appropriate instruction in reading.

Preventing reading failure and improving literacy have become of highest priority in America today. Solid reading instruction is nothing new, however. In many instances, what was good practice several years ago remains good practice today. Teaching methods that work for children with learning disabilities can be effective for *all* children. Several years ago, we included information about a series entitled "Learning to Read, Reading to Learn" in SPEAK OUT (vol. 14, no. 3 Spring 1997) The series included tips about reading for parents and teachers that are as helpful today as they were then. For a copy of these handouts that suggest ways to help children become better readers, call CPAC at 800-445-2722.

### How To Encourage Reading

#### Use the library.

Make sure everyone in your family has a library card. Help children learn how to use the library.

#### Read every day.

Make it a habit to set aside time each day for everyone to read – books, magazines, newspapers, letters.

#### Talk about what you're reading.

Children need to see adults reading frequently. Talk to children about what you're reading. Tell them how much you have enjoyed it and what you have learned.

#### Ask about reading materials.

Schools and libraries often highlight excellent books which are popular and consistent with grade-level reading skills. Call your school or library for information.

#### Make reading materials part of your home.



Buy books at bookstores and tag sales. Borrow books from the library and from friends. Subscribe to newspapers and magazines. **Then read, read, read!**

*From Connecticut Reads 2002: The Governor's Summer Reading Challenge. The CT State Department of Education, Hartford, CT*

## The CLEAR Initiative



Literacy is a continuum of skills on which people have different levels of ability. Low literacy skills occur among people from all walks of life, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or income level. The term literacy is used in this report to refer to an individual's ability to read, write and speak English and to compute and solve problems at a level of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society.

A wide range of experts, including the National Governors' Association, agree that today's economy and society require literacy skills at 'Level 3' or higher, measured on a 5-point scale. Approximately 300,000 Greater Hartford adults, roughly 41% of the adult population, are functioning below Level 3. **This is the same as the state's average and slightly lower than the national average of 49%.**

In 2002, the Greater Hartford Literacy Council launched a three-year initiative called Community Literacy Enhancement Across the Region (CLEAR). The goals are to produce meaningful change in the provision of, planning for, and funding of literacy services for individuals from birth through adulthood in Greater Hartford. During the first phase of CLEAR, the Literacy Council brought together more than 200 individuals representing 140 organizations and departments throughout the region. CPAC participated on the *Learners with Special Needs* task force. A report, "Take Action for Literacy: The Status of Literacy in Greater Hartford 2003," marks the culmination of the first phase of the CLEAR Initiative and recommends specific action steps to address low literacy issues in the greater Hartford area.

In response to those action steps, the Capital Region Workforce Development Board has pledged \$50,000 to develop an education screening, language arts assessment and design for a language arts instructional program for youth and young adults, aged 16 – 24.

For more information or a copy of Literacy Council's report, "*Take Action for Literacy*", contact the Council at 860-522-7323. You can access the report and keep an eye on future developments at [www.greaterhartfordreads.org/publications](http://www.greaterhartfordreads.org/publications).

Reading. It takes you places.



## **Dear Parent Advocate,**

Help! I have a four-year-old who attends the special education preschool program in our town for 2 1/2 hours per day. The problem is that I need day care for him because I work full-time. The day care program my friend uses says they can't care for my son because he has special needs. Does the school have to provide a full day program if I need it?

Working Mom

Dear Working Mom:

The problem you're facing is all-too-common, and there are no easy answers. First of all, the school district is responsible for providing an educational program that meets your son's needs, but they are not responsible for providing day care while you work. On the other hand, the day care provider should not refuse to let your child attend the program simply because he has disabilities. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, child care providers must make *individual assessments* about whether they can meet the particular needs of each child. They cannot exclude your child unless his presence would pose a *direct threat* to the health or safety of others or require a *fundamental alteration* of their program. Reasonable modifications must be made in order to include your son.

*For a copy of a fact sheet covering the "Basic Requirements of the ADA for Child Care Centers", please send a self-addressed stamped envelope to CPAC at 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357.*

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### **Teaching Our Youngest**

A Guide for Preschool Teachers and  
Child Care Providers

Everyone who interacts with a young child is a teacher. While this booklet was written for teachers and child-care and family providers, it can be helpful for parents, too. We all have both the wonderful opportunity and important responsibility to teach and nurture our youngest children. The years from birth through age five are a time of extraordinary growth and change. It is in these years that children develop the basic knowledge, understandings and interests they need to reach the goal of being successful learners, readers and writers. You play an important role in ensuring that "no child is left behind." This booklet draws from scientifically based research about what you can do help children develop language abilities, become familiar with books and other printed materials, learn letters and sounds and recognize numbers. Prepared by the Early Childhood-Head Start Task Force of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, April 2002. To order copies, for yourself or your child's teacher or caregiver, you can call toll-free 877-433-7827 (877-4-ED-PUBS) or email your request to [edpubs@inet.ed.gov](mailto:edpubs@inet.ed.gov).



### **Building A Child's Self-Esteem**

**Support** a child's goals and ideas, even if they are different from yours.

**Encourage** a child to make his or her own decisions.

**Let** a child take responsibility for family activities whenever he or she is ready.

**Focus** on a child's strengths and assets and praise positive behavior.

**Educate** a child that efforts count as much as the final result.

**Set** reasonable limits and follow through on them so a child knows that he or she is considered capable of handling limits.

**Try** asking for a child's opinions and decisions.

**Express** positive encouragement of everything a child does.

**Encourage** a child to express their feelings without fear of judgment.

**Make** it a point to tell a child everyday that they are special!

*From: Saint Francis Care, Behavioral Health; 800-251-6474*



## 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 complete listing of references in your area of concern.*

**How to Help Your Child with Homework: Every Caring Parent's Guide to Encouraging Good Study Habits and Ending the Homework Wars** (Revised and Updated) by Marguerite C., Radencich, PhD. and Jean Shay Schumm, PhD. Avoid homework hassles and promote school success with our popular handbook for parents. Written by teachers, it's packed with proven techniques, step-by-step strategies, and expert advice. This resource will help you choose the right "homework helper" for your child, set up a homework schedule and home study center, communicate effectively with your child's teacher, help your child prepare for tests; promote responsibility and independence, use technology wisely and teach your child study skills that will last a lifetime. You'll learn what's new about teaching today and why your child's assignments are different from the homework you remember. Includes 42 reproducible handouts. For parents of children 6-13.

**Social Relationships and Peer Support**, by Martha E. Snell, Ph.D. & Rachel Janney, Ph.D., with invited contributors. Facilitating positive peer relationships and supportive ties between students is essential to creating a successful inclusive classroom. This user-friendly guide for teachers offers proven models on how to build these important relationships. Based on research, this practical handbook guides educators on assimilating students with disabilities into class activities and enhancing social relationships. Brookes Publishing Company.

**Parenting A Struggling Reader: A Guide to Diagnosing and Finding Help for Your Child's Reading Difficulties** by Susan Hall and Louisa Moats, Ed.D. This is the first completely comprehensive, totally up-to-date, practical guide for recognizing and overcoming childhood reading difficulties. Acknowledging that parents often lose valuable years by waiting for their school systems to test their children, the authors offer a detailed and realistic program for making parents actively involved in their children's reading development.



### New Videos

**Discover IDEA: Supporting Achievement for Children with Disabilities** is an award-winning video that lets viewers hear from teachers, administrators, family members and children themselves across the nation who attest to the impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in ensuring that children with disabilities learn and achieve to their potential. The video introduces four provisions in the law that support achievement - the IEP, the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), school climate and discipline and State and district-wide assessment - and makes the case for the importance of leadership in carrying out the intent and spirit of the law. *From the IDEA Partnership Projects, the Council for Exceptional Children.*

### The ADA and Public Schools: Access for All

This video addresses the relation of the Americans with Disabilities Act to Section 504 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; the definition of disability under the ADA and general nondiscrimination requirements. The video illustrates inclusive school setting with students, teachers, parents and staff from rural, suburban and urban school districts. 18 minutes. *The ADA National Access for Public Schools Project, funded by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research of the US Dept. of Education. 2000.*



## Universal Design: A Strategy to Support Students' Access to the General Education Curriculum

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997 require that students with disabilities have access to, participate and progress in, the general education curriculum.

School curricula are still largely designed for students *without* disabilities. While techniques are available to teachers to help them adapt curricula to individual students, these modified solutions are time consuming and vary widely in effectiveness. These approaches stem from the outdated view that the fundamental problem resides in students with diverse needs, rather than in the design of curricula (King-Sears, 1997).

The concept of Universal Design originated in the field of architecture. Architect Ron Mace coined the term in the early 1980s, and defined the concept as “the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (Center for Universal Design, 1997).

The principles of Universal Design are being applied to learning environments to improve access (Rose & Meyer, 2000). Universal Design seeks to offer flexible curriculum and learning environments that allow students with widely varying abilities the opportunity to access the general curriculum and achieve the academic content standards that have been established for all students in the school, district, or state.

For a complete copy of this Information Brief (December 2002 • Vol.1 • Issue 3) from the National Center on Secondary education and Transition, contact CPAC at 800-445-2722. This publication is also available online at [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org)

### **The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for All Students K-8**

The Access Center is a national technical assistance (TA) center funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The Access Center provides multiple types of assistance to states and districts to help ensure that students with disabilities are able to access the general education curriculum and that all students learn and achieve to the best of their abilities. You can learn more about the Access Center and its services by visiting them on the web at [www.K8accesscenter.org](http://www.K8accesscenter.org).

## Access to Technology

In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act to require federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act was enacted to eliminate barriers and to give people access to information that is comparable to that of others. In its report “The Accessible Future”, the National Council on Disability (NCD) concludes that access to electronic and information technology is a civil right and cites a need for a national accessibility policy. A major concern is that the government has been without practical means for achieving compliance. (*Monday Morning*, Vol. 9, No. 7)

It is the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center’s mission to provide information to those we serve. One way we do that is electronically, via the world wide web. We are happy to report that our recently redesigned website is up and running, better than ever – and accessible to all! Please visit us at [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org) to keep on top of the latest developments and upcoming events.

## HOMEWORK?!?

*“Access to all aspects of the general education curriculum is emphasized by the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Homework is one of these aspects.”*

Marjorie Montague, Researcher, University of Miami

Homework has traditionally been considered by educators and parents alike to be an important ingredient in academic success. For students with disabilities, homework is also important and, in many cases, especially difficult. In recent years, researchers have tackled issues related to homework and how to ensure that students with disabilities benefit from it. The Spring, 2001 issue of Research Connections in Special Education describes some of that research. It includes suggestions about “*Solving Homework Communication Problems*”, “*Preferred Homework Adaptations*” and “*Tips for Assigning Homework*”. For a copy of this research paper send a self-addressed envelope with **2** stamps to CPAC at 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357.



## LEGISLATION

### Paige Marks 18-Month Anniversary of No Child Left Behind Act with Update to Congress

FOR RELEASE: July 8, 2003

U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige today gave Congress an 18-month update on the implementation of the historic *No Child Left Behind Act* — highlighting the progress made to date and identifying issues and topics that the U.S. Department of Education will focus on during the coming months.

"This tremendous achievement could not have been accomplished without the leadership of the President, the bipartisan support of Congress, and the tireless efforts of state and local leaders across the country," Secretary Paige wrote. "I thank you for your efforts and support. During my four decades working in education, I have never seen such meaningful and effective cooperation between federal, state, and local officials — all working together toward the common goal of educating every child."

In the memo, Paige details how each state submitted accountability plans and how each state's plan was approved — a major milestone achieved in record time — as well as the record federal investments taxpayers are making to help achieve the goals of the law, leaving no child behind. The secretary also shares comments from educators and parents across the country who have embraced the principles of the law and are working hard to implement it in their communities. Paige briefly outlines the issues his agency will focus on during the coming months: helping place a highly qualified teacher in every classroom; expanding opportunities for qualified students to receive tutoring and other supplemental services; and identifying schools in need of improvement and making sure they are getting the assistance they need to get back on track. For more information about the law, visit [www.nochildleftbehind.gov](http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov)

#### No Child Left Behind: A Parents Guide

This Guide summarizes the *No Child Left Behind Act*, answers common questions about the law, explains what the law does for parents and tells where to find additional resources. You can access this 44 page document at <http://www.nclb.gov/next/index.html>.

## REAUTHORIZATION UPDATE

On June 25th, the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) committee unanimously approved S. 1248, the bill reauthorizing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Senate staff members are continuing to work on S.1248, primarily to make technical corrections. (This generally means that the corrections being made do not change the substance of a bill.) Currently, the "word" is that S.1248 will come to the floor of the Senate for a vote in September.

On July 22, the Senate Republican Policy Committee (which is a group of Republican Senators that meets regularly to discuss policy issues) chaired by Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) released a paper entitled *Disabled Children May Be Left Behind if IDEA Law Becomes an Entitlement*. This document outlines the RPC's stance on IDEA reauthorization, emphasizing how IDEA may be viewed within the context of the Bush administration's education agenda. The document may be found at <http://rpc.senate.gov/releases/2003/ed072203.pdf>.

*The Latest Scoop on Reauthorization*, July 28, 2003, <http://www.nichcy.org/reauth/scoop.htm>



## CHANGES IN CONNECTICUT

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in Washington ordered CT's State Department of Education to amend certain provisions of our due process procedures in order to remain eligible for federal financial assistance. In addition to those changes, the SDE took the opportunity to make substantive changes to the special education statutes. These changes were included in the budget implementation bill that was signed by the Governor on August 20, Bill No. 6806. Two of these important changes are:

*Section 2:* Amends Section 10-76a, the definitional section of the state special education statutes to conform our definitions to IDEA. This effectively eliminates the category of "neurological impairment" as a disability category in Connecticut.

*Section 5:* Amends Section 10-76h(a)(1) as follows: Removes the requirement that issues must be raised at a PPT meeting before they are raised at a due process hearing.

## Study Suggests Current Reforms May Not Address People's Biggest Concerns About Schools

A new research brief released from Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) suggests that while people continue to support standards-based school reforms, such efforts may fail to address their biggest concerns about public schools. "Amid the largely technical discussion among educators and policymakers about standards, high-stakes testing and accountability, we rarely hear the voice of the public," noted Dr. J. Timothy Waters, President and Chief Executive Officer of McREL. "[We] felt it was important to listen to what the public has to say about its schools and current efforts underway to improve them." Here are some of the common themes that surfaced:

- Tests are necessary, but accountability should be based on more than just test scores.
- Accountability should make schools more responsive to parents and communities, not outside officials.
- People's key concerns about schools are mostly social issues not addressed by standards, tests, or accountability.
- Parents would like to be more involved in their schools, but often feel shut out of them.

In short, it seems that when it comes to education reform, parents and the public may be far more focused on improving social and personal aspects of schools — "soft" results that cannot be easily quantified. Educators and policymakers, on the other hand, appear to be mainly focused on improving the technical aspects of schooling, namely test scores and other quantifiable results.

"We believe educators and policymakers should take note of the possibility that the public may have a very different idea in mind about what needs to happen in their schools," said Dr. Waters. "If school leaders fail to understand the public's deeper concerns about education, it's possible that even if public schools succeed in boosting test scores and avoiding sanctions, they may still fail to increase public satisfaction with them."

*McREL is a nationally recognized, private, nonprofit organization located in Aurora, Colo., dedicated to improving education for all students through applied research, product development and service. To learn more about them, visit [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)*

## Survival Tips for Standardized Testing

Standardized Testing has become a critical issue in schools today. Whether we agree with the how, when or why of standardized testing, we need to face the fact that tests are being required. CPAC staff member and former special educator Kathy Slade has developed a list of "Survival Tips for Standardized Testing". We hope they are helpful for you and your child!

1. Send a note of encouragement in your child's lunch box or book bag. A simple "I love you!" can go a long way!
3. Help your child manage stress:
  - Help him see the test within the "big picture". A test is a *snapshot* of the student's performance on a particular day.
  - Encourage her to stay active and involved in sports, hobbies or other enjoyable activities.
4. Let your child know that all standardized tests are designed to have some easy and some difficult questions; students are not expected to know all the answers.
5. Do not plan activities that will take your children away from school on testing days.
6. Talk to your child about the testing and then forget about them for a while. It will be several months before the results are made available.

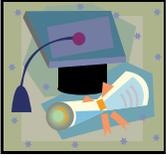
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### *Closing Connecticut's Achievement Gaps: The Role of Paraprofessionals*

The Eighth Annual Statewide "Paraprofessionals as Partners" Conference, November 13, 2003

Paraprofessionals are often one of the most stable forces in the instructional settings of children and youth who demonstrate academic and behavioral challenges. While they are often left out of the reform movements because they are perceived as "only an assistant," their role is worthy of affirmation and support. This annual conference is an opportunity for paraprofessionals to engage in cutting edge professional development while networking with colleagues. It is designed to help paraprofessionals increase their effectiveness as educational partners with teachers, student support professionals and administrators. For more information, contact the Special Education Resource Center (SERC) at 860-632-1485.

## Beyond Graduation



What happens after high school? While transition planning does get some attention these days, we still do not focus nearly enough on preparing students with disabilities for adult life. A high school

diploma does not necessarily have to be the end of formal education. More and more programs are being developed to meet the needs of young adults with disabilities to help them gain the skills they will need to be as successful and independent as possible. On this page we have showcased a few of these programs – both public and private. Hopefully the number of these much needed programs will grow!

### **THE TRANSITIONS' CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

Gateway Community College in New Haven offers a training program that is designed to assist students who are challenged by traditional learning models to develop skills appropriate to the workplace. Candidates for the program will have a high school diploma, certificate or GED; a history of receiving special education services; cognitive ability in the low-average range; reading, math and written language skills at approximately the 5th to 8th grade level. Courses focus on time and resource management, working with others, using information, and understanding systems. For more information you can contact Marilyn Bergen at Gateway, 203-285-2028 or via email at [mbergen@gwcc.commnet.edu](mailto:mbergen@gwcc.commnet.edu).

### **THE ALLEN INSTITUTE**

The Allen Institute in Hebron, CT is a post-secondary educational program for young adults with moderate disabilities, enabling them to build independence and productive lives. The Institute offers four distinct programs: the **High School Completion Program** allows students to earn their diploma in a unique and creative environment; the **Enrichment Program** offers real world experiences in social and workplace skill-building; the **Pre-College Experience** is a program that develops additional academic and social skills to prepare for transition to a more challenging course load; the **Associate Degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences** is earned after successful completion of our innovative combination of online and traditional college classroom mode. Tuition costs are similar to those of typical two- or four-year colleges. For more information, contact the Allen Institute toll-free at 866-666-6919.

## **THE WESTERN CONNECTION**

Western Connecticut State University and the greater Danbury Public School District have teamed together to form "The Western Connection", a regional program for students with disabilities providing hands-on work experience and life skills instruction. The Western Connection is designed to provide students between the ages of 18 and 21 with opportunities to help develop the vocational and social skills necessary for competitive employment and community living. For more information about the program, admission criteria and the application process, contact Richard Emmett, Special Education Teacher at [emmetr@danbury.k12.ct.us](mailto:emmetr@danbury.k12.ct.us) or Ann Griffin, Special Education Supervisor in New Milford at 860-350-6647, ext. 2306 or via email at [griffina.hs-po@new-milford.k12.ct.us](mailto:griffina.hs-po@new-milford.k12.ct.us)



### **Cassilly: How I Got to College**



This video describes the experience of a remarkable young woman with intellectual challenges who attends a community college. It is the story of Cassilly and her family, how Cassilly created a place for herself on a post-secondary education campus, and the importance of that success to the quality of her life in the community. The video encourages students, their families, teacher and counselors, to work to reduce the barriers to the inclusion of young people with intellectual challenges in post-secondary education.

### **NCD Seeks Input from College Students with Disabilities:**

The National Council on Disability's (NCD) Youth Advisory Committee is seeking input from former and current college students with disabilities. The committee advises the NCD about issues faced by children, adolescents, and young adults with disabilities. Specifically, they are requesting information about how students with disabilities pay for college. The stories submitted will help expand what is known about these issues, so the support services provided to students with disabilities can be improved. Deadline: October 30th, 2003. For more information, you can visit the council on the web at [http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/advisory/youth/yac\\_inquiry.html](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/advisory/youth/yac_inquiry.html).

## NEXT STEPS...

HEADING TO HARTFORD!



CPAC is pleased to announce that our upcoming Next STEPs (Support and Training for Educators and Parents) series will be held at the Greater Hartford Association for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (HARC) this fall. HARC's mission is "to help people with mental retardation and their families enjoy lives of quality, inclusion and dignity by providing support, education and advocacy". The series will consist of six sessions to be held every other week beginning in September. For more information about the Next STEPs Parent Advisor training you can call CPAC at 800-445-2722, or Dawn Allen at HARC, 860-278-1100 ext. 412, to register and request an application

An abbreviated version of this training will also be offered in Spanish at HARC. Please call Karen Morales @ 860-278-1100 x 221 for details and registration information.

### CPAC Parent Advisors are Taking the Next STEPs!

Over the past few years, CPAC has offered our Next STEPs (Support and Training for Educators and Parents) Training in Middletown, East Hartford, Waterbury, Norwich and New Haven. Graduates are involved in helping other parents in a variety of ways. Some Parent Advisors are helping others on a one-to-one basis. Others have started parent support groups, served as parent representatives on task forces, represented CPAC at outreach events and conducted parent training workshops. Some have taken their training and their skills and have gone on to work in the field. Whatever the activity, we recognize and applaud the commitment and enthusiasm of our Parent Advisors. A sincere thank you to all of you who have become involved, and an invitation to those of you who might consider attending our training and volunteering with us in the future.

For more information about CT Parent Advocacy Center's Next STEPs program, contact Jane Hampton-Smith at CPAC, 800-445-2722.

## CPAC is Sponsoring Two Terrific Free Workshops!



October 22, 2003  
7:00 - 9:00 pm  
Cromwell, CT

### **Inclusive Education: Best Practices for All Students**

Schools by their very nature are structured settings. Accommodations in schools for students with disabilities are challenging but crucial. How do families work with school staff to assure successful school experiences? The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center is sponsoring this workshop to help you learn about the Least Restrictive Environment and Inclusive Education.

Presenter Frank Sgambati is the project director for Partnerships for Educational Innovations: New Hampshire's Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Project. This project is sponsored collaboratively by the New Hampshire Department of Education and University of New Hampshire's Institute on Disability. Frank provides assistance to families and school teams on promoting full inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms.

October 29, 2003  
7:00 - 9:00 pm  
Cromwell, CT

### **Reading is Rocket Science: Ways Parents Can Help**

This presentation will give some background about why reading is difficult for so many and what parents need to know to help their children find success. The presenter will discuss some of the reading programs that are available and how parents can find the right help for their children. The event is co-sponsored by Smart Kids with LD.

Our presenter, Marjorie Gillis, Ed.D., is the Project Leader of Early Reading Success at Haskins Laboratories in New Haven and co-founder of Smart Kids with Learning Disabilities. Margie is a Certified Academic Language Therapist in Multisensory Structured Language (MSL) Instruction for children with reading disabilities.

Both evenings are sure to be informative and interactive! Come join us! Call CPAC at 800-445-2722 or email [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org) for directions and to register for either or both workshops.



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Please share this newsletter with others!

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

**Printing costs continue to rise. If you would like to receive SPEAK OUT via email, please contact CPAC at 800-445-2722.**

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## **SAVE THE DATE!**

- October 11, 2003      **CT Down Syndrome Congress 18th Annual Convention**, "Down Syndrome: Celebrate the Differences." Farmington-Marriott Conference Center. Keynote Speaker: Dr. Richard Villa, well-known author and lecturer on inclusive practices. For more information, contact Ken Cholewinski at 860-663-2676.
- October 22, 2003      **"Inclusive Education: Best Practices for All Students."** Cromwell, CT Presenter: Frank Sgambati, Partnerships for Educational Innovations, New Hampshire. For more information, call CPAC at 800-445-2722.
- October 29, 2003      **"Reading is Rocket Science: Ways Parents Can Help."** Cromwell, CT Presenter: Marjorie Gillis, Ed.D., Project Leader of Early Reading Success, Haskins Laboratories, New Haven. Co-sponsored by Smart Kids with LD. Call CPAC at 800-445-2722 for more information.
- November 1, 2003      **CACLD's 33rd Annual State Conference**. Marriott Hotel, Stamford. Keynote Speaker: Larry Silver, M.D., author of *The Misunderstood Child*. For more information, contact CACLD at 203-838-5010.
- November 13, 2003      **SERC's 8th Annual Paraprofessionals as Partners Conference**, "Closing Connecticut's Achievement Gaps: The Role of Paraprofessionals." Radison Hotel, Cromwell. For more information call SERC at 860-632-1485.