

# SPEAK OUT

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc.

Volume 20 Number 3 • Winter 2004

338 Main Street • Niantic • CT • 06357 • 860-739-3089 v/TDD  
Parents may call toll-free: 800-445-2722 • Fax: 860-739-7460  
Satellite Office: Fair Haven Community Health Center, New Haven • 203-776-3211

website: [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org)  
email: [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org)

## Get Involved!

Public education today is under a great deal of scrutiny at the local, state and federal level. Elected officials finally agree that schools must be held accountable for teaching our children – all of our children. The passage of *No Child Left Behind* in 2002 signaled a “sweeping overhaul of federal efforts” to support changes in an educational system that is in desperate need of reform and repair. *No Child Left Behind* is built on “four common-sense pillars: accountability for results; an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research; expanded parental options; and expanded local control and flexibility.” Whether or not you agree with NCLB and its implementation (i.e. accountability based on more and more standardized assessments and test scores) at the very least the new law and its requirements are getting national attention. It’s a start.

Both *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) take parent involvement seriously; “Research overwhelmingly demonstrates the positive effect that parent involvement has on their children’s academic achievement.”<sup>1</sup> Both laws not only support, but also mandate, parent involvement in our schools in a variety of ways and on a variety of levels:

### In This Issue:

CPAC Activities . . . . .	2
Connections in CT . . . . .	3
Inclusion . . . . .	4
Dear Parent Advocate . . .	5
Bookworm . . . . .	6
Disability Resources . . . .	7
Legislation . . . . .	8
Transition . . . . .	10
Upcoming Events . . . . .	11
Calendar . . . . .	12

- NCLB requires districts to provide parents with local report cards that include information on how students in each school performed on state assessments. Be on the lookout for your district’s report card!
- If a school is identified as needing improvement, the school district must notify parents and explain how they can be involved in school improvement efforts.
- Parents must be part of the team developing the Individualized Education Program for each student with a disability. They must have “meaningful opportunities to participate.” (IDEA ’97)
- Each state department of education must support the collection and dissemination of information on effective parent involvement practices to local school districts.
- Schools receiving Title 1 funds must ensure parent involvement in significant areas, including overall planning at district and school levels, written policies on parent involvement, annual meetings, training, etc.

The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center is Connecticut’s Parent Training & Information Center, federally-funded through the IDEA. We give each parent who calls us personal guidance and assistance, explaining the law as it pertains to their child with a disability. More and more, we are also helping parents understand their rights and responsibilities under *No Child Left Behind*, as that legislation impacts all children, including those with disabilities. At CPAC, we believe that each and every child, and each and every parent, counts. Having said that, however, we also believe that in order for there to be any real and long-term change in the system as a whole, we need to act

*continued on page 2*

and work together. Parents have to come forward, work with other parents and the professionals in their districts. Teachers, therapists and administrators need to start thinking of the parents as allies, as true partners in the educational process. "If you think that you alone cannot do much to improve your school, you are probably right. But if you collaborate with other parents and organizations, you can make a difference. There is strength and power in numbers."<sup>2</sup>

We know that too often parents do not feel welcomed in their children's schools. At times, it seems that the doors to 'meaningful participation' are closed. With *No Child Left Behind*, however, those doors should be opening. When they do, we need to be ready and willing to enter.

1. *No Child Left Behind, A Parent's Guide*. U.S. Department of Education, 2003, page 10.
2. *From 12 Things You Should Expect from Your Schools*, Parent Leadership Associates website, [www.plassociates.org](http://www.plassociates.org)

Editor, SPEAK OUT

## Welcome, Michelle!

CPAC is fortunate to have Michelle Doty as a new member of our staff. A graduate of Southern CT State University and officially our Administrative Assistant, Michelle does everything from answering the phones and managing the office to offering much-needed technical support to our staff. Michelle comes to CPAC with a wealth of diverse work experience, most recently working in CIT for Pfizer Inc. She has brought new energy, enthusiasm and order to our office. Be sure to say hello next time you call!

## Thank You, Demaree!

Demaree Ritacco, a founding member of CPAC's Board of Directors, stepped down from the board last fall. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to Demaree for her years of service and support. Recognizing her tireless efforts to make respite care more available for families in Southeastern Connecticut, the board has established the Demaree Ritacco Respite Fund. The application procedure for accessing these funds is currently being developed. If you would like to make a donation, please send your tax-deductible contribution to the Demaree Ritacco Respite Fund, care of CPAC.

## Involving Parents so No Child is Left Behind

CPAC is offering a new workshop for parents and professionals on the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001". Participants will learn about the new federal legislation and take home specific ways to be meaningfully involved in their children's education. Parents and educators should come prepared to explore the best ways to support successful parent/school partnerships so that both children and local schools will have high achievement. Call CPAC for more information or to schedule training in your area.



### 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.  
338 Main Street  
Niantic, CT 06357

*CPAC Staff:*

*Executive Director:* Nancy Prescott

Jane Bolles

Debbie Burke

Andrea Deshefy

Michelle Doty

Jane Hampton-Smith

Carmina Lizardi

Beth Reel

Kathy Slade

Annie Stockton

Kathy Whalen

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.

## Connections in Connecticut: How Parents are Making a Difference

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



### Does Your Group have the Fizzles?

If attendance is dropping in your group, it might be helpful to review the following problem areas:

**Meeting Place:** Is your meeting location appropriate for your group? For example, meeting at a restaurant may not provide enough privacy (or may exclude those who cannot afford the meal). Meeting at a hospital may bring back bad memories. Choose a neutral location if possible.

**Meeting Frequency:** Do you meet so often that you're rehashing the same topics or looking everywhere for new programs? Take the pulse of your group and change as needed.

**Meeting Time:** Is the time of day convenient for your group members? Many parents work during the day, but some people may not like to travel at night. Consider offering alternative meeting times, use "buddies" to share driving, etc.

**Starting and Ending:** Begin and end on time!

**Meeting Structure:** Is your meeting organized to encourage active participation? Invite anyone who wishes to participate to do so. Some groups go around in a circle to allow everyone the opportunity to talk (or pass) if they want to.

**Monopolizers:** Do certain people in the group tend to take over and talk forever? Consider preventive and corrective measures to limit sharing. A time limit of 3-5 minutes, for example, not only prevents rambling but also helps people stay on task.

*Adapted from Connections, the newsletter of the Connecticut Self-Help Network, September 24, 2003*

### Farmington Valley Aspergers Network (FAVAN)

FAVAN is a not-for-profit support group for parents, family members, educators and professionals who either have children or are associated with children on the higher end of the Autism Spectrum. Their immediate goal is to provide emotional support and informational exchange, and to provide an opportunity for parents to network with other parents in similar situations. As part of their overall mission, they aim to educate members about local resources and provide help with school and other educational issues. For more information you can contact Allison Gozzo at 860-651-6462 or via email at [info@favan.org](mailto:info@favan.org)

### Changes in the SEPTA Network

In our last issue of SPEAK OUT we included information about the new SEPTA Network, 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. They have recently changed their meeting night, meeting location and added a Parent Support Group. SEPTA Network now meets on the last Monday of each month, with accommodations made for various holidays. The Network also sponsors two parent support group meetings. For further information you can visit their website, [www.septanetwork.org](http://www.septanetwork.org), or contact Douglas Sharafanowich at 203-876-1189 or via email at [info@septanetwork.org](mailto:info@septanetwork.org)

#### Support Group Meeting in Southington

The Parent Circle meets the second Tuesday of every month at the Orchards of Southington. The goal of the group is to help direct parents to resources and to share concerns, information and experiences. For more information contact co-leader Lesa Hartman at 860-621-1207

#### And another change to note...

The Preston Autism Spectrum Disorder and Developmental Delay Support Group has changed its meeting date to the first Monday of the month. They continue to meet at the Preston Public Library from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Contact Lisa Allen at 860-886-2991 for more information.



## Ideas for Encouraging Children's Friendships Through Recreation

Families, school personnel, and community recreation staff all play a role in encouraging the growth of friendships between children with and without disabilities. The following recommendations from members of all three groups address some of the ways that friendships can be promoted through recreation activities in homes, neighborhoods, schools, and community programs.

### What Families Can Do

Families can take many positive steps to influence friendship-building between children with and without disabilities

- Make friendship development a family priority.
- Become acquainted with other families.
- Schedule children's times together.
- Invite children into homes and on outings.
- Encourage positive social interactions.
- Learn about community recreation resources.

### What School Staff Can Do

School personnel can play an important part in encouraging friendships through recreation activities during the school day:

- Include social and recreation skills in curricula.
- Assign friends to the same classroom
- Provide opportunities for families to become acquainted.
- Include friendship and recreation goals in the IEP.
- Train school personnel on friendships.
- Tell parents when friendships develop.

### What Community Recreation Staff Can Do

Community recreation personnel can create many ideal opportunities for children with and without disabilities to meet, get to know each other, and become friends:

- Welcome all children in recreation programs.
- Ensure architectural and program accessibility.
- Educate staff to meet individual needs.
- Provide cooperative activities that promote positive peer interactions.
- Coordinate after-school activities and school schedules.

*Excerpted from an article in IMPACT, vol. 16, number 2, 2003. For a copy of the full article, which details ideas and approaches to encourage friendships through recreation, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to CPAC. You can also find the article online at <http://ici.umn.edu/products/impact/162/over6.html>.*

## "The Me Bag"



As more students are being included in the regular education classroom, teachers need to ensure that their educational needs are being met, both academically and socially. The following is a simple activity that will allow students to learn about each other and share their experiences. Students may find that they have a lot in common and friendships may develop.

Have a bag sitting on each student's desk. Included in the bag is a letter from the teacher describing him/herself, telling of hobbies, etc. Ask the students to decorate and fill the "Me Bag" with pictures from magazines, drawings, objects, facts, or stories that represent themselves. (The teacher has already completed a sample "Me Bag"... Students love to hear about their teacher!) The students keep their objects secret until they share their "Me Bags" with the class. As well as allowing students to get to know one another, this can stem some neat writing assignments.

*Adapted from Inclusive Schools, Celebration Ideas: Activities and Resources for Schools, Classrooms, and Families, p. 10.,*

### New Resources available at CPAC

The Foundation of Inclusive Education: A Compendium of Articles on Effective Strategies to Achieve Inclusive Education, Second Edition. Ryndak, Diane Lea and Fisher, Douglas. Baltimore, MD: TASH, 2003.

Inclusive Elementary Schools: Recipes for Success. Fisher, Douglas, N. Frey, and C. Sax. Colorado Springs, CO: PEAK Parent Center, Inc., 1999.

Deciding what to Teach and How to Teach It: Connecting Students Through Curriculum and Instruction. Castagner, Elizabeth, D. Fisher, K. Rodifer, C. Sax, and N. Frey. Colorado Springs, CO: PEAK Parent Center, Inc., 2003.

### Inclusion videos from the University of Kansas

- Ø *Expanding the Circle: Best Practices for Inclusion of Learners Who Have Severe Disabilities in Multi-aged Classrooms.* 30 minutes
- Ø *Focus on Inclusion: A Circle of Inclusion* 27 minutes
- Ø *The Process of Instruction* 12 minutes
- Ø *The Process of Communication* 10 minutes

If you would like to borrow books or videos, please contact CPAC at 800-445-2722.



## Dear Parent Advocate,

I have a son who has moderate mental retardation (intellectual disability). What should I be doing for him in terms of guardianship, etc.? I have always done everything, but I understand that I need to start preparing for things before the age of eighteen.

Transitioning in Torrington

Dear Transitioning:

At age 18, your child is legally considered to be an adult. In addition to the issues that this may present to any family, there are particular issues which should be addressed by parents of a child with disabilities. These are:

**Guardianship:** If your child needs your continuing support for making decisions and signing documents involving residence, educational, vocational or behavioral programs, release of records, or medical and dental care, you will need to apply to your local Probate Court for either Full (Plenary) or Partial Guardianship. A filing fee of \$150.00 is usually charged. The Court will arrange for assessments to be done by both a lawyer for your child and a team of professionals, and a hearing will be scheduled within 45 days. You should take this time frame into account when you decide to apply for Guardianship. To apply, look in the Blue Pages of your phone book under the town in which you live for the listing of the Probate Court. You will have to apply in person.

**Entitlements:** Because your child is now considered to be a disabled adult with (usually) low income, financial assistance may be available through two sources: the Federal Government (SSI) and the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services (medical insurance – Title 19). Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI) is now recommending that you apply in the month following your child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. To apply, you can call Social Security toll-free 800-772-1213. Your child may also be eligible for medical insurance (Title 19). To apply contact the Department of Social Services (in the Blue Pages under Connecticut, State Of) for an application.



---

## Laying the Foundation for Independence

---

Attitudes and actions in the home can greatly affect success once a child leaves the nest. Here are some practical tips that will help a child with a disability get a head start on independence.

### 1. Let Him or Her Make Decisions

When possible, let the child be the decision maker. Start with small decisions: Saturday night's movie rental, the grocery list, where to place a new piece of furniture. Remember, this may not go smoothly at first. Learning how to make responsible, adult decisions is something we learn over time, through trial and error.

### 2. Allow for Risks

Students will encounter new situations of all sorts and will have successes as well as failures and mistakes. One way to prepare for inevitable mistakes is to allow for risk taking – it gives the child a valuable opportunity to realize consequences of choices and behaviors. How would your child handle the responsibility of budgeting a pay check, a cell phone or having a boyfriend/girlfriend? Practicing while your child is still living at home will give you a chance to see how your child will respond under certain situations.

### 3. Allow for Relationships

Allow your child to form some sort of boyfriend/girlfriend relationship, within limits that are comfortable for your family. Agree to let your son or daughter go on a date. Students entering post-secondary programs who have never had the opportunity to date will often dive headlong into relationships when experiencing freedom for the first time. Previous dating experience will help curb the new student's fascination with having a boyfriend/girlfriend.

### 4. Community Ties

Introduce your child to the idea of volunteering and attending town or city-sponsored events in your hometown. Become familiar with local restaurants, retail stores, and theatres. When possible, go to the same bank, grocery store, drug store, or hair salon on a regular basis. This will help him become familiar with the employees and layout of the business, which may result in his going to these places without your assistance.

*Adapted from "Laying the Foundation for Independence in the Home," by Tammy Vuksinic, Asst. Executive Director, Chapel Haven - an independent living facility for adults (18+) with cognitive disabilities*



## The Bookworm

### RESOURCE COLLECTION ADDITIONS

We are pleased to announce the addition of two new resource collection categories within our library – *Literacy* and *Study Skills*. If you are interested in a listing of additional materials available in these categories please call us or visit our website at [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org)

A new book available in our *Study Skills* category is, **What Do We Say? What Do We Do? Vital Solutions for Children’s Educational Success** by Dr. Dorothy Rich. This book is about specific support parents need to help their children achieve. Parents are the primary teachers and coaches in children’s lives. This doesn’t come naturally. It is hard daily work, experimentation, trial and error. *What Do We Say? What Do We Do?* focuses on specific home-school problems and the words and actions that help us through the process of solving these problems.

Also available for lending is Dorothy Rich’s **Reading, Writing, Math How Parents Can Help Children Succeed in School**. A MegaSkills minibook. MegaSkills are superbasics, the inner engines of learning, that determine achievement in school and beyond: Confidence, Motivation, Effort, Responsibility, Initiative, Perseverance, Caring, Teamwork, Common Sense, Problem Solving and Focus.

**The Source for Nonverbal Learning Disorders**. Thompson, Sue. IL: Linguisticsystems, Inc. 1997. Not sure if you have a student with nonverbal learning disorder (NLD)? See if this description sounds familiar: ignores nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, is clumsy for no apparent reason, makes inappropriate social remarks, and has difficulty with visual-spatial-organizational tasks. This resource provides you with useful checklists, anecdotes, and methods for dealing with this little understood disorder through the lifespan.

**Education and Public Health Natural Partners in Learning for Life**. Smith, Jenny. VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. 2003. This book provides insight into how schools and public health agencies can work together to improve student achievement, behavior, and health. Using examples from diverse communities, the author discusses the intersections between education and public health, keys to successful projects, and ways to connect to the curriculum.



### Revised Lending Policy



*The Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center’s collection of books and videotapes is 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. Unfortunately, over the past few months, a number of resources that we have sent out have not been returned. It has become necessary for us to require a \$25.00 refundable deposit for books whose replacement cost exceeds this amount. We will require the deposit before the book is sent out and return the deposit when the book is returned. We are committed to providing parents with the latest materials available and hope that this allows us to continue to do so.*

### Children's Books

CPAC also has a number of children's books available for you and your children. The West Hartford SEPTA kindly donated a wonderful book to our collection: **Don't Laugh at Me**, by Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin; illustrated by Glin Dibley.

Have you ever been picked on, or have you laughed at someone else for some reason? This kid's book shares the message: "Don't laugh at me. Don't call me names. Don't get your pleasure from my pain." This book is not for whiners, but will give children the words they need to take charge and stop the cycle of teasing.

Tricycle Press, 2002.

## Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Interventions: What Parents Need to Know

Many children have inappropriate behaviors that are part of their disability. These behaviors may make it difficult to learn, cause harm to the child or others, or isolate a child from his or her peers. Some children have behaviors that they can't control; others simply have not learned positive ways to have their needs met.

Adults often have two different approaches to dealing with problem behaviors. These different approaches are based on different beliefs. One belief is that the *child is a problem*, and the other is that the *child has a problem*.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) regulations state: "The IEP team shall, in the case of a child whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, consider, where appropriate, strategies, including positive behavioral interventions, strategies and supports that address that behavior." (Section 300.346(2)(I))

We can teach appropriate behavior skills to children! To do so, we need to understand problem behaviors, such as where they occur and what purpose they serve for a child. The process of learning about how children develop problem behaviors is called *functional behavioral assessment* (FBA). If we learn about the behaviors and know when and where they are likely to occur, we can plan positive strategies to teach new behaviors. These strategies are called *positive behavioral interventions*.

**Positive:** Characterized by or displaying approval, acceptance or affirmation

**Behavior:** what we do

**Intervention:** an action that changes a course of events (adapted from Webster's Tenth Collegiate Dictionary.)

This overview will help parents better understand functional behavioral assessment and positive intervention. When parents understand the process, they can work more effectively with the rest of the team.

For a complete copy of this paper, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to CPAC at 338 Main Street, Niantic, CT 06357, or you can access this document on the *Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (FAPE)* website, [www.fape.org](http://www.fape.org)

*From 'Functional Behavioral Assessment and Positive Interventions: What Parents Need to Know'. FAPE Coordinating Office: PACER Center, Minneapolis, MN*

## National Resource Center on AD/HD



Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a neurobehavioral disorder that impairs the functioning of millions of American children and adults each and every day. The National Resource Center on AD/HD: A Program of CHADD has been established with funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be a national clearinghouse of information and resources concerning this important public health concern. Their website, [www.help4adhd.org](http://www.help4adhd.org), includes answers to many of your questions about AD/HD, with sections about Diagnosis and Treatment; Dealing with Systems; Educational Issues & Living with ADHD. It also directs you to other reliable sources online.

---

### **Identifying and Treating Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A Resource for School And Home (2003)**

This 23-page resource guide from the U.S. Department of Education, designed for families and educators, provides information on how ADHD is identified and treated. The guide includes sections on legal requirements, treatment options, and helpful hints about improving the quality of life at home and at school for a child identified with ADHD. You can find it on the web at <http://www.ed.gov/teachers/needs/speced/adhd/adhd-resource-pt1.pdf> or send CPAC \$2.00 to cover postage and handling and we will be happy to mail you a copy.

---

### **Life Success For Children with Learning Disabilities: A Parent Guide**

This guide is based on over 20 years of research conducted by the Frostig Center in Pasadena, California. The research traced the lives of individuals with learning disabilities in an attempt to identify factors that predicted successful life outcomes. This guide was developed as part of a larger ongoing study and looks at attributes such as self-awareness, proactivity, perseverance, goal-setting, presence and use of support systems, and emotional coping strategies. A downloadable version of this useful guide is available at [www.LDsuccess.org](http://www.LDsuccess.org) or you can call CPAC to borrow our copy.



## LEGISLATION

### The REAUTHORIZATION of I.D.E.A.: An UPDATE

December 12, 2003

On Friday, November 21st, Senate Democrats and Republicans passed a unanimous consent agreement. This agreement summarizes the conditions under which S. 1248 will be brought to the Senate floor for debate and a vote. The consent agreement allows for four amendments to be offered by the Republicans and four amendments to be offered by the Democrats. While specific language of the amendments is not known, the subject matter will be the following:

#### Republicans:

Senator Gregg (or his designee) may offer an attorney's fees amendment. Speculation is that this amendment will limit the amount that Courts can award parents for attorney's fees when they are "prevailing parties."

Senator Gregg (or his designee) may offer a funding amendment. It is anticipated that funding will remain "discretionary." This means that, unlike entitlement programs, Congress is not required to fund the IDEA

Senator Gregg (or his designee) may offer a paperwork reduction amendment.

Senator Gregg (or his designee) may offer an amendment, the subject of which is not known.

#### Democrats:

Senator Harkin may offer a mandatory full funding amendment

Senator Murray may offer an amendment concerning homeless students.

Senator Clinton may offer an amendment that would coordinate data between agencies on developmental disabilities.

Senator Kennedy (or his designee) may offer an amendment, the subject of which is not known.

**Action on the bill will probably take place after January 20, 2004 when the Second Session of Congress begins.**

The text of the unanimous consent agreement, as it appeared in the Congressional Record, is posted on the web at: [www.nichcy.org/reauth/consentagree.pdf](http://www.nichcy.org/reauth/consentagree.pdf)

## NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND?

We continue to hear about *No Child Left Behind* and its impact on schools across the country. With that in mind, we wanted to once again discuss...



### No Child Left Behind – What it Might Mean for Students with Significant Disabilities

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was signed into law on January 8, 2002. This bill reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is the Federal government's largest investment in public education.

No Child Left Behind is based on education reform principles that include provisions requiring schools to make progress in closing the persistent achievement gaps between students who are disadvantages or disabled and their peers. States now must account for all public elementary and secondary school students in a manner that results in continuous and substantial improvement. The system of accountability must be the same for all public schools in the state, and timelines must be put in place to ensure that all students will meet or exceed the state determined proficiency level (at or above grade level).

#### What does this mean for Students with Disabilities?

The U.S. Department of Education issued "non-regulatory guidance" to states in March 2003 outlining and clarifying NCLB assessment requirements. First, the state's assessment system must be designed to be valid and accessible to students with disabilities under IDEA and 504. Assessment accommodations must be made by the IEP team. Accommodations must be based on individual student needs, and should be in place when students take classroom tests and assessments. The U.S. Department of Education has defined accommodations as "changes in testing material or procedures that ensure that an assessment measures the student's knowledge and skills rather than the student's disability."

For some students, the PPT may decide that the student cannot participate in all or even part of the state assessment even with accommodations that allow changing materials or procedures. These student may take an alternate assessment. For students considered to have the "most significant cognitive disabilities," alternate achievement *standards* (not just alternate assessment) may be used. Proposed NCLB regulations limit the use of these standards to no more than 1% of all students that are assessed (The 'One Percent Rule').



The proposed rule may have a serious impact on the education of our children and youth with (significant) disabilities. Our students have often been overlooked and undereducated due to low expectations, lack of up-to-date knowledge of best practices, and lack of access to high quality instruction and technology. This is especially true in the area of school accountability for student achievement.

The concern is that increased accountability for “results” could endanger the positive progress we have made in building the capacity of neighborhood schools to provide appropriate curricula and successful supports and services. Over 20 years of research has informed us that access to inclusive school programs, where all children are expected to achieve high standards, is a fundamental component of successful educational outcomes for students with significant disabilities. We want to ensure that the implementation of NCLB does not create disincentives to realizing the goal of inclusive schools where all children belong and are valued as learners.

*Excerpted from 'What NCLB Might Mean for Students with Significant Disabilities', TASH Connections, October 2003*



### **Helping the Student with Diabetes Succeed: A Guide for School Personnel**

More than 17 million Americans have diabetes. It is one of the most common chronic diseases in school-aged children, affecting about 151,000 young people in the United States, or about 1 in every 400-500.

Diabetes is a serious disease that impairs the body's ability to use food for energy. Major research advances have been made in diabetes management and control during the past decade. Several studies have proven that aggressive treatment to lower blood glucose (sugar) levels can help prevent or delay diabetes-related complications.

Diabetes must be managed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP) developed this guide to educate and inform school personnel about diabetes, how it is managed and the important role each member of the school staff - from nurses and teachers to bus drivers and coaches - can play. For a copy of this guide and other important diabetes information, you can call the NDEP at 800-438-5383 or visit the program's website at [www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov)

## **School Choice in Connecticut**

Over the past ten years, the state of Connecticut has expanded the range of public schools available to parents and students.

The traditional and most common choice has been to send your child(ren) to one of the schools operated by your local or regional school district. The expanded range of public school choices now available to you and your children includes:

- Charter Schools
- Magnet Schools
- Public schools in neighboring districts through the OPEN CHOICE program (operating in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and New London)
- Vocational Agriculture Centers and
- Vocational Technical High Schools.

In order to provide you with information on all of these choices, the State Department of Education has published a parent information booklet called “*Public School Choice in Connecticut, A Guide for Students and their Families*”. To get a copy of the booklet you can contact your local school or access it online at [www.state.ct.us/sde](http://www.state.ct.us/sde). The guide is available in both English and Spanish.

### **The CT Family Support Network Grant**

The Connecticut Department of Mental Retardation, on behalf of the Connecticut Family Support Council, has been awarded a \$100,000 Family Support Network grant from the Federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities. The goal of the 17-month grant is to increase the availability of quality family supports services in Connecticut. The grant will be used to enhance local family networks, encourage families' participation in public policy development, increase participation of families from diverse communities, and to strengthen the Connecticut Family Support Council's effectiveness in advocating for families who have children with disabilities.

For more information about the Family Support Network grant or the Connecticut Family Support Council contact Terry Cote at [Terry.Cote@po.state.ct.us](mailto:Terry.Cote@po.state.ct.us) or the Co-chairs of Council, Karen Zrenda at [Karen.Zrenda@Yale.edu](mailto:Karen.Zrenda@Yale.edu), or Laura Knapp at [lauraknappseven@msn.com](mailto:lauraknappseven@msn.com)

## The "Look Around" Rule

The following is an excerpt from a memo dated December 18, 2002 from George Dowaliby, Chief, Bureau of Special Education and Pupil Services, CT SDE to Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services across Connecticut. The intent of this memo is to provide clarification on how districts should count hours as "Time with Non-Disabled Peers" (TWNDP) as it relates to the participation of students with disabilities in job placements/ community-based settings and regular education classes.

The federal definition of "regular education" includes the following:

"...age-appropriate community-based settings that include individuals with and without disabilities, such as college campuses or vocational sites... (OSEP, IDEA, Part B Data Dictionary – October 2002)."

When determining if such community-based job placements or skills training programs should count as TWNDP, all of the following apply:

- The job placement occurs in an inclusive setting where individuals with and without disabilities are present. Think about the "look around" rule – when you are in a setting in which the student is being educated, "look around" to see if there are individuals without disabilities present;
- The job experience is one at which any student could potentially work;
- It is not a job placement designed just for students with disabilities; and
- The community-based job placement and/or skills training program is part of the student's educational program (i.e., not just an after-school job).

Examples of community-based experiences that would NOT meet the criteria to be counted as TWNDP would include:

- Sheltered employment of any kind.
- Periodic "field trips" for the purpose of one-time job shadowing, visits to businesses., or to conduct independent living activities.
- Work crews where students complete work in a separate room or setting, or after business hours, and there is no meaningful presence of individuals without disabilities.

Call CPAC at 800-445-2722 for a complete copy of this memo, which details "Time with Non-Disabled Peers" in school and in community-based settings.



## *Learning How to Learn: Getting Into and Surviving College When You Have a Learning Disability*

Written for high school and college students with learning disabilities, this manual gently steers students through the process of preparing for college, choosing the right school, and succeeding academically. Drawing from her own experiences, the author, Joyanne Cobb, offers concrete, step-by-step advice on how LD students can highlight their learning strengths, and survive and succeed in college and beyond. Most significantly, Cobb offers a simple yet powerful message to college students with learning disabilities: You can! You can order this book online at <http://www.learninghowtolearn.org/> or call CPAC to borrow our copy.

## **Self-Determination: Supporting Successful Transitions**

This research brief outlines research on self-determination suggesting that youth with disabilities who actively direct their own lives are more likely to successfully transition into adult life. It addresses development of self-determination skills and student-led Individualized Education Program meetings. Also included are descriptions and contact information for several self-determination curricula and helpful Web links. Available online at [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org) or by calling CPAC at 800-445-2722.

*National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Research to  
Practice Brief, Vol. 2, Issue 1, April 2003*

## **An Educational Journey from Self Discovery to Advocacy: A Handbook for Students**

Self-Advocacy means speaking up for yourself. It requires knowledge of your personal strengths and needs, and making your needs known to others. Transition planning involves thinking about goals after high school and developing a long-range plan to get there.

This handbook was created for high school students with disabilities as an instructional tool for the development of self-advocacy skills and transition planning. It is divided into five sections: Disability Awareness; Learning to Advocate; Career Planning & Community Connections; Participating in PPT Meetings; and Resources.

*An Educational Journey* was developed by Debora Presbie for the CT SDE through a grant from OSEP. For a copy, contact CPAC at 800-445-2722.



## Post Your Event on CPAC's 'Upcoming Events' Page

If your organization is holding an event geared toward parents of children with disabilities, or professionals who work with their families, we'd like to help you spread the word on CPAC's Upcoming Events Webpage, [www.cpacinc.org/events.htm](http://www.cpacinc.org/events.htm).

To submit an event for posting, please contact Michelle via email at [mmdoty@cpacinc.org](mailto:mmdoty@cpacinc.org), or via fax at 860-739-7460 with the following information: Event title, date, location, target audience, registration information, contact information, and if applicable, a URL we can link to for further information on the event. Events may be submitted for posting up to 6 months in advance, and no later than a week prior to the event. CPAC reserves the right to edit submissions in order to meet space restrictions.



*Some things never change...The following article was first printed in SPEAK OUT in February, 1990.*

### Six Pointers to Prevent Due Process

√ Establish a good communication system with teachers and administrators before there is a problem. Make sure you know who to contact if a problem does arise.

√ Be prepared for any meetings. Prepare a list of your concerns, questions and ideas. Gather any supporting information you might need from others who know your child. Be sure you understand the laws and regulations governing special education.

√ Be certain to explain your concerns and your child's needs from your perspective.

√ Be prepared to listen and to be willing to consider alternatives. Explore all possibilities before accepting or rejecting any suggestions or offers. There are often many acceptable routes which can provide a solution. You need to choose one which is appropriate and comfortable for everyone.

√ Be willing to compromise. Sometimes compromise is necessary, even if only as a temporary solution when time is needed to develop a final resolution of the problem.

√ Seek assistance and advice from outside sources if communication breaks down or a solution cannot be reached collaboratively.

## Working Well With Families

For over 20 years, CPAC has been helping parents to develop positive working relationships with their schools. Of course we know that schools need to do their part as well. The following is excerpted from a sample checklist developed by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, School Practices Project. Feel free to share it with educators in your district!

### How to facilitate positive relationships among school personnel and families.

#### When working with families, do you:

- treat families with the same respect you show friends?
- listen and acknowledge parents' concerns?
- ask what you can do to address those concerns?
- put yourself in the family's shoes?
- use clear, simple words?
- give families choices about as many things as possible?
- communicate frequently with families?
- tell families the good things about their child (not just the bad)?
- invite families to be involved in school-wide decision making?
- support families' decisions about their child?
- ask families to tell you about their child's strengths and needs? (This may be particularly useful at the beginning of the school year.)
- respond to messages within a day?
- thank the person for talking with you?
- follow through with your assigned/volunteered tasks?
- convey a positive attitude about parents?

#### Save the date...

for the 104th Connecticut PTA Convention  
May 7 & 8, 2004

Hilton Southbury, Southbury, CT

"The Power of Association:

Making great things happen together!"

See the PTA website, [www.ctpta.org](http://www.ctpta.org),  
for details



Connecticut Parent  
Advocacy Center, Inc.

338 Main Street • Niantic, CT 06357  
Telephone: 860-739-3089 V/TDD

Presorted Standard  
Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 75  
Niantic • CT

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.**

---

## **SAVE THE DATE!**

- February 28, 2004      **CT Tourette Syndrome Association Annual Conference.** Central Connecticut University. National TSA's Sue Conners will give the keynote presentation. In addition to their regular children's program, we will have a separate program for teens. For more information, visit [www.tsact.org/events.htm](http://www.tsact.org/events.htm).
- March 27, 2004      **Learning to Listen and Listening to Learn.** Farmington Marriott, Farmington, CT. Sponsored by the Connecticut Chapter of the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Presentation by Nancy Schenck, M.Ed., CCC-A, CED, Cert.AVT, Director, Auditory-Verbal Services, Inc. For more information, email [biernat@comcast.net](mailto:biernat@comcast.net) or visit the A.G. Bell website at <http://agbellct.tripod.com/agbellct2000/index.html>
- March 27, 2004      **Autism Spectrum Resource Fair.** Gateway Community College, North Haven, CT. Sponsored by the Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center, this fair will feature exhibitors from schools, camps, colleges, transition programs, community provider agencies, recreation programs, after school programs, and more. Admission is free. For more information, contact ASRC at 203-248-5222, email [info@ct-asrc.org](mailto:info@ct-asrc.org).
- April 22, 2004      **Together We Will 11th Annual Conference.** Radisson Hotel, Cromwell, CT "Embrace the Use of Technology to Meet the Needs of all Young Children." The keynote speaker will be Caroline Ramsey Musslewhite, Ed.D., an assistive technology specialist with more than 25 years of experience working with children. For more information, please contact Jennifer Sharpe at SERC via phone at 860-632-1485 ext. 241.

Visit the CPAC website, [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org), for more Upcoming Events!