

# SPEAK OUT

Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc.

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## Focus on Learning

**A**ccess, as defined in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, is the freedom or ability to obtain or make use of something. The word stands for openness and carries the idea that there are no barriers, that no one says, "You can't." The concept is essential to the education of students with special needs and has been a key component of special education legislation since Congress passed the first federal special education law in 1975. At that time, the term was defined somewhat narrowly: schools were required to provide physical access to their buildings and classrooms and access to special education services. Although the law led to improvements in the way students with disabilities were educated, it did not bring them full access to the learning their peers experienced. In the public school system, special education was separate—and different—from general education, and expectations about what students with disabilities could accomplish and learn were lower than those set for other students.

Over the years, the concept of access as applied to special education evolved and expanded, and more and more students with disabilities were placed in regular education classrooms. Despite this trend, however, students with disabilities continued to encounter obstacles when schools failed to provide the services and supports they needed to make progress in a general education setting. Simply placing students with disabilities in classrooms alongside students without disabilities did not guarantee access to learning.

In 1997, Congress acknowledged that additional changes were needed and reauthorized the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) with a broader, more appropriate definition of access: the right to be involved in and make progress in the general curriculum to the maximum extent possible. By redefining the term to include both participation and progress in the general curriculum, this law shifted the focus closer to where it should be—on access to meaningful learning. It also raised expectations by placing a greater emphasis on schools' obligation to help students with disabilities work toward achieving independence and self-sufficiency. When IDEA was reauthorized in 2004, Congress again raised the bar, describing that the purpose of the law is "to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living." (Section 1400(d)(1)(A)) Access now stands for the opportunity to participate in the kind of learning that helps students get ready to lead productive and independent adult lives.

This issue of SPEAK OUT looks at what access under IDEA means—for schools, for students with disabilities, and for their parents. What is the general curriculum? What are some of the ways schools support the participation of students with disabilities in the general curriculum? What role can parents play in

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making sure their child has the services and supports he or she needs to be involved in the general curriculum? How can parents tell if their child is making progress? While we recognize and respect that some parents may not agree that the general curriculum is an appropriate program for their child, we believe that a basic understanding of the answers to these questions can help all parents work with schools to ensure that their child has access to meaningful learning.

**Sources:**

"Providing New Access to the General Curriculum: Universal Design for Learning," by Chuck Hitchcock, Anne Meyer, David Rose, and Richard Jackson, *TEACHING Exceptional Children* 35, no. 2, Council for Exceptional Children, www.cec.sped.org; "Access to the General Curriculum for Students with Disabilities: A Brief for Parents and Teachers," by Joanne Karger and Charles Hitchcock, National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum, www.cast.org; "10 Tips: How to Use IDEA 2004 to Improve Your Child's Special Education," by Wayne Steedman, Esq., and "Rebutting Rowley? Independence and Self-Sufficiency Are New Standards for FAPE," by Peter W. D. Wright, Esq., and Pamela Wright, Wrightslaw, www.wrightslaw.com

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**The Connecticut Parent  
Advocacy Center, Inc.**

is a statewide nonprofit 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 are available, including telephone consultation; workshops and in-service presentations for parents, schools, and service providers; a website; and a lending library of books, CDs, videotapes, and DVDs.

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**SPEAK OUT**

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## Readers Speak Out

Part of the mission of the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center is to promote the exchange of information, ideas, and resources among families of children with disabilities. By sharing their knowledge and experience, parents can educate other parents and help them be effective advocates for their children. Joining a support group and getting involved in a school community are two ways to do this. But CPAC also encourages families to use SPEAK OUT to reach others. Give your copy of the newsletter to a friend, neighbor, or colleague. Or let us know about a book, website, or service you found useful so we can pass the information on to other readers. The letter below is a great example of how a parent can use these pages not just to learn but to teach.

Dear CPAC—

The first thing I thought of when I read the "Dear Parent Advocate" letter from Involved Mom [SPEAK OUT, Summer 2008] was if she knows her child loses ground in the education process during the summer, she can ask for a PPT meeting when school starts. If she shows that the child regresses, it is up to the school to provide summer assistance to keep the child from losing her skills. Sometimes this is done with a tutor, programming at school, or in a recreation or camp setting—provided by her town educational system. Thought this might help out.

—Gail Paggioli, South Windsor

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Editor's Response:

What you refer to are extended school year services (ESY). These services are provided beyond the length of the regular school year at no cost to parents. The type, amount, and duration of services depend on the needs of the child. A child's eligibility for ESY must be determined each year and is generally discussed at the annual IEP review. We decided not to include information on ESY in our summer issue because we knew it would come too late to help parents prepare for that season. Your letter gives us the opportunity to let our readers know that the time to begin planning for next summer is now. Thank you for helping out.

## Our Thanks

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A special thank you to Maria Varga, Linda Hinckley, Sherri Edgar, and Katie Fahey for contributing to SPEAK OUT, Summer 2008.

Your stories helped us show what's possible!

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## What is the general curriculum?

A curriculum is a plan of instruction used by a school or school system. The term refers to the subjects taught and the knowledge, skills, and understanding students are expected to gain in each subject. It includes goals that detail what students are to learn; materials to be used by students and teachers, such as textbooks, workbooks, and teacher guides; specific teaching methods; and ways to assess and report student progress.



The general curriculum refers to the plan of instruction developed for general education. In the past, schools may have used both a general curriculum and a special curriculum tailored to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities. Under the current law, however, schools are required to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the general curriculum. Goals, materials, methods, and assessments must be the same for all students to the maximum extent possible, and schools must provide the supports and services that students with disabilities need in order to participate in and make progress in this curriculum.

In recent years, efforts to improve education throughout the country have led states to set standards that define what students are expected to know and be able to do in a particular subject. The general curriculum is then developed based on these expectations. Federal law requires schools to provide all students, including those with disabilities, with the high-quality instruction they need to meet the standards in the general curriculum. Students with disabilities must also be included in assessments that measure progress toward these standards.

#### Sources:

"Raising Standards of Learning: Students with Disabilities and Standards-Based Education Reform," by Janet R. Vohs, Julia K. Landau, and Carolyn A. Romano, Federation for Children with Special Needs, [www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org); "Access, Participation, and Progress in the General Curriculum," by Chuck Hitchcock, Anne Meyer, David Rose, and Richard Jackson, National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum, [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org); "Special Topic Area: Academic Standards and Students with Disabilities," National Center on Educational Outcomes, [www.cehd.umn.edu](http://www.cehd.umn.edu)

**Parent Tip #1:**  
Obtain a copy of Connecticut's standards from the State Department of Education (see **Resources**) and a copy of the curriculum from your child's school or district. Review the information for your child's age group.

### Resources:

The **Connecticut State Department of Education** provides information on curriculum and instruction, including guides outlining the state's standards and grade-level expectations. Contact the department at 860-713-6543, or visit [www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov).

The following books are available from **CPAC's lending library**: *Deciding What to Teach and How to Teach It: Connecting Students Through Curriculum and Instruction*; *Opening Doors: Connecting Students to Curriculum, Classmates, and Learning*; and *Emergent Curriculum*. We also offer these handouts on related topics: "Back to School Checklist: Questions and Tips for Parents, Schools and the Community," "Family Academic Expectations," and "Family Support of Academics." To request any of these materials, contact us at 800-445-2722 or [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org).

# What are some of the ways schools support the participation of students with disabilities in the general curriculum?

## Parent Tip #2: Accommodations

Exchange information with your child's teachers about what works for your child. Talk about what has helped your child in the past, and ask about which strategies are effective now.

If you have ever used a booster seat to help your toddler reach the table or put training wheels on your son's or daughter's bicycle, you have made a change that allows access—access to a meal in the first case, access to a bike ride in the second. Changes that allow access are also at times necessary in school settings. These changes, called accommodations, allow a student with a disability to have access to the same instruction and assessments as other students. Accommodations help the student learn or participate in school activities without reducing expectations. They may alter how information is presented to the student, how assignments are completed, or how tests are taken. They may change the setting, timing, or scheduling of instruction or assessments. But accommodations do not change what the student is taught or what the assignments or tests measure.

The use of assistive technology—such as a spell check, calculator, word processor, or large print text—is one example of an accommodation. Other accommodations a teacher may provide in the classroom are giving both oral and written directions, arranging a student's seating to reduce distractions, and checking a student's work in progress. Accommodations for assessments include permission to record answers directly in a test booklet rather than on a separate answer sheet and extended time to complete projects, written work, or tests. In general, the accommodations provided to a student must be the same for instruction and assessments. Some accommodations, however, are not permitted for certain standardized assessments, including the Connecticut Mastery Test and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test.

A student with a disability who qualifies for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) can receive accommodations appropriate to meet his or her needs. The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) must list the specific accommodations the school will provide. A student with a disability who does not qualify for special education services

under IDEA may still be eligible for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. A student who qualifies for accommodations under this law should have a Section 504 plan that lists the changes in the education program needed to meet his or her needs.

## Modifications

Unlike accommodations, modifications change what a student is taught or what an assignment or test measures. Examples include requiring a student to read fewer pages of a text, reducing a math assignment so that a student needs to complete only some of the problems, and shortening a spelling test to focus on the most functional words. Since they alter what a student is expected to learn, modifications can reduce access to the general curriculum. In its publication *IEP Manual and Forms*, Connecticut's Bureau of Special Education recommends that schools try a continuum of accommodations and evaluate their effectiveness before using modifications.

Whenever appropriate, parents and educators should include students with disabilities in the process of selecting accommodations and evaluating which ones are helpful. Student involvement is important because:

- Students often can provide valuable input about what is difficult for them and what helps them learn.
- Students are more likely to use accommodations if they are involved in selecting them, especially as they reach the teen years and want increased independence.
- Students learn vital self-advocacy strategies when given guidance and feedback on how to speak out about what they need. Since students who need accommodations in school generally also need them at home, in the community, and later on in postsecondary education and at work, they benefit from learning how to make sure those accommodations are provided both in and out of the classroom.

### Sources:

*IEP Manual and Forms*, Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, [www.sde.ct.gov](http://www.sde.ct.gov); *Accommodations Manual: How to Select, Administer, and Evaluate Use of Accommodations for Instruction and Assessment of Students with Disabilities*, by Sandra J. Thompson, Amanda B. Morse, Michael Sharpe, and Sharon Hall (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2005), [www.ccsso.org](http://www.ccsso.org); "School Accommodations and Modifications," ALLIANCE ACTION Sheet, PACER Center, [www.taalliance.org](http://www.taalliance.org); *Negotiating the Special Education Maze: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*, by Winifred Anderson, Stephen Chitwood, Deidre Hayden, and Cherie Takemoto (Woodbine House, 2008)

## Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction has been compared to the kind of teaching that took place in the one-room schoolhouse of the past. It is a model of teaching based on the idea that children with diverse backgrounds, abilities, preferences, and interests can learn together in one class. This approach recognizes that students are not all the same and that learning takes place in many different ways. Rather than expecting students to adapt to a set way of teaching, teachers adapt instructional methods and materials to match their students.

In an ideal differentiated classroom, all students have access to the same content—the concepts and skills the teacher wants the class to learn. But the teacher presents the content in different ways depending on how much students already know and how they learn best. For example, when introducing a new topic, the teacher may take into account a range of student needs by lecturing, using a standard printed textbook, using a taped text, giving a demonstration, or presenting a slide show with pictures and charts. Sometimes students are engaged as a whole class; at other times, they work in small groups or individually. Learning activities are varied and may include projects and hands-on tasks. Each student is given work on a level challenging enough that it ensures learning but not so difficult that it prevents success.

Evaluating student learning is an essential part of differentiated instruction. Before beginning a course of study, the teacher assesses how much students know about topics, what their abilities are, and where their interests and talents lie. Ongoing assessment gives the teacher information about which types of presentations, groupings, and activities benefit students and which students need additional or different instruction. Assessments may include informal surveys and interviews as well as formal tests. Students have opportunities to show their knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways; for example, they may have the option of creating a video presentation or a website instead of writing a traditional research paper.

**Sources:**  
"Differentiated Instruction," Council for Exceptional Children, [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org); "Differentiated Instruction," by Tracey Hall, National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum, [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org); "What Is Differentiated Instruction?" by Carol Ann Tomlinson, Reading Rockets, [www.readingrockets.org](http://www.readingrockets.org)

A summary of research on the views of children in grades K–12 found that students with and without learning disabilities had similar beliefs about teacher practices. In general, both groups felt that students should have the same books, homework, activities, and grading criteria. But they also recognized that not everyone learns in the same way or at the same speed and that instructional adaptations and accommodations can benefit all students. Across grade levels and disability status, students said that what helped them most was

- extra time for work
- choices and opportunities for creative expression
- clear explanations of lessons
- help with reading or math
- active, hands-on activities
- opportunities for interpersonal interactions

More information is available in "Students' Perceptions of Instruction in Inclusion Classrooms: Implications for Students with Learning Disabilities." Contact CPAC for a copy, or view it online at [www.taalliance.org](http://www.taalliance.org).



### Resources:

The following books are available from **CPAC's lending library**: *The Survival Guide for Kids with LD\* (\*Learning Differences)*, *The School Survival Guide for Kids with LD\**, and *The Survival Guide for Teenagers with LD\**; *The Source for Dyslexia and Dysgraphia* and *The Source for Nonverbal Learning Disorders*; and *Differentiating Instruction in the Regular Classroom: How to Reach and Teach All Learners, Grades 3–12*. For information on how to borrow these books, contact us at 800-445-2722 or [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org).

CPAC also offers a variety of handouts with information on accommodations, modifications, and teacher practices, including the U.S. Department of Education's *Teaching Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Instructional Strategies and Practices*. Contact us by phone or email to request copies.

## What role can parents play in making sure their child has the services and supports he or she needs to be involved in the general curriculum?

**Parent Tip #3:**  
Use notes you take at the PPT meeting to make sure clear descriptions of the services and supports your child needs to be successful are written in the IEP.

Parents of a child with a disability have a unique perspective on their child's needs and abilities. They can be well informed about the nature of their child's disability and what the latest research shows. They also have experience that can give them insight into the particular ways their child is affected by his or her disability, including how it might have an impact on learning. This kind of knowledge and understanding makes parents key participants in the process of designing an appropriate education program for their child.

Parents of a child who qualifies for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must be members of the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) that develops their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The law outlines procedures for the team to follow to ensure that the IEP both meets the child's specific needs and provides access to the general curriculum:

- All PPT members should discuss the specific ways the child's disability affects his or her involvement and progress in the general curriculum.
- The team must develop measurable annual goals and short-term objectives that address the child's needs and tie in with the general curriculum. These goals and objectives should reflect standards set by the state and used by the school or district in designing the curriculum. The child may need additional goals not specifically related to academic standards, such as independent living or

vocational goals, but even work on these goals can usually be done within the context of the general curriculum.

- The team must consider the full range of services and supports necessary for the child to participate and make progress in the general curriculum. The IEP must describe the specific special education and related services, supplementary aids and services, accommodations, modifications, and supports for school personnel provided by the school. These must be directly linked to achievement of the results described in the general curriculum.

Source:  
"Raising Standards of Learning: Students with Disabilities and Standards-Based Education Reform," PEER Information Brief, Federation for Children with Special Needs, www.fcsn.org

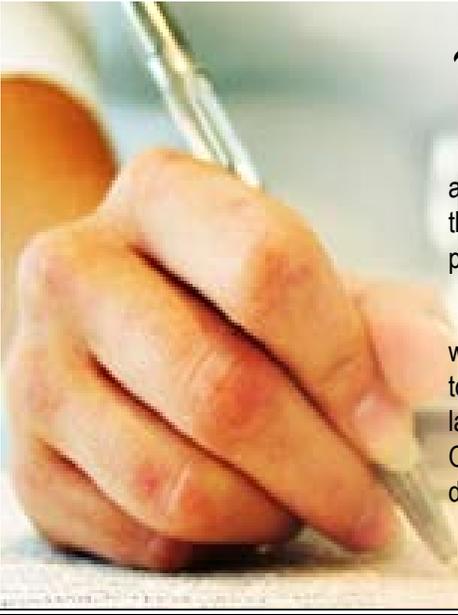


### Resources:

The Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, has published a guide entitled *IEP Manual and Forms*. To request a copy, call the State Education Resource Center at 860-632-1485.

"Individualized Education Program (IEP) Goals—The Basics" and "Aligning the IEP and Academic Content Standards to Improve Academic Achievement" are available from GreatSchools. Visit their website at [www.schwablearning.org](http://www.schwablearning.org).

CPAC provides materials on PPT meetings and IEPs, including "The Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting," "Preparing for Your Child's Planning and Placement Team (PPT) Meeting," "The Individualized Education Program," and "SMART Goals for an IEP." View these online at [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org), or request copies by contacting us at 800-445-2722 or [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org).



## Dear Parent Advocate,

Our son was diagnosed with autism when he was eighteen months old. He attended a Birth to Three program for children with autism spectrum disorders. The intervention strategy that the speech and language pathologist at this program used helped him make significant progress.

At the transition meeting that was held before our son was enrolled in preschool, we were clear about our strong belief that our son's communication skills would continue to improve if this particular intervention were used. But we were told that the speech and language pathologist at the school our son would attend is not familiar with this technique. Our requests that the school district provide a therapist trained to use this strategy were all denied. Doesn't the district have to provide the support we want for our son?

—Frustrated and Angry

Dear Frustrated and Angry,

Your question raises the issue of how families and schools need to work together to reach agreement when developing a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Best practice would be for all members of the Planning and Placement Team (PPT) to discuss the issues surrounding the child's disability and possible ways to intervene. As part of this discussion, parents as well as professionals should share information about previous interventions and whether they were helpful for the child. Generally, if each member of the team has the opportunity to offer input and keeps an open mind about the input of others, a decision on which everyone agrees can be made.

There are times, however, when this does not happen and the school does not agree to provide a specific service or use a specific strategy that parents want for their child. At this point, the question becomes a legal one: Is a school district required by law to provide a particular intervention that parents feel will benefit their child? In 1982, in a case called *Board of Education of the Hendrick Hudson Central School District v. Amy Rowley*, the U.S. Supreme Court dealt with this issue. The justices considered the meaning of a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE) as required under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (now called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA). In their ruling, they found that a school district must provide a program that gives "some educational benefit." As long as a child's program meets this standard, the district has fulfilled its legal obligation and is not required to comply with a parent's request for a specific intervention. Since this ruling, changes in the law have set a higher standard for FAPE by requiring schools to provide access to the general curriculum and to prepare children for further education, employment, and independent living. However, IDEA still does not require a school district to provide a specific intervention requested by a parent.

Our advice to parents is that you can and often should ask for a particular strategy, service, or support, one that has benefited your child in the past or that you think will benefit him or her. We recommend that you present your argument at the PPT meeting by stating what the needs of your child are and what type of intervention might be helpful in addressing these needs. If your child has made progress using a particular program outside of school, come prepared to show evidence of this. We also encourage families and school staff to be creative and flexible when designing an IEP. The goal is to plan a program that meets the child's needs.



## How can parents tell if their child is making progress?

**Parent Tip #4:**  
If you think your child is not making meaningful progress in school, request a meeting to discuss revising your child's IEP. Your child may need changes in special education or related services, instructional methods, or assistive technology or other accommodations.

An essential part of any curriculum is the assessment of learning. Keeping track of student progress is necessary to ensure that instruction is effective, that special needs are being met, and that each student is moving toward the standards set by the state and the goals developed specifically for him or her. Teachers use assignments, projects, quizzes, tests, and homework to monitor their students' understanding of concepts and their mastery of skills. Schools administer standardized assessments each year to measure academic performance.

But parents should not leave all the checking to school personnel. Parents need to be involved in making sure that their child is progressing. Since a child who receives special education services has the right to participate in the general curriculum, information about how well the child is doing in school must come from both special education and regular education sources. In addition, parents can gain valuable insight into their son's or daughter's learning by carefully observing him or her at home and in the community. To get a complete picture of their child's progress, parents need to consider information from several sources:

- Teachers and specialists—The most important source of information about a child's progress is his or her teachers and specialists. Report cards provide some feedback about how a child is doing, but parents should also make an effort to keep in touch with school personnel on a regular basis. Parents may find it helpful to mark their calendar with reminders to talk to teachers after school or to schedule conferences. Keeping a list of questions, concerns, and comments to address in these discussions is useful. Parents and teachers can also exchange information in a notebook that the child carries to and from school.
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)—An IEP is written each year for every child in special education. Each IEP must include an updated statement that describes how the child is currently performing in school. Parents can get a sense of their child's progress by looking at the differences between the most recent statement and the one in the previous year's IEP. An IEP must also include measurable annual goals that describe

what the child is expected to achieve during the academic year. How often the child's progress toward these goals will be measured and how parents will be informed of the progress must be identified. Parents of a child with a disability must receive progress reports at least as often as parents of children without disabilities do.

- Standardized assessments—The No Child Left Behind Act requires schools to administer statewide assessments. Students are tested in reading and mathematics annually in grades 3 through 8 and at least once during grades 10 through 12; they are tested in science at least once during the elementary, middle, and high school years. In Connecticut, student performance is measured by the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). Under the law, all students, including those with disabilities, must participate in these assessments. If necessary, children with disabilities may take the tests with specific accommodations. If the Planning and Placement Team that develops a child's IEP determines that the child cannot participate in a statewide testing even with accommodations, the school must use an alternative assessment for the student.





- Parents' own observations—Parents can gather important information by observing their child in settings outside the classroom, such as at home, at the store, in the playground, or at the library. These observations may reveal progress in a child's development, academic skills, social skills, or behavior. For example, parents may notice that their child can speak more clearly when ordering a meal in a restaurant, is more confident about reading a book, or can count change more quickly when purchasing an item in the supermarket. They may observe that their child has an easier time making friends or behaves more appropriately with his or her siblings. They may see that their child needs less help to complete homework assignments, takes less time to finish chores, or is able to stay focused for longer periods.

Parents may find it helpful to keep track of this information by focusing on a few changes at a time. They can create a valuable record of progress by making a list of two or three areas in which they would like their child to improve and jotting down specific observations over a three-month period. This record can then be shared at teacher conferences or meetings to develop an IEP.

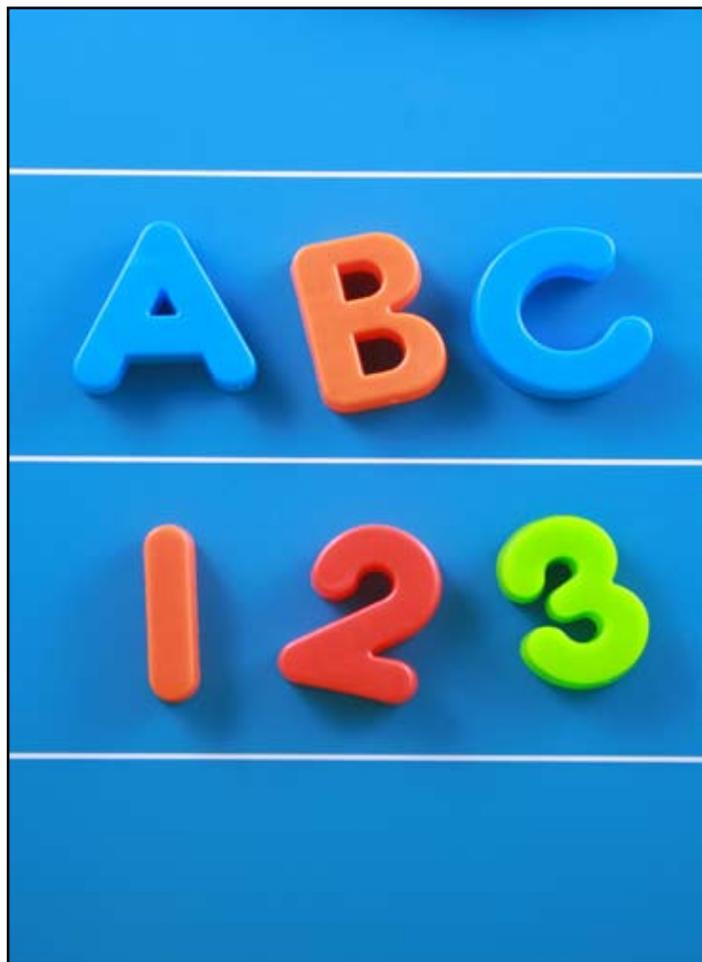
- The child—Parents should talk to their child about school, as appropriate. They should ask about how things are going, what subjects are most enjoyable, how much time is spent on particular activities, and which assignments are easiest or most difficult. These types of conversations not only provide parents with useful information; they also help the child develop a critical skill—the ability to monitor his or her own progress.

## Resources:

The following materials related to progress monitoring are available from CPAC in English or Spanish: “**The ABCs of Staying in Touch with Your Child’s School**,” “**Numbers to Remember**,” and “**No Child Left Behind: What Parents Need to Know**.” Contact us at 800-445-2722 or [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org) to request copies, or visit our website at [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org).

“**Observing Your Child’s Behavior**” contains tips on how parents can gather information that helps them monitor progress and develop an appropriate education program for their child. Contact CPAC to request a copy.

Schools are increasingly using a method of progress monitoring called curriculum-based measurement. **The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring** provides information on this method on their website, [www.studentprogress.org](http://www.studentprogress.org).



**Sources:**  
“How Will I Know If My Child Is Making Progress?” PACER Center ACTION Sheet, [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org); *Negotiating the Special Education Maze: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*, by Winifred Anderson, Stephen Chitwood, Deidre Hayden, and Cherie Takemoto (Woodbine House, 2008)

## ¿Está aprendiendo mi hijo/a?

### Sugerencia #4:

Si piensa que su hijo no está progresando en la escuela, pida una reunión para discutir y revisar el IEP. Su hijo puede necesitar cambios en los servicios de educación especial o servicios relacionados, métodos de enseñanza, asistencia tecnológica u otros acomodados.

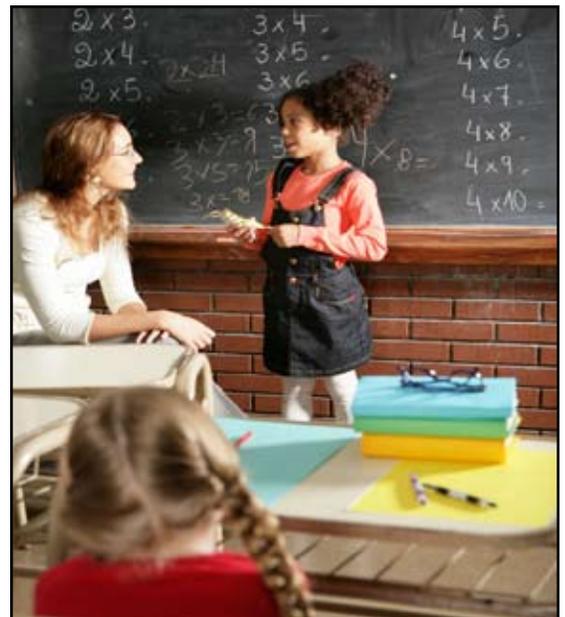
Un componente muy importante de todo currículo es medir el aprendizaje. Es necesario mantenerse al tanto del progreso del estudiante para asegurar que la instrucción es efectiva, que se llenan las necesidades especiales y que su hijo/a está avanzando hacia los estándares establecidos por el estado y hacia las metas desarrolladas específicamente para él/ella. Los maestros utilizan asignaciones, proyectos, pruebas, exámenes y tareas para monitorear el dominio de destrezas y comprensión del material. Las escuelas también administran exámenes estandarizados anualmente para medir el desempeño académico.

Los padres no deben dejarlo todo en manos de la escuela, es vital que se involucren para asegurar que sus hijos están progresando. Como el niño que recibe servicios de educación especial tiene el derecho a participar en el currículo general, la información sobre su progreso debe venir de fuentes de educación especial y y también de educación regular. Los padres también pueden obtener información muy valiosa sobre el aprendizaje de su hijo/a observándolo en el hogar y en la comunidad. Los padres pueden obtener una idea más completa del progreso de su hijo/a de las siguientes fuentes:

- Maestros y especialistas—La fuente más importante de información sobre el progreso son los maestros y especialistas. Las boletas nos dan una idea sobre como está saliendo, pero si desea mantenerse al día debe contactar al personal de la escuela con regularidad. Puede ayudar marcando en el calendario recordatorios para hablar con los maestros o hacer citas. El mantener una lista de preguntas, preocupaciones y comentarios puede ser muy útil. Los padres y maestros también pueden utilizar una libreta para intercambiar información con la escuela.
- Programa Educativo Individualizado (IEP)—Todos los años se escribe un IEP para cada estudiante en educación especial. Cada IEP debe incluir una declaración sobre el desempeño del estudiante en la escuela. Leyendo las diferencias entre las declaraciones del IEP actual y los anteriores ayuda a los padres a tener una idea más clara del progreso.

El IEP también debe incluir metas anuales medibles que describan que se espera el estudiante logre durante el año escolar. Debe identificar cómo se va a medir el progreso hacia las metas y cómo se le informará a los padres del progreso. Los padres de un niño/a con discapacidad deben recibir reportes del progreso con la misma frecuencia que los padres de un niño sin discapacidad.

- Evaluaciones estandarizadas—El Acta Qué Ningún Niño se Quede Atrás-requiere que las escuelas administren exámenes en todo el estado. Se evalúa a los estudiantes en lectura y matemáticas en grados 3 al 8 y una vez entre los grados 10 al 12; también se evalúan en ciencia una vez en escuela elemental, intermedia y secundaria. En Connecticut, el desempeño del estudiante se mide con el Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) y el Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT). Bajo la ley, todos los estudiantes, incluyendo aquellos con discapacidades, deben participar en estas evaluaciones, a los niños con discapacidades que lo necesitan, se les puede proveer acomodos específicos. Si el Equipo de Planificación y Ubicación que desarrolla el IEP determina que el niño no puede tomar la prueba aun con acomodos, la escuela debe entonces utilizar una evaluación alternativa.





- Observaciones de los padres—Los padres pueden obtener información útil observando al hijo/a en diferentes lugares, como en el hogar, la tienda, el parque o la biblioteca. Estas observaciones pueden mostrar progreso en el desarrollo, destrezas académicas, sociales o de comportamiento. Por ejemplo, el padre puede notar que el niño/a habla más claro cuando ordena comida en un restaurante, que muestra más confianza cuando lee un libro o que puede contar el cambio con más rapidez cuando compra algo en el colmado. Pueden observar que el hijo/a hace amigos con más facilidad o se comporta de manera más apropiada con sus hermanos. Puede notar que su hijo/a necesita menos ayuda para completar las tareas, terminar sus asignaciones, o que puede mantenerse enfocado por más tiempo.

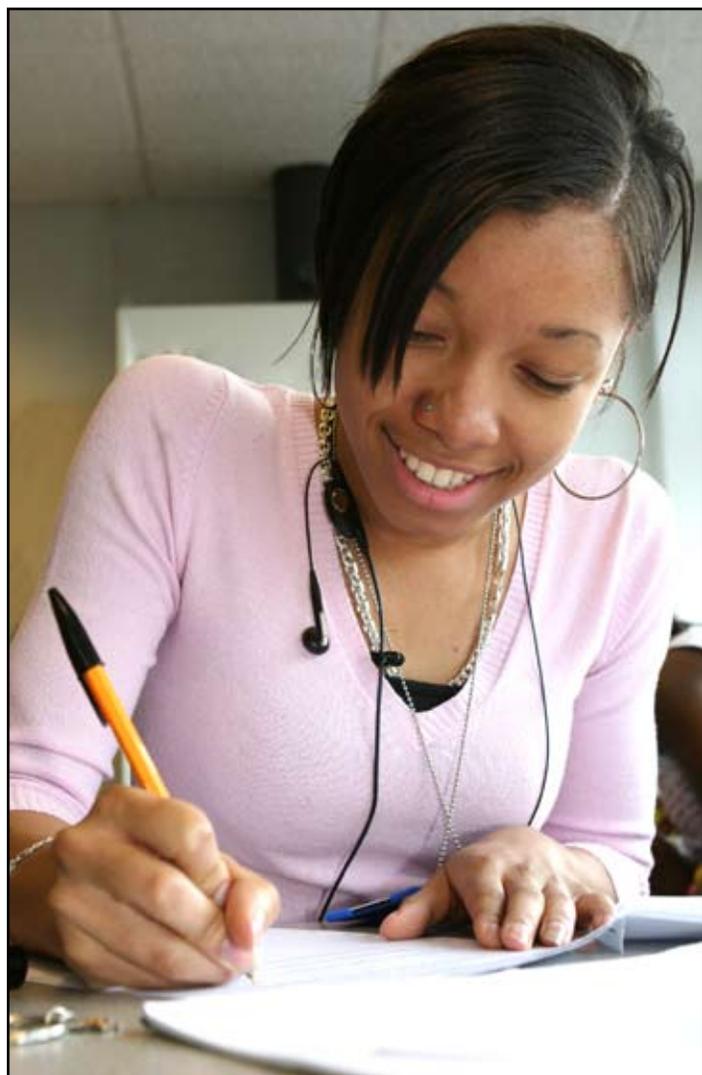
Los padres pueden encontrar que el mantenerse enfocado en lograr pocos cambios les ayuda a darle seguimiento al progreso. Los padres pueden desarrollar un récord del progreso del hijo/a haciendo una lista de tres o cuatro áreas en las que quieren que su hijo mejore a través de un período de tres meses. Luego puede compartir este récord en las conferencias con el maestro o en reuniones para desarrollar el IEP.

- El niño/a—Los padres deben hablar con el hijo/a sobre la escuela, cuando sea apropiado. Deben preguntar como van las cosas, que asignaturas prefieren, cuanto tiempo pasan en algunas actividades y cuales asignaturas se le hacen más fáciles o más difíciles. Estas conversaciones no sólo proveen al padre información útil sino ayudan al niño a desarrollar una mente crítica—habilidad para monitorear su propio progreso.

## Recursos:

Los siguientes materiales relacionados a como monitorear el progreso están disponibles en CPAC en inglés o en español: **“El ABC de estar en contacto con la escuela,”** **“Números telefónicos para recordar,”** y **“Qué ningún niño se quede atrás: lo que todo padre debe saber.”** Nos puede hablar al 800-445-2722 o [cpac@cpacinc.org](mailto:cpac@cpacinc.org) para una copia, o visite nuestra página web, [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org).

Cada vez más las escuelas están usando un método para medir el progreso llamado—medida del progreso basada en el currículo. El **National Center on Student Progress Monitoring** provee información de este método en su página web, [www.studentprogress.org](http://www.studentprogress.org).



### Fuentes:

“How Will I Know If My Child Is Making Progress?” PACER Center ACTION Sheet, [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org); *Negotiating the Special Education Maze: A Guide for Parents and Teachers*, by Winifred Anderson, Stephen Chitwood, Deidre Hayden, and Cherie Takemoto (Woodbine House, 2008)

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## Talk Back

A telephone survey conducted by our summer intern, Katie Dinnan, yielded some important information about the views of parents and professionals who used CPAC's services during the past year. While we were pleased to learn that most people found our workshops and phone consultations helpful, we also appreciated the comments about what we need to change or improve. Some suggestions were:

- make our website more interactive
- provide more information about activities and happenings in Connecticut
- offer workshops in other forms, such as podcasts or videos
- provide more information for parents who are new to dealing with the school system and have no background knowledge

CPAC values the opinions of the families we serve, and we are looking for more of this kind of feedback. A survey with questions about our website, newsletter, and other services is available at [www.cpacinc.org](http://www.cpacinc.org). Please take a moment to tell us what you think of our work and make a suggestion or two about what we should do differently.

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The staff at CPAC would like to extend a special thank you to Katie for all the time and hard work she put into conducting the summer survey and completing other projects in our office. Katie has returned to the University of Connecticut, where she is a senior majoring in psychology. She plans to pursue a doctorate in neuropsychology and get involved in research on learning and memory that will help people with learning disabilities. We wish her much success.