



A newsletter from the Parent-Educator Connection

for families and educators of students receiving special education services

Volume 21 Issue 1

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Creating Solutions: Skills to Effectively Resolve Differences Between Parents and Educators

Would you like to be able to communicate better with your child's teachers and other professionals?
Would you like to learn what it takes to be a good listener?
Would you like to be a real problem-solver?
Well, here is your opportunity!

The Parent-Educator Connection is sponsoring a workshop on
November 28, 2007,
at the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency, Bettendorf. The workshop will start at **8:30 A.M.** and conclude at **3:15 P.M.**

About the Workshop:

The goal of the workshop is to help parents be more effective in raising concerns regarding their student's education in a way that will contribute to the creation of solutions and increase the likelihood that parents and educators will work together collaboratively to resolve their differences in the best interests of the student. The workshop will also provide parents the opportunity to learn some of the core problem resolution skills that have been presented to educators in mediation skills training programs.



As a result of attending the workshop, parents will be able to use enhanced listening and communication skills to create more positive working relationships with educators and employ interest-based negotiation as a problem-solving tool.

About the Trainer:

Pat Carlson is an Associate Professor at Iowa State University in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. She currently teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in special education. Dr. Carlson received her Master of Science degree in learning disabilities from Indiana University-Bloomington and her bachelor and doctorate degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her doctorate degree is in behavioral disorders and administration. She taught children/youth with learning and behavior problems for ten years in Iowa and Nebraska prior to coming to Iowa State University. Dr. Carlson is a special education mediator for the Iowa Department of Education.

Intended Audience:

Parents, educators and AEA staff.

Contact:

If you are interested in attending this free workshop, please contact Carol Aden at 563-344-6287 or 1-800-947-2329.

Email: caden@aea9.k12.ia.us

R.E.A.C.H. NEW Program at the University of Iowa

The University of Iowa R.E.A.C.H. (Realizing Educational and Career Hopes) Program, one of the first of its type at a major public university, educates each student to reach his or her full potential through a two-year, comprehensive, campus-based certificate program.

The R.E.A.C.H. Program at the University of Iowa seeks to create a living-learning experience where young adults with multiple learning and cognitive disabilities are empowered with the skills necessary to be independent, engaged and contributing members of their community. The R.E.A.C.H. Program also contributes to the strategic mission of the University of Iowa and the College of Education through training future generations of educators and professionals

The R.E.A.C.H. experience integrates the areas of Academic Enhancement, Career Development, Community Life, and Residential Life to create a dynamic collegiate educational career, and social opportunity for students.

**Applications for enrollment for Fall 2008
are now available.**

Application deadline is March 1, 2008;
however, campus interviews will be held
beginning Fall 2007.

For more information please contact:

**REACH - Realizing Educational and Career
Hopes: A Program for Youth with a Future**
N297 Lindquist Center, Iowa City, Iowa 52242-
1549

Phone: 319-384-2127

Email: reach@uiowa.edu

Map: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~maps/l/lc1.htm>



Transition Panel

Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency is providing an informational gathering in the form of a panel which will include participants from the R.E.A.C.H. program as well as representatives from St. Ambrose and Eastern Iowa Community Colleges who will be available to answer questions about their programs. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents and students to find out what is available to them after high school. This event is scheduled for:

**November 15, 2007
from 6:00 – 7:00 P.M. at the AEA.**

For more information or to register for this panel discussion, contact Carol Aden at 563-344-6287 or 1-800-947-2329. Her email is caden@aea9.k12.ia.us



2008 Transition/Parent- Educator Connection Conference

“Reach for Success”

February 17-19, 2008
Scheman Center, Ames, Iowa

The conference will focus on ways to support students in making successful transitions from school to adult living, learning and working environments. The targeted audience includes parents, educators, and service providers. For the first time, the conference will also have a strand targeted toward youth with disabilities preparing for transition to adult life. The Parent-Educator Connection has stipends available for parents and educators who would like to attend the conference. For information about a stipend contact Kathy Anson, Parent-Educator Facilitator 563-242-6454 or kanson@aea9.k12.ia.us.

More detailed information about the conference will be coming soon.



TRANSITION and the IEP

The “Right” Thing to do!

By Jane Rock, Transition Specialist, Mississippi Bend AEA

This year there is a lot of emphasis on compliance for addressing transition in the IEP. It’s easy to get bogged down in the compliance requirements and forget that we do this for a very good reason! Helping our students look ahead to *hopeful futures* and teaching them (some) of the skills they will need for those futures is the very essence of special education at the secondary level. The six “critical IEP elements” that have been identified by the Iowa Department of Education will not only help us meet compliance with the federal law, but more importantly will help us support our students with IEPs in developing and achieving their life goals. Those six “critical elements” are:

1. Identifying **student interests and**



preferences – What “turns on” this student? What preferences will be important to help motivate this student and make the difference in having a good quality of life as an adult? The interests

and preferences of our students begin to give us clues about future careers and environments or supports that will work well for the student.

2. **Assessment in the areas of living, learning and working** – We need to get a handle on our students’ current skills, attitudes and habits in order to make the best use of our limited time with them. It is difficult to assess skills needed without having some idea where the student is headed, which makes the 3rd critical area REALLY critical!

3. **Post-secondary expectations in living, learning and working** – Where would this student like to see himself or herself as a

young adult? Living on their own? Working full-time? Going to college? Living with family or in a supported apartment in the community? These can be difficult, gut-wrenching, painful, eye-opening and magnificent discussions with a student and his or her family. Giving “permission” to have some hope for the future is a good place to start. Then we ask the question, “What would it take to get there?” This question becomes the basis for the 4th, 5th and 6th critical elements.



4. **Course of Study** – What courses and activities will this student participate in throughout the rest of high school to move toward that hoped-for future? When will he or she graduate and what criteria will be used to determine readiness for high school graduation? These are IEP team decisions.

5. **Goals!!** – Based upon the long-term planning and current assessments already accomplished, it is likely that one or more goal areas have become obvious. Goals must be written in such a way that they are meaningful and measurable. We need data to know when to change what we are doing; if we are not making adequate progress, we will want to do something differently.



6. Finally, we come to the point in the IEP (on Page F) where we describe the **services and supports** that this student will receive in order to move closer to readiness for their desired future. Page F ties everything together by describing the individualized program the student will receive. This is also the place to discuss and document community linkages and responsibilities, which is extremely important as we prepare to transition our students from the world of the high school to the world of adulthood.



Whining

Understanding your child, yourself, and the situation

Children do what works. If your child is whining, he or she is getting a response from you. Oddly enough, children seem to prefer punishment and anger to no response at all. Whining is usually based on the goal of seeking undue attention. This child believes, “I belong only if you pay constant attention to me—one way or another.” For some children, it is the only method they know to get their needs met. Other children go through a whiny time and it then disappears as quickly as it started. Some of the suggestions here may seem contradictory, depending on whether they address the belief or behavior. Choose the approach that feels best for you.

Suggestions:

1. Every time your child whines, take him/her on your lap and say, “I bet you need a big hug.” Do not say anything about the whining or what the child is whining about—just hug until you both feel better.
2. Let your child know that you love him/her but can’t stand the whining. Tell him/her that if he/she whines, you will leave the room. Say, “I’ll be happy when you stop whining so we can spend some time together.” Then, leave the room. If the child follows, go to the bathroom and lock the door. Turn on the radio if you need to drown out the noise (whining). It is more effective if you say nothing but just follow through with what you have said. Kind and firm actions speak louder and more effectively than words.
3. Address the problem your child is whining about by saying, “Let’s put that on the list to talk about later at a family meeting.” And then go on. Ignore the whining.

Planning ahead to prevent future problems

1. Plan for regular, scheduled special times with your child to help him/her feel special, important and that he/she belongs.
2. During a happy time, work out a signal with your child about what you will do when you hear whining. Perhaps you will put your fingers in your ears and smile. Another possibility is to put your hand over your heart and pat it as a reminder that, “I love you.”
3. Tell your child what you are going to do: “When you whine, I will leave the room. Please let me know when you are willing to talk in a respectful voice so I will enjoy speaking to you.” Another thing to try with a more mature child is, “It’s not that I don’t hear you. I just don’t want to have a discussion with you until you use your regular voice. I don’t hear whiny voices.”
4. Have regular family meetings so there is a specific time your family can discuss issues, and your child knows it.



Life skills children can learn

Children can learn that their parents love them but will not fall for their manipulative tactics. Children feel better about themselves when they learn effective skills to deal with their needs and wants.

Excerpt from “Positive Discipline” website.





What's New in the Parent-Educator Library?

Libraries are located in the AEA offices in Bettendorf, Clinton and Muscatine. Materials can be sent and returned on the AEA van to the school nearest you, or you may come into the office and browse.

These DVDs might be of interest to you or teens. *I'm Tyler (don't be surprised)* by Tyler Greene, a high school sophomore. This video tells about all the activities he participates in because adults in his life practice "Ability Awareness"—what a kid CAN do is more important than what he can't.

Fitting in and Having Fun Social Skills Training Video, Vol. 1. Follow Jonathan through his school day and learn how to get along better with classmates and teachers.

Fitting in and Having Fun, Vol. 2 - Moving on to Middle School. Tips from students for students. Real life situations reenacted by students of experiences in middle school.

Some interesting books have also been added. *More than a Mom: Living a Full and Balanced Life when Your Child Has Special Needs* Heather Fawcett & Amy Baskin give information and advice for mothers of special needs children on how they can take care of themselves while nurturing and advocating for their children. *Mental Wellness in Adults with Down Syndrome: A Guide to Emotional and Behavioral Strengths and Challenges* by Dennis McGuire & Brian Chicoine is an upbeat, thoroughly readable guide to understanding how to promote mental wellness and resolve psychosocial problems in people with Down syndrome.

These books are on autism. *Preparing for Life: The Complete Handbook for Transitioning to Adulthood for those with Autism and Asperger's* by Dr. Jed Baker, is a guide for transitioning to adulthood for those with autism and Asperger's Syndrome.

Thinking in Pictures: and Other Reports from My Life with Autism by Temple Grandin. The author, who has autism and a Ph.D. in animal science, tells how her visual mind works and what it is like to live with autism.

Educate Toward Recovery: Turning the Tables on Autism by Robert Schramm. This book uses everyday language to show how the Verbal Behavior Approach to Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) can be applied by parents, teachers and therapists.



Parent Surveys

The Parent-Educator Connection (PEC) has participated in parent surveys conducted throughout the state of Iowa for two years. These surveys are for parents of children who are receiving special education services in pre-school through grade 12. The surveys were done through phone conversations and later recorded by the Parent-Educator Connection. The results of these surveys are used to improve the services kids receive and develop better ways of delivering the services.

This school year, the PEC will once again be involved in conducting these surveys, but the process will be a little different. Parents who are selected by the state are to receive a copy of the survey at their child's IEP meeting



along with a self-addressed stamped envelope to use to return it. If there are questions or concerns, parents may contact their PEC Facilitator who will be happy to

assist them. If you do not receive a survey at the IEP meeting, you are probably one of the parents who did not get selected this year. You will most likely get chosen in a different year. This is done in an attempt to keep the data current and representative of the schools' population. In the event that you had your IEP meetings before the names were selected by the state, your PEC Facilitator will contact you, and we will do the survey together over the phone.

The surveys provide the state with vital information that will help to improve services for all of our children. We appreciate your willingness to participate and thank those families who have already participated in the surveys. Please contact your Parent-Educator Facilitator with any questions.



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The **Parent-Educator Connection** provides support and resources for families and teachers.
For more information, please contact the Parent-Educator Facilitator in your service center:

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Serving school districts: Andrew, Bellevue, Calamus-Wheatland, Camanche, Central Clinton, Clinton, Delwood, East Central, Northeast, Maquoketa and Preston

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Serving school districts: Bennett, Columbus Jct., Durant, Louisa-Muscatine, Muscatine, West Liberty and Wilton
Any one of them can also be reached by calling **1-800-947-2329**.

David Quinn, Bettendorf **563-344-6201 or 1-800-947-AEA9** **Email: dquinn@aea9.k12.ia.us**

Director of Special Education



Websites of Interest

www.askresource.org .ASK Family Resource Center (Access for Special Kids)

www.iowaParents.org .Iowa Statewide Parent Information Resource Center

www.aea9.k12.ia.us Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency—This publication, **PARTNERS**, is available on this site. Click on Programs & Services. Next, under Special Education, click on Parent-Educator Connection, and then click on Partners Newsletter.



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The Mission of the Mississippi Bend Area Education Agency is to improve teaching and learning for all students through active partnerships and assertive leadership in a climate of mutual respect.