

SEPTA NEWS



Volume 3, Issue 4

January 2006

EDITOR: NICOLE HOROWITZ

E-MAIL: NICOLEHOROWITZ@AOL.COM

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Nicole Horowitz

Jane Hellberg

Happy New Year and welcome back!

So far 13 people have registered for the "CSE Parent Member Training" class that will be offered in Somers. There is still time to register!

If you are unable to attend the class on the 26th, be sure to check the BOCES Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) catalog for future dates.

Work has begun on a special education parent handbook. We have been collecting and reading parent hand-

books from other SEPTAs in the area. By the end of this year we plan to have the information we will need to get a draft put together early in the 06-07 school year.

If you are interested in helping out on this project, please let one of us know.

Believe it or not - it's time to start thinking about next year. We need volunteers for a nominating committee to put together the 06-07 executive board. Let us know if you'd like to help.

Our next meeting will be

on March 14th. Barbara Probst, a clinical social worker, will present, "When labels don't fit: other ways of understanding and helping children with social, emotional, sensory and learning issues." We hope to see you there.

Keep warm and have fun in the snow!

The January 17th meeting will be re-scheduled. Be sure to watch for flyers and check our website for the new date. ♦

Inside this issue:

Message From Special Services - Continued	2
Parent & Educator Workshops	2
Legislation	3
Medical & Therapy News	4
Visual Processing Disorders	5
What Every Parent Should Know About Dyslexia	6
New Graduation Requirements Approved	7
Testing Forces A Faster Start	7
Get Lead Out of Lunch Boxes	8

MESSAGE FROM SPECIAL SERVICES

Shelley Fleischmann, Director

(con't on page 2)

CSE PARENT MEMBER TRAINING

This workshop is designed to give parent members a better understanding of the CSE process. Topics will include:

- ✓ Roles and responsibilities of CSE members
- ✓ Requirements of Federal & state laws & regulations
- ✓ IEP process
- ✓ Role of the parent member
- ✓ Overview of IDEA

Presented by: Laurie Levine, Regional SETRC Trainer

Date: Thursday, January 26th

Time: 9:30am - 11:30am

Location: SIS Conference Room

Registration is required: Contact Anita Bader at 277-2453 to register

MEETING DATES

All meetings are at 7:30pm in the SIS Library

- ① March 14th - Barbara Probst
- ① April TBA
- ① May TBA

MESSAGE FROM SPECIAL SERVICES (CON'T)



COFFEE AND CONVERSATION
 WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15
 CONFERENCE ROOM AT BAILEY COURT
 HOSTED BY SHELLEY FLEISCHMANN AND
 ANNA MAGGIO
 RSVP: ANITA BADER 277-3777

PARENT & EDUCATOR WORKSHOPS

Educational Rights and Responsibilities for Children (Birth to 21 Years) with Borderline Personality Disorder

Presented By:

Amy Evans, PARC, Joy Drummond and Jessica Baumann, PILS

DATE: January 23

TIME: 10:00am to 2:00pm (lunch will be provided).

LOCATION: Putnam Independent Living Services, Carmel, NY.

FEE: None

REGISTRATION: Required - 888-788-6268

Co-sponsored by: Putnam Independent Living Services DREAM and Parent Training Programs, through the Advocacy Center, Rochester, NY.

Camp and Teen Expo 2006

Summer Camp Representatives

DATE: January 25 (snow date, February 1)

TIME: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Mildred E. Strang Middle School Cafeteria, Yorktown Heights

FEE: None

INFORMATION: svrcoord@aol.com or tpubpgzm@aol.com

Sponsored by Yorktown SEPTA and Somers PTA.

Navigating the Social World: What is it About Kids with Social/Communication Difficulties?

Presented by:

Cynthia Potel and Pat Rowan

DATE: January 26

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

LOCATION: Carrie E. Tompkins Elementary School, Croton-on-Hudson, NY

FEE: None

INFORMATION: 914-325-1027 or cynthiapotel@hotmail.com

Sponsored by Croton SEPTA

Legislation

APPROPRIATIONS APPROVED; EDUCATION FUNDING REDUCED

Source: National PTA *This Week In Washington, December 23, 2005*

Senators approved the final passage of the fiscal year 2006 (FY06) Defense appropriations conference agreement (HR 2863) and Labor-HHS (Health and Human Services)-Education appropriations conference agreement (H.R. 3010). The education appropriations bill went unchanged from the one passed by the House, cutting education funding by \$59 million, the first cut to federal education spending in 10 years.

Funding for education was lowered even further due to a 1 percent across-the-board (ATB) cut to all discretionary programs, except those that serve veterans. (Nondiscretionary programs, or mandatory programs, include programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, and social security benefits.) This cut was passed as part of the Defense appropriations bill and brings the total cut in education funding from fiscal year 2005 (FY05) levels to \$624 million. When inflation is taken into account, this is a funding cut of more than \$2 billion.

In real dollars (not adjusted for inflation), the FY06 education appropriations bill and the 1 percent ATB cut:

- ⌘ Reduce funding for programs in the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) by more than \$1 billion, or 3.97 percent;
- ⌘ Reduce funding for Title I, the program at the heart of NCLB that serves low-income and disadvantaged students, by \$28 million;

- ⌘ Reduce the federal share of special education costs for the first time in 10 years, providing less than 18 percent of the excess costs of special education (down from 18.6 percent in last year's appropriations); and
- ⌘ Make significant cuts to funding for critical programs, including a cut of 56 percent for the Even Start literacy program, a cut of 50 percent for state block grants for innovative education, and a cut of 45 percent for state grants for education technology (a cut that comes on top last year's budget cut of 28 percent, despite the fact that one in four states have no technology funds dedicated to tracking student achievement data or improving teachers' use of technology).

The Defense bill includes \$1.6 billion for schools that were affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Of that \$1.6 billion, \$645 million has been allocated to public and private schools that enroll or have enrolled displaced students, \$750 million has been allocated to schools that need to rebuild or make repairs due to the hurricanes, and \$200 million has been allocated for higher education to assist displaced students and the universities that allowed them to enroll.

Amidst the funding cuts in the education appropriations bill, National PTA was able to pull out a victory: Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) were saved from elimination. PIRCs

were slated for elimination in President Bush's budget request, as well as in the House's version of the education appropriations bill. On June 2, 2005, then National PTA President Linda Hodge announced at a PIRC conference that PIRC funding would be National PTA's top priority in education appropriations this year.

Through aggressive lobbying and significant grassroots mobilization by National PTA, PIRCs were included in the Senate education appropriations bill at \$48.5 million, \$6.6 million above FY05 levels. When the bill moved to conference negotiations, National PTA joined forces with the National Council of LaRaza (NCLR) to ensure that PIRCs would retain funding in the conference agreement. National PTA and NCLR claimed victory when PIRCs were granted \$40 million in the conference agreement.

Though the funding is below last year's levels, in a year in which several programs were eliminated and many more saw massive cuts to their funding, National PTA is pleased to have fulfilled Hodge's commitment to PIRCs. ♦

Medical and Therapy News

study: caffeine perks up short-term memory

by Ronald Kotulak - *The Journal News*, December 1, 2005

Caffeine is the most widely used stimulant in the world, consumed in coffee, tea and soft drinks by hundreds of millions of people to get started in the mornings and as a pick-me-up during the day. That people like the jolt they get from caffeine is no secret, but what caffeine does in the brain has been unknown.

Now, a team of Austrian researchers using advanced brain imaging technology has discovered that caffeine makes people more alert by perking up part of the brain involved in short-term memory, the kind that helps focus attention on the tasks at hand.

And Americans seem most in need of concentration their thoughts, since their average daily consumption of 236 milligrams of caffeine, equivalent to more than 4.5 cups of coffee, is three times the world average. "Almost all of us drink coffee or something with

caffeine in it, and we know why: because we want to be more awake or feel better," says Dr. Florian Koppelstaetter of the Medical University Innsbruck in Austria. "We wanted to know what effect one to two cups of coffee would have on short-term memory."

Reporting at the Radiological Society of North America meeting in Chicago, Koppelstaetter said that functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, was used to measure brain function in 15 healthy volunteers before and after consuming coffee.

The findings revealed increased activity in the frontal lobe, where working memory is centered, and the anterior cingulum, which controls attention, in volunteers after consuming 100 milligrams of caffeine, the equivalent of about two cups of coffee. These areas showed no increased activity when the subjects drank the same fluid without

caffeine in it.

"The increased activity means you are more able to focus," Koppelstaetter said. "You have more attention, and your task management is better."

Short-term memory lasts about 30 to 45 seconds and stores a small amount of information for a limited amount of time. It's the kind of memory used to look up a telephone number and remember it long enough to dial it. Long-term memory, on the other hand, stores an unlimited amount of information for an unlimited amount of time.

"What is exciting is that by means of MRI we are able to see that caffeine exerts increases in neuronal activity in distinct parts of the brain going along with changes in behavior," Koppelstaetter said ♦

Panel Endorses Patch to Help Treat ADHD

The Journal News, December 3, 2005

A federal advisory panel determined [early in December] that the first skin patch to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder in children is both effective and safe, bringing the patch a step closer to regulatory approval.

However, the panel of independent experts voted to recommend to the Food and Drug Administration that the patch's label encourage its use as an alternative treatment for children with ADHD - in effect, saying doctors should

prescribe it only if taking pills is too difficult for a child.

The patch is designed to go on a child's hip for nine hours, according to submissions by the companies that developed it. It releases into the body methylphenidate, which has been shown to help children with ADHD. It is the same stimulant that is in Ritalin.

The patch is designed for children between the ages of 6 and 12.

The developers said it is a way to treat ADHD in children for whom taking pills is difficult or unpleasant.

Some children who received the patch during trials reported decreased appetites, headaches, insomnia, nausea and tics, the FDA said. ♦

VISUAL PROCESSING DISORDERS

Fact Sheet: National Center For Learning Disabilities, www.ncl.org

There are lots of ways the brain processes visual information. Weaknesses in a particular kind of visual processing can often be seen in specific difficulties with practical everyday tasks.

Visual processing disorders are also known as visual perceptual processing disorders. They affect how the brain perceives and processes what the eye sees.

These disorders can occur without impaired vision of any kind; and like all learning disabilities, can be a lifelong challenge.

People with visual processing disorders have problems with the way they interpret information; but what others will notice in people with these disorders, is the behavior that happens after the difficulties occur.

There are several types of visual processing disorders, each affecting different aspects of visual information processing. Below is an explanation of each of the types of visual processing. Each category also includes:

- ☞ Possible difficulties that can occur if there is a weakness in that area.
- ☞ Possible strategies that may help overcome the difficulties.

Be aware that weakness can occur in one or more category at the same time.

It is also important to note that many people without any kind of visual processing disorder experience problems with learning and behavior from time to time. However, if a person consistently displays difficulties with these tasks over time, testing for visual processing disorders by trained professionals should be considered.

Visual Discrimination

The Skill: Using the sense of sight to notice and compare the features of different items to distinguish one item from another.

Difficulties:

- ☞ Seeing the difference between two similar letters, shapes, or objects.
- ☞ Noticing the similarities and differences between certain colors, shapes, and patterns.

Helpful Strategies:

- ☞ Clearly space words/problems on a page.
- ☞ Anticipate confusions and point out examples of correct responses.

Figure-Ground Discrimination

The Skill: The ability to distinguish a shape or printed character from its back-

ground.

Difficulties:

- ☞ Finding a specific bit of information on a printed page full of words and numbers.
- ☞ Seeing an image with a competing background.

Helpful Strategies:

- ☞ Practice with 'find the item' challenges, such as *Where's Waldo?*
- ☞ Use an index card or marker when reading to blot out distraction of other words.
- ☞ Highlight useful information while reading.

Visual Sequencing

The Skill: The ability to see and distinguish the order of symbols, words or images.

Difficulties:

- ☞ Using a separate answer sheet.
- ☞ Staying in the right place while reading a paragraph. Example: skipping lines, reading the same line over and over.
- ☞ Reversing or misreading letters, numbers and words.
- ☞ Understanding math equations.

Helpful Strategies:

- ☞ Combine reading with oral presentation.
- ☞ Color code written instruction.

Visual Motor Processing

The Skill: Using feedback from the eyes to coordinate the movement of other parts of the body.

Difficulties:

- ☞ Writing within lines or margins of a piece of paper.
- ☞ Copying from a board or book.
- ☞ Moving around without bumping into things.
- ☞ Participating in sports that require well-timed and precise movements in space.

Helpful Strategies:

- ☞ Allow the use of a computer.
- ☞ Allow the use of a tape recorder for lectures.
- ☞ Substitute oral reports for written ones.
- ☞ Provide a "note buddy" to check that topic notes are clear and well-organized.

Visual Memory

The Skill: There are two kinds of visual memory:

- ☞ Long-term visual memory is the ability to recall something seen some time ago.
- ☞ Short-term visual memory is the ability to remember something seen very recently.

Difficulties:

- ☞ Remembering the spelling of familiar words with irregular spelling.
- ☞ Reading comprehension.
- ☞ Using a calculator or keyboard with speed and accuracy.
- ☞ Remembering phone numbers.

Helpful Strategies:

- ☞ Provide handouts that are clearly written.
- ☞ Provide oral instruction to reinforce written directions.

Visual Closure

The Skill: The ability to know what an object is when only parts of it are visible.

Difficulties:

- ☞ Recognizing a picture of a familiar object from a partial image. Example: A truck without its wheels.
- ☞ Identifying a word with a letter missing.
- ☞ Recognizing a face when one feature (such as the nose) is missing.

Helpful Strategies:

- ☞ Practice with jigsaw puzzles and rebus-type games.

Spatial Relationships

The Skill: The ability to understand how objects are positioned in space in relation to oneself. This involves the understanding of distance (near or far), as well as the relationship of objects and characters described on paper or in a spoken narrative.

Difficulties:

- ☞ Getting from one place to another.
- ☞ Spacing letters and words on paper.
- ☞ Judging time.
- ☞ Reading maps.

Helpful Strategies:

- ☞ Practice estimating distance with ball games and using a tape measure.
- ☞ Create maps and travel logs.
- ☞ Practice social skills that focus on judging appropriate physical proximity to others. ♦

WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT DYSLEXIA

From: Coordinated Campaign For Learning Disabilities (cclld)

The following information was adapted from the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). IDA is a non-profit, scientific, and educational organization dedicated to the study and treatment of dyslexia. IDA has been serving individuals with dyslexia, their families, and professionals in the field for more than 50 years.

Let's meet Adam, a typical child with dyslexia

Adam has trouble in school - with reading, spelling, and occasionally math. Sometimes he has trouble saying what he means and understanding what his parents and friends say to him.

Before he started school, he was a very happy child. He was good in sports and had many friends. However, it all changed when he started first grade. He learned quickly to hate school, and often said he had a stomach ache.

He didn't learn to read as fast or as well as his classmates. When his teacher called on him, he couldn't get the words out - even when he knew the right answer. The teacher got impatient, and accused him of not trying. He began to feel frustrated and anxious. Because he was afraid of losing his friends, Adam became the class clown. It was a lot better to make friends laugh with you than to have them laugh at you.

Adam's teacher said he was a problem, but Adam was not a problem child; he is a child with a problem. Too often, we think that people like Adam are lazy, uncaring, and maybe even dumb. Our misunderstanding makes these people lose confidence in themselves and in their abilities.

Dyslexia - The Facts

When a person has dyslexia they have difficulty with language. People with dyslexia often struggle with reading, spelling, understanding language they hear, or expressing themselves clearly when speaking or writing. Both oral and written language are affected. Of students with learning disabilities who receive special education services, 70 to 80 percent have problems with reading. Dyslexia is the most common cause of reading, writing and spelling difficulties.

People with dyslexia and other learning disabilities are as smart or smarter than other people, they simply learn in a different way.

Reading disabilities are the most understood and effectively corrected learning disability. If children who are dyslexic get effective instruction early and intensively in kindergarten, first and second grades they can make significant gains in learning to read at grade level. If help is delayed until third grade they will rarely catch up with their peers - 75 percent of children who were poor readers in the third grade remained poor readers in the ninth grade

and could not read well when they became adults.

If parents suspect that their child has dyslexia, the sooner they act on their suspicions, the better it will be for their child. Parents should familiarize themselves with the warning signs and talk with a child's teacher if a problem is suspected. For more information on learning disabilities, parents can visit www.aboutld.org, or call 888-GR8-MIND to receive a free brochure.

Warning Signs

The following difficulties may be associated with dyslexia if they are unexpected for the individual's age, educational level, or cognitive abilities. To verify that an individual is dyslexic, he/she should be tested by a qualified testing examiner.

Pre-School

- ✓ May talk later than most children
- ✓ May have difficulty pronouncing words, i.e., *busgetti* for *spaghetti*, *mavn lower* for *lawn mower*
- ✓ May be slow to add new vocabulary words
- ✓ May be unable to recall the right word
- ✓ May have difficulty with rhyming
- ✓ May have trouble learning the alphabet, numbers, days of the week, colors, shapes, how to spell and write his name
- ✓ May have trouble interacting with peers
- ✓ May be unable to follow multi-step directions or routines
- ✓ Fine motor skills may develop more slowly than in other children
- ✓ May have difficulty telling and/or retelling a story in the correct sequence
- ✓ Often has difficulty separating sounds in words and blending sounds to make words

Kindergarten - 4th Grades

- ✓ Has difficulty decoding single words (reading single words in isolation)
- ✓ May be slow to learn the connection between letters and sounds
- ✓ May confuse small words - *at-to*, *said-and*, *does-goes*
- ✓ Makes consistent reading and spelling errors including:

Letter reversals - *d* for *b* as in

dog for *bog*

Word reversals - *tip* for *pit*

Inversions - *m* and *w*, *u* and *n*

Transpositions - *felt* and *left*

Substitutions - *house* and

home

- ✓ May transpose number sequences and confuse mathematic signs (+ - X / =)
- ✓ May have trouble remembering facts
- ✓ May be slow to learn new skills; relies heavily on memorizing without understanding
- ✓ May be impulsive and prone to accidents
- ✓ May have difficulty planning
- ✓ Often uses an awkward pencil grip (fist, thumb hooked over fingers, etc.)
- ✓ May have trouble learning to tell time
- ✓ May have poor fine motor coordination

5th Through 8th Grades

- ✓ Is usually reading below grade level
- ✓ May reverse letter sequences - *soiled* for *solid*, *left* for *felt*
- ✓ May be slow to discern and to learn prefixes, suffixes, root words, and other reading and spelling strategies
- ✓ May have difficulty spelling, spells same word differently on the same page
- ✓ May avoid reading aloud
- ✓ May have trouble with word problems in math
- ✓ May write with difficulty with illegible handwriting; pencil grip is awkward, fist-like or tight
- ✓ May avoid writing
- ✓ May have slow or poor recall of facts
- ✓ May have difficulty with comprehension
- ✓ May have difficulty making friends
- ✓ May not understand body language and facial expressions of others
- ✓ May have trouble with non-literal language (idioms, jokes, proverbs, slang)
- ✓ May forget to hand in homework or to bring in homework
- ✓ May have difficulty with planning and time management. ♦

New Graduation Requirements Approved

From: *New York Parent Teacher*, Vol. 37, issue , Fall 2005

Final proposal to phase in graduation standard of 65 on the required Regents exams - **VOTED AND PASSED ON JUNE 21, 2005**

The EMSC/VESID committee on the Board of Regents proposed to the full Board:

For students entering grade 9 in 2005: General education students must have at least two scores at 65 or above on the five required Regents exams and all scores at 55 and above

For students entering grade 9 in 2006: General education students must have at least three scores at 65 or above on the five required Regents exams and all scores at 55 or above

For students entering grade 9 in 2007: General education students must have at least four scores at 65 or above on the five required Regents exams and all scores at 55 or above

For students entering grade 9 in 2008 (current 5th graders): General education students must pass **all five** required Regents exams at a score of 65 or above

This proposal also establishes an **appeals process beginning with the students entering grade 9 in 2005, for students who score within three points of 65 (64, 63, 62) on a required regents exam for graduation and have a 65 course average.** The student must have taken and been unsuccessful on the exam in question *two* times and meet the

criteria identified in the full regulation policy to demonstrate that they meet the state learning standards. The appeal allows for **10 days** to decide rather than the original 5 days in the document.

NOTE: The **RCT'S** (regents competency test) **for students with disabilities (SWD) will continue to be available for students entering grade 9 before the year of September, 2010. Students using this safety net will receive a local diploma, the low-pass option of scoring between 55-64 on the required regents exams to earn a local diploma will continue to be available for students with disabilities.** ♦

Testing Forces a Faster Start

by David Novich, *The Journal News*, January 14, 2006

In an age of rising standards, educators say three hours a day is just not enough for Kindergarten. It's not enough time to teach the basics of how to read and write, speak and listen, and compare and contrast. It's not sufficient to prepare the children for the rigors of first grade and a growing number of high-stakes test.

If the state Board of Regents has its way, school districts will no longer have an option. The Regents are proposing that all districts be required to provide full-day kindergarten and that the starting school age be lowered to 5 years from 6.

Kindergarten is no longer about learning shapes, developing social and emotional skills, and napping. Now, 5-year-olds are expected to know letters, some words and basic math concepts by the end of the year.

"Because of what they're expecting kids to do, the teacher needs more time," said Lucia De Rosa, director of the prekindergarten program in White Plains schools. "A kindergarten teacher has a very full day, a very pressured day in trying to get all these pieces in there."

The Regents proposal would cost hundreds of millions and has school administrators worried about funding and space. But experts say the proposal mirrors the patterns of modern early childhood education nationwide.

For example, fewer than 10 states required kindergarten attendance, but 98 percent of children still go, said Beth

Graue, a professor of early childhood education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Moreover, since the early 1990's, more children have been attending full-day rather than half-day kindergarten programs, she said.

Most of the research has shown that students in full-day programs have higher levels of achievement and are more likely to have recess and play time. But the success of a longer day depends on the curriculum and the teacher, who needs to make sure there is a balance between following the lesson and responding to children's interests.

"If you have a kindergarten teacher who's developmentally oriented, that knows what to expect from 5-year-olds, that knows that they need structured and unstructured time ... that full-day program can be incredible," Graue said. "But if the kids are expected to sit down, shut up and count to 100 all day long, that's twice as much abuse as you would get in a half-day program."

In the Lower Hudson Valley, most children attend some type of preschool before they enter kindergarten.

Some parents feel their children are not ready for kindergarten and keep them in these programs an extra year.

Under the Regents proposal, parents would still have that option by requesting a waiver from their school dis-

trict's superintendent. The proposal would also move the cutoff date for kindergarten from December to September, allowing children who turn 5 later in the year to stay out of full-day kindergarten.

Patricia Collins of Tarrytown decided to keep her 5-year-old son in preschool this year at the River School in Nyack after educators said he was developmentally young and she thought he might be too shy for kindergarten.

Collins thinks the cutoff date in the state's plan should be in July, leaving the younger kids even more time to grow up before kindergarten.

"Everybody is being pushed into adulthood so early," Collins said. "I think it's essential for them to have a childhood, to develop emotionally and be a fuller person when they grow up."

Pat Vogelsperger, director of World Cup Nursery School and Kindergarten in Chappaqua, said kindergartens need to adapt and address the needs of all children.

But if the state mandates full-day kindergarten, she said, parents will struggle less with their decision over whether to keep their children in preschool an extra year.

"This just makes it more clear to them that they definitely don't want to send them on," Vogelsperger said. "All day for some young children is just too hard." ♦

SOMERS SPECIAL EDUCATION PTA

OFFICERS
CO-PRESIDENTS Nicole Horowitz and Jane Hellberg
VICE PRESIDENT Katherine Realbuto
SECRETARY Julie Woogen
TREASURER Mary Ward

Somers Central School District
 Special Services Shelley Fleischmann
 277-3777 Annamarie Maggio
 Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joanne Marien
 277-2400
 Asst. Superintendent Mrs. Kathy Mason
 277-2405

New Location Bailey Court Building C
New Mailing Address P.O. Box 620
 Lincolndale, NY 10540

“Together We Can Make A Difference”

The Mission of the PTA

- ☞ To support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children.
- ☞ To assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children.
- ☞ To encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

State: Get Lead Out of Lunch Boxes

by Nick Reisman, *The Journal News*, Nov. 30, 2005

Tens of thousands of children’s lunch boxes, bearing the images of popular characters like Superman and Spiderman, are being pulled from store shelves after tests showed they contained environmentally hazardous amounts of lead.

The soft plastic lunch boxes were sold at several stores across the state, including Wal-Mart, Target, Toys R Us, and JC Penny. The retailers have voluntarily pulled the lunch boxes from their stock, according to Attorney General Eliot Spitzer’s office.

Assistant Attorney General Ben Bruce said that the lunch boxes, which were sold between March and September [2005], posed very little health hazard, but rather an environmental risk.

“We didn’t go forward on this matter for public health, since most of the lead is actually in the vinyl lining,” he said. “If that package is incinerated, you have lead in the atmosphere or disintegrating in the ground.”

The Manhattan-based company that

distributed the Chinese-made lunch boxes, Fast Forward LLC, has been fined \$7,000 under the state’s environmental conservation law. The statute prohibits containers like juice boxes from containing above the legal limit in lead.

Parents can tell if their children’s lunch boxes have lead in the by the Fast Forward tag on the side of the lunch box. Customers may return the lunch boxes to the store they purchased them for a full refund or store credit, or they can get a full refund from Fast Forward by going to the Attorney General’s Web site. But customers have only until Feb. 28th to claim a refund.

Alan Klestadt, disagreed with the assessment that the lunch boxes fell under the law as a “container,” he said he wanted to avoid litigation with the attorney general’s office. Klestadt stressed that the settlement was not part of an overall recall effort.

A spokesman for Spitzer said that Fast Forward had been “quite coopera-

tive” in handling the matter.

“They (Fast Forward) were surprised by it,” said Marc Violette of the discovery of the lead. “They weren’t aware this situation existed.”

Bruce first learned of the lead lined lunch boxes after a complaint was filed from the Rochester-based advocacy group, the Empire State Consumer Association.

“It didn’t surprise us in the least” that they contained lead, said Judy Braimain, a spokeswoman for the group. She said that in cases like these, it’s all too often that companies produce or sell products with harmful amounts of lead in them.

Braimain also called for companies to discontinue the use of the vinyl commonly found in lunch boxes - which contains the potentially dangerous chemical chloride - in products meant for children. ♦