

SEPTA NEWS

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE — JANE HELLBERG

Welcome to the 2004-05 school year. I am Jane Hellberg, this year's SEPTA president.

If your child struggles with homework, receives support in a resource room, receives services such as speech and language, occupational therapy, or physical therapy, is in a self-contained classroom, or receives modifications or accommodations based on his or her special needs; then the Special Education PTA is a network of resources, information, and support for you. SEPTA provides parents with opportunities to obtain support and stay connected with the special education community. *SEPTA News* will be sent home with every Primrose and SIS stu-

dent each time it is published this year and will be mailed home to all members that do not have a student attending Primrose or SIS. All are invited to sign up for an e-mail distribution list to receive reminders about meetings and lectures on various topics which may be of interest to our community.

SEPTA meetings offer parents the opportunity to network, share what you have learned, learn from others, and discuss new thoughts and ideas. The first SEPTA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 14, 7:30pm in the SIS Library. Barry Whalen and Alethea Schepperly, the director and assistant director of Special

Services in Somers will be guest speakers. Come find out what is new in special education in the Somers school district this year and bring your questions.

Everyone is welcome to become a member of SEPTA. Membership supports the wonderful educational enhancements SEPTA provides to the special education community. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Inside this issue:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 10 Commandments for Parents | 2 |
| The CSE Process | 2 |
| Legislation | 3 |
| Medical & Therapy News | 4 |
| Upcoming Workshops | 5 |
| Resource List | 6 |
| Purple Trees | 6 |

MESSAGE FROM SPECIAL SERVICES

Barry J. Whalen, Director

Another beginning of a school year has arrived and with it some new programs have been added to special education services in Somers. Katy Faivre's students are beginning ninth grade at Somers High School and have a new teacher, Doreen Small. Katy remains at Somers Middle School and has welcomed back a number of our students who have previously been in out of district placements. Both classes have had a successful first week.

In addition to these newly formed classes, our self-contained class at Primrose has a new teacher, Kathleen Kane.

Kim Gordon has returned to SIS from maternity leave. Karalee Cal-

ganini, who did such a wonderful job as her substitute, is now a part-time special education teacher there. Julie Kotler had a baby in August and will be on maternity leave for this year. Her substitute is Jodi Amoditz.

At Somers High School Colleen Doherty was hired to replace Barbara Russ who retired in June. Amy Novi, our teacher of the hearing impaired, is also on maternity leave until November. Her substitute is Adele Flesher. As I have gotten to know our new staff I am very confident that they will serve our students and their families in a caring, professional manner.

As for things that have not

changed we are still awaiting the reauthorization of IDEA. It is generally agreed that this will not take place until a new Congress takes office in January. I will continue to keep you updated on its progress.

I am looking forward to describing in more detail our educational programs at the first SEPTA meeting in October. In the meantime, please contact your child's special education teacher should you have any questions.

Once again I look forward to working with all of you in a partnership that will lead to a fulfilling, productive year for your children.

MEETING DATES

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

⇒ October 14

⇒ November 18

⇒ January 20

⇒ March 10

⇒ April 28

⇒ **May 16 - Budget Q&A - 9:30am at Primrose**

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR PARENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Reprinted from C.H.I.L.D. Newsletter 2003-2004

1. Never underestimate your child's potential. Encourage, expect, and allow him to develop to the best of his abilities.
2. Find positive mentors: parents and professionals who can share with you their experience, advice and support.
3. Provide the most appropriate educational and learning environments for your child from infancy on.
4. You need not justify your actions to your friends or to the public. Answer only to your conscience: then you'll be able to answer to your child.
5. Go easy on yourself. There will be days when you don't have control over everything, but neither does anyone else.
6. You can't be "Super-Parent" 24 hours a day. Allow yourself anger, pity, frustration and even discouragement in small amounts whenever necessary.
7. Stop and smell the roses. Don't continually focus on what needs to be done. Remember to look at what you've already accomplished.
8. Be mindful of the needs of your spouse and other children. Remind them that this child doesn't get more of your love just because she gets more of your time.
9. Make each day a positive one; understand that you have gained a special appreciation for some of the little miracles in life that others take for granted.
10. Keep a sense of humor. Cracking up from laughter can keep you from cracking under the pressure.

The CSE process*

If your child is having trouble in school, the following steps need to be taken to ensure your child receives the support and services that are needed.

PRE-REFERRAL CONDITIONS

Once you have become aware of a problem, start to gather information to help you understand your child and help him. Speak with your pediatrician, observe other children of the same age, read books on child development and learning difficulties, speak with the teacher, and network with other parents.

REFERRAL

Write to the Special Services Office, to formally notify them, that your child is experiencing difficulties in school and that a full evaluation is needed.

EVALUATION/TRIENNIAL EVALUATION

Will take place 40 school days from the receipt of referral or 30 school days from receipt of parent consent, whichever is earlier. The evaluation must include: a physical, a psychological evaluation, social history, classroom observation, and appropriate educational assessments.

The triennial evaluation is done every 3 years for special education students.

RECOMMENDATION

If there is insufficient information for a recommendation, further evaluation will need to be done. Not all school related problems require special education services. Other services, such as remedial services, section 504, or peer tutoring may be recommended.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

If special ed. services are recommended they will begin within 30 school days after the recommendation. During this time an IEP meeting will take place to determine your child's educational needs and goals.

ANNUAL REVIEW

Takes place every 12 months to reassess your child's progress and continuation of services.

* This information was compiled from *Negotiating The Special Education Maze: A Guide For Parents and Teachers, 3rd Edition*, by W. Anderson, S. Chitwood, & D. Hayden and *Special Education Support Services: A Guide for Parents of Children Ages 3 to 21*, by The Committee for Children Having Individual Learning Differences-Scarsdale, NY

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.

LEGISLATION

Students with Disabilities to Gain Improved Access to Learning

July 2004 - Students with blindness, low vision and print disabilities are expected to gain improved access to textbooks under a voluntary standardized format for electronic files, U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige announced. On behalf of Secretary Paige, Deputy Secretary of Education Gene Hickok discussed the new standard at an event commemorating the 14th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The event was co-sponsored by the Departments of Commerce and Education in Washington, D.C.

“President Bush believes that every single child can learn and deserves the opportunity to learn—that’s why he pushed for the historic education reforms of the *No Child Left Behind Act*,” Secretary Paige said. “Today, we’re taking another step toward this goal with a new, voluntary standard that will enable students and teachers to more quickly access general curriculum materials, thereby opening more doors of

opportunity to students.”

When textbooks and classroom materials are produced using this voluntary standard, they will be in a standard electronic format that can be adapted to products ranging

... textbooks and classroom materials ... will be in a standard electronic format that can be adapted to [a range of] products ...

from Braille editions of textbooks to on-screen displays

of text and graphics. In past years, the lack of a standardized format meant that publishers had to produce materials in multiple formats—often causing delays that meant students with disabilities did not receive their textbooks in time for the beginning of the school year.

To address these challenges, the Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs provided funding to the National Center of Accessing the General Curriculum at the Center for Applied Special Technology, Inc. to convene an expert panel to establish a voluntary, standardized format for materials. The 40-member

panel included educators, publishers, technology specialists and advocacy groups.

In addition to establishing the new standard, the Department of Education will fund two centers to support further development and assist states with implementing the voluntary standard, thus improving academic results for students with disabilities.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* is the bipartisan landmark education reform law designed to change the culture of America’s schools by closing the achievement gap among groups of students, offering more flexibility to states, giving parents more options and teaching students based on what works. Under the law’s strong accountability provisions, states must describe how they will close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including students with disabilities, achieve academically.

For more information on the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard, please visit www.cast.org/NFF/NIMAS.

NEW LAW FOR PARENT MEMBER ON CSE - NYS DEPT. OF ED.

On July 20, 2004, Governor Pataki signed an amendment to the section of the Education Law that deals with parent eligibility to serve as the additional parent member on a Committee on Special Education (CSE).

This amendment expands the pool of parents eligible to serve by authorizing parents whose disabled child is no longer eligible to receive special education services to serve on a CSE for a period of 5

years after the declassification, or the graduation of their child.

This law, which took effect immediately, does not apply to the parent member of the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE).

Previous to this amendment, a parent was no longer eligible to serve on a CSE once their child was declassified or was graduated. This had eliminated the availability of parent members

from serving on a CSE, who were not only willing to continue to serve, but who had also accumulated several years of experience.

The new law now allows parents who wish to continue serving on a CSE to do so for a period of 5 years beyond their child’s declassification or graduation.

For additional news about education, visit www.vesid.nysed.gov and go to “What’s New.”

Medical And Therapy News

Brain Scans Suggest New Approach to Dyslexia

Adapted from: *The Journal News*, Sunday September 5, 2004, article by Joseph B. Verrengia

Westerners shudder at the idea of reading even the most basic street signs and instructions in Chinese, a language with 6,000 characters to memorize to be considered fluent.

A new set of brain images shows why: Reading English-style alphabets and Chinese characters use very different parts of the brain.

The results also suggest that Chinese schoolchildren misfire in a different brain region than the one used in reading alphabet-based languages like English. This demonstrates that the learning disorder dyslexia is not the same in every culture and does not have a universal biological cause, researchers said.

Neurologists described the results as "very important and innovative." While dyslexia has certain common roots, researchers now have some proof that this kind of functional problem plays out differently according to the unique demands that Western and Eastern languages place on the brain.

And, it suggests that treating dyslexia around the world probably will require different therapies between nations and languages.

"Reading is complex," said Georgetown University neuroscientist Guinevere Eden. "This shows we need to be more open-minded about diverse treatment approaches."

Dyslexia is a common developmental disorder in which people of normal intelligence have difficulty learning to read, spell and master other language skills. In the United States, it is observed in 5% to 15% of the population, while in China it affects up to 7%.

Its origins are complex. There appears to be inherited genetic aspect. Researchers say they expect that the same genes would be involved in dyslexics regardless of their heritage. It also may result from neural injury before birth that changes visual and auditory pathways in the brain.

Earlier brain scans show that Eng-

lish-reading dyslexics misfire in the left temporal-parietal region of the brain associated with awareness of phonemes, 44 sounds from the English alphabet. It is located in the middle and upper portion of the brain.

"We assumed that all dyslexics probably were the same," Eden said. "But reading Chinese requires a different set of skills."

And, according to the new study, it uses different parts of the brain called the left middle frontal gyrus, or LMFG.

The LMFG is located toward the left front of the brain. It is associated with symbol interpretation. Unlike alphabet letters, Chinese characters represent entire thoughts and physical objects.

The findings do not mean Chinese dyslexics might be able to use different portions of their brain and learn to read English more easily. Once a person learns to read, he or she tends to use the same circuitry regardless of the second language and its alphabet, Eden said.

KIDS EXPRESS

If you are interested in registering your child for this unique after-school social/recreational program, and fear you have missed the September 17th deadline - fear no more!

Registrations are still being accepted.

Registration forms are available in the main office.

MEMBERSHIP

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN SEPTA, PLEASE FILL OUT THE MEMBERSHIP FORM AT THE BACK OF THIS ISSUE OF *SEPTA NEWS*.

UPCOMING WORKSHOPS/PARENT PROGRAMS

Managing Life With the "Difficult" or "Different" Child

Struggling to raise a child with social, emotional, behavioral or educational issues can be overwhelming. Do you feel frustrated, helpless, angry, isolated, discouraged or just in need of some practical help?

Special Program by
Barbara Probst, CSW

7:00pm, Tuesday October 5th

John C. Hart Memorial Library
1130 Main St. Shrub Oak
Admission is FREE

To register, call 245-5262X3

4th Annual Resources for Living Fair

If your life has been touched by a disability, whether it be developmental disability, physical disability, learning disability, ADD/ADHD, mental health issues, behavioral issues, socialization problems, you will find useful resources.

There will be:

- ◆ 60 providers and vendors
- ◆ Book Fair featuring reading materials about all disabilities
- ◆ Demonstrations
- ◆ Food and refreshments
- ◆ Entertainment for children and child-care
- ◆ Free materials and information on all types of disabilities

Wednesday, October 6th

4:00pm-8:00pm

Mahopac Middle School
425 Baldwin Place Rd.
Mahopac, NY

For information:

Contact Putnam County Office for
People with Disabilities - 845-228-
5912

Social Skills Training for Children and Teen with Asperger Syndrome and Social-Communication Disorders: A

Workshop for Parents and Teens

Presented by:

Jed Baker, PhD

Director, The Social Skills Training Project

Friday October 15th

Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, NY
For Information:

Visit

www.socialskillstrainingproject.com or

e-mail BethSklarBaker@aol.com

A SOCIAL LIFE - Opportunities and Issues in the Lives of Children with Special Needs

A look at the socialization needs of all children with an eye to the unique issues faced by children with differing abilities. Topics will include:

- ◆ Picking up on social cues
- ◆ Finding opportunities for leisure activities
- ◆ Fitting in with peers
- ◆ Parent concerns and warning signs
- ◆ Local resources and ideas

Presented by:

Lisa Ricci

Putnam Independent Living Services
and
Pam Forde

Putnam Family Support & Advocacy
Tuesday, October 19th at the Mahopac Public Library

Thursday, December 14th at the Putnam Independent Living Services in Carmel

Registration is Required

For Information call:

845-228-7457

AUTISM SEMINAR:

How to Get Your Child to Speak and Communicate Better

Presented by:

Rob Bernstein, MA

Educational Therapist

For Parents of children displaying Autistic (ASD) tendencies. Each child will be arranged to be seen individually for personal feedback. There will also be an afternoon networking session for parents and professionals.

Saturday, October 30th

Hilton Hotel, Tarrytown, NY

Program Schedule: Continental Breakfast at 9:30am, morning seminar, lunch, networking session, individual session with your child (same day or different day)

For information and registration:

visit www.robberstein.com or

call 914-478-4868

Understanding NCLB -

What Every Parent Should Know About "No Child Left Behind"

Besides being the most extensive federal law impacting education in decades,

the *No Child Left Behind Act* requires parent involvement. Learn how schools are being held accountable for student progress, for maintaining highly qualified teachers and teaching assistants, and for notifying parents of options they may have if their schools do not meet these standards. NCLB is being championed by some and criticized by others. This session will review "the facts of the act", and discuss whether this extensive law makes good educational sense.

Presented by:

Laurie Levine

Regional SETRC Specialist

Wednesday, November 3rd at 7:30pm

Fox Lane Middle School

Route 172

Bedford, NY

Registration is Required

For information call:

Putnam/No. West. BOCES 914-248-2290

When the Yellow School Bus Doesn't Stop Here Anymore - Planning for Successful Transition to Adulthood

How do families find more information about the services and supports needed when students with disabilities complete their public schooling? What is the local school district responsible for? How can you work effectively with your school district in planning your child's life after school?

Presented by:

Kerry McKenna, Transition Coordinator, and

Laurie Levine, Lower Hudson Regional Trainer

Friday November 12th 9:30am-11:30am

Putnam/No. West. BOCES

Yorktown Heights

Registration is Required

For Information call:

Putnam/No. West. BOCES 914-248-2290

Most of these workshops were found listed in the Special Education Training and Resource Center (SETRC) brochure.

If you would like to receive a SETRC brochure, call 914-248-2289, or you may access it on-line at www.pnwbores.org/specialed/

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT Jane Hellberg
VICE PRESIDENT Lisa Immerblum
SECRETARY Laura Hanlon
TREASURER Katherine Realbuto

“Together we can make a difference.”

Somers Central School District

Special Services Barry Whalen
 277-3777 Alethea Schepperly
 Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joanne Marien
 248-7872
 Asst. Superintendent Mrs. Kathy Mason
 248-5531



PLEASE NOTE: The following is a compilation of resources that SEPTA members have used and found helpful. While SEPTA does not endorse any individual resource, we do hope that you find this list useful.

NYS PTA Special Education Chairperson

Josephine Macchia Dalerone@aol.com 631-893-5123

Auditory Processing Testing

Westchester Institute for Human Development
 Shelley Hirsch, MA, CCC-A Valhalla 493-1784
 Robin Zenchk Carmel 845-878-9078

Child Psychiatrists

Dr. Boris Rubinstein Hastings-on-Hudson 478-1330

Child Psychologists

Marta Flaum, PhD Chappaqua 238-1438
 Beth Raines, PhD (clinical) Goldens Bridge 232-1102
 (Works with adolescents)

Educational Testers

Marta Flaum, PhD Chappaqua 238-1438
 Linda Silbert, PhD Strong Learning Center - Mahopac 845-628-7910
 (testing, tutoring, executive skills)
 DAIC Developmental Assessment & Resource Center
 Dr. Risa Tabacoff 666-7687

Books

Negotiating the Special Education Maze: A Guide for Teachers and Parents, by Winifred Anderson, et al
When Your Child has LD: A Survival Guide for Parents, by Gary L. Fisher, et al
The Survival Guide for Kids with LD, by Gary L. Fisher, et al

* This is only a partial list and will be changed in each issue of the newsletter. For a complete list, please see our website.

Have You Ever Seen a Purple Tree?

This is a wonderful story about a girl who painted a purple tree.

Her teacher had drawn a tree on the board and asked the children to copy it. When she sees the girl's tree she disapproves.

“You didn't copy my tree.”

“I know,” says the girl, “I painted my tree.”

“But I've never seen a purple tree.”

“Isn't that a shame,” says the girl.



Sometimes our educators, our leaders, our parents, haven't the eyes to read our insides. And so we write our own stories to fit their skewed sight, even if it means a betrayal of our own tales.

Children are naturally unique until they “try to be.” They try to be in order to get us to notice

them because we weren't paying attention to them when they were painting purple trees. The job of an educator, and we are all educating one another, is to impart basic skills to the student AND to honor the purple tree.

The purple tree is rooted in the part of us that cannot be fully expressed, cannot be narrowed into words, and cannot be subject to laws.

adapted from *The Mystery of Love*, by Marc Gafni