

Connecting with Families and Educators



Providing information, support and encouragement to families and educators of children and young adults with disabilities.



Time is Ticking...

April and May always seem like such busy months. I do not know if they really are, after the long winter, or if when the weather starts to cooperate and the days get longer, the time just seems to fly. By looking at just the events listed in this newsletter, you can see how packed the weeks are, so it is no wonder the days and weeks seem to speed by.

As the school year reaches the end (even with all those make up snow days) it is good to think not only about “getting through” the rest of this year, but to think ahead to plans for next year. Most IEP meetings will be held before the end of April, with plans in place for the rest of this year and the beginning of next. You might want to put a note on your calendar to schedule some time in early August with your son or daughter to review his/her IEP before school starts. Especially for middle and high school students it is good for the student to understand what is in place for supports and what expectations are for the student.

Many students who have received services in school start college or jobs after high school without a clear understanding of their disability/condition. Many do not know what supports and accommodations they need to be successful and why they are helpful. Individuals who need accommodations need to be able to describe what they need and why to employers and colleges. As a matter of fact, they need to be able to explain why they should get accommodations (the impact of their disability/condition,) and what accommodations they need (how the accommodations enable them to do their work/ participate in school.) If they don't step-up to ask for the accommodations and if they can't explain the needs to the school or workplace, they will not get the supports they need to be successful. It is one of the aspects of adult life for persons who have disabilities.

So, practice now, while in middle and high school to help prepare your son/daughter to take care of business when they leave high school to go on to work or college.

Family Center on Technology and Disability

The Family Center on Technology and Disability (FCTD) has set up a site on the social network, Ning, as a place for parents, special educators, and AT professionals to share information. You can post questions, share events, and communicate with other assistive/instructional technology professionals and families. FCTD staff also posts relevant resources on AT and special education. To learn more, please visit <http://fctdnet.ning.com/>

Parent Survey Results...Thanks!

Our thanks go to the gracious parents who have taken a few minutes of their time to answer questions about special education services. As part of the continuous improvement process each year we interview parents of students who attend schools in our area. The results of the phone interviews are tabulated and compiled on a regional and statewide basis. The information obtained is used to make sure quality services continue to be provided for the students in our schools, and to help identify any areas that need improvement.

If you are interested in the results of the parent survey, you may find the summary and conclusions in the Department of Education annual report, Chapter: Parent Involvement, Indicator at: http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=623&Itemid=1641

Summer Activities

It is not too early to be thinking about summer schedules and activities. Most of us, children as well as adults function better with routine and predictable schedules.

We also know that it is important for children of all ages to continue learning during the summer months. Math, reading and all those other subjects we learn in the classroom fade away under the bright sunshine and late summer nights if we don't make a point of practicing some of those skills. The challenge for parents in particular is how to make sure our children have opportunities to use their skills when they are away from the classroom. Reading books, magazines, comic books, newspapers or anything in-between whether they come from the library or convenience store are always great ways to remind children that reading is good both for information and for pleasure.



Nontraditional learning opportunities may add variety and interest to a student's learning experience and still keep skills shiny and bright. These might include everyday applications of those skills learned in the classroom, such as using math skills in cooking and shopping. Here is an example: Suggest your son invite friends over for supper before a baseball game or other outing. Give him an amount of money to budget for the night's activities and remind him to allow for all the expenses... cost of groceries, gas money, admission to the event, and any snacks he wants to provide. If he comes to the realization that the money can't stretch that far, he might problem solve with you to figure out a solution. Maybe the menu needs to change, maybe guests need to be invited with the understanding that they will be responsible for their own admission at the event, or maybe a free event could be identified. After the budget is developed and you have approved it, go on a shopping trip for the supplies. Have your son keep track of the expenses within the budget. The next activity may be developing a timeline for meal preparation with the steps outlined in order and by time so that the meal is ready on time, there is time to eat, and time to get to the event. You may want to have your son develop an invitation for the event, look up addresses, address envelopes and determine when the invitations should be mailed. Depending upon how adventurous you are meal preparation could be another opportunity for using measurement and time keeping skills, besides cooking and cleaning techniques.

Similar approaches can be used for craft or construction projects, family vacation planning, running errands... the possibilities are endless. It is difficult to go through a day without using math, writing or reading!

If you are looking for social opportunities for your children, don't forget your community library and parks and recreation departments. YMCAs in many communities have organized activities for children of all ages. Art centers, community churches and other religious or social organizations might be possible sources to consider. Summer camps, some with sessions designed for particular groups of children, are available across the state, and many have scholarships available for families that are in need. A listing of accredited camps and information about how to select a camping experience for your child is available at the American Camp Association at www.acacamps.org or contact the regional office for Iowa located at ACA, Great Rivers, 6031 Hickory Street, Omaha, NE 68106; Barbara Collins at 402-556-7524 executive@ACAGreatRivers.org

Whether summer includes activities at home, in the community or at a summer camp, opportunities to learn new skills and keep the old ones fresh makes for the best summer and start to a good school year next fall.



Access Pass to National Parks

Any United States citizen who has a permanent disability may receive a free pass to national parks and historical sites and monuments through the Access Pass program. The pass allows individuals free access to national recreation areas and discounts for some facility fees (such as camping.)

You may pick up a pass at most national parks and federal recreation areas by presenting proof of a disability. For more information about necessary documentation and provisions of the pass go to www.us-parks.com/golden_access_passport.html.

The Nightmare

"The Nightmare" is the title of a poem written by a student in one of our middle schools just a few weeks ago. The student and his parents have granted permission for the poem to be published in this newsletter, and I am grateful to be able to share it with you.

Through this poem the author sheds a little light on what it feels like for some students who do not see school as a welcoming and positive place. Schoolwork may be challenging and overwhelming or adults seem uncaring and unsupportive.

As you read Matt's poem, please give some thought to what you do every day at school or at home or in your community to support students who may have feelings similar to this, but are not as skilled at expressing them as Matt.



Time to go to school again
I think school is a repetitive
cycle. Every other day is the
same.

It feels like I'm drowning in
a pit of despair, help is
just an arms reach away,
but I keep sinking deeper and
deeper.

Then it's Friday, it's almost
over...
Sunday night I keep thinking of
the Jaws theme song, and
Monday is the giant shark that
eats you alive.

I wake up, realize it was just a
dream and get ready for the
real nightmare to begin.

—Matt Urbatsch
March 2010

Experience with Exploration by Design: How Stuff Works 2010

Attention tinkerers and dismantlers! If figuring out the inner workings of things is something you enjoy, don't miss "Exploration by Design: How Stuff Works 2010," a three-day immersion experience for students with disabilities who are interested in science, social sciences, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Instructors from the University of Illinois and the University of Wisconsin-Madison will guide participants in hands-on activities, experiments and discussions to unlock the mysteries behind how everyday objects function. Participants and their parents also will gain valuable insights about careers, postsecondary transition, accommodations and assistive technology.

Campers can attend one of two sessions; session one takes place at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana on July 20-22 followed by session two at the University of Wisconsin-Madison on July 27-29. Each site can accommodate up to 20 students and their parents or guardians.

Click here to apply: <http://stemmidwest.org/default.asp?contentID=596>

Online registration begins March 1, 2010. Participants must be current or graduating high school students in grades 9-12, U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents and must have a verifiable disability. All expenses, including food, housing and transportation within Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin will be provided for students and up to two parents or guardians. Prior year participants are not eligible in order to allow new participants to take part. Application preference will be given to residents of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa. Applicants from other states are allowed to apply, but will only be accepted if space permits after April 30, 2010.

NOTE: These camps require active parent and student participation during each day of the camp. Breaks and social time will be provided, but we do expect both parent and student participants to be on-site during the dates of each camp. *This article provided by Midwest Alliance in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) University of Wisconsin-Madison, 338 Goodnight Hall, 1975 Willow Drive, Madison, WI 53706; 866.857.4358; <http://stemmidwest.org/>*

On-Line Social Skills Training Available

The Regional Autism Services Program sponsored by the University of Iowa Child Health Specialty Clinics and the Iowa Department of Education presents an on-line learning opportunity for anyone interested in finding out more about social skills training strategies for individuals who have an autism spectrum disorder.

This training is:

- Free
- On-line and available on **your** schedule
- Allows two different ways to participate, either as an interested individual or as a member of a school team that will be provided follow-up training in August.

Anyone interested in learning can view the course between April 1 and May 31, 2010. In order to access the training, request a password via e-mail at sue-baker@uiowa.edu or register online at www.medicine.uiowa.edu/autismservices

Iowa Educators AIM for 100% Access to Bookshare Statewide

Shouldn't the first day of school mean that every student has access to the instructional materials they'll need to succeed? The Iowa's Department of Education had just launched a drive to encourage every school district to sign up qualified students with print disabilities for Bookshare memberships.

Bookshare (www.bookshare.org) is the world's largest online accessible library for individuals with print disabilities. The library is free to qualified U.S. schools and students who are blind, have low vision, a physical disability or a severe learning disability that affects reading. The Iowa statewide access program, called TRUE AIM, began in February 2010 with a special joint training session for Area Education Agency Directors (chief administrators, special education directors, media directors, and instructional services directors). These educators are now qualified to help other districts sign up for and use Bookshare to ensure that 100% of students who need accessible instruction materials (AIM) get signed up and receive accessible books in a timely manner. Learn more about Iowa's True AIM Campaign at: <http://trueaim.iowa.gov/>.



Kurtis Broeg, Special Education Teacher and Learning Strategist for Williamsburg Jr. and Sr. High School, Williamsburg, Iowa and his student.

Shouldn't the first day of school mean that every student has access to the instructional materials...

Mr. Broeg said, "Required reading assignments in junior and senior high school can be long and difficult for average readers. For struggling readers and students with disabilities, it can be nearly impossible to have a successful reading experience. Bookshare has transformed my students' reading experience and has saved me countless hours of searching and locating required accessible books."

Bookshare is a non-profit organization partially funded by a \$32 million award from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The accessible library offers tens of thousands of ebooks including best sellers, textbooks, teacher-recommended reading and periodicals along with two software applications that read digital books. Parents can also sign their children up for individual Bookshare memberships at: <http://www.bookshare.org/signUpType>

Contact Steve Maurer, Iowa DOE at 515-281-3576 or email steve.maurer@iowa.gov for information.

Contact Valerie Cherneck, PR Manager at Bookshare: 410-871-2670 or email valeriec@bookshare.org.

Bookshare 101 for Parents

Join Bookshare and the Iowa Department of Education to learn about free reading resources for qualified Iowa students. Students who struggle with reading due to a print disability like blindness, low vision, physical disabilities, and severe learning disabilities like dyslexia qualify for free access to Bookshare, a nonprofit online library with over 68,000 digital books and free assistive reading software that can be installed at home. In this webinar, you will learn:

- What is Bookshare?
- How does Bookshare help students with print disabilities?
- Who is eligible for Bookshare and how do students sign up?
- How can parents help their children?

Learn more about Bookshare and how your child may be able to access its great book collection and technology by visiting the Bookshare website (www.bookshare.org) or attending a webinar for parents in Iowa <https://cc.readytalk.com/cc/schedule/display.do?udc=expjbmjvbj27>

This article provided by the Iowa Department of Education.

Sign up today!

Staying Safe and Healthy

The national Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes that people with disabilities sometimes have a harder time getting and staying healthy than people without disabilities. The use of universal design and architectural accessibility features help people live more active and independent lives.

Resources available through the CDC include health and safety tips that include information on universal design listed below:

Health and Safety Tips

- Find the best health care professionals in your area to meet your needs.
<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/Disabilities/#healthcare>
- Create a personal support network (sometimes called a self-help team) to help you prepare for a disaster. (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA])
http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/pfd_all.pdf
- Build or modify your home for independence. (The American Occupational Therapy Association)
<http://www.aota.org/Consumers/Tips/Adults/HomeMods/35182.aspx>
- When remodeling, find a contractor who can help you make the changes that allow you to stay in your home as long as you want. (AARP)
http://www.aarp.org/families/home_design/rate_home/a2004-03-23-caps.html

Important Links

- Disability and health
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dh/infocenters.htm>
- Disaster Preparedness for People with Disabilities and Special Needs (FEMA)
http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/pfd_all.pdf
- Universal design Guidelines: Making Health Settings & Information Accessible
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/dh/accessibilityguides.htm>
- Accessibility and universal design U.S. Department of Labor and federal partners
<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/digovpublic/public/DisplayPage.do?parentFolderId=5173>
- Home design (AARP)
http://www.aarp.org/families/home_design

Student Health Issues Linked to Student Achievement Issues

According to an article that appeared in the March 9 *Education Week* electronic newsletter, certain health issues impact student learning and aggravate the already existing achievement gap for students from “disadvantaged” groups. The article cited a study conducted by Charles E. Basch, a professor of health and education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

The health issues identified in the study are: vision problems, asthma, teenage pregnancy, aggression and violence, physical inactivity, lack of breakfast, and inattention and hyperactivity. For more information on the study, and a copy of the report, go to the *Education Week* site at: <http://www.edweek.org/login.html?source=http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/03/09/25health.h29.html&destination=http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2010/03/09/25health.h29.html&levelId=2100>

RESPECT Training

Recognizing Everyone's Strengths by Peace-building, Empathizing, Communicating and Trust-building (RESPECT) in the IEP process is a four-day course for parents and educator members of IEP teams. This training is sponsored by the ASK Resource Center and Iowa Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC.) Course goals are to teach IEP team members how to honor and resolve differences that arise among families and educators and how to think and act like facilitators/coaches in IEP meetings, even though that may not be their formal role.

Trainings will be held from 8:30 a.m. – 4:15 p.m. The four days of training are scheduled over 3 months, to allow participants opportunity to practice skills included in the training. Individuals who attend are expected to share presentations and participate in discussions of the final assignment. Participants are expected to attend all four sessions.

Graduate credit and CEUs may be available upon request. Participant meals and all materials will be provided. ASK will provide parent stipends (\$50 per day) and funds to defray the cost of substitutes for teachers and administrators (up to \$100 per day).

Training is scheduled in Waterloo at Hawkeye Community College, Martin Luther King Jr. Center, 515 Beech St., Waterloo, IA 50703. Dates: (Wednesdays) April 21, May 26, June 9, June 23.

Course instructors are Susan Myers and Gretchen Woods of the ASK Resource Center and Robin Galloway of the Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC).

To register contact Amanda at ASK Resource Center, 515-243-1713, 800-450-8667, or info@askresource.org to register.

Support Group Information

There are a number of support groups across Iowa and in AEA 267. If you are affiliated with a support group and would like information about the group listed on the AEA 267 Family-Educator Connection web site and in our newsletters, send information to Sandy Kraschel at skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us or call 800-392-6640.

ADHD support group Meets second Monday of the month during the school year at Upper Iowa University. 3563 University, Waterloo from 6:30-8 pm. For more information contact Barb at 319-266-2901 or wilk123abc@q.com

ASD/ PDD Support Group A support group for parents. Meetings are held at 3:00 p.m. the first Sunday of the month in Mason City and the third Sunday of the month in St Ansgar. Locations are Whiskey Creek Woodfire Grill, 1519 4th Street SW in Mason City and Fourth Street Coffee Shop, 230 West 4th Street, in St Ansgar. For more information, or to sign up for the group's E-mail, send a message to pddsupport@mchsi.com.

Designer Genes - A Support Group for families of children with Down Syndrome, provides parent groups as well as family events and playgroups for young children. For more information call 319-939-8065 or e-mail designergenes2005@yahoo.com.

Prader Willi Syndrome Association of Iowa

For more information please contact:

Edie Bogaczyk

515-987-0288 or dbogaczyk@msn.com.

Epilepsy Support Group

Waterloo/Cedar Falls Area

Held at the Kimball Ridge Center, Conference Room 1

2101 Kimball Ave. Waterloo, IA

Held the 2nd Thursday of every ODD month at 6:30 pm

For more information contact Karly Ashlock, Services Coordinator for Iowa Epilepsy Foundation North/Central Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, 1111 9th Street, Suite 275, Des Moines, IA 50314

Phone: 515-238-7660; Email: kashlock@efncil.org

Support Group for Parents of Children with special Needs

Just forming in the Iowa Falls area. For more information contact Andy Lawler.

alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us or 631-844-2469

ASD Support Group Forming

Jeni Oelkers is a mom who is interested in establishing a support group for parents of children affected by autism and related conditions, and others who are interested in autism spectrum disorders.

If you are interested in making a connection through an ASD support group, please contact Jeni at 641-512-6230 or jhoelkers@gmail.com.

Check us out
on the Web!

www.aea267.k12.ia.us



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FAMILY ED CONNECTION



Calendar

April

Friday, April 16

Mental Illness in Children

Brooklyn Center, Minnesota
Dr. Christopher Okiishi, noted child psychiatrist will provide an overview of the most common childhood psychiatric conditions. He will illustrate his workshop with examples of behaviors a child may exhibit in the classroom, community or home and discuss the possible mental health underpinnings of these behaviors. Conditions addressed include: Mood disorders (Depression, bipolar, adjustment disorders, grief); Anxiety disorders (Generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety, panic disorder, OCD, post-traumatic stress disorder, separation anxiety disorder); Disruptive behavior disorders (ADHD, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, reactive attachment disorder); Tic disorders (Tourette Syndrome); Cognitive disorders (Mental disabilities, learning disorders); Psychotic disorders (Schizophrenia)
Workshop sponsored by Spectrum Training Systems. For more information go to www.SpectrumTrainingSystemsInc.com or call (920) 749-0332

April 22
Earth Day



Friday, April 23

International Dyslexia Association Upper Midwest Branch Annual Conference

St. Paul, Minnesota
Featured speakers include Dr. Marcia K. Henry and Dr. Maryanne Wolf.
For more information contact events@ida-umb.org or 651.450.7589 or www.ida-umb.org

Saturday, April 24

Parenting for School Success

Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Sponsored by the Iowa PTA and the Iowa Parent Information Resource Center, this all day workshop is for parents and their educational partners. Keynote address on internet safety and workshop sessions including PTA involvement, Family learning time for young children, Advocating for your child with special needs, Iowa Core Curriculum, No Child Left Behind, Homework success, Substance abuse and children, and others.
For more information go to www.iowapta.org or call 800.475.4782

April 28

National walk at Lunch Day! Invite a co-worker to take a hike during lunch.

May

May 1 May Day and Join Hands Day

Wednesday, May 5 - Thursday, May 6 3rd Annual Mental Health Awareness Conference

Dubuque, Iowa
Featured speaker: Christopher Okiishi
More information contact Community Circle of Care at 563.583.3266 or www.dbqfoundation.org/Events/Event3/Event3WithPaypal/tabid/

May 9
Mother's Day

Thursday, May 13- Friday, May 14 Making a Difference in a Changing World, The Arc of Iowa 57th Annual Conference

Cedar Falls, Iowa
The Arc of Iowa presents Derrick F. Dufresne, Senior Partner of Community Resource Alliance and Dee Dee Eberle, Director of Chapter Organizing and Advocacy, The Arc of United States at this two-day conference. Workshop topics include the basics of advocacy, parent advocacy skills, and making a difference in the changing world.
For more information go to www.arccv.org Registration forms also available through AEA267 Family & Educator Connection at 800.392.6640.

May 31 Memorial Day

June

June 20
Father's Day

Remember to check the Disability Training Information calendar at www.disabilitytraining.org/ and the AEA 267 Professional Development web site at www.aea267.k12.ia.us/pd/ for information on more learning opportunities.

Summer hours for AEA 267 Offices June 7 through August 13: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

The Family-Educator Connection

The AEA 267 Family-Educator Connection provides information and support for families and educators around disability related issues. Whether you would like to talk about family adjustment issues with a new baby or newly diagnosed disability, home-school communication issues, questions relating to understanding a disability, or parenting strategies, we are happy to take your call. We have quite a library of resources available for loan and a number of highly qualified people to consult. If you have a question, we will do our best to help you find the answer. We are available by phone, mail, e-mail or by appointment, in-person.

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FAMILY-EDUCATOR

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