

The SPED Informant

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A note from the Editors

The **SPED Informant**, our very own home grown newsletter dedicated to the dissemination of special education information, got off to a good start. We published our first edition of the **SPED Informant** in June 2003. We worked hard to get it off the ground, and it has been very rewarding receiving the many compliments you gave.

We are dedicating this edition of the **SPED Informant** to the subject of Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning. You will notice that most articles are given an IEP focus.

In the area of training, Sandra Lopez and Lynn Guiser report on training we took on Inclusion and Running Support

Groups, respectively. We dedicated a corner to the Tinton Falls, NJ school district administration in which Mr. Richard Wesler, Director of Special Education Services, shares his view of where we are, and where we are going in the school year 2003-2004.

calendar.

Lastly, as a new feature, we are opening the doors to contributions from learners in our district. We hope they become a permanent column to look forward to in future editions.

Remember that the **SPED Informant** will be published every two months. Please consider submitting articles for publication by sending email to us by the 15th of the month of publication (e.g., October 2003, December 2003). Email us at:

TheSPEDInformant@yahoo.com.

We hope you find the **SPED Informant** useful and informative.

Your Editors,

Sandra Lopez and Lynn Guiser

"I have never been especially impressed by the heroics of people who are convinced they are about to change the world. I am more awed by those who struggle to make one small difference after another."

Source: Ellen Goodman

In addition, we provide an update on the Reauthorization of IDEA. We review the topics that will be covered over the 2003-2004 SPED meeting series

Get involved; Be a Sponsor!

By: Alix Zweig

On September 21, 2003 there's going to be a walk to help find a cure for Autism. The walk is in Mercer County Park in West Windsor, NJ. Autism is a developmental disability that effects one in two hundred fifty births.

My brother Christopher, who is 10 years old, has this disability. He has some difficulties. For instance, he has difficulty with his social skills and repetitiveness. But the good things about him are he is very funny, loves movies, and is very smart.

I would like to help find a cure by raising money. Last year I raised over 1,000 dol-

lars and I would like to raise even more this year! So if you are interested in making a pledge please contact me at 732-542-3624. All proceeds benefit the National Alliance for Autism Research.

Thank you in advance for your support!

Our Special Education Parent Discussion Group is dedicated to serving the special education needs of the Tinton Falls, New Jersey community.

Our Mission

To keep the Tinton Falls, NJ parent community informed on matters related to special education. We will accomplish this by:

- *Understanding, assisting, and supporting parents in addressing and resolving issues related with special education.*
- *Empowering parents to be effective advocates for our children in a newer, deeper, more personal way.*
- *Seeking accountability from the Tinton Falls School District (TFSD), the State of NJ, and the federal government in matters related to special education.*
- *Seeking improvements in educational results of children receiving special education in the TFSD.*

What is an Individualized Education Plan?

By: Sandra Lopez

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) also known as IDEA, defines the term 'individualized education program' or 'IEP' as a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with item d of section 614 of the Act "Evaluations, eligibility determinations, individualized education programs, and educational placements: IEP".

IDEA requires that IEPs include the following components:

- a statement of the learner's present levels of educational performance;
- a statement of measurable annual goals, including benchmarks or short-term objectives;
- a statement of the special education, related services and supplementary aids and services to be

provided to the learner, or on behalf of the learner, and a statement of the program modifications or supports for school personnel that will be provided for the learner;

- an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the learner will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular classroom;
- a statement of any individual modifications in the administration of State or district wide assessments of student achievement that are needed in order for the learner to participate in such assessment;
- if the IEP Team determines that the learner will not participate in a particular State or district wide assessment of student achievement (or part of such an assessment), a statement of why that assessment is not appropriate for the learner and how the learner will be assessed must be included;

- the projected date for the beginning of the services and modifications, and the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those services and modifications;
- a statement of the transition service needs of the learner, beginning at age 14, and updated annually;
- a statement of how the learner's progress toward the annual goals will be measured;
- a statement of how the learner's parents will be regularly informed (by such means as periodic report cards), at least as often as parents are informed of their non-disabled children's progress, of —
 - (i) their child's progress toward the annual goals; and
 - (ii) the extent to which that progress is sufficient to enable the child to achieve the goals by the end of the year.

The IEP and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

By: Sheila Duane

In my capacity as a teacher, I have spoken with so many people who have asked me specific and, sometimes, heart wrenching questions about the disorder known as ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder). I have taken it upon myself to read all available literature on this disorder so that I might appropriately answer any questions parents might ask. However, what I found to be the most difficult aspect of meeting a child's need and meeting the goals and objectives of his or her IEP was appropriately measuring the development of "understanding" as opposed to "ability to respond" to instruction. It was also very difficult to explain the difference to parents.

"Individuals with ADHD are often very intelligent; ADHD is a developmental disorder that impairs their ability to plan and execute what they know."

Dr. Russell A. Barkley, a noted Professor of Psychology and Neurology, is often considered one of the foremost researchers in the field of ADHD.

Although the research and information he presents in his texts are too sweeping and too technically exhaustive to be relayed here, the realities of ADHD and the difference between "understanding" and "responding," according to Dr. Barkley, can be briefly summarized as follows.

- Dr. Barkley asserts that ADHD is not a perceptual problem; rather, it is a motor output problem that is related to a deep mental mechanism in the frontal lobe of the brain. He believes it is not caused by television, sugar, or the environment.
- ADHD's most important cognitive impairment is the delayed internalization of language, in other words, the afflicted child can speak, can hear, can understand but has difficulty appreciating and acting on the information, verbal cues, and instructions. Thus, the disorder, according to Barkley,

makes the child less available for learning.

- Individuals with this disorder are often very intelligent; it is a developmental delay that impairs their ability to plan and execute what they know.
- Dr. Barkley believes that a better moniker for "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" would be "Intention Deficit Disorder" because those afflicted with the disorder find it difficult to formulate intentions, that is, plan for the future or make focused decisions. The disorder inhibits their ability to wait and practice self-control.

I personally do not agree with all of Dr. Barkley's recommendations for treatment. I believe each child is a unique individual and must be treated and loved as such. It's important that Child Study Teams, teachers, and parents work together as a team to create measurable goals and objectives for each individual child. It's also important that educators and parents work together, at home and at school, to help the individual child achieve his or her maximum potential.

What is Your IEP IQ?

Adapted by Lynn M. Guiser from Wrightslaw.com reprint of article published in *Autism Asperger's Digest Magazine* (March-April 2001, pg 11)

To be an Effective Advocate for your child, you need to know the law. You also need to know how to use the law without starting no-win battles. Few parents and educators learn about legal rights and responsibilities by reading statutes, regulations and cases. Most parents get information from training sessions, articles, listserv advice, and informal discussions with others. Your knowledge can rise no higher than your source!

You Must Learn the Law. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA) is a federal statute that begins in title 20, United States Code Section 1400. The legal citation for the law about Individual Education Programs (IEPs) is 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d).

The U. S. Department of Education adopts regulations to implement the IDEA. The federal special education regulations are in volume 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, beginning in Part 300. The legal citation about [regulations about IEPs](#) is 34 C.F.R. § 300.340-350.

The federal special education regulations include additional information about IEPs in an appendix called Appendix A. It includes 40 Questions and Answers about IEPs. With this "Q & A" format, [Appendix A](#) is similar to "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQs) on web-sites.

IEP Quiz tests your knowledge. Answers follow and can also be found in [Appendix A](#).

1. Must a child's IEP address his or her involvement in the general curriculum, regardless of the nature and severity of the child's disability and the setting in which the child is educated?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts
2. Must the measurable annual goals in a child's IEP address all areas of the general curriculum, or only those areas in which the child's involvement and progress are affected by the child's disability?
Answer: All areas / Only areas affected by disability / It depends on specific facts
3. Must the public agency inform the parents of who will be at the IEP meeting?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts
4. Do parents have the right to a copy of their child's IEP?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts
5. If a child with a disability attends several regular classes, must all of the child's regular education teachers be members of the child's IEP team?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts
6. Must the public agency ensure that all services specified in a child's IEP are provided?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts
7. Is it permissible for an agency to have the IEP completed before the IEP meeting begins?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts
8. Must a public agency provide related services that are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, whether or not those services are included in the list of related services in Sec. 300.24?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts
9. Must the IEP specify the amount of services or may it simply list the services to be provided?
Answer: Must specify amount / May list
10. If a child's IEP includes behavioral strategies to address a particular behavior, can a child ever be suspended for engaging in that behavior?
Answer: Yes / No / It depends on specific facts

See Page 7 to **Score your test.**

Read Appendix A. Your goal is not to memorize the answers to these questions. After you read these questions and answers, you will know that the questions have been asked and answered. You will know where to find answers. This is sufficient.

The [IDEA statute](#), [federal regulations](#) and [Appendix A](#) are available at the [Wrightslaw](http://Wrightslaw.com) site and in the book, [Wrightslaw: Special Education Law](#).

Getting Started as a Special Education Advocate

By: Lynn Muller Guiser

I attended my first IEP (Individual Education Program) meeting not knowing what the letters IEP stood for or what it meant in terms of educating my child. I had never even heard the term before. I took a passive role in the process of developing the first IEP. This is not an advisable approach!

Experts in special education often refer to the IEP as the 'heart' of the free appropriate public education (FAPE). As parents, we need to learn how to contribute to the team process of drawing up an effective IEP for our children. For your child to have meaningful benefit from the implementation of the IEP, it behooves us to learn the components and purpose of this vital document.

Based on personal experience, plus trainings provided by advocates such as Judy Livney of BEAM (Becoming Educated and Motivated about Special Education), and SPAN (Statewide Parent Advocacy Network), I offer the following tips to get you started as an advocate in the special education process.

"I attended my first IEP meeting not knowing what the letters IEP stood for. This is not an advisable approach"

To help you begin, the tips offered in this article focus on three important components of the IEP - the Present Level Of Performance (PLOP), the Goals and Objectives (G & O), and the child's Educational Placement. The PLOP and the Goals and Objectives sections of the IEP are closely tied together. One of the last decisions made by the IEP team is the educational placement of your child - the place (s) where learning and teaching will take place.

Think of these tips as reminders of the things you can do to get to a good start.

Ten Beginner Tips For IEP Development

1. An IEP is a needs-based document. Draw up the IEP based on current needs and most recent academic and behavioral tests, evaluations and observations.
2. Write a description of the Present Level Of Performance (PLOP) and the educational needs of your child. This will include results from most recent evaluations and observations. The PLOP describes where your child currently performs in many different areas. It gives starting data from which measurable goals and objectives can be written.
3. Goals and objectives included in the IEP shall relate to the problem/weak areas and needs that are described in the PLOP.
4. When writing goals and objectives, think about what grade and age-appropriate children are learning (to the maximum extent possible - given the student's individual needs). What does your child need to learn in order to progress to the next grade level? For example, a preschooler needs to attain certain reading readiness goals in order to progress to kindergarten.
5. The goals and objectives must be measurable. They must be able to be counted or measured in order to monitor their achievement. Annual goals describe the achievements that are expected over the next year. Break goals down into quarterly objective measurements of progress. For example, if 24 letters of the alphabet are expected to be identified, one might expect achievement of 6 letters per quarter.
6. Determine what, if any - support, technology, supplemental or related services are needed - in order to achieve the written annual goals? For example, if alphabet letter writing is a goal and holding a writing utensil is a problem, the child may need an Occupational Therapy (OT) evaluation. This will determine if there is a delay in fine motor skills development - which may need to be addressed in order to accomplish letter writing.
7. The last part of IEP development is the decision about 'placement' of the student. The IEP team will decide where the teaching and learning of the IEP goals will take place. The decision making must always 'begin' with a discussion of the child being placed in regular education - called 'least restrictive environment'. For example, for a preschool-aged child, the question would be, 'what support does the child need - if anything - to be "included" in a regular education preschool experience?'
8. 10 days before the IEP meeting, you will receive your copy of the evaluation reports that have been completed about your child. Ask ahead of time - in writing - for each evaluator, to include sub-test scores and percentage rankings for each test and sub-test given to your child. Review the reports with an experienced professional, advocate, or parent well before the IEP meeting.
9. Read the procedural safeguards booklet. Ask for a current copy of NJAC 6A:14 - the entire NJ code/regulations for special education. Plan to get a copy of IDEA (Individuals With Disabilities Education Act.) - the federal statute governing special education. Read different sections of these regulations as you move along your journey of advocacy.
10. Expect to need support and help with note-taking at the IEP meeting. Therefore, bring someone with you - a friend, advocate, relative, neighbor - as well as a tape recorder. (Inform your school district ahead of time if you plan to audio-tape the meeting.)

IDEA Reauthorization Update

By: Sandra Lopez

Note: Most of the material for this article was drawn from the Our Children Left Behind [OCLB] website and its various links.

The 2003 Summer was wet and I am grateful it went fast! The kids are going back to school and our families will be struggling with getting back to the regular routine. Before you know it, we will all be fitting back into old routines or creating new ones.

Our support group has tried to keep all parents informed of what is happening with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Reauthorization effort. We have been urging parents, students and families to keep contacting those Congress members and US Senators who hold our children's fate in their hands. One thing hasn't changed since June 2003. The IDEA 97 remains under attack, and 6.5 million students and their families remain with their backs against the wall. September, always a busy month, will be pivotal in the battle to save IDEA 97. In this article, I review relevant history, previous battle activity and give you a peak into what might be happening next month, when the war might be decided.

Part B of IDEA 97, the section governing parent/student rights and student eligibility; Individual Education Program [IEP] development; IEP Team activities and requirements; discipline provisions; and appeal mechanisms was permanently authorized by Congress in IDEA 97, and does not have to go through Congress again now or at any time in the future in order to remain the law of the land. There is no legal need or reason to review or revise Part B in order for it to remain in effect.

No Child Left Behind [NCLB], which became law in 2001, does work toward measurements that gauge student academic progress, but its provisions do not embrace an understanding of or regulate the measurement of the skill building components that often are at the core of IEPs for students receiving services under IDEA, particularly those students who have cognitive or physical disabilities, or emotional impairments.

IDEA 97 and NCLB can co-exist. Nothing in NCLB, either in its language or operation, requires that IDEA 97 be revised to conform to NCLB. IDEA 97 is in conformity with NCLB.

Show that You Care!

1. You need to keep writing and calling your congress representatives.
2. If appropriate, take your child to meet her/his Congressional legislators.
3. Tell your family members and friends about the battle and what it means for your child and you. Ask them to join you in voicing your opinion.
4. Review the resources available on the internet and learn about the proposed changes and what they will mean for your child and family.

There is very little current, reliable research data that fairly or accurately assesses IDEA 97's effectiveness across the country. It is too early to declare with certainty that any provisions put into place by IDEA 97 are not working. Nonetheless, Congress thought it necessary to amend IDEA 97. The current Congressional push to amend Part B of IDEA 97 has been driven to a great extent by school administrators and their lobbyists over the last two plus years in an effort to "reduce paperwork and burdensome procedural safeguards".

H.R. 1350-the "Improving Education Results for Children with Disabilities Act"- was drafted by the House Subcommittee on Education Reform and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce and was approved on the floor on April 30. H.R. 1350 was drafted with the primary view and help of school and special education administrators and their lobbyists. Congressmen Boehner and Castle, the key House committee chairs, made no attempts to hide that they would hold no public hearings.

The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee worked on its own version of H.R. 1350. The senate was expected to follow the House lead, both in speed, and in shutting out parent and advocacy organization input. Early predictions were that the bill would be introduced and clear the Senate by Memorial Day. But something happened. The parents and advocates made progress in telling Congress about our children, and about how H.R. 1350 would hamper their educational opportunity. The Senate slowed its process down and decided to draft its own bill. On June 12th Senators Gregg and Kennedy introduced S. 1248-the "Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2003". The goal initially was to have S. 1248 go through the Senate by Independence Day,

The bipartisan Senate proposal for updating the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is far superior to the House-passed version. The Senate opened a two week period of public comment to hear what parents and administrators thought of the bill. Families, advocates and consumer-based organizations quickly drafted and filed their responses. Many families traveled to Washington, including representatives from SPAN from NJ, including our very own Lynn Muller Guiser and Sandra Lopez, to introduce the Senators and staff members to their children and to express their opinions about the bills. July 4th came and went without any Senate floor debate or voting.

THE NEXT STEP IS SENATE FLOOR DEBATE

— Our scouts are telling us that S. 1248 will likely be introduced without too much advance notice. The full Senate will debate and vote on the bill, and there may be many amendments offered during the debate. The Senate Republican Policy Committee has issued a report that appears to favor many of the House provisions over those included in S. 1248. Expected amendments include one that would substitute the language of H.R. 1350 for S. 1248 and one from Senator Lamar Alexander (TN) that will provide local educational agencies and schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress on the basis of children with disabilities who meet the goals in their individualized education programs (IEP), with an administrative review prior to identification for improvement.

The most common rumor is that the leadership hopes to have S. 1248 to be introduced and go for vote immediately after the September Labor Day break.

THE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

— Once the House and Senate pass bills with equal or similar scope, the bill creation policy calls for the need conference committee to be assembled to reconcile the bills. Conference Committee members include both Congress members and Senators who are appointed by the respective body's leadership. The Conference Committee will likely be made up of members of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, and the Senate Health, Education Labor and Pension Committee. The Conference Committee will do its work outside of the public eye, and is free to keep or throw out anything included in either S. 1248 or H.R. 1350. In fact, it is not uncommon for conference committees to add provisions to bills that have absolutely nothing to do with the bill's primary topic or purpose. The bill must pass both houses in identical form in order to go to the President for his signature.

IN SUMMARY — We all must keep the pressure on, and we all must make extra effort to be sure our voices are heard in the critical days ahead.

From The Desk Of The Director of Special Services

By: Richard Wesler

It is a pleasure to welcome everyone back to school. I hope a great summer was enjoyed by all. The following are some highlights of the activities of this summer and the upcoming school year.

We have been very busy throughout the summer in the department of Special Services. We began the month of the July with the Extended Year Program. The Extended Year Program dates were from July 7th through August 15th, 2003. The ESY program provided all educational services in each pupil's IEP including all related services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy, language therapy, home instruction, and home-based services. The program was quite large with approximately 65 district pupils and 20 students from other districts participating. All of the pupils were delighted to participate in the programs presented by our staff. Programs included a visit by Jenkinson's Aquarium during which they had the students introduce themselves to a live penguin. Other events included a presentation by the Police Canine Unit and a fair with face painting and trampoline. Parents were also able to participate in these events and they were truly an asset as chaperones on the field trip to Holmdel Park. We are

indebted to our parents for all their help. It couldn't have been a success without all of them.

Special Services received a large number of referrals for initial evaluations throughout the summer. It has been a real challenge to bring staff back to meet this demand. Referrals included many direct referrals from parents, others included students transferring into the district from other districts and needing a variety of services requiring child study team action.

Our district's self assessment of the Special Services department was completed with the assistance of parent participants Mrs. Sandra Lopez and Mrs. Lynn Muller Guiser. The Department of Education has notified us they will convene a focus group on May 3, 2004 and conduct on-site monitoring of the district's self assessment as a follow up on May 12, 2004. Additional information about these activities and dates will be announced as it is received.

The Child Study teams have been re-configured for the 2003/2004 school year. Dr. Molly Foard, School Psychologist, Sara Gordaychik, School Social Worker and Vicki Gross-DeVita, LDT/C will be the Child Study team members at Mahala F. Atchison. Betsy Gibney, LDT/C and Joanne Shoffel, School Social Worker, along with a School Psychologist to be hired, will be the Child Study team members at Swimming River School. The School Psychologist hired in August replacing Dan Liska, who resigned in June for a position closer to home, has notified us he will not be joining us in September. Therefore, we are currently actively recruiting other candidates to fill this position. Nancy Fonyo, School Psychologist, Marie-Ellen Walsh, LDT/C and Joanne Shoffel, School Social Worker, will be the Child Study team members at Tinton Falls Middle School.

The Special Education staff, including teachers and aides, returning for the upcoming year are all experienced staff having worked with us in previous years. I am very pleased to have such a dedicated and experienced group of teachers and aides. The position of Behavioral Consultant to the district has been increased through the use of increased IDEA-B funds received by the district. This will be a great asset to our staff and pupils in accomplishing and maintaining LRE for our pupils.

I am pleased to report that as of this memo, I have set aside additional IDEA funds to pay for parent training. This will allow us to send some parents for training programs they feel they need to assist with their child's needs. This is training in addition to workshops already available through the district presented by MOESC. They will offer approximately 15-18 workshops this year. They can be attended by staff and parents, in most cases, without cost, above the district's participation fee.

In the area of curriculum, the district is providing greater blocks of time for instruction in the core subject areas. Generally, this means instructional periods are for one hour instead of 45 minutes. While this may mean pupils will have fewer choices in some areas, more importantly, they will receive more instruction in the core content areas. This should result in higher achievement and better learning. With the incorporation of improved instructional strategies including multiple intelligences and brain-based learning techniques, I am hopeful more special education pupils will experience greater success in the general education classrooms, resulting in fewer removals from these classes. This is our goal, to have all pupils learning and succeeding together.

Finally, our parent groups, the Special Education Parent Discussion Group (SPED) and the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) have exciting and full schedules of events for the 2003-2004 school year. The schedules include some joint events to bring parents together and keep communication open between both groups. Working together, we can continue the good working relationships and successes we have seen in past years to the benefit of all our pupils.

Again, I am happy to welcome everyone back to school for another exciting year. I am looking forward to seeing everyone and working with all of you.

Developing the IEP for Achievement Workshop

By: Lynn Muller Guiser

On August 6, 2003 Judy Livney, founder of BEAM (Becoming Educated and Motivated About Special Education) presented at our Special Education Parent Discussion Group workshop on "Developing the IEP For Achievement". In attendance were 15 people, including representatives from the Tinton Falls, NJ administration, Board of Education, Child Study Group, and parents.

Judy delivered a comprehensive presentation on the very many aspects of an IEP that are often overlooked or are typically not discussed with the parents.

This presentation was taped and it is available to borrow upon request. Copies of the handouts are available upon request, as well. To request access to the tape or copies of the handouts, please send an email to TheSPEDInformant@yahoo.com. Please provide your name and mailing address in your request.



The START Project Offers Support Group Assistance and Training

By: Lynn Muller Guiser and Sandra Lopez

We attended a day-long training workshop designed to teach us support group leadership skills. This training was offered under the umbrella of services of the START (Statewide Technical Assistance & resource Team) project, which is the result of a partnership between the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) with the State of New Jersey Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs as part of the implementations of the state improvement plan.

This training was facilitated by the New Jersey Self-help Clearing House. Fourteen parents from around our state attended the training. The intent is to create a pool of Parent Support Group Specialists that can provide direct technical assistance and leadership development expertise for existing local parent/family support groups and assist districts and parents throughout the state in forming additional local parent/family groups.

A value-added benefit of this training workshop was the unique opportunity of networking with experienced, self-made Special Education support group leaders. We gathered a substantial amount of valuable information from the experiences shared and roads traveled by the participants. In addition, we have been able to continue to communicate and are starting to create a virtual network of communication networks and experiences. The participants discussed the need for continued support in providing the forums for leaders to collaborate as an obvious outcome of this workshop. Representatives from SPAN asserted their intent on creating innovative collaboration means, including the creation of a page in their website for this purpose.

I am sure we will continue to interact with each other and rely on each others help to move forward and expand the scope and reach of our individual support groups.

Kudos to SPAN and the Office of

Special Education Programs of the State of New Jersey Department of Education for a job well done. We only hope that they realize the sharing must continue for this project to succeed.

If you know of anyone in need of assistance in starting a parent/family support group with educational focus, please have them contact Lauren Hirtes at 973-297-5300 or laurenh@spannj.org for more information.



From Page 3

Score your test

1. Yes, Appendix A, question 2.
2. Only affected areas, Appendix A, Q 4.
3. Yes, Appendix A, Q. 7.
4. Yes, Appendix A, Q. 8.
5. No. Appendix A, Q.25.
6. Yes, Appendix A, Q. 31.
7. No, Appendix A, Q.32.
8. Yes, Appendix A, Q.34.
9. Must specify amount, Appendix A, Q.35.
10. Yes, Appendix A, Q. 40.

Changes to SPED Support Group

By: Sandra Lopez

At the August 2003 meeting of our group the membership discussed the merits of some ideas and changes geared towards providing more value to the members, to allow for more independent decision making, and to conduct more member-friendly meetings.

The following changes are being implemented:

1. Meetings
 - Fixed Agenda meetings will be scheduled on a regular basis;
 - Allow for Open Agenda meetings in the schedule to be held off school premises, and restricted for Parents-only attendance. The meetings can be used as Social gatherings, if appropriate.
2. Creation of Advocacy Committee
 - To be a sounding board for systemic issues;
 - To support and assist parents with advocacy issues;

- To coordinate and Arrange for Free Advocates;
- To look for systemic issues, to formulate plan of action for addressing systemic issues and to report to full membership on recommended actions.
3. Conduct fundraising activities for developing an independent financial base that can then allow the group to:
 - Provide grants to teachers, parents and learners;
 - Be self-sufficient in development and printing of group publications (i.e., Brochures);
 - Afford desired parent training;
 - Buy supplies necessary to support group activities such as supplies and refreshments for off-campus meetings.

We look to you for guidance and support as we roll out these changes. Please be there when we call on you to help. After all any time you invest in our group is time invested on your future and the future of your child.

Highlights from the Inclusive Education Conference for the Millennium

By: Sandra Lopez

I attended the Inclusive Education Conference for the Millennium on July 8-10, 2003. This conference was sponsored by the Montclair Public Schools and the New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education (NJCIE). I was privileged to attend the conference because of the help I received through a grant/scholarship from the NJCIE. I would not have been able to attend had it not been for this grant!

I estimate attendance was in excess of 250 people. All stakeholders in the special education process were represented: General and Special education teachers, related services professional, child study team members, paraprofessional, administrators, parents, and researchers.

The opportunity afforded by this conference to learn about practices that support achievement and inclusion was invaluable. The ability to network, talk, and listen to people talk about the successes and failures is without a question the

greatest success story.

Of particular importance and value was the Keynote speaker's presentation. Dr. Dorothy K. Lipsky delivered a compelling story, full of personal accounts of struggles and successes, enlightened and fueled by her involvement in research and development work in the field of special education. She brought with her Dr. Alan Gartner who has been her longtime partner in her research. Together this dynamic pair provided an entertaining discussion of the road towards inclusion. Their opposing views, and sometimes energetic exchanges demonstrated that properly motivated people, even opponents, can achieve goals as long as the road is traveled together.

I also got to participate in various tracks that included:

- No Child Left Behind;
- IDEA Reauthorization;
- The role of Paraprofessional in Inclu-

sive Classrooms;

- Developing Social Relationships and Skills in Inclusive Schools;
- Teacher's Thoughts on Inclusion.

After two-days of intensive, thought provoking workshops I was poised for being an agent of change in our district. While not there yet, many of the key building blocks required for generating high achievement for all are starting to surface in our district. The journey towards inclusion has just begun in our district. This year we are introducing Multi-Age classrooms, Looping, Team Teaching and Block Scheduling learning environments in our district. We are also revamping various components of our curriculum, such as the pre-school disabled and the math curriculums. We are entering the Monitoring phase of the Self-Assessment process. Fine tuning, innovative thinking, and leadership skills are going to be needed to get us to the next level.

SPED Discussion and Collaboration Website (Hosted by MSN)

By: Sandra Lopez

I invite you to join the Tinton Falls, NJ Special Education Discussion and Collaboration website. This website was created in an effort to keep the Tinton Falls parent community informed on anything related to special education.

On the website you will find ways to collaborate with other members. This website can only be joined by invitation.

If you wish to join the website, please send an email to request an invitation to join the website to the moderator at TheSPEDInformant@yahoo.com.

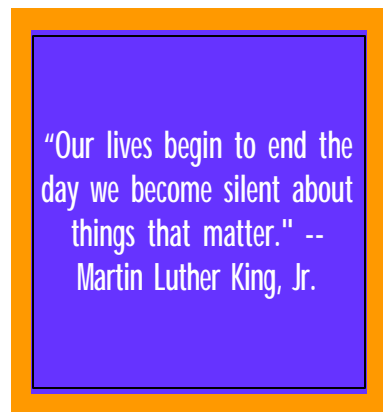
The website provides you with the ability to ask questions and advise from other parents, make a recommenda-

tion, make other parents aware of something of interest and finally chat online with other parents. Our voice will be heard if we share our issues and concerns with each other. Systemic issues can then be brought to the school administration and Board of education attention and we can seek accountability and resolution.

We have populated information in the Calendar, Documents, Training, Links, and Messages web pages.

We welcome your participation. The more members we have the more knowledge we can share.

Remember that Knowledge is power, and our website is a knowledge sharing tool.





The SPED
Informant

TheSPEDInformant@yahoo.com
Website: [http://groups.msn.com/
TintonFallsNJSpecialEducation/](http://groups.msn.com/TintonFallsNJSpecialEducation/)

Editors In Chief:
Sandra Lopez—732-542-6878
Lynn Guiser—732-224-9364
Email: TheSPEDInformant@yahoo.com

THE SPED INFORMANT

Knowledge is Power

We're on the Web!

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TintonFallsNJSpecialEducation/](http://groups.msn.com/TintonFallsNJSpecialEducation/)

Group Meetings

Swimming River School, 220 Hance Avenue
Tinton Falls, NJ 07724

- SPED Meeting on September 9, 2003, NCLB by Debra Jennings, SPAN, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on October 22, 2003, Self-Assessment Process and it's implementation by R. Wesler, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on November 12, 2003, Advanced Advocacy by Renay Zamloot, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on December 10, 2003, Social Agenda, Off Campus, Only Parents, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on January 27, 2004, Basic Rights in Special Education and ESY, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on February 25, 2004, Social Agenda, Off Campus, Only Parents, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on March 24, 2004, Budget by Tamar Sydney-Gens, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on April 21, 2004, Social Skills Development/Training, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on May 18, 2004, Social Agenda, Off Campus, Only Parents, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM.
- SPED Meeting on June 16, 2004, Bullying/Counseling by Joan Vernon, 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM.

THE SPED Informant

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