

The Bridge

President's Message



Dear Members and Friends,

As we sit and write this message, it is the third day of school and we have already had our first SEPTA meeting of the year! We have certainly started off at a fast pace and hope to continue to bring you informative, helpful, and fun information and activities.

A special thank you to Gail Notaro, Director of Special Education for MSD, who introduced the current special education staff at our first meeting and talked about current programs. We also want to thank the Massapequa School District staff members who attended and provided information: Lucille Iconis, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, Maxine Bogen, Secondary Supervisor, Linda Cohen, Elementary Supervisor, Bridget Karras, CSE Chairperson for the High School, Kim Christ, full time CSE Chairperson, Darlene McLaughlin, Behavior Consultant, and Dr. Barbara Williams, Principal of Ames Campus.

We, as Co-Presidents see our role as three-fold: First, bringing you current information on special education issues, by trying to obtain the most accurate information through attending workshops, state and region PTA meetings, researching, and talking to other SEPTA's throughout the state. Secondly, advocating for all children's education, which can mean asking for new programs, the tweaking of current programs, interfacing with educational staff and attending Board of Education meetings. The third aspect is helping to educate the school community and local community about disabilities, and ensuring children with differing abilities the opportunities to interact with each other and with typical peers. This aspect is perhaps the most challenging for us, as it has so many components and is more individualized. We welcome your suggestions for socialization opportunities, both within school and outside of school.

We have a wonderful opportunity for socialization at our 5th Annual Harvest Dance on October 23, and we hope you will all consider attending next year. Thank you to everyone who made this special event, open to all our classified children and families, an amazing chance for everyone to enjoy themselves.

Volunteers are always welcomed for the many jobs that make SEPTA run smoothly throughout the year and we promise to find you something to do that is of interest to YOU!

Thank you for the opportunity to be your co-presidents and know that we enjoy talking to each of you about your concerns, as well as hearing about the success of each of your children!

Lori-Ann Buffolino and Bonnie Goess

Co-Presidents

- **November 6th**
Joe Corbi Fundraiser Ends
- **November 10th**
*SEPTA General Meeting
McKenna Senior Center
7:30PM*
- **November 11th**
Veteran's Day
- **November 12th**
*BOE Public Session
8PM Board Room*
- **November 26th**
Thanksgiving Day!
- **December 3rd**
*BOE Public Session
8PM Board Room*
- **December 1st & 3rd**
*Joe Corbi Fundraiser
Pick up at
Ames Cafetorium
4:30-7:00PM*
- **December 24th**
Holiday Recess



***Going, Going,
Almost Gone!***

**Massapequa School
Calendars in the
convenient purse or
briefcase size are
available for
only \$5.00**

**Contact Lori Bonetti
Fundraising VP
at 516 797-5316**



An important SEPTA General Meeting...

Please join us as Massapequa SEPTA welcomes presenter
Lisa Mitchell, LCSW from the Cody Center on

**“Bringing the Birds and Bees Down to Earth:Sexuality Education for Individuals with
Autism & Developmental Disabilities”**

an informative and frank discussion that will address the concerns of many of our families.

Tuesday, November 10th, 2009

McKenna Senior Center

7:30 PM

.....
: Parents, grandparents, friends, teachers, and administrators are all welcome :
: to attend our meetings to learn and share information. :
:.....

Massapequa Special Education Parent Teacher Association, SEPTA, is a support organization serving every family who receives special education services in Massapequa, NY.

Massapequa SEPTA Member-

Our mission is to educate parents and staff through speakers, workshops and information regarding special education and related areas, to provide information on the multitude of services available for our children locally, statewide and nationally, and to create social and recreational opportunities for all the children with special needs in Massapequa (including those who are placed out of district). SEPTA represents over 1,000 students and their families receiving services district wide. We have, and will continue working closely with our school administrators to improve the availability and quality of special education services for our children.

✂

YES! I want to join Massapequa SEPTA to benefit all students receiving special education services.
If using this form for more than one child, please attach a separate sheet. If you prefer your cards be mailed, please include a self addressed, stamped envelope.

Name: _____ Student Name: _____

Address: _____ Town/Zip Code: _____

Email: _____ Student's Grade _____ Building _____

In District/Out of District Placement _____

Please tear off completed form and send with your check payable to Massapequa SEPTA.
Membership is \$8.00 and only \$7.00 for each additional family member.

Additional Member(s) Name: _____

Mail to: **Massapequa SEPTA Membership**
c/o Sandra Donovan
38 Scott Street
Massapequa Park, NY 11762

WANTED: Parent Members for MSD CPSE and CSE Meetings

Our District is in much need of Parent Members for our CPSE and CSE Meetings.

Parent members may be asked to serve on the committee throughout the year at any time during the school day, as well as on occasion in the summer, depending on when the district schedules the meetings. The busiest times are during the annual reviews in the spring. Training is usually given by the district or Boces, which is only a few of hours. The role of parent members is as follows:

- To develop and maintain knowledge of CSE Process; develop and maintain knowledge of CSE regulations pertaining to CSE process.
- Support the parent of the child with a disability
- Ask questions to assist parents in the understanding the discussion at the CSE meeting.
- Advocate for the child who is being referred to the committee.
- Assist in ensuring that the parent understands the CSE process and feels comfortable.
- Participate in the discussions involving eligibility, IEP development and LRE considerations
- Share personal experiences as appropriate
- Keep aware of community services
- Bridge gap between parents and CSE Make sure all parent concerns are addressed



In addition, The LI Parent Technical Assistance Center is hosting a series of workshop's and the one on February 10, 2010, will be on the Role of the Parent Member. If you are interested in attending, the number to register is (631) 603-3300.

If you are interested in serving our children as a parent member, please contact Bonnie Goess at 541-1714 or Lori-Ann Buffolino at 795-8115 for additional information.

The Association for Science in Autism Treatment

The Association for Science in Autism Treatment (ASAT) has some exciting news! They will be resuming its quarterly newsletter (for free), [Science in Autism Treatment](#) (Old issues remain available at www.asatonline.org, under "Suggested Reading.")

In case you haven't read it, the newsletter will include the following:

- Featured articles by leading advocates for science-based treatment
- Clinical Corner responses to frequently asked questions about autism treatment
- Detailed summaries of specific treatments for autism
- Book reviews
- Reviews of published research to help consumers and professionals access the science
- Interviews with professionals advancing science based treatment and confronting pseudoscience
- Discussion of accurate and inaccurate portrayals of autism and its treatment by the media
- Guidelines to help consumers access effective treatments
- and even more*

EMPOWERING YOUR CHILD'S BEST ADVOCATE: *YOU*

By Dr. Shannon Melideo, contributing writer Parenting Special Needs Magazine

I was an elementary school teacher. I had many children with special needs of varying abilities in my classrooms over the years. I was an elementary school administrator. I orchestrated and participated in hundreds of the special education meetings from “Child Study” through “Eligibility” to IEPs and 504 plans. I had done research in the field. I read case studies and special education journals frequently. As a teacher and administrator, I thought I made every decision with the child’s best interests in mind. I thought I helped parents of students with special needs feel at ease in the IEP meetings, classrooms, and school in general. Yet, I felt completely unprepared for the future when I learned that my second child had special needs. Because my son has an extremely rare condition named Kabuki Syndrome which features a “laundry list” in health ailments and developmental and cognitive issues, I found myself educating his doctors and teachers along the way.

I will never forget the first official IEP meeting for my son Sammy at the school district’s special education headquarters. This was the first time I sat in the “parent’s chair”, not the “teacher’s or “administrator’s chair” for such a meeting. As my son’s current functioning levels were explained, his needs discussed, goals set, and papers signed and shuffled, I found myself feeling very insecure. I found myself second guessing every decision that was just made. Did the “picture” the teachers and assessors just painted truly reflect Sammy? Did we design a plan that would help Sammy best succeed? Those questions and more swirled around in my head. To be completely honest, I was extremely nervous and anxious.

Again, I recalled my time as a classroom teacher and administrator. My questions about serving the needs of prior students and parents surfaced. When I was an administrator, did I properly explain everything to parents that they should know? Did I help provide to students what they really needed? Will the rest of my life be spent in a continuous battle to get Sammy what needs to be successful?

I didn’t have the answers to any of those questions at that moment, but I did know something to which I fervently clung. I am and will always be Sammy’s best advocate. No one could advocate for him like me. There is no better advocate for a child than her or his parent or guardian. Fortunately, for my son and me, I am an educator with extensive background and experiences in elementary and special education. I am well-aware this is a great advantage for my son and I am thankful. I am confident that if I don’t understand or simply don’t know about something related to my son’s educational plan and progress, I will find some way to learn it.

This leads to me to my latest pressing question: how do we truly empower parents who come to the IEP meeting without a background in education? If I was “shaking in my boots” at that first IEP meeting, how must most parents and guardians feel? I grapple with this question every time I attend a meeting on my son’s behalf. As an educator and former administrator, I believe it can be quite overwhelming and I am not merely speaking of the emotional and psychological elements, but the paperwork and educational jargon as well.

I needed a simple method to be and feel prepared for all special education meetings. I purport some basic organizing and preparing would help many parents and guardians feel better informed, more empowered, and truly enabled to advocate for their child.

If you have child with special needs, examine the following recommendations. If you are an educator, administrator or advocate, share the following recommendations with parents and guardians of children with special needs.

Four Important Recommendations for Parents/Guardians of Children With Special Needs

1. Organize! Organize! Organize!

Organize two binders for maintaining documentation.

a. health binder -insert a calendar in the front for marking illness, medical appointments, medication, and examining patterns. Depending upon your child's needs, sharing knowledge of his or her health may be very important in educational planning and updating for the teachers.

b. education binder - for keeping all academic information related to special education including IEPs, home visit reports and other important materials. For filing ease, place the most recent paperwork on top of the previous. Insert a blank pad of paper in the interior pocket of the binder for note taking. Make sure a writing implement is always accessible to you in this binder.

c. Keep these binders in an easily accessible location in your home so that you can find them easily, use them to write down questions, and remind yourself of the goals everyone in your child's educational life are working toward.

d. Simple tabbing with logical headings will suffice in the education binder, such as "eligibility information", "progress reports", "parental rights and responsibilities", and "IEPs".

e. Just entering the special education meeting with your binder in hand will make you feel more confident and prepared for the agenda.

f. Such preparation will appear to be a notation of a solid investment in your child's education and that you care and take the team approach very seriously. It claims "you are a stakeholder" and expect to be treated with respect and dignity.

2. Request! Request! Request!

Request therapy providers to share any documents that present baseline data on typical development (i.e. a chart that delineates which speech sounds normally appear at what age).

3. Use! Use! Use!

Use parents resource centers for research and to find support groups. Find out the hours and locations. These resources are for you and typically are free. The time invested in resource centers and communicating with support groups will benefit you and your child two-fold.

Ask about government funded programs for your child. For example, the federal government funds an excellent books-on-tape program for visually impaired and physically handicapped persons as mentioned above.

4. Go! Go! Go!

Go to every meeting with your list of questions. Date and number each question and allow space for the responses from the education team. Keep this pad in the education binder for future reference and use.

Truthfully, the total cost for these four recommendations is under \$5.00. It might be a powerful message if school districts were to provide parents and guardians the education binder at the very first meeting. Teachers could assist parents and guardians with the use and maintenance of the binder. We know parents and guardians leave every IEP meeting with a stack of papers that should be stored someplace. This method keeps the "paper trail" for the parents and guardians more organized from the start. I am well aware that a simple binder cannot fully prepare parents and guardians for all of the special education meetings in their future. I do strongly believe that being (and feeling) organized is a very important step in helping parents and guardians feel more empowered as their child's best advocate.

Reporting in...



[Prenote: Terry Yard Healy's daughter, Erica, attended Carmen Road BOCES from age 6-8, she is now almost 17.]

Today, at the Massapequa SEPTA Make a Friend, Erica (16.5 yrs) was grouped with the teens, Amanda Prystupa (13 yrs.) and Zachary Jennings, (17yrs.) who is not verbal. Joyce Larkin, an Eagle teacher at Eastlake and I realized that Zach was trying to tell us that he knew Erica. Part of the program was for the kids to tell which school they attend. Amanda is very verbal said she attends Seaman's Neck. Amanda and Erica were very patient while Zach, using his fingers, spelled out his school and his age. We understood that he attended Carmen Road BOCES and that he was 17.

They shared the names of their new stuffed animal friends and, since the group decided it was the "birthday" of our stuffed friends, after naming the friends, the group sang happy birthday to each of them.

Zach kept focusing on Erica. He kept making the sign for "friend", giving her hi 5's and he was so full of joy! During the Pizza Party portion of the afternoon, I met his mother. She confirmed that Zach and Erica had the same teacher for 2 years at Carmen Road BOCES.

Zach's mom seemed very sad that none of the other Massapequa Carmen Road kids came. I told her that this is something SEPTA has tried to work on and that BOCES students are always welcome. It has always been difficult for Massapequa SEPTA to stay connected to our children attending out-of-district schools, and we will continue to try to bridge, (no pun intended), the gap.

From all accounts, this day of creating stuffed animals and socializing was a huge success. A good time was had by all and for some it was also a day to rediscover old friends. I look forward to more events where SEPTA children of all ages can participate.

Respectfully submitted,

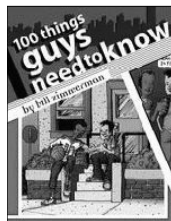
Terry Yard-Healy

Editor's note: The SEPTA Make a Friend event in May 2009 took place after our June issue went to print.

Book Reviews... take a look!

100 Things Guys Need to Know

By Bill Zimmerman



Boys need and want advice on all kinds of issues, for all kinds of problems, questions, and concerns. Often, they don't know who or how to ask, and it seems to them that most self-help books are written for girls.

Everything about this book is for and about guys. Graphic-novel-style illustrations engage even reluctant readers. Quotes from real boys, results from a nationwide survey, inspiring stories, facts, and anecdotes keep them interested.

Journaling prompts invite boys to think about each topic and what it means to them—from family life to fitting in, showing emotions, bullies, school, peer pressure, failure, handling anger, and more.

Positive, practical, and affirming, *100 Things* is just what boys need in a world of mixed messages on what it means to be male.

HORSEABILITY

At our October 6th SEPTA meeting, we had a presentation by HorseAbility of Melville. They offer Hippotherapy, which can only be used in conjunction with a licensed Occupational, Physical or Speech Therapist who uses the horse's movements to attain therapeutic goals.

It can often be covered under insurance, and requires a doctor's prescription. They also offer Therapeutic Riding, which is a lesson taught by a qualified Riding instructor. The child will receive benefits of the horse's natural movements while learning to ride. Both can improve balance, coordination, motor planning, communication skills, focusing and self-confidence. They also have a week-long Summer camp.

They are located at
238 Round Swamp Road,
Melville, NY 11747, (631) 367-1647
www.horseability.com



Sen. Gillibrand calls for ***Autism Treatment Acceleration Act***



October 5, 2009

According To New Data, An Estimated 48,000 New York Children Are Diagnosed With Autism

Washington, D.C. - New numbers released today by the American Academy of Pediatrics showed that 1 in 91 children suffer from Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). According to the new data, an estimated 48,000 children across New York suffer from Autism - more than pediatric cancer, diabetes and AIDS combined. U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand renewed her call today for quality, affordable autism treatment for families. She is pushing legislation that would mandate autism coverage and urging greater federal investment in Autism research.

"The rate in which autism is increasing is alarming," said Senator Gillibrand. "It is vital that we make quality care affordable for families and invest in new research that will benefit the lives of millions. Thousands of New York families are being pushed toward bankruptcy because of the cost of providing autism treatment and special education for their children. We know that early intervention is the best way to ensure a child's long term success. We've come a long way in developing effective treatments to help children living with autism lead healthier, more successful lives, but insurance companies are often refusing to pay for it. Families simply can't afford to spend thousands of dollars each month to give their child the care they need."

The study, published today in *Pediatrics* based on the results of a survey of more than 78,000 parents, showed that 1 in 91 children are currently diagnosed with autism - an estimated 637,000 children nationwide. Previous Centers for Disease Control and Prevention numbers had reported a rate of 1 in 150 children suffer from autism. A new case of autism is diagnosed every 20 minutes - making it the fastest-growing serious developmental condition in America. Despite autism's far reach, insurance companies still deny families coverage for necessary treatments - costing them up to \$6,000 out-of-pocket each month.

To help improve the lives of children and families living with autism, Senator Gillibrand released a three point plan in June of this year that called for quality, affordable autism treatment for families:

1. Mandate Insurance Companies to Cover Autism

Senator Gillibrand is pushing the *Autism Treatment Acceleration Act* with Senator Dick Durbin which would require all private insurers nationwide to cover evidence-based, medically-necessary autism treatments and therapies - including Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy.

ABA is a scientifically validated treatment program for autism, recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Academy of Sciences. ABA therapy is proven effective, but only at the recommended levels of 25-40 hours a week - a level that can cost families up to \$6,000 each week. The *Autism Treatment Acceleration Act* would make sure families can get the treatment their children need through coverage they can afford.

2. Ensure TRICARE Covers Autism for Military Families

TRICARE - the military health insurance program - currently considers ABA therapy special education and not medically necessary treatment, and caps coverage for ABA at \$3,000 a month. That amounts to only 16 hours of therapy a month - a fraction of what's necessary to actually improve the life of a child suffering from autism. Senator Gillibrand authored and introduced the *USA Heroes Act* to require TRICARE to cover autism treatment, including ABA therapy to help military families get the care their children need.

3. Increase Federal Investments for Autism Research

Cutting-edge research holds the potential to help children suffering with autism live better, healthier lives, and one day lead to a cure. Senator Gillibrand is calling for a portion of the \$10 billion that was allocated under the Economic Recovery plan for the NIH, be dedicated to research ASD. With better funded research, scientists and laboratories will have the resources they need to reach breakthroughs to improve care - helping children with autism get the care they need in early stages and help them live long, healthy, successful lives.

Investing now for a child's needs later: Special Needs Planners

Money Fix, Patricia Kitchen Newsday Monday, September 21, 2009

There are financial planners— and then there are financial planners with the expertise to help families with special-needs children.

If a planner is a generalist— “just a money guy”— you may not get a solution there”, says Michael Kresh, a certified financial planner in Islandia, who says about ten percent of his clients have at least one child who may require long-term care. In some cases a condition that can run in families may be diagnosed later in life, and parents can plan not for that possibility with their child, he says.

Parents should leave nothing to chance, experts say. So, when looking for a planner with special-needs expertise, ask for referrals from other parents you know. You can also search the National Association of Fee-Only Financial Advisors (napfa.org) or the Financial Planning Association (fpanet.org)

“Read up on financial issues and prepare questions for prospective planners”, says Craig Marcott, a certified financial planner in East Patchogue who runs a year long program to help parents of special-needs kids. Both say you want to ask about:

- Experience in special needs
- Relationship with attorneys who draft special needs trusts
- How much money is invested differently in such cases
- How to maximize government benefits/entitlements
- What the person knows about age “pressure points”, such as age 21, when a special-needs person moves from public school programs to adult services.



cial

FAQ: Can my child receive modifications during the SAT?

According to Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, testing modifications are one of the accommodations schools can offer in the interest of providing a fair, appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students. You should check with your school and IEP team, however, to determine which accommodations are appropriate for your child.

ETS, the publisher of the SAT, offers many options for its test-takers, but the process for getting approval takes seven weeks at the minimum. In most cases, the evaluation and diagnostic testing documentation needs to have been completed within one year of the request for modifications. Your child may request to use assistive technology for his documented disability. Note that there are no additional fees for any testing modifications.

For more information on the documentation criteria, please visit Services for Students with Disabilities (College Board). You can also contact ETS Disability Services directly at 1-866-387-8602.

Also, there are several online practice sites where your child can gain practice and familiarity with the computer-based test format. Check out the practice sections and tests at:

College Board .com

Princeton Review .com

Petersons .com

Early Identification of Speech Language Delays and Disorders By: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Why is speech-language treatment needed?

- My baby doesn't talk yet!
- That's just "baby-talk." I'm sure my child will outgrow it.
- Everyone in our family was a late talker. My child will talk when the time is right.
- Why worry now? Speech and language services will be available when school starts.
- Treatment? Looks like they are just playing games to me.

You may have had similar thoughts or comments. Usually, there is concern about a child's speech and language skills if there is no speech by the age of 1 year, if speech is not clear, or if speech or language is different from that of other children of the same age.

What is early identification? It is estimated that 2% of all children born each year will have a disabling condition. Many of these children will have speech and or language delays and disorders that may have a significant effect on personal, social, academic, or vocational life. Although some children will develop normal speech and language skills without treatment by the time they enter school, it is important to identify those who will not.

Many people falsely believe that speech-language treatment cannot and should not begin until a child begins to talk. Yet research has shown that children know a great deal about their language even before the first word is said. For example, children can distinguish between their native language and a foreign language, use different nonverbal utterances to express different needs, and imitate different patterns of speech through babbling.

Early identification includes the evaluation and treatment provided to families and their children under 3 years old who have, or are at risk for having, a disability, or delay in speech, language or hearing. A child can quickly fall behind if speech and language learning is delayed. Early identification increases the chances for improving communication skills.

Who should be evaluated? Children identified as at-risk or high-risk, such as those from neonatal intensive care (NICU) units, should be tested early and at regular intervals. Other risk factors include: diagnosed medical conditions like chronic ear infections, biological factors like Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, genetic defects like Down Syndrome, neurological defects like cerebral palsy, developmental disorders like delayed language.

Children with no high-risk features should be evaluated if their speech and language is not similar to other children of the same age.

How is the evaluation done? Evaluation may be formal or informal and include any combination of standardized tests; direct observation of play and interaction with caregivers; report by parent, teacher, or physician; and collection and detailed analysis of spontaneous speech samples. Several sessions as well as ongoing evaluation may be required to obtain enough information to make an accurate diagnosis.

The early identification team may consist of the speech-language pathologist, audiologist, psychologist, neurologist, electrophysiologist, otolaryngologist, pediatrician, nurse, and social worker. Because speech-language delays and disorders may be due to a variety of causes, each professional makes valuable contributions to the evaluation.

What is speech-language treatment? From the results of the evaluation, certain services may be recommended. Prevention includes those children who have been identified as at-risk, for example, due to low birth weight, for a communication delay or disorder.

Services are provided before a specific diagnosis has been made. Remediation increases function in areas identified as delayed or disabling and may serve to prevent other related problems. For example, remediation of a language disorder can help to offset learning difficulties. Compensation enables the child and the family to make adjustments for limitations, as in some cases of cerebral palsy.

Language is taught in a natural setting. It is presented at the child's developmental level; responses are consistently stimulated; and output is rewarded. Play may be used to teach communication, language models or rules of conversation, such as turn taking

Feeding and swallowing treatment may be needed to sustain life. It can also be used to encourage speech-like movements, stimulate sound production, or increase the child's awareness of speech movements.

If you are concerned about a possible speech-language delay or disability, consult a speech-language pathologist.

A list of certified speech-language pathologists in your area may be obtained by calling the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's (ASHA) toll-free HELPLINE at 1-800-638- 8255.



Massapequa SEPTA serves every family who receives special education services in our school district.

Massapequa Special Education



everychild.one voice.®



eSpecialMatch.com is a website for social networking,

dedicated to providing information, resources and support to families with special needs children, including autism, aspergers, down's syndrome, speech-language disorders, ADHD and others.

The Long Island Dyslexia Association



has a website with information on local resources, membership, workshops, school events, fact sheets, resource links and more.

Please visit www.lidyslexia.org

Editor's 5th Anniversary!

Thank you for the privilege of serving our community by being editor-in-chief of this wonderful collaboration between parents and administrators!

Editor's email:

(SEPTA in subject line)

DFG818@optonline.net

Massapequa SEPTA®

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Massapequa, NY 11758

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Permit # 9

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Massapequa SEPTA email address:
Specialed11758@hotmail.com



Please visit the Nassau Region PTA website

www.nassaupta.org

which includes PTA information for councils and units, parent workshops, conferences and registration forms.