

November, 2003



Welcome to the first Connections newsletter of the 2003-2004 school year. This issue features important developments in the I.D.E.A. Reauthorization. This is an important new development that will affect us all. This issue also contains a summary of the "Recreation Opportunities" event on October 22nd, which was well attended and very informative. We are always looking for ideas for after

school and recreation programs that not only include our kids, but also embrace them. Also included are the minutes from the April, 2003 meeting, "Helping Your Child with Communication - Social and Writing Skills", and an important article about Easter Seals and job opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

We are dedicated to making the Belmont Special Ed Advisory Council a strong and visible organization. We are here to support you and your children through the daunting educational system so that we have knowledge and the ability to advocate for the best education and opportunities for our children. I encourage everyone to submit any websites of interest, events happening in the area, books, movies, ideas, and articles for this newsletter. You may call or e-mail them to Susan Sher, 617-484-8767 or [susansher@msn.com](mailto:susansher@msn.com).

Susan Sher

## Federal News That Will Affect Everyone's Children

As most of you know, the U.S. Congress has been revising the federal law which guarantees a free and appropriate education to children with disabilities, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.). It would be difficult to over-emphasize I.D.E.A.'s importance as the law which most affects the daily lives of our children. Over the past year, the U.S. House of Representatives drafted and passed its own bill with extensive amendments to the I.D.E.A. (H.R. 1350). In its turn, the U.S. Senate drafted its own similar bill (S. 1248), and on November 4, 2003, the final version of the bill was put into the queue to be voted upon on the Senate floor. If all goes as expected, the Senate will pass S. 1248, the House and Senate will confer to reconcile H.R. 1350 and S. 1248, and the final bill will be presented to President Bush to sign. However, there is currently a move in the Senate to delay passage of S. 1248 so that H.R. 1350 can be piggybacked to an Omnibus bill and thus become law without any Senate vote. This is causing grave concern in the disabilities advocacy community.

Why? Though disability organizations consider S. 1248 to be a highly problematic bill, H.R. 1350 is considered to be much worse. It was passed during a time when the country was distracted by the war on terrorism, so that parents and advocates did not effectively participate in the shaping of the bill. During hearings in the House last April, Representatives said they'd heard from school boards and school administrators, but not from parents. Over the past year, the disabilities community has been split over how to



effectively lobby Congress. On the one hand, for example, the Federation for Children with Special Needs has been lobbying in favor of S. 1248, deeming half a loaf better than none, while the Disability Law Center has been lobbying against both bills. This has decreased the efficacy of lobbying efforts, since groups are not speaking with one voice.

Paramount is the issue of full funding for I.D.E.A., which is expected to come up as an amendment to S. 1248, should S. 1248 reach the Senate floor.

I.D.E.A. has never been fully funded, leading to enormous strains on state and local education budgets. Numerous attempts to write full funding into law have failed previously.

What are the issues of concern in the I.D.E.A. bills? Below are some highlights of H.R. 1350. For a side-by-side comparison of H.R. 1350 and the current law (I.D.E.A. 1997), see <http://www.wrightslaw.com/news/2003/idea.house.sidebyside.napas.pdf>.

#### H.R. 1350

§ Does away with mandated yearly IEPs, offering 3-year IEPs as an option.

§ Eliminates short-term objectives and benchmarks on the IEP.

§ Diverts funds away from direct services to children with disabilities and allows 15% of the money to be used for a new pre-referral program, to supplant local education funds, to provide "supplemental services," and to be used for purposes other than the provision of services for children with disabilities.

§ Allows administrators to remove students from school for any violation of school rules, whether the student has a behavioral disability or not, under zero tolerance standards.

§ No longer requires schools to develop functional behavioral assessments (FBAs), which are positive behavioral support plans.

§ Eliminates the requirement that schools must determine if misbehavior is caused by a disability.

§ Requires that parents attend forced settlement discussions without attorneys.

§ Regulates fees for attorneys who represent parents and prevail, so that low-income parents will have less access to attorney services. There is no concomitant regulation of what school districts can pay the attorneys they retain.

§ Sets up a one-year statute of limitations, so that if parents do not file a complaint within one year of an incident, they will have no legal recourse.

S. 1248 is different in that it:

§ Still requires quarterly progress reports.

§ Instead of "forced settlement," offers an "Opportunity to Cure – Early Resolution" meeting.

Parents would be required to sit down with the school before going to due process. Attorney's fees are not provided, but an attorney may be present.

§ Permits removal of students for certain specific violations (drugs, weapons, or serious bodily harm), but does not grant carte blanche to schools.

§ If a student has been suspended from school for 45 days, requires schools to determine if student behavior is due to disability.

§ Does not limit attorneys' fees.

§ Sets up a two-year statute of limitations.

For full details regarding S. 1248, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), and type in the bill number. For a more in-depth analysis of issues, check out [www.ourchildrenleftbehind.com](http://www.ourchildrenleftbehind.com). To receive email updates from the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, send an email to [preserveIDEA@dredf.org](mailto:preserveIDEA@dredf.org). Other organizations, such as the ARC (<http://capwiz.com/thearc/home>) and the National Association of School Psychologists (<http://www.nasponline.org/advocacy>) also provide legislative updates.

**What can you do?** Because the Senate has yet to vote, and the House may yet attach H.R. 1350 to an Omnibus bill, it is important that parents contact their Representatives and Senators to express their opinions. Please persuade your friends and relatives in other states to get involved, as well.

Massachusetts contact

information: **Rep. Edward J.**

**Markey**, 5 High Street, Suite 101, Medford, MA 02155, (781) 396-2900; **Senator John Kerry**, One

Bowdoin Square, Tenth Floor, Boston, MA 02114, (617) 565-8519, Fax: (617) 248-387, E-mail:

[john\\_kerry@kerry.senate.gov](mailto:john_kerry@kerry.senate.gov);

**Senator Edward Kennedy**, 2400 JFK Building, Boston, MA 02203, (617) 565-3170, Fax: (202) 224-2417, E-mail:

[senator@kennedy.senate.gov](mailto:senator@kennedy.senate.gov).

-- Amanda Green

## Recreation Opportunities

*By Helen Golding*

At least 50 people were in attendance at the October BSEAC meeting, which featured speakers representing organizations that provide recreational opportunities for children with disabilities. Each speaker also brought along literature describing his or her organization and its programs. This article will give a brief description of each organization, as well as website and/or contact information, where available. For those of you who were unable to attend, we will try to display reference copies of the hand-outs at the November BSEAC meeting.



**Belmont S.P.O.R.T.** is a local organization that has programs that offer sport training and social activities for people with developmental disabilities. Belmont Sport is supported by the Belmont Recreation Department and The Belmont S.P.O.R.T. parents group. It includes the towns of Belmont, Watertown and Arlington. S.P.O.R.T. offers a wide variety of recreational activities (such as floor hockey, basketball, bowling) and lessons (e.g., swimming, ice skating) for children and adults and includes opportunities for participation in the Special Olympics. S.P.O.R.T. also sponsors a variety of social activities. Program information and registration materials are sent out twice a year (in August and December) and are also available at S.P.O.R.T.'s website. To get on the mailing list, contact the Belmont Recreation Department at (617) 484-5134. To learn more about Belmont S.P.O.R.T., contact Sue Weiner, c/o the Recreation Department, or go to [www.belmontsport.org](http://www.belmontsport.org).

The **Arlington Recreation Department** also offers programs for children and adults with special needs. It runs Special Olympics programs in swimming and track. Other recreational programs include bowling, skating, and "Sports and Games" for children ages 5-9. In the summer, the Arlington Recreation Department runs a full-day recreational program which provides additional supports to children with special needs, and it also has school vacation camps, which operate Tuesday through Friday of vacation weeks, from 9-3. All programs are open to Belmont residents. For more information, call 781-316-3880 or go to this website: [http://arlingtonma.virtualtownhall.net/Public\\_Documents/ArlingtonMA\\_RecMin/RecreationIndex](http://arlingtonma.virtualtownhall.net/Public_Documents/ArlingtonMA_RecMin/RecreationIndex).

The **Lexington Recreation Department's** programs are also open to participants from neighboring towns. There are programs for preschoolers as well as for youth/teens and adults. There is no special programming for children with disabilities, but the representative from Lexington's Recreation Department indicated that all programs are open to individuals with disabilities. For more information, call 781-862-0500, ext. 262. The web address is: <http://ci.lexington.ma.us/Recreation/Recreation.htm> (last updated 9/02).

**Woburn** has a Challenger Skating Program, where kids can learn to skate or play hockey. It meets on Sunday mornings, beginning September 28, 2003, at the O'Brien Skating Rink in Woburn. Woburn's Challenger Baseball Program for Spring 2004 will meet on Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. at Weafer Park in Woburn. For more information, call Brenda Shea at (781) 933-0939.

The new **Oak Square YMCA** in Brighton is completely accessible and offers a broad range of classes. Among their special programs for persons with disabilities is Adaptive P.E. for Youth and the Adaptive P.E. Variety Pack (a more advanced adaptive

P.E. class). For more information on the YMCA's programs, call Matt LaPorte, Sports Director, at (617) 787-8663. The web address is [www.ymcaboston.org](http://www.ymcaboston.org).



For persons interested in somewhat more exotic outdoor activity, there were two organizations that offered some tantalizing options. **Outdoor Explorations** offers a variety of recreational outings, including such things as cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Their number is (781) 395-4183, and the website is [www.outdoorexplorations.org](http://www.outdoorexplorations.org).

**AccessSportAmerica** is "a national non-profit organization dedicated to the discovery of higher function, fitness, and fun for children and adults with disabilities through high-challenge sports and individual training." Its high-challenge sports program includes a variety of water sports (kayaking, wind-surfing, water-skiing, outrigger canoeing), as well as cycling and soccer, including some programs for the whole family! They have developed innovative adaptive equipment to assist people in overcoming a variety of physical challenges. The telephone number for more information is (617) 303-2456; web site: <http://www.accessportamerica.org>.

Over the last several years, the **Minuteman Arc for Human Services**, located in West Concord center, has been focused on expanding its recreational programs for youth. It also offers a daily after school program, which is also open during school vacations. The recreational programs for 2003-2004 include weekly pottery classes (priced on a per-class basis), a bowling league, and various outings to such locations as Drumlin Farm, the New England Sports Museum, and Bobby's

Farm (for a sleigh ride). For more information, contact Susan Mayer at (978-371-1543). Website: [www.minutemanarc.org](http://www.minutemanarc.org).

The **Academy of Physical and Social Development** in Newton runs small activity groups that use physical activities to help children work on their social skills and self-confidence. Groups are 40-70 minutes in length and are tailored so that children are matched with others of comparable age, physical skill, developmental level, cognitive abilities, and social /emotional maturity. The group meets weekly at the same day and time, and with the same counselors. For more information, contact the Academy at (617) 969-2200. It's on the web at [www.Academynewton.com](http://www.Academynewton.com).

**Creative Arts Therapy for People with Special Needs** (CHAMPS) offers music and art therapy at various locations around the Boston area. Contact Ericka Gonzalez at (617) 288-5858 ext. 10 or email [ArtsTherapy@biat.org](mailto:ArtsTherapy@biat.org); website: [www@biat.org](http://www@biat.org).



**Kartwheels in Motion** is a physical activity program for children with developmental and physical challenges. It meets at the Boston Sports Center (BSC) in Waltham (Winter Street), Monday through Thursday, in the late afternoon or early evening. Activities take place at the pool or gymnasium. For more information, contact Jeannie Watson at (781) 893-6515 (email [jewatt@kartwheels.org](mailto:jewatt@kartwheels.org)).

Thanks again to all of those who came to tell us about their organizations and all of those who turned out for this great evening of information.



## Easter Seals School Services

Young people with disabilities face many obstacles as they transition from school to work. Early planning is crucial. Researchers have identified lack of preparedness as a key factor influencing low employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Vocational planning should begin at approximately age 14 so schools can productively utilize the high school years to prepare students for their chosen career path. A fundamental step is a vocational evaluation that determines areas of interest and ability. Preparation for the job market may include job shadowing - visiting a variety of work sites to observe specific jobs being performed - job searching, resume writing and interviewing. Job placement and support provides practical, ongoing help in getting and keeping a good job. Computer skills training is strongly recommended if adaptive equipment can help make the student more employable.

Easter Seals specialists will come to the student's school or students can come to Easter Seals job training classrooms in Boston, near South Station, or downtown Worcester. Easter Seals Job Training and Development staff are experienced in helping young adults with disabilities gain independence through employment that fits their skills and interests.

For more information contact Rosalind Fisher at 1 800 244-2756, ext. 851 or [rozf@EasterSealsMa.org](mailto:rozf@EasterSealsMa.org). The Easter Seals website is [www.EasterSealsMa.org](http://www.EasterSealsMa.org)

-- Rosalind Fisher

### April 2003 BSEAC Meeting

## Helping Your Child with Communication - Social and Writing Skills

Speakers: Speech therapists Ms. Julie Cyr Gibowicz and Ms. Kim Stillwell of Communication Therapy Associates in Arlington, MA.

Ms Stillwell began the talk by noting that more and more of what happens in classrooms and the curriculum revolves around language and writing systems. She then went on to talk about what it takes to write.



We have four interconnected language systems:

- aural—what we hear and comprehend
- oral—what we express verbally (milestones

achieved in preschool and early elementary)

- reading—(milestones achieved in middle childhood)
- writing—(development continues into adulthood).

Writing is similar to driving a car: both are complex actions and both require a number of upper and lower skills operating at the same time.

There are five components to writing:

- transcription—includes hand writing, letter formation, and correct spelling.
- cognitive/executive functioning skills—includes knowledge of the writing process, writing concepts such as topic sentence and paragraph construction, how to organize information and revision.
- language—includes vocabulary, correct grammar, and the ability to logically order ideas and thoughts.
- memory—includes remembering assignment directions and

steps, words related to the assignment, and spelling and punctuation rules.

- organization—includes knowing what resources you will need, knowing when and how to start, estimating how long the assignment will take, knowing the assignment and the due date.

Ms. Stillwell then talked about how we can help our children with writing. First, we should figure out where in the process our child is having trouble. One way to do that is to listen to the complaints. She gave some strategies for different problems.

1) Difficulty getting started:

- Provide motivating items like new pencils or a bowl of popcorn
- Set time limits and provide breaks.
- Help with an outline.
- Brainstorm ideas and make a list.
- Delay giving suggestions about spelling, wording, or punctuation until a rough draft is done.

2) Has too many ideas:

- Determine the purpose of the assignment. Figure out the topic of the assignment.
  - Brainstorm a list of ideas and number the ideas in level of importance.
  - Ask your child to tell you what is important and write it down. See what comes up first.



3) He thinks it is long enough but you know it isn't:

- Praise what is on the paper.
- Ask one or two questions about the main point and see if the response provides more details.
- Ask who, what, where, when, why, how questions.
- Make sure paragraphs have topic sentences, two to three supporting sentences, and concluding sentences.

4) Doesn't know directions or can't remember what was studied in class:

- Make a list of key terms and concepts.
- Ask your child to tell you everything he knows.
- Reread directions and assignment instructions.
- Create a checklist of smaller steps.

5) Hand gets tired:

- Scribe ideas for your child.
- Use outlining software.
- Let child use whatever format is easiest (print, cursive, keyboard).
- Alternate between having an adult scribe and child write.
- Take a break and rub hands together briskly.

6) Can't get organized:

- Get phone numbers of two reliable classmates who can provide information about assignments.
- Create a dedicated workspace (no TV, computer games, etc.).
- Keep materials such as pens, pencils, sharpeners, paper, dictionary, and thesaurus nearby.
- Set up a consistent weekly schedule for completing homework; check in with your child every day about assignments
- Break down larger projects into smaller ones; use a calendar to record start and end dates.
- Use the backpack as "home base".

Ms. Gibowicz spoke about pragmatic/social skills in the second half of the talk. Pragmatic skills are "the ways in which we use our vocabulary, voice, and body to convey messages and emotions." She noted that while parents can be excellent models, it is often difficult for them to "teach" pragmatic skills. Areas of difficulty include:

- Paralinguistic aspects of language (tone of voice).
- Conversational components such as initiation, topic maintenance and shifting, and ending.
- Nonverbal pragmatic/social skills such as body language, facial expressions, and personal space.
- Perspective taking.

She then went into more detail about how parents can model appropriate behavior (for younger children) or work with older children in each of these areas.

1) Paralinguistic aspects of language:

For younger children

- Use different registers when reading stories.
- Practice using and labeling emotions.

For older children

- Practice using different registers, depending who they are talking to.

- Record messages, matching different tones of voice to the appropriate message.
- Practice stressing important information in a response, depending on the question being asked.

2) Conversational components:

All ages

- Role play.
- Videotape role playing.
- Practice greetings.
- Work on responding to comments and questions of partner before introducing another topic. Gradually increase the turns per topic.

- Spend time looking at comics and discuss why they are funny.
- Designate topics that the child likes but adults might only want to discuss in short increments as "hot topics" and negotiate the amount of time conversation is devoted to them.
- Model ways of ending conversations

3) Non-verbal pragmatic/social skills:

All ages

- Play charades.
- Draw attention to facial expressions. Talk about the real physical aspects of emotions.
- Teach your child about personal space.

For older children

- Discuss and demonstrate the four distances—public (12-25 ft), social (4-7 ft), personal (arm's length), and intimate (very close, for family and very close friends).
- Point out body language.

4) Perspective Taking:

For younger children

- Play dumb so they can provide additional information.
- Play pretend games that allow your child to play different roles

For older children

- Have child practice giving directions on how to do things.
- Have your child hide and object and try to direct you to it with verbal, directional clues.
- Discuss how events may affect different people.

Ms. Gibowicz concluded that pragmatic/social skills are necessary for children to be effective and interesting communicators. They need relationships and they need these types of skills to achieve those relationships. Well-developed social skills involve mastery of language and sensitivity to context. Teaching social skills involves:

- describing the social behavior
- modeling the social behavior
- practice naming the social behavior.

Ms. Stillwell concluded by saying that children need to complete six to eight assignments in one genre to master that genre. She also recommended that children use Post-It notes while reading to mark important places in chapters and jot down a couple of sentences about what is important in the chapter at the end of each chapter (you can also use a tape recorder for this).



- practice using the social behavior
- getting feedback on the use of the behavior

Children have to practice with a reliable adult, then with one child, and then with a small group. A lot of structure helps in this type of training.

### Writing Resources

Strategies for the Reluctant Writer  
[http://www.idonline.org/ld\\_indepth/writing/reliant\\_writer.html](http://www.idonline.org/ld_indepth/writing/reliant_writer.html)

### Educators Publishing Service, Inc.

31 Smith Place  
 Cambridge, MA 02138  
 1-800-225-5750  
[www.epsbooks.com](http://www.epsbooks.com)



**Writing Skills** Book 1 (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) and Book 2 (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>)  
 Diana Hanbury King

**Reading and Reasoning** Level 1 (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) and Level 2 (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>)  
 Joanne Carlisle

**Report Writing** Book 1 (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) and Book 2 (4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>)  
 Marjorie Gann

**Writing with a Point** (high school)  
 Jeanne Stephens and Ann Harper

**Kidspiration** software (Grades K-3)  
**Inspiration** software (Grades 4+)  
 1-800-877-4292  
[www.inspiration.com](http://www.inspiration.com)

-- Stephanie Woerner



## Community Calendar of Events

Tuesday, December 2 –  
**“Residential Schools: Know Your Rights”**. 6:30-8:30 PM. Germain Lawrence School, 18 Claremont Ave, Arlington. RSVP Denny Holly, 781-648-6200 xt 150 or [pfr@fcsn.org](mailto:pfr@fcsn.org)

Tuesday, December 2 –  
**“Strategies for Achieving Quality Parenting.”** 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Presented by Marilyn Buckler of Families First at Waltham YMCA 725 Lexington Street Waltham. Fee – \$15.00. Contact Families First 617 868-07687 or [www.families-first.org](http://www.families-first.org)

Saturday, December 6 –  
**Autism Spectrum: Home School and Community. “Tying It All Together”**. 5<sup>th</sup> Annual conference of the Autism Resource Center. 8 am – 4 pm, Holy Cross College, Worcester. Registration, \$30.00, after Nov 27, \$40.00. To Register, contact ARC at 508-595-9101, email [autism@HMEA.org](mailto:autism@HMEA.org) or visit [www.arccm.info](http://www.arccm.info).

Wednesday, November 19 –  
**“Study Skills for Middle & High School Students”**. 7-9 PM. Practical strategies parents can use to help their children learn more effectively and efficiently. Workshop led by Tim Mahoney, Assistant Academic Dean, Landmark. Presented by the Attleboro Spec. Education PAC. Brennan Middle School, 320 Rathburn-Willard Dr, Attleboro. \$2.00 donation suggested, Contact Lori Scales, 508-222-5150, [lorik\\_scales@yahoo.com](mailto:lorik_scales@yahoo.com)

Sunday, November 23 –  
**“Evening of Giving”** A night of private shopping, raffles and door prizes. 7 PM, Burlington Mall. \$8.00 ticket with \$6.00 going to

local PAC and \$2.00 to Simon Malls charities. Contact Dennis McCarron, 781-273-5663 or [danmmccarron@hotmail.com](mailto:danmmccarron@hotmail.com)

**Arts 4 Kids Sake** – A series of free performances for children, Jimmy Tingle’s Off Broadway, Somerville.

November 22 –  
**Unseen Borders: An American Sign Language Program;**  
 November 29 – Cinderella, Tanglewood Marionettes; December 6 - Oregon Trail, musical story of Francis Parkman’s journey across the continent in the late 1840’s. Children - free, \$5.00 for adults, 10-11 AM. Call 617-591-1616 for reservations.

Tuesday, February 10 –  
**“College Access and Transition for High School Students with Disabilities”**. 7- 8:30 PM. Presented by Paul Hasting, Director of Disability Support Services, Wheelock College. Ashland High School Library, W. Union Street, Ashland. Contact Kathy Bach, 508-881-9076 or [hellooutthere@comcast.net](mailto:hellooutthere@comcast.net). Free

Monday, November 24 –  
**Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness.** Dr. Ned Hallowell will discuss his latest book. 7:00-8:30 p.m., Ashland H.S., Little Theatre, Ashland. Contact Kathy Bach, 508-881-9076 or [hellooutthere@comcast.net](mailto:hellooutthere@comcast.net). Free

Friday, January 9 --  
**Special Needs Advocacy Network Workshops.** Effective Social Progress; March 12 - Legal Updates; April 2 – Conflict Resolution and Negotiation Skills, May 14 – Early Childhood. Charles River Arc, 7 East Militia Heights Rd., Needham. Cost is \$25.00 per workshop. For more information and to register go to <http://www.spanmass.org>

Monday, December 1, 2003 --  
**Autism Support Center**, Danvers, is sponsoring a Guardianship Workshop featuring Atty. Carol Powers, Dir. Legal Services, No. Shore Arc. As a child reaches the age of majority (18) parents may

need to consider their son or daughter's ability to make informed decisions. Ms. Powers will present an overview of the process and the considerations facing parents. Time: 6:30 - 9:00 pm, Burlington Public Library, 22 Sears St., Burlington. \$10.00 donation suggested Contact: Susan Gilroy, Autism Support Center, Phone: 978-777-9135 ext. 202, email: [sgilroy@nsarc.org](mailto:sgilroy@nsarc.org)

Monday, December 15 –  
**“Access to General Curriculum Workshop”** 7-9 PM. The Federation for Children with Special Needs, hosted by Murdoch Middle School, 40 Brick Kiln Road, Chelmsford. Registration required: email [register@fcsn.org](mailto:register@fcsn.org) or calling 800-331-0688

Tuesday, January 13 –  
**“Discipline for Children with Disabilities”**. 7-9 PM. Presented by the Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC) and hosted by the Murdoch Middle School, 40 Brick Kiln Rd, Chelmsford. To register send email to [cantara-perry@comcast.net](mailto:cantara-perry@comcast.net)

Tuesday, April 6 --  
**Transition to College and Work.** 6:30 – 9:00 PM. Presented by the Federation for Children with Special Needs at Murdock M.S., 40 Brick Kiln Rd, Chelmsford. Registration required: email [register@fcsn.org](mailto:register@fcsn.org) or calling 800-331-0688

Wednesday, November 19 -  
**Stephen Shore, author of “Beyond the Wall: Personal Experiences with Autism and Aspergers Syndrome”** will be presenting a workshop on his personal experiences living with Autism, Aspergers, and other spectrum disorders. 7-9 PM. West Middle School Auditorium, Andover

Saturday, March 20, 2004 –  
**“Visions of Community”**, annual conference held by the Federation for Children with Special Needs. World Trade Center, Boston. For more information call the Federation at 617-236-7210, send e-mail to [fcsninfo@fcsn.org](mailto:fcsninfo@fcsn.org) or access the website at [www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org)

-- Submitted by Laurie Graham



## Belmont Special Education Advisory Council 2003-2004 CALENDAR

### **November 20, 2003: Chenery Large Community Room: What's New in the Belmont Schools?**

An exchange with Student Services Director Ms. Sally Smith and School Committee members Ms. Elizabeth Gibson and Mr. John Bowe about school happenings and current issues. This is a golden opportunity to dialogue with other parents, find out what's really happening in our district from those who know, and give feedback to decision makers. Don't miss it!

### **Tuesday, December 16, 2003: Managing Behavior at Home and School**

Is your child out of control? How might you change your child's behavior? Would you like to coordinate school and home behavior plans? Our speaker, Ms. Mindy Davin, MSW/LIC, consults in the Belmont Public Schools as part of the Walker School's CASP program. She has more than twenty years' experience working with teachers, parents, and students to help children succeed both at home and at school in inclusive environments.



### **January 14, 2004 (Snowdate 1/21), 7:30-9:30 p.m.: Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)**

If your child has a disability and requires specially designed instruction, an IEP is the document which spells out your child's needs and educational plan. The Federation for Children with Special Needs presents this essential workshop for all parents of children with disabilities. Learn the ins and outs of the team process, the law, and the paperwork.

### **Sunday, February 1, 2004, 3 - 5 p.m.: Annual Funfest**

Come join us at the Wellington School for games, crafts, music, pizza, and just plain fun!

### **February 11, 2004: Effective Inclusion**

What makes inclusion work? How can parents and teachers work together to create effective inclusion? Join Belmont teachers Christine Fedolfi, Vicky Sutton, and Mike McAllister and

Belmont Inclusion Specialist Peg Hamilton as they share their extensive experience including students with disabilities in classrooms at the elementary and middle school levels. Bring your questions!

### **March 24, 2004: All About Tests**

Your child needs testing, but you have no idea what kind. Your child has been tested, but what do those numbers mean? Ms. Joan Axelrod, MEd, a psycho-educational diagnostician in private practice in Lexington and a consultant in the Belmont Public Schools, will clear up your confusion. Ms. Axelrod will unravel the mysteries of cognitive/psychological, neuropsychological, and

academic tests, addressing how to interpret test scores and how testing can (and cannot) inform educational planning.

**April 14, 2004, Chenery Cafeteria: Assistive Technology for Reading and Writing**

Does your child have difficulty organizing ideas or writing a paragraph? Is reading a challenge? Does he or she have fine motor skills deficits which make writing a struggle? Assistive technology can help. Join us as Easter Seals presents this informative evening on the latest computer software for students in grades 1-9. Learn about Read and Write, Co-Writer, Kurzweil, Inspiration, and more!

**April 2004: College Information Evening**

A wonderful opportunity to hear a panel of Belmont High School counselors, experienced parents, and college students who will share their experiences with the college admissions process. Date and location TBA.

**Thursday, May 13, 2004, Chenery Large Community Room: First Annual BSEAC Appreciation Awards**

Join us as we honor people who have made a positive difference in our children's lives.

**May 19, 2004: Managing Executive Function Disorder and ADHD at Home**

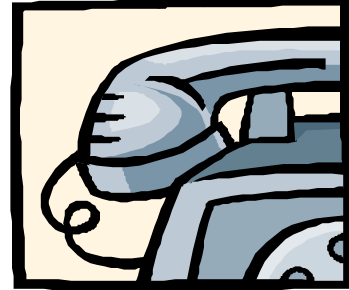
Does your child's brain seem to have no CEO on board? Do disorganization and chaos rule the day? In her private practice, Sarah Ward, MS, CCC/SLP, a speech pathologist specializing in cognition and attention, teaches her

clients organizational behaviors and then helps them generalize those behaviors in real life. In this valuable workshop, Ms. Ward will provide parents with strategies they can use at home to help children get organized, from homework to chores.

**Thursday, June 10, 2004: Information and Planning** Our annual opportunity to reflect on the current school year and plan BSEAC's calendar for the year ahead. A great chance to exchange ideas with Student Services Director Ms. Sally Smith and with fellow parents. Join us for a lively and productive discussion.



**NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted, all meetings will be held in the Chenery Middle School Faculty Dining Room on Wednesdays from 7:30-9 p.m. For further information or weather cancellations, contact BSEAC Co-Chairs Amanda Green (617-484-2218 or [amanda.green@earthlink.net](mailto:amanda.green@earthlink.net)) or Laurie Graham (617-489-6483 or [iamlaurieg@yahoo.com](mailto:iamlaurieg@yahoo.com)).



**STAY IN TOUCH,  
KEEP CONNETED**

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