



# Connections!

for families of students with disabilities



## A Message from Our Executive Director

We welcome you back to the 2011-2012 school year! Every member of our staff is excited about plans for the year and also excited about the opportunity to continue collaboration with you and school staff to ensure that all students with disabilities have opportunities to be part of the school community, have appropriate strategies in place to support their access to the general education curriculum and have sufficient support so that they can be successful in their individual programs.

You have undoubtedly read in the paper the news indicating that North East ISD, for the first time, failed to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the Federal Accountability system.

For the 2010-11 school year the passing standard for the district and for all student groups, including special education students, was 80% in reading and 75% in math.

This was due to the performance of our students with disabilities in both reading and math and was primarily a result of the district exceeding the number of students with disabilities who could be counted as passing the

modified version of the state test (TAKS-M).

When we exceed the percentage identified in law then only a specific number of passing student scores can be counted as passing for purposes of meeting the AYP standard.

Headlines this summer have indicated that over 50% of the school districts in the state did not make AYP and that the state of Texas did not achieve AYP.

As the standard has risen since 2002 and the passage of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act, it has become very difficult to meet those standards for our students with learning challenges.

For additional information on the new **STAAR** tests please refer to the article on page 6 of this newsletter. On the North East webpage there is additional information on the new tests for students with and without disabilities.

For 2011-12 the standard for meeting AYP rises to 87% in reading and 83% in math for all students and for all student groups. That will be a very tough

standard to meet, however, we are making a commitment to families that the district will continue to work to improve the achievement of all students and to narrow the achievement gap between students with disabilities and students without disabilities.

We also commit to you that decisions in ARD meetings regarding how our students with disabilities are assessed will continue to be made in a manner that considers first the best interest of each individual student, even if that means that the district will again exceed the number of students who can be assessed on the modified test.

We welcome your questions on this important issue and have scheduled a special meeting to allow time for this conversation.

We hope you can join us on **September 20, from 6:30-7:30 at the Community Learning Center, room 217.**

Please call ahead for childcare reservations for children *ages 6 and under*. 407-0257



**Dr. Judith Moening;**  
**Executive Director;**  
**NEISD Department of**  
**Special Education**

## Statewide Assessment

### And Federal Accountability

**September 20, 2011**

**AYP and  
Special Education**

**Community Learning  
Center: Room 217**

*Tesoro Drive: Across from the  
Taco Cabana Office Building*

**Please Call for Childcare Reservations:  
Children age 6 and under  
210-407-0257**



## Routines and Practice: Smooth Transitions

Guest Contributor: *Diane Cantrell, MA, LPC-S*

*Diane Cantrell is a local Children's Author and Counselor. You may visit her website at <http://www.dianecantrell.com>*

*"My belief is that everyone has his or her own special story to share.*

*Some stories we create with our imaginations while others are created by life circumstances and our reactions to them.*

*Regardless, our stories impact our lives and others in powerful ways!"*

*Diane*



Back to School Time is transition time for the entire family. I hope these tips will assist you and your child in getting back into the school schedule. After deciding what your routines will be, stick with them. Consistency is key.

### **Implement bedtime and wake up routines now.**

Life is hectic, there is so much to do when the family returns home, and parents are hungry for time with their children. Nevertheless, children as well as adults still need an adequate amount of sleep. If children don't receive an ample amount of sleep they will be more likely to have meltdowns, be forgetful, be unable to retain information, and be just plain grumpy. Sleep requirements fall within a predictable range based on a child's age.

- Ages 1-3 10-13 hrs.
- Ages 3-5 10-12 hrs
- Ages 6-9 10 hrs
- Ages 10-12 9 hrs
- Teens 8-9.5hrs

### **Identify and explore glitches in last year's routines - brainstorm possible solutions with your child.**

In my work with children and parents I frequently hear complaints about homework woes and getting children up and out the door in the morning. Many of these problems can be avoided by simply exploring issues and hearing your child's thoughts and suggestions on the topic. *Talk about what is working and what isn't working.* Listen without judgment or

defensiveness to what your child has to say. I am constantly amazed at how insightful children can be and the wonderful suggestions they can offer in solving problems, especially when it pertains to them.

### **Prepare for the next day - the evening before!** Some simple things you can do to help with the morning rush are:

- Have all paperwork signed and backpacks loaded and by the door ready to be picked up on the way out.
- Have your child pick out the clothes that he wishes to wear the night before.
- If your child takes a lunch to school you may want to have them assist you in preparing it the night before. *Supervision is strongly suggested especially regarding the selection healthy and nutritious foods.*

### **A child that feels prepared is more likely to feel confident and have positive experiences.**

- *Be positive about the beginning of a new year.*
- *Take advantage of all school offerings* you and your child are given to visit their school, classroom, and teacher.
- *Visit your child's school's website and teacher's page.*
- *Review your school's routines, procedures, expectations, and behavioral programs with your child.* For example, remind your child of cafeteria procedures, playground rules, and how to line up to go to lunch or "specials." Get creative in this process...have your child tell your pet or a puppet about school procedures. You can also have older siblings create a play or pup-

pet show or movie for younger siblings who are starting to school for the first time. Whatever you do, make it fun.

- *Be sure that your Pre-K child and/or Kindergartener know their first and last name.*
- *It is also extremely helpful if your child knows their teacher's name.*
- *Make sure your child knows how they will be returning home from school.* It is always a good idea to send a note with young children. The first days of school can be very long, tiring, and overwhelming. Sometimes the most responsible children forget things or misconstrue their parent's directions.
- *Send a favorite healthy treat in your child's lunch.* Your child will be so pleased and comforted to know that you were thinking of them. An additional bonus is to send a special greeting or love note.
- *Engage your child in conversation about their feelings relating to starting/ returning to school.* Ask how your child is feeling about this event and why.
- *Observe your child's play activities, behaviors, and sleep patterns.* While it is always a good idea to engage your child in conversation, these attempts can often be met with frustration among parents. The younger the child the less able they are to identify and express what is happening in their inner world. Often, children tell us how they are feeling through their play and behaviors. If you are noticing an increase in aggressive play and or behaviors or any changes in behavior, your child may be experiencing some anxiety. Validate your child's feelings by saying that going back to school can be scary for many children. Please affirm your child by reminding him or her that they are a year older and wiser and you feel certain that they are equipped to handle the new school year. If your child remains unconvinced let them know that whatever problems they may encounter you are there for them and will help them or get them the help they need.

Have a great school year!

## **Special Ed Manager Software: Version 10**

*Mary Mahoney; Specialist for Student Planning and Records*

SPED Manager© is the NEISD choice for records management. As changes take place within the educational system, our software provider continuously updates their system to be aligned with regulations and vocabulary!

- Statewide assessment changes from TAKS to STAAR or EOC (End of Course)
- Accommodation / Modification codes match the statewide assessment
- The disability category of MR will change to ID (Intellectual Disability)
- The signature page will provide a box for parents to check concerning prior written notice

# Tips to Maximize your Child's Education

Guest Contributor: Sylvia Farber; [www.101Advocacy.com](http://www.101Advocacy.com)

*A child's education is a journey. Mapping the route is what IEP planning is all about! Sometimes plans evolve along the way. Communication helps the team chart the course!*

Being a parent of a child with special needs and working as an advocate has given me a unique perspective. Unfortunately, I usually meet my clients when they are unhappy about their child's special education services. I would like to offer some tips that may serve to prevent families from reaching this point of despair.

### Monitor your child's progress more frequently than just prior to the annual ARD.

- IEP Progress reports are provided by your school in coordination with the traditional

report card. NEISD provides official grade reporting for each quarter, or every 9 weeks.

- IEP Progress reports are more specific than a typical report card. Teachers should be reporting data based progress on the specific goals and objectives that were agreed upon at your most recent ARD. If you are getting progress reports that only make generic statements like "doing great", "I am proud of your child's efforts" or "student is expected to achieve this goal by the

annual ARD"; schedule an appointment to visit with your special education teacher about the data that supports these statements. Reflective data driven progress re-

ports include scores for accuracy or numbers of trials completed successfully. (i.e. "in 5 of 10 assignments *name* had 80% or higher accuracy; Scores: 55%, 65%, 75%, 85%, 75%, 80%, 85%, 80%, 85%.) Some goals are better represented in other forms than percentages. Methods of reporting can be a positive conversation during the ARD!

### Actively participate in each ARD meeting.

- Prior to the ARD make a list of questions and/or concerns you would like to discuss. It is often helpful to provide your list to your child's case manager prior to the ARD to give them an opportunity to address them fully! ARD meetings can be intimidating even with the best intentions from both the school and the parent to be at ease and use open communication. A written list ensures that nothing is overlooked in what sometimes becomes a stressful time.
- Although it is unintentional on the part of the school, an ARD may feel like an assembly line procedure to a parent. As parents we usually attend one each year. A teacher may do a couple each week! Active participation on the part of the parent helps the whole team to truly focus on the child and make excellent decisions for individualized planning for progress.

### Maintain positive relationships with teachers and staff members of the school.

- As a former special education teacher, I know the countless hours that are spent by teachers to plan, instruct, assess and complete paperwork on behalf of your child. Words of encouragement and affirmation are the greatest gifts a teacher can receive.

## Members of the Team

*Jan DeHaven; Director for Instruction in Special Education*

As 2011-2012 the school year is opening many of us are participating in transitions to new schools, teachers, administration or program structures.

Changes are challenging for everyone; parents and students alike. New situations can produce anxiety if the support systems that were previously in place appear to have shifted or have not been introduced.

Communication is the key to making the connections and relieving the stress of establishing new relationships. We believe it is better to ask for the information and open the conversations rather than wait and wonder.

Each campus will have a support team identified for your

child. Talk with your child's teacher(s) about your concerns and your excitement. Ask questions. Information eases the stress of the unknown.

In addition, the district Department of Special Education is a part of your team. If you need support beyond the campus, you may contact any of our district special education staff and allow us to assist you in making each transition smooth and successful.

We look forward to each opportunity to serve your child in NEISD!

The main number at the district office is 210-407-0185.



# Parent to Parent



Lynn Rice, Parent  
Lopez Middle School  
NEISD  
[trice0527@sbcglobal.net](mailto:trice0527@sbcglobal.net)

## Middle and High School Parents: Support Group Opportunity!

### Lynn Rice: Lopez Middle School Special Ed Representative for PTA

Welcome to the 2011-2012 school year in NEISD! Each year brings new opportunities for our children. As parents, we often discover that having time to share with other parents who are in similar situations to our own is very helpful.

I am the Special Education PTA Representative at Lopez Middle School. I am organizing a "Parent to Parent" Support Group with a focus on students who are in Middle School and High School.

This group is open to all middle/high school parents who have children with disabilities, chronic illness, and other special health care needs.

The group meetings are intended to provide parents with information, support and an opportunity to build unity within the NEISD community. The plan is to hold monthly meetings at the Lopez Middle School Campus - or other campuses as members participate and assist with organization of each event. We will invite representatives from the district's special ed office to assist in providing relevant information and Ideas that are unique to families to older children receiving special education services.

If you are interested in attending or would like more information about this newly forming parent support group, you can email me,

Lynn Rice, at  
[trice0527@sbcglobal.net](mailto:trice0527@sbcglobal.net)



I am looking forward to another successful school year for our children and to meeting many parents through this support group!

**"When parents get together, amazing things can happen!"**

## Elementary Parent Collaborative!

### Diane Benvenuto: Wilderness Oak Elementary Special Ed Representative for PTA



**Parenting is a process of constant growing and learning:  
Supporting each other enhances the experience!**

Special Education Representatives from seven NEISD elementary campuses have formed a support group cooperative for parents whose children receive special education services at school.

Wilderness Oak, Stone Oak, Hardy Oak, Canyon Ridge, Tuscany Heights, Harmony Hills and Hidden Forest are teaming together for discussions and sharing of knowledge!

The group meets monthly for breakfast and often invites outside speakers to discuss a variety of topics that are unique to parents of children who learn differently.

If you are interested in establishing a support group with a cluster of campuses or would like to visit a meeting contact Diane at

[dianerben@gmail.com](mailto:dianerben@gmail.com) .

### PTA Representatives

**If you are interested in filling this position with your campus PTA, contact your school and inquire into the campus based process of developing the PTA Leadership Team!**

# ESC 20 Opportunities for Parents!

FREE for Parents at Education Service Center; Region 20



## September

**September 13 9:00 - Noon**  
Understanding the New State  
Assessment: STAAR & your  
Child's Learning Style

**September 29 9:00-2:30**  
Connecting to the TEAM ...  
The ARD/IEP Process

## October

**October 5 9:00 - Noon**  
Supporting Math at Home

**October 26 9:00 - Noon**  
What Parent's Need to Know  
about Special Education: An  
Overview

## ESC 20

1314 Hines Ave  
 San Antonio, TX 78208

210-370-5200

Near I-35 and Walters



## November

**November 15 9:00 - Noon**  
Creating Graduates Instead of Dropouts

## December

**December 7 9:00 - Noon**  
An Overview of ADD/HD Characteristics  
and Strategies

## January

**January 10 9:00 - Noon**  
The Changing Face of Discipline

**January 31 9:00 - Noon**  
Avoiding Power Struggles  
with Children



## February

**February 8 9:00 - Noon**  
Transfer of Educational  
Rights and Guardianship

Teachers Administrators Parents Professionals



**February 26 8:00 - 4:00**  
TAPPestry Conference

## March

**March 6 9:00 - 2:30**  
Becoming a Love & Logic  
Parent

**March 28 9:00 - Noon**  
Accessing Community  
Services, College Support  
Services, and Information  
regarding Parent Support  
Groups and Recreational  
Activities

## April

**April 11 9:00 - 2:30**  
Autism 101

**April 25 9:00 - 2:30**  
Becoming a Love & Logic  
Parent

## May

**May 2 9:00 - Noon**  
The 411 on Bullying

**May 17 9:00 - Noon**  
School's Out! How can I  
help my child at home  
during the summer?

For more information on these sessions please contact:  
 ESC 20 Department of Special Education; Kim Baumgardner

## Consider Connecting in the Community!

Research and practice have shown that students with disabilities benefit from interacting with peers who may not experience their same challenges. This is the case for students both in classroom settings and in the community! Preparing your child to participate in community activities is a part of their growing and learning. Consider joining youth organizations in your neighborhood..

Places of worship have many offerings for students during the week.

Girl Scout Troops, Cub Scout Packs/Dens, and Boy Scout troops are all organized by neighborhood and age group!  
 Community Centers offer options for students to interact.

Many times parent leadership is a part of being a member of an organization.  
 Join in! It will be valuable time with your child as well as put you in a position to provide knowledge and make a positive impact in the community.



Jan DeHaven; Director for Instruction in Special Education

## State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness

The 2011-12 term has introduced a new state assessment - **STAAR: State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness.**

Students being served through Special Education continue to have options in testing that will meet their learning needs. These options are addressed at ARD meetings and test selection will be based on eligibility criterion identified at the state level.

Students may be assessed using the **STAAR** that is offered to all students. A second option will be to participate in the **STAAR with** the addition of

specific **accommodations** that will be identified by the ARD.

For students whose academic performance indicates that an assessment with modified format and standards is appropriate, a **STAAR - Modified** may be selected by the ARD. The Texas Education Agency is publishing eligibility requirements in the form of questions that must be answered during the ARD process.

**STAAR - Alternate** will be a fourth option for an ARD to consider for students who meet the eligibility requirements set for the by the state.

The graphic posted here illustrates the forms of the test that will be available for ARD committees to consider.

More information is available on the NEISD website. The following url will guide you to information for parents about the new assessment for students in the state of Texas.

<http://www.neisd.net/staar/>

As information about this assessment is provided through TEA, it will be communicated with teachers and parents!

### STAAR Options for Students Served through Special Education:

Individualized Decisions using the ARD Process

