

Volume 2, Issue 2

## Family - School Partnership



August 2011

*where every seat counts*

### Welcome!

Roundtable is the quarterly e-newsletter of the Family-School Partnership at The Advocacy Center. Our goal is to give families the tools to fully participate in their children's education. When families partner with schools, they form a strong foundation of support for children. This gathering is casual with a family and school-friendly atmosphere. You are invited to visit often. Contribute your questions, comments, topic suggestions or writing at

### Why Roundtable?

We chose the name "Roundtable" because at a round table there is no seat that is more important than any other seat. Since there is no head of the table, everyone seated is an equal member. Children benefit when families and schools work together.

### In this Issue...

**This is our Back-to-School issue with essays and helpful tips to get the year started off on the right foot, as well as information about upcoming workshops.**

### Remember ~

When parents and professionals work together, everyone benefits – especially our children!

If you have questions, need help, or would like more information about our workshops, please contact us. All services are free to parents and all information is confidential.

### Family-School Partnership at The Advocacy Center

590 South Avenue, Rochester, New York 14620  
(585) 546-1700 or (800) 650-4967

To subscribe to Roundtable please e-mail [Dixon@advocacycenter.com](mailto:Dixon@advocacycenter.com)

The Family-School Partnership at The Advocacy Center is the Mid-West Special Education Parent Center funded by The New York State Education Department.

Publications within this newsletter should not be considered an endorsement by The Advocacy Center and/or the funders.

**To view the resources on our website click here:**  
<http://specialedparentcenter.org/en/1/resources>

# Creating Your Child's Portfolio

A portfolio is a visual representation that can be used to introduce a child to any professional. Photos and concise text illustrate a child's strengths, family, hobbies, interests, and "things you should know about them."

Participants start with a vision statement and begin to explore how to promote the vision through a portfolio. Educators who have received portfolios have commented that they would like a portfolio for every student!

To learn more, you can attend a workshop at The Advocacy Center on Thursday, October 13, 10am-12pm. For information about registering for this or any of our workshops please go to: <http://advocacycenter.com/calendar.php?coursesID=480&yearID=2011&monthID=10#event>

## Tips for Good Study Habits

To help your children develop good study habits:

- Set up a quiet and comfortable homework station with simple supplies, such as dictionary, pens, pencils, paper, scissors, and tape, nearby. Don't forget to remove distractions (Television, radio, and telephones off...)
- Provide a note pad to write down and organize assignments each day. This will help your child to manage his time and work toward long range goals.
- Encourage your child to do the most difficult homework first, not last! However, you can experiment with what works best for him.
- Check that assignments are completed and turned in on time. Pay attention to the process they use to complete work than with getting a right answer.
- Routine is a key factor in academic success. Having a regular time to do homework helps children to finish homework.
- Consider your child's developmental level when setting the amount of time to complete homework. (10 minutes per grade level is a reasonable expectation, so in 3rd grade you can expect 30 minutes of homework.
- Teach your child that studying is more than just doing homework. Encourage your child to:
  - Take notes as they are reading a chapter
  - Learn to skim materials
  - Learn to summarize what they have read in their own words
- During a homework session, watch for signs of frustrations. It is difficult for learning to take place and little can be accomplished if the child is angry or upset. If child is still struggling discuss the issue with the teacher to provide the child with the appropriate support.

## Back-to-school Tips for Parents:

- **Get organized:** Visit your school and meet with your child's teacher. Get to know the people who will be teaching your child; share your thoughts, child's strengths and concerns.
- Get the teacher's e-mail address and/or phone number and find out how the teacher prefers to be contacted.
- Routine is usually the best way to learn a habit. Practice your child's new school schedule at least five days before school begins, including going to bed and getting up earlier.
- Get your child's school handbook and become familiar with the rules and expectations. Discuss these with your child.
- Consider whether a carpool is needed.
- If an emergency arises, who can you call on to pick up your child? Make sure they are on the school's list of people who can pick up your child.
- A family planner, located where everyone can see is usually a good way to keep the whole family in touch.

**\*When our children return back to school we as parents can get a little bit overwhelmed or stressed. These tips are offered to help!**

# Opportunities to Learn More

## **Success from the Start: Strategies for the Journey to Adulthood**

A Day of Inspiration and Learning for  
Individuals with Disabilities, Family Members, and Professionals

What: A Full-Day Conference

When: Saturday, September 24, 2011, 7:45 am– 3:15 pm

Where: St. John Fisher College, Rochester NY

With Keynote Speaker Loujeania Bost PhD  
Promoting Graduation for Students with Disabilities:  
It's Never Too Early to Start Thinking about Graduation and Beyond

For more information and registration go to:

<http://advocacycenter.com/calendar.php?coursesID=475&yearID=2011&monthID=9#event>

## **The Quest for Ordinary Life:**

### **Preparing Individuals with Disabilities to Function Productively in the Real World of Work**

**Date:** October 20, 2011 - 08:30 AM to 12:00 PM

**Description:** This conference will feature an inspiring and informative presentation by Lou Brown, PhD, featuring strategies and real life examples to support competitive employment for individuals with disabilities.

Location: Strong National Museum of Play, 1 Manhattan Square Drive, Rochester, NY 14607

For more information and registration go to: <http://advocacycenter.com/calendar.php?coursesID=476&yearID=2011&monthID=10#event>

## **Walk-In Wednesdays**

Parents and/or caregivers will have a chance to meet one on one with a representative from The Advocacy Center. The purpose of these sessions is to provide assistance and answer questions regarding your child's education.

**To make sure the meeting is productive, please bring the following:**

- Educational records/documents
- A list of questions that you would like to discuss
- Your desired outcome

Check our calendar for dates and times this fall! <http://specialedparentcenter.org/modules/events/>

## **Parent Member Training**

Have you ever considered becoming a parent member for the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) or Committee on Special Education (CSE) in your school district?

### **What is a parent member?**

A parent member of the CPSE/CSE is a parent of a child with a disability who lives in the school district or a neighboring school district. They attend the Committee meetings to support the parents/guardians and to help insure that the focus of the meeting is on the child. A parent member of the CPSE/CSE should not be confused with a Parent Advocate.

The role of the parent member at a Committee on Special Education meeting is to:

- support the parent(s) and explain the process as needed
- provide feedback from a parent's point of view
- seek clarification and explain to the parent as needed
- keep all student and family information strictly confidential

For more information please see our website: [http://specialedparentcenter.org/en/17/parent\\_member\\_training](http://specialedparentcenter.org/en/17/parent_member_training)

# Maritza's Inspiración



Maritza Cubi is  
a Bilingual  
Parent  
Education  
Specialist



## Back-to-School

### A Parent's Perspective vs. A Child's Perspective

As I was walking into Wal-Mart, I couldn't help notice all the marketing for going back-to-school; aisles and aisles of supplies, posters of children with backpacks and of course they were promoting the latest trends for the upcoming school year. I couldn't help not focusing on all the marketing; it was everywhere! I was receiving advertisements in the mail of all the upcoming sales for going back to school, I was even overhearing my son talking to his friends about school sneakers and what was he was going to buy when he goes school shopping.

What does going back to school mean? Well, when I asked my thirteen year old, he said, "Back to school means shopping, getting together with friends, meeting new people, girls, and learning new stuff." This reply made me curious, which led me to ask the same question to my other 2 children. Basically, they all view going back-to-school as an opportunity to go shopping, reunite with friends, meet new friends, develop new relationships, and of course, learn new things.

This was very interesting to me, because it made me question myself. What does going back to school mean to me? This is what I got: Getting re-organized, (this includes emotional organization;) reconnecting with my childrens' educational world, making sure all their educational needs are being met, and that all the supports and services are in place; and of course, the open houses, school supply lists, and new routines including bus schedules crossed my mind! Wow, these thoughts can be overwhelming!

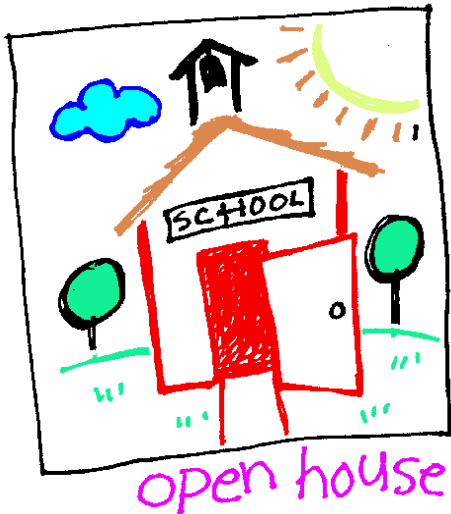
Back to school can lead to many different feelings and opportunities. I know, as a parent I can say that this can be overwhelming and lead to stress. Parents need to keep in mind that we need to take care of ourselves to be able to take care of our families. Planning ahead can help the feeling of being overwhelmed. And, my children see going back to school as an opportunity for growth in their social, emotional, and academic world. And, let's not forget shopping; an opportunity that I can use for teaching math skills and for appreciating the value of money.



## Carrie's Community Centerpiece



Carrie Burkin  
is a  
Parent  
Education  
Specialist



### The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

Ahhh...Autumn! You have to love the crisp chill in the air, the beautiful changing of the leaves, apple picking, and fall festivals.

Another wonderful thing about the fall time is school open houses. These events are a time for parents and caregivers to experience their child's school day first hand. We get to follow their schedules, check out their lockers and cubbies, sit in their desks and meet their teachers. We also get the opportunity to learn the classroom expectations and some of what our children will be learning throughout the year.

Such valuable information squeezed into a few evening hours! Open houses are a wonderful way to be involved in your child's education. Also, attending school functions such as open houses is a wonderful way to demonstrate our interest in what goes on in their lives. So....clear your calendars and get ready for some open house fun!

To expand on the topic of school involvement and open house participation I sat down with Lee Dam. Lee is the assistant principal at the Integrated Arts and Technology High School on the Franklin Campus.

Carrie: When are RCSD open houses held? How are parents notified?

Lee: It is determined by each individual school. At Integrated Arts we like to have open house early on in the school year. In many cases it is the parents' first real look inside the school. We notify parents through a variety of avenues. We use a Robocall system which sends a mass phone call advertising the open house. We also advertise on the website and send fliers home with students.

C: What positive outcomes result from parents and family members attending a child's open house?

L: The most beneficial aspect that comes from attending an open house is the relationship that is created between staff and family member. This can be invaluable in opening the lines of communication between home and school.

C: What other ways can parents/guardians play a role in their child's education?

L: A parent has several opportunities to be involved in their child's education. They can serve on a committee such as the School Based Planning team, building committee, or their schools PTA/PTO. They can also volunteer in their child's classroom or any other classroom. It is always good to be as visible as possible in your child's school.

# April's Alternative Dish



April Dixon  
is a Parent  
Education  
Specialist

## Back to School: Leaving Last Year



The beginning of each new school year can be a time of great excitement and high anxiety for students, families and teachers. Along with the 3 ring binders, pencils, folders and loose leaf paper, sometimes last year's negative baggage can also be found packed in book bags. Whether the difficulty was with the Committee on Special Education (CSE), transportation, or with school staff, in order to successfully move forward. Last year's troubles are better left behind.

A fresh start and a clean slate are necessary tools to pave a road toward success. The past should only serve as a map to find the potholes, ruts, and cracks that made travel uncomfortable. Families are the project managers on this construction site. We can make a difference. For instance, if a family had issues with the bus driver last year, a \$5 gift certificate for coffee with a "Cheers to the New Year" message might get things started on the right foot. A handmade card will work just as well. It is the thought that counts. Your effort will be noted.

Expectations are very powerful. When we anticipate good things, they usually show up. The key is to remain watchful, because the packaging can deceive us. I avoided a certain teacher for months at the end of the school year. "Whew! Out of sight, out of mind!" I thought. Unfortunately, my child had this teacher again the following year. I attended Open House and this teacher was not in the classroom when we arrived. I was relieved. We were just about to exit the building when we were approached by the teacher. I could not escape. So, I decided to make the best of it. I smiled and offered a warm greeting. I expressed to the teacher that my child and I were excited about the great year we all were going to have. What a pleasant conversation we had! Did difficult situations arise during the school year? Of course they did! However, I decided to talk to the teacher about the current issue without revisiting last year's troubles. I felt better not having to lug excess baggage during the conversation. Sometimes we have to let what happened last year, stay in last year.