

Winter Issue

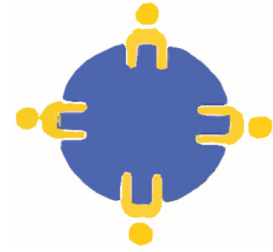


Volume 1 Issue 3

Family - School Partnership



where every seat counts



November 2010

Could This Be Your Last Issue of Roundtable?

Please take a moment and subscribe today by email to Dixon@advocacycenter.com to continue receiving Roundtable. We have so much more to share with you. Don't let this be your last issue! **If you don't subscribe, you will no longer receive Roundtable.**

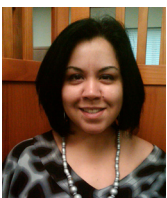
Welcome!

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 Dixon@advocacycenter.com. Feel free to bring guests.

Why Roundtable?

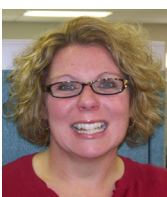
We chose the name "Roundtable" because at a round table there is no seat that is more important than any other seat. Since there is no head of the table, everyone seated is an equal member. Children benefit when families and schools work together.

Welcome to the Team!



Maritza Cubi came to The Advocacy Center in 2004 in search of support and direction while trying to acquire the proper education for her son. Maritza worked as a daycare teacher and as an advocate for 10 years. While working full time, she managed to be a full time student at Empire State College. Maritza has a Child Development Associate, a Family Development Credential, and an Associate in Human and Community Service with a concentration in Children and Families.

Maritza has three children of her own, one in elementary, and the other two in middle and high school. Two of her children have special needs. Maritza serves as a Bilingual Parent Education Specialist.



Carrie Burkin has a Bachelors Degree in Health Science with a concentration in Community Education. She previously worked for AIDS Rochester as a prevention educator. Carrie has two daughters ages 5 and 7. She became familiar with The Advocacy Center after her older daughter, who has Down syndrome, was born. Carrie and her family have been very active within the Down syndrome community. Having a child with a disability has taught Carrie the value of encouraging all

children to find the educational path that works for the best for them. Carrie serves as a Parent Education Specialist.

10 Team-Building Tips for Meetings by April Dixon

Here are a few ideas to help families and schools have better meetings.

- Arrive and begin on time.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Come prepared to listen.
- Keep an open mind. Compromise does not equal defeat.
- Put your cell phone on 'vibrate'.
- Do not play the 'blame-game'. Come to the table with solutions.
- Believe that everyone at the table desires success for the student.
- Write down decisions and make sure they're accurate.
- Know when to end the meeting. If the pot gets too hot, turn down the flame.
- Remember that the meeting is confidential.

Effective Teamwork

by Maritza Cubi - Parent Education Specialist

Can you remember the first day your child started Kindergarten? What came to your mind? I remember the first time my first son began to attend school. I said to myself, "My son is going to learn how to read, do math and so many other things." When I received his first report card I went straight to the school. I was furious! My child had failing grades.

I'm a mother and like other mothers I believed that the teachers in his school were responsible for my child's future preparation. Yes, in part this is true! Teachers are there to educate our children. But, we are also the teachers! We know our children better than anyone else. Parents that get involved in their child's education bring success to their child's education.

How can we accomplish this? Establishing positive communication with your child's school is important for your child's future and it's the first step. When parents, teachers and other members in the community and schools work together, students obtain a better education. There are many ways to achieve better communication. Let's share this responsibility, let's take a role, let's invest in our children, let's work together so that our children can be successful at school and receive an effective education, the education that every child should receive no matter the culture or the disability!



Opening the Lines of Communication

by April Dixon

School has begun. You find that you would like to know more about your child's progress. After Parent-Teacher Conferences, you've not heard any good or bad news. Who says the teacher has to make the first move?

Why wait? Initiate! Go ahead and open up the lines of communication! The first step is to meet with your child's teacher and express your need for more communication while acknowledging his or her busy schedule.

It's good to be clear about what you want communication with your child's teacher to look like. If you prefer phone calls, how often and when is the best time to make or receive calls? One parent reports asking her child's teacher to call if there was a "problem." This resulted in her being called more than 5 times each day. This mother spoke with the teacher to clarify her definition of a problem. Some families like email once or twice a week. Remember to always be sure your tone is respectful and that your message is clear. Again, the key is to describe what you want communication to look like. Many parents use notebooks that stay in a child's backpack to keep in touch with their child's teacher.

If your child is experiencing difficulties in class, be sure to share successful home strategies with the teacher. Point out the progress your child is making and how much you appreciate the teacher's efforts. When disagreements occur, meet with your child's teacher face to face to resolve them. Good family-school partnerships are necessary for our children's success. Start today! If not you, then who?

The Importance of Family Involvement

by Laura Arrington

One of the most important ways to improve schools is through family involvement. Research shows that when families become involved in their child's school, children are absent less frequently, do better academically, and are less likely to drop out of school. Family involvement encourages learning and is more important to a student's success than parents' income or educational level.

It's never too late to get involved. As students get older, they tend to not want their parents around, but it is more important than ever to get and stay involved when your child reaches secondary school. This helps reinforce the idea to our children that school is important.

Family involvement may look different for each family. It can be checking your child's homework, reading with your child, or discussing with them what they are learning in school. For others, it may be volunteering at school, attending PTA/PTO meetings, to becoming a school board member. Involvement increases opportunities for teachers and families to work together for the betterment of their school.

Tools for School

Great Resources

Did you know that we have extensive **Special Education** resources on our Family-School Partnership website? There is family-friendly information about the **Committee on Special Education (CSE), Individualized Education Programs (IEP), Committee on Pre-School Special Education (CPSE), Early Intervention**, and so much more.

Just visit at www.specialedparentcenter.org and select the Resources tab for quick and easy access.

10 Tips About Placement

<http://www.wrightslaw.com/howey/10tips.placement.htm>

Workshops!

Attend workshops to build your skills in advocacy, communication, and collaboration. Also, get more information about Special Education processes, specific disabilities, and transition. Visit our website at www.specialedparentcenter.org for a list of workshops and check the calendar for scheduling.

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:

- 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

There are Parent Member Trainings Scheduled for November and December 2010 and January 2011. For more information check out the flyer CSE Parent Member Training Fall/Winter 2010/11 on our website at www.specialedparentcenter.org

Latest News!

Celebrating 35 Years of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

In 1975, the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142) guaranteed access to a free, appropriate, public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to every child with a disability.

President Barack Obama Issues National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Proclamation

On **October 1**, President Obama issued a National Disability Employment Awareness Month Proclamation, stating that "Individuals with disabilities are a vital and dynamic part of our Nation, and their contributions have impacted countless lives...This month, let us rededicate ourselves to fostering equal access and fair opportunity in our labor force, and to capitalizing on the talent, skills, and rich diversity of all our workers...I urge all Americans to embrace the unique value that individuals with disabilities bring to our workplaces and communities and to promote everyone's right to employment."



Five Questions about the Kinship Care Resource Network

No two families look alike. This is the explanation I gave my five year old daughter when she asked why her new friend on her school bus lives with her grandma instead of her mom and dad. In fact, the definition of family according to the Webster dictionary is “a group of individuals living under one roof and usually under one head.” Not that my five year old would be very interested in the actual definition of family, but it does support the idea that there is no one correct way to go about creating a family.

All of this thinking about the many different versions of family led me to my meeting with Rosemary Stubbs. Rosemary is the program coordinator and case manager of the Kinship Care Resource Network. I sat down with Rosemary at her office in the Catholic Family Center on North Clinton Ave to chat about the program.

Carrie: Please give us some background information on the Kinship Care Resource Network program.

Rosemary: The Kinship Care Resource Network is funded by the Office of Children and Family Services and we service all of Monroe County. Our purpose is to improve the lives of families. Our focus is any caregiver who is raising another relative's child. We also focus on fictive caregivers who are caregivers that have no blood relation to the child but are close to them, such as a family friend.

C: How are these services delivered?

R: Grandparent support groups, which are peer run and facilitated, are held monthly. We also house the Kinship Alliance meetings. The goal of these meetings is to promote advocacy and give recognition to various kinship issues. We also provide case management and home visits. The main goal of these visits is to assess the needs of each individual child and the family as a whole. We also offer counseling for families, legal assistance, parent education, and activities for families.

C: What is the biggest barrier that your group faces?

R: The barriers we face are usually centered on the caregiver's role in the school system. Enrollment of these students can be difficult. Many times the school districts want proof of guardianship that a caregiver may not yet have. Also, getting some of the school districts to include the kinship caregiver in decision making and notification process can be difficult.

C: What are some positive points about this group?

R: One of the biggest positives is that we focus on each of the family members individually, not just the child or children being placed into kinship care. Our goal is to enhance the physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being of each family member. This helps us to ensure the safety and permanence of families.

C: Share with us an unusual fact, point of interest, or statistic about the Kinship Care Resource Network.

R: Informal or private kinship care is more than 12 times larger than the formal system. In New York state, more than 300,000 children are in the informal system and fewer than 30,000 are in foster care.

More information about the Kinship Care Resource Network can be found by calling (585) 262-7048 or visiting www.cfcrochester.org

April's Alternative Dish



*April Dixon
is a
Parent
Education
Specialist*

Little Eyes and Ears

When I was a little girl, I thought that grownups had very silly conversations. My mother would often interrupt her company and say “little eyes and ears” and everyone would laugh. I wondered what was funny about little eyes and ears and why on earth adults would make fun of someone.

Now that I am all grown up, I understand. My mother was cautious about what was being said because I was present. Sure, I was playing, but I watched everything they did and I heard everything they said. I didn’t miss anything because I was “Miss Nosy.”

As parents of children with disabilities, the time will come when we have to decide whether or not to have our children attend Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings. Sometimes these meetings are not only stressful and tense, but they are often negative. The teacher says, “April is reading on a 1st grade level. April is in 6th grade. April is not trying hard enough. April needs to be in a different classroom.” Who wants their child to hear this?

Another thought is that having your child present can be a model of positive advocacy skills. Wouldn’t the adults be aware of little eyes and ears? Just imagine a strength-based assessment of your child’s educational program. The general education teacher says, “April is maintaining her current level in reading and has made great progress in math!” The CSE chairperson asks, “April, what is your favorite thing to do?” “Computer games!” exclaims April. “Our efforts to incorporate April’s passion for computer games into her reading program have lessened her anxiety around this subject and have allowed her to engage her peers socially,” says the Special Education Teacher.

I know that in the “real world” this scenario is not the norm, but change is possible. Regardless of “little eyes and ears” being present, my big dream is that we all could be more aware of the effect of our words and our audience.

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

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To subscribe to Roundtable please email Dixon@advocacycenter.com

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