

The Advocate

“Every Child is Born with Wings...

**Make it a Choice to Educate and Advocate for
the Chances for
All Children to Learn to Soar”**

Tax Benefits for Parents of Children with Learning

SEPTA would like to
thank

Disability Services
& Advocacy, LLC

www.dsausa.net

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Schwab Learning, a disability learning web site at: <http://www.schwablearning.org>, has an article on tax benefits available to parents (who has a child) with severe learning disability. If your child has AD/HD, or other physical, mental, or emotional impairment, you may also qualify for tax benefits. The site created by Investment Guru Charles Schwab (who also has a learning disability), reports that anywhere from 15-30 percent of families do not take advantage of these tax saving techniques. ***This article will highlight some of the common techniques and is for information purposes only. Please consult with***

your accountant before making any tax decisions.

Some common tax techniques highlighted in the Schwab article include:

Medical Expense Deduction:

The IRS has ruled that the following expenses may qualify as a medical expense deductions. Remember medical expenses are deductible only to the extent that they exceed 7.5 percent of the individual's adjusted gross income.

- Tuition costs for a special school that has a program designed to educate children with learning disabilities.
- Amounts paid for a child's tutoring by a teacher specially trained and qualified to deal

with severe learning disabilities.

- Transportation expenses to the special school or to the tutor may also qualify as medical expense deductions.
- Diagnostic Evaluation from Psychologists, Neurologists or other person with professional qualifications.
- Costs of attending medical conferences to obtain medical information concerning treatment for and care of their child. These include admission and transportation costs, they do not include meal and lodging costs (unless your travel and stay at a hotel is the result of your dependent receiving medical *(continued on page 2)*

Help Wanted:

Would you like to help with our Newsletter, or Website?

Have you come across an interesting book, article or website that deals with education, special ed., or parenting that you'd like to share with others?

Write a short summary and we'll love to put it in our newsletter and web page.

IDEA Reauthorization and No Child Left Behind What Every Parent Should Know....

With the mounting pressure is building on Congress to change "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) which would weaken accountability for students with disabilities. *Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP)* is the measurement under NCLB in which school must show yearly progress in educational goals. Arguments and allega-

tions are made by states, districts and schools that students with disabilities can't demonstrate proficiency on achievement tests and assessments thus jeopardizing federal funding under the *No Child Left Behind*.

"The two main arguments we are hearing in opposition to accountability provision for

students with disabilities in *No Child Left Behind* are based on incorrect premises. Some of the opponents of *No Child Left Behind* allege that the law is not fair for students with disabilities because it expects achievement to measure by a "one size fits all" test. They also allege that the fact that these students have disabilities means that they can't

“Families may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) based on the presence of one or two qualifying children in the taxpayer’s home. While most children do not qualify after the age 19 or 23...parents of severely disabled children have a “qualifying child” as long as the child lives with the parent even into adulthood.”

“Expenses for regular childcare services, after-school programs, and summer camp qualify although overnight summer camp does not.”

Measurable goals and objectives can be surprisingly fast, easy to write, and helpful once the skill has been learned. You will learn just that with this IEP best practice book, authored by special education and IEP law specialists Drs. Barbara Bateman and Cynthia Herr”

Tax Benefits for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities (continued from pg1)

Treatment from a licensed physician in a hospital or related setting). Recreation must be a secondary purpose of the trip and the conference must deal with specific issues related to a medical condition.

Child and Dependent Care Credits:

- The Child and Dependent Care Credit is allowed for work related expenses incurred for dependents of the taxpayer. Generally, the dependent must be under 13, however, if the child has a disability and requires supervision, the age limit is waived.
- Expenses up to \$2,400 per year per dependent are allowed. Expenses for regular childcare services, after-school programs, and summer camp qualify although overnight summer camp does not. The credit is 20-30% of allowable expenses and can be

as high as \$1440. (See IRS Publication 503, Child and Dependent Care Expenses).

Exemption for Dependents:

A taxpayer is entitled to claim an exemption for each qualified dependent. Caretakers, such as grandparents, aunts, or even foster parents may be entitled to this exemption. Non-custodial parents who provide the majority of support (more than 50%) for a child with a severe learning disability may be eligible for an exemption. This Exemption could save up to \$900 in taxes.

Earned Income Tax Credit:

Families with adjusted gross income under \$34,178 (\$1,000 less for taxpayers filing as single or head of household) may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) based on the presence of one or two qualifying children in the taxpayers home. While most chil-

dren do not qualify after the age of 19 or 23 (if attending one semester of college), parents of severely disabled children have a “qualifying child” as long as the child lived with the parent even into adulthood.

IRS Free Booklets:

The following free booklets published by the IRS provide additional information on the topics listed above.

IRS Publication 17:

“You Federal Income Tax”

IRS Publication 502:

Medical and Dental Expense

IRS Publication 503:

Child and Dependent Care Expenses

IRS Publication 501:

Exemptions, Standard Deduction and Filing Information

IRS Publication 596:

Earned Income Tax Credit

ON THE BOOK SHELF:

“Writing Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives”

By Barbara D. Bateman & Cynthia M. Herr

Newly released (March 2004) author Barbara D. Bateman has once again given parents of special needs children an essential book to read. Parents are presented in Bateman’s typical straight forward –cut to the case method of the presenting to parents the easiest means of understanding information and pointing out how what “seems” to be a “good goal or objective” in an

IEP is not (in actuality when accountability & measurable outcomes are applied).

Bateman and Herr present to parents a “starting place” from which a student’s IEP goals should be derived from, simple questions and “check phrases” a parent can ask in regards to

IEP goals and objectives that include percentiles and measurement as a component, and most

importantly the importance of a direct relationship between the student’s present level of educational performance and the other components of the IEP.

“Writing Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives” by Barbara D. Bateman and Cynthia M. Herr can be order through [IEP Resources](#) Tel. (800) 651-0954 or online at www.amazon.com. Book price approx. \$25.00

IDEA Reauthorization and No Child Left Behind~ What Every Parent Should Know (continued)

demonstrate proficiency on assessments.

Under *No Child Left Behind*, students with disabilities can take regular assessments (with or without accommodations) or they can take an alternate assessment based on grade level achievement standards or alternative achievement standards. States have the flexibility to have a number of different alternative assessments and a number of different alternative achievement standards.

This is not a "One Size Fits All" situation.

In addition, the fact that a child has a disability does not mean he or she can not demonstrate grade proficiency with the appropriate accommodations or with an alternate

assessment. Many students with disabilities are on diploma track and should be expected to be proficient at grade level. This is true for students without cognitive disabilities and for students whose cognitive disabilities are mild. Students with a significant cognitive disabilities are permitted to demonstrate proficiency on assessments based on an alternate achievement standard; these assessments may include "Off Level" (below grade level) test."¹

1. Diana Autin-Executive Co-Director
State Wide Parent Advocacy Network
Email: diana.autin@spannj.org

What Parents can do to ensure that Congress does not lower the accountability standards for students with disabilities?

Contact the following:

On our website

www.specialeducationpta.org

There is a letter which you can print, sign and send to your congress and state representatives listed below:

Senator Frank Lautenberg

324 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510-3003
Telephone:(202)224-3224
Fax(202)228-4054

Main District Office:

1 Gateway Center
Newark, NJ 07102
Tel. (973) 639-8704
Fax (973) 639-8723

Senator Jon Corzine

502 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510-3004
Telephone: (202) 224-4744
Fax (202) 228-2197

Main District Office:

1 Gateway Center 11th Floor
Newark, NJ 07102
Tel. (973) 645-3030
Fax (973) 645-0502

Representative Rush Holt

1019 Longworth House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515-3012
Telephone: (202) 225-5801
Fax: (202) 225-6025

Main District Office:

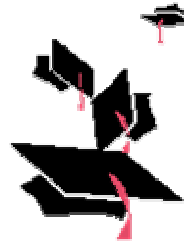
50 Washington Rd.
West Windsor, NJ 08550
Tel. (609) 750-9365
Fax (609) 750-0618

2004 S.E.PTA Scholarship

Applications for the S.E.PTA scholarship for any graduating special education student of the South River School District (either in the public H.S. or placed in a private school) school or secondary school are

education at a college, trade school or secondary school are now available at the Office of Special Education. Submission deadline is April 30th 2004.

Good Luck to all applicants!



S.E.PTA Family Fun Day

The Special Education PTA of South River is in the mist of planning its' first "Family Fun Day" for Sunday June 27th

But We Need Your Help!

We are requesting help from parents, relatives, and commu-

nity groups to help make this day a wonderful day for the special needs children of South River and their families.

If you are interested; Please come to the S.E.PTA meeting on April 7th 6:30-9pm at the So. River Public

We are asking for help in planning games and activities And other items of interest to be included on this day. Please come and show your involvement-

We need your help to make

Interested in obtaining a copy of the
S.E.PTA of South River's
Special Education Resource CD-Rom?

Contact S.E.PTA
At
(732) 651-7157
Or
Email us at:
info@specialeducationpta.org
Cost: \$7.50
(includes ship/handling fees)

The Special Education PTA of South River

81 Johnson Place
South River, New Jersey 08882

Information Line: (732) 651-7157
E-mail: info@specialeducationpta.org

We're on the web!

www.specialeducationpta.org

*"Every Child is Born with Wings....
Make it a Choice to Educate and
Advocate for the Chances for All Children to Learn to Soar"*

Special Education PTA of South River was founded by a group of parents who wished to promote the education and advocacy for the special needs children of their community.

By providing parents with the tools and effective advocacy skills ~

We endeavor to keep this goal a reality so that

Every Child Will Full Fill their Dreams and Learn to Soar.

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Up Coming Events:

April 7th:

- Parent Open Forum
6:30-7pm at the So. River Public Library
- S.E.PTA Meeting
7-9pm at the So. River Public Library
To include discussions on:
 - *Family Fun Day
 - *S.E.PTA Resource Library
 - Donations for 2004

April 30th:

Deadline for S.E.PTA
scholarship

May 5th:

- Parent Open Forum
6:30-7pm at the So. River Public Library
- S.E.PTA Meeting
7-9pm at the So. River Public Library
*Scholarship committee meeting

May 13th:

Parents Coffee
9:30-11:30am

For more information call Vivian Paulus
(732) 297-4028

June 2:

- Parent Open Forum
6:30-7pm at the So. River Public Library
- S.E.PTA Meeting
7-9pm at the So. River Public Library