

SEPTA thanks
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For sponsoring the mailing
 of our newsletters.

Inside this issue:

<i>Assistive Technology</i>	1
<i>News from the Web</i>	2
<i>Assist. Tech. (continued)</i>	2
<i>Baja Fresh Fundraiser</i>	In- sert
<i>Assist. Tech. (continued)</i>	3
<i>Up Coming Events</i>	4

The Advocate

The Advocate is the free public newsletter of the Special Education PTA of South River.

Published monthly from August to June of each year by the Executive Board Members of the SEPTA - this newsletter is mailed directly to families of classified students of the South River Public School District from the Office of Special Education. Additional copies are available at the South River Public Library. Past editions of the Advocate can be downloaded from our website. Interested individuals may sign up for our electronic newsletter and a listing of other newsletters related to special education issues by visiting our website at:

www.specialeducationpta.org

Questions related to the Special Education PTA as an organization, the services we provide, and our calendar of events can be answered by telephone at (732)651-7157 or by email at info@specialeducationpta.org

If you would like to submit letters or articles, post information or contribute pictures to be included in future editions of the Advocate please contact our newsletter by email at SRPTAAvocate@aol.com

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”*



Learning About Assistive Technology

On March 2 Jeannette Van Houten an Assistive Technology Specialist with United Cerebral Palsy gave an excellent presentation on the Assistive Technology available to students with disabilities and their families.

What Is Assistive Technology?

An assistive technology device is “any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially or off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.”

Examples of Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology devices can include high-tech equipment like computers, but also simple magnifiers, splints, pointers, and ramps. The single most important characteristic of an assistive technology device, whether it is high, mid or low tech, is its ability to meet the specific and individual need of the child.

Assistive Technology Services

An assistive technology ser-

vice is “any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device.” Assistive technology services include:

- evaluation of the needs of a child with disabilities
- purchase or leasing of assistive technology devices
- selection, fit, customization, maintenance, repair, or replacement of a device
- Coordination of other therapies, interventions, or services
- Training or assistance of either the child who will use the device or individuals who will assist the child in using the device

When to Introduce Assistive Technology

Assistive technology should be introduced to a child as soon as a significant delay in functional skills or development is identified. Childhood provides the most fertile opportunity for learning. Providing children with disabilities with effective assistance and strategies to navigate their disability increases their self-confidence and desire to learn.

Requesting An Evaluation

If you believe your child could benefit from Assistive Technology the first step is to contact your Case Manager in writing. You want to request an assistive technology evaluation or augmentative communication evaluation to address specific areas of concern. In your letter, you want to state that you want a qualified assistive technology practitioner or specialist performing the evaluation.

Areas Addressed By Assistive Technology

Access devices help children interact with computers. These aids help children use head, neck, or eye movements to operate equipment that allows them access to computers. Other devices included in this category are input devices such as switches, alternative keyboards, special mice, touch windows, speech recognition software, and infrared pointers. These tools allow children to enter or manipulate data.

Assistive-listening aids help students who have hearing problems or auditory processing problems. They include hearing aides, personal FM units, Phonic Ear, TDDs, or

(Continued on page 2)

NEWS FROM THE WEB:

www.idonline.org

Learning Disabilities Online

This wonderful online resource organization offers parents

- Facts about learning disabilities
- What you can do as a parent of a child with learning disabilities.
- Common warning signs / Seeing the signs of learning disabilities.
- Informative resources:

Organizations to contact /

Books resources list and more...

<http://rwjms.umdj.edu/bogscenter/resources/index.htm>

The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center

on Developmental Disabilities, part of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School offers parents a four page reference list of organizations and direct links to information on medical, government and private organizations.

Links off their home page will also supply parents with workshop information, projects, and What's New at the Bogg's Center.

www.addup.org

ADD UP

Website and searchable database of national ADD programs, including University Centers, P & A Programs and DD Councils

Learning About Assitive Technology

(Continued from page 1)

closed captioned television.

Augmentative-communication devices and techniques supplement a child's natural speech and communication. These may be low-tech, such as communication notebooks and boards; high-tech, such as electronic communication devices or speech synthesizers; or no tech, such as sign language.

Computer-based instruction can make possible independent participation in classroom activities. Software can teach the same lessons the rest of the students are receiving, while offering different ways for children to respond. Software can provide the tools for writing, spelling, calculation, reading, basic reasoning, and higher-level thinking skills.

Mobility aids are designed to help children whose impairments limit their mobility. These devices include self-propelled walkers, manual or powered wheelchairs, and powered vehicles such as bikes and scooters.

Positioning and seating aids help children achieve healthier and more functional positions in a variety of settings. Items may be simple, such as a footrest, or customized, such as lateral supports to assist with stable, upright trunk and head positions. Aids include standers and devices that assist children in maintaining a variety of positions.

Self-care devices allow children with disabilities to dress, clean, and feed themselves. They include electric feeders, adapted utensils, and specially designed showers and toilet seats.

Social interaction and recreation devices allow children with disabilities to have fun with their peers, and include drawing software, computer games and simulations, and adapted puzzles and games.

Visual aids help children who have vision problems. Devices include screen readers and enlargers, large-type books, taped books, Brailers, light boxes, high-contrast materials, synthesizers, and scanners.

Assitive Technology Ideas and Sup-

ports on the Web

Learning Disabled—General information

www.schwablearning.org

- Learn about—keywords and terminology (essential background for web searching)
- Generic descriptions of technology.
- Links to manufacturers

www.ldresources.com

- Hear perspectives you don't normally hear (adults with disabilities). For example, how computers change the writing process.

All Disabilities—General information

www.ataccess.org

- Good annotated vendor list
- Popular book on computers and assistive technology available online

www.closingthegap.com

- Bi-monthly newspaper on assistive technology, with a bent towards computers and education) they want you to subscribe.
- Resource directory provides access to archives in the library section that are excellent

Assitive Technology Databases

Use these on-line tools for software and hardware options. It is important to know your child's disability, age level and content area you are interested in.

- www.closingthegap.com (resource directory and bi-monthly newspaper)
- www.learningneeds.com (commercial site)
- www.idonline.com (grant funded)
- www.schwablearning.com (grant funded)

Learning About Assistive Technology (Continued From Page 2)

- www.assistivetech.net (grant funded)

Listservs

A listserv is an easy way to communicate via e-mail among people interested in a particular subject. Below are some of the more popular Assistive Technology Listservs.

- www.edc.org/speak2wrt (Allows participants to ask questions to experts and users of AT—particularly speak2wrt software).
- <http://maelstrom.stjohns.edu/archives/resna.html> (the Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America—you do not have to be a member to join the listserv)
- www.yahoogroups.com/group/njcart (The New Jersey Coalition for the Advancement of Rehabilitation Technology—you do not have to be a member to join the listserv. NJ only focuses on school age students).
- www.qiat.org (QIAT stands for Qual-

ity Indicators for Assistive Technology. This group attempts to identify best practices in AT.

Local Newsletters

- www.cprofnj.org (Educating for success newsletter—published by Cerebral Palsy Association of NJ).
- www.tcnj.edu/~technj (College of New Jersey-NJ Newsletter)

Manufacturer Tutorials On-line

- www.intellitools.com
- www.inspiration.com

Grant Funded Tutorials On-line

www.at-training.com (Website specifically creates tutorials).

Public Comment Wanted On the Rewriting of Special Education Administrative Code after Passage of IDEIA law

The NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities and the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) are soliciting parent and student input on the rewriting of the NJ Department of Education Administrative Code and specifically how it relates to Special Education services since the passage of the Federal law the **Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA)**.

One of the positive features of the new law is that states have a great deal of latitude in enacting this legislation. While the Federal law provides for minimum standards it does not prevent states from imposing higher standards if they so choose.

The New Jersey state code currently provides greater protections in a number of

areas that are not provided in the new federal legislation.

Specific areas that Council on Developmental Disabilities and SPAN would like parent reaction and input on include:

- The elimination of short term objectives and benchmarks for students who take the normal state assessments.
- The elimination of periodic report to parents on whether the progress is sufficient to meet the annual goals outlined in the IEP by the end of the year.
- Permitting the “excuse” of the general educator from participating at the IEP meeting.
- Raising the age at which transition dis-

cussions begin from 14 to 16 years of age.

- Elimination of the “stay put” rule when discussing disciplinary “alternative placements.”
 - Allowing three year IEP’s
 - The elimination of a number of related services in the code.
- Visit www.spannj.org and complete the survey to voice your opinions on these important changes.

The SEPTA of South River

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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"

*The SEPTA of South River was founded by a group of parents who
wished to promote the education and advocacy rights of 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 Fulfill Their Dreams
and Learn to Soar.***

Interested in
obtaining a copy of the

**SEPTA of
South River's**

S. E. Resource CD-Rom?

Contact SEPTA

At (732) 651-7157

Or Email us at:

info@specialeducationpta.org

Cost: \$7.50

(includes ship/handling fees)

Help Wanted:

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

Have you come across an inter-
esting 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.

Up Coming Events:

April:

April 14th:

BAJA FRESH FUND RAISER

Eat at Baja Fresh on this
day and they will donate
15% of the proceeds to the
Special Education PTA of
South River.

Get together with family and
friends to help us, while you
help yourself to some great
food-with an event like this,
everybody wins!!

April:

April 19th:

BOARD OF EDUCA- TION ELECTIONS

Candidates (in ballot order)

John V. Budzin

Regis Wyluda

Gregory P. Palaski

William S. England

May:

May 4th:

SEPTA Meeting

South River Public Library

(downstairs meeting room)

6:30pm Parent Forum

**7pm : PTA Executive Board
Meeting**