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CENTER for EDUCATIONAL NETWORKING

Effective Ideas for Improving the Educational Performance of Students with Disabilities

Newsline

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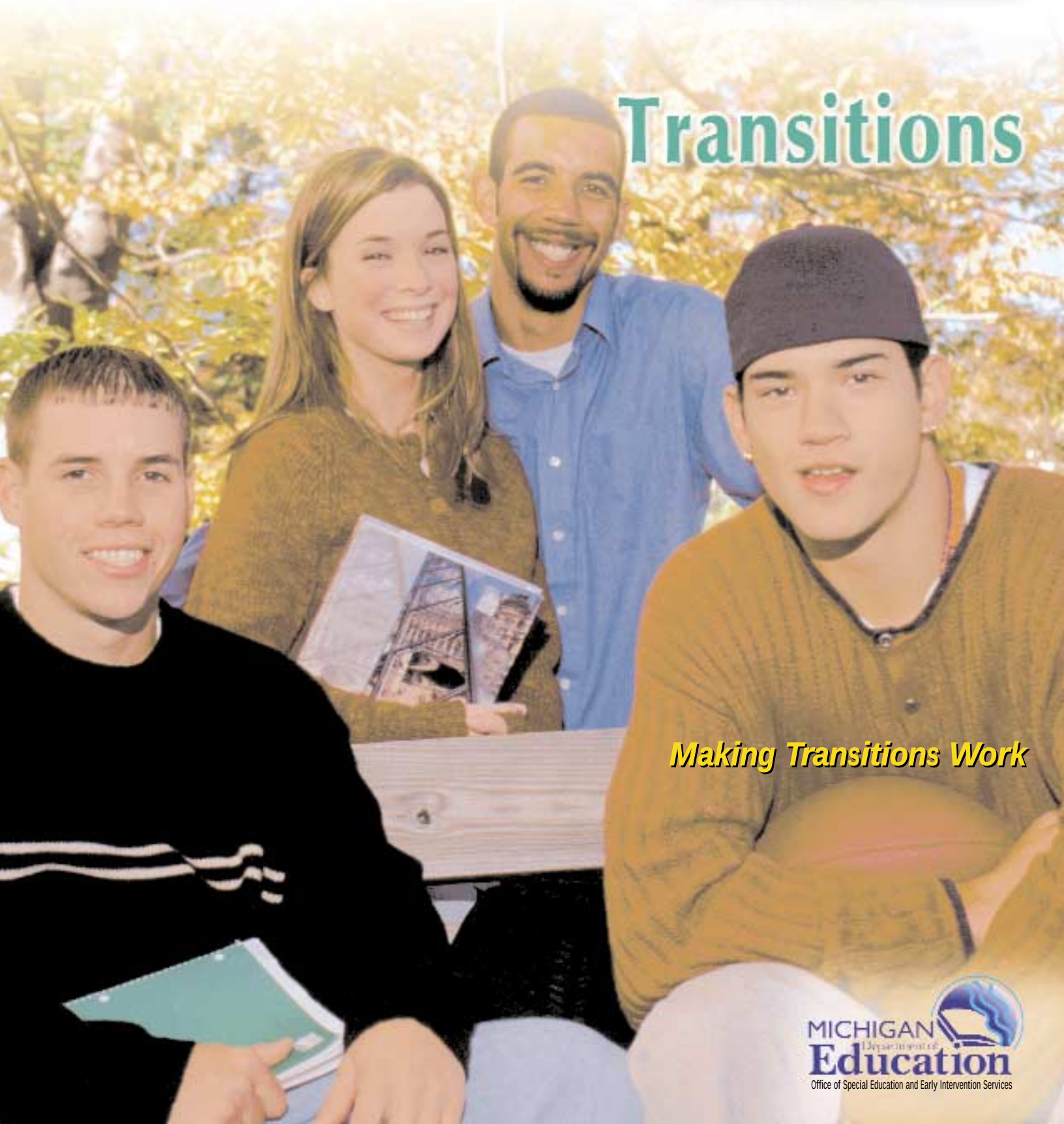

Transitions

Making Transitions Work

MICHIGAN Department of Education
Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

Center for Educational Networking

Newsline

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TRANSITION:

Transition is a term used to describe the process when a student moves through school to adult life (adult living, community participation, post-secondary education and/or employment). Because the transition process should begin early in a child's life, this issue of *Newsline* defines transition from age three with reference to Michigan's early intervention service system referred to as *Early On®*. For individuals with disabilities, transition is federally regulated. The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) *Amendments of 1997*, Public Law 105-17 (Section 602), defines transition as "(30) a coordinated set of activities for a student with a disability that—is designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to post school activities, including post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation; is based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests; and includes instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and, when appropriate, the acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation."

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On our Cover...

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The Center for Educational Networking (CEN) is a project awarded by the Michigan Department of Education to Eaton Intermediate School District (EISD). *NEWSLINE* is produced by CEN for OSE/EIS through a PL 105-17, *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act,* state discretionary project grant. Contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Michigan Department of Education or Eaton ISD, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement. Some photographs are used solely for graphic presentation and do not necessarily represent individuals with disabilities. This information is in the public domain unless otherwise indicated. Readers are encouraged to copy and share articles, but proper credit must be given.

Director OSE/EIS

Jacquelyn J. Thompson, Ph.D.

For all of us, transitions occur throughout life. Transition can bring opportunity, challenge, and/or anxiety. For students with disabilities and their families, transition presents all of these and more. Planning is essential for successful transitions.

The Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (MDE-OSE/EIS) supports improved planning for transition through grants to intermediate school districts (ISDs), by supporting the statewide Transition Services Project (TSP), by funding parents as co-trainers in transition training, and through collaborative planning and practice with other state agencies. The new administrative rules for special education will emphasize the importance of quality transition services and support continuous improvement toward best practice models for preparing young adults to make their transition into adult life roles.

Planning for the future is appropriate for ALL students—which is why Michigan's new accreditation model, Education Yes!, will require the development and use of individual four-year education and employment plans for each secondary student. The plan for individual education and employment plans for ALL students will build upon the work of the Michigan Department of Career Development. The ongoing transition planning efforts of MDE-OSE/EIS for students with disabilities will be very helpful to this Education Yes! accreditation indicator.

Editor

Holly Spence Sasso

In music, shifting from one note to another is considered a transition. In writing, a sentence connecting two paragraphs within a composition is considered a transition. Within the educational system, transitions begin at birth with developmental milestones leading toward school readiness until students move successfully into college, employment, and/or another independent living option. Transition in the educational setting is closely aligned with life goals and like music and writing requires planning and persistence for successful outcomes.

The articles presented in this issue of *Newsline* were chosen to inform readers about the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (MDE-OSE/EIS) efforts to ensure quality transition programming for ALL students. Transition requires planning and collaboration between parents, teachers, and participating transition organizations or agencies. A variety of the articles presented here share examples of effective collaborations among these education stakeholders (see "Education Advisory Groups Link Agencies with Workforce Initiatives" on page 9 and "Interagency Collaboration Has a Rich History in Michigan" on page 8.)

Self-Determination is defined by Field and Hoffman (1994, p.164) as the "ability to identify and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself." In this issue, parents, teachers, and administrators share their perspectives on transition and offer examples of this essential component of transition (see articles on pages 16-22).

We hope that this issue will be a valuable reference in your transition planning efforts! If you would like to receive additional copies of this issue or past issues of *Newsline*, to share with school staff or parents, please contact Robin Wolever, Center for Educational Networking (CEN) (800)593-9146 #20, rwolever@eaton.k12.mi.us.

Please note that the Michigan Department of Education is in the process of "transitioning" to a new web site. You'll find the address conveniently located in the footnote of each right-hand page of *Newsline.* In addition to many valuable resources, the Web site offers on online version of *Newsline* and an option to subscribe to the online version of this publication—***E-Newsline.*** At the Web site, click on "Administrators," then "Special Education," and finally "Newsletters." You can also access *Newsline* and subscribe to ***E-Newsline*** at Michigan's State Improvement Grant (SIG) Web site, www.michigansig.org (see "State Improvement Grant Unveils New Web Site" on page 15 of this issue). To subscribe to ***E-Newsline*** from this site, click on ***E-Newsline*** under "Subscribe to Services."

Wishing you a great summer!

Field, S. & Hoffman, A. (1994). Development of a model for self-determination. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals*, 17, 159-169*

Guest Editor

Jan Yoak-Newman, Director, Transition Services Project

Michigan's Transition Outcomes Improvement Project Helps Pilot Sites Address Transition Mandates

While a great deal has occurred in states and local districts to improve transition services for youth with disabilities, there are many states and local districts that continue to find difficulty in meeting the transition services requirements of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA). This is due to a number of factors, including a lack of understanding of the requirements and a lack of knowledge of how to address both the mandate and intent of the legislation. Simply put, teachers and administrators are asking for direction and information that will guide them with examples, show them clearly and concisely how to plan for, develop, and implement transition services for youth with disabilities. Over the past 18 months, the Michigan Transition Services Project (TSP) (see "Interagency Transition Collaboration Has a Rich History in Michigan" on page 7) has been providing technical assistance to several pilot sites across the state to help them address the transition mandates.

The purpose of the Transition Outcomes Improvement Project is to:

- Assist local districts in meeting the transition service requirements of IDEA.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of providing and delivering transition services to students and families through the individualized education program (IEP).
- Provide training and resource materials on the transition process for educators, administrators, adult agency personnel, parents, and others.
- Improve the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities.
- Develop a model and process for meeting the transition requirements that can be replicated and implemented in a variety of states and districts.

The proposed plan focuses on measurable results that are consistent with IDEA transition requirements and improving the post-school outcomes of students with disabilities. The proposed approach is detailed below:

- Review IEPs of transition-age students to determine problem or deficit areas with the transition requirements of IDEA.

Continued on page 6…

Guest Editor

Jan Cheeney, Parent Liaison, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

Michigan Supports Early Transition Planning

Transition plays a big part in *Early On®*. *Early On®* is Michigan's early intervention service system for infants and toddlers and their families from birth to age three. Transition planning for children involved with *Early On®* begins at least 90 days prior to the child's third birthday but no earlier than six months of age.

When a child turns three, he/she transitions out of *Early On®* and may need several different service options. These could be enrollment in preschool, Early Head Start, special education, day care or at home settings. There may be a need for support in order to continue services through another agency. Families of very young children experience many feelings and emotions when their child moves into some new aspect of life. The support that an *Early On®* service coordinator or service provider can offer is crucial to families at this time in their lives.

Early On® coordinators need several skills in order to provide support. They need the knowledge of what is available in their community, how to help families gain the skills they need to prepare for transition, how to support families in the decision making process, and how to serve as a liaison between their families and new settings.

It is helpful to provide families with all the information, support and backup they may need for this transition. Families deserve to be treated with respect for their feelings, their concerns, and their needs. In order to reduce the anxiety that can come with the change, *Early On®* can help by arranging for site visitations, answering questions, and allowing adjustment time for new relationships that can take time to develop.

Occasionally, as they move through the transition process, families come face to face with concerns and feelings they thought were well behind them. Concerns can arise at any time and may include such questions as: "Is this good for my child? How will he/she do? What if he/she gets scared? What if someone doesn't understand him/her? What if I don't know something that I am expected to know?" These questions can come up, repeatedly, no matter the age of the child/student.

Continued on page 7…

Watkins Generates School Finance Discussion

T.J. Bucholz, Coordinator of Communications Outreach, Michigan Department of Education

A report on school financing and Proposal A is available on-line for review by the public at-large. "From Proposal A to A+ - A discussion of issues and options regarding the financial requirements of public education in Michigan" was accepted by the State Board of Education at its March meeting.

The bi-partisan report, funded by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) and written by a cadre of school finance experts, including representatives from Indiana University, Wayne State University, Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and the non-partisan Citizens Research Council, is designed to generate conversation about the ways school funding works in Michigan. The impetus of the report occurred when the State Board unanimously commissioned its creation in November 2001.

"The benefit of Proposal A is recognized. However, much like a 1994 automobile, Proposal A may be in need of an engine overhaul and body redesign to remain contemporary," State Superintendent for Public Instruction, Thomas Watkins said. "Perhaps Proposal A was good in the 20th century. Now, perhaps, the citizens and children of Michigan deserve Proposal A+ as we move into the 21st century."

"Policy makers like the State Board of Education have a responsibility to take a conscious look at our decisions to see if they withstand the test of time and to ask ourselves if we can do better," Watkins said. "It is with that intent that the State Board and I share this report. Our goal should be to work together to find a shared vision and common agenda that will address the shortcomings of the existing system."

The State Board will review final recommendations from the task force and forward policy recommendations to the Legislature in the fall for its consideration.

A copy of the full report is available at www.michigan.gov/mde. An on-line survey on the subject will also be made available soon.

Education YES! Continues To Move Forward

Three members of the State Board Education's Accreditation Advisory Committee discussed key issues of the state's recently established school accreditation system with Board members during the Board's May meeting in Monroe County.

The Committee includes five nationally recognized experts in accountability, measurement, school improvement, and accreditation systems. Philip Kearney, Sharon Lewis, and Edward Roeber listened carefully to the Board's direction and concerns regarding the Board's Education YES! accreditation system. Two of the Committee members—Lawrence Lezotte and Mark Reckase—were unable to attend the Board's meeting. State Board Vice President Sharon L. Gire shared her concerns regarding timelines

Continued on page 19…

Changes in the Proposed Administrative Rules for Special Education Affect Transition Services

David Brock, Supervisor, Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services

The proposed administrative rules for special education are in the final stages of approval at the time of this writing. Some changes proposed affect transition services. One of the changes was to delete the references to work study and work study coordinators.

The term "work study services" [Rule 1733(i)] was replaced with "worksite-based learning," which is a more up-to-date term. The proposed rule would still require a written agreement and/or plan between the student, parent, school, and worksite representative.

Transition services include much more than vocational opportunities, and every student with a disability should receive transition planning and services. Therefore, the scope of "work study services" has been expanded to include all transition services.

According to the proposed rule, transition services may be coordinated by "professional special education personnel, a transition coordinator, or both." Former work study coordinators who are professional special education personnel may continue in the role of coordinator of transition services.

A new personnel category referred to as "transition coordinator" is intended to allow other professionals, including community mental health providers and rehabilitation counselors, to also qualify as special education personnel. At this time, the Transition Services Project (TSP) is meeting with Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services staff, university representatives, work study coordinators, and others to develop a proposal to define the qualifications of transition coordinators. Consideration is being given to both preservice preparation and methods for current professional staff to qualify. This proposal will be the basis for a new proposed rule. Time will be given for review and comment by all organizations and individuals before a new proposal is finalized.

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Michigan's Transition Outcomes Improvement Project Helps Pilot Sites Address Transition Mandates (continued from page 4…)

- With local district staff, identify strategies, interventions, and an implementation plan with specific measurable targets that will directly address the problem or deficit areas.
- Provide follow-along with building staff to assist in implementing the strategies, interventions, and implementation plan.
- Involve local district administration, teachers, state personnel and other stakeholders in all phases of the project.
- Evaluate and report on the changes, improvements, activities, and strategies.

The proposed plan of action and activities includes the following:

- Develop an evaluation instrument that can be used to determine the extent to which all transition requirements under IDEA are being met by local districts.
- Develop a process for determining a group of students for conducting IEP evaluations for initial baseline.

Team Training

- Identify and train evaluation team members on the instrument, process, and procedures.

Selection and Team Visits of Districts

- Evaluate team members' schedules, meet with district personnel, and complete reviews of IEPs of students 14 years of age and older on all transition requirements.
- Compile, analyze, and summarize findings.
- Develop strategies, interventions, and implementation plans.
- Meet with local district building and IEP team members to report findings from the IEP review.
- State and regional resource center staff and members of the evaluation team meet with staff from local educational agencies to report findings, develop strategies and interventions, set target goals and timelines for implementation and final reviews, and schedule follow-up visits.

Implementation and Follow-Along

- Local education agencies implement the strategies, interventions, skills, knowledge and procedures obtained from the review meeting/training to address deficit and target areas.
- State regional resource center personnel conduct follow-along during the implementation stage to help districts implement the strategies, interventions, skills, knowledge, and procedures, or identify alternative interventions and strategies, if needed.

Evaluation, Refinement, and Development of Next Steps

- Conduct formal follow-up reviews of IEPs to determine improvement and proximity in meeting target goals. The exact timeline or schedule is determined for each district by district staff.
- Meet with staff from local districts to report final results and discuss next steps.
- State personnel review overall results to develop next steps for expanded training, implementation, and replication.

The Transition Services Project (TSP) has completed the gathering of baseline IEP file data from 23 Transition Outcomes Improvement Project pilot sites. The results were reviewed by each site and goals and timelines were established to improve desired outcomes. At the end of June, 2002, another review of the same IEP files will be conducted and the results will be compared to the initial baseline data. A compilation of the data will be available at the completion of the project.

Adapted with permission from Ed O'Leary, Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center

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Laurie Bradley Coordinates Trainings for TSP

Laurie Bradley

Laurie Bradley has been the Coordinator for the Transition Services Project (TSP) since its inception in July, 1998. During the first three-and-a-half years of TSP, Laurie has organized many transition workshops and training-of-trainer activities, worked with other organizations to incorporate transition sessions into their conferences, and coordinated a very successful Summer Transition Institute. She also serves as editor, typesetter, and proofreader for the many presentations, participant handouts, and print products disseminated by TSP. As a member of the TSP team, Laurie has provided valuable input into the structure of transition services and coordination in Michigan.

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Early On® Services Provide Transition Support to Families and Children

Families Can Connect with *Early On*® through the Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education

Are you concerned about the health or development of a child between birth and age three? Michigan's *Early On*® program is there to help. *Early On*® is a comprehensive system of service delivery and support designed around the needs of the family and child. While *Early On*® is housed in the Michigan Department of Education and carries out the provisions of Part C of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA), it is a cooperative program conducted by three state agencies—the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), the Family Independence Agency (FIA), and the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH).

Early On® services are available to families regardless of income. Depending on the needs of the family and child, services can include early identification; screening and assessment; psychological, medical, social work, and nursing services; speech pathology; audiology; occupational and physical therapy; vision services; special equipment; nutritional counseling; transportation; family skill training; counseling (family, group, or individual); home visits; and educational instruction.

Families connect with *Early On*® through MDE's Public Awareness, Information, and Referral program (PAIR). Last October, the PAIR program and *Early On*® certified information and referral specialist Roger Phillips transferred to the Citizens Alliance to Uphold Special Education (CAUSE).

When families or providers call (800)*Early On*®, they reach Roger Phillips or Samantha (Sam) Garcia at the CAUSE office. Roger and Sam work with families to identify their needs and then refer them to their local *Early On*® coordinator located in each of Michigan's 57 intermediate school districts (ISDs).

Also transferring to CAUSE last October was Project Find. Project Find is a program developed by Michigan's State Board of Education to coordinate Michigan's effort to find individuals from birth to age 26 who have difficulties walking, talking, hearing, speaking, or who have other physical, emotional, or mental conditions that prevent them from keeping up with others their age and that may make them eligible for special education services provided by Michigan's public schools. Project Find is Michigan's response to the "child find" requirements of IDEA. While Project Find efforts in the past have focused on finding young children with developmental delays, since coming to CAUSE, the focus has expanded to finding children of all ages who may need special assistance.

Every ISD and some local districts have a Project Find representative. CAUSE answers the toll-free, statewide Project Find hotline and helps families and educators identify student needs and connect with their local ISD Project Find coordinator.

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Michigan Supports Early Transition Planning ***(continued from page 4…)***

Families need to have choices for their level of involvement in the transition process. They need to be informed of all the options available for their child. There should be no gaps in services for the child or the family, both of whom should have time to adjust to the new setting. The child and the family should be satisfied with the result of the transition.

Transition is common to all of us, and creates stress. Families need the hope and the assurance that this "next" step will be respected and that they, as parents, can feel good about themselves and the new phase into which they are moving with their child. Transition placement is as important to the young child and his/her development as it is to an older student moving into adulthood.

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Interagency Transition Collaboration Has a Rich History in Michigan

Jan Yoak-Newman, Director, Transition Services Project

Since the 1970s, state level agencies have devoted human and fiscal resources to promote linkages, reduce duplication of services, and encourage family and student involvement to improve post-school outcomes for students with disabilities. These agencies, particularly Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Career and Technical Preparation, provided leadership to the field in the development and implementation of interagency agreements and community transition councils. Through these activities, interagency transition partners were able to define roles and responsibilities for each partner.

In the early 1990s, Michigan received federal systems change dollars for transition. At the same time, the Michigan Department of Education earmarked additional funds for providing technical assistance and developing training modules to support this initiative, and 20 local communities were designated as model demonstration sites. These local communities strengthened their transition councils, provided opportunities for students to learn self-determination skills, revised interagency agreements, and provided the leadership for the development of Michigan's *Fundamentals of Transition and Secondary Special Education Program Manual*.

In the mid 1990s, with the strong foundation for interagency collaboration established and the federal transition systems change dollars coming to an end, Dr. Jacquelyn Thompson, Director of the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS), earmarked $2.5 million to support/sustain interagency transition services and activities. Two million dollars went directly to all intermediate school districts (ISDs) to enhance transition councils, develop and/or revise interagency agreements, and provide training activities to promote family and student involvement. Five hundred thousand dollars supported a plan for statewide technical assistance for collaborative transition services. An interagency team that includes staff representing special education, families, career preparation, and vocational rehabilitation was established and provides community partners with information and support for using research–based and proven models and strategies for the coordination of transition services. This technical assistance is referred to as Michigan's Transition Services Project (TSP).

This state discretionary project supports a comprehensive, collaborative effort of school personnel, families, and agencies to improve transition outcomes for students with disabilities through:

- a state level transition team
- interagency collaboration through fiscal resources, training, and dissemination of transition related materials
- technical assistance to community partners for overcoming barriers to the implementation of collaborative transition services
- transition services training opportunities
- networking opportunities to showcase best practices

TSP

During the 2001-2002 fiscal year, OSE/EIS more than doubled the amount of funds to ISDs to support transition services and activities. Approximately 50% of the dollars are designated to support a transition coordinator position at each ISD and the remainder is allocated to support services and activities. To go along with this increase in funding, Michigan is moving toward the development of competencies for transition coordinators.

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Organizational Perspective

Education Advisory Groups Link Agencies with Workforce Initiatives

Annette Gorden, Program Assistant, Center for Educational Networking

The Education Advisory Groups (EAG) are part of the Michigan Department of Career Development (MDCD). The mission of the MDCD and its partners is "to develop and maintain a system of career development that produces a workforce with the required skills to maintain and enhance the Michigan economy." EAGs are the linking mechanisms between workforce development boards and education agencies; they serve in an advisory capacity to education agencies implementing career preparation initiatives. In 1994, the federal school-to-work initiative was legislated and later moved in the direction of career preparation. By 1998, school-to-work boards became education advisory groups (EAGs). Required to exist in each region, EAGs review career preparation, technical preparation, and Perkins III secondary programs, which are three funding sources given to secondary schools. Career preparation dollars are state funded and assist K-12 students in choosing a career path in which they are interested and successful. Perkins III dollars are federally funded and used to support career programs approved through the EAG. The monies may be dispersed to high schools, community colleges, or both. Technical preparation links these two together by allowing a student's high school coursework to carry into college credit in a particular area of study.

Currently, there are 25 workforce development boards and 25 corresponding EAGs across Michigan.

Education Advisory Groups are charged with the responsibilities:

- Develop and implement that portion of the local career development strategic plan that pertains to the educational needs of the region
- Carry out requirements relating to the Career Preparation Act and coordinate with educational entities in guiding other programs that are related to career development, such as technical preparation.
- Assist in developing and implementing policies for categorical programs under the purview of the Workforce Development Boards.

For more information about Education Advisory Groups, contact:
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Ron Storing Works to Ensure that Career Development System Includes ALL Students

Ron Storing is a member of the general and, executive boards and serves as chair of the marketing committee for the Oakland Area Education Advisory Group (EAG). Storing also works for New Horizons Rehabilitation Services, Inc., which serves individuals with disabilities in Oakland, Macomb, Genesee, and Lapeer counties. New Horizons is currently involved in eight transition projects for special education in conjunction with the Michigan Department of Career Development/Rehabilitation Services.

Oakland County's EAG Board, currently housed in Oakland County, works closely with staff at Oakland Schools and Oakland's Career Development Department. According to Storing, the Oakland Area EAG Board sets policies for activities related to career preparation in conjunction with the staff at Oakland Schools. Some of the activities of the EAG include: interpreting and staying up-to-date with current federal and state mandates; determining the best ways to implement those mandates; determining methods for tracking student progress and outcomes; and involving students, teachers, parents, and businesses in transitioning students into adulthood and work.

As a member of the Oakland Area EAG, Storing advocates for persons with disabilities and works hard to make sure the career development system includes ALL students. He spends a good deal of time with parents, "informing them about the career preparation system and the transitioning process for students with disabilities." Storing attempts to keep them involved. He encourages parents to work with their children to develop a plan that outlines where the student wants to be in adult life. Ron also provides students and parents with information about local job markets, economic forecasts, and the pay scales and benefits expected for various jobs.

There are 35 people on the Oakland Area EAG board, half of whom are from the private sector. Storing points out that "The Oakland Board believes in the idea of transition," and he speaks of the career preparation system with great compassion, describing it as "the most important initiative that's ever taken place in the public school system."

Ron Storing

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New Horizons
Rehabilitation Services, Inc.

Transition Taxonomy Organizes Secondary Education into Five Areas

by Paula Kohler, Ph.D., Professor, Western Michigan University

Editor's Note: The Transition Services Project (TSP) is currently engaged in two major training and technical assistance activities. Representatives from special education, rehabilitation services, and parents/families have been busy modifying transition training materials for use with community partners. TSP has also been involved in updating and merging the Fundamentals of Transition *and* Secondary Special Education Program Manual. *The underlying foundation for both of these activities is based in research and on proven models for effective transition services systems. This research–based, provenmodel is organized into best practices entitled* Taxonomy for Transition Programming. *The following information is reprinted with permission from its original author, Paula D. Kohler, Ph.D., from Western Michigan University.*

Taxonomy for Transition Programming is an applied framework of secondary education practices associated with improving the post–school outcomes of youths with disabilities. The Taxonomy includes practices organized into five areas: student focused planning, student development, interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, family involvement, and program structure and attributes. The conceptual framework represented by the Taxonomy operationalizes a transition perspective of education. A brief description of each category of practices follows.

Student-Focused Planning – Student-focused planning practices focus on using assessment information and facilitating students' self-determination to develop individualized education programs based on students' post-school goals.

Student Development – Student development practices emphasize life, employment, and occupational skill development through school-based and work-based learning experiences. Student assessment and accommodations provide a fundamental basis for student development that results in successful transition.

Interagency Collaboration – Interagency collaboration practices facilitate involvement of community businesses, organizations, and agencies in all aspects of transition-focused education. Interagency agreements that clearly articulate roles, responsibilities, communication strategies, and other collaborative actions that enhance curriculum and program development foster collaboration.

Family Involvement – Family involvement practices are associated with parent and family involvement in planning and delivering education and transition services, including facilitating such involvement. Family-focused training and family empowerment activities increase the ability of family members to work effectively with educators and other service providers and vice-versa.

Program Structures and Attributes – Program structures and attributes are features that relate to efficient and effective delivery of transition-focused education and services, including attributes of a school that provide the framework for a transition perspective. By operating from the transition paradigm, schools put in place those structures and policies that reflect the notion that outcomes and activities of 100% of the students are important.

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Tomorrow's Leaders Attend 2002 Michigan Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities

The Michigan Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF) will take place June 23-27, 2002, at Michigan State University in East Lansing. Approximately 30 high school juniors and seniors with disabilities are scheduled to attend this unique leadership program. The forum is structured to prepare students with disabilities for the challenges they will face as they transition from high school to post-secondary education and training as they work to become leaders in their communities.

For more information, contact:
Margaret Heiser, Right Representative
Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns
Family Independence Agency
(517) 334-8000 (VOICE/TTY)
MCDC@state.mi.us
www.mfia.state.mi.us/mcdc/mcdc.htm

Transition Services Project Offers Workshops and a Summer Institute for Educators, Students, Families, and Service Providers

The Transition Services Project (TSP) offers free statewide training in several types of workshops. The focus of these workshops is to improve the skills of educators, inform and empower students and families, and foster communication and collaboration with agencies. The most successful workshops include participants from a variety of associations such as parents and agency representatives (Department of Career Development/Rehabilitation Services, Department of Community Health/Mental Health, Centers for Independent Living, etc.). A list of training sessions follows:

Transition Perspective of Education

As a result of this training workshop, participants will be able to:

- identify potential outcomes of students with disabilities exiting school
- define transition
- describe transition-related legislation
- discuss components of effective transition planning

Family Involvement

As a result of this training workshop, participants will be able to:

- discuss the importance of family involvement in the transition process
- define roles of family members
- discuss legislation related to parent involvement
- identify successful training and supports for family members

Student Focused Planning for Transition to Life

As a result of this training workshop, participants will be able to:

- state legislative requirements for transition
- identify strategies for promoting active student and family involvement in education and transition planning
- discuss the benefits of a "holistic" approach to transition planning

Interagency Collaboration

As a result of this training workshop, participants will be able to:

- describe the components of effective teams
- describe the components of effective collaboration
- discuss the use of teams in developing a student-focused transition IEP
- identify issues and strategies relevant to planning services and options for youth within their communities
- describe the importance and development of interagency agreements

What Families Need to Know about Transition (Developed by Parents, for Parents)

As a result of this training workshop, participants will be able to:

- discuss critical aspects of transition
- describe successful parent tips for planning transition

A Five-Step Process for Effective Transition Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

As a result of this training workshop, participants will be able to:

- state information about the IEP transition service requirements of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*
- describe the key concepts in the transition planning process
- discuss the design of, and approach to, the process of documenting transition in the IEP

TSP pays for the transition materials that participants receive at each session. The minimum number of participants is 10; the maximum is 30. Sites interested in sponsoring a training session should allow four to six weeks advance scheduling time to enable TSP to prepare materials and contract with presenters.

Summer Transition Institute

In collaboration with Western Michigan University and the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition (CEC-DCDT), Transition Services Project (TSP) is sponsoring the second Summer Transition Institute, entitled "Improving Transition Outcomes through Student Focused-Planning and Development." The Summer Institute will be held at Sylvan Treetops Resort in Gaylord, Michigan.

Last year approximately 250 community partners, representing 38 teams (parents, family members, educators, and adult service providers) came together to plan student development activities for their local school districts. TSP anticipates participation to exceed last year's numbers. Dr. Paula Kohler, Western Michigan University, and Dr. Sharon Field, Wayne State University, will once again provide guidance for the institute.

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Administrator's Perspective

Transition Is a Final Step in Special Education

Scott Hubble, Assistant Superintendent, Ionia County Intermediate School District

Guiding our students in special education through transition is the "finishing touch" on the task of preparing students for the adult world. My father was a very wise man, and one of his beliefs was that we need to finish every job well. He reasoned that if you didn't finish a task well, effort would be wasted. Whether our students' transition is to post-secondary education, the military, competitive employment, supported employment, independent living, supported living arrangements, or to some other adult support service system, transition needs to be done well. As an intermediate school district administrator, supporting effective transition efforts is a responsibility I take very seriously.

Work Harder to Prepare Students for Life Beyond School

Historically, national statistics do not paint a very positive picture of the job schools have done in transitioning students in special education programs to adult living roles. The unemployment and graduation rates for students in special education do not compare favorably to rates for the general population. The prison population includes a very high percentage of inmates with disabilities. These factors, along with personally seeing students with whom I have worked struggle in the adult world, have made me a big supporter of transition programs. It is clear that schools need to work harder at preparing our students for their lives beyond school.

Transition in the Ionia County Intermediate School District (ICISD) is supported in a number of ways, including discussion, action, and funding. Staff will confirm that when it comes to transition, I am seldom at a loss for words—I feel that it is important for staff, parents, and agency partners to hear from their special education director about the importance of transition. I write articles about transition for the local paper and feature stories for the ICISD newsletter, I give talks to civic groups, including the Ionia Community Commissioners, and I discuss transition with our community agency partners.

Administrative Support Means Direct Participation

I believe providing true administrative support, means being directly involved. My direct participation in transition over the past several years has been achieved at three levels: school monitoring, interagency agreements, and state support.

At the school level, I assist with in-service training for staff members and parents, visit promising transition practice sites with local staff, and include transition topics in all ISD and local special education directors' meetings.

At the interagency level, I have chaired the Ionia Community Transition Council. I hold the education seat on Ionia County's multi-purpose collaborative body and the Ionia County Community Child Family Council (ICCFCC), and I have worked to make transition a priority with this group. Our Community Transition Council is now a formal groupwork of the ICCFCC. It ensures that all agencies participate on the council and that transition is included in community funding opportunities.

At the state level, I am actively involved with the statewide Transition Services Project, and I serve on the state's Transition Network Team (TNT), which is made up of state agency directors, advocates, parents, and practitioners. TNT's task is to eliminate barriers to transition by fostering better cooperation, increasing awareness, and promoting effective practices among agencies. I am also a member of the Federal Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Steering Committee as a secondary transition subcommittee representative.

Scott Hubble

Funding Issues Present the Most Difficult Challenges for Administrators

Providing support for funding may be the most difficult task administrators face. ICISD struggles with money issues as do most ISDs. ICISD has attempted to "put its money where its mouth is," however, by supporting a full-time transition specialist. We feel this is key to making gains in transition.

ICISD paid for the development of a transition manual for all service providers and sponsored several ISD-wide trainings for staff, parents, and students. ICISD also sets aside $10,000-$15,000 annually for transition mini-grants for local special education teachers, an incentive that may be one of the most effective funding supports. It is amazing how creative and effective teachers can be with a little flexible money.

This is my 30th year as a special educator, and during those years, I've seen few things I consider more worthwhile than transition. We all need to remember that every student deserves to finish well.

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Parent Perspective

Parents Play an Important Role in the Transition Process

Chuck Saur Shares His Perspective as a Parent and a Professional

Judy Winter, Writer

Editor's Note: Chuck Saur is the transition coordinator for Kent County Intermediate School District (KISD) and the father of a 14-year-old son with cerebral palsy. Judy Winter, an award winning journalist and the parent of a 12-year-old son with cerebral palsy, is recipient of the Michigan Federated Chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children 2002 Exceptional Parent Award (see "MCEC Parent Award Receipient is Judy Winter" on page 22). Both parents are committed to increasing awareness of and improving life opportunities for children with special needs. Judy Winter interviewed Chuck Saur for this issue of Newsline

Q: How do you define transition?

A: To me, transition is a way to make sure that students with disabilities get connected to the help they need to make a successful transition from what they are doing in school to what they are going to become and do as adults.

Q: How would you like to see transition-related issues addressed?

A: Good transition planning addresses education goals, including career preparation, life skills, and necessary interagency linkages and services, and should start early in a student's life. In Michigan, I believe parents and professionals need to start thinking about transition by age 12. Try to think of transition in terms of your own retirement. You aren't going to suddenly walk out of your job one day and say, "Now what am I going to do?" You need time to prepare.

I believe that transition should be documented in the individualized education program (IEP) team meeting beginning at age 12. Although there is a section on each IEP form that should start the discussion, transition planning activities must start prior to the IEP team meeting.

Q: Why should parents and professionals be concerned about early transition planning?

A: You need to focus on getting the appropriate educational support you need to meet the student's goals while the student is still in school. For example, the last thing you want is to have a student do his/her initial career exploration in college.

Q: What do parents need to understand most about the transition process?

A: Parents need to understand that they must be proactive in helping their students to achieve their goals. In a perfect world, parents and students would create the demand for better transition planning that includes career preparation. Ultimately, parents need to make sure that what their student is doing in school is relevant to career preparation.

Parents should be vigilant in assuring that the plans made for their students are based on what preferences and interests the student has. Concentrate on what the student likes to do and is interested in. What sort of jobs has the student expressed an interest in? Where would the student like to live when he/she is older?

Sue and Chuck Saur with their sons Dan, 14, (here at age 12), and Nick 10 (here at age 8).

Q: What are the key areas of transition planning?

A: I believe that the key areas that must be addressed in transition planning include: independent living, community connections, employment, and post-secondary learning opportunities.

Independent Living:

Ask the question, "What are the student's aspirations for living independently?" Parents should start early to make sure that they are doing things to encourage the student to become as independent as possible when he/she exits the school setting, whatever age that might be. Parents should ask questions about their student's ability to perform daily living skills that many of us take for granted. For example, can the student wake up alone in the morning?

Community Connections:

Community connections are linkages that ensure that a person feels a sense of belonging within a community. There are

Continued on page 14…

Parents Play an Important Role in the Transition Process (continued from page 13)

many things the local school district can do to help with this part of transition planning because the school district has an array of social and community connections. Parents can involve their child in the parents' community networking, take their child into various work places and stores, teaching them about volunteering in the community.

Post-Secondary Learning Opportunities:

What additional learning is the student going to need when he/she exits the school setting? Will the student require occupational training for his/her career choice? Will he/she want to attend a community college or a four-year university? What kinds of support will the student require to accomplish these educational goals?

Employment:

Having students work as early as possible on a variety of career explorations is essential. Finding out where their talents and interests lie is an important part of the IEP team meeting. This discussion should take place early so that some thought can be put into how to best help students reach their goals. As a parent, you can discuss a variety of jobs with your child and give him/her the opportunity to try different work sites.

Q: What role does the student play in successful transition planning?

A: A critical part of good transition planning is student involvement. Good transition begins with the student exploring his/her interests. For transition planning to be effective, the IEP should include a statement describing the student's interests and preferences. This statement will encourage the student and IEP team members to begin thinking early about the student's aspirations for when they exit school.

Q: What about students with significant disabilities who can't easily voice career dreams?

A: Transition planning includes all adult outcome areas, not just the planning for employment. For some students, disabilities may limit options. The object of transition planning for these students is to maximize the level of independence the student can reach. For this to happen, it is important that the IEP team understand the options, obstacles, and, most important, community support that will need to be in place before the student exits school. Because of our son Dan's limitations, we suspect that he will not become a driver for Federal Express. We need to think about what range of connected options for living, community involvement, and additional training will lead to a successful career that he can enjoy. We also need to explore the assistance he will need.

Q: How do you convince parents to think about transition planning for a 12-year-old?

A: Most parents of 12-year-old students are thinking, "The last thing I want to do is create a life plan for my child. My child is going to change his mind fourteen times based on what he saw on television last night. Tonight, he wants to be a forensic pathologist; yesterday, he wanted to be a veterinarian. That's okay. An interest in medicine doesn't always mean the child wants to be a neurologist; it may mean he/she wants to get into the medical industry. An interest in veterinary medicine may might not mean he/she wants to be a veterinarian; maybe he/she wants to work near animals. Parents need to find out why the child is attracted to specific careers.

Q: In your opinion, how does the law support transition?

A: Michigan's *Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education* state that a student should be adequately assessed to better understand his/her potential. Questions such as: "Where are his/her interests?" and "What are the aptitudes he/she has for different vocational areas?" should be asked. Then, proper follow up should occur. Placement should not be the only consideration. So many times, when considering a student with significant disabilities, the question "What can we do to support what the student wants to become?" is not asked. The questioning gets stuck at "Where do we place this student?" We should be asking what the next step is in helping this student get where he/she wants to be. It's a big shift in thinking.

Q: Some professionals might argue that you're not being realistic.

A: Whose reality? I've heard it said that "Parents don't see reality; they've got to get real, and they need to understand the way it is." What that professional is really saying is that parents have to see things the way the professional sees them. I encourage parents to support their children's dreams.

Q: What do you most want to say to parents and professionals about transition?

A: When a student says he/she wants to do something, educators, parents and agency personnel should never, ever say "Yes, but..." Always say "Yes, and..." Then, start thinking about all the things that can be done to better understand why the student wants to do it and whether it's a good option. When you say, "Yes, but...," the student hears "I don't believe you can do it." With "Yes, and...," the child is encouraged to become accountable for participating in the end result."

The expectations we have for students with special needs can be fairly low, at times, based on a diagnosis or label. I say use those factors as guidelines, but not as boundaries, barriers or obstacles.

Q: What is an Educational Development Plan (EDP) and where does it fit in to transition planning?

A: The EDP, or Educational Development Plan, is nothing more than a four-year course planner. It says you need to look at the interests and preferences of the student and then develop a statement of transition needs and educational courses. What are the academic courses of study that support the student's interests and preferences? Parents and educators need to make

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Glossary

ADVOCACY
The act of speaking or acting on behalf of someone to protect his or her rights and needs.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990
A federal law that outlaws discrimination against people with disabilities. The law affects employment, transportation, services provided by state/local governments, services/accommodations offered by private businesses, and telecommunications access by people with communication difficulties.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY
The systematic application of technology to meet the needs of, and address the barriers confronted by, persons with developmental disabilities in areas including education, employment, supported employment, transportation, independent living, and other community living activities.

CAREER EDUCATION
A comprehensive, lifelong educational program focusing on individual career development.

CAREER EXPLORATION
Involves investigating occupational areas through real or simulated work learning experiences.

COMMUNITY-BASED
Refers to normalized settings within the community.

EMPOWERMENT
The act of enabling individuals with disabilities and the families of individuals with disabilities to exercise control in their lives by becoming the primary participants in decision-making about the services and supports they are to receive, where they will live, where they will work, go to school, etc.

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS
The skills a person needs to be able to live on his/her own or with limited supervision. Also known as activities of daily living (ADL).

JOB COACH
A person who trains persons with disabilities on the job. Job coaches have special training to help them both teach the person with a disability to do the job and to aid him/her to be fully included in the work place.

SELF-ADVOCACY
Speaking and/or acting on one's own behalf through decision-making and exercising one's individual rights as a citizen of a community.

SELF-DETERMINATION
Making one's own choices.

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI)
A disability program directed by the Social Security Administration (SSA) for individuals who have little or no income or resources and are elderly, blind, or have a disability.

TRANSITION
The process of moving from one "set" of services to another "set" of services. For a student nearing completion of school, this term describes a planned, multi-agency process for the movement of an individual from a school program to adult life in the community. The process focuses on the student's individual vocational, residential, social, and continuing educational needs.

VOCATIONAL EVALUATION
A comprehensive process designed to assist an individual in choosing and finding a job by systematically providing information about an individual's work-related strengths, aptitudes, and weaknesses. Vocational evaluation incorporates medical, psychological, social, vocational, education, cultural, and economic data.

State Improvement Grant Unveils New Web Site

Michigan's State Improvement Grant (SIG) has a new Web site, www.michigansig.org. The new site includes several improvements and new features for its users.

The new features include:

Contacts–features a searchable list of employees within the SIG as well as other important phone numbers.

Events–includes workshops, conferences, and other events of interest to users. The page allows users to see events in a calendar or list view and features a box to remind users of upcoming registration deadlines.

Feedback–users will have the opportunity to provide immediate feedback on the effectiveness of the site. Many pages include short surveys asking about the usefulness of the information provided.

Glossary–includes definitions of terms and acronyms. Words that appear within the site can be tied into the glossary. When a user rolls over the word with his/her mouse, a definition will appear in a pop-up menu with a link to the glossary.

News–includes announcements and news items. The home page will also show the most recent news items.

Products–includes publications that can be purchased as well as publications that can be downloaded in a portable document format (PDF). The home page will show a featured product—a document or publication that might be of special interest to users.

Promising Practices Database–gives users access to promising practices that have supporting data proving their effectiveness. Users can browse through the database and see programs, their outcomes, and the validation process.

An invitation page will allow users to submit practices/programs that have worked with students.

Services–users can access the promising practices database from this page as well as take and/or read surveys. There are also links to allow users to subscribe to publications and register for events.

Self-Determination Is Important for Teachers and Administrators Too

Sharon Field, Associate Professor (Research), Wayne State University, College of Education

For the past ten years, there has been a growing movement to encourage the development and expression of self-determination among students with disabilities, particularly in transition-related programs. As programs and supports for students have grown, the need to support self-determination for educators has also become apparent. The ability to act in a way that promotes self-determination is important for teachers and educational administrators for the same reasons that it is important for students—increased self-determination leads to enhanced job performance and to a higher quality of life. Furthermore, one of the most important ways students learn is by example. If teachers model self-determination, it will foster student self-determination, as well.

In 1999, the College of Education at Wayne State University, in collaboration with Portland State University, was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop strategies and supports to help teachers and administrators further develop their own self-determination and become better prepared to promote student self-determination. Seventeen instructional modules intended for use in initial preparation or in-service settings are being developed through the project. The modules are intended to help teachers and administrators examine their beliefs and way of thinking about self-determination and its importance in education.

To generate information about the beliefs, knowledge, skills, and practices about self-determination that administrators and teachers bring to their work, the first stage of the project involved conducting interviews with 60 administrators and teachers in Michigan and Oregon. The interview participants included central office and building administrators and both general and special education teachers from elementary, middle, and secondary public schools. The purpose of these interviews was to determine the significance of self-determination knowledge and skills for teachers and administrators, the relationship between their self-determination and their professional practices, and the factors that help or hinder their self-determination.

Two of the major themes that emerged from the interviews were 1) the importance of supportive relationships, and 2) the ability to prioritize tasks and manage time. For example, both teachers and administrators reiterated that the support they received from both members in their families and their supervisors/colleagues enhanced their ability to be self-determined. The following quotes reflect these sentiments.

> *I am blessed with having a mother who always believed in me. Unfortunately, my father died when I was very young. My mother always believed that I could be whatever I wanted to be.*

> *I am also blessed with having the support of my bosses. I pick up the phone if I need something and I know the support is there. This does not mean that we'll always agree. I just know that there is an underpinning of support, which is very important to me.*

> *I have a lot of support on the staff and that helps. My associate principal is a gem. Our two counselors are strong advocates for children. Our teachers, they genuinely, by and large, to the person, care about students here.*

Both teachers and administrators stated that they were pressed for time. They stated that it was crucially important for them to manage their time and prioritize their tasks so that they could exercise a sense of self-determination in their work.

Sharon Field

"Finding the time to do some of the things that we need to do is a problem. There are times when I say to my staff "Ladies we need a duty-free lunch." This is one area that I am working on—finding time and space for myself. I don't think anything happens in isolation, but that is an area that I need to work on. When you don't take the time to eat or you don't take the time to have a mental break, you're not as effective in your work—you're not as patient, you're not as kind. I need to do that to be more effective with my students and staff. I'm working on that."

The interview results were used to revise the self-determination model developed by Field and Hoffman (1994) (see Figure 1 on page 22), which was reviewed and expanded to identify the application of self-determination knowledge and skills to 1) the tasks of educators and 2) supporting student self-determination. This new model, "Teaching with Integrity, Reflection, and Self-Determination" (see Figure 1) is being used as a foundation for developing the 17 instructional modules. The modules focus on both the ability of teachers to approach their jobs in a manner that is self-determined and on their ability to promote self-determination for their students. The modules are highly experiential and provide opportunities for participants to reflect on their roles in schools.

Examples of modules are provided below:

- **Is It Me?** offers a case study of a first-year teacher who is overwhelmed by the myriad of tasks before her: paperwork, parent requests, and supporting student behavior, to name a few. Participants analyze the case study and go through a systematic process during which they develop a plan to help the teacher get a

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Events by Date

Editor's Note: Upcoming Events are uploaded regularly to the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services website. You can access events information at the website (see footnote) or wait until events are published in Newsline. *You can upload events to the website yourself or continue to submit them to* Newsline. *Events should be submitted two months prior to* Newsline *publication.*

JUNE 13, 2002

State Board of Education Meeting

Sponsor: State Board of Education
Location: Lansing, MI
Contact: Eileen Hamilton
(517) 373-3900

JUNE 14–15, 2002

Picky Eaters vs. Problem Feeders

Sponsor: The Abilities Center
Location: Royal Oak, MI
Contact: The Abilities Center
(248) 855-0030

JUNE 17–19, 2002

SIM Awareness Workshop

Sponsor: Forest Hills Central High School
Location: Grand Rapids, MI
Contact: Amy Scheuermann
(616) 644-3977

JUNE 17–21, 2002

Phonics First™ Orton-Gillingham Training

Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
Contact: Kim Kapla, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

JUNE 20, 2002

Communities for Power Conference

Sponsor: Communities of Power Action Cycle Disability Conference
Location: Alpena High School; Alpena, MI
Contact: Judy Trapp
(989) 356-8468

JUNE 22, 2002

Annual Golf Benefit

Sponsor: Michigan Association for Deaf, Hearing, Speech Services (MADHS)
Location: Meridian Sun Golf Club; Haslett, MI
Contact: MADHS, yourear@pilot.msu.edu
(800) Your-ear

JUNE 24, 2002

From Chaos to Mutual Respect

Sponsor: UCP of Metropolitan Detroit, Inc.
Location: Dearborn Heights, MI
Contact: Sharon, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843

JUNE 24–25, 2002

PBS for Young Children Team Training

Sponsor: Northern Michigan University and Marquette–Alger RESA
Location: Marquette, MI
Contact: Jeff Miller, jefmille@nmu.edu
(906) 249-2222

JUNE 25–27, 2002

SIM Awareness Workshop

Sponsor: Northville Public Schools
Location: Northville High School; Northville, MI
Contact: Amy Scheuermann
(616) 644-3977

JUNE 26, 2002

UCP SOS (Share Out Stories) Support Group

Sponsor: UCPof Metropolitan Detroit, Inc.
Location: Southfield, MI
Contact: Sharon, ucp@ameritech.net
(800) 827-4843

JULY 7–11, 2002

13th Annual Summer Courses for Teachers, Principals, and Parent Leaders

Sponsor: The Walloon Institute
Location: Delevea, WI
Contact: The Walloon Institute
(847) 441-6638

JULY 9–10, 2002

PBS for Young Children Team Training

Sponsor: Sopris West Inc.
Location: Grand Traverse Resort; Traverse City, MI
Contact: Dawn Quintana, dawnq@sopriswest.com
(720) 494-8227

JULY 11–14, 2002

Summer Academy

Sponsor: Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)
Location: Bavarian Inn Lodge; Frankenmuth, MI
Contact: Tricia Byerly
(800) 968-4627 #238

JULY 14–17, 2002

Rebuilding Trust and the Tradition of Support for Education

Sponsor: National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA)
Location: San Diego, CA
Contact: NSPRA
(301) 519-0496

JULY 14–19, 2002

The Pine Lake Experience 2002 Summer Camp

Sponsor: Michigan Career & Technical Institute (MCTI)
Location: Plainwell, MI
Contact: Kathy Fretz
(616) 664-9260

JULY 21–24, 2002

DEAF BLIND TRANSITION CAMP

Sponsor: Self Help for Independency in Michigan
Equalizing the Deaf Blind (SHIMDB)
Location: East Lansing, MI
Contact: Beth Kennedy, beth.kennedy@cmich.edu
(888) 758-0508

JULY 21–26, 2002

The Pine Lake Experience 2002 Summer Camp

Sponsor: Michigan Career & Technical Institute (MCTI)
Location: Plainwell, MI
Contact: Kathy Fretz
(616) 664-9260

JULY 28–31, 2002

Literacy Leaders Institute: Creating America's School–Wide Literacy Plan

Sponsor: National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), Scholastic Inc., and National Middle School Association (NMSA)
Location: Wyndham Chicago; Chicago, IL
Contact: Scholastic Inc.
(800) 660-7714

JULY 29–31, 2002

Strategic Instruction Model Training

Sponsor: Michigan Association of Learning Disabilities Educators (MALDE), and Genesee Intermediate School District
Location: Genesee ISD; Flint, MI
Contact: Laura Westphal
(810) 591-4881

Events by Date

August 1–2, 2002
5th Annual Statewide Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Conference
Sponsor: Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)
Location: Harbor Springs, MI
Contact: PAC
(231) 526-3000

August 4–7, 2002
Summer Institute
Sponsor: Michigan Association of Administrators of Special Education (MAASE)
Location: Thompsonville, MI
Contact: Larry Campbell, LLCambe@remc12.k12.mi.us
(616) 244-5387

August 5–9, 2002
Phonics First™ Orton–Gillingham
Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

August 7–8, 2002
Strategic Instruction Model Training
Sponsor: Michigan Association of Learning Disabilities Educators (MALDE), and Lowell High School
Location: Lowell, MI
Contact: Amy Scheuermann, ams0402@aol.com
(616) 644-3977

August 12–16, 2002
Phonics First™ Orton–Gillingham
Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Mercy Center; Farmington Hills, MI
Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

August 13–15, 2002
Strategic Instruction Model Training
Sponsor: Michigan Association of Learning Disabilities Educators (MALDE) and Tuscola ISD
Location: Caro, MI
Contact: Amy Scheuermann, ams0402@aol.com
(616) 644-3977

August 22–25, 2002
Summer Academy
Sponsor: Michigan Association of School Boards (MASB)
Location: Mission Point; Mackinac Island, MI
Contact: Tricia Byerly
(800) 968-4627

September 14 & 21, 2002
Introduction to Phonics First™ Orton–Gillingham
Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

September 28, 2002
Multisensory Comprehension & Written Expression
Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

September 28, 2002
Phonemic Awareness
Sponsor: Reading and Language Arts Centers (RLAC)
Location: Bloomfield Hills, MI
Contact: Kim Kaplan, info@rlac.com
(248) 645-9690

Transition Resources

Assess for Success – Handbook on Transition Assessment. (1996). Helps the IEP team decide what to assess and how assessment data should be collected and used within the context of career development. Sitlington, Patricia L., et.al Council for Exceptional Children – DCDT, 1920 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191-1589, (800) CEC-READ.

Children's Dictionary of Occupation. (1992). Brief description of different occupations. Classroom activity books for different grade levels and CD-ROM version also available. Meridian Education Corporation, 236 E. Front Street, Bloomington, Illinois. (800) 727-5507.

Career Link: Job Shadowing. (1995). Procedures and forms for establishing authentic workplace experiences. Irvine Unified School District, 5050 Barranca Parkway, Irvine, CA 92714-4698. Contact Linda O'Neal (714) 651-0444.

Choices. Several different computer programs that engage students (6th–12th grade) in an interactive process that heightens their self-awareness, helps them set priorities, and develops career decision-making skills. Careerware, 810 Proctor Ave., Industrial Park Bldg. #3, Ogdenburg, NY 13669, (800) 267-1544.

Helping Students Develop Their IEPs: A Student's Guide to the IEP. (1995). Teacher and student guides and audiotape overview. A free publication of NICHCY—the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities. P.O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013. (800) 695-0285.

Individual Program Plan Resource Manual: A Person-Centered Approach. (1995). Available free from: California Department of Developmental Services, 1600 9th Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. (916) 654-2198.

Individual Transition Plans. (1995). Manual for writing ITP goals. Includes samples for students with a variety of cognitive, learning, physical, and behavioral disorders. Paul Wehman, Pro-ed, 8700 Shoal Creek Blvd., Austin, TX 78757-6897. (512) 451-8542 Order Number 6956.

Preparing for the Future: A Teacher's Guide to the Transition IEP. (1997). Comprehensive guide contains all of the information a teacher needs to prepare for a quality transition IEP meeting. Also included is a four-week preparation curriculum to prepare students for their transition meeting. Riverside County Office of Education, 3939 13th Street, P.O. Box 868, Riverside, CA 92502. Contact Rebecca Silva (909) 788-6530. $25

Self-Determination—Student Strategies for Facilitation Student Directed Life Planning. Curriculum outline and training available. Irvine Unified School District, Beverly Huff. (714) 651-0444, #217.

Self-Directed IEP. Martin, James. E., et al. (1993). Teacher's manual, 25 student workbooks and 25 self-determination assessment forms. Sopris West Publishing, 1140 Boston Ave., Longmont, CO 80501. (800) 547-6747. $95

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- ❒ Department Head/Chair
- ❒ Director
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- ❒ *Early On®* Coordinator
- ❒ General Education Teacher
- ❒ ISD Center Program Contact
- ❒ IHE Committee Member
- ❒ LEA Center Program Contact
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- ❒ Special Education Teacher
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- ❒ Early Childhood Educator
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- ❒ Paraprofessional
- ❒ Physical Therapist
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Institution Type

- ❒ Alternative Education Facility
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- ❒ Local District
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- ❒ Organization
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- ❒ Vocational Setting
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A Self-Determined Athlete Achieves His Goals with Help from Parents, a Peer Mentor, and an Open-Minded Coach

Jan Fialka, MSW, ACSW, Parent

"Real inclusion" of kids with special needs occurs both outside the classroom as well as inside. This is a fairly basic principle, however, it is not always easy to make it happen.

When our son Micah started high school, we thought long and hard about what after-school activities would engage him, keep him healthy, and help him stay connected to his peers in a natural way. As we explored our options, we were fortunate that Micah had a peer mentor, a junior in high school who helped us think through Micah's choices. J.J. was the captain of the high school cross country running team, so it may have been natural for him to suggest that Micah join the team.

"Great idea!" my husband and I thought. J.J. could support Micah in becoming part of the team. Micah would be physically active every day after school and would be hanging out with his new peers. Perfect! It never crossed OUR minds that Micah rarely walked briskly, let alone ran. But that was a minor point—for us. For Micah, running was the farthest thing from his mind. But he liked J.J., he liked hanging out with an upperclassman, and he was willing to try it "for two weeks, Mom."

Three weeks into the season (he made it beyond the two-week trial period—our plan was working!), we received a phone call from Micah's coach. He asked if my husband and I could meet with him to talk. "Of course," I responded, but my heart sunk to the basement floor.

We set a date, but I knew what was happening. The coach was getting to know Micah and was realizing that our son was NOT a runner. My spirits dropped as I anticipated that I would have to "go back to the drawing board" to find something else Micah might do after school. Perhaps I would have to stage an "inclusion fight." It wouldn't be the first.

We went into the meeting prepared to be told that it just wasn't working out. The coach greeted us and then quickly began: "I want to talk with you about a goal I have for Micah."

"Goal," I said to myself. "G-O-A-L. Goal."

The coach continued. "I would like Micah to run one mile in one of the cross country meets in a few weeks. For those of you who are, like me, new to high school sports, cross country meets are five kilometers long, or about three miles.

"You mean you are not going to tell me it's not working out? You mean Micah can stay on the team? You mean you have a goal for him?" I didn't say these things out loud, but I was shouting them silently. "Bravo!" I thought. We did not have to fight! We did not have to convince anyone that my son should be included. Instead, all we had to do was say, "Yes, Coach. That's a great idea!" All we had to do was let the coach work with Micah while we sat back in the stands watching our son run. We liked this a lot! To this day, I am sure Coach has no idea how thrilled and relieved we felt about his goal for our son.

At this same meeting, the coach made another request. He explained that during one practice a week, the kids ran for several miles in local neighborhoods. He worried that because Micah had a "bit slower" pace (those were his words!), Micah was often left behind and alone. Coach was concerned for Micah's safety. I suggested that on those days, Micah could skip practice and run with me at home.

The Fialka family: Rich, Janice, Emma, and Micah

Coach quickly disagreed, saying, "No, I want him to remain connected with the school and team. I was wondering if it would be okay if he spent that practice in the weight room in the school gym, running on the treadmill. "I was stunned to know that the coach truly wanted Micah's

running routine to be as closely aligned to the team as possible."

Whaam! Another surprise—a welcome surprise! "Sounds perfect," I said, hardly believing what I heard.

Continued on page 28…

A Self-Determined Teacher

Galien Teacher Creates Student Transition Opportunities

Shirley A. Beckman, Writer

Galien Township School District is a small district in rural Berrien County, Michigan. With a district enrollment of 320 students and no in-house vocational program, the community offers limited vocational opportunities.

This has presented a challenge for Larry Phillippi, the high school's only special education teacher. Undaunted, he has arranged trips to other schools, worked with staff at Lewis Cass Intermediate School District, solicited materials such as desks and computers, developed and found job-shadowing opportunities, and brought more people into the classroom. He is planning future college visits and helping students to start student-based businesses.

Phillippi's students have started a school newspaper. "They do everything," he says. "They report, do the layout, the typing."

Students work with WorkForce Investment Act youth specialists to identify positive work ethics and the financial cost of a poor employee to an employer.

Galien students and family members visit a welding and auto shop program at Lakeshore High School. Left to right: Andrea and Yolanda Creekmore, Michael Creekmore, John Troutman, Gary Grant (Lakeshore instructor), and John Creekmore.

Phillippi is working with the WorkForce Investment, a federal program designed to prepare adult education and alternative education students to enter the workforce. He says that, ordinarily, special education students would never be able to take advantage of this program, because there are no special education services in adult education and alternative education settings. Therefore, Phillippi brought WorkForce Investment into the high school setting to make the program work for his students now. Youth specialists meet with the students weekly and will follow them through the summer and into the next school year, when they plan to arrange college visits.

Special education students at Galien High School have formed businesses, each one operated by a different team. During the last hour on Fridays, some students make and sell popcorn, and they also keep the books for the enterprise. Another group has ordered a cappuccino machine and will be selling coffee drinks at sporting events. A third group is making stained glass projects. Next year, students are planning to open a small gas engine repair business.

Students have one-on-one meetings with an employment agency and then do three-day job shadowing. "After the second day, they really understand what the job is," says Phillippi, who sets up a post-evaluation with the employment agency. He also arranges for a corporate trainer to work with the students in a full-day workshop to teach team building and conflict resolution.

Phillippi says his students are "extremely excited about the hands-on approach to learning. My students are very capable. They are excited and that is what makes the difference."

He encourages his students to look at each other and at themselves to see the positive traits they will bring to their jobs after they finish school. He wants students to leave school having experienced success and to continue to be successful down the road. Phillippi is committed to helping his students, mostly in grades 10-12, to be the best that they can be. Next year he hopes to bring his transition efforts to students in the lower grades.

"For a small school, we are doing very well," Phillippi says modestly.

For more information, contact:
Larry Phillippi
Teacher, Galien Township School
P.O. Box 248, Galien, MI 49113-0248
(616) 545-3366
lphilli@remc11.k12.mi.us

Ty Jackson and Robert Keefer prepare their resumes.

Larry Riego, helped make Christmas wreaths, as a classroom project.

A Self-Determined Community Participant

Self-Determination Leads to Business Success

Despite Obstacles, Scott Nelson Achieves His Goals

Shirley A. Beckman, Writer

Scott Nelson has not let what some would see as an insurmountable obstacle keep him from realizing a long-desired goal.

Scott never learned to read, but he wanted to have his own auto service business. Nelson's–Your Full Service Auto Center in Fowlerville, Michigan, is the realization of that goal.

Scott is a 1982 high school graduate who received special education services. Scott attributes his success to his memory, which allows him to compensate for an inability to read phonetically. Scott says that being called on to stand up in front of the class to read was particularly painful.

Today, Scott uses his memory to manage his business. He works at the computer behind the counter in the service center office. "It is what I like to do," he says.

One of four children, Scott went to work in an auto body shop at an early age, through a school work program. In his spare time, he worked on the cars belonging to friends and teachers and knew, at age 14, that he wanted to own his own shop. At 17, while still in high school, he bought an acre and a half of land on a land contract.

After graduation, he got a full-time job in a body shop, where he worked for five and a half years. When he had the money to start his own business, Scott built a 30-by 70-foot building on his property. He has added to and expanded that building several times. He recently bought another building for his growing business.

Nelson's is really six businesses with 22 employees, some of whom are high school students. "Kids have to earn their way," Nelson says. "They have to learn the basics and respect for what they are doing."

Scott says "his education never stops." He has taken and continues to take management courses. He takes someone with him to do the note-taking and to help him complete the exams. The people who are part of his team—"an attorney, an accountant/finance person"—all contribute to the success. "I am not afraid to admit to the negatives," he says, realizing his inability to read is one of those negatives.

When asked who has helped him over the years, he mentions his parents as always being behind him. "A lot of people gave me advice—good advice and bad advice," he says. "The Livingston County Small Business Center was helpful."

Scott Nelson

"You have to be self-determined," Scott says. You have to deal with a lot of issues that are difficult. I have to make a lot of decisions I don't want to make. That's the hard part."

Today, Scott and his wife Kim have a young daughter and a new house. He enjoys work, but he also is making up for some of the fun he missed as a teenager. He likes to water ski, play golf, and snowmobile.

David White, transition coordinator for Livingston Regional Educational Service Agency, says, "Scott is an example of how, regardless of the obstacles, if you have set a goal, a clear goal, you can achieve it."

Education YES! Continues to Move Forward ***(continued from page 5…)***

for implementation of the system, the viability of the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test as an assessment tool, and the use of letter grades for individual school buildings.

"We need to be about the business of ensuring that teachers are teaching and that children are learning," Gire said. "These issues will be critical as we establish cut scores and letter grading systems for our schools. Our goal is to develop a system based on multiple measures that truly assesses school quality and I am confident that our experts can help us develop a substantive and meaningful system."

The State Board has charged its Accreditation Advisory Committee with ensuring that Education YES! is aligned with federal legislation, setting distribution of scores for schools in Michigan, and establishing school performance indicators. The Board approved Education YES! in March.

The Board also received word that the four chairs of the State Legislature's education and school aid appropriations subcommittees have accepted Education YES! —the State Board of Education's recently adopted schools accreditation system. According to state law, any new accreditation system must also be accepted by the Legislature.

"We are very pleased with the leadership shown today by the four chairs of the House and Senate Education and School Aid Committees to affirm Education YES! as it was approved in March. They are recognizing, as the Board has, that Michigan students are more than a single test on a single day," said State Board of Education President Kathleen N. Straus. "The Department of Education will continue to move aggressively and implement our system by year's end."

All Michigan schools will receive their first Education YES! report card in December 2002.

Self-Determination Is Important for Teachers and Administrators Too (continued from page 16…)

handle on the many demands she perceives and to do this in a manner that helps her to accomplish what she feels is most important to her in teaching.

- **Building Partnerships with Families in Promoting Self-Determination: Respecting Family Diversity** helps participants to apply a family systems framework as they examine several family vignettes. The vignettes represent families who have children with disabilities at various age levels with diverse cultural perspectives related to self-determination.
- **Strategies for Using Self-Determination as a Learning Process** provides examples and strategies for assignments and activities, across the curriculum, that include self-determination as a component of the learning process. This module provides a structure for conducting classes in a way that promotes self-determination and self-directed learning. The module includes activities that help participants learn how these strategies could be applied to other instructional content.

The modules are currently being field-tested in Colorado, Kansas, Michigan, Oregon, and Washington, D.C. in both initial preparation and inservice settings. The grantees anticipate that they will be available for distribution in spring, 2003.

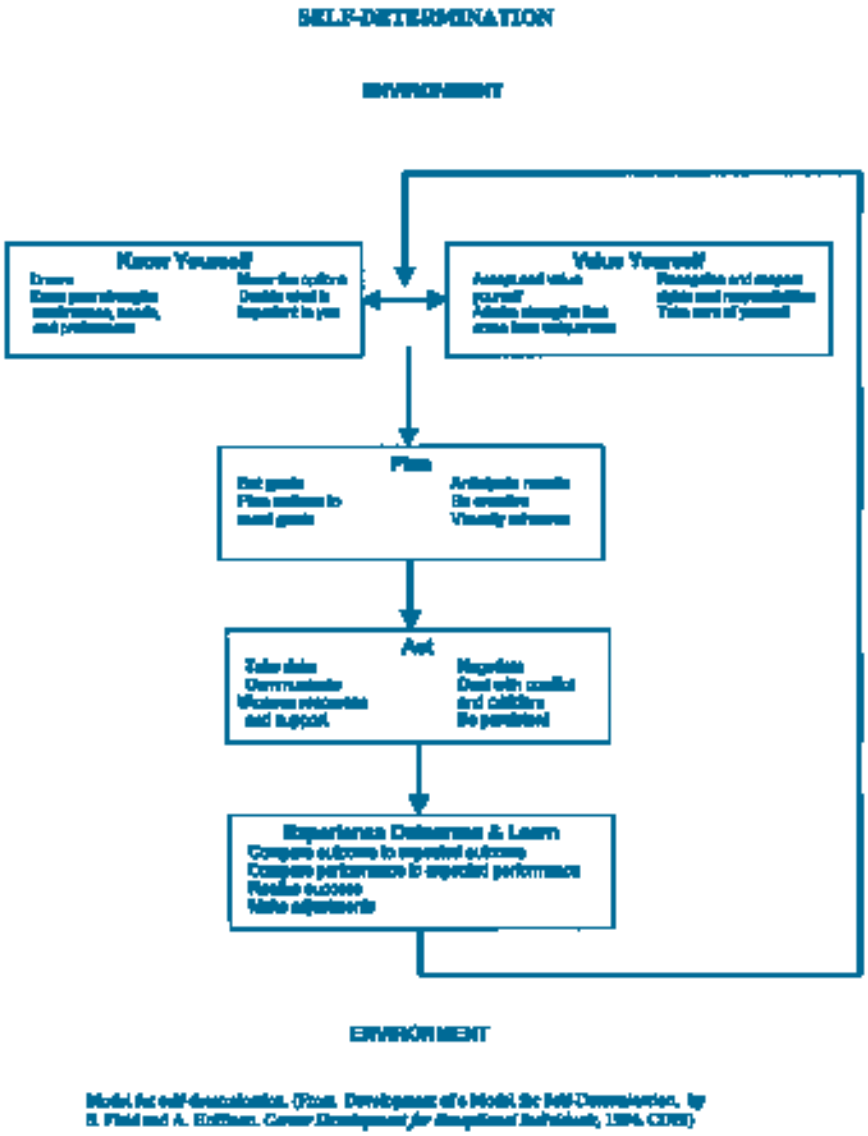

Figure 1

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Self-Determination—A Teacher's Perspective

Learning Skills and Strategies Help Students to Become More Independent Learners

Lori Shulze, Communication Specialist, Center for Educational Networking

Editor's Note: Rebecca Shankland is a self-determined resource teacher who has taught for 24 years, the last 16 at Forest Hills Central High in Grand Rapids.

Q: What types of changes have you seen at your school?

A: Four years ago, the special education department at Forest Hills Central High School made the decision to transform our program. The department moved away from the traditional tutorial support model that helped students get by, but did not realize an increase in skills and strategies nor increased independence. In fact, students grew increasingly dependent on staff support each year. I became very discouraged because the students appeared to be doing well in high school (because one of us sat next to them and helped them through every assignment) but were unable to make the transition to college. Many did very poorly because they did not have the independent learning skills necessary for success. The result of our program overhaul is a comprehensive program that helps our students learn essential skills and strategies. The strategic instruction model (SIM) is the foundation of our academic strategies curriculum.

Our department goals are to:

- help students become independent, strategic, lifelong learners
- improve the quality of instruction in our school through the use of research-validated curriculum and instructional practices
- integrate SIM with other best practices
- create real access to the general education curriculum for all students at Forest Hills Central High

Q: What is the most rewarding part of your job?

A: I am thrilled to see pride in students when they learn skills that they can apply to classwork and/or their job. It's rewarding when students notice changes in their abilities. One student said that an online friend mentioned that her spelling had improved. She hadn't noticed the gradual improvements, but the comment from her friend helped motivate the student to continue.

Q: How do you involve students in goal setting?

A: Students compare their strengths to the demands of their classes, identify skills and strategies they need to improve or learn, and then set learning goals for themselves. This process provides a sense of empowerment and gives students a major voice in decisions about their education.

Q: How do you encourage students to make choices based on what they want?

A: As students develop their transition plans, we require that they research jobs in which they are interested.

Q: At what stage do you encourage students to start thinking about their future?

They should start in middle school, before they reach the ninth grade. Many former students come back to visit. I always ask them if they would be willing to talk with current students about their experiences. Listening to a former student who is closer in age to them has more impact than anything I can say. It is always surprising to hear my words come out of the mouths of my graduates; often, when they were in high school, those same kids argued with me about these suggestions. Graduates are amazingly willing to talk with current students about their own past failures. One common theme in their advice to current students is "Do what you need to do in high school so that you will have choices when you get out." One young man said "Grand Rapids Community College isn't so bad, but I wish I had a choice of where to go. That was my only option because of my high school performance."

Rebecca Shankland

Q: Does your school encourage self-determination on a schoolwide basis?

A: One of our strategies for the school improvement process includes having every student complete the Individual Educational Development Plan.

Q: What opportunities are there for students to practice self-determination?

A: I spend the majority of time at each individualized educational program (IEP) team meeting discussing the transition plan. Students prepare the draft of the plan in advance and then present it to the team. The majority of discussion during the IEP team meeting then is more directly related to helping the student get from point A to the goal stated in his/her transition plan.

Q: What types of careers do some of your graduates currently have?

A: One of my students has gone on to become a certified public accountant in Chicago after graduating from MSU. Another is a geologist, and one is a fashion designer in New York. A couple of former students own their own businesses—landscaping, snow removal, and asphalt paving. Kara Scanton, another resource room teacher, currently has a senior who works part-time as a mortgage broker. The student is very focused on her career after high school and she is earning credit through our co-op program. We all have a sense of pride when our students set goals for themselves and are determined to reach them.

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A Self-Determined Parent

A Parent's Self-Determination Brings Eric Closer to Achieving His Dreams

Technology Has the Potential to Enhance Independence

Judy Winter, Writer

Technology is a valuable educational tool for all students that offers far more than Internet access for researching class projects. Today's state-of-the-art technology can help open educational doors for the most challenged students, including those with special needs.

As the mother of an 11-year-old son who is limited only by the physical challenges of cerebral palsy and antiquated stereotypes, I'm excited about the role technology can play in maximizing Eric's education and future independence. Here's why.

We all know that an individual's inability to use language to clearly communicate knowledge makes accurate educational assessments difficult and that the lack of appropriate staff training and dynamic resources further compound this challenge. Like other parents, my husband and I have boldly faced the challenges of classroom inclusion, determined to secure Eric a good education despite his physical disability. Our commitment to quality education has always held fast for both of our children. Eric's sister will head to California next fall to pursue long-held dreams of becoming a photojournalist. Granted, meeting Eric's educational goals is more challenging, but why should quality education be viewed as less important for a child with a disability, especially when he also has a bright mind and eager spirit?

Technology Promises to Help

The good news is that technology promises to help Eric show how bright he is. Undereducating students with special needs today is inexcusable, especially given the availability of state-of-the-art technology, unlimited Internet access, and dynamic educational resources.

Eleven years after passage of the *Americans' with Disabilities Act* (ADA), many children with special needs remain at high risk of being undereducated. Despite the best efforts of those involved in education, some children are left feeling flawed. This powerful childhood scar often results in a frustrating cycle of underachievement and societal dependence carried into adulthood.

Also, in today's standardized-testing climate, there's little room for gray when assessing a child's knowledge. Teachers feel pressure to deliver black-and-white assessments and rock-solid test results. Knowledge is power, if you can access it, but children with disabilities rarely fit into neat and tidy educational boxes.

For nearly eight years, my son has been asked repeatedly to prove that he understands simple knowledge, despite the fact that this confident and social child often clearly indicates choices through solid eye gaze and other strong non-verbal cues. What's the problem? Professionals must be willing to take time to read and interpret those cues. Some do.

More than one professional has commented on Eric's sophisticated sense of humor. He "gets" the punch lines others miss—a sign of intelligence. But laughter alone can't prove intelligence; spoken and written language are considered more conclusive.

Technology Opens Locked Doors

Today's technology—including computers activated by simple eye blinks and computers that speak human thoughts clearly—hold the keys to locked doors for many students with special needs. This same technology offers parents and professionals valuable access to a wealth of free resources and information, including nationwide networking opportunities that can help reduce isolation. Perhaps that is the real marvel of technology.

For children with disabilities, this may well be the best of times. With technology changing rapidly, there now exist opportunities for educating the most challenged children, offering hope for a better future.

Dynamic opportunities for hands-on learning fill in the educational gaps for Eric, but my engaging preteen has a growing need to express his knowledge more independently. Eric needs his voice to be heard.

Eric will soon take part in an exciting augmentative assessment with Dr. John Eulenberg, an expert on communication and director of the Artificial Language Laboratory (ALL) at Michigan State University. Eulenberg's expertise and professional commitment to individuals with communication challenges is impacting people with special needs nationwide.

Judy Winter

Michigan's Assistive Technology Resource (MATR) Serves Eric's Needs

Our educational team will also continue to access the dynamic services of Michigan's Assistive Technology Resource (MATR) in St. Johns, where the staff skillfully assessed Eric's augmentative needs and presented us with an individualized plan for classroom success. We plan to revisit this valuable program soon for updates and to take advantage of the equipment lending library.

We're on an amazing mission to prove that disability shouldn't serve as an excuse for undereducating any child. Children with special needs don't want pity and limiting labels. Like other students, they want a chance to reach their potential, and a good education offers them a better shot.

Today's state-of-the-art technology promises to grant Eric his long-awaited wish to speak his mind clearly and to pursue his own dreams, just like his sister.

I can't wait to hear what he has to say.

For more information, contact:
Judy Winter at jappwinter@aol.com

People Who Make a Difference

MCEC Parent Award Recipient Is Judy Winter

Judy Winter of DeWitt, Michigan, has been awarded the Michigan Federated Chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children (MCEC) 2002 Exceptional Parent Award for her work promoting quality education for children with special needs. Winter and her family accepted the award at a banquet at the Amway Grand Hotel in Grand Rapids during the annual MCEC convention.

The award is presented to a parent who demonstrates outstanding contributions to the growth of their child through effective home/school collaboration and personal effort that consistently illustrates the benefits of parental support toward achieving quality education for their child. "Judy is an advocate in the best sense of the word," Gigi Mitchell of Oakland Schools said in her recognition speech. "Judy is passionate in her mission, not only to help her son, Eric, but to help all children with disabilities and their families take one step closer to achieving their dreams."

Winter is an award-winning journalist on disability issues whose column and feature work has appeared in numerous publications. She recently accepted representation from the Jeff Herman Literary Agency in New York City to represent her book on parenting children with special needs. She has sold story ideas to national publications, including *People Magazine* and *Writer's Diges*t, and is a virtual parent advisory to *Child Magazine.*

Judy and her husband, Dick, a C.P.A., have two children. Jenna is a DeWitt High School senior who will attend Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California, next fall to pursue a degree in visual journalism. Eric is a fifthgrader at Herbison Woods School and has cerebral palsy.

Winter is a graduate of Michigan State University's College of Communication Arts & Sciences.

Judy Winter and her son Eric, who has cerebral palsy, at the Michigan Federated Chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children convention where Judy received the 2002 Exceptional Parent award.

Julie McCormick Exemplifies Excellence in Teaching

The William C. Morse Teacher of the Year Award recipient for 2002 is Oakland Schools Autism Program (OSAP) teacher Julie M. McCormick. This award, named for Dr. Morse, a special education pioneer from the University of Michigan, is given to an outstanding special education teacher who has shown imagination and creativity, and has provided exemplary service to students with disabilities.

Julie is a member of the OSAP instruction team at Pattengill Elementary School in Berkley. She also serves as the lead teacher for all the elementary staff in the program.

After beginning her teaching career in 1991 as a teacher of students with severe emotional impairment, Julie moved on to instruct those with learning disabilities, mental impairment, and is currently a teacher of students with autism.

During the past 11 years, Julie has continually worked toward professional improvement. She has attended numerous workshops to improve her skills in the classroom. As a result, she is lead teacher in her current position, a mentor for new employees, a member of a website development team for special education, and is involved in curriculum development. She has piloted instructional materials and alternate assessments, chaired individualized education program (IEP) meetings, and coordinated program field trips, among many other endeavors.

According to one of her nomination letters, "Julie has continually gone above and beyond her duties as a teacher and has gained the respect and admiration of all the professionals who have had the opportunity to work with her.

Julie's classroom is a place of order and structure, a place where children are seen for their individuality rather than their disability. In addition to being held in high esteem by her colleagues, Julie is loved by the parents of students in her charge. Most important, Julie's students grow and succeed during their experience with her.

Julie McCormick looks on as Joesph Handziak (poet) and Matthew Yunker (artist) autograph their poster, which was honored as the Exceptional Children's Week poster contest winner at the Michigan Federated Chapters of the Council for Exceptional Children convention in March. Both Joseph and Matthew are students in the Beal City Public Schools.

Parents Play an Important Role in the Transition Process (continued from page 14)

sure the courses a student selects support what the student wants to do.

Broaden the transition concept by looking at the four key transition areas mandated by law to see if the academic preparation is supporting those four key areas. Transition planning should never be only about placement. Constantly look at the student's present level of educational performance and ask where the student is relative to where the student wants to be.

Q: What about transition planning for students who are 16 and older?

A: Parents, schools, and community agencies should start looking at who is likely to provide and/or pay for services for these students after they exit school. Without transition planning, the ball is thrown down the court without knowing if it will be caught. Transition planning is more like running a relay race and handing off the baton with a lot of time to spare. Try to make transition connections early enough so that the student isn't left standing in the fog at the top step of the high school, asking, "Now what?" Instead, the student should be walking out the front door saying "I know exactly where I'm going and I've got the support I need." This is where the agency agreements at state and county levels come in.

Q: Are most community agencies up to speed on transition requirements?

A: Typically, yes. It is crucial that professional development opportunities are provided for all community partners.

Q: Which agencies are involved in transition?

A: It varies. Typically, the community agencies involved are Community Mental Health (CMH) and all their partner agencies, the Michigan Department of Career Development Rehabilitative Services, the Family Independent Agency (FIA), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and the courts, if needed. There maybe others, depending on the needs of the student.

Q: So agency services are not necessarily guaranteed?

A: No, they aren't guaranteed! Let's use housing as an example. The old thinking was that when the student was ready for housing, we'd just call down to Community Mental Health and get it. Or, we'd start early and get on the housing list. But that's not the way it works now. Obtaining necessary housing today depends on eligibility or the net supports that person already has in place.

Q: How would you define the terms "eligibility" and "entitlement?"

A: Entitlement means services mandated by special education rules and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) for students receiving special education services. Eligibility means the rules and criteria for services individually determined by the agency whose services you are considering.

Q: Who oversees and determines eligibility for these services?

A: Each individual agency does. Every agency has different funding streams, service provisions, and strengths and problems, but they are all considered individual agencies. You may find a case manager within an agency who will help you look into partnering agencies and coordinate cases. That's an important point for parents to understand.

Q: Do various agencies work closely together to meet a student's needs?

A: There is coordination and cooperation among the agencies but they are still separate entities with separate funding streams. Again, you need to start planning early to address these concerns.

Q: What's is the school's responsibility here?

A: Schools aren't set up to deal with agency roles. They can be very good at connecting with agencies and giving information and referrals, but an educator is not necessarily going to know everything that is out there. Nor should they. Their job is to help the student get through school.

Q: How is this part of transition addressed in the IEP?

A: There is usually an interagency agreement that states the services and financial support a particular agency is willing to provide to transition-age students. But the agency agreement alone isn't going to guarantee a student anything. It is very important to understand there is a willingness to discuss the needs and that there's a path parents and students can take to meet them. The agency agreement itself may or may not specify dollars to help transition students. It may or may not offer support staff who may or may not go into the schools prior to the student's age of eligibility to consult with the educational team.

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A Word to Education Professionals about Parents, Transitions, Feelings, and Dreams

A Teacher Reaches Out to Ease a Parent's Transition Worries

Janice Fialka, MSW, ACSW

Several years ago, my friend's son, Andrew, who has Down syndrome, was approaching his sixth birthday—the first one celebrated in a regular education setting. Andrew was gleefully excited, as evidenced by his regular declarations that "soon, soon, I am bringing a big, big birthday cake with hundreds of baseball bats decorated on it to school for all my friends!" The teacher was preparing for the big day. She was also mindful that my friend was anticipating this day with delight, but perhaps with some sadness, too. The teacher found a quiet, private moment and offered these words to my friend: "I know how wonderful birthdays can be for families. I have also learned that some parents re-experience some less comfortable feelings, such as grief or sadness. Birthdays and other milestones sometimes call up uninvited feelings. I just wanted you to know that this might happen and that I would be here if you wanted to talk about them."

Stunned, my friend fought back tears. She wondered how this teacher knew what had been keeping her up nights. How did she know? The teacher had validated her private experience and helped her know that she was not a "terrible mother" for having those feelings of regret, loss, and sadness. Andrew's mom left the teacher's classroom feeling less alone and a bit more normal than when she had entered the school that day. She was not "cured" of her sadness, but she felt lighter, less troubled, more able to move forward. The teacher's insight and words of compassion were as beautiful a gift to my friend as were the 25 red and blue baseball bats my friend lovingly decorated on the cake for her son.

A Five-Minute Interaction Can Impact a Lifetime

This interaction took less than five minutes, but its positive impact continues for my friend even today, ten years later. Seemingly simple and sensitive interventions by professionals do not go unnoticed by families who often struggle to make awkward and conflicting feelings fit together.

Transitions, especially for young people with disabilities, seem to give rise to almost every feeling in the universe, sometimes all at the same time. Often there is no warning and very little public recognition of the universality of these strong feelings.

As my 17-year-old son, who has developmental disabilities, approaches his senior and final year in high school (gulp!), I find myself shoved back into that speeding roller coaster of feelings so dominant in our lives when he was a toddler and we were just beginning our ride into the world of disabilities. (See "A Self-Determined Athlete Achieves his Goals with Help from Parents, a Peer Mentor, and an Open-Minded Coach" on page 18). Ordinary moments now re-awaken strong feelings: a flyer announcing "College Info Night at the High School;" moms chatting about the rewards of having their teenage sons who drive cars run errands for them, seeing a group of young guys hanging out at the basketball court. Events like these can cause me to sink into sadness, reel into rage, and whirl into worry. Humbly I whisper, "I want those ordinary things for my son, too."

Fight Back the Tears and Fears

Early childhood educators should have an awareness of and sensitivity to these strong feelings in parents. These professionals are well trained to understand the grief process during the initial diagnosis phase, when children are babies and toddlers and parents are unprepared for such unexpected news. As a result, early childhood professionals often address family emotions in skillful ways, giving parents opportunities to talk about their thoughts and concerns. Listening can help families to cope, adapt, and find their strengths. As the children move on into middle and high school, however, professionals may grow less cognizant of the normal, yet still troubling emotions that parents may re-experience during periods of transition with milestones occurring throughout the life cycle. It's not that these professionals are less sensitive, but perhaps they're less aware and more distracted by other educational issues and demands.

Empathy from Professionals Can Empower Parents

When school, vocational, and health professionals are empathetic and aware that grief is an expected emotion for most parents at any phase of our children's lives, we feel validated and empowered. It is helpful and tremendously supportive when professionals can reframe our parental feelings of evolving sadness and loss and recognize that, while these feelings come from a deep core of love and passion, they ultimately move us to create the best world possible for our children.

The next time you are working with a family, continue to create strong goals, clear objectives, fruitful action plans, rea-

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Promising Programs and Practices

Agencies Collaborate to Develop a School to Work Program for Young Adults with Autism

Lydia Gray, MEd., C.S.W., L.P.C., N.C.C., Director, JVS Rehabilitation Services

JVS *Realizing life's potential*

Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) Rehabilitation Services, Michigan Department of Career Development-Rehabilitation Services (MDCD-RS), and Oakland Schools have developed a pilot program to facilitate the transition of students with severe autism from school to post-secondary pursuits. The program, which is entering its third year of operation, has continued to evolve in response to the needs of the students being served.

Traditionally, students with severe autism have been unserved by rehabilitation services. David Halter, district manager of the Oakland County District MDCD-RS offices, identified a need to develop a model of service delivery to effectively assist the special education students either to obtain community-based employment or to identify their students' least restrictive vocational options, empowering them to exit school with realistic transition plans. A secondary goal of the program is to educate employers about the benefits of hiring individuals with autism.

This project represents a collaborative partnership among JVS, MDCD-RS, and Oakland Schools, as well as with individual school districts within Oakland County. School personnel, consulting with JVS and MDCD-RD staff, refer individual students to the program. Staff involved in coordination and service delivery include the JVS case coordinator, two JVS autism technicians, the MDCD-RS counselor, and teachers and social workers from the participating schools.

The schools, MDCD-RS, and JVS staff determine together which students may be well suited for the program by looking at the following criteria:

The student's past work experience? If he/she is currently familiar with only classroom-based work experience, she/he may benefit from some type of a community-based work experience prior to being referred to the Transition to Employment Program.

How does the student handle change in the work environment? If the student tends to experience heightened anxiety and stress when experiencing a change in routine, he/she may need additional training in the classroom setting prior to being referred to the Transition to Employment Program.

Is the communication system used by the student understood by the staff working with the student? This is a key component as it is necessary to understand the student's communication system in order to develop strategies for training.

Does the student have a functioning system for receiving and processing environmental stimuli that is demonstrated as effective in the classroom? The student will achieve greater success when this system is learned by JVS staff and then transferred and adapted to new situations. This may include use of picture cues and storyboards that can be modified for the tasks assigned.

Does the student have the ability to generalize his/her system for receiving and interpreting stimuli? This is important in order to help the student master various new tasks. It also helps if the student can be introduced to the tasks prior to actually starting the vocational exploration phase of the program.

The students participating in this program are generally within two years of exiting from school. Although this program was designed to be community-based, the initial four-week phase of the program occurs in school and community settings. It is during this time period that the autism technician and the student get to know each other in the familiar school setting as well as in the student's home and in other familiar community locations such as at a restaurant. Ideally, the same technician continues to work with a student through all components of the program.

A Vocational Profile is developed, serving as the basis for planning for the remainder of the community-based program—an instrumental component in making the transition from school to community successful. A Profile meeting is scheduled to include JVS staff, the MDCD-RS counselor, school staff, and the student's family and significant others. Identified interests and strengths are reviewed at this meeting and the next phase of the project, Vocational Exploration, is planned.

By completing the Vocational Profile in the beginning of the program, the student gains an opportunity to become familiar with the autism technician, and the technician has an opportunity to learn the student's information processing systems before moving to more unfamiliar settings. This includes reinforcers that may also be appropriate in the community. The case coordinator, autism technician, and school support staff work together to determine reinforcers that can transfer into the community appropriately. This type of teamwork also is used to find solutions to problematic issues, such as dispensing medication at set times. Often the home support staff and/or family become involved when issues of medication dispensing arise.

During the vocational exploration phase, the student tries our community-based jobs, accompanied by the autism technician. Generally, the student will try out two different jobs during the four-week period, based on stated and observed interests. The student's vocational strengths are clearly identified during this program component, along with potential behavioral and work related goals. At the end of this phase, the student chooses a job goal and moves into the next component.

Armed with specific goals and objectives identified to support/foster vocational success, the student moves into the work exposure stage of the project. During this component, the student, with assistance from the autism technician, performs a job of her/his choice and works toward demonstrating progress toward specific goals. Teachers and school social workers frequently assist the autism technician at the job site, helping to develop accommodations, interventions, and reinforcers appropriate for the work site.

Following the work exposure, when the student demonstrates appropriate work skills and core work behaviors, the job development component begins. The case coordinator contacts employers

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School to Work for Young Adults with Autism (continued from page 26)

in an attempt to carve out a position to match the student's skills and interest areas. Once the student is placed on a job, the autism technician provides job coaching services to assist her/him to master the tasks of the job and to organize and structure its routines. It is during the job coaching phase that the autism technician works to develop natural supports in the workplace to prepare the student to work as independently as possible at the job. Once job coaching has been completed, the student receives ongoing job retention services provided by the case coordinator.

One case example will illustrate the effectiveness of this model. James has transitioned into a work site that requires minimal to moderate supports. Initially, he demonstrated behaviors such as hitting himself and others when exposed to stimuli such as sneezing, sniffling, and coughing. After completing the first two components of the program, he returned to the classroom and received additional supports and training to help him cope with these stimuli more appropriately. Upon James's return to JVS for the third component of the program, the autism technician utilized James's updated work system that included a storyboard with behavioral intervention techniques for inappropriate behaviors. James demonstrated consistent improvement and currently uses his storyboard only at the beginning of his workday to remind him of coping techniques he can use, if needed. Prior to this program, James was very echolalic and tended to wait for prompts in order to interact with people. He now interacts independently with co-workers, staff, and his supervisors. Joyce Wefel, autism teacher at the Oakland Schools program, states, "I think this program was successful because of the cooperation and teamwork among JVS, MDCD-RS, and Oakland Schools."

According to Jim Stokes, MDCD-RS counselor, "Ideally, the goal for all participants involved is competitive employment. This program has allowed for an objective and realistic approach toward defining what this goal means. Under the umbrella of this program, we have been able to assemble a team that can assist in the transition process whether it is employment, supported employment, or sheltered work activity. Participation by the parents/legal guardians, school staff, and representation from the local community mental health agency is essential. This program has allowed for services to be provided, goals to be identified, and a team to be ready to implement the outcome, all within a framework of fiscal responsibility."

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A Word to Professionals about Parents, Transitions, and Feelings (continued from page 25)

sonable time frames, and responsive interventions. They are important ingredients for successful transitions. But don't forget to take time to sit with parents, ask how they are doing, inquire about what might be on their minds, and invite them to share a bit about what they are wishing for or missing. Let them know that it is not uncommon for parents to feel moments of grief, sadness, loss, fear, anger, guilt, worry, and even despair. Allow parents the opportunity to sit with someone who can acknowledge the troubling emotions. Remind parents that grieving is a normal part of the parenting experience. Great comfort and strength come from being in the company of caring people who are not afraid of feelings. Feelings are at the core of our humanity—to bury them is to bury our potential to connect with others.

Marsha Forest, an educator and leader in the inclusion movement, observed: "Martin Luther King said 'I have a dream.' He did not say, 'I have goals and objectives.'" Indeed, dreams are what propel us forward, drive us to work harder. Of course, we need clearly articulated goals, but, ultimately, it is our dreams that breathe life into our actions. Parents appreciate it when they have the opportunity to work through their original dreams and move into the new ones. Rebuilding dreams is a lifelong journey, extending into every new phase and new milestone of our child's life. If professionals move too quickly into action plans, they lose the opportunity to support parents through the phases of normal grieving, worrying, and wondering.

In Susan Zimmerman's book, *Grief Dances*, she poignantly tells the story of her daughter, Kat, who had Rett Syndrome, and the lessons learned by each member of the family in dealing with Kat. In one passage, Zimmerman's younger daughter, Helen, says "Don't you get it, Mom? Kat keeps us from just living on the surface."

Professionals have that chance, too. When you pause, sit, reflect, inquire, and invite parents to share their darker feelings and worries, when you validate those experiences and value this part of your job as much as the well-defined action plan, then the work you do is not surface work. It is the stuff of which dreams—even new dreams—are made.

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A Self-Determined Athlete Achieves His Goals with Help from Parents, a Peer Mentor and an Open-Minded Coach (continued from page 17)

I left the meeting pleased and excited. I met a man, a high school coach, who had probably never read anything by the leading thinkers on inclusion, Marsha Forest or Jack Pearpoint, or subscribe to *Inclusion News,* but who understood "inclusion" from his heart and not from any mandate. He just "got it" and we were thrilled.

In mid-October of Micah's freshman year, on one of those glorious autumn days with a backdrop of blue skies, with orange and yellow leaves dancing lightly in the sweet, soft breeze, our son ran in his first meet. We videotaped all 11 minutes and 32 seconds of his run. Best friends came to watch, I choked back my tears of pride, and his team cheered "Go, Micah! You can do it!"

In May as we began to think about Micah's sophomore year, we learned that his coach would not be coaching the next year. This news sent me into a downward spiral. When parents find adults who believe in their child, they cling to them like Velcro. I did NOT want coach to leave.

At the end-of-the-year meeting to plan for Micah's sophomore year, we met the new coach. I eyed him suspiciously, wondering if he knew how terrific my son was, if he knew how desperately we wanted Micah to be part of this experience. I quickly learned the answer to that question. This new coach stated, in a clear, unwavering voice, "I have a goal for Micah. I want him to run in EVERY meet and I want him to increase his distance to two miles."

We beamed, nodding our heads, too stunned to find the words to express our excitement (again, no "inclusion fight"). Micah's reaction to the coach's goal was a bit different. He groaned, muttering, "Two miles … No way, Mom!"

While delighting in the day's success later that night, I thought of Adrienne Rich, a wonderful poet. She wrote about growing older and wiser and recalling the lessons she had learned along the way. She said, "I live not, not as a leap, but as a succession of brief amazing moments, each one making possible the next."

The poem describes Micah's cross country story perfectly. There were many amazing moments, each building on the previous one. J.J., his peer mentor, opened the door to cross country. Micah's first coach opened the door to his first meet. Micah's second coach opened the door to running in EVERY meet and running longer. And this year, in his junior year, the new captain and a couple of other kids are driving Micah home from practice every day.

Everything is not perfect. "Real" inclusion is hard work, an ideal, something to move toward, something like a cross country run. Micah's cross country career evolved over time, without huge leaps. Micah has learned that he must run every single part of the mile to get to his finish line.

There's a lesson in that for me, as well. All of us who believe in inclusion have to run every part of the inclusion course. I cannot leap onto the finish line without running the entire course (darn it!). Some of the tracks are smooth and straight, others have steep hills, twists, and turns. But each part must be run. Each part is connected to the previous section. Each part must be encountered, traveled, negotiated. As Micah has learned, we all must keep a steady pace, look ahead, keep breathing; be encouraged by the cheering; move forward at our own pace. We'll probably groan as Micah did: "Two miles! No way, Mom!" But we, like Micah, are spurred on toward our goal. There are no leaps in cross country running, but there can be many brief amazing moments.

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Micah Will Attend the 2002 National Youth Leadership Conference

Micah Fialka-Feldman, a junior at Berkley High School, has recently been selected to participate in the 2002 National Youth Leadership Network Conference for Youth with Disabilities in Washington, D.C. July 26–29, 2002. Conference goals are to help prepare the next generation of disability leaders and to identify ways to improve policies and supports for young people with disabilities. The application process included a letter of reference and completion of three essay questions:

1) Describe two experiences you have had as a young person with a disability and what you learned from them.

2) List your school and community activities and honors.

3) Describe how your leadership skills have been developed.

Micah attributed some of his leadership skills to his participation in the 2001 Michigan Youth Leadership Forum (see "2002 Michigan Your Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities is Looking for Candidates" on page 10) and to his national Board Membership in Kids as Self Advocates (KASA). Seventy youth from around the U.S. were selected for this honor.

For more information about the National Youth Leadership Network, contact:
www.nyln.org

For more information about Kids As Self Advocates, contact:
www.fvkasa.org

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Explores the Meaning of "Access to the General Curriculum"

Shari Krishnan, Parent Member-at-Large, State Improvement Project (SIP) Committee Co-Chair, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC); Ginny Palubin, Teacher Consultant, East Detroit Schools MFT and SRP Representative, SIP Committee Co-Chair, SEAC; and Karen Rockhold, Consultant, Michigan Department of Education

The last issue of *CEN Newsline*, introduced the Special Education Advisory Committee (*Newsline*, March 2002, "What Is the Special Education Advisory Committee?" page 34). This month, SEAC will share an example of how SEAC subcommittees work with the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) for the benefit of students with disabilities and those who serve them in Michigan. One of the purposes of SEAC is to advise the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction about the educational needs of students with disabilities.

SEAC has three standing subcommittees, one of which is the State Improvement Plan (SIP) subcommittee. The committee consists of 20 members from a diverse special education stakeholder group, including: parents, a school superintendent, teachers, higher education professionals, a non-public school representative, a school board member, a compliance monitor, special education administrators, and special education advocates. An impartial process facilitator helps to preserve the voices of individual committee members. Two SEAC Executive Committee members, a teacher and a parent, co-chair the committee and serve as contacts for on-going dialogue between meetings. Once an agreed-upon meeting process was determined, the dialogue surrounding the topic of "Access to the General Curriculum" began.

Context for How this Discussion Evolved

The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) put a new emphasis on accountability and improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities. While IDEA continues to emphasize the identification and placement of children and youth with disabilities, the spirit of the legislation is explicit in stating that ALL students will have access to the general curriculum. MDE stands behind the belief that access to the general education curriculum should not be based on placement. Presently, MDE utilizes the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) participation rates data to report Michigan's progress with access to the general curriculum. In 1999, 48 percent of students with disabilities took some portion of the MEAP with or without accommodations. Eighty percent of Michigan students who receive special education services are eligible as learning disabled, emotionally impaired, or speech impaired. The SIP committee questioned why the full 80 percent of the Michigan students, who receive services with eligibility under learning disability, emotional impairment, or speech and language impairment, didn't participate in the MEAP or MEAP with accommodations.

What Are the Issues Surrounding "Access to the General Curriculum?"

To help begin uncovering potential answers to this question, MDE's Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) core planning team representatives approached the SIP committee to study issues surrounding access to the general curriculum. The request aligned with the purpose of the SEAC. The SIP committee was eager to do a study of this topic. The committee began to work on the topic in the fall of 2001.

At first, approaching this topic seemed like it was going to be straightforward. As we started to talk about these issues, we began to see how truly difficult this conversation was. The committee looked at initial impressions of the terms "access" and "general curriculum." We questioned whether we agreed with MDE's impression that access to the general curriculum is not related to placement. The SIP committee scoured through textbooks, Internet resources, various dictionaries, publications, and data sources. We invited guest speakers, interviewed individuals (outside of the committee process), and volunteered to attend professional meetings related to the topic. Hand-drawn models were developed to more clearly describe individual thoughts and group understanding. As SIP committee members enhanced their scholarship on the topic, monthly meetings were used as a vehicle to gain a shared committee understanding of what access to the general curriculum means.

Defining the Terms

What does access mean? What is the general curriculum? When the words go together in a phrase, does access to the general curriculum mean the same thing as the definition of its individual parts? What does it look like? This focused inquiry has forced the SIP committee into rethinking our past notions about what meaningful access to learning and curricular content really entail.

At the end of SEAC's 2001-2002 term, a report reflecting the consensus and dialogue of the committee will be submitted to the MDE and the State Board of Education. This report will identify:

- The SIP Committee's definition of "Access to the General Curriculum"
- Boosters presently available within the system to help make this happen
- Barriers within the system that prevent this from happening
- Prioritized recommendations outlining ways to take this dialogue to the next step. The report will be completed this summer of 2002.

The SIP committee's study of access to the general curriculum is an example of how the SEAC subcommittee process is

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Hearing Officers Rule to Ensure Direct Teacher Involvement and Proactive Use of Functional Behavior Assessment

Editor's Note: This is the second column on Dispute Resolution offered by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS). This column will appear regularly in Newsline. *OSE/EIS is providing information in this feature with a reminder that each due process hearing decision and each complaint investigation decision is based solely on factual circumstances, as presented in individual cases. Specific cases presented here should not be the basis of generalizations about dispute resolution. The OSE/EIS received several comments on the feature that appeared in the last issue and appreciates the perspectives that were shared.*

What precipitated the request for a hearing?

The background information is contained in the local hearing officer (LHO) decision. The LHO noted that the 12-year-old student presented complex physical, mental, behavioral, health, and education needs and was eligible for special education services from early childhood. The student was treated by a variety of mental health professionals and was placed into two psychiatric/short-term residential settings. Various medications were tried. After discharge from the second facility, various IEPs placed the student into a special education classroom in an age-appropriate facility and then a center program. The center program used seclusion for inappropriate behavior. Dissatisfied, the parent requested a due process hearing. The parent and the district used mediation to develop a new IEP. The IEP placed the student with a one-on-one paraprofessional in an isolated setting at a middle school for 20-25 hours per week. The student was assigned to a special education teacher who was indirectly involved with the student. The student also received related services. The district implemented the individualized education program (IEP) and the parties agreed that the student made instructional gains. The next fall, the parent requested a new individualized education program team (IEPT) meeting. The new IEP increased the amount of special education and related services the student was to receive, and the parent and the district agreed. Then the parent requested another IEPT, which the district convened.

What did the district propose for the student?

At the IEPT, the district determined that the student was eligible for special education services as educable mentally impaired (EMI), with a secondary eligibility as physical or otherwise health impaired (POHI). The IEP was essentially the same as the previous IEP, 20-25 hours per week with a one-on-one paraprofessional in an isolated part of the middle school. A special education teacher of the emotionally impaired (EI) was to provide overall instructional supervision. The student was also to receive related services (i.e., teacher consultant (T/C), occupational therapy (OT) and adaptive physical education (PE).

What were the disagreements?

The parent requested a due process hearing, stating that there was no special education eligibility category that accurately described the student. The parent also disagreed on the grounds that the paraprofessional was the primary person delivering instruction to the student. After agreement regarding who would be the LHO, prior to the written decision, the student assaulted the paraprofessional. Mental health professionals recommended another hospitalization, but the parent declined. The district requested the LHO to consider the student as dangerous, and the LHO identified an interim alternative educational setting (IAES). The parent declined the IAES and kept the student at home.

What did the LHO decide?

By the time the LHO issued the decision, the district wanted a more restrictive setting than that identified in the contested IEP. Because the district changed its proposal, the LHO placed the burden of proof on each party. The LHO ordered:

1. Eligibility as EMI/POHI (noting that Michigan's emotional impairment eligibility rule excludes persons whose "behaviors are primarily the result of intellectual, sensory, or health factors").
2. Placement into an EI program, with a one-on-one paraprofessional, and an additional paraprofessional assigned to the classroom, for 25 hours per week.
3. Instruction directed primarily by the teacher, with assistance delivered by the paraprofessional.
4. Construction of a soundproof area in the classroom to be available to the student and the paraprofessional.
5. Limitations on the number of students in the classroom at one time.
6. Related services.
7. Development of a functional behavior assessment (FBA), behavior intervention plan (BIP), and crisis intervention plan.

What did the state hearing officer decide?

The parent appealed for a state review. The state hearing officer (SHO) ordered:

1. Eligibility as EI because of the history of psychiatric disorders and the preponderance of behavioral issues in previous placements.
2. Implementation of LHO decisions 2-7, with some modifications.
3. Educational compensation, consisting of a summer school program, because the district did not provide the student with a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in two previous district placements. Specifically, the district did not:
   a. Provide the student with instruction from a special education teacher, with adequate lesson plans.
   b. Conduct a FBA/BIP as a proactive response to the frequency and severity of the student's behavior problems. This resulted in the excessive use of seclusion as punishment.
4. If the student cannot be educated in the special education classroom, the district may have to educate him alone.

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Dispute Resolution (continued from page 29…)

OSE/EIS Reviews Compensatory Education in the Complaint Process

Where does the term "compensatory education" come from and what does it mean?

Section 300.660(a) of the final regulations implementing IDEA requires each state to adopt written procedures to resolve complaints. Section 300.660(b) is entitled "Remedies for Denial of Appropriate Services." Section 300.660(b) requires that, if a complaint investigation concludes that a district failed to provide a student with appropriate services, the resolution of that complaint must include a remedy for the denial of services. The term most commonly used to describe remediation for a denial of services is "compensatory education."

How has Michigan implemented this requirement related to compensatory education?

The initial draft of Michigan's Complaint Procedures for Special Education assigned responsibility for awarding compensatory education to each student's IEP team. However, when this draft was submitted to consumers for public comment, Michigan's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) indicated that it wanted the Michigan Department of Education to direct compensatory education. Therefore, the final Complaint Procedures indicate that the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) has this responsibility.

How has the OSE/EIS managed compensatory education?

First, the OSE/EIS compliance unit developed a framework to use in guiding decisions about when and how to award monetary reimbursement and/or compensatory education. The framework begins with the perspective that no matter how similar any two students with disabilities may initially appear (e.g., age, type of eligibility, type of program/related services needed and provided, school district, etc), each is, upon closer review, unique. This uniqueness is captured, in some respect, in the specificity of each student's IEP. But even if two IEPs were nearly identical, chances are high that each student's response to that IEP would be unique. Therefore, any decisions about compensatory education for a denial of services for a student will depend on his/her specific factual circumstances, his/her IEP, and, ultimately, the student him/herself.

Compensatory Education Designed to Re-Establish Equity

The framework notes that compensatory education was not developed to be an abstract remedy, nor to punish a district. It was designed to re-establish equity, to make up for that which the parties, through the IEP, agreed should have been done. The framework indicates that compensatory education applies only to educational loss, not to other forms of loss. Some factors to be considered include the following: What was the actual loss (e.g., type of program/service that was not provided, amount/frequency that was not provided, etc.)? Was the loss solely the fault of the district, or did parental actions contribute to the loss? What was the impact of the loss on the student from the parent's perspective? From the district's perspective? What's an appropriate remedy from the parent's perspective? From the district's perspective? What's the perspective of staff most familiar with the student? Did the parent and the district already identify some measures to make up for the loss?

Second, the OSE/EIS has been directing monetary reimbursement and/or compensatory education for students when the student did not receive some (or all) of the special education program and/or related services on the IEP. The determination that a student was denied programs/services occurs through the complaint investigation process. Either the intermediate school district (ISD) or the OSE/EIS can decide that a district did not provide a student with the required programs/services. From January 1, 2001, through December 31, 2001, the OSE/EIS awarded compensatory education to students in approximately 23 percent of all of the cases in which a violation of any type was found involving a denial of services (it is important to remember that there are times when a violation occurred, but no student was denied services). Examples of compensatory education ordered required districts to make up missed services (before, during, or after school hours), or to provide tutoring or summer school, or to reimburse parents for expenses they accrued.

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The Special Education Advisory Committee Explores the Meaning of "Access to the General Curriculum" (continued from page 29)

used to enhance the work performed by MDE on the behalf of students and youth with disabilities. Using a variety of "interpretive lenses" to look at current topics, a mutually appropriate context for dialoguing and reaching consensus is in place. The SIP committee report will enter the CIMP process as a new data source that may be used to explore and address systemic issues that could lead to improved educational results for students with disabilities.

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Dr. Thompson Addresses the State of Special Education in Michigan

Using the tree as a metaphor, Dr. Jacquelyn Thompson, Director of the Michigan Department of Education Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, presented the annual state of the state address at the 62nd Annual Michigan Council for Exceptional Children Convention March 1, 2002, at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids.

Dr. Thompson focused on education as a dynamic, living system as she addressed an audience of parents, students, educators, administrators, advocates, and other educational professionals. "The roots of the education system include equity and social justice. The trunk represents policy and practices that positively impact services to children with disabilities," Thompson said. "Together, policy, practice, and advocacy move us ahead. They ensure improvements in student rights, services, and results."

According to Dr. Thompson, the new Revised Administrative Rules for Special Education are in the process of finalization. The new rules for Michigan will ensure compliance with federal rules and will serve as a companion document to the federal rules.

Dr. Thompson spoke passionately about the change to people-first language that is included in the new rules and should be incorporated as standard usage into all writing and discussion. Archaic terms that label people, such as "handicapped student" or "disabled student" should be replaced by people-first terms, such as "student with a disability" or "student with a learning impairment." Michigan has been slow to adopt these changes, according to Thompson. Additional terminology changes in the new rules will include "early childhood program" replacing "pre-primary program" and "transition" replacing "work study."

Dr. Jacquelyn Thompson (pictured second from left) with (from left to right) Laurie Vanderploeg, Lynelle Shooks, Beth Steenwyck, and James Linsell spoke to special education stakeholders in her annual state of the state address at the Michigan Federated Chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children convention in Grand Rapids last March.

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, legislation that reauthorizes the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* (ESEA), was also highlighted in Thompson's presentation. The new legislation addresses assessment, standards and competencies for paraprofessionals, highly qualified teachers, English language proficiency, and literacy.

Thompson likened the branches of the tree to programs and services, essential learning, independence and self-determination, and a place in the community.

"If we always look at what kids can't do, we are going to miss the opportunity for essential learning," she said. "Categorical disability is all about eligibility. Once you have determined eligibility, that label should then be filed away, because it has served its purpose in determining if the student is eligible. What matters now is the student and his/her own strengths and needs. That is what this system is about, not labels."

"Much as a tree matures over time, so has the special education system," Thompson said. "In the 1970s, the mindset was to protect individuals with disabilities. The mindset now is to support, nurture, and educate. We are moving from overprotection to independence and from separateness to inclusiveness.

Each leaf on the tree represents everyone in the education system—parents, teachers, students, administrators, policymakers, future teachers, state agencies, and more," Thompson concluded. "We are all part of the system, each and every one of us. Every one of us can make a difference."

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