

The Special Education Voice

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A Parent Newsletter

U.S. ISSUES NEW RULES ON SPECIAL EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- For more than 25 years, federal law had required that schools nationwide identify children as learning disabled by comparing their scores on intelligence tests with their academic achievement. This meant that many students had to wait until third or fourth grade to get the special education help they needed. In the new regulations issued after changes to the law, the

federal Education Department said states could not require school districts to rely on that method, allowing districts to find other ways to determine which children are eligible for extra help.

It was the final step in the federal government's repudiation of the old approach, which had come under severe criticism from advocates for children with disabilities, testing experts

and eventually federal officials themselves. Advocates for those children applauded the change.

Read the full story at:
<http://www.aapd.com/News/education/060804nyt.htm>

ONLINE RESOURCES

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS (OSEP)

Federal agency dedicated to improving results for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21 by providing leadership and financial support to assist states and local districts.

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html?src=mr>

READ ANY GOOD BOOKS LATELY?

"The Law and Special Education, 2nd Edition", by Mitchell L. Yell.

This book presents the necessary information for educators to understand the history and development of special education laws and the requirements of these laws. This book provides the reader with the skills to locate pertinent information in law libraries, on the internet, and other sources to keep abreast of the constant changes and developments in the Special Education field.

(Paperback, 512 pp., copyright 2005 Prentice Hall Publishing)

Assistive Technology

Visual Communication Supports for Child with Autism

Teachers use a variety of strategies to enhance communication with children with autism. Visual supports such as photos and picture cards can help to increase communicative efficiency and decrease frustration. Visual supports help to add predictability, meaning and structure to the child's day.

Myth: Many parents are concerned that if you give the nonverbal child pictures to use to talk, that the child will not use his words. Actually, visual supports help to enhance communication, decrease frustration and often increases verbalization.

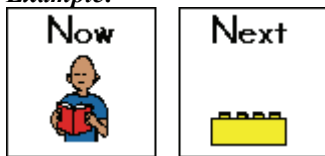
Behavior problems can occur when the child has:

- An inability to request,
- An inability to predict what is going to happen in the future,
- Difficulty transitioning from one activity to another,
- Anxiety in being unable to order their day.

Photos and picture cards can be used to:

- Request a snack (Have several pictures of your child's favorite foods/drinks on the refrigerator. Let the child point and if verbal, say the word to request the item. As they master this, expand the language to include a phrase or sentence).
- Request a favorite activity,
- By placing pictures depicting daily activities in a Top-down or Left-right sequence, the child can better understand expectations and structure their day, or
- Show what the child is to do "now" and beside it a picture of what the child will do "next".

Example:



A visual schedule can be used to help predict what will happen next and relieve anxiety about the "unknown." Also, this idea can help the child who has difficulty transitioning from one activity to another.



Ex: morning schedule
(Helps to structure the day)

Pairing Literacy and Language Development

Book reading is a great way to increase overall language development and enhances reading (literacy) skills.

Book reading at a set time of each day with your child is a great opportunity for children who need to work on back and forth turn-taking skills and pragmatic (social language skills) in a one-to-one situation before being required to use these same skills in a group. Children with Autism often have particular difficulty with pragmatic language skills.

Book reading can help to promote the following social (pragmatic language) skills:

- Gestures (pointing, clapping, shaking head yes and no, shrugging, reaching, etc.)
- Pretend roles (The parent can use a character's voice and encourage the child to take on another character voice. Pretend to blow out candles if there is a birthday party in the book.)
- Sharing joint attention to the same object (book)
- Turn-taking
- Increase eye contact
- Promotes appropriate body language for listening
- Tolerating touch & cuddling with the parent; enjoy this time together
- Talk about the character's feelings

Book Reading can help to teach the "Concepts of Print:"

- Top to bottom
- Left to right
- Return sweep to next line
- Matching the spoken word to the printed word
- Recognize difference between words and letters
- Know that spaces divide words in a sentence

Book Reading helps to teach the parts of a book

- Front cover
- Title page
- Illustrator
- Author

Vocabulary Development

As you read with your child, discuss meanings of words.

Book reading can help to identify parts of speech at the very basic level of "who? doing what? where?"

Book Reading reinforces Reading Concepts:

1. To teach sequencing skills, let your child read to you in his or her own words by telling what is happening in the pictures of a favorite well-read book.

2. Help your child use a variety of strategies to comprehend read-alouds (Ex: retelling, predicting, using context clues to draw conclusions) – Before turning a page in a book, ask what the child thinks will happen next.

The key to this activity is to do it regularly. Also, it is ok to re-read favorite books.

C.A.R.E.

Communication, Advocacy, Resource, and Education

The purpose of the Communication, Advocacy, Resources, and Education (CARE) group is to provide meaningful parent training on different special education issues, such as graduation requirements, agency support, etc. as well as to facilitate opportunities for parents to meet other families for experience sharing and support.

Information is provided through:

Newsletters

During the school year, at least 2 issues of "The Special Education Voice" are available for families of special education students in the district. This newsletter is available on the Comal ISD website under the Current News & Information link. The newsletter features perspectives from special education professionals, questions from parents, as well as information on upcoming training opportunities and/or

other events of interest to the special education community.

Parent Meetings

The CARE group will meet 2 times a year. These meetings are open to the public and will focus on special education issues. At these meetings, the group will provide information about programs of interest to the special education community. Topics may include making transitions, TAKS testing issues, etc.

Parent Handbook

Many resources have been brought together in the Parent Handbook to help guide parents through the Special Education process in CISD. This handbook will be updated by CISD special education staff and made available to parents.

C.A.R.E. Volunteers

Parent volunteers will be available to assist parents through the special education process. Parents may be able to provide a different perspective to issues faced by the family of a student receiving special education services.

Meeting Dates:

Dec 13, 2006—Canyon Intermediate School 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

April 12, 2007—Canyon Intermediate School 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

For more information, please contact Cindie Walker at 830-221-2047.

L.I.F.E.

Living Independently through Functional Education

This program is designed to provide services in the areas of post secondary education, integrated employment, vocational training, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, community participation, social/recreation/leisure, and other important life considerations that address the interests, preferences, and needs of individual students ages 18-22 in an environment that replicates the environment of their peer group. The program design focuses on transitioning the young adult from public school to the adult world in a manner that allows each participant to

achieve his/her desired quality of life within an inclusive community providing natural supports.

Students who participate in this program must be 18-22 years of age and eligible for special education services, have completed 4 years of high school and minimum number of credits for graduation, have completed 1 year of supported employment for pay/1 year of on-the-job training in the community, and commit to participate in the program for a minimum of 2 school years or until eligible for public school exit.

Target Group: Students with identified significant disabilities age 18-22. A student with a significant disability is defined as an individual who requires extensive ongoing support in more than one major life activity to participate in integrated community settings and to enjoy the quality of life that is available to citizens with fewer or no disabilities.

If you have questions about this program, please contact Shanie Bowers at 830-221-2058 or Sue Saur at 830-221-2000 ext. 3237.

Crisis Prevention Intervention

Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) is a program designed to train individuals in implementing effective techniques when dealing with an agitated individual. This program is designed to provide care, welfare, safety and security for all individuals involved in a crisis situation. All trainings will begin at 8:00 am and last until 4:00 pm. If you would like more information or are interested in attending a training, please contact:

Halcy Martin-Dean at 830-221-2095 or by email at halcy.dean@comalisd.org

Dates of Trainings:

January, 27, 2007 at Central Office

March 24, 2007 at Central Office

Parent Training

Local Workshops

The Special Education Department would like to invite parents to attend local workshops and training opportunities that address the needs of our special education population during the 2006-2007 school year.

Local workshops can be found on the Region XIII Education Service Center (www.esc13.net) and Region XX Education Service Center (www.esc20.net) websites. For more information please contact Halcy Martin-Dean, Special Education Coordinator at 830-221-2095.



The last Friday of every month from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m., the Mark 9 Ministry will be hosting a Parent's Night Out program at Oakwood Baptist Church for

Parent's Night Out

families with a child with special needs. The Mark 9 Ministry is partnering with Camp C.A.M.P., who has been hosting respite programs in and around San Antonio for over 20 years. There is a "zero turn away" policy for disability, so it does not matter how mild or how involved the special need is. We take siblings too, so parent's get a real night off!!!

The registration cost is \$35 per year per family. A nurse or physician is always in attendance.

To register please contact Laura Christianson at (830) 608-0158.

Region Service Centers

Region XIII (Austin)
(512) 919-5313
www.esc13.net

Region XX (San Antonio)
(210) 370-5200
www.esc20.net

Special Education District Staff

The mission of Comal ISD, as the foundation of public education, is to provide extensive learning opportunities through the commitment of a broad range of district-wide resources to ensure that all students of our diverse communities have the opportunity to become contributing members of our changing society.

For more information contact:

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Comal Independent School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, color, national origin, or disability in providing education services, activities, or programs. It is the intent and policy of this district to conduct its activities in compliance with all Federal and State laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, religion, color, national origin or disability.

El Distrito Independiente Escolar de Comal no discrimina a base de raza, sexo, edad, religión, color, origen nacional, o incapacidad en proveer servicios educacionales, actividades, o programas. Es la intención y norma del Distrito de conducir sus actividades de acuerdo con todas las leyes Federales y Estatales prohibiendo discriminación a base de raza, sexo, edad, religión, color, origen nacional o incapacidad.