



# PEAL News

Summer 2009

## Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership

### Changing the Way We Think by Janice Fialka at [www.danceofpartnership](http://www.danceofpartnership) (reprinted with permission)

When you have a child with a disability you enter a new world, filled with new people, new words, and new ways of thinking! One of the harder new lessons we, as parents learn about "this new life" is that people, even well-meaning people, frequently make dangerous assumptions about our children and say things to us like: You have to be realistic about his future.\* You must accept your child's limitations.\* Assessments and evaluations of your child tell us what she can and cannot do.\* You are expecting too much.\* She'll never be able to \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank).

I don't think folks intend to be hurtful or



limiting of our children, but most people have a narrow experience with people with disabilities. They haven't seen many people with disabilities genuinely integrated in our communities, leading productive and meaningful lives, using unique ways to make this happen. Most of us were raised with the belief that disabilities are deficiencies, not just differences.

One of the pioneers in changing how we think about people with disabilities is Anne Donnellan who in 1984 launched the radical concept of "least dangerous assumption" as it related to people with disabilities. The "least dangerous assumption" states that "in the absence of absolute evidence, it is essential to make the assumption that, if proven to be false, would be least dangerous to the individual." (Rossetti and Tashie) In other words, we can never be certain of what people are capable of, so to avoid any grave consequences, we must assume that they have potential.

Zach Rossetti and Carol Tashie helped me understand the "least dangerous assumption" in their wonderful example of going fishing. They posed the question that if you go fishing for several days and do not catch any fish, what can you assume? You might believe that

(**Changing** Continued on page 2)

### Cambiano la Manera en que Pensamos por Janice Fialka (traducido por Astrid Camille Arroyo)

¡Cuándo usted tiene un niño con incapacidades usted entra a un mundo nuevo, lleno de gente nueva, nuevas palabras, y nuevas maneras de pensar! Una de las lecciones más difíciles que, como padres aprendemos acerca de "esta nueva vida", es que las personas, inclusive esas personas que tienen buenas intenciones, con frecuencia hacen asunciones erróneas acerca de nuestros hijos y nos dicen cosas como: Tienes que ser realista sobre su futuro.\* Tienes que aceptar las limitaciones de su hijo.\* Las calificaciones y evaluaciones de su niño nos deja saber lo que ella puede o no puede hacer.\* Usted espera demasiado.\* Ella nunca podrá hacer \_\_\_\_\_ (llena el blanco).

Yo no creo que la intención de la gente sea de hacer daño o limitar a nuestros hijos, pero la mayoría de las personas tienen poca experiencia con personas con incapacidades. Ellos no han visto individuos con incapacidades verdaderamente integrados en nuestra comunidad, viviendo vidas productivas y significativas, usando maneras únicas para lograrlo. Muchos de nosotros fuimos criados

con la creencia de que la incapacidad es una deficiencia, no sólo una diferencia.

Uno de los pioneros en cambiar como nosotros pensamos acerca de las personas con incapacidades es Anne Donnellan quien en 1984 lanzó el concepto radical de la "suposición menos peligrosa" como se relaciona a personas con incapacidades. La "suposición menos peligrosa" indica que "en la ausencia de evidencia absoluta, es esencial hacer que la suposición que, si se prueba que es falso, sea menos peligroso al individuo." (Rossetti y Tashie) En otras palabras, nunca podemos estar seguros de lo que las personas son capaces, así que para evitar graves consecuencias, tenemos que asumir que ellos tienen potencial.

Zach Rossetti y Carol Tashie me ayudaron a entender la "suposición menos peligrosa" en su maravilloso ejemplo de ir a pescar. Ellos plantean la pregunta que si usted va a pescar durante varios días y no coge ningún pez, ¿qué puede usted asumir? Usted puede creer que no hay peces en el lago ya que no cogió

(**Cambiano** Continued on page 2)

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*The Mission of the PEAL Center is to ensure that children, youth and adults with disabilities and special health care needs lead rich, active lives and participate as full members of their schools and communities by providing training, information and technical assistance based on best practices to individuals, families and all people who support them.*

*La MISIÓN del Centro de PEAL es proveer entrenamiento, información, y asistencia técnica basada en las mejores prácticas a individuos, familias y todas las personas que los apoyan para así garantizar que los niños, jóvenes y adultos con impedimentos y necesidades de cuidado de salud especial tengan vidas ricas, sanas, activas y participen como miembros de pleno derecho en sus escuelas y sus comunidades.*

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there are no fish in the lake since you did not catch any after hours of trying. Or you could assume that there are fish in the lake but you need to be patient, innovative, and persistent.

With the first assumption, you are likely to stop fishing, leave the lake, and abandon it. In the second assumption ("the least dangerous assumption"), you are likely to continue fishing, move to new places on the lake, try different bait, ask for the assistance of the local fishing community, or try a new way to cast the line.

When we apply this analogy to children with disabilities and we practice working from the "least dangerous assumption" then we do not abandon children who initially may appear unable to learn, communicate, or grow. We assume that they can do all of those things, just in different ways—ways that are waiting to

*(Cambiano Continued from page 1)*

ninguno después de horas de tratar. O usted puede asumir que hay peces en el lago pero tienes que ser paciente, innovador, y persistente.

Con la primera suposición, usted probablemente deje de pescar, se va del lago y abandona al noción de pescar. En la segunda suposición ("suposición menos peligrosa"), es probable que usted siga pescando, se mueva a otro lugar en el lago, trata diferentes anzuelos, le pide asistencia a la comunidad local de la pesca, o trata una manera nueva de lanzar la línea.

Quando aplicamos esta analogía a niños con incapacidades y practicamos trabajar con la "suposición menos peligrosa" entonces no abandonamos niños quienes inicialmente aparecen no poder aprender, comunicarse o crecer. Asumimos que ellos pueden hacer todas esas cosas, sólo en diferentes maneras – maneras que están esperando a ser

be discovered.

We assume that more time and creative strategies are needed to help draw out their abilities. We do not assume that their brain is empty as the lake described in the earlier example. We don't allow standard assessments or deeply embedded images of who learns stop us from seeing what might be. We teach them as if they can and will learn. We assume that we need more time on this lake – a lake that is overflowing with fish of unusual colors, shapes, and sizes. We believe that the best bait is the belief that assumes competence of our children. That's the hook. That's how we unlock the potential in each child.

That's how we will reel in the fish.

Janice Fialka is coming to PA on September 12. See page 6, *Erie Series*

descubiertas.

Asumimos que más tiempo y estrategias creativas son necesarias para ayudar a desarrollar sus capacidades. No asumimos que el cerebro esta vacío como el lago descrito en el ejemplo anterior. No permitimos que evaluaciones estándares o imágenes emprendidas de esos que aprenden nos impida ver lo que puede ser. Le enseñamos como si ellos pueden y van a aprender. Asumimos que necesitamos más tiempo en este lago – un lago que esta desbordándose con peces de diferentes colores, formas y tamaños. Creemos que el mejor anzuelo es la creencia que asume la competencia de nuestros niños. Ese es el gancho. Así es como abrimos el potencial en cada niño.

Así es como sacamos el pez.

Janice Fialka estará en PA el 12 de Septiembre. Vaya a la página 6, *Series de Erie*.

*The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of what is elusive, but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions for hope.*

John Buchan



*El encanto de la pesca es que es la persecución de lo que es evasivo, pero accesible, una serie perpetua de ocasiones para la Esperanza.*

Juan Buchan

## Recent Supreme Court Decision Gives Families Options

The Supreme Court recently ruled that parents of students receiving special education services may seek government reimbursement for private school tuition, even if they have never received special education services in public school.

This is based on the case of *Forest Grove School District v. T.A.* In this case, the district had found that the child was not in need of special education services. The Supreme Court states that,

"Indeed, by immunizing a school district's refusal to find a child eligible for special education services no matter how compelling the child's need, the School District's interpretation [of the statute] would produce a rule bordering on the irrational."

". . . we conclude that IDEA authorizes [tuition] reimbursement for the cost of private special education

services when a school district fails to provide a FAPE and the private-school placement is appropriate, regardless of whether the child previously received special education or related services through the public school."

Further, The Ninth Circuit held that:

"... a student who never received special education and related services from a school district nevertheless may recover reimbursement for the costs of private school education. We conclude that such a student is not barred as a matter of law from receiving reimbursement. In the IDEA, Congress conferred broad discretion on the courts to provide appropriate equitable relief, including reimbursement for attendance at a private school."

The case can be seen in its entirety at <http://www.wrightslaw.com/law/caselaw/ussupct.forest.grove.ta.pdf>

## Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten

by Stephanie Scanlon, Family Consultant, Pittsburgh Public Schools Early Intervention

Okay, so the IEP is written, the placement decisions have been made, and you're ready for your child to go to kindergarten. Now it's time to prepare to send your little one off to the big school.

Kindergarten can be an overwhelming prospect to both children and families. Hopefully by now you have had the opportunity to visit the school that your child will attend. Here are suggestions that parents can employ to help ease the transition:

§ During the summer months while you and your child are out running errands, drive past the school and point out to your child that is the school he/she will be going to in the fall. Make it sound very exciting and like it is a big deal. Parents know their children best, so if making a big deal would cause anxiety in your child, you can keep things low key with social stories and/or repeated visits to the school throughout the summer months.

§ Go to your local library and check out some books on starting school and read them with your child.

§ Some school districts will host Family Fun Nights or Back to School Nights to welcome children and families to the

school community. Take advantage of the opportunity and attend the event. It will give you and your child the chance to meet other children and families that attend the school, and show your child that school can be fun.

§ Most kindergarten classrooms start later than the rest of the student body, take the time at the beginning of the school year to go into the school with your child and meet the teacher that will be teaching your child's kindergarten class. This visit will also give your child the opportunity to see the classroom and all the fun things that school has to offer. Make the experience exciting by pointing out all the cool things you see in the classroom. Let your child explore the classroom and interact with the teacher so that he/she feels comfortable in this new environment. This will help to build a relationship with the teacher and to ease the fears you have about the person you are trusting with your child. Let the teacher know that you are involved in your child's education and want to be a partner in helping your child to succeed. Give the teacher the opportunity to ask any questions he/she may have about your child.

After all you want the teacher to be comfortable with having your child in his/her classroom as well.

§ Lastly, once school starts become an active parent in the school. Join the PTA or other parent councils, volunteer in the classroom or on field trips, and attend open houses and parent/teacher conferences. If attending scheduled conferences and open houses are not possible, talk with the teacher at the beginning of the school year and make other arrangements to meet when it is convenient for the both of you. This not only shows the school that you are interested in your child's education, but it will show your child that you care.



Emily Dollinger enjoys Physical Therapy with JoAnn

## Preparando a Su Niño para que este Listo para el Kindergarten

por Stephanie Scanlon, Consultor de la Familia, Intervención Temprana de las Escuelas Públicas de Pittsburgh (traducido por Astrid Arroyo)

Bueno, el PEI está escrito, las decisiones de colocación han sido hechas, y usted está listo para que su hijo vaya al Kindergarten. Ahora es el turno de preparar a tu chiquillo para ir a la escuela.

Kindergarten puede ser una perspectiva abrumadora para ambos, los niños y la familia. Con suerte, usted ya ha tenido la oportunidad de visitar la escuela que su niño va a asistir. Aquí hay unas sugerencias que los padres pueden emplear para ayudar a facilitar la transición:

§ Durante los meses de verano cuando usted y su niño estén haciendo diligencias, pase por la escuela y señale a su niño que esa es la escuela que él o ella va a ir en el otoño. Hágalo con mucha emoción y como si fuera un gran evento. Padres conocen mejor a sus hijos, si hacer que es un gran evento le causa ansiedad a su niño, usted puede

mantener las cosas a bajo perfil con historias sociales y/o repetidas visitas a la escuela durante los meses de veranos.

§ Vaya a su biblioteca local y cheque algunos libros acerca de empezar la escuela y léalo con su niño.

§ Algunos distritos de escuela anfitriona Noches de Diversión Familiar o Noches de Vuelta a la Escuela para darle la bienvenida a los niños y sus familias a la comunidad escolar. Aproveche la oportunidad y asista a estos eventos. Le dará a usted y su niño la oportunidad de conocer a otros niños y sus familias que asisten a la escuela, y muéstrele a su niño que le escuela puede ser divertido.

§ La mayoría de las clases de Kindergarten comienzan más tarde que el resto de los estudiantas, toma este tiempo al comienzo del año escolar para ir a la escuela con su niño y conocer a la maestra que va a enseñar la clase de Kindergarten de su niño. Esta visita le dará a su niño la oportunidad de ver el salón de clases y todas las cosas divertidas que le escuela ofrece. Haga que esta sea una experiencia emocionante señalando todas las cosas buenas que ven en el salón de clases. Deje que su niño explore el salón de clases e interactúe con la maestra para

así él/ella se sienta cómodo en este nuevo ambiente. Esto ayudará a desarrollar una relación con la maestra y aliviar los temores que usted tenga sobre la persona que usted está confiando su hijo. Déjele saber a la maestra que usted está envuelto en la educación de su hijo y quiere ser socio en ayudar a su hijo a tener éxito. Dale la oportunidad a la maestra a hacer cualquier pregunta que él/ella tenga sobre su hijo. Después de todo usted quiere que la maestra o el maestro se sienta cómodo/a con tener a su niño en su salón también.

§ Por último, una vez que comience el año escolar conviértase en un padre activo en la escuela. Únase al PTA u otros consejos de padres, sea voluntario en el salón de clases o en excursiones, y asista a casas abiertas y conferencias de padres/maestros. Si atender una conferencia prevista y casas abiertas no es posible, hable con la maestra al principio del año escolar y haga arreglos para reunirse cuando es conveniente para ustedes dos. Esto no sólo muestra que usted está interesado en la educación de su niño, pero también mostrará a su niño que usted se preocupa por él/ella.

## Early Intervention Leads Father to New Career

by Kurt Kondrich



Chloe gets batting tips from Andy LaRoche

On May 16, 2003 my beautiful daughter Chloe was born into this world, and shortly after her birth we were informed that Chloe had Down syndrome. Little did I know that day as a Pittsburgh Police Officer how much my life would change as I was led down a career path I never would have envisioned.

I am a mission-oriented person, and once we had Chloe safely home I began my mission of learning as much as I could about the supports and services available for Chloe that would give her the best possible foundation.

With the guidance of an awesome Service Coordinator and exceptional team of therapists I began attending as many meetings, trainings and seminars as possible.

When my Service Coordinator suggested I attend my local LICC (Local Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Intervention) meeting I followed her advice. It was there that I met key Early Intervention professionals in my county along with other families working hard to navigate the system. I quickly connected with the Director of the preschool program Chloe would be entering, and this connection was priceless as we transitioned from Early Intervention to preschool.

Networking is a tool I used frequently as a Police Officer

walking the Beat to troubleshoot problems quickly, and I soon became aware how important networking was for families in the Early Intervention and disabilities system. The paperwork, forms, acronyms and raw emotions can overwhelm individuals rapidly, and it is critical that families learn early on who the key contacts are for supports and services.

The LICC is a great starting point for all families who have children in Early Intervention. Families can obtain LICC information concerning meeting dates, times and locations from their Service Coordinators, and family participation is vital for the proper functioning of an LICC. After becoming the Parent Co-Chair of the Allegheny LICC, I became aware of the SICC (State Interagency Coordinating Council for Early Intervention). The PA SICC is an advisory board of parents and professionals appointed by the Governor that advises and supports state agencies by making programmatic recommendations to the PA Early Intervention system. I became involved with this state advisory board, and I currently serve as Chair of the PA SICC.

I cannot emphasize how important it is for parents and families to connect with their LICC's, and it truly is a priceless resource as a family begins their journey in Early Intervention. I would be happy to assist anyone with connecting to their LICC, and I invite all to attend bi-monthly SICC meetings either in person or via video link [http://www.pattan.net/partners/StateInteragencyCoordinatingCouncil\(SICC\).aspx](http://www.pattan.net/partners/StateInteragencyCoordinatingCouncil(SICC).aspx).

My experience with the LICC and networking provided me with the boost to change careers in my mid 40's, get a Masters in Early Intervention from Pitt, and I now serve as the Director of Community/Family Outreach for Early Intervention Specialists. I wish you all much success and optimism as you lay the foundation for your child in Early Intervention.

### LICC Letter

Dear PA Early Intervention Family,

My name is Kurt Kondrich and I am the Chair of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for Early Intervention which is appointed by the Governor's Office. The State ICC is charged with the following in Pennsylvania:

*The Pennsylvania State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) for Early Intervention was created in 1986. The SICC is an advisory body appointed by the Governor. Their role is to advise and assist state agencies by making recommendations to the Departments of Education, Health and Public Welfare on the implementation and maintenance of the statewide Early Intervention system for children. The membership of the SICC consists of parents of children with disabilities, Early Intervention providers, state departments, education agencies, county government, legislators and professional associations.*

I want to invite you to contact me with any comments, questions or concerns you may have with the Early Intervention System in PA. I am the father of a 6 year old daughter Chloe who has Down syndrome, and Chloe has benefited greatly from PA Early Intervention. I am very active at the local and state level supporting families, and I received my Masters Degree in Early Intervention from the University of Pittsburgh. I am dedicated to giving family members a voice in PA Early Intervention, and I would be glad to assist you in any way and relay your feedback during the bi-monthly SICC meetings which are held in Harrisburg and linked via live video to Pittsburgh and King of Prussia. Thank you for your time, and I wish you the very best.

Sincerely,

Kurt A. Kondrich M.Ed

412-951-9117 [kkondrich@eiskids.com](mailto:kkondrich@eiskids.com)

SICC Website - [http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/partners/StateInteragencyCoordinatingCouncil\(SICC\).aspx](http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/partners/StateInteragencyCoordinatingCouncil(SICC).aspx)

### Carta de LICC

Estimada Familia de Intervención Temprana de PA,

Mi nombre es Kurt Kondrich y soy el Presidente del Consejo de Coordinación Interagencial Estatal (SICC, siglas en Inglés) para Intervención Temprana el cual es designado por la Oficina del Gobernador. El ICC Estatal esta encargado de lo siguiente en Pensilvania:

El Consejo de Coordinación Interagencial del Estado de Pensilvania (SICC) para la Intervención Temprana fue creada en 1986. El SICC es una junta consultiva designada por el Gobernador. Su papel es aconsejar y asistir a las Agencias Estatales haciendo recomendaciones al Departamento de Educación, Salud y Bienestar Público en la implementación y mantenimiento de la Intervención Temprana para Niños en el estado. La membresía del SICC consiste de padres de niños con incapacidades, proveedores de Intervención Temprana, departamento de estado, agencias de educación, gobierno de condado, legisladores y asociaciones profesionales.

Quiero invitarlos a que me contacten con cualquier comentario, pregunta o preocupación que usted tenga acerca del sistema de Intervención Temprana en PA. Yo soy el padre de Chloe una niña de 6 años con Síndrome de Down, y Chloe se ha beneficiado grandemente de le Intervención Temprana de PA. Estoy bien activo a nivel local y estatal apoyando a familias, y recibí mi Grado de Maestría en Intervención Temprana de la Universidad de Pittsburgh. Yo estoy dedicado a darle a los miembros de la familia una voz en la Intervención Temprana de PA, y me dará mucho gusto en asistirlos en cualquier manera y relevar sus comentarios durante las reuniones bimestrales de SICC las cuales se llevan a cabo en Harrisburg y conectadas a través de video en vivo a Pittsburgh y King of Prussia. Gracias por su tiempo y les deseo lo mejor.

Sinceramente,

Kurt A. Kondrich M.Ed

412-951-9117 [kkondrich@eiskids.com](mailto:kkondrich@eiskids.com)

SICC Website - [http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/partners/StateInteragencyCoordinatingCouncil\(SICC\).aspx](http://www.pattan.k12.pa.us/partners/StateInteragencyCoordinatingCouncil(SICC).aspx)

## Words of Wisdom from Parents on Early Childhood Transitions

"START EARLY! Begin transition meetings with the EI and IU staff early. Six months in advance is not too early.....

VISIT! ....The parent/caregiver should make a list of questions to take along on the visit. Questions may include: What is a typical class day schedule?...What kinds of chairs do the kids sit in?...When do therapists work with the child? ....

### BE PATIENT AND OPTIMISTIC!

....Optimism is a necessary component for success. If transition goes well, then congratulations! If transition is rougher than expected...Give it time, be an active part of the team, and initiate changes to the plan if necessary."

*Cindy Dollinger*

".....each year before the new school year ...make a booklet for them with actual photos of their room/rooms, the school building if this is new, and anyone he/she will need to be familiar with, e.g. teachers, aides, principal, nurse, custodian, lunch workers, etc., and a brief explanation of that person's duties. Review the book over the summer."

*Annette*

"...make sure to include the child in with the planning of the new school every chance you get.... My biggest advice is to walk out of the class when they are crying. It will break your heart but know most times they are truly fine as soon as that door shuts."

*R.Ibbetson*

"Don't be afraid to communicate with the people that can help you. ... I often did not want to open up to my children's teachers at first.....The more I shared with them the better they were able to service my family. I had to lay aside a lot of fear. "

*Antionette Jones*

".....The more relaxed the parent the more relaxed the child. Be sure to attend any orientations the school provides, or ask to have your child meet with his/her teacher in the classroom before the year starts.... Remain calm."

*Jackie Pisano*

"...During the summer, my son and I were able to visit the kindergarten room ... and meet other students/families....I added to that a social story that we read every week during the summer that talked about ...

kindergarten...and a separate story about riding the school bus."

*Susan Wuenstel*

"We had a big monthly calendar by our front door and we posted pictures for each day of where he was going- Monday - Friday, picture of the school and then Sat & Sunday was a picture of home.....Include some kind of communication book or email with the child's teacher."

*Susan Bolig*

"...set up a time that we could take our son and visit the classroom while it was in progress. It made it easier on all of us to be able to meet the teachers and staff, see how they interacted with our child and the other children and to also view the classroom and program. ... We also used the process of slowly introducing our son into the program by increasing his time in the program from maybe an hour a day then add an hour more each day until he was attending full-time.

*April Gambino*

**Thank you to all those who shared your  
Words of Wisdom  
with our readers**

Share your **Words of Wisdom** by responding to the Hot Topic questions posted quarterly on our website

## Make A Difference! Consider PEAL's Board of Directors

**Are you a passionate and committed individual?  
Do you have strong values about equality and social justice for children with disabilities?  
Do you want to help connect families of children with disabilities to the information and resources they need to help their children to participate fully in their community?**

If you answered **yes** to any of the questions above, or if you are interested in being a leader in the disability advocacy community in Pennsylvania, then you should download an application for PEAL Center's Board of Directors at: [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org).

Consider applying to be part of this important mission as a volunteer member of the Board of Directors. As a Board member, you have the opportunity to contribute your passion, skills, and experience to help families and children live rich active lives, participating as full members of their schools and communities.

Since PEAL serves as one of Pennsylvania's federally funded Parent Training and Information Centers, PEAL has some requirements regarding the composition of its Board. To fulfill

our obligations on the diversity of skill on our Board, PEAL is currently looking for Pennsylvania Board members who fulfill the following roles:

- Parents of young children with a disability
- Parents representing diverse cultural or ethnic backgrounds
- Individuals with interest in raising funds
- An individual with legal expertise

The Board meets at least quarterly and usually in Pittsburgh. Board terms run for three years, and members participate on one of the many Board Committees to capitalize on individual strengths and expertise.

Would you like to get involved with PEAL Parent Center and share your skills as a Board or Committee member? You can download an application on the "About Us" page at [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org).

Please contact Molly Black, Nominations Chair, with questions @724-863-1283

Note: *PEAL's Board of Directors has limited seats. Applications are required.*

**Make A Difference! Consider PEAL's Board of Directors**

## Resource from the PEAL Lending Library

The PEAL Center maintains a lending library for families and educators. Materials can be borrowed from our library at no charge. This month's feature is a spiral bound book by Michael L. Remus and Bev Adcock titled ***More Than Shared Classrooms: Educating kids with and without disabilities together successfully.***

Remus is a national special education system change agent who has worn every hat from parent to teacher to state level Director of Special Education. In his various roles he has developed strategies to turn school districts around to foster fully inclusive practices. Currently working in Phoenix, AZ, Remus recently spoke to the Project for PEACE class in Meadville, PA.

His book is easy to read and features sections on What's Special About Education, Making Inclusion Work, Getting the Supports Your Child Needs and Resources such as tools for inclusion and sample plans.

Families and educators alike can use the samples in this book to develop goals and work plans to foster inclusion. Remus offers many suggestions saying that "Kids are part of the community and become an even more important part as they grow up, get jobs, and start families of their own. By having the entire community involved in making schools and education successful for all kids, we will build stronger, more inclusive communities that are better places for all of us to live, learn, work and play."

For a complete list of titles available through PEAL, log onto our website at: [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org) under the Resources/PEAL Library tab.



## Tiny Fingers to Tiny Voices

The PEAL Center will once again offer its *Tiny Fingers to Tiny Voices* sign language course for parents with children ages birth to age 6. Fall sessions are planned in Armstrong and Westmoreland counties.

Taught by Kimberly Simon, M.Ed. Special Education for the Hearing Impaired, this six-week course is based on American Sign Language and is intended for all children needing help to improve communication skills.

For more information call Melissa Allen at the PEAL Center at 412-281-4404 ext. 13.

## Working Together To Find Solutions Series Comes to Erie

Supported by funding from PADDCC, the Arc of Erie Co., and the Down Syndrome Group of Erie and in collaboration with the Millcreek and Erie School Districts, PEAL is offering three free trainings for parents and educators in Erie. Educators can earn Act 48 hours.

### Saturday, September 12, 9:00-3:00, Maennechor Club

*The Dance of Partnership: Why Do My Feet Hurt? Strengthening Parent-Professional Partnerships*, Janice Fialka, MSW, ACSW

This day long workshop is designed to assist participants to better understand the challenges of forming creative partnerships. As a result of this training, both parents and professionals will gain insights about this working alliance and be better able to collaborate effectively for children with special needs.

### Thursday, October 15, 9:00-3:00, Shrine Club

*Creating Agreement: Conflict Resolution Skills for Parents and Educators*

A training opportunity designed to develop skills in conflict resolution leading to appropriate and successful outcomes at the local level. Participants will then be invited to a future "Train the Trainer" session. This session will be presented by staff from the Office of Dispute Resolution (ODR).

### Saturday, November 14, 9:00-3:00, Maennechor Club

*Behavior is a Family Affair: Positive Behavior Support Strategies to Support Children with Challenging Behavior*, Kiki McGough

This interactive session will highlight effective strategies to promote family/school partnerships to support students with challenging behaviors.

For more information and to register go to [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org)

## PA Consortium for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

The two day Consortium for CYSHCN Conference held in Harrisburg on June 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> was attended by 150 parents, service providers, state department and agency representatives. The conference was the beginning of a process to define the most pressing issues for parents and their children and youth with special health care needs as they attempt to navigate the health care and community support systems. A common thread throughout the facilitated breakout sessions was the difficulty families experience in their efforts to gain accurate information, find resources and access needed services in a system of so many separate "silos".

The 2-day working meeting was an opportunity for parents, youth and providers to identify common issues statewide and lay the groundwork to establish ongoing regional working committees to address these issues. Within the 6 planned regional forums, participants representing a cross-section of all stakeholders will have a voice in changing the current policies and practices that create barriers for families.

The regularly scheduled forums will be the vehicle where all can gather together in a collaborative problem solving process to address identified issues within the local region. Problems identified as statewide concerns will be forwarded to a state level planning group to fix the problem at the state level.

Evaluations from the initial 2 day event indicates that there is a high level of interest in moving toward action both at the local and state level so that families and youth can navigate the health care, insurance and community support systems more easily resulting in improved services to children and youth with special health care needs.

To join a regional forum in your area and be part of the change process, contact Ann Bacharach at: 215-625-3596 or 800-274-3258.

## RESOURCES

## EARLY INTERVENTION

**Education Law Center Offers Fact Sheets for Families**

The Education Law Center offers many resources for families including information on Early Intervention services. Some of the publication pieces available include:

*Early Intervention: Questions and Answers*

*What Families Should Not Accept From Their School Districts Or Early Intervention Providers*

For these or any of the other pieces prepared by the Education Law Center go to: [www.elc-pa.org](http://www.elc-pa.org). The telephone number in Pittsburgh is (412) 258-2120.

**CONNECT Helpline**

If you are a parent and have questions about your child's development contact the CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288. The CONNECT Helpline assists families in locating resources and providing information regarding child development for children ages birth to 5. In addition, CONNECT can assist parents by making a direct link to their local Early Intervention program or local preschool Early Intervention program.

**Competence and Confidence: Partners in Policymaking**

**Early Intervention 2009-2010:** A free leadership development training for families with children in Early Intervention and pre-school programs. Participants will identify best practice supports in early intervention, connect with community resources, and navigate the PA EI System. Eligible participants will receive travel and childcare cost reimbursements. Open to family members from PA who have an infant, toddler or pre-school age child who receives early intervention services. Must commit to attend all four 2-day training sessions to be held on Fridays and Saturdays, starting in **October 2009 and ending in April 2010** in Lancaster, PA. For more information and/or an application, contact: Diane Perry, Family Inclusion Coordinator, 215-204-3031 (voice) 215-204-1356 (TTY), email: [dperry@temple.edu](mailto:dperry@temple.edu)

## COMMUNICATION

**Employment Conference For Augmented Communicators**

**August 7-9, 2009** - Sheraton Hotel, Station Square, Pittsburgh, PA. Visit - <http://shoutaac.org/welcome.htm> or contact: Robert Conti, 412.885.8541, [bobconti@shoutaac.org](mailto:bobconti@shoutaac.org)

**American Sign Language Expo**

**October 17, 2009 - 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM**  
Monroeville Convention Center, North Exhibit Hall, 135 Mall Boulevard, **Monroeville**, PA 15146. Free admission.  
Register: <http://www.aslexpo.com/index.php/register.html>

**New Resources Support Inclusion In Early Childhood Education**

The Division for Early Childhood and the National Association for the Education of Young Children have recently approved a joint position statement that underscores their commitment to quality early childhood inclusion. Early Childhood Inclusion: A Joint Position Statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) takes a historic step by providing a shared national definition of inclusion as "the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society." The document, which was developed through a collaborative national process that

## EVENTS

**Family Involvement Conference**

**October 25-28, 2009**, The Resort at Split Rock in the Poconos, **Lake Harmony PA**.

Active family involvement in the educational process is the key to effective schools and student achievement. This conference brings together school administrators, teachers, community members, and parents, to interact and address issues that are vital to academic success and well being of our children. Join with colleagues and parents from PA, NJ, NY, DE, CT, and MD to dialogue about this important partnership. For additional information visit: <http://www.familyinvolvementconference.com/> or call 570-455-8196 or email: [icasari@ptd.net](mailto:icasari@ptd.net)  
Hotel website: <http://www.splitrockresort.com>

**Using Section 504 to Help Children with Disabilities in School**

**October 28, 2009 from 9:30 AM – 12:00 PM** at 20 locations throughout Pennsylvania. A telephone conference and **Webinar** training on Section 504, a federal civil rights law that can help children with disabilities get the accommodations, supports, and services they need in school, even if they do not qualify for special education. Register online at: <http://www.elc-pa.org/trainingregistration.html>

**The Arc of the United States 2009 National Convention**  
**Nov. 11-14, 2009**

David L. Lawrence Convention Center, **Pittsburgh**, PA  
<http://www.thearc.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=1979>  
Keynote speaker is Steadman Graham. A limited number of scholarships will be available for self-advocates and families to attend. Letters requesting scholarships must be received no later than three weeks before the conference. Mail to Cathy Downs, the Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, 711 Bingham Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15203.

**TASH 2009 Conference****If Not Us, Who? If Not Now! When?**

**November 18-21, 2009**, David L. Lawrence Convention Center, **Pittsburgh**, PA  
Keynotes: Al Condeluci, "Building Community From the Inside Out – Understanding Cultural and Social Capital" and Keith Jones, "The Now and Forever: Bridging the Theory and Practice of Inclusion"  
<http://www.tash.org/2009tash/index.htm>  
<http://www.tash.org>

the National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) coordinated, represents the first time these two leading national organizations have partnered on a joint product that is expected to have a widespread impact on the early childhood field.

View or download the position statement at:  
[http://community.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early\\_Childhood\\_Inclusion](http://community.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early_Childhood_Inclusion)

A 1-page synthesis of the position statement is also available at:  
[http://community.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early\\_Childhood\\_Inclusion\\_Summary](http://community.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early_Childhood_Inclusion_Summary)

To view a short video related to Early Inclusion go to:  
<http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect>



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The PEAL Center serves families of children with disabilities and special health care needs. We provide information and training on education

in Central and Western Pennsylvania, and on healthcare needs and support services statewide through the Family to Family Health Information Center.

### JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

To receive our email BLAST and NEWSLETTER electronically, click on **mailing list** at [www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org) or call us toll-free at 1-866-950-1040 to receive information in the mail.

Join **The PEAL Center** on **FACEBOOK.com**

Follow the **PEAL Center** on **Twitter** at

<http://twitter.com/PEALCenter>

## Fundraiser to Benefit PEAL

**CROP FOR A CAUSE**  
Enjoy a Day of Scrapbooking  
and  
Support the PEAL Center

Lampighter in Delmont, PA  
September 20, 2009  
9am to 9pm

Presented by

**ALLSTATE-THE SNIDER  
AGENCY & ART-TECH**

*Proceeds go to the PEAL Center*

This day includes  
Brunch and Dinner

A **GOODIE BOX**...full of the hottest scrapbook products on the market

**FABULOUS DOOR PRIZES**

**MAKE AND TAKE PROJECTS**

sponsored by Art-Tech  
and Kathy Stewart of Creative Memories

**FREE USE OF Art Tech's die-cut machines**, all of Art-Tech's punches, templates and other tools.

Space is limited to the first 100 croppers,  
so register today!

**\$50.00 Registration Fee**

Questions? Contact: Jo Snider @ 412-496-0826

Registration information available at:

[www.pealcenter.org](http://www.pealcenter.org)



## FAMILY INPUT NEEDED

### EVERYDAY KIDS, EVERYDAY LIVES SURVEY

We want to know your thoughts and opinions about what experiences, activities, and outcomes you consider most important for knowing if young children birth to 8 years of age live in loving families and welcoming communities. The survey is being conducted as an activity for the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.

The survey includes 10 sections on different areas of child, family, and community outcomes. Please feel free to complete only those sections that are of special interest to you as a parent, professional, or other interested citizen. *To complete the survey go to [www.smriusa.com](http://www.smriusa.com), click on "Survey," then the "Begin Survey" button.*

### LOS NIÑOS Y SU VIDA COTIDIANA ENCUESTA

Nosotros queremos saber lo que piensa y opina usted acerca de cuáles son las experiencias, las actividades y resultados que usted considera más importantes saber, si los niños son entre recién nacidos y 8 años de edad y viven en una familia cariñosa y en una comunidad que los aprecia. La encuesta se está llevando a cabo como parte de una actividad para el Consejo para el desarrollo de los discapacitados en Pensilvania (Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, en inglés) Esta encuesta incluye 10 secciones que abarcan diversas áreas, como por ejemplo: el niño, la familia y los resultados en la comunidad. Si usted desea, complete solamente las secciones que le son de interés especial para usted tanto sea como padre, profesional o de otro tipo de interés. La última sección de la encuesta se centra en preguntas acerca de usted.

Vaya al sitio de Web del Instituto de Investigación de Smoky Mountain [www.smriusa.com](http://www.smriusa.com), click on "Survey," then the "Begin Survey" button.

*La Información es en ambos, Inglés y Español*

Para más información contactar: Carol Trivette, Smoky Mountain Research Institute, 128 South Sterling Street, Morganton, NC 28655 or via email at [ctrivette@puckett.org](mailto:ctrivette@puckett.org). Call (828) 432-0065 <http://www.puckett.org>