

RAP Sheet

The Latest in Disability Research, Advocacy, Policy, and Practice

Spring 2018 Issue

SPECIAL EDUCATION – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



INCLUSION – IT TAKES A TEAM

By Jill Prakop and Déodonné Bhattarai, JD/MPH, Volunteer Lawyer, DRC-NH

The Derry Village School (DVS) has made a commitment to full inclusion and two sisters who experience a rare genetic disorder are at the center of it all. Their mother, Jill Prakop, has worked with DVS staff to ensure Fiona and Neala are not only academically successful, but are also included as valued members of the larger school community. Chris Kellan, Derry Cooperative School District Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, described Jill as a dedicated mother and fantastic advocate, “We rely on strong advocates like Jill because

they always end up advocating for more than their own kids.”

Jill’s advocacy was in response to her daughters’ early experiences at DVS. For both girls, who are just a year apart in school, first grade was difficult. Fiona, the oldest, frequently bolted from the classroom and refused to eat in the cafeteria, behaviors that continued into second grade. As a first grader, Neala’s lack of confidence kept her from succeeding academically and socially. As the sisters prepared to enter second and third grade, Jill wanted to see changes. She knew that her daughters could accomplish so much more if they had a definite sense of belonging.

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Neala and Fiona are all smiles at Derry Village School.
(from left to right Neala, teacher Trisha Pantone,
Fiona, and Jill Prakop)

Welcome to the Spring issue of the RAP Sheet on special education in the Granite State. While it has been more than 40 years since passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), children with disabilities and their families continue to face significant challenges. The work to ensure that special education students are truly included in their schools and have the support and opportunities they need to succeed is far from finished.

SUSAN COVERT, EDITOR

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BY THE

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER-NH, INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY, AND NH COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES



RUNNING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By Linda Wadensten, Chairwoman, Newport School Board

My son wasn't born with a disability, he had a simple fall that could happen to a million kids with no incident. Yet, not for mine. He suffered a traumatic brain injury at a young age that sent me, as a new mom, into the world of advocacy.

I truly wasn't even sure what advocacy meant or what I needed to do. I just knew it didn't make sense that people who were supposedly there to help, didn't want to do everything that they could. When my son started school, I was relieved. Now I finally would have a team helping me and looking out for my son's best interest, or so I thought. Sure, we've had some great team members, but why wasn't this easier? I've always thought of myself as an educated woman, and I kept thinking if this maze is so hard for me, what must it be like for those who have less of a voice?



This began my never-ending journey of educating myself about advocacy. I signed up for countless workshops, joined great organizations like the Parent Information Network, participated in the Institute on Disability's year-long New Hampshire Leadership Series, and went to the few parent trainings at my son's school. It just never seemed to be enough. I finally decided to get more directly involved. I joined school committees to see if I could understand how the school worked and if there was something I could offer. I started with the obvious stuff like PTO and school leadership and began to realize there was so much more I could do.

The more I got involved, the more people I met like me. I heard countless stories of the challenges parents faced both with "typical" children and not so typical ones like mine. I still can't figure why we make this distinction - aren't all these kids equally important? Don't they all deserve to have free and appropriate educations with equal opportunities to thrive in the least restricted environments?

Seeing things from the inside, I began to understand how political the system was and started to envision what I could do to make the system better for all kids. I made the decision to run for School Board. I went to the SAU office and signed the form to put my name on the ballot; that was the easy part. I went on local radio, talked to reporters from our local paper, and put up a few lawn signs. My platform was all about community voice; what I felt could be better and how I could help. On Election Day I stood outside the polls asking people for support and listening to their concerns.

It was a close race against a popular incumbent. I lost, but by less than a dozen votes. Running for office, I learned a lot about myself, the system, and the people I would represent. Later that year when the man who beat me stepped down, I immediately put my name in for the open seat. For those of you considering running for office, filling in the remainder of an existing term is a great way for voters to get to know who you are and running as an incumbent in the next election is a definite advantage. Which is exactly what I did. I won the open seat. Now, two more elections and seven years later, I'm still serving on the School Board.

It can be an extremely hard road; you must be able to shrug off the small stuff to get the big stuff done. I'm proud of the work I've done with the Board to make things better for all the kids in our community. This has included revising school district policies to make them fair and equal and improving accountability for special education, making sure kids have proper services, and that the district is getting its fair share of State support for those services. The

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(Cover story continued)

A graduate of the New Hampshire Leadership Series and PIC's Volunteer Advocate training, Jill used her advocacy skills to work with her daughters' team and the school administration to support their full inclusion in their classrooms and at school. The girls are no longer pulled out for occupational therapy; these services are now provided during art. The team has supported opportunities for the girls to participate in a number of school activities, including mentoring kindergarteners during reading. Under the guidance of the special education facilitator, Kim Rivers, the team adopted instructional practices that benefitted not only Neala and Fiona, but all students. There have been other benefits as well. By supporting Neala and Fiona to be truly included, students and teachers alike have learned that the community is stronger when everyone is valued and has the opportunity to contribute.

Special education teacher and case manager, Trisha Pantalone, has been key to the team's success. Trisha has worked with Fiona for three years and Neala for two years. When the girls moved from one grade to the next, Trisha provided the consistency needed to ensure they didn't regress academically or socially. Each week she reviews and modifies the curriculum, making sure the girls can participate in large and small group work, discussions, and classroom projects. Having Trisha work with the classroom teachers has enabled Fiona and Neala to spend their day in the classroom alongside their peers.

At the end of last year, Fiona presented her part of a group project. Being able to showcase her artistic abilities made her incredibly proud. Now in fifth grade, Fiona sings in the school chorus, serves on the student council and will soon be acting as a liaison between DVS and the middle school to assist with students' transition to a new school. Fiona's world is expanding beyond DVS. She recently enjoyed her first sleepover at a friend's house.

As a fourth grader, Neala is much more confident; she now believes in herself as much as her team does. She is setting her own goals and with her team's help is learning to write numbers and letters. Like her sister, she sings in the school chorus. Neala is also a member of the running club and plays in the afterschool basketball program. Looking to next year, she is excited about serving on the student council with her friends.

No longer fearful or running out of class, Fiona and Neala are thriving at school. Inclusion does not just happen. Jill and the DVS team have worked diligently and creatively to make meaningful inclusion possible and they are committed to continuing that work. All their efforts have paid off. "Seeing is believing," the team says with pride. Fiona and Neala are truly part of the school community. DVS would not be the same place without them.

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Board unanimously adopted NH PACE (Performance Assessment of Competency Education), which offers a reduced level of standardized testing and locally developed assessments that are designed to support deeper student learning through competency education integrated into students' day-to-day work. The Board also unanimously voted to begin a Unified Sports program, giving all kids in our schools – those with disabilities and those without – opportunities to be teammates enjoying training and competition. I've worked to form Ad Hoc committees that have helped the Board to make

better informed decisions about a wide variety of matters including building use, strategic planning, special education, and community wellness.

The challenge of community service is one I've gladly taken on for my own children and for all the children in our community. While there is nothing typical about servant leadership, there is a common thread of having a love for others and the desire to make things better. It doesn't take special skills. It's a learn as you go job. You just need the heart and the will to work for change.



FAMILY-CENTERED EARLY SUPPORTS AND SERVICES - WHERE ARE WE NOW?

By Peggy Small-Porter, Executive Director, Richie McFarland Children's Center

"Early intervention services supported by Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) help children meet their developmental milestones and provide parents and caregivers with extra support to understand how to best meet their children's unique needs. When problems are identified early, timely intervention can mitigate or even eliminate the long-term effects on development."¹

BACKGROUND

New Hampshire's early intervention program, Family-Centered Early Supports and Services, is designed to build the capacity of natural caregivers to use evidence-based practices to help their child learn and grow to their full potential. Families know their child best and are engaged from the start to plan, evaluate, and implement individualized strategies, with the support of caring professionals.

The Early Supports and Services (ESS) system is well established with 14 programs across the 10 regions of the state. The system is primarily funded by federal and state dollars, with a small amount coming from private insurance. In 2017, the system served approximately 3900 children with a budget of \$11.5 million (funding breakdown - 36.5% Federal Medicaid, 16% Federal Part C Grant, 36.5% State Medicaid Match, 3% State General funds, and 8% private insurance).

CHALLENGES

For years New Hampshire's ESS programs have experienced significant deficits, in large part because the funding formula established in 2007-2008 for equitably distributing state and federal dollars has remained stagnant. Financial problems have been compounded by the shortfall in private insurance reimbursements. The funding formula was built on private insurance generating 11% of program revenue, when in reality it accounts for only 8% (the statewide average, reimbursement rates vary among programs). Between high deductibles and coverage exclusions in policies, exemption of self-funded plans to support early intervention therapies, as well as a family's right to deny access to bill their insurance, most ESS programs struggle to meet the private insurance line item in their budgets.

The system has survived primarily by paying therapists and educators below market value. Programs making cost of living adjustments did so by trimming other expenses (i.e., decreasing employee benefits, reducing support for continuing education, skimping on supervision). When nothing further was left to cut, programs were faced with the difficult decision to reduce the frequency of services to children and families, a situation that was not only unacceptable to everyone involved, but counter to the very mission and values of New Hampshire's Early Supports and Services system. Having a stable experienced work force, comprised of comprehensive teams of specialists, is essential for the delivery of high-quality care.

OPPORTUNITIES

Family-Centered Early Support and Services is on the cusp of a transformation. As a result of hard work by a diverse group of dedicated advocates, and with the support of the Department of Health and Human Services, for the first time in 10 years the legislature



Courtesy of the Richie McFarland Children's Center

¹ Early Intervention: A Critical Support for Infants, Toddler, and Families, Oct 3, 2017, Zero to Three Policy Resource

approved a budget increase for the state's ESS system. As of July 1, 2017, an additional \$2.2 million dollars was earmarked for wage increases and to secure, sustain, and increase the capacity of programs to serve children more intensively.

The legislature required that at least 5% of the additional funding be used to increase salaries for direct service providers. In fall 2017, with Phase I funds, these salary increases were instituted. Phase II funding, which is now underway, provides support to increase the frequency of intervention services and home visits for the nearly 4000 children served by ESS each year.

Research has consistently found that during the first three years of life brain development is the most receptive to interventions and that interventions are more effective and less costly when delivered as early as possible. New Hampshire should be proud that in

fiscal year 2016, roughly 5% of children under the age of three received services through Part C, well above the national average of 3%. There is, however, still work to be done. Too many children in need of early intervention services are falling through the cracks. Only 30% of children under the age of 6 in our state have access to developmental screenings and those children referred for a comprehensive evaluation must meet a 33% developmental delay in order to be eligible for services. We are missing valuable opportunities to make a significant difference in the lives of children and their families.

The ESS Advocacy Workgroup, a coalition of program representatives and other stakeholders, will continue to coordinate advocacy efforts to ensure New Hampshire has adequate resources to provide family-centered, evidence-based services to *all* eligible children and their families.

For additional information about Early Supports and Services:

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2067-early-intervention-a-critical-support-for-infants-toddlers-and-families>

<http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/importanceofearlyintervention.pdf>

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-science-of-ecd/>

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bds/earlysupport/documents/publicreport.pdf>

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1158-new-hampshire-state-baby-facts>



FINDING A WAY

By Jaime Roscoe

When Yemi and her family emigrated from Nigeria in 2010 she could not envision a full life for her son, Tunmi, who experiences a wide-range of disabilities including an intellectual disability, ADHD, and a behavior disorder. Yemi and her husband wanted the best for their son, but didn't know how to achieve it. Over the course of three years, Tunmi attended three segregated schools. "Our son lost his social skills from attending restrictive schools," Yemi said. "We lived day-by-day and feared for his future. We needed help."

Thankfully, in the spring of 2016, Yemi found the assistance she and her family so desperately needed. She attended an outreach meeting to recruit refugees, immigrants, and people of color for the New Hampshire Leadership Series, a program of the UNH Institute on Disability. At the meeting, she learned that the series has a proven track record of helping individuals and their families develop the skills they need to improve the quality of their lives. Yemi applied and was accepted to the program and a few months later began a life-changing journey.

In the first Leadership session, Freda Smith spoke about the history of the disability movement in New Hampshire and the role parents played in closing Laconia State School. Freda, whose daughter was a resident at the State School, worked with other parents in bringing a class action lawsuit against the State for its failure to provide adequate care to residents. Their efforts eventually led to the closing of the institution. Freda provided a first-hand account of how negative perceptions of people with disabilities can lead to systemic injustice. "Freda's speech changed the way I

see my son," Yemi said. "I started seeing him as a unique person with his own ability. The session gave me hope and planted a seed of advocacy for my child."

As the Leadership Series progressed, Yemi learned about available resources and was empowered to take an active role in securing help for her son. She enrolled Tunmi in Medicaid which significantly improved the family's ability to access needed health and support services. She scheduled meetings with representatives from Tunmi's school district and with a community mental health provider.

Yemi reported, "My son now has a speech therapist that comes to the home every week and we have a case manager from New Hampshire Healthy Families."

Yemi is working with the school district to include Tunmi in traditional classroom settings. He currently spends two hours a day at Jewett Street School in Manchester with a goal of increasing his time at school. Tunmi receives OT, PT, and speech therapy at Easter Seals and three afternoons a week attends Crotched Mountain's *Ready, Set, Connect* program where

he is learning to manage his behavior. Her son now uses augmentative communication. Tunmi has two portable devices; one that he uses at school and in his day programs and the other at home.

While there is still much work to be done, Yemi now has the skills, confidence, and support network to make her vision for Tunmi a reality. She is also reaching out to other immigrants and is currently helping a family newly arrived from Africa to find services for their five year old son who has a disability.

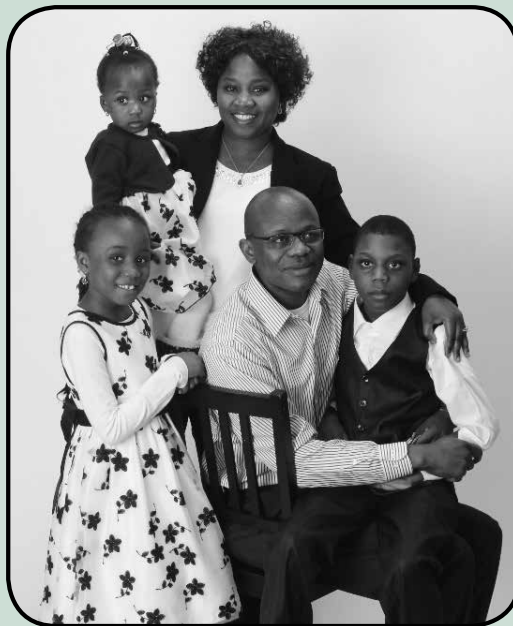


Photo Credit – Picture People Studio

*Christiana and Yemi Adedeji and their children
Tunmi, Precious, and Olu*



HIGH EXPECTATIONS SHOULD NOT BE A PRIVILEGE

Increasing parent, student, and educator engagement in setting challenging expectations for *all* students.

By Dan Vallone, Policy Director, Reaching Higher New Hampshire

In education, high expectations are too often limited to a privileged few. While some students are continuously challenged and encouraged to reach higher and higher levels of achievement, for others, expectations are considerably lower and, like concrete, harden early weighing students down as they strive to move forward. This dynamic is especially apparent within special education and presents a serious impediment to student learning and growth. To ensure that every student has the opportunity to meet challenging expectations, we need to cultivate more intentional family, student, and educator engagement.

In 2016, only 65.5% of public high school students with disabilities in the United States graduated in four years, in contrast to 84.1% of the total student population. In New Hampshire, 73% of students with disabilities graduated in four years, as opposed to 88.2% of the total student population.¹ This disparity and similar gaps in other academic and economic outcomes, is in large part the result of holding students with disabilities to lower expectations.²

In testimony to the U.S. Senate Health and Education Committee, Dr. Martha Thurlow, Director of the National Center on Educational Outcomes, stated, “Students with disabilities are not to be pitied or protected from the same high expectations we have for other students.” She reported that over 80% of students with disabilities, when properly supported, can realize the same level of academic achievement as other students.³

¹ National Center for Education Statistics. Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR) for the school year 2015-16; https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_RE_and_characteristics_2015-16.asp; accessed December 18, 2017.

² While the majority of special education students are capable of graduating in four years, there are students with disabilities who benefit from special education and related services until they turn 21, a provision guaranteed under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

³ Thurlow, M. L. (2010, April 28). Written testimony before the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP), United States Senate. Available at <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/NCEO/Presentations/ThurlowTestimony2010.pdf>; accessed December 18, 2017.

To address the achievement disparity, we need to focus more on relationships among students, parents, and educators and build traction behind practices that support student success. At the core of these practices, is recognition that student learning occurs within a web of relationships, from members of the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team to the school board and administrators. Promoting practices that foster growth, learning, and self-advocacy for all members of the student’s network – including the student - can make a significant difference. These practices include:

For Students:

Cultivating a growth mindset among students (and parents and educators) that intelligence is not a fixed attribute. Helping students realize that they are capable of more complex and difficult work leads to increased motivation and higher achievement.

Establishing student-led parent-teacher conferences where students develop the ability and confidence to serve as their own advocates, articulate the supports they need to succeed, and take greater control over their own learning.

For Parents/Guardians:

Creating Academic Parent Teacher Teams where educators work with parents to set goals for their student’s learning, develop at-home learning activities that support these goals, and review their student’s progress over time.

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FROM A FAMILY PERSPECTIVE - DEAF EDUCATION

An interview with Elizabeth Greeno and Donna Preve

Effective special education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing is individualized, provided by trained professionals, and includes early access to language, communication opportunities, and technology. It is critical that families receive the supports and information they need to make informed decisions regarding their child.

Pam Lovejoy, Teacher of the Deaf at **Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services**, interviewed Beth Greeno and Donna Preve about their families' experiences with deaf education. Beth and her husband Jason have a 3-year old son who is partially deaf and has Williams Syndrome. Donna Preve has an adult son and 5-year old grandson who are hard of hearing.

What is the biggest educational challenge for children who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Beth: The biggest challenge is having the funding for services. There is a great need for deaf language classes, schools, and support systems for families. These are services that are definitely worth investing in. I have seen Sam progress from being very quiet to very vocal. Working with deaf language teachers and having hearing aids, Sam is able to communicate better than ever before. I know this will keep improving as our family learns to sign.

Donna: My grandson had a rough experience during his first year of preschool. Getting the correct FM system (wireless hearing device) and keeping it working was a challenge to everyone. This made me think, 'Has anything changed in 30 years?' This year, he is in a better school environment with a trained specialist. We need to keep communication open with professionals and work together. This means 'greasing those wheels' often so issues stay in the forefront.

What is working well for educational services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Beth: We love Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (NDHHS)! The support we have received from the Family Sign Language Program has been incredible. We have also received a great deal of support from our deaf language head teacher at New Searles. The information from Early Supports and Services is very helpful and access to services seems to be easier here in New Hampshire.

Donna: I think the school staff are more aware of children's needs today than they were 30 years ago when Oliver's father was in school. Definitely, the technology is very much improved. Parents and professionals are more aware that students with disabilities have rights. Before, if you didn't do the research yourself or didn't have a good audiologist, you could miss out. Society has become more accepting of those with special needs. I don't see my grandson as concerned about wearing his hearing aids as his father was. My son was probably the only one in his school who wore hearing aids. It also helps to have other people in your life who are deaf or hard of hearing.

What advice do you have for parents of young children who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Beth: Get started early on getting deaf education for your child. Jason and I learned from 9 East Network (Vermont education consulting agency) and NDHHS



Sam Greeno and his parents

Photo credit - Jason Greeno



Oliver Preve

that the sooner you can start sign language and get hearing aids, the easier it is for your child. Also, get support from family, friends, parent-to-parent programs, or counseling. Everything is easier when you have support.

Donna: Take advantage of all the services that are out there. Try to find key contacts who can lead you to other resources. You just have to keep digging. That's how I found NDHHS. It takes a while to connect with an organization or person who can help; the sooner you start the better.

What advice do you have for professionals who work with families and children who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Beth: The people you are helping are just like you. All families have something to contribute. We are all human and we make mistakes. Give the person you are helping the benefit of the doubt and try to be non-judgmental. It can be a really stressful time for families when they are making decisions that can affect their children for the rest of their lives. Families are very grateful for your services, help, and kindness even if they don't say it.

Donna: People know if you are deaf or blind, but not if you're hard of hearing. It's a whole different concept. You can't answer something you didn't hear. Teach people to be aware that a hard of hearing person may not have heard the entire conversation. Also, professionals need to give families time to share their updates on what is going on. It makes a big difference.

We welcome any questions or comments. Please feel free to reach out to Northeast Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services at plovejoy@ndhhs.org or 603-224-1850 ext. 203. For additional information, visit our website - <http://www.ndhhs.org/>

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This webinar series is designed to support parents and educators who want a road map to guide the membership, participation, and learning of students with more significant disabilities in general education classrooms and other inclusive settings. During each webinar, examples will be given for elementary, middle, and high school, with the last session focusing on supporting students to go on to post-secondary education.

Sessions topics include: Establishing and Communicating a Vision for Inclusive Education, Best Practices in Inclusive Education, Creating Inclusive Individualized Education Programs, Translating the Vision for Inclusive Education into the Classroom, Integrating Related Services into General Education Instruction and Typical Activities, Maximizing Social Relationships at School and at Home, and Think College! Planning for Post-Secondary Education.

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EDUCATIONAL CHOICE LEGISLATION AND ITS IMPACT ON SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

By Representative Tamara Le, member of the NH House Education Committee

In New Hampshire, and across the nation, “Educational Choice” legislation is stirring anxiety among public school educators, parents, tax-payers, and inclusion advocates. Senate Bill 193, currently working its way through our legislature, would allow families to use state public education dollars, funneled through educational savings accounts, for home school expenses or to offset tuition at private schools, including religious schools.

If passed, this legislation would present unique challenges for local school districts already coping with reduction in the state’s Catastrophic Aid for special education services. Siphoning off more public tax dollars for educational savings accounts or other voucher programs will further compromise the quality of education and services for New Hampshire public school students, both now and into the future. As of this writing (February 2018), the state’s nonpartisan Legislative Budget Assistant’s Office has conservatively estimated the costs to local school districts at \$36 million over 12 years, plus the loss of \$143 million in state aid. Reaching Higher NH, a nonpartisan 501c3 focused on educational policy, estimates a significantly higher rate of families utilizing this program and anticipates the cost to districts to be \$338 million over 13 years.

While school choice lobbyists argue that SB 193 and other voucher programs benefit students with special needs, they do not tell parents that enrollment in private or religious schools waives their children’s rights and protections guaranteed under most state and federal disability laws, including IDEA.

In November 2017, the United States Government Accounting Office released its report, *Private School Choice: Federal Actions Needed to Ensure Parents are Notified About Changes in Rights for Students with Disabilities*. Report findings included:

“private school choice programs inconsistently provide information on changes in rights and protections under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

(IDEA) when parents move a child with a disability from public to private school. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education strongly encouraged states and school districts to notify parents of these changes, but IDEA does not provide it with statutory authority to require this notification.

Almost all of the 27 private school choice program websites provide a directory of participating schools and some provide guidance on selecting schools. However, GAO estimates that no more than half of all schools participating in any type of voucher program mention students with disabilities anywhere on their websites, according to GAO’s review of a nationally generalizable sample of websites of private schools in voucher programs. Further, GAO estimates that no more than 53 percent of private schools in voucher programs designed for students with disabilities provide disability-related information on their websites.”

The complete GAO report can be found at: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-94>

SB 193 is only one of nearly 150 bills that have been introduced this legislative session that would affect special education or impact children who experience disabilities. Other bills coming forward in this session include: standards for determining an adequate education, moving toward a Performance Assessment of Competency Education (PACE) system, lowering the grade level admission requirements for student participation in Center for Technological Education (CTE) programs, and addressing the burden of school transportation costs.

The expertise of New Hampshire’s special education and disability communities and their feedback on proposed legislation have proven critical this session. Moving forward, please do not hesitate to contact me to share your insights or concerns. I can be reached via email at: Tamara.Le@leg.state.nh.us

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Initiating parent-teacher home visits where educators and families nurture strong, trusting relationships. This includes educators spending time with their students' families, exploring both the family's and the educator's hopes and dreams for the student. Forging stronger parent-teacher bonds, is mutually empowering and establishes a shared accountability for the student's success.

For Educators:

Improving educators' ability to effectively create a personalized-learning environment and tailor opportunities to each student's unique situation. An example of such professional development is New Hampshire's Universal Design for Learning Academy.

Elevating educator leadership through more intentional induction of new educators that includes on-the-job mentoring with an accomplished peer and expanding opportunities for educators to take on greater autonomy, authority, and responsibility.

We can create a powerful momentum for change in New Hampshire by supporting students to take greater control of their learning, enabling parents to play a more meaningful role in their children's education, and empowering educators to create personalized learning opportunities for students. Ultimately, these efforts will be key to bringing about systems-level changes, but these all start with supporting relationships and improving educational practices at the student level.

For additional information, check out the following sites:

<https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/04/when-students-lead-parent-teacher-conferences/477069/>

<http://flamboyanfoundation.org/focus/family-engagement/student-led-conferences/>

<http://flamboyanfoundation.org/focus/family-engagement/academic-parent-teacher-teams/>

<http://flamboyanfoundation.org/focus/family-engagement/parent-teacher-home-visits/>

https://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/special_ed/universal_design_learning.htm



PARENT INFORMATION CENTER

By Bonnie Dunham, Parent Information Center, Parent Consultant

For more than forty years the Parent Information Center (PIC) has fostered family/school/community partnerships that support positive outcomes for New Hampshire children and youth. Founded by a coalition of parents, disability service providers, and advocates, PIC's creation closely coincided with the passage of the 1975 Federal special education law (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). Recognizing that parents would need support to be full participants in the special education process, PIC applied for Federal funding to develop a Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). In 1977, PIC was awarded a federal grant for the Parent Information Center on Special Education. New Hampshire joined four other

states in developing the nation's first Parent Training and Information Centers. Based on the success of these early centers, every state in the Union now has a PTI!

The Parent Information Center on Special Education provides information, referrals, support, training and technical assistance to families, educators, and youth with disabilities. PIC provides parents with the resources they need to participate effectively in their children's education and development and cultivates effective parent/professional partnerships to ensure positive outcomes for all children with disabilities.

PIC training (live and web-based) covers a variety of topics including: early childhood, special education

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STABLE NH – A GREAT SAVING OPTION FOR GRANITE STATERS WITH DISABILITIES

What is a STABLE Account?

A STABLE Account is an investment account available to eligible individuals with disabilities. STABLE Accounts are made possible by the Achieving a Better Life Experience (“ABLE”) Act, federal legislation that allows families and individuals with disabilities the opportunity to create tax-advantaged accounts that can be used to maintain health, independence, and quality of life.

STABLE Accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save and invest money without losing eligibility for certain public benefits programs, like Medicaid or SSI. Earnings in your STABLE Account are not subject to federal income tax, so long as you spend them on Qualified Disability Expenses.

STABLE Accounts have some similar features to normal bank accounts, but they are not checking or savings accounts. STABLE Accounts are investment accounts, similar to 529 college savings accounts or 401(k) retirement accounts. When you deposit money into your STABLE Account, your money will be invested in different options that you choose. While you can still withdraw and spend your money whenever you need it, a STABLE Account also allows you to grow your money and to save long-term expenses. You can use your STABLE Account to pay for any expense related to your disability including: basic living expenses, housing, education, transportation, assistive technology, employment training, and personal support services.

STABLE NH is New Hampshire’s ABLE plan. The New Hampshire Governor’s Commission on Disability and the Treasurer’s Office have partnered with STABLE Accounts and the Ohio Treasurer’s Office to offer this program to Granite Staters with disabilities. Although STABLE Accounts are available nationwide, STABLE NH offers discounted rates and is only available to New Hampshire residents.

How To Open a STABLE Account

Enrolling in the program and setting up a Stable Account is done all online. When you open your account, you will be asked to create your own username and password for the online account portal. You will put in basic information, such as your name, address, birth date, etc. (If you are a parent or other

representative opening an account for someone else, you will need to put in your information and the account holder’s information.) You also will be asked a few questions regarding your disability, in order to confirm your eligibility to open an account. Once you have input your information, you will make your initial contribution and choose your Investment Options.

Account Cost

Setting up your account online is free (and easy!). You will need to make an initial contribution of at least \$50 in order to set up your account. Currently, Granite Staters pay \$3.50 per month (\$42 annually) to maintain their accounts. There is also a small asset-based fee and there may also be other costs (e.g., a return check fee) depending upon your particular account activity.

STABLE Benefits

One of the primary reasons that the federal ABLE Act was passed was to protect individuals with disabilities from losing certain benefits such as SSI or Medicaid. With the exception of some special SSI rules, your STABLE Account funds do not count against you for purposes of determining your eligibility for means-tested federal benefits programs. For example, if you have \$5,000 in your STABLE Account, that \$5,000 does not count as an asset when determining your eligibility for SSI or Medicaid. In addition, your STABLE Account will not affect your eligibility for state-based means-tested benefits programs offered by New Hampshire.

STABLE Card

The STABLE Card is a loadable prepaid debit card that is available to everyone with a STABLE Account. You can use your STABLE Card anywhere MasterCard is accepted. The STABLE Card does not pull money directly out of your STABLE Account. Instead, you choose a specific amount of money to load onto your card. If you are a parent or other Authorized Legal Representative for a loved one’s STABLE Account, you can also request a companion card for that individual. The STABLE Card’s discrete loading feature allows you to limit how much money your loved one can access at any given time.

For more information and to open an account - <https://www.stablenh.com/stable-account/>



DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER TURNS 40!

In 2018, Disability Rights Center is celebrating 40 years of service to people with disabilities.

Much has changed in the last 40 years. In 1978, the majority of people with disabilities in our nation were isolated, with few opportunities to live full and productive lives. Many were warehoused in institutions like New Hampshire's Laconia State School and Training Center and Willowbrook State School in Staten Island.

It was investigative reporting on the horrific conditions at Willowbrook that put in motion significant changes for Americans with disabilities. Under the leadership of New York Senator Jacob Javits, the US Congress incorporated the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System in the 1975 renewal of the Developmental Disabilities Act. This legislation ensured that each state would have an independent Protection and Advocacy agency whose mandate was to protect people with developmental disabilities living in institutions from abuse and neglect. The Disability Rights Center is the Protection and Advocacy agency for New Hampshire.

Today opportunities for people with disabilities have expanded dramatically. Increasingly, people with disabilities live independently and are making their own decisions about their lives, work, and participation in their communities. DRC is proud to be part of this progress. Through our work in individual and class

action litigation, students with the most significant disabilities now go to neighborhood schools, people with mental and developmental disabilities have greater freedom, and many New Hampshire businesses are accessible.

While there has been significant progress, much work remains to be done. Every day DRC receives calls from people with disabilities whose rights are endangered. Now more than ever, DRC must fight to protect the rights of people with disabilities to be treated as first-class citizens. We are ready for the challenge.

Thank you for your support over the last four decades. As part of our anniversary celebration, throughout the year we will be sharing personal stories in our newsletter, on social media, and on our website. We would like to ask your help in gathering these stories. How did DRC help you or your family? What do you think are DRC's greatest achievements? To share your memories, please visit - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfTVNxVZQftuLNwYaiYnFvdV-tJUwXpFuRjcjA_bEWYMDfJXg/viewform or email stephaniep@drcnh.org. Photos and videos are also welcome.

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laws and process, the Individualized Education Program (IEP), and effective communication and collaboration. PIC provides telephone technical assistance and access to free resources and materials, including sample letters on how to make a special education referral, request an evaluation, or ask for an IEP team meeting. The special education-focused website, www.nhspecial.org provides links to on-line trainings and national resources.

PIC's Volunteer Advocate (VA) training program is a critical component of the special education project. This intensive 11-week (44 hour) course is free for parents and others who want to support parents of children

with disabilities in the special education process. Training topics include: disability awareness, state and federal legislation/regulations, development of the IEP, mediation and due process procedures, accessing community resources, and effective parent/professional collaboration. New Hampshire currently has over 200 active Volunteer Advocates. Parent Training Information Centers in a number of states have replicated PIC's VA training program. For additional information and an application - <https://nhspecial.org/workshops-training/volunteer-advocate-training/>.

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TRAINING & EVENTS

Accessibility Webinar Series

An overview of federally mandated digital accessibility standards, best practices for accessibility in Adobe Acrobat and Microsoft Word, and demystify making presentations, webinars, and social media accessible.

Session: Creating Accessible Outreach & Dissemination (Presentations/Social Media):
March 28, 2018
Time: 2:00 – 3:00 pm EST
Cost: \$20 per session
Location: Online

nTIDE Lunch & Learn Webinar Series

The first Friday of the month, corresponding with the Bureau of Labor Statistics jobs report, the Employment Policy and Measurement Rehabilitation and Research Training Center offers a live Zoom Webinar to share findings and provides updates from the field of disability employment.

Dates: April 9, May 4, June 1, & July 6, 2018
Time: 12:00 pm EST
Location: www.researchondisability.org/ntide

The New England Regional Genetics Network Annual Meeting

"Making Connections: Assuring Access for Children with Special Health Care Needs to Genetic Services" will focus on addressing the unique challenges in connecting underserved populations with genetic services.

Date: April 5 & 6, 2018
Time: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Location: Hilton Garden Inn, 100 High Street, Portsmouth, NH

NH Leadership Series 30th Anniversary Celebration

Reconnect with alumni, meet friends of the Series, and enjoy an evening featuring hors d'oeuvres & cash bar, raffles, the Presentation of the 8th Annual Brianna Dillon Leadership Medal, and inspirational stories from graduates.

Date: April 6, 2018
Time: 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Location: Fratello's Italian Grille, 155 Dow Street, Manchester, NH 03101
Donation: \$35

MTSS-B Tier 2 & Tier 3 Behavior Support Team Retreats

What's in Your Toolbox? The day focuses on building a continuum of support for students who struggle socially and/or academically. Interventions, resources, case examples, and planning tools will be reviewed to help your team get ready for effective implementation.

Date: April 10, 2018
Time: 8:00 am - 3:00 pm
Location: Grappone Conference Center, Concord, NH
Cost: \$199 per session individual,
\$179 per member of a group of 3+

Awesome Reminding and Finding Apps, Devices, Accessories, and Strategies

Learn about apps, accessories, and devices to help individuals who struggle with memory and attention issues.

Date: April 25, 2018
Time: 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Online **Cost:** \$25

Age of Champions

A FREE multigenerational health fair promoting Healthy Active Aging! Featuring vendor booths, health assessments, and exercise classes.

Date: April 28, 2018
Time: 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Location: UNH Field House, Durham, NH

2018 START National Training Institute

The annual START National Training Institute (SNTI) provides a forum for START partners to learn about best practices and innovations to improve local capacity, service outcomes, and life experiences for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs and their families.

Date: May 7 – 9, 2018
Time: 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
Location: Sheraton Boston Hotel, Boston, MA
Cost: Single Day: \$50 – 350,
Full Conference: \$549 - \$699

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Other Parent Information Center projects include:

Race 2K supports school districts, early supports and services, and families in understanding their roles and responsibilities in early childhood education. Funded by the New Hampshire Department of Education, Race 2K offers technical assistance and resources on Child Find, early childhood transition practices, and provision of education and supports in the least restrictive environment. For more information - <https://nextsteps-nh.org/about-us/>

Next Steps New Hampshire focuses on developing and sustaining the skills of school district staff and families to increase the college and career readiness of students with disabilities and/or students at risk of dropping out. Next Steps assists schools, parents, and youth with disabilities in understanding and participating in the transition planning process. The project supports greater family-school engagement, increased use of Extended Learning Opportunities, and professional development. For more information: <https://nextsteps-nh.org/about-us/>

Advocates for Families of Children with Disabilities (AFC) is a fee for service program for parents who want intensive individualized technical assistance to better understand their child's special education needs and develop strategies to meet those needs. AFC also supports families who are involved in the mediation process. For more information: <https://www.picnh.org/portfolio-item/advocates-for-families/>

NH Family Voices is a free, confidential resource for families and professionals caring for children with health, physical, developmental, and mental health challenges. Services include: help in navigating service systems, access to information and resources, trainings for families, an extensive lending library, and parent-to-parent support. For more information: <https://www.picnh.org/portfolio-item/nh-family-voices/>

One of the most important aspects of PIC's work is to ensure that parents have a place at the table and that their voices are heard. PIC, through its staff and volunteer network, brings a "parent perspective" to the New Hampshire Department of Education, local school districts, elected officials, and other policy makers.

Assistive Technology and Aging with a Disability

Discussion and demonstration of AT solutions to enable individuals who experience disabilities to age in place, including: voice assistants, virtual participation, remote monitoring, magnification and sound amplification, solutions to reduce falls, and reminder devices/strategies.

Date: May 15, 2018
Time: 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Online
Cost: \$25

Supporting Choice and Preferences: Tools for Caregivers

Tools to help caregivers support individuals receiving long term services to exercise as much choice as possible.

Date: May 8, 2018 or June 6, 2018
Time: 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Location: IOD Professional Development Center, 56 Old Suncook Road, Concord, NH
Cost: \$35

Assistive Technology (AT) for 21st Century Seniors

Learn about AT apps and devices to help maintain and enhance vision, hearing, and memory.

Date: April 24, 2018 or May 22, 2018
Time: 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Location: IOD Professional Development Center, 56 Old Suncook Road, Concord, NH
Cost: \$35

3 EASY WAYS TO REGISTER!



online

WWW.IOD.UNH.EDU/Events



call to register or to request a registration form

603.228.2084



mail a completed registration form

**INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY
56 OLD SUNCOOK ROAD, SUITE 2
CONCORD, NH 03301**

RAP Sheet

NH COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

2½ Beacon Street, Suite 10
Concord, NH 03301-4447

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ◆ *Early Supports and Services*
- ◆ *Setting High Expectations*
- ◆ *PIC – Training and Resources*
- ◆ *Personal Stories*

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER - NH

64 North Main Street, Suite 2, 3rd Floor, Concord, NH 03301-4913
Voice and TDD: (603) 228-0432 ◆ 1-800-834-1721 ◆ FAX: (603) 225-2077
TDD access also through NH Relay Service: 1-800-735-2964 (Voice and TDD)
E-mail: advocacy@drcnh.org ◆ Website: www.drcnh.org
"Protection and Advocacy System for New Hampshire"

The Disability Rights Center is dedicated to eliminating barriers to the full and equal enjoyment of civil and other legal rights for people with disabilities.

INSTITUTE ON DISABILITY/UCED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

www.iod.unh.edu | facebook.com/instituteondisability | twitter.com/unhiod | youtube.com/unhiod

Durham Office:

10 West Edge Drive, Suite 101 | Durham, NH 03824
Phone: 603.862.1769 | Relay: 711 | Fax: 603.862.0555

Concord Office:

56 Old Suncook Road, Suite 2 | Concord, NH 03301
Phone: 603.228.2084 | Relay: 711 | Fax: 603.228.3270

The IOD promotes full access, equal opportunities, and participation for all persons by strengthening communities and advancing policy and systems change, promising practices, education, and research.

NH COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

2½ Beacon Street, Suite 10
Concord, NH 03301-4447

Phone: (603) 271-3236 ◆ TTY/TDD: 1-800-735-2964 ◆ Website: www.nhddc.org

Dignity, full rights of citizenship, equal opportunity, and full participation for all New Hampshire citizens with developmental disabilities.

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