



Come to the 2002 STEP Conference! Mark Your Calendar

October will be conference time again! Once again, STEP will collaborate with the LRE for LIFE Project at UT-Knoxville and present the FAST Conference (Families And Schools Together). So please mark your calendar for October 10 & 11 (Thursday and Friday) at the Downtown Knoxville Hilton.

STEP and LRE have arranged to have excellent speakers and great

break-out sessions. To learn more, a conference flier is inserted in this newsletter and once again we have great speakers and wonderful break-out sessions that will interest both parents and educators.

A parent stipend called a "workshop" (a paid scholarship you work for) will be available for those who need financial assistance traveling

to and attending the conference. Please call Ginger at STEP (800-280-STEP) early if you need financial assistance as the funds are limited. We are pleased to tell you that once again the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities will provide significant funding to make these parent supports available. We hope to see you in October, so start making your plans now.



School Opens with New Eligibility Criteria and Lots of Questions!

Much has changed in the past year. We are working with new regulations from last year and new eligibility criteria for this year. There are tons of questions and concerns with all these changes happening. As always with change, there are more myths than facts being told across the state. With all that, how is anyone to know the truth? As always, go to the law itself and the implementing regulations. In this day of internet, all school personnel have access to the new laws, regulations, and Tennessee policy. So the answer to most of your questions should be backed-up with a citation (where it is) in the law.

The expression most used should be "show me where it says that". If you are told that your child "must be reevaluated to determine if he/she is still eligible under the 'new criteria'", ask the schools to show you where the regulations say they are required to reevaluate your child. It may just be a misunderstanding or miscommunication, remember everyone is experiencing much confusion because of all the changes. At a recent training put on by the Tennessee Division of Special Education on the topic of the new eligibility criteria, it was said that the new criteria is not intended to be used to dump kids out of special education! It should

be used when your child's three year evaluation is due and the team wants to see if the child still requires special education to assist them in achieving in the general education curriculum. The new criteria for eligibility for learning disabilities is no longer a "simple formula", in fact it is so complicated that it requires use of a special document that translates the child's ability score and performance score into a "regression formula". The old fashioned way of taking the child's ability score and subtracting the performance score to look for a "16 point difference" is no longer valid. Rumor has it that the old formula is now 22 or 23 points. NOT TRUE. It becomes essential to ask questions

STEP WORKSHOPS ACROSS TENNESSEE

If you want to attend a workshop in your area, would you help us by letting us know so we can schedule one for you? Call:

Training Coordinators:

East TN -	Karen Harrison -	(423)639-0125	email- tnstepeast@aol.com
Middle TN -	Loria Hubbard-	(615)587-4422	email- tnstepmidd@aol.com
West TN -	Jeness Roth -	(901)756-4332	email- tnstepwest@aol.com

Parent Training Workshop Schedule

Preregistration is required for all workshops (see contact number). Basic Rights is a three-hour basic training workshop: "First STEP: A Parent's Introduction to Special Education." Additional workshop topics include: IEP, Evaluation, Inclusion, Section 504, Communication & Conflict Resolution, Transition, and Early Childhood. (E=East TN, M=Middle TN, W=West TN)

Date	Time	Workshop	TN	Location	Contact
08/29/02	6:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 296.0092
08/29/02	6:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Elizabethton/Carter Co.	(423) 474.2858
09/07/02	9:00 a.m.	Communication	E	Johnson City/Washington Co.	(800) 821.1312 x25
09/07/02	1:00 p.m.	IEP	E	Johnson City/Washington Co.	(800) 821.1312 x25
09/07/02	3:00 p.m.	Evaluations	E	Johnson City/Washington Co.	(800) 821.1312 x25
09/09/02	6:00 p.m.	IEP	E	Sevierville/Sevier Co.	(865) 774.9660
09/12/02	6:15 p.m.	Transition	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 266.1604
09/17/02	6:30 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Parrottsville/Cocke Co.	(423) 623.2159
09/24/02	6:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Morristown/Hamblen Co.	(423) 586.7700
09/26/02	6:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Clinton/Anderson Co.	(865) 463.2814
10/01/02	6:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Clinton/Anderson Co.	(865) 457.0159
10/01/02	6:30 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Rogersville/Hawkins Co.	(423) 921.9621
10/24/02	6:30 p.m.	Basic Rights	E	Maryville/Blount Co.	(865) 984.1212
10/26/02	9:00 a.m.	Basic Rights	E	Athens/McMinn Co.	(423) 744.3910
10/26/02	1:00 p.m.	IEP	E	Athens/McMinn Co.	(423) 744.3910
08/27/02	5:00 p.m.	Communication	M	Mr. Juliet/Wilson Co.	(615) 758.2426
09/10/02	5:30 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Nashville/Davidson Co.	(615) 936.5120
09/17/02	9:00 a.m.	Basic Rights	M	Fayetteville/Lincoln Co.	(931) 438.2322
09/18/02	5:30 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Lewisburg/Marshall Co.	(931) 359.1197
09/18/02	9:00 a.m.	Basic Rights	M	Crossville/Cumberland Co.	(931) 484.9669
09/20/02	9:00 a.m.	Basic Rights	M	Murfreesboro/Rutherford Co.	(615) 898.2458
09/24/02	9:00 a.m.	Evaluation	M	Mt. Juliet/Wilson Co.	(615) 758.2426
09/26/02	5:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Erin/Houston Co.	(931) 289.4135
10/03/02	6:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Fayetteville/Lincoln Co.	(931) 438.0337
10/03/02	5:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Waverly/Humphreys Co.	(931) 289.4135
10/23/02	6:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Nashville/Davidson Co.	(615) 269.7091
10/24/02	5:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Dickson/Dickson Co.	(931) 289.4135
10/29/02	5:00 p.m.	Transition	M	Mt. Juliet/Wilson Co.	(615) 758.2426
11/05/02	3:00 p.m.	Communication	M	Springfield/Robertson Co.	(614) 382.3014
11/07/02	5:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Big Rock/Stewart Co.	(931) 289.4135
11/26/02	5:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	M	Mt Juliet/Wilson Co.	(615) 758.2426
08/26/02	2:00 p.m.	Basic Rights	W	Memphis/Shelby Co.	(901) 763.1430

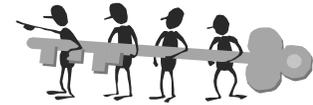
This is NOT a complete list of workshops, it's a list of the workshops scheduled prior to this printing. For a more up-to-date list, please be sure to check our Web Page at www.tnstep.org You can contact your Regional Training Coordinator , or call the STEP Parent Information line at 1(800) 280-STEP -- Workshops ARE being added to this list daily!



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 Nancy Diehl, Executive Director, 712 Professional Plaza, Greeneville, TN 37745.
 Telephone: (423) 639-0125 or (800) 280-STEP. Text: (423) 639-8802 E-mail: tnstep@aol.com



***Inclusive practices leave no child behind!
Good teaching is the key!***



**October 10-11, 2008
at the Downtown Hilton
Nashville**

Sponsored by
The Tennessee State Board of Education
The Tennessee State Board of Health

Keynote Speakers:

Dr. Mary Howard, Executive Director, National Reading Initiative

Dr. Mary Howard, International Reading Expert

Conference Fees are:

Professionals: \$100
Parents: \$50
Children: Free

Corporate Sponsorship Opportunities

Many corporate sponsors welcome the opportunity to support teachers and students personally. They may not be aware, however, of the option of sending a teacher or team of educators including educational assistants, administrators and others to conferences and other professional development activities. Help your corporate sponsor promote this conference and as a result, send a team or your team members will be eligible for a special prize to be drawn during the conference.

For more information, contact the LRE for LIFE Project at 615-255-1234 or
the LRE for LIFE Project website at www.lreforlife.org
Please fill out [this registration form](#).



Preschool Sessions:

1. Paving the Way for Successful Transition into Preschool Literacy Programs

Preschool orshos:

1. Functional Communication Assessment

- . Positive Behavior Support and Social Stories

Primary Sessions:

1. Developing Student Phonological Awareness through Word Walls and Word Wall Activities

- . Learning Centers

Primary orshos:

1. Meeting the Individual Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities through Instruction and the Use of Learning Centers in the Classroom

- . Strategies for Struggling Readers

Postsecondary Sessions:

1. Meeting the Needs of Postsecondary Struggles

- . Social Stories

Postsecondary orshos:

1. Transition from High School to Postsecondary and Implementing a Comprehensive Communication Assessment

- . Strategies for Motivating Students

- . Using Self-management to Deal with Anger

Severe Disabilities Sessions:

1. Self-determination and Personalized Planning

- . IEP Alternatives, Portfolios and the S

Severe Disabilities Sessions:

1. Meeting the Needs of Students with Severe Disabilities

- . Community Training

Severe Disabilities orshos:

1. Success Stories Panel Discussion on Inclusion

- . Collaborative Lesson Planning for Differentiated and Personalized Instruction

Severe Disabilities orshos:

1. Applications of Multiple Intelligences to Classroom Instruction and Cooperative Learning Structures for Differentiated Instruction

- . Collaboration is More than Just Getting Together: Working Together through Effective Collaboration Strategies

- . Self-advocacy

Transition to Postsecondary Sessions:

1. Individualized Transition Plans from School to Work Including Goals and Objectives

Transition to Postsecondary orshos:

- . Collaboration with Transition Staff

- . Work Incentives through Social Security

Postsecondary Sessions:

1. Data Collection Strategies to Monitor Progress toward Postsecondary Goals and Objectives

Postsecondary orshos:

1. Strategies for Writing Behaviorally Specific and Measurable Goals and Objectives

- . IEP Alternatives

For parents who need financial assistance to attend the FAST Conference, call Ginger at 1(800) 280-STEP, and request help with (1) Conference Registration, and/or (2) hotel cost (limited number available). **Thanks** to the **Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities** for providing travel assistance to families. This will be handled on first-come first-serve basis and we will request that you help at the conference in exchange for this assistance (a "work-ship").

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and learn about this new formula that will now be used (as of July 1, 2002). Another misunderstandings is that this new criteria is the same as the "pilot criteria" tried a few years ago; it is NOT the same.

So -- you ask, how will I know all I need to about this Learning Disabilities criteria and how it will affect my child? This article should help some, going to the state's website at:

<http://www.state.tn.us/education/msped.htm> would provide an enormous amount of information, all the laws, regulations, policies, and forms are available except one-- the form they will use to translate the ability score and the performance score into the eligibility score. That can be obtained by calling the state Special Education office toll-free at: 888/212-3162 and asking them to send you a copy of "Tennessee's Guidelines for Evaluation of Specific Learning Disabilities" (LD Discrepancy Conversion Chart). Finally, you can attend a STEP workshop. In the new 2002 edition of the Parent Manual, there will be a copy of the conversion chart, and finally, a chart can also be obtained by calling STEP's Information Line at 800-280-STEP.

The other significant changes to eligibility criteria are for speech/language disability and mental retardation. The same resources above can help you understand these changes. Most importantly, it is important to understand that the LD criteria, the Speech/Language criteria, and the Mental Retardation criteria were NOT changed to exclude kids from special education. The intent is to ensure that eligible children indeed have specific learning disabilities and they are identified and served in appropriate ways. All children who are tested for a learning disability should also be tested for any processing problems they might have (such as auditory and visual) so that those issues and needs can be addressed as well in the child's IEP.

The anticipated results with the new criteria are that more children with normal to low-normal abilities would become eligible and less children who are above normal to gifted would remain eligible. Their performance (how they perform compared to their same-age peers in the classroom) would be the key.

The best way to explain this formula is by using examples. Example A is a child who struggles in school and is referred for evaluation. The testing concludes that he has an ability score of an 80 (IQ) and a performance score of 65 (the name of the tests used will be revealed later in the example). Using simple math (not a complex formula), the difference between the two scores is 15. Based on the old criteria, he might not be eligible because the criteria looks for a greater than 15 score and his is right at 15. It is true that the IEP team could use an override and

determine this child eligible but many school systems refused or were afraid to use overrides for various reasons. In the past, this child might be found struggling in a classroom far behind his peers but not "eligible" for the special services that are available to children who have "disabilities". With the new criteria, student A would be eligible to receive the supports that he needs! How that is figured is by use of the chart we referred to. The types of tests used determine which column on the chart are used. In this example, we will say that the evaluation instrument used is a WAIS-R Full Scale IQ score of 80. The chart tells us that he should be performing at an 88. That score is then compared to his performance score of 65. There is now a "significant discrepancy" between how he should perform and how he is actually performing. Using the same (new) chart, he would need an 18 point difference (all based on very complex formulae!). The difference between 88 and 65 is 23 points (more than the 18 required in this example). Before, using the old eligibility criteria student A was either not eligible or barely eligible (if the schools used an override) to now being fully eligible in 2002.

However, for a above-average student - example B, we still cannot use simple math to determine her eligibility. Student B has an ability score of 130 (IQ) and a performance score of 113 (please note - a score that is similar to the performance of her same-age class peers), simple math reveals that she has a 17 point difference and may have been determined eligible in the past (remember the old formula was more than 15 point difference). However, using the new criteria and chart (using the same evaluation instruments as example A), this student's 130 IQ score would be converted to a 118, the score that she would be expected to perform at with that ability score. When the difference for student B is examined, her expected achievement of 118 and her performance of 113, we see that there is only a 5 point difference, far below the 18 points that the chart indicates would be a significant difference needed to make a child eligible.

No one can make these new formulas easy to use. Please know that more than 20 individuals from every point of view worked together to come up with a formula that would indeed help those students that were left out as not eligible in the past and reduce the number of students who were performing at grade level and succeeding in classrooms, but who may have been identified simply by doing the math. There were many safety nets in the past to prevent these seeming inequities, but the new formula addresses them and hopefully, students who need special education supports will receive them.

[It is important to note that the previous discussion has NOT addressed the "two-prong eligibility test" -- that is, the questions - (1) does a child have a disability, and (2) need special education in order to benefit from education.]

Your School's Report Card for 2001-2002

Both schools and parents have asked STEP which schools do a good job of being child centered, providing special education and related services in exciting and creative ways, and which schools work well with parents. Here is a chance for you to send us a report card on your school system and how well it works with you and your child. The positive results will be reported in future issues of *STEP Ahead*.

NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL SYSTEM _____

NAME OF YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL _____

Please give each item a grade of A, B, C, D, or F.

A= Excellent job!

B= Pretty Good, could be better.

C= Some effort but not quite enough to be good.

D= Not failing but pretty poor job, serious lack of effort.

F= Failing!

Please also offer comments of either Praise or how the school could do better.... (add a sheet of paper...)

CHILDFIND

Effort to locate, find, and evaluate every student with a disability 0-22 living in the school district.

Informs every parent of the availability of special services and the protections against discrimination (504), and rights under IDEA.

WRITTEN PRIOR NOTICE

School informs you (in writing) every time it proposes to change your child's IEP, placement, related services, and any other significant change and invites you to the meeting where those decisions will be made.

Informs you who will be attending the IEP meeting.

With this notice included a written copy of your rights as a parent.

Provides you with the opportunity to schedule the meeting for a mutually convenient time and place.

Every time you request something and the school turns you down, they provide you with a written explanation why they are refusing your request.

FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Except for the supplies fee and field trip costs, you are not charged extra for anything that parents of students without disabilities don't have to pay for, including evaluations.

Your child's IEP is designed specially for your child focusing on your child's strengths to help them with their weak areas.

Your child's IEP is planned around the curriculum of regular education for the same-age classroom.

LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (Inclusion)
Your child's day is filled with opportunities to learn from and interact with non-disabled students.

Every time your child is out of the regular education environment it is because your child needs to be removed in order for your child to benefit from the instruction.

Before your child is removed from the regular educational environment, all efforts and considerations have been made to bring supplementary aids and services into the child's classroom to help your child succeed.

Your child is included on regular education field trips and all school extracurricular activities including sports, clubs, after-school care & pictures.

Your child's exclusion from regular ed. is based on your child's unique need and not on administrative convenience.

RELATED SERVICES

All your child's related services (ie: speech, PT, OT, etc.) are documented on the IEP with beginning dates, ending dates, frequency of sessions, duration of sessions, location of sessions, and the personnel responsible for delivering the services.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)
You are involved in the development and writing of the IEP (even if a draft has been brought to the meeting).

Your ideas and concerns were sought by the team and addressed in the IEP.

You felt an equal partnership with the school personnel during IEP discussions and decisions.

Everything that was agreed upon at the meeting was documented clearly on your child's IEP.

Your questions were clearly answered.

All necessary personnel were in attendance at the IEP meeting. (School designee to allocate resources, child's teacher, psychologist or someone qualified to explain the evaluation results), and a regular education teacher.

The goals and objectives were observable, measurable, and based on what your child could achieve in a school year and focused on outcomes that will lead to an independent life (as much as possible).

PLACEMENT

All decisions about where your child would receive education were left until after the IEP goals and objectives were written and agreed upon.

Serious consideration was given to find effective ways to provide the IEP services in the regular education environment including the use of supplementary aides and services.

Send to: STEP, 712 Professional Plaza, Greeneville TN 37745

Our Friend Jenness is Back!

As many of you know, Jenness Roth, our West TN Training Coordinator has been out all summer recovering from surgery and chemotherapy. We all want to thank you for your many kind words, prayers, cards, and good thoughts for her. Thanks especially for your patience as we tried to fill in for her absence. She will return part-time at first. A special thanks to our new West TN Outreach Coordinator, Bev Hart who has been wonderful as she jumped in and met the needs of West TN families.



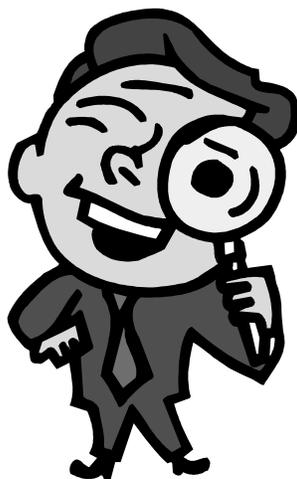
STEP's Lending Library has New Additions

This year, consider borrowing a book or video from our lending library to read or view. There are several new additions including videos with open captioning for those with hearing disabilities. It is easy to borrow a book or video. Simply request the book and we will mail it directly to you for a three week period, if you need longer, call for an extension and when finished mail it back to us. To get an updated library list, call STEP's 800 line and request a list, 1(800)280-7837 (STEP).

Internet Resources

There are many great resources on the Internet for families. A good place to start besides the STEP web page at www.tnstep.org, are excellent Tennessee resources such as the Tennessee Family Path Finder at: www.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy/pathfinder/index2.html, from there you can learn about many Tennessee Resources and links including a list of all the upcoming training available in

At A Glance



Tennessee. From there you can locate the State Department of Education's website [www.state.tn.us/education/msped.htm] and many advocacy groups including the Tennessee Disability Coalition, The Arc of Tennessee, the Tennessee Council on Developmental Disabilities. Local advocacy groups are available there as well, including Nashville's Disability Coalition on Education, and Nashville's Community Parent Resource Center.

One of our favorite websites to visit is Wright's Law, an excellent site to find quality information about special education across the country at www.wrightslaw.com, you can also get on their newsletter list for free and up-to-date information. Many of their publications are available in our lending library. Another favorite is Reed Martin's website www.reedmartin.com.

You can get on the U.S. Department of Education's website as well. Go to www.ed.gov and go to OSERS or OSEP. You can also view many new documents there including the new "President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education Report", a document that may strongly influence our legislature during the upcoming reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Of course, our friends at NICHCY (National Clearinghouse for Children and Youth with Disabilities) have an excellent site with a wealth of information at www.nichcy.org.

EDITORIAL Who's IDEA is It?

IDEA 2002 - what will it look like? In 1997 (the last revision) we saw many changes - most of which we are still seeing the state and local schools struggle with. Although no changes are required, it looks like Congress will revisit this precious law. There is a listserv that will keep parents and advocates updated on any proposed changes and actions that might help you express your thoughts. The service is free and seems highly accurate. Simply e-mail them at: preserveIDEA@dredf.org and ask to be put on the Rapid Response Network list. DREDF is a well respected California and Washington, DC based disability rights organization.

Recently, a well known NEA (National Education Association) representative said publicly that it was time to "go back to the good old days" meaning before IDEA (PL 94-142)! He thought the friendly way that schools and parents worked together was better than the IEP process. I had a chance to remind him that the "good old days" were not so good for a lot of us and gave him the example of my son who was not allowed to get an education but instead we were given a "truancy exception" meaning that we did not have to bring our son to school and no truancy officer would bother us. Those were the bad old days... and I told him so. But many highly influential people have the notion that they "know best" for our children. I attended a conference with a unique name, "Who's IDEA is It Anyway?". I think that says it all. IDEA is a law that was born of a demand for children's civil rights and a fight against the routine denial of those rights. They were really the "bad old days", trust me!

Nancy Diehl, Executive Director

IDEA 2002 Song

(sing to the tune of the 'Beverly Hillbillies')

All across the states - we hear the same old song,
 When the plan's not workin', where does the blame belong?
 It can't be "us" and "them" -- it has to be a "WE",
 Gotta keep our focus ...collaboration is the KEY!
 ...Working together that is
 ...To educate kids

We have to find a balance - 'tween "all", "some", or "none",
 We have the IEP process - to show us how its done;
 Kinfolks are sayin'- "Let 'em spend some time with peers"
 Do what the child needs NOW, - not wait 'nother 20 years!
 ...Think about it, all kids can learn
 ...What an IDEA

IEP Team members - work better when all know the law,
 We'll keep on workin' together - 'til ALL really means ALL;
 "Leave No Child Behind" - is the President's creed,
 Let's all stay together - and give kids what they need!
 ...An education that is
 ...High expectations

by STEP staff

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 Greeneville, TN 37745

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