



1 (800) 280-STEP

1 (800) 975-2919 Espanol

TTY: (423) 639-8802

(423) 639-0125

## **AHEAD**

Volume 19

Issue 1

Summer 2008

### **Start The School Year With A Smile!**

As parents and teachers we are so often focused on completing an objective, meeting a deadline, making sure we make our point, or getting to the task at hand in a meeting that we often forget the basic rules of interacting. Take a moment to greet one another, ask about the summer, or share a funny story about yourself or your child. When differences arise, try to look for creative ways to solve them that will have a lasting impact. This story demonstrates this technique!

According to a radio report, a middle school in Oregon was faced with a unique problem. A number of girls were beginning to use lipstick and would put it on in the bathroom. That was fine, but after they put on their lipstick they would press their lips to the mirror leaving dozens of little lip prints.

Finally the principal decided that something had to be done. She called all the girls into the bathroom and met them there with the maintenance man. She explained that all these lip prints were causing a major problem for the custodian who had to clean the mirrors every night. To demonstrate how difficult it was to clean the mirrors, she asked the maintenance man to clean one of the mirrors.

He took out a long-handled squeegee, dipped it into the toilet and then cleaned the mirror.

Since then there have been no lip prints on the mirror.

There are teachers and then there are TEACHERS.

### **Heather King Receives Advocate of the Year Award**

Heather King, a parent from Hardeman County Tennessee, was honored this year at the 2008 Disability Megaconference. Heather has two children; Brooklyn is 12 years old and experiences multiple disabilities. Heather has learned to navigate the complicated service delivery system for her daughter, who needs, among other things, nursing services in school. Over the years, she has become increasingly aware of Brooklyn's rights and her own strength as an advocate. Even though she lives in a rural part of West Tennessee, Heather has become a resource for other parents and frequently mentions the impact of her own advocacy upon other children in her area. She has been an inspiration to STEP staff as she has grown in knowledge and skills over the years.

Congratulations, Heather!



**The King Family  
Blank and Heather  
Brooklyn and Russ**



STEPWORKSHOPSACROSS TENNESSEE

Call (800) 280-STEP or e-mail us at [information@tnstep.org](mailto:information@tnstep.org) Spanish (800) 975-2929

Preregistration is requested for all workshops.

Date	Time	Workshop	TN	Location	Contact
08/05/08	6:00 pm	Basic	W	Memphis/Shelby Co.	(901) 547-7588
08/19/08	6:00 pm	Basic	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
08/26/08	6:00 pm	Basic	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
08/28/08	6:00 pm	Basic	E	Gray/Washington Co.	(423) 913-2203
09/02/08	6:00 pm	IEP	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
09/09/08	6:00 pm	Communication	M	Dickson/Dickson Co.	(615) 446-9534
09/11/08	5:00 pm	Basic	W	Raleigh/Shelby Co.	(901) 507-8568
09/16/08	6:00 pm	Follow-Up	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
09/18/08	6:00 pm	IEP	E	Gray/Washington Co.	(423) 913-2209
09/18/08	6:00 pm	EC Transition	E	Knoxville/Knox Co.	(865) 690-8961x2225
09/20/08	3:00 pm	Basic	W	Martin/Weakley Co.	(731) 514-0797
09/22/08	5:30 pm	Basic	M	Knoxville/Knox Co.	(865) 824-2897
10/09/08	5:30 pm	Basic	M	Nashville/Davidson Co.	(615) 269-7091x105
10/18/08	1:00 pm	Basic	W	Jackson/Madison Co.	(866) 650-0500
10/21/08	6:00 pm	Evaluation&RTI	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
11/04/08	6:00 pm	Basic	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
11/11/08	6:00 pm	Communication	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
11/24/08	6:00 pm	Communication	E	Knoxville/Knox Co.	(865) 824-2897
01/13/09	6:00 pm	Basic	M	Dickson/Dickson Co.	(615) 446-9534
01/22/09	6:00 pm	LRE	E	Gray/Washington Co.	(423) 913-2203
01/27/09	6:00 pm	IEP	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
02/10/09	6:00 pm	IEP	M	Dickson/Dickson Co.	(615) 446-9534
02/26/09	6:00 pm	Communication	E	Gray/Washington Co.	(423)-913-2203
05/19/08	6:00 pm	Transition	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504

This list is as of 08/14/08, more workshops are being added daily!

Please call us or go to our Website ([www.tnstep.org](http://www.tnstep.org)) to learn of the newest schedule of workshops!

STEPS TO DREAM BUILDING GAME

A fun way to engage students, teachers, and parents in transition planning! This activity was created by STEP as a way to give students who have trouble expressing themselves a way to make choices and show their preferences and what is important to them. Each set of laminated cards depict in full color with a written description a broad range of categories such as daily living skills, social skills, recreation, employment, independent living and decision making and much more. Once the student has indicated their preferences, you can use those choices as a springboard for further discussion, transition planning, or as a way for the student to share with the IEP team their preferences.

When used as a group training activity, teachers, parents, and students identify what THEY feel are the five most important areas for independent living. Similarities and differences that emerge help the team to develop a cohesive transition plan and see each other's unique perspectives. Families and teams that have used them have raved over the doors it opens for students to express themselves!

Here are a few examples of what the cards look like.

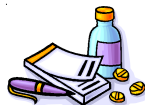
These were chosen as "the most important" during a recent transition workshop.

**Take this test:** See if you can determine who the choice was made by:

STUDENT - (S) PARENT - (P) TEACHER (T)



Being Clean



Learning About Their Medications



Going Out To Eat



Having A Boyfriend or Girlfriend



Following A Budget



Using Public Transportation



Having Friends



Going To Church



Learning To Cook



Staying Close To Family

**Answers:** Being Clean - (T), Learning About Their Medications - (P), Going Out to Eat - (S) Following a Budget - (T), Using Public Transportation - (S), Having a Boyfriend/Girlfriend - (P) and (S), Having Friends - (P) Going To Church - (S), Learning To Cook - (T), Staying Close To Family - (S)

## TN DISABILITY RIGHTS CHAMPION HONORED AT WASHINGTON, D.C. EVENT

Carol Westlake, a leading advocate within the Tennessee disability community for more than twenty years, will be honored alongside two congressmen with a "Justice for All" award in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>. The award from the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) recognizes individuals who are extraordinary champions of political and economic empowerment for people with disabilities.

The honor caps an exciting year for Westlake who is Executive Director of the Tennessee Disability Coalition (Coalition). This spring the Coalition led efforts within the disability community to pass the Governor's landmark Long-Term Care Community Choices Act of 2008 as well as Claire's Law, an act to ensure all Tennessee newborns are screened for hearing loss.

In addition, the Coalition hosted four stops last fall – more than any other state – on the national Road to Freedom Tour to promote disability awareness and helped establish the national Disability Vote Alliance. STEP joins with many others in our appreciation of Carol for her years of dedicated service to ensure that the rights of people with disabilities is "front page" news and barriers are removed.



**When asked about the award, Carol had this to say:**

**"I hope that you will let folks know the value of working together. It really does take a village. This award belongs to all of us in Tennessee – the people with disabilities, families, and friends who know that there is strength – and power – in numbers!"**

## Share Your Success Story!

By Karen Harrison

As a parent of a child with a disability I have spent countless hours trying to gather information on everything from A to Z trying to make sure I am taking steps that will help my daughter have friends, fun, an education, stay healthy, have good behavior, better mobility, ways to communication; the list is endless. What I have found is that it is often one story passed on from another parent that is the key to an Aha! moment for me! I remember reading everything I could find about chewing and swallowing and taking Sarah to hours of therapy trying to teach Sarah to "bite down". One day I was chatting with a mom in the waiting room and she said, "Just buy some big puffy cheeto's and put it on her molars and help her make it "crunch" and then you crunch one...it's a game, it tastes good and it helped my son grasp what we were trying to get him to do". Worth a try, right? It worked. I have had the same experience with inclusion, behavior and many other things.

We want to give you an opportunity to share your success stories with other families through our website. If you have used strategies that you learned at a STEP workshop to help you be successful at an IEP meeting or your child has accomplished something and you would like other families to know about it, send it in! One of the things we can give each other is hope. Your stories may be the lifeline that will give another family the strength to keep trying, reach higher, or try something new!

Don't forget to send pictures. Everyone loves pictures! The picture to the right is Cody Jennings with his friends when he was finally able to stand up with them using his Permoble! Want to hear more about that? Keep an eye for this new feature on our website and Cody's story!

Send your pictures and stories in electronic format to [information@tnstep.org](mailto:information@tnstep.org) and please include permission to post on our website. Thanks!



## CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

STEP staff attend a wide variety of workshops and conferences to enable us to keep current on issues that affect children with disabilities and their families. We use this information to enhance the information packets and workshop materials and when answering individual questions. This newsletter segment will highlight conference information that STEP staff identified as particularly high quality and of great interest. Enjoy!



### *Plan A Perfect Life: How is Your Balance?*

Transition to life after school is a "hot topic" right now and believe me with my daughter Sarah turning 18 in a couple weeks, it is on my mind all the time. I attended a session at the state Special Education Conference and found this tool to be extremely helpful.

"Representatives from the Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services are happy to share an effective, useful career planning tool, Plan a Perfect Life. The Excel program was presented by DRS staff at the Special Education Annual Conference in Nashville earlier this year. The audience response was quite enthusiastic and as a result, Plan a Perfect Life (with instructional manual) was distributed among participants for use in classrooms across the state."

Check out our website at [www.tnstep.org](http://www.tnstep.org) to download the Excel program and manual. You will be glad you did!



By K. Harrison

### *Alternative Pencils*

By Karen Harrison

Writing is typically a challenge faced by many students with speech, sensory and motor difficulties, which results in limited, if any opportunities to write. The Center for Literacy and Disability Studies, UNC at Chapel Hill have developed a variety of "alternative pencils." These "pencils" provide students with significant disabilities with access to the alphabet to use for very emergent writing activities.

I was very impressed by a color coded Eye Gaze Frame that allowed a student who had never been able to express himself to learn to write his thoughts. As he gazed at each letter on the board a transcriber wrote it down and showed it to him. She used lots of verbal praise. "Good job, you wrote and A" . Using specific teaching strategies it was demonstrated how this student's writing emerged. At the conclusion it showed this student writing through eye gaze about his mom taking a trip and it was going to be "me and dad" and wrote over and over. How exciting it was to see this student able to express what was on his mind.

To see 6 types of alternative pencils and information about a CD how each pencil has been developed to support different students' sensory and physical abilities in manipulating the alphabet, go to [www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds](http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds) Look for Case Studies from the Deaf-Blind Model Demonstration Project. At the end of that paragraph you will see links to Jake and Matthew's story. Click on their names to see the video.

### **What An Inspirtation!**

By Donna Jennings

Again this year, the Tennessee Disability Mega Conference was spectacular. There were varied sessions that I attended, however, one session in particular made a great impact on me. It was very inspirational as well as informative. Mike May presented on the (GPS) Global Positioning System. In his session details were given on how cutting edge navigation technologies, GPS cell phones and databases present opportunity for those who are blind or have other visual disabilities. Through the Sender GPS system, of which Mike is the President and CEO, audible technology and software allows people to "see" locations for street signs, building names, bus stops, and talking ATM's, etc. Hikers can get a detail of their surroundings, and students can locate buildings on campus. There is a database that shares the information of locations. He stated in his session that "People Finder" is his next venture.

Mike who was blind since age three, has been recognized for breaking world records in downhill speed skiing, for which Ronald Reagan acknowledged him at the White House after the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics, as he was the first blind skier.



He obtained a Masters Degree from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Mike worked at the Central Intelligence Agency, and a successful inventor, entrepreneur, and family man with two children. He has met several presidents, and a vice president. He has been windsurfing, waterskiing, parachuting, and traveled aboard to Africa and Europe. A stem cell transplant in 1999 could be a possibility for Mike to be sighted.

You can learn more about his adventures in a book written by Robert Corson, *Crashing Through*, which tells of the risk and adventures of one man's journey from blindness to sight. A movie has also been made. If you would like to learn more about Mike Mays' pioneering efforts, and the product types of GPS technology, go to their website at: [www.senderogroup.com](http://www.senderogroup.com).



STEP AHEAD is published by STEP, Support and Training for Exceptional Parents, Inc. To comply with Section 507 of the HHS Appropriation Act of 1997, STEP discloses that this publication was printed in part with federal money through grants from the U.S. Department of Education. Additionally, the USDOE does not make any endorsement regarding the content or quality of STEP's programs. Permission is granted to photocopy this publication for distribution. Any reprinting of articles is permitted only after permission is obtained and STEP is given proper credit. Comments or inquiries are welcome and should be directed to: Jenness Roth, Executive Director, 712 Professional Plaza, Greeneville, TN 37745. Telephone: (423) 639-0125 or (800) 280-STEP. Text: (423) 639-8802 E-mail: [information@tnstep.org](mailto:information@tnstep.org)



STEP is a partner with the TN Dept. of Education State Improvement Grant

## Transitioning High Students with Disabilities into College Programs

*Excerpt from an article by Mary Ann Cummins Prager*

On May 4, 2008 the Center on Disabilities at California State University at Northridge held its annual recognition awards ceremony, awarding scholarships to 10 outstanding students with disabilities for their academic and leadership accomplishments. The audience was completely quiet as the achievements of these amazing students were described. With a variety of disabilities including vision, mobility, mental health and learning disabilities, the awardees spoke eloquently about their successes. Sitting in the audience were many of us who have worked with literally thousands of students with disabilities over the years, many of whom have fallen short of achieving their academic, personal, and career goals. As we listened to their stories, I thought about why these students were succeeding when so many others either struggle through college or leave disappointed at their failure to achieve their college dreams. I realized that each of these students had a set of characteristics in common that allowed them to achieve in spite of the extra challenges they faced. Those students at the recognition awards, who were sterling examples of achievement, had the ability to take on academic and personal challenges because they were able to do the following:

**1. Describe their disability.** They were able to discuss their disability in a knowledgeable manner, sharing the impact of the disability on their lives in a detailed and relevant way with faculty and service providers. They knew how their disabilities impacted them in the classroom, in social settings and in the workplace, and they were able to use that knowledge in communicating the accommodations they needed to optimize their chance of success.

**2. Objectively analyze their strengths and weaknesses.** They engaged in a great deal of self reflection and could tell you what they were good at and where they faced challenges. They had gained a strong sense of self and were comfortable with their identities including their identity as a person with a disability. While clearly their disabilities were an important component of their self image, they could speak about their complete profile of talents, abilities and affinities. They had developed practical ways to use their strengths to overcome weaknesses and made realistic choices about majors and careers.

**3. Advocate effectively.** Leaving the high school environment where parents and in some instances teachers had advocated for them, each of the students learned to ask for accommodations and press the case when they felt they needed more assistance. They built effective alliances with faculty and service providers, understood procedures and utilized them, and had learned to navigate a complex organizational environment. Even those students with disabilities that caused them discomfort in social settings had developed advocacy and networking skills.

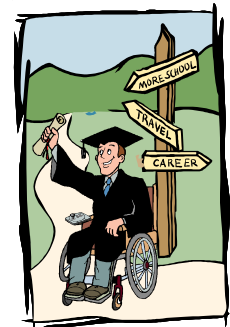
**4. Differentiate between their rights and their responsibilities.** They knew when they had the right to request accommodations, and they understood their responsibilities as students in the college setting knowing that they needed to meet the high expectations of faculty and rigorous academic requirements.

**5. Organize and manage their time and workload.** All of these students had struggled in some way with the organizational and time management skills that are essential to succeed in college. Each student had a unique challenge in this area beyond those faced by all college students. For some, simply getting to campus using public transportation was a significant time management issue which could cause a great deal of stress. For most, the increased academic workload required them to become more focused and organized. Even those with significant learning, attention and mental health disabilities learned survival skills in these areas.

**6. Access available resources.** These students learned where to go for assistance before they got into trouble. As simple as this sounds, not all students access the resources that are available on college campuses. When they reach an academic or personal crisis, they are amazed to find that help was available that could have prevented the crisis.

Designing programs and activities that support the attainment of these skills should be a high priority both at the high school and college level if we truly want students with disabilities to succeed.

Mary Ann Cummins Prager is the Associate Vice President, Student Access and Support Services California State University, Northridge. [MaryAnn.Cummins-Prager@csun.edu](mailto:MaryAnn.Cummins-Prager@csun.edu)



View the full article at <http://www.atechnews.com/articlesbysubject/education.html> call 1/800-280-7837 to request a copy.

## STEP Services Make a Difference!

STEP receives letters of thanks from many families and they always are passed from staff to staff with many smiles and tears. We appreciate so much the trust that families place in us by allowing us to provide support and information to them. We certainly love to receive pictures and hear success stories!

One family that shared their thanks and success is Sadiatou Barrow and her daughter, Binta. Born with a very rare disability, Dandy Walker Syndrome, Binta has had to face many obstacles. Sadiatou Barrow arrived in the United States from her native Gambia in 1990 with the assistance of Alex Haley. Sadia learned about STEP when Binta was transitioning into the school system. Because Binta has involved medical needs along with her many educational needs Sadia needed to know her rights and how to navigate the special education process. STEP and other organizations have helped her on that journey.

Sadia had this to say about the information and support she has received from STEP and other agencies.



Sadia and Binta share a smile!

"God has provided us with professionals that have good heart working for organizations that care about us. The professionals understand how we feel because they either have children with disabilities or have worked with other parents of children with disabilities. These wonderful people have given us encouragement to love our children, dedication in helping us grow strong in our constant care for our children with multiple needs, and help us fight to get what we need to help care for our special children." Binta has had a range of services in the Knox County School system ranging from home bound when needed to an exciting placement this year in her neighborhood school with lots of opportunities to be with her typically developing peers.

S.T.E.P. EN ESPAÑOL  
APOYO Y CAPACITACIÓN PARA PADRES EXCEPCIONALES

Somos una organización sin fin lucrativo de apoyo a los padres con niños con discapacidad y problemas de aprendizaje, orientada a dar soporte informativo a los padres y técnicos que dan atención a las diversas discapacidades que pueden afectar el desenvolvimiento de los niños en el estado de Tennessee, e contribuyendo a que conozcan y apliquen la ley educativa Americana bajo la ley federal y estatal que les asiste, así como orientar para los planes de Educación Individualizada (IEP), que den estabilidad emocional que permita su formación educativa y de capacitación, brindando a las familias hispano-parlantes una interpretación veraz de sus derechos, (Basic Rights) así como el apoyo a los técnicos en la resolución de las dificultades que se manifiestan en este proceso.

¿Cómo se apoya?

Con el fin primordial de dar cumplimiento a nuestros objetivos se han implementado:

Una línea gratuita (1800- 975-2919) con atención en español donde se escucha y orienta a los padres o encargados de esta comunidad. Realizando talleres de capacitación se contribuye a que conozcan las herramientas necesarias para lograr un mejor plan de estudios individualizados. Para las personas que no puedan asistir a los talleres se puede proporcionar el dbd en español. Se distribuye material escrito para los distintos procedimientos o dudas que pudieran surgir con respecto a las discapacidades y como detectarlas o el siguiente paso a seguir. Para cualquier consulta o ampliación de nuestros servicios no dude en contactarnos, recordando que entre mas temprano llegue nuestro apoyo, mejores oportunidades tendrán nuestros niños.

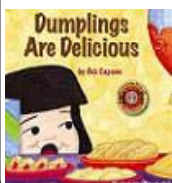
### New Release: Literacy for ALL dvd

This dvd is a multi-faceted project to introduce and educate families and teachers on literacy topics for students with disabilities. The dvd was designed to provide information and visual strategies that families and teachers can use to raise the bar and have high expectations for all students, including those with significant disabilities.

#### Highlights of the Literacy DVD:

Introduction: Focus on Literacy  
Building Blocks of Literacy  
Literacy for Children with Special Needs:  
Response to Intervention (RTI) and Inclusion  
Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder  
Highlights of the "live" Literacy Toolkit Workshop  
Assistive Technologies for Literacy  
Literacy In Action: Real Life Success Stories

Order your FREE copy today! Call 1/800-280-7837 or email your request to [information@tstep.org](mailto:information@tstep.org)  
Great to show segments at parent support group meetings or teacher inservice training. We know you will find it entertaining and informational!



### STEP Welcomes Patricia Valadarez



I was born in Guatemala, Central America, my family consist of two daughters and four grandchildren, one brother, my mother who still alive and a wonderful father that died 9 years ago. My father was a blind person he had retinitis pigmentosa, a hereditary disease that my brother and I got from him. Because of the continues fight my parents had for life and every new thing there was to know about this disease, we were in an experimental medicine based on vitamine E for night blindness, we were able to have some sight until our mid thirties, usually patients with RP, start losing their sight at their early twenties, as it was in my fathers' case. RP, affects your peripheral

vision and consequently your night vision until you have only tunnel sight left. We went to regular school and had a pretty normal life; got married and have children, with some exceptions like driving and have some difficulties in some ball games.

My brother has two sons, my daughters and them, until today, thanks God, have not shown any signs of RP, so is the case of my grandchildren. My father was member of the Board of Director for the Committee for the Blind and Deaf in Guatemala for many years, after him my brother took his place, I work as a regular employee in their Public Relations Department for many years.

Our family have work no only with the blind but with other disabilities; my brother is Coordinator of the Special education Department of a Private School, he is a Psychologist that works with families that has a family member with disabilities. We both have been members of the National Council for the Disabled in Guatemala.

My parents has been an example of strength and fight and I have tried to give the same for my children, including my sons in law. Family is very important and union, support and strength goes together, so we can win on any adversities in life. My immediate family moved to Tennessee three years ago, and they are the reason I am here with you.

### Information, Information!



We want to get the word out to people about the wonderful services and support that are provided by the STEP staff and one way to accomplish that is through information fairs. Unfortunately, we do not have the "people power" to staff all the requests we receive to come to information fairs and conferences to display our information.

We are so thankful for each of you that are committed to ensuring that your friends and neighbors know their children's rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and other laws that ensure great outcomes for our children! What we can do is send brochures, workshop schedules, and other materials to those of you who are having an event in your community and would like to distribute STEP materials. Call 1/800-280-7837 or email [information@tstep.org](mailto:information@tstep.org) to request materials to distribute.

A little knowledge that acts is worth infinitely more than much knowledge that is idle.

KAHILIL GIBRAN

## New Legislation Passed Regarding Restraint and Seclusion What Families Need To Know

Sherry A. Wilds, Staff Attorney

Disability Law & Advocacy Center of Tennessee (DLAC)

Imagine a child with autism and intellectual disabilities who is placed in a locked closet with no windows for two full school days by his teacher. This is just one of several similar incidents that have occurred in Tennessee public schools within the last couple of years. Until very recently, schools in Tennessee did not have clear guidelines or laws that addressed the use of restraint and seclusion in the school setting. The legislature passed a new law that will take effect on January 1, 2009 on this important issue. This law, which can be found at <http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/bills/currentga/Chapter/PC1063.pdf>, forbids the use of locked structures for isolation of children with disabilities. A child who is placed in isolation must be within constant view of a staff member. This new legislation requires school staff to report all forms of isolation and restraint to the school principal who must make the documentation of the incident available for review by the parents. In addition, schools must report emergency restraints that are not part of a child's IEP to the parents. The law also contains other restrictions and exceptions. One of these provisions in this law that may help many children prevents school personnel from filing juvenile petitions against children whose behavior was caused by their disabilities.



Parents of children with disabilities should become familiar with this new law. Although some of the amendments that were made to the original language of the bill may have weakened some of its force, the new law may be a good beginning toward protecting children from inappropriate restraint and isolation. The rules and

regulations for this law are in the process of being written.

## Live in the West? You Could Work With the Best!

We have a job opening in West TN, Memphis area. This is a half time position working with families to provide information, training, and support to parents of children with disabilities. The schedule is flexible and the work is very rewarding. Many of our staff started as part-time district parent trainers and/or half-time staff because of it is a great way to work in the field of disability and make a real difference in the lives of families.

STEP is actively seeking to give employment opportunities to parents of children with disabilities or who are families members of persons with disabilities. We seek to give employment to qualified persons who experience disability, or minority status.

Your personal story is very important to us, so please send a cover letter that includes any personal experience with disability, advocacy experience, training, and interest in the position with your resume along with a your resume. Send to: [jobs@tnstep.org](mailto:jobs@tnstep.org) (attachments in MS Word, PDF, or WordPerfect only).

A child comes home from his first day at school. His Mother asks, "Well, what did you learn today?"

The kid replies, "Not enough. They want me to come back tomorrow."



## Let's Give A Hand To Our Contributors

**There is still time to sign up for a SunTrust account and STEP will receive \$100.00**

Go to <http://suntrust.com/mycause> or visit your nearest Sun Trust location, open a new SunTrust Personal or Business Checking account from now through December 31, 08. Accept and make any purchase with your new SunTrust Visa Check Card by February 15, 2009. Complete and submit a redemption form by February 15, 2009.



**Samuel Roth  
Scott Finney  
Lissa Duston  
Lifeline, Inc.  
Barbara W.  
Susan Huskey  
Jenness Roth  
Foundation (anonymous)**

**Karen Harrison  
Peter Rosasco  
Eric and Robin  
Federspiel  
Dan and  
Susan Speraw**

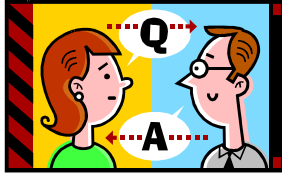
Join those who have made a contribution to STEP.  
Your generosity is much appreciated and will be used to further all the services that STEP provides to families.

**Mail your tax deductible contribution today to:**

STEP, Inc  
712 Professional Plaza  
Greeneville, TN 37745

**Or Visit Our Website: [www.tnstep.org](http://www.tnstep.org) to make an online donation**

### STEP Into the Question and Answer Corner!



**Q:** I have a son who is turning 3 years old on July 28. He has autism and has been served for 4 months by Tennessee's Early Intervention System. He had his transition meeting with the school system in April and we are about to go to his first IEP meeting. I am hoping he can continue to receive ABA services at home like he has gotten through TEIS. He also will need to continue speech therapy and occupational therapy. How do I approach the school system about his continued need for those services? Another parent that I know said that the school system told her that they "don't do ABA"...what does that mean for me?

**A:** I'm glad your transition meeting with the school system was timely; that means they know your son is coming and have had time to look at all of your evaluations and possibly have done some of their own. It is the intent of TEIS and your local education agency to provide "seamless" services as your child moves from one system to the other. As you approach the IEP meeting, it is important to remember that decisions about services are based on information from all team members (including you!) and rely heavily on information from evaluations and the experiences of those who have already served your child. The receiving school system has experience serving children with disabilities LIKE your son's; they haven't actually served your son yet—so those folks that have provided services will be called on, either in person at the meeting or through their written reports, to recommend services and discuss how your child has progressed so far. The LEA (local education agency) is responsible to ensure that your son has in place a program that allows him to make appropriate educational progress in the least restrictive environment. The focus will shift at transition time from the needs of the family to the needs of the child. The LEA will consider all the input from the team and will offer a set of services that will allow for this progress; if ABA services are necessary in the provision of appropriate services, they will be considered. One thing to think about is terminology; if you are saying that your child needs one-to-one direct instruction with a curriculum of sequential skills and an

individualized reinforcement schedule delivered in a sound-quiet environment and driven by data—you might want to say THAT instead! ABA is really an overarching term that describes the intelligent search for what behavior means and how it is motivated and reinforced. What you want to say to the IEP team is that your son will need structured teaching on the basic elements of learning—that he is not yet ready to learn "incidentally" in the classroom (a weakness of many children with autism) and is overwhelmed by the sensory stimulation in an active classroom, and because of those individual traits needs to be taught in the manner mentioned above. The folks who have worked with him within the TEIS system will be able to describe (and show data supporting that description) how he learns, and the rate at which he can progress. The school may, upon hearing all of this, offer that type of teaching within the school day; you may all decide to see how his rate of progress is, given that level of support, before deciding whether he needs more hours of teaching to be delivered outside the typical school day. Remember—peer-reviewed, research-based methodologies have to be used to the extent practicable—so whatever the team decides to use to teach your son, it has to have the backing of research behind it. And don't forget to note in your IEP a method for determining progress and a way to report that progress back to you! That will help you all decide if the rate of progress he has made through early intervention services is being maintained under the IEP.

**Q:** Yo tengo un hijo que tendra su reunion de transicion al sistema escolar en abril y nosotros estamos a punto de ir a su primer reunion de IEP. Yo espero él pueda continuar recibiendo ABAservicios en la casa como lo ha estado recibiendo a través de TEIS. Él también tendrá que continuar terapia del habla y terapia ocupacional. ¿Cómo me dirijo al sistema escolar para que continuen con los mismos servicios que el necesita? ¿Un padre de familia me dijo que el sistema escolar le dijo que ellos "no proporcionan" el servicio de ABA ...." que significa esto para mí?

**A:** Yo estoy contento que su reunión de transición con el sistema escolar haya sido oportuno; eso significa que ellos saben que su hijo está llegando y tienen tiempo de revisar todas sus evaluaciones y hacer posiblemente sus propias. El propósito de TEIS y su agencia de educación local es de proporcionar "servicios sin complicaciones" para que su hijo cambia de un sistema al otro. ¡Mientras que usted se acerca la reunión de IEP, es importante recordar que las decisiones sobre los servicios están basadas en la información de todos los miembros del equipo que lo incluye a usted! Y confíe fuertemente en la información de evaluaciones y la experiencia de aquellos que han servido a su hijo. El sistema de recepción escolar tiene experiencia sirviendo a niños con discapacidades COMO su hijo; pero ellos no lo han atendido en realidad todavía, así que son muy necesarias las recomendaciones de aquellos que han servido a su hijo, y se requiera su visita o proporcionen un informe escrito, para recomendar los servicios que sean necesarios y discutir la forma de llevar su progreso, y que usted sea informado. El LEA (agencia de educación local) es responsable para asegurarse que su hijo tiene un programa que permite que él progrese educativamente de una forma apropiada en el medio ambiente menos restringido. El enfoque será a la hora de la transición, de las necesidades de la

familia hacia las del niño. LEA, considerará toda la información del equipo y ofrecerá un juego de servicios que se tomarán en cuenta para el progreso; si los servicios de ABA son necesarios o en la provisión de servicios apropiados, se considerarán. Una cosa para pensar es sobre la terminología; si usted está diciendo que su hijo necesita instrucción directa uno a uno con un currículo de habilidades secuenciales y un programa de reforzamiento individualizado repartido en un entorno silencioso y conducido por datos—usted podría decir, ESO en lugar de ABA es un término complicado que describe en forma inteligente el sentido del comportamiento y quiere describir lo que motiva y realmente refuerza. Lo que usted quiere decir al equipo de IEP es que su hijo necesitará la enseñanza estructurada en los elementos básicos de aprendizaje y que no está aún listo para aprender "incidentalmente" en el salón de clase (una debilidad de muchos niños con autismo) y abraza por la estimulación sensorio en un salón de clase activo y debido a aquellos rasgos individuales tiene que ser enseñado en el modo mencionado. La gente que ha trabajado con él en el sistema de TEIS podrán describir (y mostrar datos que sostienen esa descripción) cómo él aprende y la escala en la que él puede progresar. La escuela puede ofrecer todo este sistema educativo en su rutina diaria escolar; todos ustedes pueden decidir y ver cómo se da su nivel de progreso con ese apoyo, antes de decidir si él necesita más horas de enseñanza afuera del día típico escolar. Recuerde, revise, las metodologías basadas en investigaciones para tener el debido conocimiento para cualquier cambio, no es solo por decisiones del equipo de IEP, SINO ES BASADO POR UNA INVESTIGACION. ¡Y no olvide QUE EN SU IEP DEBE DE LLEVAR UNA FORMA DE medir el progreso que su hijo ha tenido, así usted está informada y saben que el sistema utilizado en Intervención Temprana ha sido efectiva y se ha seguido utilizando por el equipo de IEP.





## Making Sense of New Early Intervention Guidelines

By *Jamie Kilpatrick, Director of Early Childhood Programs* and  
*Ruth Wiseman, Public Awareness Coordinator*

Tennessee's Early Intervention System, or TEIS, is a program within the Division of Special Education of Tennessee's Department of Education. It is the state's voluntary educational program for families with children birth through two years of age with qualifying disabilities or developmental delays.



The program has been in existence since 1989 and is governed by Part C of the Individual's with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Early intervention programs vary from state to state, but are similar in their quest to provide families with the skills and supports to work with their infants and toddlers with special educational needs.

In 2006, TEIS underwent a policy analysis at the request of the Department of Education. The analysis was lead by Governor's Office of Children's Care Coordination (GOCCC) and supported by the Department of Education and the Division of Special Education. The outcomes and recommendations of this report are located on the TEIS website <http://www.TN.Gov/education/teis> . The 138 page GOCCC reform document laid the foundation and steps for the Reform of TEIS. The Reform was lead by the Office of Early Childhood, Division of Special Education's new director, Jamie Kilpatrick.

October 1, 2007 was a new day for Tennessee's Part C system. Nine State Point of Entry offices were established from Johnson City to Memphis and staffed with state personnel. The criterion for eligibility was equalized, creating consistency for all families interested in TEIS across the state. Since its inception in 1989, TEIS has developed its first Operations Manual and Public Policies, which assist to provide an equitable administration of the system. These have been developed with technical assistance from federal resources and with consultation from other states.

Part C mandates that states provide transition planning to assist families in preparing for the transition from Part C at age three to another system, program, or environment. TEIS continues to stress the importance of timely transition planning through training, monitoring, and communication between TEIS and the Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

On a fiscal note, TEIS is no longer on unstable fiscal footing, something that the program has experienced for many years. The program is also no longer under conditional federal funding, as the lack of Payment Policies has been resolved. This was a problem cited by the Office of Special Education Programming (OSEP) for years. Another positive fiscal note is that TEIS has provided seed monies to local programs in Memphis and Knoxville, with the intent of designing stronger programs for families and children affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder. Another TEIS initiative will ease the referral process for children involved with substantial cases of abuse or neglect into Part C. TEIS also continues to offer Part C support for group intervention, a service most states do not allow. These positive advancements in TEIS have been accomplished while fulfilling a promise to not institute family fees, something that has been done by almost every other state for years (see [www.nectac.org](http://www.nectac.org) for individual state's information).

The TEIS staff, along with state vendors and related community agencies are motivated and committed in making TEIS a strong, viable, and innovative program for years to come. Please visit <http://www.TN.Gov/education/teis> for brochures, vendor information, the Analysis Report, and other information Tennessee's Early Intervention System or call 1-800-852-7157.



## We are Cooking up an Event you don't Want to Miss!

STEP had great success with a Transition Institute held in Knoxville TN and there have been requests for that to be replicated across the state.



In the fall a STEP Transition Insitute will be held in Memphis! Information will be presented from a wide range of agencies and workshop topics will include in-depth planning strategies for developing Transition Plans and information you need to become familiar with options for life after high school. Workshops will be done in Spanish and English! To be placed on a list to receive further information about this event, email [information@tnstep.org](mailto:information@tnstep.org) and just put TRANSITION IN MEMPHIS in the subject line or call 1/800-280-7837 and ask to be added to the list.



Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
GREENEVILLE, TENNESSEE 37743  
PERMIT 24

Support & Training for Exceptional Parents, Inc.  
712 Professional Plaza  
Greeneville, TN 37745

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

---

## STEP AHEAD

---



## Unveiling the New State Special Education Manual



The new Special Education Manual has just been released (you can download from our web site <http://www.state.tn.us/education/>). The manual is designed to provide an overview of the manual which will give assistance to parents, local school personnel and State Department staff in answering questions and resolving concerns which relate to state and federal special education law, policies and procedures.

As a way of getting the information out to parents, the State Department of Education is coordinating with Support and Training for Exceptional Parents (STEP) in providing the SEM training. The dates, location, time, and registration information for the presentations that have been confirmed are below. Additional dates will be posted on the STEP website at [www.tnstep.org](http://www.tnstep.org) as they are scheduled. Please share this information with the parents in your area and encourage them to attend. The State Department of Education staff want to insure parents know about the new manual and the important contribution they have in their child's education. You can download a copy from the state web site <http://www.state.tn.us/education/>

### **Tuesday, September 16**

Hamilton Baptist Church  
3700 Bonny Oaks Dr.  
Chattanooga 6 - 7 pm  
Call Lisa to register at 423/645-0504  
A Parent's Introduction to Special  
Education will follow from 7 - 9 pm

### **Thursday, September 18**

Boones Creek Baptist Church  
305 Christian Church Rd.  
Gray/Washington Co. 6 - 7 pm  
Call Mary to register: 423/913-2203  
IEP training will follow from  
7 - 9 pm

### **Tuesday, September 22**

Cherokee Health Systems  
2018 Western Ave.  
Knoxville 6 - 7 pm  
Call Brook to register: 865/824-2897  
A Parent's Introduction to Special  
Education will follow from 7 - 9 pm