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## AHEAD

Volume 19

Issue 1

Winter 2008

### Jenness Roth Named Executive Director

Article written by Barbara Wagner  
Chair, STEP Board of Directors

STEP, Inc. has a new Executive Director, but she is anything but new to STEP. Jenness Roth has been with STEP since 1995, when she resigned her position as a special education teacher in the Memphis City School System. Since that time, many parents and professionals have come to know Jenness as a devoted and dedicated advocate for the rights of children and parents. As the mother of a son with autism, STEP's mission is both a personal and professional motivator.

During her 12 years with STEP, Jenness has served as the West TN Regional Coordinator, Co-Director and Interim Executive Director. She has gained the respect of many colleagues who are also leaders in Tennessee. Walter Rogers, Executive Director of The ARC of Tennessee stated, "I have found her leadership and collaborative efforts to be of high standard and effective. You will not find a more committed leader of the cause and a more skilled navigator of our complex system for children utilizing specialized services in our state." Upon hearing of Jenness' appointment, he said, "I was delighted to hear the news of the Board of Director's decision to hire Jenness Roth as your new Executive Director. I and my co-workers here at The Arc of Tennessee are looking forward to our continued working relationship with STEP."

Others have voiced similar sentiments and confidence. Jawanda B. Mast, Executive Director of the Down Syndrome Association of the Mid-south said of Jenness' abilities, "Jenness has an unusual ability to be able to see the big picture but is also able to address the unique needs of the one child/family. In the role of state director, her personal experiences, organizational skills and depth of understanding will prove to be valuable resources – opening doors for STEP and families. Under her leadership, I am certain the organization will thrive." After a lengthy search, the Board of Directors met November 17 and voted unanimously to offer her the position. The meeting took place as part of the second combined Board and Staff Retreat, held at the Alex Haley Farm in Clinton, TN. When the decision was announced to everyone attending, cheers and tears of joy filled the room. The employees, District Parent Trainers and Board members, are very fortunate to have Jenness. Lisa Gorove, Project Officer with the Office of Special Education Programs responded, "This is excellent news. OSEP has been very impressed with the strides that STEP has made in the past year. As Project Officer, I attribute much of the growth to Jenness Roth's efforts. I feel confident that families in TN can contact the PTI and receive services that are of high quality, responsive, and culturally competent." (con't pg.3)



**STEP staff, board, and parent trainers  
Haley Farm  
2nd Annual Joint Staff/Board Retreat  
November 2007**

**1st row: (L to R)**

Terry Long, Barbara Wagner, Jenness Roth,  
Laurel Ryan, Karen Harrison, Juanita Flakes

**2nd row:**

Pam Huber, Lisa Mattheiss, Scott Finney,  
Brandi Mareno, Susan Speraw, Kimberly Trent

**3rd row:**

Sally Ottinger, Donna Jennings, Virginia Piper,  
Carnisa Dillard, Linda Burrows

**Last Row:**

Steven Glowicki, Brian Sims,  
Bill Allen, Mark Trent

## STEP WORKSHOPS ACROSS TENNESSEE

## Workshop Schedule

Call (800) 280-STEP or e-mail us at [information@tnstep.org](mailto:information@tnstep.org)  
Preregistration is requested for all workshops.

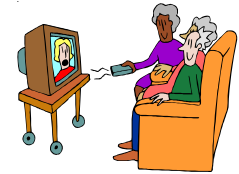
Date	Time	Workshop	TN	Location	Contact
01/28/08	6:00 pm	Basic	E	Knoxville/Knox Co.	(865) 637-3914
01/29/08	9:00 am	Basic	E	Coalmont/Grundy Co.	(931) 592-2311
01/31/08	6:00 pm	Basic	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 648-1758
02/05/08	6:00 pm	Evaluations	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
02/09/08	12:00 pm	Basic	W	Bartlett/Shelby Co.	(901) 388-1228
02/12/08	6:00 pm	Basic	M	Dickson/Dickson Co.	(615) 469-7350
02/12/08	6:00 pm	Basic	M	Tullahoma/Coffee Co.	(931) 454-0050x3
02/19/08	6:00 pm	Basic	M	Fort Campbell/KY	(270) 798-2727
02/19/08	5:30 pm	Basic	M	Pulaski/Giles Co.	(931) 424-1816
02/21/08	5:30 pm	Basic	M	Waverly/Humphreys Co.	(931) 289-4135
03/06/08	6:00 pm	Communication	E	Gray/Washington Co.	(423) 913-2203
03/11/08	6:00 pm	IEP	M	Dickson/Dickson Co.	(615) 469-6350
03/13/08	5:00 pm	Basic	M	Nashville/Davidson Co.	(615) 936-5209
03/18/08	6:00 pm	Basic	E	Chattanooga/Hamilton Co.	(423) 645-0504
04/10/08	6:00 pm	IEP	W	Memphis/Shelby Co.	(901) 547-7588
04/15/08	6:00 pm	IEP	M	Fort Campbell/KY	(270) 798-2727

(E=East TN, M=Middle TN, W=West TN)

This list is as of 01/23/08, 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! These trainings are free to parents or other family members! Professionals are welcome to attend, there may be a nominal charge for some materials.

## Workshop In A Box

A convenient way for you and your friends to get the information you need!  
Superbowl parties are all the rage...but learning your rights, or how to improve your communication skills can be a rewarding evening for you and some friends.  
**Choose a topic:** BASIC rights, Communication, or Section 504 Anti-Discrimination.  
**Call to order:** The dvd and materials will be sent to you.  
**Invite your friends:** Let the learning begin. Call 1/800-280-7837



## Nominations for the Wayne Parker Advocate of the Year Now Being Accepted

Each year STEP honors the memory of Wayne Parker who was a zealous advocate for the rights of children and families. He worked tirelessly to ensure that families had the information they needed to speak up and advocate for the needs of their children with disabilities. Wayne was also a strong advocate for encouraging young people with disabilities to advocate for the life they wanted. Wayne was well respected by parents and professionals. Wayne was always quick to praise members of school teams when they went above and beyond in their advocacy efforts for students.

If you know of a parent, student, or professional who has demonstrated the powerful outcomes that are possible by applying your rights in an assertive and positive manner, this is your opportunity to submit their story for recognition. Please provide a brief story along with the nominee's name and contact information. Nominations can be sent to [information@tnstep.org](mailto:information@tnstep.org) or by fax to (423) 636 - 8217.



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Jeness 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

**Roth (con't from page 1)**

Steve T. Raney, a now private attorney who has worked with Jenness for over 10 years said, "The Board has made a wise and fantastic decision." As a former Compliance Supervisor of Memphis City Schools, Mr. Raney observed, "She has dedicated her life to helping parents and children with disabilities to receive the services the children need."

With such hearty support from the Board, the employees and a wide and varied cross section of professionals in Tennessee, parents should feel the information and services they have come to expect from STEP will continue to be of the highest standard. Other organizations and agencies can be assured of her dedication to continue to collaborate with them and forge new relationships with many others. While Jenness continues to reside in Memphis, finding her there may be difficult due to her commitment to represent STEP effectively. She spends time in each of the three STEP offices across Tennessee. If you have not had the pleasure of meeting her, you can likely find her at an upcoming Institute or Forum sponsored by STEP.

**Scientific Researched Based Instruction**

No Child Left Behind Act and IDEA 2004 as well as many federal K-12 grant programs, call on educational practitioners to use "scientifically-based research" to guide their decisions about which interventions to implement to improve student achievement.

McGraw-Hill Education has specific research-based solutions and information designed to help meet the needs of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) including the integration of technology in the classroom.

[www.mheducation.com/programs/nclb\\_solutions.shtml](http://www.mheducation.com/programs/nclb_solutions.shtml)

The International Campbell Collaboration  
Reviews of evidence on the effects of interventions in educational arenas.

<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org>

**IDEA 2004 Introducción a la Educación Especial para Padres  
¡Disponible en español!**

STEP tiene ahora un DVD en español que explica los conceptos básicos de los derechos de los padres establecidos por el Acto de Educación para los Individuos Discapacitados, tales como la Educación Pública Gratuita Apropriadada para discapacitados y su evaluación. Aquellos interesados en ver este DVD, sea un padre, una madre, o un grupo de padres, pueden comunicarse con la línea directa en español al 1-800-975-2919.

**IDEA 2004 DVD training available in Spanish!**

STEP now has a Spanish BASIC rights dvd that explains the core concepts of parental rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Topics include Evaluation, Free Appropriate Public Education, Evaluation, and much more. Any parent or parent group that would like to check out the dvd can call 1/800-280-7837

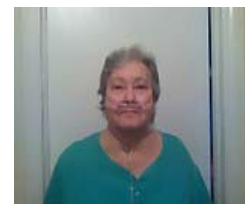
*We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.*

**Marian Wright Edelman**

Thank you to all the people who have donated their time, talents, funds and support this year. We recognize that each workshop sponsored, brochure given, or check sent is a unique gift and impacts STEP's ability to serve families across TN.

**Exceptional Volunteer Recognized**

When Wanda Rader began volunteering for STEP a few hours a week, no one could have foreseen the impact that she would have over time for families that are served by STEP. Wanda recently passed the "100 hours of volunteer service" mark! We cannot express what that means to our organization. Many of the packets readers have received were assembled by Wanda. In fact, Wanda spent many hours making survey calls to find out what families had to say about STEP services. Wanda is truly an exceptional volunteer. In total she has logged 173 volunteer hours! What is truly incredible is that Wanda recently had serious health issues and is under doctor's orders not to leave her house. That has not dampened her volunteer efforts--she is stuffing packets from home. When asked what volunteering means to her she said, "I feel like I am making a difference and helping parents and kids. I love STEP and enjoy giving information to parents to help them know where to go for help. If anyone is able to volunteer, STEP is a great place to do it. They really care about families and children with disabilities." Wanda is the proud grandmother of Cody, who has Cerebral Palsy, and lights up her world. From our hearts we thank you Wanda!





## Comunicándose con la Escuela de Su

Usted quiere que su hijo sea exitoso en la escuela. El trabajar como socio con los maestros y la administración de la escuela es una buena manera de asegurarnos de que nuestros hijos tienen el apoyo y las oportunidades de aprendizaje para prepararlos para el futuro. Una de las barreras más grandes para las asociaciones exitosas es la **comunicación**—especialmente cuando se refiere a preocupaciones o problemas que involucren a nuestros hijos. Hemos reunido algunos consejos que pueden ayudarlo cuando esté comunicándose con la escuela de su hijo. **Usted puede estar de acuerdo con el asunto que debe ser cubierto, pero no estar en total acuerdo en cómo Empezando.** *Primero, entienda que su papel como padre es único. Nadie conoce y ama a su hijo de la manera que usted lo hace. Su pasión, como padre, puede ayudarlo a comunicar brillantemente, y algunas veces, puede sobrepasarlo.*

### Paso 1. Mantenga su enfoque positivo.

No deje que los pensamientos de problemas en la escuela en el pasado (o en el presente) y otros pensamientos se metan en su mente. Enfóquese positivamente en sus metas y la visión de que la escuela quiere hacer lo mejor para su hijo. Si usted espera tener dificultades cuando se reúna con el personal de la escuela, su mente y cuerpo estarán preparados para una batalla. Respire profundamente. No deje que su frustración o enojo se metan en el camino de sus esfuerzos para compartir sus ideas y preocupaciones para el éxito de su hijo.

**Paso 2. De prioridad y planee.** ¿Cuál es la cosa más importante que tiene que ser cubierta para su hijo? Haga una lista de asuntos, preguntas, y posibles soluciones. Clasifíquelos. Decida si hay algunos que pueda no tomar en cuenta y cual(es) debe(n) de ser cumplidos. Planee como está dispuesto a dar y recibir para poder alcanzar la meta más alta. Bosqueje lo que tiene que decir y practique, si eso ayuda **“Lo que ahora es más importante para Jordan es . . . Necesitamos enfocarnos en . . .”**

**Paso 3. Escuche activamente para comprender la perspectiva de la otra persona.** Sea directo: “Simplemente no entiendo lo que está diciendo. ¿Podría explicarlo de diferente manera o darme algunos ejemplos?” “¿Hay algo que pueda mostrarme, en escrito, para poder entenderlo completamente?” Siga preguntando y espere por las respuestas hasta que entienda completamente. Resista cualquier tentación de responder sus propias preguntas o poner palabras en la boca de alguien más.



**Paso 4. Clarifique sus declaraciones si ve una expresión de duda en la cara de alguien más y pida clarificación de regreso. Para se entendido:** “No debo estar explicando esto claramente, lo que estoy tratando de decir es . . .”

Al final, pida el “sí.” Conforme se comunique y negocie, descubrirá áreas en la que usted y la escuela estén de acuerdo. Usted puede estar de acuerdo con el asunto que debe ser cubierto, pero no estar en total acuerdo en cómo cubrirlo. Esto quiere decir presentando y analizando completamente las soluciones propuestas en sus propios méritos. Esto también significa realizar algunas preguntas directa, pero educadamente como: “Sigo confundido. ¿Por qué es esto una opción?” “Felipe necesita esto. ¿Quién tiene algunas ideas de cómo podemos hacer que esto suceda?”

Asegúrese de que el enfoque se mantenga en su hijo y en cubrir sus necesidades.

Adaptado de CADRE & Parents Reaching Out  
www.parentsreachingout.org

## Communication with Your Child's School

You want your child to be successful in school. Working as a partner with teachers and the school administration is a good way to make sure that our children have the support and learning opportunities to prepare them for the future. One of the biggest barriers to successful partnerships is **communication**—especially when it comes to concerns or problems that involve our children. We've gathered some tips that may help you when you are communicating with your child's school.

**Getting Started.** *First, understand that your role as a parent is unique. No one knows and loves your child the way that you do. Your passion, as a parent, can help you communicate brilliantly, and sometimes, it can overtake you.*

### Step 1. Keep your focus positive.

Keep thoughts of past (or present) problems at school and other negatives from creeping into your mind. Focus positively on your goals and the view that the school wants to do their best for your child. If you expect to have difficulty when meeting with school personnel, your mind and body will be primed for battle. Take a deep breath. Don't let your frustration or anger get in the way of your efforts to share your ideas or concerns for your child's success.



**Step 2. Prioritize and plan.** What's the most important thing that needs to be accomplished for your child? Make a list of the issues, questions, and possible solutions. Rank them. Decide if there are any you can pass on and which one(s) must be addressed. Plan how you are willing to give and take in order to achieve the higher goal. Map out what you need to say and practice, if that helps. **“What's most important for Jordan right now is . . . We need to focus on . . .”**

**Step 3. Actively listen to understand the other person's perspective.** Be direct: “I just don't understand what you are saying. Can you explain it in a different way or give me some examples?” “Is there something you can show me, in writing, so I can fully understand?” Keep asking and wait for responses until you do fully understand. Resist any temptation to answer your own questions or put words into someone else's mouth.

**Step 4. Clarify your statements if you see a puzzled expression on someone's face and ask for clarification in return. To be understood:** “I must not be explaining this clearly, what I'm trying to say is . . .”

In the end, ask for the “yes.” As you communicate and negotiate, you will uncover areas where you may agree on the issue that must be addressed, but not be in full agreement on how to address it. This is when it can be especially helpful to restate and discuss options in a problem solving way. This means presenting and fully analyzing proposed solutions on their own merits. It also means asking some direct, yet polite, questions such as: “I'm still puzzled. Why isn't this an option?” “Felipe needs this. Who has some ideas on how we can make it happen?”

Make sure that the focus stays on your child and meeting his or her needs.

For more communication strategies check out the “Communication, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution” dvd from the STEP lending library.  
Call 1/800-280-7837

## Job Openings at STEP

### WEST TN: Project Assistant 20 hours per week

To provide parent training activities and to work directly with parents of children with disabilities. The job entails providing information, training, and support to parents to meet the purposes of the project.

### Middle TN: Outreach Planning/Training Coordinator Full time position/Benefits

A management/administrative position working with all project staff and STEP staff to support the project. This position provides parent training activities and works directly with parents of children with disabilities. Provides recruitment, selection, and supervision of District Parent Trainers and Community Resource Volunteers. The position also entails providing information, training, and support to parents to meet the purposes of the project, and statewide planning and coordination of outreach activities.

STEP is actively seeking to give employment opportunities to persons who experience disability, minority status, and/or are families members of persons with disabilities. Send resume along with a cover letter explaining your interest and any advocacy, training, and mentoring experiences (including personal experiences) that you feel would qualify you for any of these positions. Send to: [jobs@tnstep.org](mailto:jobs@tnstep.org) (attachments in MS Word, PDF, or WordPerfect only).

## STEP Welcomes Linda Burrows as Project Assistant

Hello to those (ancients) who remember me from past years with STEP. I am so pleased to be doing work that I love, with those I love and respect. Through the years STEP has been the gold standard for knowledge and respect for all peoples. Thank you for the opportunity to work with you again. An update on my son Charles to those who know him or may meet him eventually. He is an adult working 5 days a week with support (job coach). He is living in a supported living home with one roommate and dating!(My Heart). STEP, his good education, Voc. Rehab. supports are all responsible for the fact that my son has a LIFE. Bless all those who have been involved!



## Love of Letters and Gameshows Leads To Trip to LA

It is important to introduce letters, words, and numbers to children early to promote literacy. Sometimes that exposure comes through bedtime stories, labeling objects in the house or looking at price tags in the mall. For Sarah Harrison, a fascination with game shows helped with her acquisition of language and love of words! Prior to age eight Sarah was not able to verbally participate in "calling out letters" on the Wheel or "bidding" on items on the Price Is Right so she used her picture board to point to Bob Barker (right at 11:00) and Pat Sajak. Parents will use any tactic they can to help their children, and we were no exception. To get Sarah to come and put on her shoes when she refused, we would say "Sarah Harrison, Come On Down and put your shoes on!" It worked everytime. In October a wish was granted for Sarah to visit a taping of the Wheel of Fortune. When she came out on stage and saw her name on the puzzle board she stood transfixed and said S-A-R-A-H over and over! I know that using what Sarah liked to improve literacy really worked.



As part of STEP's ongoing work with the TN Department of Education State Improvement Grant (SIG), whose major focus is parent involvement in literacy and improving outcomes for students, STEP has been working on a dvd project that will highlight literacy possibilities for students with disabilities. The dvd, entitled "Literacy Is for ALL", is set to be completed by Feb. 27. Copies of the dvd will be made available at conferences and by request. Many partners worked with us in the filming of the dvd and we are excited about the impact for families, students and professionals in including literacy objectives in students' individual plans.

**Standing with gameshow hosts Pat Sajak and Vanna White are Sarah Harrison and her parents, Jimmie and Karen. Seeing her name on the puzzle board is an experience Sarah will never forget!**

Written By Karen Harrison

For more information on referring a child or making a donation to the foundation, please see [www.wish.org](http://www.wish.org)

### STEP Services Make a Difference!



#### *George the Pirate in his Kindergarten play*

George is a 7 y/o boy who happens to have Down Syndrome. Thanks to the training and support I received from STEP, he is fully included in his Kindergarten class! He is doing fabulously academically-reading first grade words, counting to 40, and learning how to tell time. He is quite popular never without a friend. --Written by George's mom

### Board Chair Shares Insights and Hopes

STEP, Inc. is fortunate to have a dedicated Board of Directors that have made a commitment to the mission of our organization. Many of the board members have had personal experiences accessing STEP services for their son or daughter with disabilities. Board Chair, Barbara Wagner, recently agreed to share her thoughts regarding her role on the Board of Directors and the board's collective vision for STEP.

#### → **What do you wish someone had told you before you became Board chair?**

How difficult it is to find fellow board members that have time to take the lead in carrying out the board responsibilities. We are working to expand the board so that committee work can be diversified and we can bring more expertise to the table and not burn out those members who are continuously called upon for tasks.

#### → **What is your motivation to serve on the STEP board?**

My first experience with special education was before STEP had been formed. Having to find my own way through the special education process in a system that was not forthcoming about my rights made me appreciate the work that STEP does, which is critical to parents being involved in the process.

#### → **What do you think is most important about the relationship between the board chair and the executive director?**

Honesty and open communication are so important. We have accomplished a great deal simply because we communicate openly. Because board members are not typically present when services are being delivered, we rely on the integrity of the staff as they inform the board. I appreciate the trust that the executive director has in me as the board chair.

#### → **What is your vision for step?**

I would love for STEP to be able to have additional staff to serve TN. The board is looking for ways to expand STEP services. I am very proud of the reputation that STEP staff has across TN for providing accurate information and assistance with strategies on how to effectively use the IDEA to improve outcomes for children with disabilities. My vision is that the board and staff will routinely brainstorm about the needs of families and children and work together to increase the capacity of STEP to meet those needs.

### The 2008 Disability MegaConference

May 28 - 30

Those parents and professionals who have attended will tell you, "There is something for everyone at this conference!"

Conference strands include:

- Employment
- Systems Change
- Administrative/Management
- Assistive Technology
- Quality Supports
- Empowerment
- Disability Specific
- Education
- Access

You won't believe how much you will learn! Make plans to attend.

Call: (615)248-5878

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

This is your opportunity to hobnob with state legislators at the Capitol and talk about issues important to you and your family. Dozens of disability organizations from across the state will be participating and with your help we can ensure that every legislator gets to hear from a constituent with a disability, a family member or friend.

For information on how your organization can get involved contact the Coalition's Courtney Jenkins-Atnip at [courtney\\_j@tndisability.org](mailto:courtney_j@tndisability.org), by phone at 615-383-9442 or by TTY at 615-292-7790.

**West Tennessee** - February 27th, 2008

**Middle Tennessee** - March 5th, 2008

**East Tennessee** - March 12th, 2008





## A New Year: Seeing Challenges as Opportunities

By Jenness Roth



I am so honored and excited to have been given the chance to continue on with the amazing STEP team as executive director. We all look forward to new beginnings—knowing that inherent to change is uncertainty and challenge. As I think about STEP's new involvement with our State Improvement Grant and potentially with the State Personnel Development Grant, and STEP's role in teaching families about Response to Intervention, and also explore the infusion of new standards for best practices for non-profits into our existing work, it is easy to identify the challenges—the primary one being the 24-hour day! Families can identify with this, as they seek to not only feed, clothe, and guide their children, but also to partner with the schools on behalf of their children with special needs in an environment where laws, terminology, and methodologies change seemingly every day!

But as soon as these changes and challenges come into our lives we can choose to see the opportunities that they convey. While involvement in, for example, Tennessee's State Improvement Grant has meant lots of time spent in meetings, in product development, and in training, it has also meant being at the table "at the front end" when systems were beginning to change and being able to speak with a parent's voice about the potential impact of those changes. STEP has been privileged to be part of a state team invited to Washington D.C. to discuss Response to Intervention as it applies to all kids; it is clear to me that the Parent Center opportunity in this is to ensure that equal partnerships and level playing fields exist, that parents have solid information about what is going on and what it all means—for their unique, diverse, and amazing children. We must continue to say in a clear voice that success for our kids depends not only on professional expertise but also on our participation and buy-in. Therein lies our challenge, our opportunity as a Parent Center, and as parents: to make sure that we are at the table when decisions are being made about the big changes and innovations, and to then remind everyone that we are talking not just about systems, but about kids learning—one kid at a time.



**Staff member Donna Jennings enjoys a selection from the Langston Hughes Library**

The recent staff retreat was a time of renewal for STEP staff and Haley Farm was the perfect location to spend time in reflection and planning. Located in Clinton, TN, the retreat center is available to organizations whose mission includes making positive change for families and children. Staff spent time building their knowledge base about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to ensure that we are providing accurate information to families. A bonus of having the planning retreat at Haley Farm was the opportunity to spend time in the Langston Hughes Library. Much of the planning for STEP outreach services to unserved and underserved individuals was done in this environment steeped in cultural history.

Brandi Mareno, District Parent Trainer for STEP, remarked of her experience:

**"This was the perfect place to retreat, the heritage was amazing to learn and the chance to meet with our counterparts was comforting and just plain fun. I look forward to more training and mingling. Thank you."**

### A Hot Topic of Discussion: Restraint and Seclusion

By Steven Glowicki



Today, nothing in Tennessee's laws or education rules regulates the use of restraints and seclusion in school settings. As a result, it is possible that a student might be physically restrained or isolated for a long period of time without the family being notified. There are also no limits on the frequency or length of episodes of restraint/seclusion, or training requirements for school staff that use these practices. A Bill to establish guidelines and reporting requirements for restraint and seclusion was introduced in the TN legislature during the 2007 session, HB1186/SB1662. The Bill did not pass, but the legislative study group has been set up to review these practices in TN schools. The Bill was not passed in part because the Legislators did not feel this was a problem in Tennessee. We need your stories to help prove to the Legislators that this is a problem in Tennessee. This is extremely time sensitive, and we need all of your help. So if you have a story that can help us make our case there are a couple of different methods that you can choose for entering your survey. If you have access to the internet, you can visit the Tennessee Disability Coalition's website: <http://www.tndisability.org/restraint.htm> Further explanation of the purpose of the survey will be provided and a link to the online survey. If you do not have access to the internet or you have questions about the survey, call Steven Glowicki at 615-463-2310 or Sally Ottinger at 800-280-7837. We would be happy to mail a hard copy of the survey and answer any questions you may have about the survey. All information will be kept confidential. --Cited from information provide by the Disability Coalition on Education (DCE).

## *State Board of Education Passes New Eligibility Criteria*

All revisions for the disability eligibility standards (with the exception of Specific Learning Disabilities) received final approval from the State Board of Education on August 10, 2007. Specific Learning Disabilities received final approval on December 19, 2007. The SLD standards are effective immediately. A memo specific to the changes is posted on the Department of Education website. The approved revisions of the disability eligibility standards are posted on the Special Education Assessment web page at <http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced/>. In this special edition of the STEP newsletter we will explain changes to the format of the eligibility criteria and highlight changes in some of the eligibility categories. Due to the significant changes in the Specific Learning Disability criteria, it will be included in its entirety, along with supplemental documents regarding identification of SLD.

### **TN Eligibility Standards Take New Format**

The definitions for each eligibility category have been expanded to include information that was formerly in a separate section of "eligibility standards". Each category is now consistent in both the format and the language. The format for each area is the following: (1.) Definition (2.) Evaluation: which includes Evaluation Procedures and Evaluation Participants. In regard to the evaluation participants, one change of note is that the team members for evaluation now include the general education classroom teacher AND a licensed special education teacher. A good tip provided during training was that unless the standard says that an evaluation measure must be "standardized", it is not required to be.

#### ***Intellectually Gifted***

The Gifted Task Force completed revisions of standards and assessment procedures for the identification of students (K-12) as Intellectually Gifted and made recommendations for changes in the gifted eligibility standards, which were approved. According to a memo from Ann Sanders-Eakes the "revisions in these standards provide a more equitable and reliable opportunity for students who are potentially gifted to be recognized, referred and evaluated. These revisions are aligned with recognized constructs which describe giftedness and provide a valid method for the identification of all students who are gifted.

#### ***Developmental Delay***

The changes to the standards for Developmental Delay were made, in part, to clarify the language regarding the evaluation process for students served in the category after age 7. The standards include: "After the age of seven, when reevaluation for continued eligibility is

determined appropriate by the IEP team, the reevaluation shall include at a minimum, a multi-measure diagnostic procedure which includes a comprehensive psychoeducation assessment that measures developmental skills, cognitive functioning, and/or additional area as determined appropriate by the IEP team."

#### ***Functional Delay***

The definition of functional delay is "a continuing significant disability in intellectual functioning and achievement which adversely affects the student's ability to progress in the general school program, but adaptive behavior in the home or community is not significantly impaired and is at or near a level appropriate to the student' chronological age." The standards are detailed regarding the level of deficit and have specific information about the selection of tests that are "sensitive to cultural, linguistic or sensory factors."

#### ***Mental Retardation***

An interesting point regarding assessments and interpretation of evaluation results in the MR standard is that factors that may affect test performance should be "taken into account" to make sure that the assessment tool being used meets the needs of the student. Teams do not "rule out" factors like limited English proficiency, cultural factors, medical conditions that impact school performance, environmental factors, communication, sensory or motor disabilities, but take into account that those factors may affect test performance.

*For more information regarding changes in the eligibility standards contact the TN Dept. of Education at 1-888-212-3162*

As always, a terrific resource to turn to when you have questions is the STEP parent manual. If you have attended a workshop or viewed and returned the BASIC rights dvd, you have a print copy. The manual is also available in a searchable format on our website [www.tnstep.org](http://www.tnstep.org). The parent manual includes not only the new eligibility standards, but also IDEA 2004 statute and regulations, the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the TN special education Rules (which are slated to be passed mid-February), sample letters, and many disability related resources. If you haven't visited the STEP website recently, check it out for links, list of packets and other points of interest.





1. **Definition**

“Specific Learning Disability” The term Specific Learning Disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations, and that adversely affects a child’s educational performance. Such term includes conditions such as perceptual disabilities (e.g., visual processing), brain injury that is not caused by an external physical force, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia. Specific Learning Disability does not include a learning problem that is primarily the result of Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment; Mental Retardation; Emotional Disturbance; limited English proficiency; environmental or cultural disadvantage.

2. **Evaluation The characteristics as identified in the Specific Learning Disabilities Definition are present.**

a. Evaluation for Specific Learning Disabilities shall meet the following nine standards:

- (1) evidence that underachievement in a child was not due to a lack of appropriate (the child’s State-approved grade level standards) scientifically-validated instruction (instruction that has been researched using rigorous, well-designed, objective, systematic, and peer-reviewed studies) in reading and math;
- (2) evidence that prior to, or as a part of, the referral process, the child was provided appropriate instruction in general education settings;
- (3) evidence that instruction was delivered by appropriately trained personnel;
- (4) data-based documentation of repeated formal assessment of student progress during instruction (progress monitoring data) that has been collected and recorded frequently (a minimum of one data point per week in each area of academic concern);
- (5) evidence that progress monitoring data was provided to the child’s parents at a minimum of once every four and one-half (4.5) weeks;
- (6) evidence that, when provided scientifically-validated instruction and appropriate interventions and learning experiences, the child did not achieve at a proficiency level or rate consistent with State-approved grade level standards or with the child’s age, in one or more of the following areas;
  - (a) oral expression,
  - (b) listening comprehension,
  - (c) written expression,
  - (d) basic reading skills,
  - (e) reading fluency skills,
  - (f) reading comprehension,
  - (g) mathematics calculation, and
  - (h) mathematics problem solving;
- (7) evidence that the child exhibits a pattern of strengths and weaknesses in performance, achievement, or both, relative to State-approved grade-level standards, the child’s age, or intellectual development that is determined to be relevant to the identification of a Specific Learning Disability (as defined in the definition of Specific Learning Disabilities); and
- (8) evidence that the child’s learning problems are not primarily due to Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment; Mental Retardation; Emotional Disturbance; limited English proficiency; environmental or cultural factors; motivational factors; or situational trauma (i.e., temporary, sudden, or recent change in the child’s life);

b. A child whose characteristics meet the definition of a child having a Specific Learning Disability may be identified as a child eligible for Special Education services if:

- (1) all the requirements of standards 2.a.(1) – 2.a. (8) have been met;
- (2) the evidence and documentation is evaluated and results verify that the characteristics exhibited by the child meet the definition of a Specific Learning Disability; and
- (3) documentation, including observation and/or assessment, of how Specific Learning Disabilities adversely impacts the child’s educational performance in his/her learning environment.

**Evaluation Procedures**

Evaluation and identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities may be conducted using either a State-Approved Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI) Method of Identification or the State-Approved IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Method of Identification as described in Procedural Addenda A and B, respectively, of the Specific Learning Disabilities Standards.

**SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES Standards (con't from page 9)**Evaluation Participants

Information shall be gathered from the following persons in the evaluation of a Specific Learning Disability:

- (1) the parent;
- (2) the child's general education classroom teacher;
- (3) a licensed special education teacher; a licensed school psychologist, licensed psychological examiner, licensed senior psychological examiner, or licensed psychologist;
- (4) at least one person qualified to conduct an individual diagnostic evaluation (e.g., licensed special education teacher, licensed speech-language teacher/pathologist or licensed remedial reading teacher/specialist); and
- (5) other professional personnel as indicated (e.g., Optometrist or Ophthalmologist).

**PROCEDURAL ADDENDUM A      SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES**

The Responsiveness to Intervention (RTI) Method of Identification

**1. Definition**

RTI is a set of systematic and data-based instructional processes for identifying, defining, and resolving students' academic and/or behavioral problems. RTI is a multi-tiered approach that provides services and interventions to struggling learners at increasing levels of intensity. The RTI approach must use a systematic process with a continuum of intervention options to determine if the child responds to scientific, research-based interventions.

**2. Evaluation**

(1) A Response to Intervention Method of Identification may be used for the identification of students with Specific Learning Disabilities when the following requirements are met:

- (a) districts and/or schools must receive state approval from the Tennessee Department of Education, Division of Special Education, Office of Assessment, 710 James Robertson Parkway, Nashville, Tennessee, 37243 before using the RTI Method of Identification for Specific Learning Disabilities; and
- (b) the submitted plan must include, at a minimum, completion of the Tennessee RTI Action Plan template at the Division of Special Education website on the Special Education Assessment page: <http://state.tn.us/education/speced/seassessment.shtml>.
- (c) The Tennessee RTI Action Plan follows the standards of excellence presented in the IRIS Center for Training Enhancements, RTI Online Modules located at <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources.html> particularly Module 4: RTI: Putting it all Together, and Module 5: RTI: Considerations for School Leaders.

(2) A State-approved RTI Method of Identification must include:

- (a) high-quality instruction and positive behavioral supports provided by appropriately trained personnel;
- (b) scientifically-validated interventions appropriate for suspected area of disability;
- (c) frequent, ongoing progress monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions and inform instruction that includes:
  - i. data-based documentation to illustrate the student's response to the intervention(s);
  - ii. data-based documentation of intervention integrity, fidelity to design, and intensity; and
  - iii. periodic collaborative student support team review of student outcome data taking into account Local Education Agency-determined decision points.
- (d) documentation of parental input; and, as appropriate, the child's input; and
- (e) documentation that the child's learning problems are not primarily due to:
 

i. lack of appropriate instruction in reading and math;	vi. Mental Retardation;
ii. limited English proficiency;	vii. Emotional Disturbance;
iii. Visual Impairment;	viii. environmental or cultural factors;
iv. Hearing Impairment;	ix. Motivational factors; and
v. Orthopedic Impairment;	x. situational trauma.

(3) Evaluation using a State-approved RTI Method of Identification must include:

- (a) data demonstrating the student's non-responsiveness to scientifically-validated interventions supported by comprehensive, curriculum-based data;
- (b) documentation that rules out other disabilities or factors including the administration of a linguistically and culturally-fair individual, standardized scale of intelligence (short-form measures of cognitive ability established by the State as valid and reliable may be used); and
- (c) a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation when the assessment results from the previous standards listed in (3)(a) and (3)(b) are inconclusive.

**PROCEDURAL ADDENDUM B - SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITIES -****The IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Method of Identification****1. Definition**

The IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Method of Identification concludes there is a severe discrepancy between educational performance and predicted achievement that is based on the best measure of cognitive ability. A severe discrepancy between educational performance and predicted achievement that is based on the best measure of cognitive ability is defined by at least 1.5 Standard Deviations (considering Standard Error of the Estimate) when utilizing regression-based discrepancy analyses described in Tennessee's guidelines for evaluation of Specific Learning Disabilities in the SLD Assessment Resource Packet: <http://www.state.tn.us/education/speced/seassessment/>.

**2. Evaluation**

(1) The IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Method of Identification must include documentation that all the standards in the Specific Learning Disabilities Evaluation Section 2.a.(1) – 2.a.(8) and Evaluation Section 2.b.(1) through 2.b.(3) have been met.

(2) Evaluation using the IQ/Achievement Discrepancy Method of Identification must also include:

- (a) an individual standardized multi-factored assessment of cognitive ability;
- (b) an individual standardized assessment of academic achievement;
- (c) documentation of performance on all of the following:
  - i. group or individually administered achievement tests; and
  - ii. criterion-referenced assessments or curriculum/performance-based assessments;
- (d) at least two documented observations of the child's educational performance in the general education classroom including:
  - i. an indirect observation by the child's general education classroom teacher, and
  - ii. a direct observation by a professional other than the person providing the indirect observation (observations shall address the child's academic behaviors, academic performance, and relevant work samples);
- (e) documentation of parental input; and, as appropriate, the child's input; and
- (f) documentation that the child's learning problems are not primarily due to:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. lack of appropriate instruction in reading and math;</li> <li>ii. limited English proficiency;</li> <li>iii. Visual Impairment;</li> <li>iv. Hearing Impairment;</li> <li>v. Orthopedic Impairment;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vi. Mental Retardation;</li> <li>vii. Emotional Disturbance;</li> <li>viii. environmental or cultural factors;</li> <li>ix. Motivational factors; and</li> <li>x. situational trauma.</li> </ul>
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**Side by Side English/Spanish Resource**

Este manual les da a los padres valor para defender efectivamente el derecho de sus hijos a obtener una educación inclusiva. Cada página incluye contenido en español y en inglés.

"Este libro ofrece, en lenguaje simple, mucha información de gran utilidad para los padres que necesitan guía de cómo ejercitar, en las escuelas, los derechos de sus hijos con discapacidades."  
--Carmen Carrillo, Director Ejecutivo, Mi Casa Centro de Recursos para Mujeres

**Autor:** Randy Chapman Si desea ordenar copias de este libro, visitar nuestro sitio Web en [www.thelegalcenter.org](http://www.thelegalcenter.org) o llamarnos al 1-800-288-1376

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--Carmen Carrillo, Executive Director, Mi Casas Resource Center for Woman, Denver Colorado

**Autor:** Randy Chapman If you would like to order a copy of this book, visit the website at [www.thelegalcenter.org](http://www.thelegalcenter.org) or call 1-800-288-1376

**As Valentine's day approaches our thoughts turn to letting those we love and care about know how much they mean to us and the impact they have had on our lives.**

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## **STEP AHEAD**

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### **Remembering Jerry McEwen**

By Jenness Roth

STEP's staff were shocked and saddened to learn of the recent death of our webdesigner, Jerry McEwen, of Coolcats Creative. Jerry was visiting his neighborhood Kroger store in Nashville when he attempted to thwart a robbery attempt and was stabbed in the process. The "good Samaritan" aspect of this event apparently didn't surprise those who knew Jerry well and said it was just like him to try to help someone in trouble. I was, however, very surprised when I began to read tributes and blogs about Jerry's amazing life. To us he was our "go-to" guy for email troubles, website changes, or for anything computer related. We often had to plead with him to "speak English" with us, as his technical savvy invoked that unique language that only computer geniuses really understand. But to others, who have written volumes on various blogspots and webpages, Jerry was the quintessential musician—having played guitar professionally for more than 23 years and accompanied the likes of Crystal Gale, John Prine, the Everly Brothers, and George Jones—to name only a few. Another love of Jerry's life was windsurfing and sailing. Many remembrances are now being posted about times spent on the water with Jerry.



Our thoughts are with Jerry's family and close friends at this time.  
This multifaceted coolest of coolcats will be missed.