

STEP Ahead Newsletter

104,604 Pages Viewed in 2012....and Counting: **Our Website Delivers**

STEP launched a new website and learning management system in February of this year in response to input from families across Tennessee. This article highlights a few of the features that you will want to check out at www.tnstep.org Information is provided here how to navigate to each of these areas. Enjoy!

Training and Event Calendar

From the home page, click on the Support & Training Tab. On this page you can view descriptions of all our workshops and on the left you can access the "Events Calendar". Events are searchable by area of the state, webinars, workshops in Spanish, and Institutes. Events are added frequently, so check often.

Information Packets

There are six information packets loaded on the website, ready to be downloaded at the click of a button!

Downloadable packets include:

- ◇ ADHD
- ◇ Assistive Technology
- ◇ Department of Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities (DIDD)
- ◇ Autism
- ◇ Literacy
- ◇ Modifications and Accommodations

Many more topics are available to request through the mail.

Resource Links

The navigation panel on the left side of the home page is a place you will want to become familiar with! From here you can access our Youtube Channel training videos, frequently asked questions, transition from high school information, and link to a wealth of information about other agencies and specific disabilities.

News

We are posting news articles of interest almost daily! By partnering with other agencies that serve families who have children with disabilities we are receiving articles to post on a wide range of topics. View the latest news quickly on the home page or view archived articles. If you have an article or news event you would like STEP to post, please visit the "Submit Content" link on our homepage!

Lunchtime Leaders Webinar Topics Coming Soon!

STEP webinars are designed to provide parents and professionals with access to information on topics that will expand their knowledge base. Each webinar is scheduled during the lunch hour, so you can eat your PB&J sandwich while you are learning!

Webinar times: 11:30 - 12:30 CST (12:30 - 1:30 EST)

October 23: Tennessee Department of Education Deputy Commissioner, Kathleen M. Airhart, will present a webinar designed to inform families, student's, and those who work with them about current Department of Education initiatives.

Topics include: Education reform through Tennessee's First to the Top plan; Review of the Department's structure including Field Service Centers; Common core standards; Changes to assessment that are on the horizon; Elementary and Secondary Education Waiver (ESEA); and Strategic priorities to reach 6% gap closure for students with disabilities

- Tennessee Virtual Academy: How it works for children with disabilities - [Date to be announced.](#)

Registration links available soon at www.tnstep.org

News in this issue:

- Advocate of the Year
- New in TN: Common Core Standards
- Instant Information: New STEP website
- Be part of our team: Job opening with STEP
- Like Us on Facebook
- Q and A Corner
- Upcoming Webinars

If you want your children to improve, let them over-hear the nice things you say about them to others.

Haim Ginott

steps to a brighter future for children with disabilities

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Common Core Standards Adopted by Tennessee

What are the Common Core Standards?

- a set of standards for math and English Language Arts that were developed by state leaders to ensure that every student graduates high school prepared for college or the workforce
- designed to set clear expectations of what students should know in each grade and subject
- reflect rigorous learning benchmarks when compared to countries whose students currently out perform American students on international assessments
- states voluntarily choose whether to adopt the standards. To date, 46 states, including the District of Columbia, have adopted Common Core standards. For more information, please visit <http://www.corestandards.org/>

Why did TN adopt the Common Core Standards?

Tennessee is committed to ensuring that high school students graduate prepared for college and career. Currently, only 15 percent of Tennessee students graduate at a college-ready level (ACT (2011) 2011 ACT National and State Scores. <http://www.act.org/newsroom/date/2011/states.html> The state took an initial step to raise standards by adopting the Tennessee Diploma Project standards in 2009 to meet this challenge. By joining nearly every other state to develop and implement Common Core standards, Tennessee is now taking a further step to enhance the quality of instruction and learning for its students. Teachers in Tennessee will be able to better collaborate with teachers in other states, since all teachers will follow a common set of standards

Common Core Foundation, Benefits and Strategies

- Standards establish WHAT students need to learn, but not how teachers should teach.
- Each state and school system will choose its own curriculum—the set of courses, activities, & teaching materials.
- Teachers must use instructional strategies to help students meet the standards.
- The standards will provide students, teachers, and parents with a shared understanding of what students are learning
- In English/Language Arts and Mathematics students will **engage in deeper problem solving** and **develop critical thinking skills**.

Three Areas Targeted to Lead to Results:

- **Focus:** Knowing more than how to get the answer
- **Coherence:** Linking major topics from grade to grade AND math includes reading and reading includes math
- **Rigor:** Understanding of concepts; Skill and fluency in the processes of reading and math; **and** Real application

Timeline for TN Implementation of Common Core Standards



Future trainings, webinars, and discussions will focus on how to weave the common core standards into Individualized Education Programs for students with disabilities and how to ensure that students needs are being met through appropriate supports and accommodations. As we develop training and information packets, we need to hear what questions are on your mind. Please email your questions to karen.harrison@tnstep.org

State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG)

The Tennessee State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) is administered through the TN Department of Education, and its staff members work with families and collaborating schools across the state to promote the use of evidence based practices in reading, math, positive behavior supports, and teacher equity. STEP is one of the partner agencies who work to accomplish the goals of the SPDG.

Specific training topics provided to families and school by STEP under this grant include:

- ▶ Literacy in the IEP
- ▶ Positive Behavior Support
- ▶ Parental Involvement
- ▶ Response to Intervention

Visit the [SPDG website](#) for access to additional information and some fabulous resources!





STEP 2012 Advocate of the Year Named

We are pleased to introduce you to Mr. Juan Cardona, the recipient of STEP's Wayne Parker Advocate of the Year Award. He is pictured here receiving the award with his wife Anna, their daughter Jemima and STEP staff members Patricia Valladares and Joey Ellis. Mr. Cardona was presented the Advocate of the Year award at the annual Tennessee Disability Mega conference in Nashville TN in May. Juan is the parent of Jemima, a spirited and loving daughter who has Autism. Juan attended at STEP workshop a couple of years ago and since that time has been not only used that information to help improve outcomes for Jemima, but has assisted many families on their journey to be effective advocates for their children with disabilities. As a native Spanish speaker, his passion is to ensure that Hispanic families have information in their language. Mr. Cardona and his wife Anna have volunteered countless hours to translating materials to help families understand their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. As the Wayne Parker recipients before him, Juan is devoted to efforts to ensure a brighter future for children with disabilities. Congratulations Juan!



You can be a part of ensuring that success stories like that of the Cardona family continue to happen. Please make a contribution to STEP today so we can expand our reach to ensure a brighter future for children with disabilities.

<http://www.tnstep.org/donate/>

Q: My child has ADHD and is being evaluated by the school to see if he qualifies for special education. He has been expelled. The notice said it was "disrupting the educational set-ting". He had become angry and called the teacher a name during class. What are his rights?

A: Since the district had knowledge of your child's disability and he is in the process of being evaluated for special education, he has the protections of the disciplinary sections of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA, the school district has knowledge of a possible disability if a child has been referred for evaluation or if his parents have made a request in writing. If an exclusion will be for more than 10 days, it is considered a change in placement and certain procedures must be followed. 1) No later than the day the (change of placement) decision was made, parents must be notified and provided the procedural safeguards. 2) No later than 10 school days after the decision was made, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team must conduct a manifestation determination. It is a review of the relationship between the child's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action. 3) Either before or not later than 10 days after taking the disciplinary action, if the district did not conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a positive behavioral intervention plan, they must call an IEP meeting to develop a plan that addresses the behavior. If a plan is already in place, the IEP Team shall review and modify the plan, as necessary, to address the behavior. If a child has not been brought to the attention of the district for evaluation and a request for evaluation is made during the duration of the disciplinary action, the evaluation must be conducted in an expedited manner. Until a child is determined eligible for special education, he remains in the placement the school district chose, which can include suspension or expulsion with no services provided. The right to appeal the suspension or expulsion of any child is always available. (Copyright Washington PAVE. Reprinted with permission.)

P: Mi hijo tiene ADHD y está siendo evaluado para ver si califica para educación especial. Él ha sido expulsado de la escuela. La notificación nos explica que fue por "perturbar el lugar educativo". Se había enojado y llamó a los maestros un mal nombre durante la clase. ¿Cuáles son sus derechos?

R: Dado que el distrito tenía conocimiento de la discapacidad de su hijo y él está en el proceso de evaluación para educación especial, tiene la protección de las secciones disciplinarias de las Personas con Discapacidades (IDEA). Bajo IDEA, el distrito escolar tiene conocimiento de una posible discapacidad si un niño ha sido referido para la evaluación o si sus padres han hecho una solicitud por escrito. Si una expulsión se hace por más de 10 días, se considera un cambio de colocación y las normas a seguir son las siguientes: 1) A no más tardar del día en que se tomó la decisión del cambio de colocación, los padres deben ser notificados y siempre proveerles con una copia de las Garantías Procesales. 2) A no más tardar de 10 días escolares después de que la decisión fue tomada, el equipo del Plan de Educación Individual (IEP) de su hijo, debe realizar una **determinación de la manifestación**. Esto se refiere a una revisión de la relación entre la discapacidad del niño y la conducta sujeta a la acción disciplinaria. 3) Ya sea antes, o a no más tardar de 10 días después de tomar la acción disciplinaria, si el distrito no llevó a cabo una evaluación de comportamiento funcional y no ha implementado un plan de intervención positiva, se debe llamar a una reunión del IEP para desarrollar un plan que se ocupe de la conducta. Si un plan ya está en marcha, el equipo del IEP deberá revisar y modificar el plan, en caso necesario, para modificar ese comportamiento. Si no se le ha dejado saber al distrito acerca de este estudiante, o se ha solicitado una evaluación, una evaluación se llevara a cabo durante la duración de la acción disciplinaria, esta evaluación debe llevarse a cabo de una manera acelerada. Hasta que un niño es determinado elegible para educación especial, el permanecerá en la colocación que el distrito escolar ha elegido, la cual puede incluir suspensión o expulsión sin servicios prestados. El derecho de apelar la suspensión o expulsión de cualquier niño es siempre disponible (Reproducido con permiso de Washington PAVE) (Traducido por Maggie Ortiz, Family Connection SC)

STEP, Inc. Transition Information Made Easy (TIME)

STEP staff will provide training and professional development to families who have children with disabilities, students with disabilities preparing to transition to life after high school, teachers and related service providers who work with youth.

Direct in-person training opportunities that can be requested by families, schools, and community sponsors include:

- Transition Institutes with Information Fairs;
- Dream Building Activity: Planning for Your Future at Institutes or by scheduling a workshop;
- Workshops on "Taking the Mystery out of Transition Planning"; and
- Transition focused person centered planning seminars which include both group instruction and individual work with students. and providing transition information to families whose first language is not English.

To extend the availability of information in this technology age, STEP will make our most sought information available through video, online training, and electronic documents. More information will be available as these tools are developed.

Our goal is to provide this information on transition to adult life to all families, including families whose first language is not English. Please contact Patricia Valladares, Bilingual Family Educator, to plan for training and information in Spanish.

For more information call 1.800.280.7837 (English) or 1.800.975.2919 (Spanish)



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Upcoming Events:

Applebee’s Pancake Fundraisers:

Join STEP staff and volunteers at one of these locations to support our fundraising efforts. Complete details will be posted on the website under EVENTS or call 1.800.280.7837 for more information.

- ⇒ October 6 - Johnson City, TN
- ⇒ October 6 - Tullahoma, TN
- ⇒ October 13 - Greeneville, TN

Multicultural Parent Leadership Conference

- ⇒ November 17 - Nashville, TN

Metro Nashville Public Schools and STEP host this conference designed for parents and caregivers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have children with special needs, including those whose first language is not English. The purpose of the conference is to provide information, strategies, and tools that empower families on issues related to special education and parent engagement. **HOLD THE DATE!**

Parents As Leaders:

Groups of parents are coming together across TN who want to make their schools and communities a better place for students with disabilities. STEP will support these grass roots efforts by providing Leadership Training to small groups of parents who would like to be “agents of change” in their community. Our staff will assist the group in team building activities, identifying their core mission, and leadership assessments.

Our goal is to assist parents and family members to begin thinking of themselves as leaders, and about the contributions and roles they and other parents can make in leadership, advocacy, and policy making. Parent leaders are needed to fill positions on local, state, and national boards and parents of children with disabilities can have a great impact on outcomes for students with disabilities. Sessions will focus on starting parents on the journey to systems change activities, or building on existing structures. Another emerging area that families can have a great impact is through collaborating on parental involvement activities at their local school.

Please contact the Coordinator for your area of the state if you are interested hosting a Parents As Leaders group in your area!



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