



Network News

Your Arizona Parent School Connection



Fall 2009

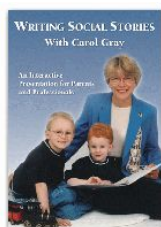
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Must See Media

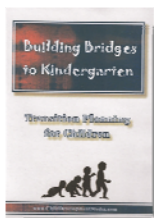
by Allison Meritt

One of the many FREE services available from the Parent Information Network includes our Media Lending Library. We have approximately 50 videos (DVD and VHS) that may be checked out by families, schools, or other interested parties. The Media Lending Library has some new additions that are sure to become favorites.

Some of these additions are *Writing Social Stories* with Carol Gray and *Building Bridges to Kindergarten: Transition Planning for Children*. *Writing Social Stories (AV40)* provides step-by-step instruction for writing effective social stories that are tailored to the individual student's needs. Use it at home, for a teacher in-service, or



during a support group meeting for parents. *Building Bridges to Kindergarten: Transition Planning for Children (AV03)* presents some of the issues to be addressed when a child is transitioning into a Kindergarten program. This video offers advice on how to make the process smooth and successful for all team members.



Some of our most popular videos include those by Rick Lavoie. Rick is a powerful motivational speaker who provides insight on students with learning disabilities. In one of his most recent videos, *The Motivation Breakthrough (AV79)*, Mr. Lavoie discusses the six factors that motivate all individuals; then breaks these motivators down into practical strategies that can be utilized by parents and teachers. Another popular Rick Lavoie title is *When the Chips Are Down: Learning Disabilities and Discipline (AV69)*; Mr. Lavoie offers practical advice on dealing with behavioral issues quickly and effectively.

A few other popular videos are *Transitions to Postsecondary Learning (AV70)* in which eight students with learning disabilities and/or Attention Deficit Disorder discuss the transition from high school to a postsecondary learning environment. The students discuss how high school and college are similar and their differences. They also talk about some skills that are necessary for postsecondary success. *The First IEP: Parent Perspectives (AV27)* is another one of our most frequently viewed videos. This DVD illustrates the importance of collaboration between parents and professionals throughout the IEP process. To see other titles that are

available please visit our website at www.azed.gov/ess/pins/pins and click on Videos. If you would like more information on these videos or any of the other titles in our library, please contact your regional PIN Specialist, listed on page 4, or call the Parent Information Network at 928-679-8102.

Enhancing Arizona's Parent Networks (EAPN)

by Biss Kuttner

Have you visited Enhancing Arizona's Parent Network's website lately? EAPN is the collaborative effort of parent groups, organizations and agencies that believe all children with special needs and their families should have access to information, support, and training. The site acts as a resource support for families and caregivers of children with disabilities, as well as, for youth with disabilities. The EAPN website, www.azeapn.org has links to the following pages:



- [Organizations](#) Informational listings for more than 60 member organizations in Arizona that provide services and support to children with disabilities and their families.
- [Training & Event Calendar](#) Many member organizations post upcoming trainings and events.
- [Newsletters](#) Links to member organization's electronically available newsletters.
- [Information](#) Updated frequently with disability related articles.
- [Leadership](#) Updated frequently with articles about self-advocacy, and postings about opportunities for leadership growth for children and adolescents with disabilities and their families.
- [IDEA Reauthorization Update](#) Resources related to IDEA 2004 and its implementing regulations and cross referenced content from other laws.
- [Spanish Resources](#) Links to disability resources in Spanish.

EAPN is hosted on the Arizona Department of Education, Exceptional Student Services (ADE/ESS) website. Bookmark us at www.azeapn.org and visit often!

If you have questions or would like more information regarding the EAPN website, contact Biss Kuttner, EAPN Coordinator, at biss.kuttner@azed.gov, or 602-403-3707.

Governance of Public Schools

by Teri Rademacher

In 1791, Virginia became the last state to ratify the Bill of Rights and it finally became effective, Vermont was admitted as the 14th state, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died, and Samuel Morse, inventor of Morse Code, was born. A somewhat less historic event also transpired in 1791, when local authorities in Boston turned over partial control of the schools to the town's people and thus *school boards* were formed. In 1826, the evolution of the school board was complete when each town in the state of Massachusetts was ordered to elect a separate school committee to have "the general charge and superintendence of all the public schools."

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes (A.R.S.), school district governing boards are charged to "prescribe and enforce policies and procedures for the governance of the schools, not inconsistent with law or rules prescribed by the state board of education." They are the governing body of their school district and are elected by the citizens of their respective geographic areas. Members of the governing board are charged with everything from approval of the district's academic calendar to the construction of new school facilities. They are also required to maintain, review, and revise their board's policies and procedures which are the guidelines by which the district is operated. These policies and procedures are a matter of public record and the general-public has the right to review them at any time. Generally, each school site has a copy in their office and should make them available upon request.



Parents often encounter situations that necessitate the review of their school district's policies and procedures. This may be when they are inquiring about open enrollment policies and procedures; when a disciplinary action is taken against their child; or when they are concerned about absences due to an extended illness or chronic health issue. Some school districts post their governing board policies and procedures on their district websites.

Many governing boards belong to the Arizona School Boards Association (ASBA) and purchase their policies and procedures from them. If you access the ASBA website at www.azsba.org, you can check to see if your school district's policy and procedure manual is available online. On their home page, you simply click on "School District Policy Manuals" on the menu on the left-hand side and then on "Free Public Access, Click Here" and search for your school district.



School district governing boards operate under the Open Meeting Law and are required to post their meeting notices and agendas so that the public has access to the information. The general public has the opportunity to be heard by their governing board by participating in the "call to the public" portion of the agenda. Typically, there are specific guidelines for participating in the call to the public and you will want to consult your district's policy manual for specific guidelines.

This information can usually be found in the policy manual under "Public Participation at Board Meetings" B-2150-BEDH.

When parents are attempting to resolve a concern about their child's special education program, they need to remember that their governing board is the last stop when following the chain-of-command. If you find yourself addressing the members of your governing board regarding an issue, it is always a good idea to take the following steps:

- ❖ Research the guidelines for public participation at board meetings and follow them;
- ❖ Prepare (write them down) your comments and edit for understanding and time limits;
- ❖ Be clear and concise about your concerns and offer a reasonable solution if possible;
- ❖ Make copies of your comments for each of the board members;
- ❖ Practice delivering your comments out-loud; and
- ❖ Arrive early to familiarize yourself with the setting and fill out the necessary paperwork.

Governing board members will not be able to respond to or discuss your "call to the public" comments. They can simply direct administrative staff to investigate the situation or they may choose to place the issue on the agenda for their next meeting. Providing them with a copy of your comments with your name and contact information will increase the odds that your concern will be addressed.

With the ever increasing demands on families, it is often difficult to find the time to attend one more meeting. However, it is important as a parent of a child who attends a district school, and as a voter, to familiarize yourself with your governing board, its members, and policies.

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Scholarships Available

For more information, contact:
Lorrie Sheehy
520-628-6351
Lorrie.Sheehy@azed.gov

Student Participation in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process

by Teri Rademacher

There are many factors that enter into the development of an appropriate and effective Individualized Education Program (IEP) and none of them is more important than input from the student. IEP teams consistently strive to develop an individualized program based upon the student's strengths, needs, assessment and evaluation results, observational data, and input from the team members. However, one critical member of the team is not always at the table and that is the student.

Without student input, IEP teams may be challenged to identify modifications, accommodations, and strategies that will provide the student greater access to the general curriculum. The success of these are often based on the student's compliance, and without student involvement it is impossible to know if they will work. If the student refuses to comply, it is back to the drawing board for the IEP team. When the student is at the table for the development of the IEP and his/her contributions are valued, the success rate increases incrementally.

There are various ways for students, of all abilities, to participate in the IEP process. The options available for participation are only limited by the imaginations of the IEP team members. Here are a few examples of creative ways students can be participating members of their IEP team:

- ❖ Develop an outline or agenda for the IEP meeting;
- ❖ Provide them the opportunity to audio tape their input on agenda items prior to the meeting;
- ❖ Create a draft IEP;
- ❖ Use checklists to promote reflection (e.g., have the student identify learning styles, strengths, areas of challenge, strategies already in place that work);
- ❖ Use assistive technology (e.g., PowerPoint presentation to highlight their strengths, goals, other components of the IEP); and/or
- ❖ Use their augmentative communication device to develop a list of their strengths and challenges.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires that the student participate in the development of the IEP that will be in affect when the student turns 16. The student's involvement is vital to the development of an IEP that focuses on what the student wants to do after high school. As the student participates in the IEP process, a natural by-product is the development of self-advocacy skills. Valuing student input and participation provides the student the opportunity to develop those self-advocacy skills and invites them to take ownership of the planning for their future.

For more information about student-led IEPs, visit *Who Makes the Choices?* online at www.studentledieps.org. LD Online also has an article that outlines strategies for teaching self-advocacy skills and ways to incorporate their development in IEP goals. The article can be found online at www.ldonline.org/article/Transition_and_Self-Advocacy.

Dear Staff at American Middle School:

My name is John. I am 11 years old. You may not know this, but I have Asperger's Syndrome, a type of autism. I was also born at American Regional Medical Center. My current height is 4'10". Meanwhile, I weigh 87 pounds. I'd only weigh 4.5 pounds on the moon, but that is just an estimation. I could be wrong.

I have some interests I would like to share with you. When it comes to movies that are NOT animated, my preference is Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith. My favorite ANIMATED movie happens to be the first Disney-Pixar movie. The title is Toy Story. My hobby is playing videogames.

If there was anything I'd want to be when I grow up, it would be an astronaut. But I guess being a football player would be good too.

When it comes to school subjects, I have already handpicked some favorites. They are: science (other than theology), computers, and Phys Ed. I have some least favorite subjects as well: elementary level music class (because all they do is teach us classical music), but I have high hopes for middle school music.

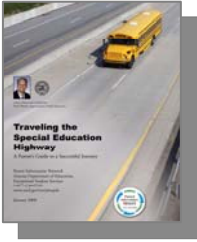
I'd like to discuss my physical strengths. I am good at playing badminton, playing soccer, and being a quarterback in football. My academic skills are that I am a good reader. My current reading lexile is 1075. I am good at math as well, most particularly place value, order of operations, solving for an unknown, and finding the missing angle for a triangle and a quadrilateral. For my age, I have a HUGE vocabulary. My mental strengths are memory and paying attention to certain details that otherwise go unnoticed. My weaknesses are, on occasion, confusing overgeneralizations for lies and sometimes identifying sarcasm.

I'm looking forward to middle school next year. It is truly an honor for me to transition from elementary to middle school. I hope I have a good time next year at AMS.

Your new student,

John

Note: This letter was composed by a student of Humboldt Unified School District in Prescott, Arizona and shared with parental permission by HUSD's Director of Special Services, Kay Turner.



The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 requires schools to provide parents of a child with a disability a copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice (PSN) to learn about parental rights and special education procedures. *Traveling the Special Education Highway (GR09)* is a guide and is not intended to replace the PSN. This *updated* guide provides valuable information to compliment the PSN and help parents fully understand their rights. It includes practical tips on Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, following the chain-of-command, and how to document your child's special education journey. Parents can request a copy by contacting their regional PIN Specialist, calling 877-230-PINS (7467) or emailing a request to PINS@azed.gov.

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Copies are now available for schools and agencies to purchase from the Arizona Department of Education by calling 928-679-8102 or emailing PINS@azed.gov.

Parent Information Network (PIN) Specialists

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For more information contact the PIN/Child Find Coordinator: Becky Raabe, (928) 679-8106, or Becky.Raabe@azed.gov.

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