

Connecting with Families and Educators



Providing information, support and encouragement to families and educators of children and young adults with disabilities.



...she may be more comfortable talking about her struggles.

“Home” work strengthens “School” work

Parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents, and neighbors all impact how well children do in school. Children don't reserve their learning for the classroom. Even better than adults, most children are tuned into their surroundings and are learning every day in every situation and environment they are in. As parents, how can we make the most of these opportunities while our children are in our care?

Build on strengths to address weaknesses

In conversation with your child talk about what is easy and what is more challenging for him. As children and adults we have areas of strength as well as areas of weakness. If your child understands that not everything comes easily for you, she may be more comfortable talking about her struggles. Whether reviewing the report card or the performance of a chore at home, it is important to look at ways we can improve by using the skills we have already acquired. Problem-solve how to improve the outcome while making the task easier to complete. Make learning fun by applying the acquisition of new skills to an activity that the child enjoys. Read books with subjects of interest to the child. Apply academic skills to work or social events to increase the interest of your teenager.

Know we all have ups and downs

In other words, there are no perfect children without perfect parents. Sometimes in our enthusiasm to encour-

age our children to do their best we slip into the expectation for perfection. None of us perform 100% one hundred percent of the time. Talk to your children and pay attention to what they tell you so that you are able to guide them without jumping in too quickly. We all learn from our mistakes as well as from our successes.

Make your child feel needed

Children, whether 3 or 17 need to feel that they are contributors to the family and their community. By depending upon children to do their part, they learn that they are important contributors. They develop feelings that it matters that they are here. The assignment of household chores, even on a limited basis, helps to build the foundation of commitment to a team. Children increase appreciation when others do things for them, and build confidence in their own abilities.

By providing opportunities for our children to use their “classroom” skills at home and by establishing good work habits, families can make a big difference in school.

Why is Transition Planning Important?

The Federal law that regulates special education, IDEA, requires that we consider a student's plan for living, learning and working after high school in the development of the student's individual education plan. In Iowa this involves developing a plan starting as early as when the student is in middle school. We look at the student's interests, skills and areas of need to determine what needs to happen while the student is still in school to prepare her for life after high school, sometimes referred to as "post secondary expectations."

Why is it important for us to think ahead and work at preparing these students for what comes next? In part it is because most people who have disabilities have increased challenges when it comes to getting a job and living as an adult.

According to the August 26 edition of the Wall Street Journal, the Department of Labor reported an average unemployment rate for disabled workers at 16.4% in July 2010, well above the 9% rate for those without disabilities.

There were roughly 27 million Americans 16 years or older with a disability last year. Nearly a third of workers with disabilities work only part-time, while about a fifth of individuals without disabilities work part time.

Preparation and education are important. Individuals who have disabilities and acquire a college degree are much more likely to be employed than those who do not.

As we work together to plan for a student's education we would do well to remember we are building the foundation for that individual's adult life.

Help with Home Heating Costs

Iowa Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is designed to assist low-income families meet the cost of home heating. Applications are accepted on a first come/first served basis at your local community action agency from November through April (October 1 for households with elderly/disabled member), Monday through Friday, or as posted at the local office

This program is not designed to pay a household's total energy costs, but to provide assistance in the payment of residential heating costs for eligible households. In most cases if you are eligible, your utility company will apply credit to your heating bill.

Household income guidelines:

Household size	Annual Income
1	\$16,245.00
2	21,855.00
3	27,465.00
4	33,075.00
5	38,685.00
6	44,295.00



Households who are over the income guidelines may be eligible for LHEAP benefits through a medical waiver component. Medical expenses must be documented, paid out of pocket and non-reimbursable.

For a list of community action organizations in your area, check the LIHEAP website at: www.dcaa.iowa.gov/alliowa_CAA/index.html, click on "Where do I apply for services?" under "I need help!" on the left of the page.

Information for this article provided by the Iowa Community Action Organizations.

Opportunities for Teens with Asperger's Syndrome



Are your teens finding it difficult to socialize and make friends in the high school setting? If you are interested in a social group for your teen that will provide fun opportunities to connect with other high school students who have similar challenges, please let us know. We will have an organizational meeting with parents who express an interest in exploring this possibility to identify the outcomes we might hope to see from the group and the shape it might take.

If you are interested, please contact Sandy Kraschel with the Family & Educator Connection at 800.392.6640 or skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us by November 20.

Save Receipts for School Related Expenses

If you have school-aged children and paid for school registration fees and school supplies, save those receipts while it is fresh in your memory. Why? The State of Iowa offers an income tax credit equal to 25% of your costs for qualified K-12 education expenses.

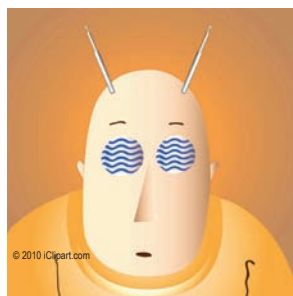
Examples of qualifying expenses include school registration fees, required school supplies, and fees for extracurricular activities. The expenses must be related to coursework and activities at an accredited school. Driver's education fees qualify if they are paid to the school. Expenses that do not qualify include: school lunches, transportation, and clothing for everyday wear.

The tax credit is limited to \$250 for each school-aged child, so qualifying expenses up to \$1,000 per child can be included.

There are some fine distinctions between expenses that qualify for the tax credit and those that do not. For example, required clothing for extra-curricular activities can also be included, if it is not suitable for wearing elsewhere. With that in mind, football shoes qualify for the credit because the cleats make them inappropriate for anything other than football. However, basketball shoes can be worn elsewhere, so they do not qualify.

For more information about the tax credit and for a listing of which expenses qualify, contact Erin Ludwig at eludwig@iastate.edu or 641.394.2174.

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Tame the Tubes

Children spend more time sitting in front of electronic screens (screen time) than in any other activity besides sleeping. This means they spend more time in front of screens than they do in school. The average time spent with various media (television, computer, video games) is more than five hours per day. Even the very youngest children, preschoolers ages 6 and younger, spend as much time with screen media (TV, video games, and computers) as they do playing outside. That means several hours of inactivity and in the case of television viewing, hours of exposure to advertising for high fat, high calorie foods. Many of these ads are aimed directly at children. Too much screen time affects children's brains and bodies.

Children who spend a great deal of time in front of a screen have less time for playing and talking with other children and adults. Language skills are best developed through reading and conversation. Excessive screen time can interfere with growth in this area. Children who watch less television do better in school and perform better on standardized tests.

Perhaps most alarming is the effect of too much screen time on children's bodies. Most children do not get the recommended amount of physical activity each day, and one reason for this is the number of hours spent inactive in front of a screen. There is a link between overweight in children and television viewing. Children who watch more TV tend to be heavier than children who watch less TV. Children who live in families in which television viewing is a normal part of the meal routine eat fewer fruits and vegetables and more pizzas, snack foods, and sodas.

Ways to limit screen time

1. Plan how much TV you and your family are going to watch. Limit screen time to one to two hours a day. Planning the amount of television you watch and selecting certain shows helps you to get the best of what television has to offer.
2. Set clear limits and be a good TV role model. Setting limits for the whole family is important. Children need to be taught how to have a good media diet.
3. Choose not to keep the TV on all the time, and instead tune into specific shows. With cable channels numbering into the hundreds, you could surf for hours and never watch a show. If the TV is on, this is likely to happen. However, if you have a TV plan and you know what shows you are going to watch, the set goes on when that show is on and off when it is over.
4. Get the TV out of the bedroom. Having a television in the bedroom allows children to watch more television unsupervised. The same goes with video games and computers; put these in a common area of the home.
5. Eat together as a family without the TV. Have media-free meals as a family. Turn off the TV, cell phone, MP3 player, and talk about your day.
6. Make a list of activities you want to do instead of sitting in front of the television, computer, or video games.
7. Watch with your children. Discuss the shows and the advertising. Help your child learn about the tactics advertisers use to sell unhealthy foods.

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Holidays Are Approaching

The Holidays are approaching and for most of us, that means increased expectations and busier schedules, at the same time energy and financial resources seem to hit all time lows. School concerts, athletic events, projects due, parties in and out of school, all combine to make the Holidays a potentially stressful time for parents and children alike.

There are a number of tips floating around out there for how to make the Holidays more enjoyable. Many apply whether you are a family with an individual who has a

disability or not. In those lists of “Top 10 Hints” that I have reviewed, there are some common themes and a few suggestions that are especially good when your son or daughter has a disability.

Tip 1:

Make a List of what is important

Identify what you enjoy about the Holiday and what makes it special. It could be an activity, an event, special foods, family traditions, decorations, or gift giving. Make a short list of the most important aspects of the Holiday for each of your family members. Use this “short list” as the guide to what you will do during the Holiday season.

Tip 2:

Plan

Look at the calendar and determine when those activities and experiences could occur during the Holiday season. You may be able to enjoy more if everything is not crammed into one week. Some things are dependent on a specific date while others may not be. Don't over-commit.

Tip 3:

Remember routines

In the scurry of shopping, visiting, and all those add-on activities schedules get changed. Meals and bedtime can become a casualty of the season. Try to maintain regular bedtimes as much as possible. Well-rested children (and adults) are much happier and more pleasant to be around. Plan at least one nutritious meal a day. Fast food and sugary snacks can add to physical stress.

Tip 4:

Limit screen time and Move

How tempting it is for busy adults to allow children more TV and video game time. Physical activity is one of the best ways to reduce stress. A few minutes of dancing or exercising to the music on the radio, taking the dog for a walk around the block or building a snowman at the park can help relieve stress, and make for a healthier mind and body.

Tip 5:

Re-think gift giving

Set a realistic budget for gifts, review the “wish lists” of your children and have a conversation about what is doable and what possible alternatives might be. Living within a budget is something we all must learn to do, and this is an opportunity to teach it.

The time we spend together is often the gift we remember most as the years go by.

Tip 6:

Customize

Consider the needs of your family and modify accordingly. If your child could be hurt by fragile decorations, opt for more durable, kid-safe ornaments and put the delicate ones up high, or packed away for another year. If there are Holiday

working together to provide support to young adults

Tip 7:

Ask for Help

Friends and family are more willing to help than we think, but people don't know when you need help unless you ask. Trade childcare, or share baked goods to help out yourself and your neighbor. Talk to your friends or relatives about errands and see if one of you can make the trip for both of you. A little help can go a long way.

Tip 8:

Recognize stress signals

Recognize signs of stress in yourself and your family. Before the big meltdown, step back and take a different direction. Maybe that concert is too long and you need to leave early to get the little one to bed. Maybe the frilly dress is just too much and a familiar outfit is more comfortable. Even though it is easy to be influenced by well-meaning relatives and their ideas of "what would be nice," you know your family and can take steps to make experiences better for everyone.

Tip 9:

Laugh

Find people that make you laugh and spend time with them. Laughter is great internal massage that provides physical as well as emotional benefit. Think of what puts a smile on your child's face and make sure you build those experiences into the Holiday schedule.

Tip 10:

Remember why the Holiday is important

Holidays are a time for celebration. Families spend time together to reflect on the past and look to the future. Focus on what is right with your world.



Autism Web Resources



www.autism-society.org www.autism-society.org/

The Autism Society of America website with resources, beginning information, and some autism curriculum

www.autismia.org www.autismia.org/

Autism Society of Iowa with links and information on upcoming conferences and workshops

www.do2learn.com www.do2learn.com/

Symbols and layouts for communication boards and visual schedules that can be downloaded

www.makebeliefscomix.com www.makebeliefscomix.com/

Form to create Comic Strip conversations

www.intellitools.com www.intellitools.com/

Free activity exchange with one hundred visual stories for children and adults

Teaching Temperature www.lucasworks.org/teaching-temperature.html

Apparel Indicating Weather Thermometer makes teaching temperature easy. Thermometers are available in a standard model, one for southern regions, and one for northern regions. Besides the temperature there are pictures of appropriate attire for the weather. Other items are available at the site for purchase.

Transition Workshop

Transitioning from High School to College for Students with Disabilities

Location: North Iowa Area Community College

Monday, April 18th, 2011

Beginning at 9:30 am

Open to high school students, teachers, parents, counselors, and administrators who work with students with disabilities.

Sponsored by: NIACC & AEA 267

Save
the
Date!

Support Groups

There are a number of support groups across Iowa and in AEA 267. If you are affiliated with a support group and would like information about the group listed on the AEA 267 Family-Educator Connection web site and in our newsletters, send information to Sandy Kraschel at skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us or call 800-392-6640.

ADHD support group

Meets second Monday of the month during the school year at Upper Iowa University. 3563 University, Waterloo from 6:30-8 pm. For more information contact Barb at 319-266-2901 or wilk123abc@q.com

ASD/ PDD Support Group

A support group for parents. Meetings are held at 3:00 p.m. the first Sunday of the month in Mason City. For more information, or to sign up for the group's E-mail, send a message to pddsupport@mchsi.com.

Designer Genes -

A Support Group for families of children with Down Syndrome, provides parent groups as well as family events and playgroups for young children. For more information call 319-404-0396 or e-mail designergenes2005@yahoo.com.

Prader Willi Syndrome Association of Iowa

For more information please contact: Edie Bogaczyk, 515-987-0288 or dbogaczyk@msn.com.

Epilepsy Support Group

Waterloo/Cedar Falls Area

Held at the Kimball Ridge Center, Conference Room 1, 2101 Kimball Ave., Waterloo, IA. Held the 2nd Thursday of every ODD month at 6:30 pm. For more information contact Karly Ashlock, Services Coordinator for Iowa Epilepsy Foundation North/Central Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, 1111 9th Street, Suite 275, Des Moines, IA 50314. Phone: 515-238-7660; Email: kashlock@efncil.org

Support Group for Parents of Children with special Needs

Just forming in the Iowa Falls area. For more information contact Andy Lawler, alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us or 631-844-2469

Check us out
on the Web!

www.aea267.k12.ia.us



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FAMILY ED CONNECTION

Resource for Families and Schools

<http://www1.cyfernet.org/about.html-howhelp>

CYFERnet is a resource of reliable, high quality, research-based information for professionals serving children, youth and families and for parents. CYFERnet's Web site brings together the best, children, youth and family resources of all the public land-grant universities in the country. College and university faculty carefully review materials posted on CYFERnet.



Calendar

November

Monday & Tuesday, November 9 -10, 2010
Disobedient, Disruptive, Defiant, and Disturbed Students: Behavioral Interventions for Challenging Students

West Des Moines

Presenter, Howard Knoff, Ph.D. is the Director of Project ACHIEVE, a comprehensive, evidence-based national school improvement program. Dr. Knoff has authored a number of books and published several articles.

Sponsored by Spectrum Training Systems

For more information or to register go to:

<http://store.spectrumtrainingsystem-sinc.com/wedesmoia920.html>

Or Spectrum Training Systems, 2024 Jonathon Drive, Appleton, WI 54914 Phone: (920) 749-0332

Thursday, November 11
College 101: Transition to Higher Education for Students with Disabilities

4:00- 5:00 p.m.

Free webinar for parents and high school students with disabilities who plan to continue education at college. Sponsored by STEM Midwest, this webinar will address many questions, including: How will college be different than high school? What types of college options are there? Can I receive accommodations in college?

Register at: www.stemmidwest.org by November 4

Tuesday & Wednesday, November 16 - 17, 2010

Autism Spectrum Disorders, and Mental Illness in Children

Northbrook, Illinois

No More Meltdowns: Handling Challenging Behaviors & Teaching Social Skills with Jed Baker, Ph.D.

Mental Illness in Children with Christopher Okiishi, M.D.

Sponsored by Spectrum Training Systems

For more information or to register go to:

<http://store.spectrumtrainingsystem-sinc.com/noil1620.html>

Or Spectrum Training Systems, 2024 Jonathon Drive, Appleton, WI 54914 Phone: (920) 749-0332

Friday, November 19, 2010
Autism society of Iowa Fall Conference & Auction

West Des Moines, Iowa

Featured Speaker:
Temple Grandin, Ph.D.

Temple is well-known for her accomplishments in the area of animal science and welfare, and for her personal insight into autism she shares in her many books and public speaking. Her current bestselling book on autism is *The Way I See It: A Personal Look at Autism and Asperger's*. She was

recently featured in Time magazine as one of the 100 "people who most affect our world."

For more information contact ASI at 515-327-9075, 1-888-722-4799, e-mail autism50ia@aol.com or check out the web site at www.autismia.org

Monday & Tuesday, November 22 & 23, 2010
Career Planning for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Northbrook, IL

Featured Speaker: James Emmet, M.S. This workshop focuses on creative career planning building on individual strengths.

For more information contact www.SpectrumTrainingSystemsInc.com or call 920.749.0332.

December

Tuesday, December 14, 2010
Customized Employment

1:00-2:00 p.m.

This webinar is sponsored by JAN (Job Accommodation Network)

For information go to <http://askjan.org/webcast/index.htm>



Remember to check the Disability Training Information calendar at www.disabilitytraining.org/ and the AEA 267 Professional Development web site at www.aea267.k12.ia.us/pd/ for information on more learning opportunities.

The Family & Educator Connection

The AEA 267 Family-Educator Connection provides information and support for families and educators around disability related issues. Whether you would like to talk about family adjustment issues with a new baby or newly diagnosed disability, home-school communication issues, questions relating to understanding a disability, or parenting strategies, we are happy to take your call. We have quite a library of resources available for loan and a number of highly qualified people to consult. If you have a question, we will do our best to help you find the answer. We are available by phone, mail, e-mail or by appointment, in-person.

Cedar Falls/ Waterloo Office

Deb Paton

3712 Cedar Heights Drive

Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Ph. 1-800-542-8375 or 1-319-273-8265

dpaton@aea267.k12.ia.us,

Clear Lake/Mason City Office

Sandy Kraschel

Mason City Airport Grounds

9184 B 265th Street

Clear Lake, Iowa 50428

Ph. 1-800-392-6640 or 1-641-357-6125

skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us

Marshalltown Office

Andy Lawler

909 South 12th Street

Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

Ph. 1-800-735-1539 or 1-641-844-2469

alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us

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3712 Cedar Heights Drive
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613-6290
www.aea267.org

FAMILY-EDUCATOR

COORDINATORS

Cedar Falls/Waterloo Region

Deb Paton

3712 Cedar Heights Drive

Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Ph. 1-800-542-8375

or 1-319-273-8265

dpaton@aea267.k12.ia.us

Clear Lake/Mason City Region

Sandy Kraschel

9184 265th St, Ste B

Clear Lake, Iowa 50428

Ph. 1-800-392-6640 or 1-641-357-6125

skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us

Marshalltown Region

Andy Lawler

909 South 12th Street

Marshalltown, Iowa 50158

Ph. 1-800-735-1539 or 1-641-753-3564

alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us