

# Connecting with Families and Educators



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

**FAMILY & EDUCATOR  
 CONNECTION  
 RESOURCES  
 THIS EXIT** 

## What can we do for you?

As we start the new school year, the Family & Educator Connection would like to remind you of the services we offer to help make your year a positive and productive one. The Family & Educator Connection (FEC) is part of a statewide network of parents and educators working together to support educators and parents of children and young adults with special needs.

### Newsletters

This newsletter, *Connecting with Families and Educators*, is distributed about four times during each school year to parents of children who have an IEP, kindergarten through high school, school administrators, special education teachers, AEA staff and our community partners.

*Bright Beginnings* is a newsletter designed for parents of infants and preschoolers and the educators and service providers who work with them. We produce and share this publication 3 times each school year.

Our hope is that the newsletters are helpful to families, educators and community partners by providing information about topics related to living, learning, and working for our children both now and in the future. We understand that with such a broad audience there may be some topics that pertain to your situation and some that are less relevant. We ask you to glance through each issue, check out the calendar of upcoming events and learning opportunities, and see what meets your needs.



### Support of the IEP or IFSP Process

One of the primary ways that the Family & Educator Connection serves parents and educators is by supporting good home-school communication. This includes providing support to families so that they can more effectively participate in the IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individual Education Program) process. This may include:

- Explaining the IFSP/IEP process
- Reviewing procedural safeguards/parent rights
- Helping parents organize their thoughts in preparation for a meeting
- Attending IFSP/IEP or other school meetings after being asked by the local school, parents or AEA staff.

### Information

The FEC does this by providing one-on-one assistance to parents or educators when there is a need for information or direct support. We provide information through our library on topics including disabilities, parenting, instructional and behavior management strategies. The FEC shares information about community resources and supports with parents and educators as requests are made.

### Website

As part of the AEA 267 website, the Family & Educator Connection posts the Connecting and Bright Beginnings newsletters, tips for parents and educators, a workshop and events calendar, and links to sites of interest to parents and educators at [www.aea267.k12.ia.us](http://www.aea267.k12.ia.us). Click on Special Education, then Family & Educator Connection to get to a menu of items.



## Workshops and Conferences

The Family & Educator Connection publicizes workshops and events that provide information and learning opportunities for families and our education partners. The FEC also collaborates with AEA staff, community organizations and others to provide workshops as needs are identified.

It is easy to connect with the Family & Educator Connection. Just call, write or e-mail your regional office listed below. If you are unsure which office to call, just call one of the offices listed, and we will help connect you to the right office. We look forward to hearing from you.

### Clear Lake/Mason City Region

Sandy Kraschel  
Mason City Airport Grounds  
9184 B 265th Street  
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Ph. 1-800-392-6640 or 1-641-357-6125  
[skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us](mailto:skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us)

### Marshalltown Region

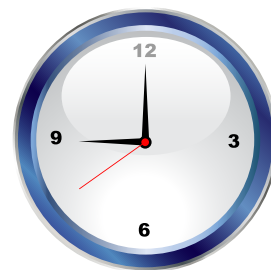
Andy Lawler  
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Marshalltown, Iowa 50158  
Ph. 1-800-735-1539 or 1-641-844-2469  
[alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us](mailto:alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us)

### Cedar Falls/ Waterloo Region

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3712 Cedar Heights Drive  
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613  
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[dpaton@aea267.k12.ia.us](mailto:dpaton@aea267.k12.ia.us)

## Get School off to a Great Start

With the arrival of September, the school year is off and running. Whether you and your family look forward to the beginning of the school year or the final days at the end of the year, there are some things you can do to make the year better at home and at school.

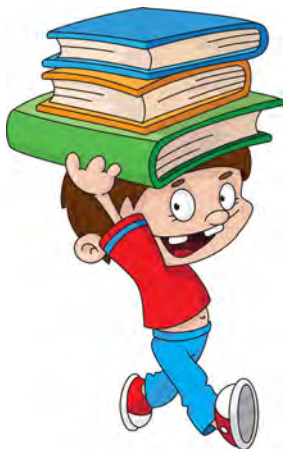


### Routines

As much as you can, keep to a consistent routine for bedtime and meals. Whether your students are in first grade, eighth grade or juniors in high school, being well rested and well fueled helps students stay focused and have the energy to succeed mentally and physically.

### Stay in touch

Keep connected with your school, whether that is through the class web site postings, the district internet system, or checking your student's planner. Most teachers and schools provide information at the beginning of the year about how to contact the teacher or school administrator when you have questions or want an update on your student's progress in school. It is easier to stay on track with assignments and grades than it is to play catch-up when the semester is winding down. Make sure you let your child's teacher know when you feel things are going well, not just when there is an issue. We all like to hear good news.



### Set high expectations

Have a conversation with your child to talk about expectations for the year. Especially for middle and high school aged students, expectations may be set in the areas of academics, behavior, and contributions to the household. Make sure you all have a clear understanding of the expectations. After a few weeks, a review of the expectations within the reality of the school year and obligations may help determine areas that should get more or less time and attention as the semester progresses.

### Schedule time together

Students perform better in school if they have interest and support at home. Something as simple as eating a few meals together every week and talking about what is going on at school help students stay engaged in school and do better in their studies.



Football, soccer, and swimming are just some of the organized sports your children may be involved in. The hours spent may be a time of fun or a time of stress. This largely depends upon how you, the parent, approach your child's participation. Remember, you are a role model and your actions and attitudes will impact your child's actions and attitudes. Begin by understanding where your child is developmentally.

### Tips to make sports more enjoyable for the entire family:

- Take a positive approach; praise children for the positive aspects of their performance.
- Focus on the child's developing skills and not the final score.
- Be realistic about a child's physical abilities.
- Use sports as a way to teach children about limits and strengths, goal setting and the importance of sports as a means for relaxation.
- Allow the child to determine the importance of sports in his or her life. Parents should not use their children to relive their own athletic past or to fulfill unmet athletic goals.
- Control emotions and actions at sporting events. Support and respect the coaches and all the children playing.
- Be a positive role model. Enjoy sports.

*This article reprinted with permission from the July-August 2011 issue of Words on Wellness from Iowa State University Extension.*

## Budget planning, a good transition skill

Iowa State University Extension has lots of good resources for families, many of which can be used to help students gain independence and daily living skills. There are a number of electronic newsletters and resources that have been created as a result of collaboration of the Extension programs from universities across the United States.

One of the ISU communications includes "Pointers from Peggy." Here is an example, the posting from Peggy in May: One way I try to save on my grocery bills is to buy everything I can on sale. To do this you have to:

- plan meals around store specials
- be able to identify when store sales are a good deal and stock up

Trent Hamm has described how this is done at his blog called **Using Grocery Flyers To Plan Meals**. ([www.thesimpledollar.com/category/groceries/](http://www.thesimpledollar.com/category/groceries/))

Several web sites now help with this goal. One that serves central Iowa is **Learning the Frugal Life**. (<http://learningthefrugallife.blogspot.com/p/weekly-grocery-deals.html>). On Wednesdays, Sara, the author, posts the items she thinks are good deals for Hy-Vee and Fareway. She also adds ideas for coupons for some of the items. You can go to the site each week or you can have the lists delivered to you via email like I do. If you like to shop at **Aldi's**, **Dahls**, **Target**, or **Wal-Mart** you have to check out the individual flyers on line.

If you are not living in Iowa there is a site called **becentsable grocery gathering** (<http://www.becentsable.net/store-deals/>) that provides lists of grocery specials by state and grocery store. If you are "into" grocery prices you might consider signing up to provide information on your favorite stores for others.

Bottom line, you can save money on groceries, but it takes a little more time and energy than just going to the store and putting whatever looks good into the cart.



## Help students be ready to leave high school

Last spring we had the opportunity to talk to some students who had just finished their first year of college. We asked them to reflect on their experiences and tell us what had been the most difficult adjustments. Our hope is that by looking at what they had to say, you may come up with some ideas of what you can do now, to make that transition better for your students this time next year, as they start their post secondary schooling.

Here are their comments:

*“All this free time... what exactly am I supposed to be doing?”*

*“Making new friends is difficult for me and I didn't know anyone.”*

*“I found the workload overwhelming!”*

*“I didn't have a clue how to organize my time.”*

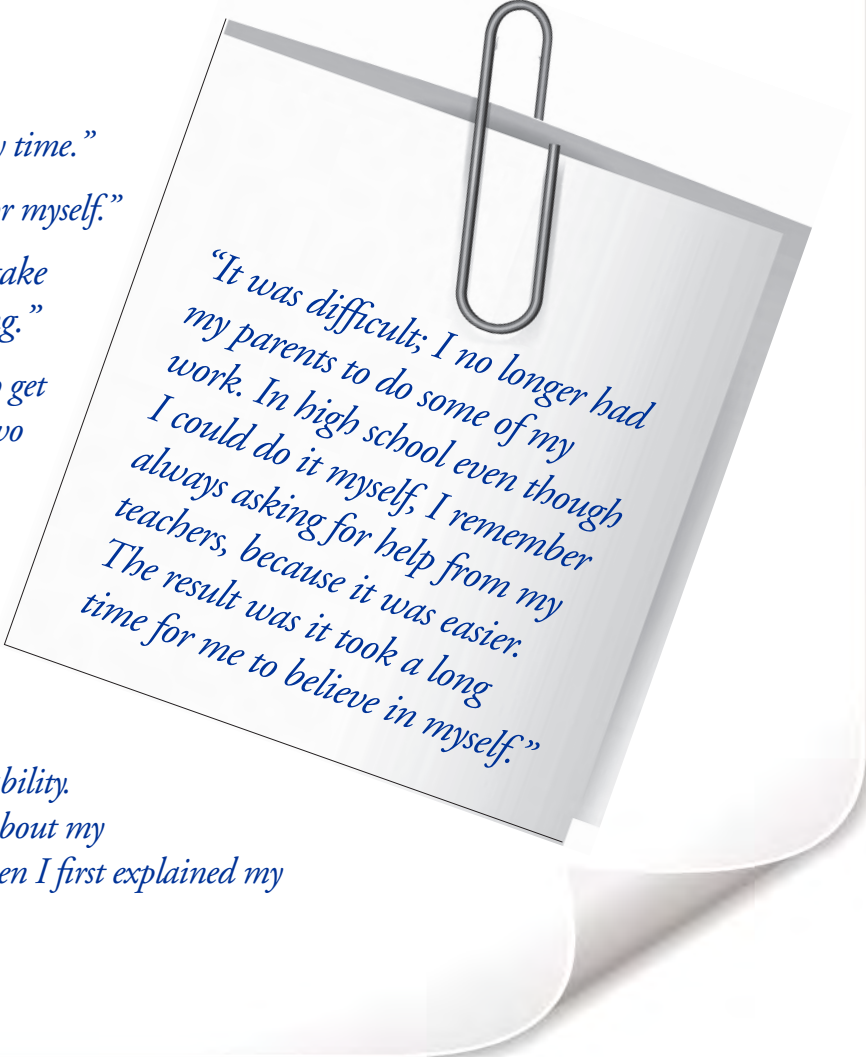
*“I was unprepared to be so responsible for myself.”*

*“I thought at college you only had to take classes that you liked, and I was wrong.”*

*“I didn't realize that it was impossible to get back on track until after I was failing two of my classes.”*

*“There are so many things to do and it is busy in the dorm, and I could not focus on my work. Every other little thing going on in the room seems just as important.”*

*“I don't like telling people about my disability. In high school I never told my teachers about my disability. Imagine how scared I felt when I first explained my disability to my English professor!”*



*“It was difficult; I no longer had my parents to do some of my work. In high school even though I could do it myself, I remember always asking for help from my teachers, because it was easier. The result was it took a long time for me to believe in myself.”*

What activities and experiences for high school students can you think of that would give them the skills to better face these challenges as they start college or work? It may be something as simple as making them more responsible for managing their own time or providing opportunities for them to meet new people in a variety of settings. Practice is one of the best strategies for development of any skill, and high school is a great time to practice those skills we need for adulthood.

## NAMI Visions for Tomorrow Education Program

NAMI of Blackhawk County is offering a free eight-week class for family members and caregivers of children and adolescents with Brain Disorders.

The classes provide support, resources and coping strategies while participants learn about a variety of disorders, including:

- Autism
- ADHD
- Bipolar Disorder
- Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

Topics include record keeping, self care, managing problems, rehabilitation, recovery, accessing school services, transition and advocacy.

### Classes are held:

- Every Thursday, September 22 to November 10
- 6:30- 8:30 p.m.
- First Congregational Church
- 608 West 4th Street, Waterloo, IA

### Register with:

NAMI Black Hawk County  
319.235.5263 or  
[namibh@qwestoffice.net](mailto:namibh@qwestoffice.net)

This class is supported by Allen Memorial Hospital, Black Hawk County, Cedar Falls Health Trust, Cedar Valley United Way, Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa, Guernsey Foundation, Lincoln Savings Bank, Principal Financial Group and Waterloo Transport.

## Working Teens as Contributors to the Family?



Many teens work for extra money but rarely are their earnings used as a contribution to the family's economic wellbeing. Research of teen employment reveals that costs for transportation, clothing and food away from home actually increases with teen employment. Involving teens in family problem solving helps teach them the reality of managing money and distinguishing between needs and wants. Asking teens to help with household expenses will need to begin with an open sharing of a family budget, income and needs. They need to know that their financial help is appreciated.

### Help your teen:

- Analyze expenses and income from their job. Do the costs outweigh the benefits to themselves or the family?
- Develop a budget that includes earnings going toward savings, family budget (if appropriate) and teen expenses.
- Plan a budget for wants like entertainment, vacation or trips. Consider what part of the teen's money will pay for family vacations or other purchases. Teens will learn the value of savings over time for wants.

*This article reprinted with permission from the July-August 2011 issue of Words on Wellness from Iowa State University Extension.*

## eSchool News suggestion for teachers



eSchool News, an electronic newsletter especially for teachers is a resource that teachers might want to check out. One of the suggestions in a recent issue is the web site [www.eduTecher.net](http://www.eduTecher.net) According to eSchool News, this site provides access to web tools for teachers and students that are at no cost. Check out eSchool News at [www.eschoolnews.com/](http://www.eschoolnews.com/)

## Resources for Siblings

The SibNet Listserv is an online community for adult siblings around the world to share information and discuss issues of common interest. You can now join the SibNet group via Facebook as well as Yahoo.com. To subscribe go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/subscribe/SibNet>

People who have a sibling with a mental health disorder are more likely to experience episodes of depression at some point in their lives, say researchers who analyzed four decades of data. Additionally, they found that people who have a sibling with low IQ are more likely to live near that brother or sister but to be somewhat emotionally detached from that sibling. The findings were reported in the Journal of Family Psychology. For more information go to [http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy\\_pdfs/discovery/discovery.pdf](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy_pdfs/discovery/discovery.pdf)

Additional resources available from the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center include: Tips for Adult Siblings of Individuals with Disabilities [http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy\\_pdfs/tipsheets/tipsheet\\_AdultSiblings.pdf](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy_pdfs/tipsheets/tipsheet_AdultSiblings.pdf)

Tips for Parents of Adolescent & Young Adult Siblings of Individuals with Disabilities [http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy\\_pdfs/tipsheets/tipsheet\\_Adolescentyoungadultsiblings.pdf](http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/kennedy_pdfs/tipsheets/tipsheet_Adolescentyoungadultsiblings.pdf)

A complete list of their resources can be found at <http://kc.vanderbilt.edu/site/resources/publications/default.aspx>

*This article reproduced with permission from Reference Points, a publication of TATRA. Reference Points received initial support from the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition <http://www.ncset.org/>. Visit their web site for a wealth of information related to secondary education and transition for youth with disabilities.*

## Autism workshops from University of Iowa Children's Hospital



The University of Iowa's Children's Hospital has announced a series of free workshops for parents. All of the workshops are scheduled for Saturdays, from 10:00-noon on the U of I campus in the Rembolt Conference Room of the Center for Disabilities and Development. Supervised play will be provided for children ages 3 to 10.

### Workshop topics include:

- Managing your child's feeding problems, September 10
- Managing Challenging Behaviors, October 8
- Teaching your child independence, November 19
- Improving your child's social skills, December, 10

You may register on-line at [www.uihealthcare.org/autismcenterworkshops](http://www.uihealthcare.org/autismcenterworkshops) or call 319.467.5658.

For more information contact Lisa Kemmerer, UI Children's Hospital Autism Center Coordinator at 319.467.5658 or [lisa-kemmerer@uiowa.edu](mailto:lisa-kemmerer@uiowa.edu)



## Financial planning guide for parents

PACER, the Parent Training and Information Center for Minnesota, has teamed up with the National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) to produce a financial planning guide for parents of children with disabilities.

The guide offers tips on organization, managing money, dealing with debt, and planning for the future needs of your child who has a disability as well as the rest of the family.

The guide is available on-line at the PACER web site at [www.PACER.org/publications/possibilities](http://www.PACER.org/publications/possibilities)

## Resources for teachers

According to a recent issue of Reference Points, a publication from PACER, the Parent Training and Information center in Minnesota, the National Institute for Literacy, has some information and tools designed to increase the effectiveness of teachers working with individuals who have learning disabilities. This includes four online, stand-alone, professional development modules:

- Learning Disabilities and Accommodations
- Learning Disabilities and English Language Learners
- Learning Disabilities and Neuroscience
- Professional's Guide to Educating Adults with Learning Disabilities

The free, self-paced modules are available at <http://mp.cls.utk.edu>.

## Mental Health First Aid

This fall, AEA 267 is offering a course that is designed to provide educators, parents, and other service providers the basic skills needed to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. Emphasis is placed on building mental health literacy and helping people identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness.

Participants will learn how to recognize warning signs of mental illness; assess for risk of suicide or harm; construct an action plan to provide mental health first aid.

### Sessions are scheduled:

Tuesday evenings from October 4 through November 1

Cedar Falls AEA 267 office

5:00- 8:00 p.m.

Register on the AEA 267 web site at [www.aea267.k12.ia.us/pd/](http://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/pd/) ; AEA 267 Offerings, course # 4685.



## Calendar

### September

Saturday, September 24, 2011

#### **2011 Autism Conference, AAA: Autism, Awareness and Approaches**

Woodward, Iowa

This conference is designed for parents of individuals on the Autism spectrum and those individuals who work with them. Sponsored by Woodward Resource Center's Autism Team. Registration form is available from the AEA 267 Family & Educator Connection office near you. For more information contact Rose Hollingsworth, at 515-438-3165 or E-Mail: [rhollin@dhs.state.ia.us](mailto:rhollin@dhs.state.ia.us) or 1251 334th Street, Woodward, Iowa 50276.

### October

Thursday - Saturday,  
October 13 - 15, 2011

#### **16th DCDT International Conference**

Kansas City, Missouri

Sponsored by the Division for Career Development and Transition (DCDT) this international conference focuses on supports, strategies and systems that address the transition needs of students with disabilities as they move from secondary to post secondary experiences and adulthood.

For more information go to <http://www.dcdt.org/>

Friday, October 14, 2011

#### **Autism Society of Iowa Fall Conference and Auction Pivotal Response Treatment for Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

West Des Moines, Iowa

Presenter: Daniel Openden, PhD, BCBA-D. This conference is for parents and educators. Continuing education units are available for Social Work, Speech Language Pathology and licensed Mental Health Counselors. Family scholarships and travel stipends available through the Family to Family project at [http://support.autismsociety.org/site/DocServer/F2F\\_Application\\_for\\_funds\\_to\\_attend\\_training\\_or\\_conference.pdf?docID=21402](http://support.autismsociety.org/site/DocServer/F2F_Application_for_funds_to_attend_training_or_conference.pdf?docID=21402) or the Autism Society of Iowa at [www.autismia.org](http://www.autismia.org)

Registration available through the Autism Society of Iowa at 515.327.9075 or toll free 888.722.4799 or on-line at [www.autismia.org](http://www.autismia.org)

Sunday - Monday,  
October 23 & 24, 2011

#### **Prescription for success: Strategies for Behavior and Learning**

Des Moines, Iowa

Sponsored by LDAIA (Learning Disabilities Association of Iowa) this conference is designed for parents, educators and service providers. Featured speakers include Dinah Zike, author and Teacher's Choice Award winner; and Laura Riffel, PhD, known as "The Behavior Doctor."

For more information, contact Kathy at [kathylda@askresource.org](mailto:kathylda@askresource.org) or call toll free 888.690.LDAI. Conference information also available at [www.lda-ia.org/conference\\_2011.asp](http://www.lda-ia.org/conference_2011.asp)

### February

Wednesday - Saturday,  
February 22 - 25, 2012

#### **LDA National Conference**

Chicago, Illinois

This 49th national conference on Learning Disabilities and ADHD addresses topics that are appropriate for adults who have learning disabilities, parents of individuals with learning disabilities or ADHD and educators and community providers who work with them. The conference is sponsored by LDA.

For more information go to <http://www.ldaamerica.org/conference/index.asp>

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

**THE FAMILY & EDUCATOR CONNECTION**

Check us out on the Web! [www.aea267.k12.ia.us](http://www.aea267.k12.ia.us)



*working together for children and young adults with disabilities*

## 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**

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

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### **Clear Lake/Mason City Office**

**Sandy Kraschel**

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