



DIRECTIONS

Technology in Special Education

Vol. 8 , No. 6

February 2002

President Bush Appoints Commission to Revamp Special Education

Source: CEC Today, Vol. 8 No 5, November/December 2001

President Bush appointed a special commission on Oct. 3 to examine special education, which he says too often fails to ensure children with disabilities achieve despite the large amount of money spent on special education. The commission is scheduled to present its recommendations this spring, when Congress is expected to begin the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) reauthorization process.

Bush administration officials backed up the president at a hearing before the House Education and the Workforce Committee.

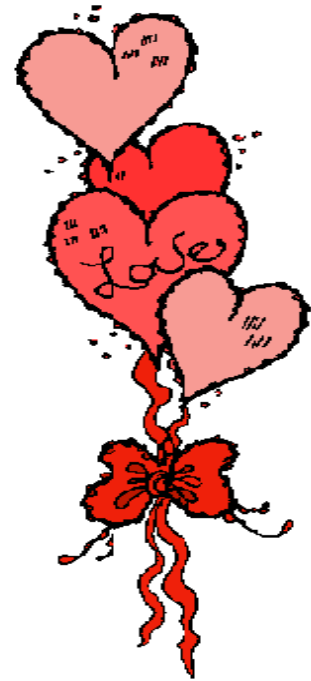
“The IDEA has yet to fulfill its promise,” said Education Secretary Roderick R. Paige. “The doors are open, but the system still denies too many students the opportunity to reach high academic standards.”

Paige also referred to the over-representation of children from diverse cultures identified as needing special education as evidence of the system’s failure.

The president’s commission met with mixed reactions among Congress members as well as the disability community. While many support efforts to improve special education, there is also fear that full funding of IDEA will be delayed and/or jeopardized. Another concern is that some of the issues listed as problematic were the focus of the last IDEA reauthorization. Because state and local districts are still struggling to implement these changes, it may be too soon to tell which problems are implementation issues and which require legislative action.

CEC expressed these concerns immediately. CEC also pointed out that special education has made a significant difference in the lives of millions of

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HalfthePlanet News

We welcome and thank our newest corporate sponsor, learningneeds.com, the online marketplace for universal learning -- www.learningneeds.com.

Our young author, Brandon Scott, shares his experiences of people's attitudes and social ineptitude around his disability. Read his latest article, "What It's Like in Public," at <http://www.halftheplanet.org>.

Through the Looking Glass, National Resource Center for Parents with Disabilities, is a community based nonprofit organization that is conducting a nationwide project to learn more about families in which a parent with a disability is raising a teen (11-17 years old). They are seeking parents with disabilities and their teenaged sons and daughters to participate in their study. For more information on the study and how to participate, go to <http://www.halftheplanet.org> and read "SEEKING: Parents w/Disabilities and Their Teens."

The U.S. Government has released a list of publications that are designed to help understand and meet the mental health needs of children and adults. To read the full list of available publications and how to order them, go to <http://www.halftheplanet.org> and read "The Superintendent of Documents Announces Publications on Mental Health."

SURVEY SHOWS THAT PATIENT HEALTH CAN BENEFIT WHEN FAMILY CAREGIVERS SELF-IDENTIFY

The National Family Caregivers

Association (NFCA) has released the Survey of Self-Identified Family Caregivers 2001, including a paper on the implications of the survey results. The survey sought to examine the attitudes and behaviors of self-identified family caregivers—those who recognize that caregiving is a job that transcends familial responsibility. According to the report, when family caregivers self-identify, they, their loved ones and society benefit. The most significant overall finding is that self-identification does make a positive difference in the attitudes and actions of family caregivers and therefore is an important goal to be pursued. In every category explored in the survey, self-identification, to one extent or another, was a factor in improving the caregiver's ability to care successfully for their loved one and ease pressures on themselves. To obtain an electronic copy of the report, send an email to info@nfcacares.org. Please provide your full name, company name, address, and phone number in the email and type "Survey" in the subject box.

The HalfthePlanet Today E-Newsletter and the HalfthePlanet web site are programs of the HalfthePlanet Foundation. HalfthePlanet Foundation is a nonprofit organization that supports the applications of technology to promote the values of the Americans with Disabilities Act: independent living, social inclusion, equality of opportunity, economic self-sufficiency and empowerment.

To subscribe to this newsletter go to <http://www.halftheplanet.org>. §

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Private Special Education Schools -- A Valid and Valuable Alternative...for Some Students... Some of the Time

By Richard D. Lavoie

Source: *CEC Today*, Vol. 8 No 5, November/December 2001

MY heart and soul reside in America's public school system. My children attended their neighborhood public schools, as did I. America's future will depend upon the success of our national school system.

That said, I feel that a private (independent) educational alternative is critical to the successful development of many students with special needs. These schools should be viewed as a partner to the public school programs - not a threat. Many public school administrators view the private school as an evil empire whose goal is to capture America's school children in order to meet entrepreneurial quotas. Still others feel that the mere existence of private alternatives is reflective of the failure of the public sector...a slap-in-the-face of the American educational system.

Having recently completed a 30-year career in private special education programs, I can assure my public school colleagues that neither of these viewpoints is valid.

Interestingly, private schools for special needs students run contrary to my core political beliefs. I have long been troubled by an amoral aspect of America's geopolitical scene. Whenever our society devalues a segment of our population (the elderly, Native Americans, African

Americans, and Hispanics) we segregate and isolate them (via nursing homes, reservations, ghettos, barrios). Instinctively, we know this is wrong. So we attempt to rationalize our actions by convincing ourselves that these groups "want to live that way...they are happier 'among their own kind'." They do not want to be with "us." This practice violates the spirit of acceptance and diversity that is our country's most basic standard.

However, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act reflects a core value of the federal special education initiatives of the 1970's...that a continuum of services must be provided for children with special needs. This range of programs and services reflects the undeniably disparate needs of the children we serve. All efforts should be made to provide the child with the necessary services within his or her neighborhood.

But there will be situations in which the complexity or severity of a child's disability renders classroom modifications and accommodations ineffective. It is in these instances wherein the team may want to explore the viability of a local or residential private program.

Private Schools, Equal Partners

We should be cautioned against

viewing such an environment as a "necessary evil." Rather, it represents an opportunity for the child to receive highly specialized and responsive service designed to meet his or her unique needs. When the private school placement is viewed as an equal partner by the public program, the child's success will be maximized. Conversely, the child's potential will not be realized if conflict exists between the parties. We must be mindful of the sage African proverb, "When elephants fight, it's the grass that gets trampled." The ultimate victim in any such territorial conflict is the child.

Having toiled in the vineyards of private residential special education for three decades, I witnessed the magic that occurs when children who "battle the same dragon" are placed in programs together. The collegiality and acceptance that occurs are wondrous to behold. The isolation and rejection they had experienced in previous placements become vague memories. They are - finally - among peers who recognize and understand their struggles. This collegiality enables children to learn, grow, and risk. They are among equals.

One of the federal government's major policy developers once referred to "special schools as "immoral," as they violated the widely-accepted concept of

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Winston Announces New Directory

Source: *Telability Media*, Vol.10 No. 2, October 2001

More than 1,500 mass media resources that serve people with disabilities are contained in the 2001-2002 edition of *America's Telability Media*, the nation's first disability media directory, published by the National Telability Media Center in Columbia, MO.

Charlie Winston, editor and NTMC Director, has added more than 100 new entries to the seventh edition, which provides current information resources that benefit the disability community and the rehabilitation industry. The 390 page book is based on an annual nationwide survey which collects data on the growth and development of telability media and offers the only national view of America's newest field of journalism. Again, this year, the directory will be available free of charge to anyone on the Internet at www.freedomforum.org. The website is provided in partnership with NTMC by the First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University, a fully funded program of the Freedom Forum, one of the nation's leading foundations concerned with media and press freedom. Winston said, "We remain deeply grateful for the continued support of the Freedom Forum, which has allowed persons and organizations around the world to have access to our directory and newsletters."

Each directory entry contains a full description of the resource, along with complete contact information, including websites and e-mail addresses. Included are more than 1,260 magazines, newspapers and newsletters; more than 95 broadcast producers; 22 newspaper

columnists; nearly 85 dial-in newspapers for the blind; and almost 30 professional organizations. "Our book," Winston added, "is a marketing tool for corporations and a thorough reference guide for libraries and service organizations." Winston, who is blind, founded the NTMC in 1992 as a non-profit organization to support the growth and development of mass media for persons with disabilities. He holds B.J. and M.A. degrees from the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism. *America's Telability Media* is available in print or on disk in Word format. The price is \$40 per copy. Mailing labels can be purchased on disk or through e-mail, with unlimited use for \$150. Checks or money orders should be made to Telability Media, P.O. Box 1488, Columbia, MO 65205-1488. You may telephone 573-445-7656 for more information. §

Special Needs Book List

Adaptive Technologies for Learning and Work Environments. Second edition. Joseph J. Lazzaro. Price: \$48.00. Language: English. Catalog #: 12252. Binding: Paperback. There is no doubt that advancements in technology can make learning, work, and life in general, easier. This updated and expanded new edition of a cutting-edge work breaks down all of the latest products and systems for making technology accessible to all.

Assistive Technology for Young Children with Disabilities A Guide to Family-Centered Services. Sharon Lesar Judge & Howard P. Parette. Sale Price: \$17.47. List Price: \$24.95. Language: English. Catalog #: 7836. Binding: Paperback. With the assistance of technology, young children with disabilities can experience more success in exploring the world around them, communicating their needs to others, making choices about their world, and taking more advantage of schooling and social opportunities. This book explores the wide range of considerations involved in evaluating children's needs, selecting and prescribing devices, and training children, families, and teachers to use the technology. Written for professionals. A SPECIAL VALUE!

Family Guide to Assistive Technology Katherine A. Kelker & Roger Holt. Sale Price: \$11.17. List Price: \$15.95. Language: English. Catalog #: 7835. Binding: Paperback. As wonderful as assistive technology can be, it is not always easy to acquire. It took expertise and persistence to find the correct devices and figure out ways to pay for them. This guide is intended to help parents learn more about assistive technology and how it can help their child. Parents have a much better chance of getting what their child needs if they are involved in selecting the technology and planning for its use. A SPECIAL VALUE!

Order from Special Needs Project,
324 State St., Suite H,
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Web: www.specialneeds.com §

Press Release

Hastings-on-Hudson, NY, November 12, 2001 -- Enabling Devices and Toys for Special Children have fantastic new toys and devices!

We have introduced enticing new variations on our classic Go! Boards, such as the Little Red Schoolhouse with 8 icon holders and a series of train Go! Boards with 4 large icon holders. These new designs might just be the motivating factor the student needs.

Enabling Devices has introduced a number of hot items to their toy line. Glowing Bedtime Sulley, from the smash hit, Monsters, Inc. has been switch-adapted so everyone can play! He speaks when the external capability switch is activated and says various phrases like, "Don't worry, I'll protect you!" He's soft and fuzzy and fun to be around! Tickle Me Elmo Surprise is also a welcome addition. When Elmo's external capability switch is actuated, he vibrates and roars with laughter. Elmo is a great plush toy for children who need sensory stimulation. The Sensory Discrimination Kit has been developed to aid therapists in sensory evaluation and/or treatment. The unit is loaded with sensory stimulation and contains 8 brightly colored 3" x 3" squares of various textures. The textures include: an unbreakable mirror, sparkle holographic film, large black bumps, small orange bumps, coarse velcro, fine sand, fuzzy felt, and soft fur.

Take the next step in your recovery by using our Foot Path! Each step on the brightly colored feet is rewarded with lights, vibration, a buzzer or music.

This path is a great motivational tool for physical therapists to work on stride and gait control, sensory awareness and stimulation, foot posture and placement. Constructed of high impact styrene, they are built to last and rated for adults to support up to 250 lbs.

For a copy of our FREE brochure or catalog featuring the above products and many more call 800-832-8697 or fax 914-478-3603. Visit our web site at www.enablingdevices.com. §

Inclusion Daily Express

My name is Dave Reynolds. I specialize in keeping people with disabilities and their advocates up-to-date on the latest disability rights news and information while saving valuable time. Inclusion Daily Express is my daily email news service that since December 1999 has delivered reliable world-wide updates on education, families, community living, employment, advocacy, laws, accessibility, crime, technology, and more, in a quick, easy-to-use format.

It's backed by 17 years of experience in the field along with an ability to search hundreds of media, government, organizational and "insider" sources for the very latest developments each day. Here is what Inclusion Daily Express readers have said about this service:

"I love the stories. I cry over some and moan over others and cheer for some more. Please know how much I enjoy this." Nancy Franklin, Coordinator, Division of Special Education Los Angeles Unified School District, Los Angeles, CA

"I enjoy the subscription very much. Not only does it help me remain

informed but expands my thinking process when I write Disability Matters." Terry Boisot, Parent/Advocate, Santa Barbara, CA President, California Alliance for Inclusive Communities Writer of "Disability Matters" weekly column for The ArcLink.org

"I think Inclusion Daily Express is wonderful. It is my link to the rest of the disability community." Amy Sutton, Parent/Advocate, LaGrange, IN.

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CEC IS GOING TO NEW YORK CITY!

Following the lead of our colleagues in New York, we continue to work diligently to make CEC's 2002 convention one that will carry our tradition of providing the highest quality professional development for special educators, parents, and related service personnel in America and around the world. The spirit of the New York Local Arrangements Committee has been an inspiration to us all as we proceed with our plans. Together we will continue to work to make the world a place where education, understanding, and compassion lead to opportunities and hope for all.

Please plan to attend the Convention and Expo which will be held at the Hilton New York Hotel, 1335 Avenue of the Americas and the Sheraton New York Hotel and Towers, 811 7th Avenue. All sessions, social events, and meetings will take place at the two hotels which are located in mid-town Manhattan.

THIS IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO:

- *Learn proven instructional strategies!
- *Network with colleagues and internationally recognized speakers!
- *Recharge your professional enthusiasm!

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Special Educators
General Educators

Teacher Educators
Researchers
Administrators and Supervisors
Principals
Related Service Professionals
Paraeducators
University Students
Parents

Preconvention Workshops-April 3, 2002-full or half-day workshops that offer you the opportunity to focus on a particular topic in depth. Workshop presenters feature prominent scholars and practitioners in topic areas such as:

- *Least Restrictive Environment Alternate Assessment
- *Autism Spectrum Disorders
- *Brain Research
- *Cultural Diversity
- *Positive Behavior Management and Supports
- *Collaboration
- *Early Reading Instruction
- *Paraeducators

Strands-April 5-6, 2002-four to six sequential sessions designed to address a specific topic in depth. Convention participants may elect to explore a topic by attending all sessions within a strand (and be eligible for CEUs) or they may choose to attend only one or two sessions of a strand. Preliminary strand topics include:

- *Juvenile Justice
- *Standards Based Systems/Promotional Policies
- *Learning Strategies

*Urban Issues

*Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

APRIL 4-6

Investigate successful strategies in one-, two-, and 3- hour concurrent sessions on topics including:

- *Providing Access to the General Education Curriculum
- *Finding Strategies to Manage Behavior and Prevent Discipline Problems
- *Discovering Successful Strategies and Instructional Tools for Teaching All Students
- *Preparing Students for Transitions
- *Improving Educational Opportunities for Students from Different Cultures
- *Learning About Programs That Work for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- *Discovering Elements of Successful Inclusive Schools

Don't miss the CEC Expo-The largest exhibit show for those who work with students with exceptional learning needs!

Career Opportunities!! The place to be if you're looking for a new job or considering a job change! At Career Connections, you'll find one of the most comprehensive placement services in the field of special education.

For information contact CEC at 1.888.232.7733 or www.cec.sped.org

See You There !! §

Continued from page 1

children with disabilities. Our successes include the fact that in the past 10 years the number of students with disabilities who graduated from high school increased by 31 percent and the number of students with disabilities who attended colleges or universities doubled.

Areas the Commission Report Will Cover

*The available research and information on the effectiveness and cost of special education and the role of the federal government in special education programming and funding.

*Recommendations regarding how federal resources can best be used to improve educational results for students with disabilities.

*A recommended special education research agenda.

*The impact of appropriate early intervention in reading instruction on the referral and early identification of children for special education.

*The effect of special education funding on decisions to serve, place, or refer children for special education services. Also, recommendations for alternative funding formulas to eliminate any incentives that undermine the goals of ensuring children with disabilities receive a high-quality education.

*Recommendations on how the federal government can help states and districts provide a high-quality education to students with disabilities, including recruiting and retaining qualified personnel and including children with disabilities in performance and accountability systems.

*The impact of federal and state laws

on the cost and effectiveness of special education services and how these laws support or hinder the achievement of students with disabilities.

*An assessment of how differences in state law and practice, as well as in school district size, location, demographics, and wealth, affect which children are referred to special education and the cost of special education.

*A review of the experiences of state and local governments in financing special education. §

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This month, we'd like to extend an extra special thank you to.....

The Spurlino Foundation
Raytheon Systems' Repro Dept

Without their help this publication wouldn't exist!

God Bless...

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inclusion. When I heard that remark, I immediately thought of an incident I witnessed at a residential school early in my career.

Karen, a 17-year-old girl with a severe language-based learning disability, developed an adolescent-onset seizure disorder. She had experienced no seizure activity whatsoever prior to this and suddenly was having several major episodes daily. As the school's medical staff began the trial and error ritual of determining the most effective pharmaceutical intervention, it became obvious that Karen's uncontrolled seizures were presenting a significant risk of injury for her. Reluctantly, we informed her that we would be requiring her to wear a helmet during her waking hours. She was crestfallen.

Insult added to injury. She was greatly embarrassed by the helmet and began to isolate herself on the campus and would not attend community activities. The staff was powerless to assist or assuage her.

However, Karen's spirits were soon buoyed when several of her classmates secretly contacted their parents and asked them to ship their bicycle helmets to the school. Soon, a dozen of Karen's friends proudly wore their helmets in solidarity.

Immoral? I think not.

It is a sad reality that many students who are "different" experience isolation, rejection, failure, and ridicule in their local schools. Private programs provide them with a supportive peer group and a specialized curriculum that responds to their unique needs and profiles. In some cases, inclusion is exclusionary ...and a highly restrictive environment is, indeed, the least restrictive.

Richard D. Lavoie has served as an administrator in residential special education programs since 1972. He served as Head of School at the Riverview School in East Sandwich, Mass. He is currently involved in foundation work in San Francisco. §

Conferences

Date: March 18-23, 2002
CSUN's 17th Annual International Conference: Technology and Persons with Disabilities

Los Angeles, CA
 Contact Information: Center on Disabilities, California State University, Northridge, 18111 Nordhoff St., Bldg. 11, Ste 103, Northridge, CA 91330-8340
 Phone: 818-677-2578
 Fax: 818-677-4929
 E-mail: ctrdis@csun.edu
 Web site: www.csun.edu/cod/

Date: April 3-6, 2002
Council for Exceptional Children's Annual Convention and Expo

New York, NY
 Contact Information: Council for Exceptional Children, 1110 N. Glebe Road, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704
 Phone: 888-232-7733
 Web site: www.cec.sped.org

Keep watching for the announcement of Dreamms' 'New Look' in the Spring !!



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