

# NETWORKER

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## Positive Parenting for Young Siblings and their Brothers and Sisters with Developmental Needs

by Howard Termo, Early Intervention Specialist, Parent Education and Support Counselor

When a child is in need of developmental assistance everyone in the family feels it. Though parents already have a lot on their plates, they worry about siblings' needs for attention. Taking a positive approach with children can create harmony, encourage independence and have lasting positive effects on social emotional development. Here are some suggestions that combine strategies from the Triple P Positive Parenting Program with information from the Sibling Support Project and other articles:

### Give Children Quality Time

A few minutes given frequently throughout the day, to read a book or listen to your child sing, goes a long way. Your private time and attention is high on the list of what siblings say they need when parents are spending time tending to a brother or sister with developmental or medical needs. If possible, try to put in place a schedule of private times for siblings.

### Talk With Children

More than directing children or giving them information, talking and listening teaches conversational and social skills, boosts self esteem and builds relationships. Get to know your children better through conversations.

### Take Time To Show Affection

Brief displays of affection throughout the day, especially when children are behaving well, helps develop positive relationships and secure attachments. Expressing your affection in ways you and they find comfortable can help children learn to give and receive appropriate levels of affection.

### Use Descriptive Praise To Encourage Desirable Behavior

Encourage desirable behavior by describing exactly what you like. As opposed to "Good girl", try something like, "Jenna, thank you for picking up your toys when I asked." Siblings are often asked to pitch in, sometimes earlier and more often than in other families. Some sibs believe that because of their experiences

they grew to be more charitable, sensitive to humanitarian efforts, and closer to family. Encourage these wonderful possibilities early by showing appreciation using descriptive praise.



### Provide Engaging Activities

Providing engaging activities promotes development, helps children learn to play independently, and reduces the chances they will show in inappropriate ways their need for something

stimulating to do. Use the library or search online using keywords like Activities For, or Teacher Resources. Your home is full of learning resources disguised as everyday household items.

### Take Care of Yourself, So You Can Set Good Examples

Parents' physical and mental health are important factors in childrearing. When parents are on edge, tired, or short of time it is hard to display tolerance and compassion. Children learn how to treat others by how they are treated. Increase the chances of setting good examples by taking care of yourself.

Parenting is the toughest, most important job in the world. With tools at the ready, parents can encourage desirable behavior while promoting positive relationships with their children.

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*Howard Termo works at Early Learning Institute in Rohnert Park, CA. To learn more about ELI's programs in Sonoma County, including the PEAS Parent Education And Support program, or to view this article in full, go to [www.earlylearninginstitute.com](http://www.earlylearninginstitute.com)*



Celebrating Strengths ~ Finding the Positive

## A Message from our Director: Finding my Strengths

Matrix Parent Network is a 501(c)(3) organization founded in 1983 to serve families of children with special needs. We serve Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma Counties.

### Board of Directors:

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Matrix is partnering with many agencies in Marin in a county-wide effort to provide parents with the **Triple P Program**. Triple P is an evidenced-based program being used in over 21 countries to assist parents in managing challenging behaviors in children ([www5.triplep.net](http://www5.triplep.net)). For those in Marin interested in more information on this, call our Helpline at 800-578-2592.

This issue's theme is **Celebrating Strengths - Finding the Positive**. Parenting a child with special needs is not for wimps. It sometimes feels like you need a combination of the fierceness of a lion, the patience of a saint, the wisdom of the ages and all the knowledge from a special encyclopedia. It also helps to have polished communication skills and the ability to face situations with courage and determination.

How do we develop these strengths when many of us feel like we are uninformed and ill-prepared to tackle the job of advocating effectively for our child? I believe we all have the qualities listed above to some extent, though we may have never had the need to use them much before. It is with time and some practice that we identify and amplify these needed strengths.

In my office I have a little sign titled *The Four Commandments*. I don't remember where I found it but it has proven helpful in my evolution as an advocate for my child. I want to share these commandments with you, hoping they may also help you find and develop your hidden strengths.

**Show Up.** As much as we may fear or dread the meetings about our child that often focus on all that is wrong -- what isn't working -- we must still "show up". Know the value of your participation and work really hard to find nuggets of positive information that will help you and your child. You are an equal team member and your presence is crucial. No one knows your child better than you.

**Pay Attention.** Slow down and pay attention to the little things, the subtle cues, especially from our children who are non-verbal. As parents of children with special needs we may find ourselves focusing on what is wrong and

where they need help, but we must also focus on the positive. Never forget to pay attention to what is right and what is good.

When decisions or conversations are occurring about your child, really listen to whoever is speaking. Do not plan your response while they are still speaking -- let them finish. Digest the information and don't answer right away. A thoughtful, delayed response may have more power than a quick one that might miss the mark.

**Do Your Best.** No one has all the answers. Do the best you can with the information you have at the time. This also means being organized, gathering all the papers, reports, etc., in advance, making a list of your concerns and priorities and staying focused on what is really important.

**Let It Go.** This one is the toughest for me. I tend to replay a situation that didn't go well, over and over, sometimes getting mad over and over again. I try to limit the replays and instead think about what I could have done differently. I can then see it as lessons-learned and hopefully apply those hard learned lessons the next time.

There are days when I do feel as fierce as the mother lion, but there are also days when I feel completely overwhelmed and unprepared to deal with the challenges. These are the days when I look at my little sign of *The Four Commandments* and I just do the best I can. I hope they help you find and polish your needed strengths as well.



*Nora Thompson*

## GOODBYES & HELLOS

This summer we said goodbye and thank you to Parent Advisors **Lynne Wasley** and **Kerry Pilley**. In her 10 years at Matrix, Lynne served as a Sr. Parent Advisor and has supported many families in Marin County on their journey with their children with special needs. Extra projects included our library committee and work with our community resources. Lynne is not totally gone from Matrix as she will continue to lead our support group for parents of children who are adopted and who have special needs. Kerry in her 4 years at Matrix assisted many Solano families and led several support groups for Early Start families. She was instrumental in coordinating the Annual Silveyville Holiday event and provided many *Organize Your IEP Papers* workshops for families. We will miss them both.

New to Matrix is **Nikisha Williams** and returning to Matrix is **Claire Gover**. Nikisha has worked in the business community in customer service and has experience with children with emotional challenges and autism. Claire worked for Matrix in several roles from 1995 to 2000. She has worked with an agency doing child care referral and coordination and brings experience with early intervention services and children with special physical needs.

## Positively Encouraging News from County SELPAs

### MARIN SELPA

On August 23rd Novato Unified School district proudly opened the Novato Early Intervention Program which serves 3 to 5 year olds who have speech and language needs. Services range from speech only to non-severely handicapped special day classes. The Novato Program Manager, Kristen Sperling, can be reached at 415-897-4206, ext. 600. The San Rafael Elementary District also has opened a similar preschool program for 3 to 5 year olds in their district.

### SOLANO SELPA

DELTA and SIGMA are new programs accessed through the IEP process to address the needs of students with serious behavior challenges and who have had difficulties in traditional public special education classes. SIGMA serves students with emotional and behavioral difficulties and DELTA is for those with severe academic and cognitive delays. For more information call the Solano SELPA at 707-399-4460.

### SONOMA SELPA

The Sonoma SELPA continues to receive funds through its Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) grant allowing Sonoma

SELPA Program Specialists to operate the ADR Hotline 707-524-2785. They provide free support and advice to parents or guardians and can serve as neutral facilitators with school district personnel when disagreements arise.

Sonoma County Office of Education opened a new program for students in grades 7 through 12 in Santa Rosa with specific emotional and behavioral needs. The students are currently “gearing up” to operate the Katherine Stevens Bike Shop and, in addition to their academics, will learn bicycle repair and assembly.

### VALLEJO SELPA

The Vallejo City School District Transition Program works with Kaiser Permanente on Project SEARCH providing training and supported work opportunities at Kaiser Vallejo for students with significant disabilities. Students benefit from intense hands on training at the hospital and learn about working in a health care environment as well as to learn how to be successful employees in any industry. For more information on Transition services for students high school until age 22 contact Joyce Montgomery at 707-556-5700 x 51088.

## STRENGTH BASED IEPs

Your child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) because their disability is getting in the way of their learning at school. The IEP describes areas they have trouble with and details how the school can help your child through specially designed instruction. This might be resource time, accommodations in the classroom, speech therapy or other services. IEPs must also include your child’s “present levels of performance” including their strengths. It is easy to focus only on what a child cannot do well, forgetting that the IEP team needs to also highlight what they do well. Your student needs to know their strengths also!

Review of your child’s school strengths and areas of challenge must include both academic and functional skills -- not only reading, spelling and math ability but also other skills that help your child function at school, including communication, behavior and social skills, fine motor skills, and skills that increase independence appropriate to their grade level.

By identifying how your child is doing in these academic and non-academic areas, the IEP team can reinforce your child’s strengths and use them to support areas of need. Robert Brooks, Ph.D., nationally known expert on resilience and self-esteem, talks about helping children find their “islands of competence” and using these to build confidence. For example, a child with good verbal skills but difficulty with writing could do verbal reports or tests or use a computer. Every child has strengths, and it is our job to help a child find those and showcase their strengths or special interests.

Some ways to help the IEP team consider and build on your child’s strengths:

- Have a picture of your child at the IEP meeting.
- Speak briefly about your child’s accomplishments (big and small) at home and in outside activities such as sports, dance class, art, cooking, etc.

- Ask your child’s teacher or the principal what positive qualities they see in your child.
- Make sure that these comments are written in the IEP and refer back to them when discussing goals and services for your child.
- When present levels of performance are written, in addition to what your child can’t do, they should include what your child CAN do. Example: The ideas in Sam’s essays reflect a grasp of abstract ideas, yet 3 out of 4 sentences have punctuation or grammatical errors.....OR...When given a visual demonstration of what is expected, Marta can follow teacher instructions independently on how to sit at group time. When only provided with verbal prompts, 50% of the time Marta rolls on the floor and is not attentive to the lesson.



The booklet *A Student’s Guide to the IEP* (at [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org) and hard copies available at the Matrix offices) provides suggestions on including strengths in the IEP process. Additional articles are available at: LD Online [www.ldonline.org/article/6277](http://www.ldonline.org/article/6277).



# The Early Edition

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The Early Edition is a publication of the Matrix Family Resource Center (FRC) program as part of California's interagency system of early intervention services for children, birth to 36 months. Our FRC staff is here to provide information and support to help you care for your baby. Useful information and additional resources are also provided in a designated Early Start section on our website at [www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org)

## Strengths are the Foundation

Parenting a little one with special needs is the beginning of a journey that most do not expect. While it is indeed of high importance to focus on early intervention around areas of weakness, equally important is focusing on strengths - yours and your baby's. Some days finding the positives may be a challenge. Being patient and resourceful, along with keeping an open mind are all traits that other parents "who have been there" say helped.

With your baby, start small. Your baby is small. Look for the little positives that may be overlooked as professionals and others are addressing what isn't as it should be. Maybe your baby's hair is extraordinary. Maybe he has beautiful eyes, or she has a strong finger grasp, or loves water, or obviously enjoys music or feeding. As you see the strengths your baby has, it can shine back in your eyes and words to your baby. Take time each day for activities in which your baby delights.

With yourself, start small also. Be patient as you learn what you need. If others are uncomfortable with your baby's special needs, be with friends who are comfortable. Create your circle of support with people who help you stay focused on strengths while strengthening areas of challenge. A few positive people make a world of difference. A few positive moments to rejuvenate yourself with activities you enjoy can give you strength to give to your baby.

If you are tempted to feel guilty because you are not doing all of the exercises or other interventions that have been included in a plan for your baby try to remember that you are a parent, not a therapist or a teacher. You will do these things as often as you are able and sometimes that might not be as frequently as others might want. Your baby primarily needs you as a mom or a dad giving them your love and attention.

Most of us build our life around our strengths and not around our weaknesses. When we embrace our strengths and the strengths of our little ones, positive feelings are shared. These

feelings are the base that will help us be strong for any challenges that are ahead.

Remember that first of all your baby is a baby and needs all the things that babies need: your attention, your delight in who they are, cuddling and all the other things that go with nurturing a baby. Take a moment each day to look at the positives in your baby or toddler and in the time that you share. And, take a moment also for YOU.

### WISDOM FROM OTHERS

Parents have found the following three books helpful on their journey to focus on strengths:

*Love You to Pieces* edited by Suzanne Kamata, this combination of fiction, poetry, and memoir about raising a child with special needs is "hard-won, firsthand insight."

*More Than a Mom: Living a Full and Balanced Life When Your Child Has Special Needs* by Amy Baskin and Heather Fawcett is a "lifeline of information and advice..."

*You Will Dream New Dreams: Inspiring Personal Stories by Parents of Children with Disabilities* by Stanley D. Klein and Kim Schive is "a compassionate, deeply felt collection of writings....you'll discover the common ground of emotions shared by parents of children with disabilities....messages of encouragement and hope."

## Accessing the New Prevention Program

California has a new program for children who are at risk of a developmental delay or whose developmental delay does not qualify them for California's Early Start Program. The Prevention Program can provide information and resources for those children. Anyone can make a referral, including parents, medical care providers, neighbors, family members, foster parents, and day care providers. If you have concerns about your child the first step that you can take is to discuss your concerns with your health care provider. To make a referral, call the Regional Center that serves your local area. Golden Gate Regional Center (serving Marin County) -- 415-945-1600. For referrals call: 1-888-339-3305. [www.ggrc.org](http://www.ggrc.org). North Bay Regional Center (serving Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties) Napa County Office: 707-256-1100 | Sonoma County Office 707-569-2000

## Paternalidad Positiva para los familiares jóvenes y para sus hermanos y hermanas con necesidades del desarrollo



Cuando un niño necesita asistencia en su desarrollo todos en su familia lo sienten. Aunque los padres ya tienen mucho en sus platos, se preocupan por las necesidades y la atención que los otros hermanos requieren. El tener una actitud positiva con los niños puede crear armonía, fomentar la independencia y tener resultados duraderos que afecten el desarrollo socio-emocional del niño positivamente. Aquí tenemos algunas sugerencias que se combinan con las estrategias de del Programa de Crianza Positiva Triple P con la información del Proyecto de Apoyo para Familiares y otros artículos:

### De calidad de tiempo a sus niños

Pocos minutos dados con frecuencia durante todo el día, para leer un libro o escuchar a su hijo cantar, es avanzar por un largo camino. El tiempo y la atención individualizada es una prioridad en la lista de lo que los hermanos dicen que necesitan cuando los padres están pasando mas el tiempo atendiendo a su hermano o hermana con necesidades de desarrollo o de salud. Si es posible, trate de establecer el tiempo individualizado que va a pasar con sus otros hijos y pónganlo en un calendario para los hermanos o hermanas.

### Hable con sus niños

Más que dirigir o darles información a sus niños, hablarles y escucharlos, les enseña habilidades sociales y de conversación, aumenta su autoestima y los ayuda a crear relaciones. Usted puede conocer mejor a sus hijos a través de las conversaciones que comparta con ellos.

### Tómese el tiempo para demostrar su afecto

Demuéstreles su afecto de forma breve durante todo el día, especialmente cuando los niños se comportan bien; esto ayuda a desarrollar relaciones positivas y vínculos seguros. Expresar su afecto en la forma que usted y su hijo (a) se sientan mas cómodos puede ayudar a los niños aprender a dar y recibir los niveles adecuados de afectación.

### Utilice elogios o cumplidos descriptivos para promover el comportamiento que usted desea

Fomente los comportamientos deseables que describan exactamente lo que usted quiere. En vez de elogiar diciendo "Buena chica", trate algo así como: "Jenna, gracias por recoger tus juguetes." A los hermanos a menudo mas cooperación, a veces a más temprana edad y con mas frecuencia que en otras familias. Algunos

hermanos creen que debido a sus experiencias llegaron a ser más caritativos, sensibles a los esfuerzos humanitarios, y a estar cerca de sus familiares. Anime estas maravillosas posibilidades desde una edad temprana al mostrar agradecimiento con cumplidos descriptivos.

### Proporcionar actividades participativas

Proporcionar actividades en donde se requiere la participación promueve el desarrollo, ayuda a los niños a aprender a jugar de manera independiente, y reduce las probabilidades de que muestren inadecuadamente su necesidad de estimular algo que quieran hacer. Utilice la biblioteca o la búsqueda en el Internet usando palabras claves como actividades o recursos para maestros. Su casa está llena de recursos para el estímulo del aprendizaje escondidos como artículos de uso cotidiano.

### Cuide de si mismo, para que pueda dar buenos ejemplos.

La salud física y mental de los padres son factores importantes en la crianza de los hijos. Cuando los padres están a la orilla, cansados, o cortos de tiempo es difícil que muestren tolerancia y compasión. Los niños aprenden a tratar a los demás por la forma en que son tratados. Aumente las posibilidades de establecer un buen ejemplo al cuidar de si mismo.

Ser padre es el trabajo más duro y más importante del mundo. Con las herramientas listas, los padres pueden fomentar conductas deseables, mientras que promueven relaciones positivas con sus hijos.

## CAHSEE y los Estudiantes con Necesidades Especiales

La exención para los estudiantes con planes de IEPs/504 de pasar el Examen de Egreso de California (CAHSEE) se ha extendido y estudiantes que se gradúan en junio de 2011 y junio de 2012 no tendrá que pasar el examen de egreso. Todos los demás requisitos para obtener el diploma se deben cumplir. Una alternativa para el examen de egreso se está desarrollando. Para más información hable con su consejero escolar o el equipo de IEP o visitar: [www/cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/](http://www/cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/)

## Fortalecer las bases del Plan Individual de Educación IEP

Cuando su hijo tiene un Plan Individual de Educación o IEP es porque su discapacidad esta interfiriendo con su aprendizaje en la escuela. El IEP describe las áreas en las cuales su hijo tiene dificultades y como la escuela le puede ayudar a través de lo se llama instrucción especialmente designada. Esto puede que sea tiempo con recursos, acomodaciones en la clase, terapia del lenguaje u otros servicios. Los IEP pueden inclusive incluir el "nivel del funcionamiento

académico", incluyendo sus "fortalezas". Es fácil solo enfocarse en lo que el niño no puede hacer bien, olvidándose de que el equipo del IEP necesita recordarse de las fortalezas de los estudiantes-de lo que ellos hacen bien. ¡Su estudiante también necesita conocer sus fortalezas! La revisión de la escuela de las áreas de fortaleza y las áreas de dificultad de su hijo debe incluir tanto el funcionamiento académico como el de sus habilidades. Esto significa que el equipo del IEP debe

considerar no solo las destrezas de lectura, escritura, ortografía y matemáticas sino que también otras habilidades que ayuden a su hijo a funcionar en la escuela. Esto debe incluir habilidades de la vida diaria-comunicación, comportamiento y habilidades sociales, habilidades de la motricidad fina, y habilidades que incrementen la independencia adecuada para su nivel o grado.

[Continúa en la página 6]

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Al identificar como le va a su hijo en estas áreas académicas y no académicas, el equipo del IEP puede ver como reforzar las fortalezas de su hijo. Esas habilidades pueden ser utilizadas después para apoyar las áreas de necesidad. El Doctor Robert Brooks, un conocido narrador y escritor a nivel nacional en ánimo y autoestima, habla sobre ayudar a los niños a encontrar su "isla de bienestar" y de utilizar esto para construir la confianza. Por ejemplo, un buenas habilidades verbales pero con dificultades en la escritura podría hacer reportes o exámenes verbales o usar una computadora. Cada niño tiene fortalezas y es nuestro trabajo ayudar al niño a encontrarlas y mostrar sus fortalezas o intereses especiales.

Algunas maneras de ayudar al equipo del IEP es considerar... pensar en las fortalezas de su hijo:

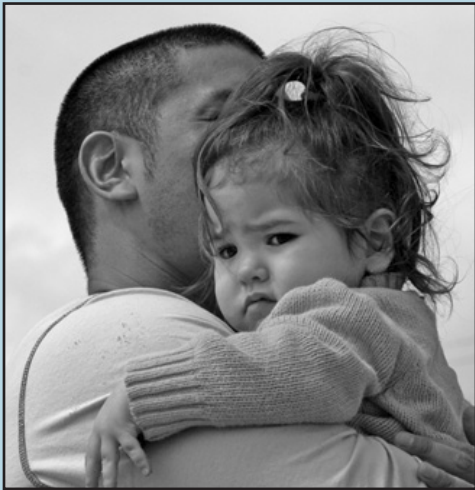
- Invágíñese como va a ser la reunión del IEP de su hijo.
- Hable por un corto tiempo sobre los logros de las actividades de su hijo (grandes o pequeñas) en la casa y dentro o fuera de actividades como deportes, clases de baile, arte y cocina.
- Pregúntele a la maestro de su hijo o al Director de la escuela,

que cualidades positivas ven ellos en su hijo.

- Asegúrese de que estos comentarios estén escritos en el IEP y se referan de vuelta a estos cuando se discutan las metas y los servicios para su hijo.
- Cuando se escriban los niveles de funcionamiento actuales, en adición a lo que su hijo no puede hacer, el equipo del IEP debe incluir lo que su hijo PEDE HACER. Por Ejemplo: Las ideas en la composición de Sam reflejan el entendimiento de ideas abstractas, pero todavía 3 de 4 oraciones tienen errores gramaticales o de puntuación..... O ..... Cuando se le da una demostración visual de las expectativas, Marta puede seguir de forma independientemente las instrucciones de la maestra a la hora de como sentarse en grupo. Cuando solo se le dan verbales puntuales, 50% del tiempo, Marta da vueltas en el suelo y no presta atención a la lección.

El panfleto La Guía del Estudiante para el IEP (en [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org) o copias en papel en las oficinas de Matrix) provee sugerencias en como incluir las fortalezas en el proceso del IEP. Adicionalmente hay artículos disponibles en LD en el Internet [www.ldonline.org/article/6277](http://www.ldonline.org/article/6277).

## Las Fortalezas son la Bas



La paternidad de un pequeño con necesidades especiales es el comienzo de un viaje en el que no sabemos que esperar. Mientras que es por supuesto de suma importancia enfocarse en la intervención temprana alrededor de

las áreas débiles, es igualmente importante enfocarse en las fortalezas- las suyas y las de su bebe. Algunos días encontrar las cosas positivas puede ser difícil. El tener paciencia, muchas soluciones y mantener su mente abierta, son cualidades que otros padres " quienes han estado allí" dicen que son de ayuda.

Comience poco a poco con su bebe. Su bebe es pequeño. Busque por pequeñas cosas positivas que puedan haber sido ignoradas por profesionales y por otros que puedan estar enfocándose en lo que no deberían estar enfocándose. A lo mejor el cabello de su bebe es extraordinario. A lo mejor el tiene unos ojos muy bellos, o ella tiene un fuerte agarre en sus dedos, o ama el agua, o es obviamente disfruta la música o la alimentación. Como usted puede ver las fortalezas que su bebe tiene, pueden iluminar sus ojos y las palabras para su bebe. Tome tiempo todos los días para hacer actividades en las que sus bebe se deslumbré.

También comience poco a poco consigo mismo. Sea paciente a medida que aprenda que es lo que usted necesita. Si otros se sienten incómodos con las necesidades especiales de su bebe, este con sus amigos que se sientan cómodos. Cree su círculo de apoyo con personas que lo ayuden a enfocarse en las fortalezas a la medida de que fortifica las áreas de dificultad. Pocas personas positivas hacen un mundo de diferencia. Pocos momentos positivos para rejuvenecerse a si mismo con actividades que usted disfrute pueden darle la fortaleza que usted necesita darle a su bebe.

Si usted esta tentado a sentirse culpable porque no esta haciendo todo los ejercicios o otras intervenciones que se han incluido en el plan para su bebe, trate de recordar que usted es un padre, no un maestro o terapeuta. Usted hará esas cosas tantas veces a usted le sea posible y algunas veces no sera tan frecuente como otros puedan querer. Su bebe primeramente lo necesita a usted como mamá o papá para darle amor y atención.

La mayoría de nosotros construimos nuestra vida alrededor de nuestras fortalezas y no nuestras debilidades. Cuando nos agarramos de nuestras fortalezas y de las fortalezas de nuestros pequeños, compartimos sentimientos positivos. Estos sentimientos son la base que nos ayudara a ser fuertes en cualquier adversidad que este por venir.

Primeramente recuerde que su bebe es un bebe y necesita todas las cosa que los bebes necesitan: su atención, su felicidad en quien ellos son, abrazos y caricias y todas las demás cosas que van con enriquecer a su bebe. Tómese un momento todos los días para ver las cosas positivas en su bebe o párvulo y lo que esta dentro del tiempo que comparte con el. También tómese tiempo para USTED.

# Matrix Invites You to Join its Board

by Rhanda Dunn, President of the Matrix Board of Directors

Ten years ago the Parent Advisor leading my toddler support group called me and said, "Matrix would like you to join its Board of Directors." My first thought was, "Me?" My second was, "Matrix has a Board of Directors?" What I didn't know is that as a federally funded Parent Training and Information Center, Matrix is governed by a Board of Directors primarily made up of parents and others with relationships to families with children with special needs. That means that parents, many of whom have had the same experiences as the families Matrix serves, have a direct influence on setting the direction for the programs and activities that Matrix offers.

Matrix's Board of Directors is now actively seeking new members to join us in creating a vision for Matrix as it strives to continue to help families during this time of dwindling services and economic uncertainties. Though many parents may have the same reservations I did ten years ago, let me share with you what I have learned.

*I'm just a Mom/Dad. What can I contribute?*

The most important contribution to give is parent perspective. Are Matrix's programs truly meeting the needs of families? Does this expense make sense? These are areas where all parents have knowledge and experience to offer.

*It's such a huge time commitment.*

Directors serve a two-year term. The Board currently meets once every two months, generally for about 2 hours. Occasionally Board members attend meetings by phone. Members contribute additional time to projects according to

their schedules. As with any volunteer activity, you control your time.

*I hate fundraising.*

OK, I won't lie. Fundraising is a significant responsibility of the Board and it was one of the main reasons I hesitated to join. There are many different ways to support the agency's development activities: attending events; writing personal notes on fundraising letters; making phone calls; or hosting a party. Directors also provide input on programming, budgeting, training and communications. (Making a big donation is good too!). Directors are simply asked to help in ways that are comfortable for them.

*What will I get out of being a Director?*

For me, I'm proud that my input has enabled Matrix to help hundreds of families deal with the challenges of raising a child with special needs. And I've grown, too. I have gained management experience and the confidence to speak in front of large groups. I not only learned how to host a fundraising party but also about resources that help me be a better advocate for my child. As a Director, you not only offer your experience but you gain expertise that can help you grow personally and professionally.

So, if you've ever thought that you'd like to do something to give back to Matrix because of the help you or others received, please consider serving on the Board. Feeling shy about joining? Ask a friend to join with you. For more information, you can email me directly at [rhandad@matrixparents.org](mailto:rhandad@matrixparents.org)



## MATRIX UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark Your Calendar and Plan to Join Us!

### Texas Hold 'Em Tournament

October 24, 2010 at River Rock Casino.

### Online Holiday Auction

November 27 through December 10, 2010.

Bid on great holiday gifts while supporting Matrix. Visit our website for donations forms and more information.

### 4th Annual Author Luncheon

March 28, 2011. Join the Planning Committee, support Matrix, and get all the details first!

## UPDATE: CAHSEE and Special Ed Students

The exemption for students with IEPs/504 Plans from passing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) has now been extended and students graduating in June 2011 and June 2012 will not need to pass the exit exam. All other requirements for earning a diploma must be met. An alternative to the exit exam is being developed. For more information speak with your school counselor or IEP team or visit the CA Dept. of Education website at: [www/cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/](http://www/cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/)

parent network  
+ resource center



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Novato, CA 94949

800-578-2592

[www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org)



### Matrix on FACEBOOK

Visit:

<http://www.facebook.com/MatrixParentNetwork?ref=ts>  
to join our group.

### CAR DONATIONS

Need a new home for that old car? Donate your unwanted car and help us support families of children with special needs by completing our on-line donation form at: <https://www.cardonationservices.com/69/donate-a-car-Matrix-Parent-Network-and-Resource-Center/> You may also call 1(888) 6TO-GIVE or 1(888) 686-4483 to speak with a live operator, who will assist you with your vehicle donation. Be sure to tell them you want your vehicle to go to Matrix Parent Network.



### Networker • Celebrating Strengths FALL 2010

*Our mission: To empower families of children with special needs to successfully understand and access the systems that serve them.*

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