



August 2008

**Back-To-School: Get Ready and Get Inspired!****In This Issue:***You've done it before and you can do it now. See the positive possibilities. Redirect the substantial energy of your frustration and turn it into positive, effective, unstoppable determination.*

~ Ralph Marston

**Back-to-School Tips**[Focus on Strengths](#)  
[Positive Thinking](#)  
[Get Ready](#)  
[Communicate](#)  
[Find the Funny](#)

For many families, the beginning of a new school year brings with it a renewed sense of hope, optimism, and determination for their child's education. It also can bring difficult transitions, last-minute preparations, and the stress of the unknown. To help you and your family navigate the back-to-school scramble, while also setting your child up for a successful school year, we've gathered some helpful articles, tips, and checklists to take with you on your journey. So read on...

**Library News**[New books](#)**Matrix Events**[25th Anniversary Party Invitation](#)  
[Thank you Sponsors!](#)**Focus on Strengths***Instead of thinking about what you're missing, try thinking about what you have that everyone else is missing.*

~ Author Unknown

As parents of children with special needs we may feel that the emphasis is always on "what is wrong" with our children, rather than "what is right" -- meetings with teachers and other professionals tend to focus on problems, rather than successes. While it is important for everyone to understand your child's unique needs and how to address weaknesses, it is equally important for them to recognize your child's inherent strengths and achievements. Celebrate your child's strengths and talk about ways those strengths can be the building blocks for your child to build upon throughout the school year. The following article has some helpful ideas on how to build on your child's strengths:

[http://www.specialneedsadvocate.com/build\\_on\\_strengths.htm](http://www.specialneedsadvocate.com/build_on_strengths.htm)**Support Matrix**[E-Script](#)  
[Challenge Grant](#)**Training/Workshop**[Schedule](#)**More Useful Information:**[NBRC Increases Reimbursement Rate](#)[Online Survey of Child Sleep Habits](#)[Training on Integrated Play Groups](#)

**Other ideas:** Make a list of your child's strengths and share it with him or her and with your child's teacher at the beginning of the year; we've attached an example of a [strengths checklist](#) to help get you started. Sitting down with your child to praise them and talk about his or her positive attributes can be a wonderful way to build confidence and self-esteem prior to starting a new school year. Speaking of praise, check out [101 Ways to Praise your Child](#) to help you practice positive parenting all year long.

Matrix serves families in 4 counties:  
Marin  
Napa  
Solano  
Sonoma

**Positive Thinking***Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.*  
~ Johnny Mercer, American Songwriter

Never underestimate the power of positive thinking. In addition to focusing on your child's strengths, try approaching the new year with a positive attitude. Not only will it help you forge strong partnerships with your child's educational team, but it can also be an effective stress management tool. And let's face it, the new school year is bound to bring some stress into your life. Read some helpful tips from the Mayo Clinic on [how to manage stress through the practice of positive thinking and self-talk](#). If that doesn't make you want to adopt a positive attitude, there's always as Herm Albright said..."A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort."

**Get Ready***To be prepared is half the victory.*  
~ Miguel de Cervantes

If you didn't [organize your child's school papers](#) at the end of the school year, be sure to do this before the school year starts. Transportation is always an important step in planning your child's school year, particularly if special transportation is required, so contacting key transportation personnel prior to the first day of

school will be necessary. In addition to organizing your papers and setting up transportation, you'll also want to begin emotionally and physically preparing your child for the first day of school. Follow these links for some helpful back to school checklists that address some of the unique needs children with special needs face this time of year.  
[Educating a Child with a Disability. Back-to-School Checklist](#)  
[Back to School Transitions: Tips for Parents](#)  
[Back to School Survival Guide for a Child with a Learning Disability](#)  
[Back to School Time: Tips to Help Children Adjust](#)

### **Communicate**

*Communication works for those who work at it.*

~ John Powell

Becoming an ally and forming a partnership with your child's teacher and educational team is an important part of your child's educational success. Opening the lines of communication early in the year is essential to maintaining a healthy partnership. A detailed parent-teacher communication system or plan is imperative to ensure that everyone involved in your child's education can work together to help your child succeed. The following article offers some strategies to help you with this:

[Parent-Teacher Partnership - Expert Strategies for Working with your Child's Teacher on an Effective Classroom Plan.](#)

### **Find the Funny**

*Total absence of humor renders life impossible.*

~ Colette

A new school year is filled with possibility, opportunity, wonder, and the great stressful unknown, so remember to keep your sense of humor -- having a sense of humor is an important part of getting along with people, getting things done, and enjoying life. For a comedic pause during your back-to-school prep work, read some funny school stories at: <http://www.yesiteach.org/funny.htm>

### **LIBRARY NEWS**

We are constantly adding helpful and informative books, periodicals, and other learning materials to our library. Looking for some back-to-school help or inspiration? Come check out **Home Sweet Homework** by Sharon Marshall-Lockett or **The Organized Student** by Donna Goldberg. For a complete list of new library additions visit [our website](#).

### **MATRIX EVENTS**

It's party time! You're invited to the **Matrix 25th Anniversary Party** - invitations are in the mail, on our website, or you can follow [this link to get your official invitation here](#). Please forward the invitation to others you think may be interested in attending and RSVP as soon as possible to help us in our planning for this great event.

### **Special thanks to our 25th Anniversary Party sponsors:**

**Benefactor:** The Schow Foundation

**Sustainers:** Jennifer and Scott Fearon, Marin Community Foundation, Kurt and Tammy Mobley, Liebe & Bill Patterson

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### **SUPPORT MATRIX**

**e-Scrip:** Matrix helps make school life better for so many students and families and we're able to help these families thanks to the generosity of our supporters. If you're looking for a way to support Matrix in your community, register for e-Scrip. e-Scrip is proven to be a fantastic resource for fundraising where participating business partners in our communities contribute a percentage of your grocery loyalty cards, credit card, or debit/ATM card purchases to the school, group, or organization of your choice. *You can also list more than one beneficiary (e.g. your child's school and Matrix.)* **Our eScrip group name is Matrix Parent Network & Resource**

Center and our Group ID# is 3648160. Visit <http://www.escrip.com> to learn more and register to be a Matrix supporter.

**Challenge Grant:** We're excited to report that we're starting the school year with a Challenge Grant in recognition of our 25 years of innovative service! **Every dollar contributed by our supporters, up to \$10,000, will be doubled.** Every dollar we receive helps Matrix empower families so that children will be able to access needed assistance. Please visit our website to learn [ways to donate](#) and additional ideas on how you can support Matrix.

### TRAININGS and WORKSHOPS

Our **2008/2009 Training and Workshop Schedule for Marin** is now available -- [click here](#). For a listing of additional lectures and trainings offered by other organizations, please visit our website at [http://www.matrixparents.org/services/tw\\_other.htm](http://www.matrixparents.org/services/tw_other.htm)

### MORE USEFUL INFORMATION

**North Bay Regional Center** has increased the maximum day care rate reimbursement rate. For more information, [click here](#).

**Participants for Online Survey Needed:** A team of researchers at the University of Texas in the Division of Pediatric Neurology are conducting a **survey of sleep habits in children** with the aim of targeting common sleep problems for future treatment and prevention, as well as to guide caregivers in regards to normal child sleep behavior. You can complete the survey online at <http://www.surveymethods.com/EndUser.aspx?B195F9E1B2F3EDE3>

**Training for Parent and Professionals on Peer Play for Children with ASD:** UCP of the North Bay is offering a training titled, *Guiding Children on the Autism Spectrum in Peer Play: Integrated Play Groups Model*. Date: August 14 & 15, Time: 9 AM to 4:30 PM, Location: Napa. For more information contact Mila Dewitt at [miladewitt@comcast.net](mailto:miladewitt@comcast.net), 707.257.6358.

Matrix serves families in 4 counties: Marin, Napa, Solano and Sonoma, with offices in Novato and Fairfield.

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