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[www.matrixparents.org](http://www.matrixparents.org)**Find Resources****Donate****Volunteer****Stay Informed****SEPTEMBER 2009****IN THIS ISSUE:****IEP Tips for Parents**[Tips & Links](#)[Matrix Packets](#)**Matrix News**[Save the Date for Temple Grandin](#)[New Support Groups](#)[New Speech and Language Publication](#)[The Watergiver - now available in our library](#)[Fall Online Auction](#)**More Useful Information**[CEC Awards Program](#)[Ask a Specialist Website](#)[GGRC Provider Fair](#)[Section 504 Training](#)[Marin Preschool Fair](#)[Sonoma Down Syndrome Buddy Walk](#)[Prevention Program Policies & Procedures](#)**Important IEP Tips for Parents***"Knowing is not enough; we must apply!"  
~Goethe*

Now that school is underway, our Matrix Parent Advisors would like to share important IEP tips for all parents to know and apply as your child begins another school year. These are common issues that come up in the calls we receive on our Helpline. If you have additional tips that you think would be helpful for us to distribute to our network, send them our way or join the [Matrix Parents Yahoo! Group](#) to post tips for other families to read ...there is always someone who can benefit from knowledge you are willing to share.

**1. Mark your calendar** one month before your child's IEP annual review date – this gives you time to work with the school to find a mutually agreeable date. The school is responsible to work with you to ensure your attendance. And mark your calendar with the dates for each progress report on the IEP goals. Measuring progress throughout the year is important as specific goals or services to meet those goals can be adjusted if the goal has already been met or not enough progress is being made. If the date for progress reports passes, and you don't receive a written progress report, contact your child's teacher. Remember, your child's teacher is a partner with you on this journey. Read [Parents' Tips for Partnering with Your Child's Teacher](#) for more ideas about how to form an effective partnership.

**2. Have your parent concerns noted in the IEP document.** Before going to an IEP meeting write down a few sentences that describe what concerns you want this IEP to address. This should then be recorded in the IEP document. Best practice in an IEP meeting is for the person running the meeting to ask you for this at the beginning of the meeting.

**3. Request copies of any written reports (preferably at the time you sign the Assessment Plan) before an IEP meeting** – this will allow you to come prepared with questions and comments. Having trouble understanding your child's testing? See the Matrix Help Sheet: [Help! My Child's Special Education Testing is Hard to Understand.](#)

**4. Expect present levels of performance and IEP goals to be specific and measurable** – anyone who reads the IEP should be able to form a clear picture in their mind of what your child is doing now and will be doing once the goal is reached. Want more information on writing measurable goals and objectives? The book, *Writing Measurable Goals and Objectives* by Dr. Barbara Bateman and Dr. Cynthia Herr is available in the [Matrix Library](#).

**5. Know what LRE means** – this is the requirement that your child be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment. This means your child should receive instruction, to the greatest extent possible, with non-disabled peers with needed supports and services unless the disability is so severe that this isn't possible. For more information on LRE visit the Wrightslaw website's page, [Questions and Answers on LRE requirements of the IDEA.](#)

**6. Request that the IEP team discuss appropriate**

**behavior interventions**, which may include a behavior goal or a behavior plan, if your child's behavior is getting in the way of their learning or the learning of other students. Problem behavior can include being so distracted and off task that work is not getting completed. [Positive Environments, Network of Trainers: Behavior Planning](#) is a particularly helpful document.

**7. Ask to take a break if you need to during an IEP meeting** – this can help if you are feeling the need to gather your thoughts or if you need to speak with your support person.

**8. Review your child's services** remembering that the type of service, how often it is provided and where it takes place should flow from the assessment reports and the goals developed from the assessment reports. Services should not be based on your child's category of disability or funding concerns. NICHCY offers 2 links to further educate yourself on the use of different services, including: [Supports, Modifications, and Accommodations for Students](#) and [Effective Practices in the Classroom and School](#)

**9. Understand what is offered before deciding how to sign the IEP** – you should not feel pressured to sign in agreement at the IEP meeting. You can choose any of the following:

- I agree to all parts of the IEP
- I agree to \_\_\_\_\_ (parts of the IEP) -- those services will then begin.
- I disagree with \_\_\_\_\_ (parts of the IEP) -- those services will not begin.
- I choose not to make a decision at this time. If you cannot decide, you can let the team know that you need a few days to make a decision. Remember, services cannot begin until you give your consent.

**10. Communicate with the school in a way that is simple, direct and clear.** It is always better to be deliberate about gathering or providing information rather than making assumptions about the intentions of others. Ask questions if you don't understand something. Sometimes asking the right question is the most important communication a parent can have! The Matrix packet, [Advocacy and Communication](#), is full of more tips to help you identify the best ways to communicate and collaborate with your child's educational team.

For additional information on IEPs download the comprehensive [Matrix IEP packet](#) or attend the upcoming training: **Advocating for Your Child's Special Education Individual Education Plan - Thursday, October 1, 2009, 9 AM to Noon.** Learn key Special Education facts, how to build an IEP to meet your child's needs, ask the right questions, and communicate your views. For more information visit [our website](#).

#### **MATRIX NEWS**

**Save the Date: Monday April 19, 2010** -- Extraordinary observer, teacher, speaker, and author **TEMPLE GRANDIN** will speak at our **3rd Annual Author Luncheon to benefit Matrix**. Among her many published works are *The Way I See It: A Personal Look at Autism and Asperger's* (2009) and *Thinking in Pictures and Other Reports From My Life With Autism* (1995). Matrix supporters and clients Becky Foust Pilcher and Tammy Mobley will co-chair the luncheon. For more information or to be involved in planning, please contact Brenda at 415-475-2118 or email [brendagm@matrixparents.org](mailto:brendagm@matrixparents.org)

**New Support Groups for families of children with Autism:** Matrix is now forming 2 new support groups in Solano: one for Spanish-speaking families and one for

English-speaking families. The English-speaking group will begin meeting on *October 20 and will meet on the third Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 8 PM at the Matrix office in Fairfield.* To RSVP for this group contact Chris at 707-423-2545 ext. 101. If you or someone you know is interested in joining the Spanish-speaking group contact Ana at 415-475-2129 for more information. For a complete listing of Matrix support groups in all 4 counties please visit [our website](#).

**New Publication Available Online:** Matrix now has a packet for **Speech/Language Difficulties** on our website. [Click here](#) to download this helpful publication now.

**Local author publishes book now available in the Matrix Library:** Joan Ryan's book, *The Water Giver: The Story of a Mother, a Son and Their Second Chance*, published by Simon & Schuster (September 2009) is now available in the Matrix Library. In her book, Ms. Ryan, the featured speaker at Matrix's Annual Author's Luncheon this past Spring, recounts the unexpected positive consequences of her son's traumatic brain injury. For more information visit [her website](#).

**Matrix Fall Online Auction:** Our online auction, **beginning Thanksgiving Day**, offers you a chance to buy holiday gifts the easy way -- and have them delivered to your door! Donate or secure a donation worth at least \$100 and you'll get a \$10 credit towards your own auction purchases. Want to help Matrix client & supporter Debbie Ward assure that you'll have spectacular gift choices? Call Brenda at 415-475-2118 or e-mail [brendagm@matrixparents.org](mailto:brendagm@matrixparents.org)

#### **MORE USEFUL INFORMATION**

**A Very Special Awards Program** – The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is now accepting nominations for their annual **Yes I Can! Awards** Program. Through this program students with disabilities – some for the first time in their lives – are recognized for their accomplishments in nine categories: Academics; Arts; Athletics; Community Service; Employment; Extracurricular activities; Independent Living Skills; Self-advocacy; and Technology. Students may be nominated by a parent, teacher, principal, or other adult. All 2010 winners will be acknowledged at the CEC Convention & Expo, April 21-24 in Nashville. And every child nominated receives a certificate of accomplishment. **Nominations must be postmarked by Oct. 9, 2009.** Please visit [CEC's Website](#) for more information, including eligibility guidelines and the nomination form.

**Ask a Specialist:** Everything you wanted to know about Autism Spectrum Disorder, Behavior, Secondary/Transition, Mental Health, AD/HD and School-Related Medical Issues! Have a Question? Need an Answer? Go online to ask a question of Special education specialists and a behavioral pediatrician in the following topic areas: Autism Spectrum Disorders, Behavior, Transition, Mental Health, AD/HD and School-Related Medical Issues. The [Ask A Specialist website](#) is provided by the [Diagnostic Center-Northern California](#) (Fremont), CA Department of Education. Each month, a submitted question is selected from each topic area and the responses are posted on the website. You will find evidence-based information, learn about helpful websites, valuable resources, and current literature for further reading to help you learn more. In addition, you can also read previously submitted questions and answers.

**Golden Gate Regional Center Marin County Service Provider Fair, co-sponsored by the Marin Autism Collaborative** -- *Wednesday, October 28th, 3:00 p.m. to*

7:00 p.m., Hollis Hall -- 1111 Las Gallinas, San Rafael. Persons supported, family members, Marin Service Providers, Special Education Teachers, and Community Resources are all invited! See [Flyer](#) for more details.

**Section 504 - speaker Perry Zirkel, presented by Marin SELPA.** Get updates on the latest student issues under section 504. *Thursday, 10/8, 2 sessions: Session 1 - 8:30 AM to 11:30 AM, Session 2 -- 1 PM to 4 PM, Marin County Office of Education.* See [Flyer](#) for more details, including how to register. Space is limited so register now! Registration is FREE if you live and work in Marin.

**Marin Preschool Fair** -- *Thursday, October 22, 7-8:30 pm. at the Marin Jewish Community Center, 200 N. San Pedro Rd, San Rafael.* A chance to learn about a variety of preschools in Marin. Representatives from an array of schools will be on hand to answer your questions and dialogue with you about their program. Hosted by the Marin Child Care Council. There is no charge for this event.

**Sonoma County Down Syndrome Buddy Walk** -- *Saturday, September 26, 2009, 9 AM to 2 PM, Howarth Memorial Park in Santa Rosa.* The Sonoma County Down Syndrome Support group is hosting its Fifth Annual Buddy Walk They will have non-profits sharing information, a talent show, a BBQ lunch, and a raffle of wonderful prizes. For more information visit [their website](#).

**Prevention Program Policies and Procedures:** State Budget Trailer Bill language changed eligibility for the California Early Intervention Program. Children at high risk for a developmental disability who will not be eligible for the Early Intervention Program will be served through a new "Prevention Program." It is described as primarily a case management program whose principal intent is to provide intake, assessment, case management, and referral to generic agencies. Parents due process rights are restricted to eligibility determinations. Funding for regional centers to purchase direct services is described as "capped" and "limited", however regional centers may purchase services if it has been determined that generic services are not available. Each regional center is required to develop a local prevention plan specific to their area to assist families in understanding the program and to train the service coordinators who will provide case management. To read more about specific policies [click here](#).

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

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