

THE NETWORKER

a publication of Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center • Fall 2015

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.

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SOME MUSINGS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...

The Value of Diversity



In a perfect world where differences are not only accepted but valued and celebrated, our children would not need special services.

For parents of children who are “different” (diverse), we have all spent a lot of time and energy promoting the positive side to differences. We have all been exposed to the powerful concepts that differences and diversity make a richer life and experience for all of us. Do these next statements sound familiar? “Every person brings their own unique gifts to this world.” Or “Think how bland and boring this world would be if we were all the same, looked the same, thought the same.” Or “Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.”

Parents know it is important to be unique and different in this diverse world, just not too unique. As inspirational as those quotes are, it is really challenging when your different-but-wonderful child is stared at, bullied, or passed over by the rest of the world. The existence of their differences in how they learn, communicate, appear, or interact with their environment means that it will be so much tougher to show the world their gifts.

As parents, we navigate the world of services. The price of admission is recognized differences (deficits). Diversity can open doors and give our children

access to opportunities that build on their strengths and self-confidence. We actively seek examples of famous people who have overcome challenges as sources of inspiration for our children, ourselves (as beacons of hope that all the hard stuff is worth it), and as “proof” to others who don’t seem to see the possibilities and gifts our children bring with their differences – “Einstein didn’t speak until he was four years old.”

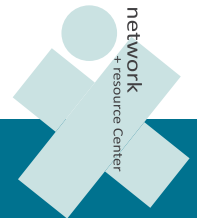
In a perfect world, where differences are not only accepted but valued and celebrated, our children would not need special services based on deficits or differences. They would not be stared at, made fun of, or viewed as “less than”. But, alas, it is not yet that perfect world. So in the meantime, we parents will continue to point out our child’s strengths and advocate for services to help them grow and flourish to become adults who have a chance to show the world their gifts.

Nora Thompson
Executive Director

parent network
+ resource center



The Value of Diversity



Parent Services

Diversity Enhances All of Our Lives

*“If a child can’t learn the way we teach,
maybe we should teach the way they learn.”*

— Michael J. Fox

Is there anything more beautiful than newly fallen snow, covering the landscape in a lovely white blanket, made up of millions of little snowflakes? Yet none of those flakes is the same. Each individual contributes to the beautiful result in its own unique way. Just as no two snowflakes are exactly the same, it is true for people as well. We are a beautifully diverse society which, when embraced, enhances all of our lives.

No setting is more suitable for embracing diversity than a classroom. The benefits to students with special needs of an inclusive education are well documented, but in reality everyone wins when surrounded by people with a variety of talents, abilities, and challenges.



Photo: United States Marine Corps



Photo: Roman Berco Balog / World Bank

Why Embrace Diversity?

Training for Real Life: The real world is richly varied, at times chaotic, and even messy. A diverse classroom helps our children master life skills they will use their whole lives.

Role Modeling: Kids teaching kids how to act with each other is an invaluable part of growing up. Typical and atypical learners all can benefit from learning empathy, patience, and observation skills.

Friendship: Keeping children of diverse abilities together allows them to not only understand how they are different, but also helps them to discover how they are alike. Shared interests and experiences are the foundations for friendships, which are crucial to every child's development.

Family: Parents and siblings of students with special needs often feel stressed or anxious about the unique challenges they face, and are sometimes unable to see which of their issues are unique and which are more nearly universal. Just as kids can learn from each other about the skills and challenges they all face, families can gain much needed perspective by being exposed to the common ground they all share.



*“We need to give each other the
space to grow, to be ourselves,
to exercise our diversity. We
need to give each other space
so that we may both give and
receive such beautiful things
as ideas, openness, dignity,
joy, healing, and inclusion.”*

— Max de Pree

UPCOMING TRAININGS FOR FAMILIES

Topics Include:

- IEP Basics and Overview
- Advocating for Your Child
- Special Education Rights and Responsibilities

September, Marin County,
IEP Basics and Overview
– In English & Spanish

October, Sonoma County,
IEP Basics and Overview
– In English & Spanish

November, Solano County,
IEP Basics and Overview
– In English & Spanish

* October and November locations
and dates to be announced.

For updates, please visit the
Matrix website calendar:
www.matrixparents.org/calendar

La Diversidad Mejora Nuestras Vidas

“Si un niño no puede aprender de la forma en que le enseñamos, tal vez deberíamos enseñarle en la forma en que aprende.”

— Michael J. Fox

¿Hay algo más hermoso que la nieve recién caída, cubriendo el paisaje con un hermoso manto blanco, formado por millones de pequeños copos de nieve? Aunque ninguno de esos copos son iguales. Cada individuo contribuye al hermoso resultado en su única manera propia. Así como no hay dos copos de nieve que son exactamente iguales, tampoco lo son las personas. Somos una sociedad muy diversa que, cuando es acogida, mejora la vida de todos.

No hay lugar más adecuado para acoger la diversidad de un salón de clases. Los beneficios para los estudiantes con necesidades especiales de una educación inclusiva están bien documentados, pero en realidad todo el mundo gana cuando está rodeado por personas con una variedad de talentos, habilidades y desafíos.

¿Por qué Hay que Acoger la Diversidad?

Formación para la Vida Real: El mundo real está ricamente variado, a veces caótico e incluso desordenado. Un aula diversa ayuda a nuestros niños a dominar habilidades para la vida que van a utilizar toda su vida.

Dando el ejemplo: Niños enseñándole a niños cómo actuar con los demás es una parte invaluable del crecimiento. Los típicos y atípicos pueden beneficiarse de aprender sobre la empatía, la paciencia y la capacidad de observación.

Amistad: Mantener a los niños de diversas habilidades juntos les permite entender no sólo la forma en que son diferentes, pero también ayudan a descubrir en qué se parecen. Intereses y experiencias compartidas son las bases de las amistades, que son cruciales para el desarrollo de cada niño.

Familia: Padres y hermanos de estudiantes con necesidades especiales a menudo se sienten estresados o ansiosos acerca de los desafíos únicos que enfrentan, y a veces son incapaces de ver cuáles son sus únicos problemas y cuales son más cerca de lo universal. Al igual que los niños pueden aprender unos de otros acerca de las habilidades y desafíos que todos enfrentamos, las familias pueden obtener una necesidad muy perspectiva al ser expuestos a los puntos de vista comunes que todos comparten.

ALGUNAS REFLEXIONES DEL DIRECTOR EJECUTIVO...

El Valor de la Diversidad

Para padres de niños que son “diferentes” (diverso) pueden pensar que todos hemos gastado mucho tiempo y energía promoviendo el lado positivo de las diferencias. Todos hemos estado expuestos al poderoso concepto de que las diferencias y la diversidad hacen que la vida y las experiencias sean más rica para todos nosotros. ¿Le suenan familiar estas próximas declaraciones? “Cada persona trae sus propios regalos únicos a este mundo.” O “Piensa en lo insignificante y aburrido que este mundo sería si todos fuéramos iguales, buscáramos lo

(continued at top)

DEL DIRECTOR EJECUTIVO...

mismo y pensáramos lo mismo.” O “La fuerza reside en las diferencias, no en las similitudes”. Los padres saben que es importante ser único y diferente en este mundo diverso, pero no demasiado único. Aunque estos dichos sean inspiradores, realmente en desafiante cuando su diferente, pero maravilloso hijo, se le quedan mirando, lo intimidan o el resto del mundo le pasa por encima. La existencia de las diferencias en como ellos aprenden, se comunican, aparecen o interactúan con su entorno significa que les será mucho más difícil demostrar sus dones al mundo.

Como padres, navegamos por el mundo de los servicios donde el precio de la entrada reconoce las diferencias (déficits) para proporcionar al niño acceso a oportunidades que se acumulan en fortalezas y en confianza en sí mismo. Buscamos activamente ejemplos de personas famosas que han superado retos como fuentes de inspiración para nuestros hijos, nosotros mismos (como faros de esperanza de que todas las cosas difíciles valen la pena) y como “prueba” a otros que no parecen ver las posibilidades y dones de nuestros niños traen con sus diferencias - “Einstein no habló hasta que tenía 4 años de edad.”

En un mundo perfecto donde no sólo se aceptan pero se valoran y celebran las diferencias, nuestros hijos no necesitarían servicios especiales basados en el déficit o en sus diferencias. A ellos no se les quedarían mirando, no se burlarían de ellos y no serían vistos como inferiores. Pero, por desgracia, todavía no existe este mundo perfecto. Así que, mientras tanto, nosotros, los padres continuaremos señalando las fortalezas, defenderemos los servicios que los ayudan a crecer y florecer para convertirse en adultos que tienen la oportunidad de mostrar al mundo sus dones.

Nora Thompson
Director Ejecutivo





The Early Edition

a publication of Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center • Fall 2015

The Early Edition is a publication of the Matrix Family Resource Center (FRC) program — part of California's interagency system of early intervention services for children from birth to 36 months. Our FRC staff is here to provide information and support to help you care for your baby. Additional information and resources are also provided in a designated Birth to 3 section on our website at www.matrixparents.org.

BIRTH TO 3

“Don’t judge your insides by someone else’s outsides”

— Author unknown

You walk into your weekly playgroup facilitated by your child's Early Intervention specialist. You smile at the other parents, comforted by the fact that they too understand what it's like to have a little one with special needs. You're soon joined by the speech, occupational, and physical therapists, and again you're comforted by the fact that your child's needs are being met by this group, that maybe your little one will actually interact with peers, that maybe you're able to socialize a bit as well.

But as you leave the playgroup, you can't help but think about what it must be like to just go to those Mommy and Me groups you see online, run by your community Mother's clubs. Or what about a music class or Gymboree? Part of you wants to add those activities to your already busy weekly schedule, even though you're a bit apprehensive that your child won't be accepted by the other kids, that you'll be pitied, potentially stared at, by the other moms.

You even wonder yourself: What do you and your child with special needs have to offer the typical toddler playgroup?

PLENTY.

All too often the definition of “diversity” fails to include the members of our community with developmental disabilities. But it really should, right? And what better place to start sharing all the wonders of a truly inclusive environment than in toddler groups?

SO VENTURE OUT.

Start teaching your little one's community to enjoy, appreciate, and accept all differences. Start exposing others to activities, materials, and concrete experiences that destroy stereotypes. Start showing them that harassment and intolerance are never acceptable.



We can help with
transition to preschool.
call 800.578.2592

Tips on Venturing Out

All children learn through concrete experiences. If they are not exposed to those who have different backgrounds and different characteristics from their own families, they will never learn to accept those differences.

So get out in the community and be an ambassador for diversity!



Photo: Lance Cpl. Damien Gutierrez

- **Walk** around the neighborhood, visit shops and parks frequently
- **Visit** working parents' workplace
- **Explore** unique community resources, in your neighborhood and beyond
- **Stop by** an older sibling's school
- **Volunteer** to care for your community (like a park clean-up event) and bring your toddler
- **Plan** a field trip to senior centers or assisted living facilities
- **Participate** in local community center classes – music, gym, playtime
-



La Edición Temprana

una publicación de Matrix Centro de Recursos Familiares • Otoño 2015

La Edición Temprana es una publicación Matrix Centro de Recursos Familiares (FRC) programa como parte del sistema interinstitucional de los servicios de la intervención temprana para niños de California desde el nacimiento hasta los 36 meses. Nuestro personal del FRC esta aquí para proporcionar información y apoyo para ayudarle a cuidar de su bebé. Información adicional y recursos también están proveídos en un área designada en la sección recién nacido a tres en nuestro sitio de web, www.matrixparents.org.

NACIMIENTO A 3

“No juzgues a tu interior por los exteriores de otra persona”

— Autor desconocido

Entra en tu grupo de juego semanal facilitado por el especialista en intervención temprana de su hijo. Usted sonríe a los demás padres, cómodo por el hecho de que ellos también entienden lo que es tener un pequeño con necesidades especiales. Pronto se encuentra alrededor de terapeutas ocupacionales y físicos, y otra vez esta reconfortado por el hecho de que las necesidades de su hijo están siendo satisfechas por este grupo, porque a lo mejor a su pequeño en realidad va a interactuar con sus compañeros, porque a lo mejor usted va a socializar un poco también.

Pero al salir del grupo de juego, no puede dejar de pensar en cómo sería ir sólo a aquellos grupos de Mamá y Yo que usted ve en línea, y que son organizados por clubes de madres de su comunidad. O ¿Qué tal una clase de música o Gymboree? Una parte suya quiere añadir esas actividades a su ya bastante ocupado horario semanal, a pesar de que usted tiene un poco de miedo de que su hijo no será aceptada por los otros niños, que le tendrán lastima, y que potencialmente las otras se le quedaran mirando.

Incluso se pregunta a sí mismo: ¿Qué es lo que usted y su niño con necesidades especiales tienen que ofrecer al típico grupo de juego de niños?

AMPLIAMENTE.

Con demasiada frecuencia, la definición de “diversidad” no incluye a los miembros con discapacidades de desarrollo de nuestra comunidad. ¿Pero realmente debería incluirlos, verdad? ¿Y qué mejor lugar para empezar a compartir todas las maravillas de un ambiente verdaderamente inclusivo que en grupos de niños pequeños?

ENTONCES AVENTURÉMONOS.

Comienza a enseñar la comunidad de tu bebé a disfrutar, apreciar y aceptar todas las diferencias; empieza a exponer a otras personas a las actividades, materiales y experiencias concretas que destruyen los estereotipos; comienza mostrándoles que el acoso y la intolerancia no son aceptables.



Podemos ayudar con la
transición a la pre-escuela
Llama
800.578.2592

Consejos para Aventurarse

Los niños aprenden a través de experiencias concretas. Si ellos no están expuestos a los que tienen diferentes orígenes y características diferentes de sus propias familias, nunca aprenderán a aceptar esas diferencias.

¡Así que a salir a la comunidad a ser un embajador de la diversidad!



- **Camine** por su vecindario, visite tiendas y parques con frecuencia
- **Visite** el lugar de trabajo de los padres
- **Explora** fuentes de recursos únicos en su comunidad, en su vecindario y más allá
- **Pase** por el colegio de los hermanos mayores
- **Sea voluntario** para cuidar de su comunidad (como un evento de limpieza del parque) y traiga a su niño con usted
- **Planee** un paseo a los ancianitos o centros de vida asistida
- **Participe** en las clases de los centros comunitarios locales - música, gimnasio, tiempo de juego
-

Ways to Give...

DEVELOPMENT

Take One Single Action...

In physics, students learn that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. The same holds true when someone who cares makes a contribution to Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center. One caring individual resolving to give \$25 through Our Kitchen Table Monthly Giving Program will result in multiple families gaining valuable knowledge and skills in our four North Bay Counties.

Can \$25 a month help?

Your \$25 a month improves the lives of many families. It provides continuous funding for Matrix to:

- Support our Parent Advisors
- Plan workshops and trainings
- Fund our toll free help line
- Maintain the Matrix website
- Create toolkits and Help! files
- Translate English files into Spanish
- Mail newsletters & announcements



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illustration by Kevin Ruelle; Petral Publications, Inc.

We all know that helpless feeling when we see children sitting alone at lunch, and we pass parents trying bravely to deal with an out of control youngster. We ask ourselves: What can I do? How can I possibly change things for them? Through one single action, you can initiate a positive and far reaching reaction.

There are over 25,000 families in our four counties who will benefit from your single action. Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center began at a kitchen table in 1983. Take a seat at Our Kitchen Table Monthly Giving Program at a level that's comfortable for you.



- Go to www.matrixparents.org
- Click on DONATE.
- Go to section 2
- Select "I would like to make this a recurring donation."

Contact Joanne Ferris, Matrix Development Director
Phone: 415-475-2118 Email: joannef@matrixparents.org

DONATION DIVERSITY EQUALS SUSTAINABILITY



"Diversity is about all of us, and about us having to figure out how to walk through this world together."

— Jacqueline Woodson

Our Donors Find Common Ground

No two families are alike. At Matrix we celebrate the rich mosaic of children, parents, caregivers, and professionals with whom we work every day. The same holds true for our program funding sources.

- Individuals
- Foundation Grants
- Businesses
- Special Events
- Fees for Service
- Government Contracts

Individually, these resources operate each in their own arena. Channeled together through Matrix Parent Network & Resource Center, they form a bond that improves the lives of families in Marin, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties.

At Matrix, our donors find common ground to positively impact lives and the community.

Matrix News

NEW PARENT SERVICES DIRECTOR AND TEAM MEMBERS

New Faces at Matrix



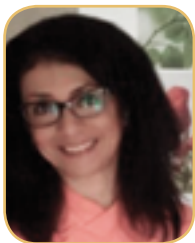
Director of Parent Services

Sandi Strang joins us as our Director of Parent Services. We are delighted to be working with Sandi again. She previously served as a Matrix Parent Advisor and is a special education teacher by training.



Parent Advisor, Marin County

Carmen Diaz joins Matrix as the Bilingual Parent Advisor for our Helpline and to serve families in Marin County. Carmen has been advocating for children with special needs (including mental health needs) for over fifteen years.



Parent Advisor, Napa & Solano Counties

Martha Perdomo, Bilingual Parent Advisor for our Helpline and families in Napa and Solano Counties, has worked for Upland and Brea Unified School Districts in Special Education and as a Bilingual Parent Educator for parents of troubled youth.



Parent Advisor, Napa & Solano Counties

Stephanie Ryan, our newest Parent Advisor, will be serving Napa and Solano Counties and responding to Helpline calls. Stephanie has a child on the Autism Spectrum and has experience in Early Intervention with families (Birth to 3).

Looking to Add Diversity to Our Board of Directors

"Diversity is the energy that enlivens our incredible world."

The Matrix family believes that to value diversity is to respect human worth. A system is strengthened when it recognizes and appreciates the varied backgrounds of those it serves, as well as those working in the field. Diversity is the energy that enlivens our incredible world.

In the spirit of diversity, the Matrix board of directors is looking to broaden its membership to include fathers, community members, school teachers, aunts/uncles, finance experts, operations minded folks – motivated individuals who share our commitment to families with children with emotional, physical, intellectual, and learning disabilities who want to help shape the future of Matrix for many years to come.

We are looking for people who live and work in Napa, Solano, and Sonoma counties to help us reach more of the 25,000 families in our service territory. The more people we have on our board to help guide Matrix, the more families we help to understand and access the resources that are available to serve them and their children.

Please consider helping us today – tomorrow – the next day – by adding to the diversity of our board.

Email me at denisel@matrixparents.org to learn more.

Thank you, Denise LaBuda, Board President



New Board President

Denise LaBuda is a marketing expert with over 30 years of experience. She is a long-time volunteer for children and adults with special needs. Denise also has expertise in personal finance and investing for children and adults.



New Board Member

Alexis Lynch our newest board member, is a Marin native and an attorney. Alexa works with families to ensure that their developmentally disabled family members are protected through conservatorship proceedings.



New Board Member

Sandy Coury lives in Vallejo, California. She works as the Director of Business Development for the Financial Fitness Group. Sandy is an intimate friend of a family who has a child with special needs. She is committed to the Matrix mission.



New Board Treasurer

Sarah Ponsford lives in Santa Rosa and has worked as a teacher and a family outreach worker with Head Start. Ella, her third daughter, was born with special needs. Sarah found help and training through Matrix and is excited to be a part of our board.



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94 Galli Drive, Suite C
Novato, CA 94949

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Fairfield, CA 94533

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www.matrixparents.org

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Upcoming Matrix Events

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- IEP Basics and Overview
- Advocating for Your Child
- Special Education Rights & Responsibilities

UPCOMING MATRIX PARENT TRAINING:

- IEP Basics and Overview
 - September: Marin County
 - October: Sonoma County
 - November: Solano County
- Advocating for your Child
 - December: Marin County
 - January: Sonoma County
 - February: Solano County
- Special Education Rights & Responsibilities
 - March: Marin County
 - April: Sonoma County
 - May: Solano County

Check our website at www.matrixparents.org
for updated dates, times, locations.

NETWORKER

Diversity Issue • Fall 2015

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

Nuestra misión: Capacitar a las familias de niños con necesidades especiales para entender y acceder a los sistemas que los sirven.

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