

SEPTA would like to thank
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The Advocate

The Advocate is the free public newsletter of the Special Education PTA of South River.

Published monthly from August to June of each year by the Executive Board Members of the SEPTA - this newsletter is mailed directly to families of classified students of the South River Public School District from the Office of Special Education. Additional copies are available at the South River Public Library. Past editions of the Advocate can be downloaded from our website. Interested individuals may sign up for our electronic newsletter and a listing of other newsletters related to special education issues by visiting our website at:

www.specialeducationpta.org

Questions related to the Special Education PTA as an organization, the services we provide, and our calendar of events can be answered by telephone at (732)651-7157 or by email at info@specialeducationpta.org

If you would like to submit letters or articles, post information or contribute pictures to be included in future editions of the Advocate please contact our newsletter by email at SRPTAAvocate@aol.com

The Advocate

*"Every Child is Born with Wings...
Make it a Choice to Educate
and Advocate for the Chances for
All Children to Learn to Soar"*



SEPTA Parent Forums:

If you have a question...it's a place to start for answers.

You may or not have heard...

You may have not had the chance to come... but parents who have can tell you this: It is where you go to get questions answered (or in the very least steered in that direction).

SEPTA holds these 30 minute monthly question and answer "Parent Forums" sessions throughout the year at the South River Public

Library, 55 Appleby Ave.

So why attend?

At these "Parent Forums" you can ask questions, get suggestions and generally "pick the brains" of parents who may have encountered a situation that you may be currently experiencing with your child or the special education system.

Got a question?

Need an answer?

Bring your question (s) to the next "Parent Forum"!

Parent Forums:

July 28th

August 4th

Sept. 8th

November 3rd

December 1st

*Meetings start at
6:30pm*

*(Children are always welcome
with their parents)*

* SEPTA Fundraiser:

On September 9th your child will come home with information on a new and exciting fundraiser SEPTA will be running this year: Kids Art!

Your child will receive a brief description of the fundraiser, 2 cards in which to design their greeting card (an extra in case of your child makes a "mistake") and instructions for completely your card's design. Your child's name will appear on the back of each greeting card in their own handwriting to signal to your relatives that

Kids Art: Your child designs printed onto high quality note or greeting cards

these cards were designed by someone very special!

Finished cards are a black and white design printed on ivory note cards -packaged in a set of 50 cards/envelopes for \$15.00

You must return your designs and appropriate money by September 23rd. You will receive your order the week of Nov.22-24th.

Your cards will be packaged in sparkling, star studded cellophane topped off with a glittering metallic ribbon.

Some themes you might consider for greeting card designs:

*Holiday Greeting Cards
*Birthday *Thank You
*Thinking of You

*Personalized Stationary

Think of the great gifts these will make for family members and friend!

NEWS FROM THE WEB:

www.idonlilne.org

Learning Disabilities Online

This wonderful online resource organization offers parents

- Facts about learning disabilities
- What you can do as a parent of a child with learning disabilities.
- Common warning signs / Seeing the signs of learning disabilities.
- Informative resources:
Organizations to contact / Books resources list and more...

<http://rwjms.umdj.edu/bogscenter/resources/index.htm>

The Elizabeth M. Boggs Center

on Developmental Disabilities, part of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School offers parents a four page reference list of organizations and direct links to information on medical, government and private organizations.

Links off their home page will also supply parents with workshop information, projects, and What's New at the Bogg's Center.

www.addup.org

ADD UP

Website and searchable database of national ADD programs, including University Centers, P & A Programs and DD Councils

Upcoming Receptions Programs for children in our area

Kool Kids Bowling, a bowling league for special needs children and their siblings will be holding registrations in September 2004. Leagues will start bowling in October 2004.

There is a weekly fee for bowling (which include shoe and bowling ball usage). League bowls on Saturday for 18 weeks and concludes with a pizza and cake party where all participants are given a trophy and gift certificate. Please look for future announcements on registration date and time.

To be contacted by email, please email the Advocate at SRPTAAAdvocate@aol.com

East Brunswick "Buddy"

Baseball League will be running "Fall Ball" on Saturdays. Please visit their website at: www.ebbl.org/buddy/home.htm for more information and registration deadlines.

East Brunswick "Fast Break" Basketball Assn.

Inc. will once again start up it's "Buddy Division" in Mid-November 2004. Children enrolled will work on basketball skills but there is "no games" involved in this league. For more information, please call (732) 251-1232.

NEW

Ultimate Learning Series Software.....by DigiSoft

Dr. Weisman had a desire, born out of a personal need when he noticed a vast vacancy in the offering of educationally based software designed specifically for special needs children.

Dr. Weisman: "When my daughter was diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder, I looked everywhere for tools to help improve her thinking, problem solving, and social interaction skills, but I couldn't find anything that would engage my daughter's interest enough to make a significant impact."

Dr. Weisman, together with the development team at DigiSoft have went on to develop the Ultimate Learning Series: "Problem Solvers", "Fun with Feelings" and "Sound Reading"

Based on "thinking games" the Ultimate Learning Series Software are "thinking games" that support both

the auditory and visual date processing while also encouraging critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Through techniques, children are taught to look closely at concepts and words in order to solve problems and correctly answer presented tasks. This software is designed to make learning disabled children apply themselves and improve their investigational language. For more information visit the DigiSoft website at: www.digisoftdirect.com Software runs \$49.95 per title (plus \$9.95 ship/handling) or is available for a free 14 day trial on line.

Information on Ultimate Learning Software and Dr. Weisman / DigiSoft appeared in an article run in Exceptional Parent Magazine June 2004 edition pg.14

Organization is the Key to starting a new school year off right...

Since my child started in the preschool handicapped program years ago, I would ask myself how would I cope with the "endless" paperwork the new school year would bring.

Trying to decide what I should keep, what gets "tossed" and how to just plain "make sense" of the mounting stack of paper that by the end of June would morph and evolve a crossed my dining room credenza while my resolve for an "organized system" had long been forgotten with every monthly page turned on the calendar.

Well— I finally accomplished my goal of an organized system last year. Based on the example given in the book, *Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy— The Special Education Survival Guide* by Peter W.D. Wright

Armed with a 1 1/2" binder (with 5 tab divider and binder folder), a 13 pocket accordion file folder and a bunch of "post its" - I have finally found a parent friendly system that is easy to use, maintain and cheap to implement.

(Supplies were found at the local discount store for under \$5.00)

So you wonder how can it work...and just how much time is involved in keeping it up?

That's the beauty of the system it requires very little (about an hour a month) to keep it going.

Interested in trying it?

In a brief summary I will give you the basics and let you decide for yourself.

In the 13 pocket accordion file folder: The First pocket: Save this pocket for any booklet information your receive from the school district (ex. PRISE) and I can not stress how important it is for parents to obtain a copy of the NJ Dept. of Special Education Administration Code. (This is available from the NJ Dept. of Special Education website, the SEPTA website and is also on the SEPTA S.E. Resource CD-Rom.

Pockets 2-13 you assign a monthly tag – September through June (or if your child attends extended school year— September through September).

For each corresponding month— you will put your child's completed homework assignments and notes/ correspondence from the teacher. Either weekly or monthly—go through the pocket and make note of any new skills acquired or mastered and jot it down on a post it and attach it to the top of the paperwork for that month.

Doesn't sound to hard, does it?

This step is important for it will give you the parent and excellent (and immediate) idea of your child's educational progress—and will also signal to you if IEP goals are being mastered or not. It will also help you become aware of problems/ educational issues that will need to be discussed with your child's teacher at your next parent teacher conference or address at your child's annual IEP meeting.

Now for the 1 1/2" binder...with 5 dividers tabs and binder folder. (Binder folder optional)

Using your divider tabs; mark them as following:

- Call Log (keep an active list of the date, time, phone number, person's name and reason for call)
- Current IEP and progress reports
- My Child's Future Goals
Statement of Planning for Future Needs
Task Time Line
- Resources (anything you come across that you feel maybe helpful to you or your child in the future)
- Master File (include any medical reports, diagnosis, test results)
- Mark the binder file "To Be Filed" if you are using one - if your are a really "bad procrastinator" you may wish to for go the "To Be Filled" because everything might end up there and never be filled in its appropriate place.

The Call Log: If you feel that it is easier for you—keep a sheet by the phone. When you fill the page return it to the binder for another sheet— but it is important to keep a call log to document something discussed, refresh your memory at a later date, or to document a problem.

Current IEP: The current IEP document including related service goals and objectives should be kept here for easy reference as well as your child's quarterly progress reports. This will make it easier for your to reference one document against the others and to make sure there is a continuity in progress to the goals and objectives listed in the IEP or that the IEP goals are being addressed.

My Child's Future Goals/ Statement of Planning for Future Needs./ Task Time Line:

Here you will compile your list of things you would like your child to accomplish in their life. After identifying each goal you think of the "steps/tasks" your child must master or accomplish to do it. By breaking the goals into smaller tasks / steps needed — you can set a timeline for each task (at the pace you think is reasonable for your child to succeed). The S.E. Resource CD has some great generic forms you can use to accomplish this section or there are a few books in the SEPTA Resource Library at the South River Public Library that can point you in the right direction.

- **Resource:** Include any information you come across that you feel may be important to you or your child in the future— website addresses, articles, recreation information etc.
- **Master File:** Include medical report about your child, evaluations, test results... basically anything medically relating to your child's disability and what medical recommendations that are suggested to address your child's disability. Never give out your original documents but rather photocopy whatever information you wish to share and stick a post it on the original stating who you gave a copy to and the date it was given / for what reason. This will help you with an "follow-up" discussion with other doctors or school personnel.

That's it in a nutshell. Remember, the system (once you commit to it) will generally become easier and easier each month. What will take most parents longer to complete will be identifying future goals, identifying the steps for each and putting them to a workable timeline. However, by addressing each goal (one at a time) you can do it.

Attend our Oct. 6th meeting- "Learn How to Manage It All" for more information on this system.

Looking at the Signs...

what your child's educational performance (or lack of it) might be trying to tell you.

Each year, your child starts off in September with the first few weeks of a “review” of the previous school year’s more important concepts before the teacher dives into the curriculum for this upcoming school year.

As the weeks progress your child maybe still struggling to “master” last years concepts in addition to learning the new curriculum. As the months progress your child (and yourself) increasingly become more frustrated and do not know where to turn for assistance. Your child’s teacher continues to tell you that your child “is distracted”, “does not follow through with directions” and (the most famous one) “has the ability but does not apply him or herself”. You take this into consideration and work every night with your child, working on homework assignments, following up on upcoming projects and studying for impending tests. Yet, your child’s grades are not improving and your child is becoming more and more discouraged about school and their ability to learn. The worst item in this equations is your (previously bright, social able and outgoing) child is now becoming withdrawn; viewing themselves as stupid and not understanding why the other kids have no problem with the school work— yet they can not seem to understand it.

As each year goes by, your child suffers, your family suffers and tensions mount. Yet, help is no where to be found.

Well to start, you may want to look at your child’s state testing scores— both the block core portions (math, reading, science, etc.)

but also the component scores within each section.

If overall, your child scored with in the “average” in each area but within the subcomponent areas they may have scored far below average. For example, your child may have “passed” each content area (math, reading, social studies...) yet score far below average in all sections when reading comprehension was measured/tested. Unless you ask to see the related scores you may not be aware of this fact. You could then approach your child’s teacher (s) or school district for more information on remedial help on the skill (s) your child is lacking to help them maintain your child’s academic progress.

A discussion with your family doctor may afford you information as well. Your family doctor may refer you to have your child formally evaluated for a learning disability. Having a child diagnosed with a learning disability is not so very different than having a child who needs glasses, is a diabetic or has asthma – how they came to have the condition is something that they have no control over and it will not correct itself without strategies or corrective steps being taken. It then becomes a question of wanting to get that help for your child and taking the steps to seeking it. Your child deserves it.

All children deserve the chance to learn and feel good about their abilities.

Warning Signs of a Learning Disability

Preschool:

Late Speech, pronunciation problems
 Trouble learning numbers, letters, days of the week, color/shapes
 Extreme restlessness, lack of ability to concentrate, impulsive behavior
 Difficulty following directions or learning routines
 Awkwardness when running, jumping, skipping
 Difficulty buttoning and zipping

Grades K-4:

Confusing basic words (run, eat, want)
 Trouble learning the connection between letters and sounds
 Difficulty with basic math concepts and trouble telling time
 Relying heavily on memorization; slow to learn new skills
 Difficulty following what is being said or expressing thoughts
 Poor coordination, frequent accidents

Grades 5-8:

Reversed letter sequence (soiled/solid, left/felt)
 Slow learning of prefixes, suffixes and root words
 Difficulty understanding oral discussions and expressing thoughts.
 Difficulty with handwriting
 Avoidance of writing compositions
 Slow or poor recall of facts

High School and Adults:

Often spelling the same word differently in a single document
 Reluctance to take on reading or writing tasks
 Trouble with open-ended questions on a test
 Weak memory skills, difficulty adapting skills from one setting to another
 Slow work pace / Poor grasp on abstract concepts
 Inattention to details or excessive focus on them
 Frequent misreading of information

It is natural for children to have one or more of the following characteristics at times. But, if your child consistently exhibits several of these signs, you should speak to his or her teachers and other school personnel, talk with other learning experts and then consider a formal evaluation to answer questions you may have about the way your child learns.

Source: Coordinated Campaign For Learning Disabilities— www.aboutld.org/problem_signs

SEPTA
“Parent Information Packets”

The Special Education PTA of South River will be working hard this summer to provide every parent of a special needs/classified child of the South River School District with “Parent Information Packets”. We will be giving these packets out free to parents. It is our hope that armed with a readily available source of information within their homes, parents will become better aware of the special education system as a whole, the role the South River Public School District and the Office of Education takes in the education of your child and provide parents with resource listings for information on various topics such as special education law, recreational listings, support groups and other items of interest to special education children and parents on the web. **If you know of something that should be included, please contact us by email at: SRPTA Advocate@aol.com or through our website: info@specialeducationpta.org**

*If you do not wish to receive one, please email us at the above email addresses with the subject line: “no information packet for me please”. Please include your name and address in the body of your email.

Kidstuff Discount Coupon Books

SEPTA will once again be a fundraiser starting Oct. 4, 2004. Kidstuff Discount Coupon Books cost \$25.00 per book and make great holiday gift ideas for relatives, friends and child care givers. This fundraiser will end on Oct. 15, 2004.

With over 400 pages of coupons, these books provide discounts on everything from food (fast food to restaurants), activities (museum, family amusement parks and sporting) to over 196 pages of discount coupons at area shopping stores for both children and adults.

This fundraiser is vital in providing funding for SEPTA programs such as: the annual SEPTA Scholarship to a graduating special ed. Senior of the S.R. School District, the SEPTA Parent Resource Library, pre-school music program and funding for guest speakers.

Please help support SEPTA during this fundraiser as we renew our commitment to supporting special needs children and their parents by providing programs and services missing in the general public. Contact SEPTA at (732)651-7157 today!

Informative Workshops for Parents...
Strengthening Parent Advocacy Skills 101

The New Jersey Coalition for Inclusive Education presents:

Creating a “Make Sense”
IEP Workshop

Thursday, Sept. 30, 2004 6-8pm at the Learning Resource Center-South

Registration Fee: \$15.00

Presenter: Bonnie Rubin-Sugarman

Director of Special Services, Haddonfield, N.J.

Description: Embodied within the spirit of EDEA will be developed through a process that unites the collective expertise of families and educators. This workshop will teach participants how to organize the IEP process to create a workable, coherent document that addresses the child’s individual needs and ensures placement in the least restrictive environment with appropriate supports and strategies.

To register by call: (732)613-0400

SEPTA of South River presents:

“Learning Disabilities & Social Skills” A Parent’s Guide

Featuring: “Last One Picked...First One Picked On” Hosted by Rick Lavoie

Wed., September 8, 2004 7pm at the So. River Public Library

Description: Parents will explore how learning disabilities interfere and effect the development of the social skills of a child with special needs. By evenings end, parents will be provided with the information and guidance related to the development of social competence for children and youths with learning disabilities. With consistent effort and sound learning practices, social competence can be taught thus effectively ending lonely hours of isolation and incidents of rejection often experienced by children with learning disabilities.

To register: call (732)651-7157

or email us at info@specialeducationpta.org

SEPTA of South River presents:

Learn How to Manage It All

Learning the tips and tricks that will help you negotiate and survive in the world of special education”

Wed., Oct. 4, 2004 6:30 pm at the S.R. Public Library

Registration fee: \$5.00

Description: Parents will learn how to create an educational file for their child, how to look for and address IEP goals and objectives, how to prepare for and what to bring to your child’s next IEP meeting and utilizing simple tips and tricks used by “other parents of special needs children”- learn to reduce your “stress” and feelings of being “overwhelmed” by the system.

To register call (732) 651-7157 or email us at:

info@specialeducationpta.org



SEPTA of South River

“Social Skills and the Learning Disabled Child– a parent’s guide”

Wednesday, Sept. 8th, 2004

7pm at the South River Public Library

55 Appleby Ave., South River, NJ

This evening will feature the special showing of the video: “Last One Picked...First One Picked On”

Featuring Richard Lavoie

(How Different Can This Be? The F.A.T. City Workshop)

Social Skills is often an important part of a child’s IEP (Individual Education Plan) that is often over looked.

Social Skills impact on all areas of a child’s life- Friendships, future jobs, and most importantly their self esteem.

Parents will explore and learn strategies to help improve the social skills of their learning disabled child using a positive and supportive approach.

SEPTA of

81 Johnson Place
South River
New Jersey 08882

Information Line:
(732) 651-7157
E-mail:
info@specialeducationpt
a.org
Website:
www.specialeducationpta
.org

- *Child Advocacy*
- *Special Education Rights*
- *Parent & Child Support*
- *Informative Workshops*

“Every Child is
Born with
Wings...

Make it a Choice
to Educate and
Advocate for the
Chance for All

Special
Education



SEPTA Membership Form

SEPTA needs your support to continue to provide you and your children with the programs, speakers and activities you currently receive.

SEPTA of South

81 Johnson Place
South River
New Jersey 08882

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Your support has allowed us to provide for an annual scholarship to a graduating Senior of the South River School District, a music appreciation program to the Pre-School Handicapped classes in South River, an annual donation of books, computer programs and magazines to the SEPTA

Please help us to continue our commitment to the special needs children and their families.

Please mail the below membership form to:
SEPTA of South River

SEPTA Membership Application 2004-2005

Name: _____

Membership Type

Address: _____

Parent _____

Telephone: (_____) _____

Faculty/Staff

Email: _____

Other _____

of memberships _____ x \$6.00 each

Membership Total : _____

SEPTA of South River

81 Johnson Place
South River
New Jersey 08882

We're on the Web!

www.specialeducationpta.org

"Every Child is Born with Wings....
Make it a Choice to Educate and
Advocate for the Chances for
All Children to Learn to Soar"

*The SEPTA of South River was founded by a group of parents who
wished to promote the education and advocacy rights of the special needs
children of their community..*

By providing parents with the tools and effective advocacy skills ~

We endeavor to keep this goal a reality so that

Every Child Will Fulfill Their Dreams
and Learn to Soar.

NONPROFIT ORG

BULK RATE

U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

PERMIT NO. 39

Interested in
obtaining a copy of the

**SEPTA of
South River's**

S. E. Resource CD-Rom?

Contact SEPTA

At (732) 651-7157

Or Email us at:

info@specialeducationpta.org

Cost: \$7.50

(includes ship/handling fees)

Help Wanted:

Would you like to help with our
Newsletter, or Website?

Have you come across an inter-
esting book, article or website
that deals with education, special
ed., or parenting that you'd like to
share with others?

Write a short summary and we'll
love to put it in our newsletter
and web page.

Up Coming Events:

September:

September 8th

SEPTA Meeting

6:30pm Parent Forum

7pm : Free Workshop

"Learning Disabili- ties & Social Skills" A Parent's Guide

Featuring the video:

"Last one picked...

First one Picked on"

Hosted by Rick Lavoie

***Parents will explore how learn-
ing disabilities interfere and
effect the development of social
skills- by evenings end, parents
will be provided with informa-
tion and guidance to help foster
and improve all aspects of***

***social skills and their child.
Parents will be given a handout
of topics covered. Please
confirm your attendance by
calling (732)651-7157 or email***

**SEPTA at:
info@specialeducationpta.org**

September 30th:

**NJCIE: Creating a "Make
Sense" IEP workshop**

6- 8pm LRC South, Sewell

**Cost: \$15.00 pre-registration is required
Please contact: NJCIE at 732-613-0400**

October:

October 4th

SEPTA Workshop:

**"Learn How To
Manage It All"**

Learning the tips and tricks that

***will help you negotiate and survive in
the world of Special Education.***

**6:30pm at the So. River Public
Library, 55 Appleby Ave.**

***Please register by Sept. 27, 2004**

Registration fee \$5.00 per person

October 4-15th: Fundraiser

**Kidstuff Discount Coupon
Books.** Over 400 pages of
discounts for many stores
restaurants, and amusement
parks.

November:

November 3rd:

SEPTA Meeting

6:30pm Parent Forum

7pm General Meeting