

## There's No 'I' in Team: School-Based AT Teams



### In this Issue...

Across the nation teams of special education professionals harness their interdisciplinary energy in the interest of children with disabilities and their parents. Some teams are school-based while others have a district-wide scope. The latter assist and support school-based teams and parents of children with disabilities in evaluating, selecting and using augmentative and assistive technology – AT. Usually comprised of special educators and professionals, district-wide teams provide prescriptive and diagnostic assistance only; school-based teams are responsible for implementing strategies involving the use of AT. Most district teams also consult with school teams to recommend classroom integration strategies.

Today, as the evolution and sophistication of technology accelerates faster and faster, the expertise and care exercised by these teams is increasingly important in aiding children, their parents and school-based teams to strike the right balance in their quest for the most appropriate AT devices. This issue examines these organizations and their pivotal role in helping schools to match the right high- and low-tech accommodations to the needs of the children and families who need them.

### Marilyn Jacobs Speaks

Marilyn Jacobs discovered her calling while serving as a college volunteer working with special needs students in West Virginia. “I was a biology/psychology major but I truly fell in love with the special needs population. She transferred to the University of Maryland where she completed her undergraduate degree in Special Education.

After spending several post-graduation years as a special education teacher in Maryland schools, Jacobs took time off to raise a family, which included a son who had a knack for computer technology. “I decided to learn about computers just to keep up with him,” she recalls. “He pulled me right into it and I’ve been there ever since.”

She reentered the school system as a substitute teacher at Forest Knolls Elementary School in Silver Spring, MD, which has a program for children with physical disabilities. It was there that she met the individuals who would later comprise the InterACT Team -- the Interdisciplinary Augmentative Communication and Technology Team, which has provided augmentative and assistive technology consulting services to the Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools (MCPS) since 1983. Made up of 140,000 students

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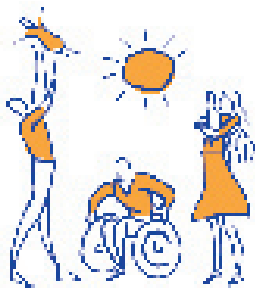
attending 200 schools, Montgomery County is the 17th largest school system in the U.S.

Jacobs prepped for her eventual association with InterACT by working as a parent volunteer with Kathleen Adams, a speech-language pathologist and MCPS augmentative communication pioneer. After joining InterACT as a special educator in 1995, Jacobs earned a Masters degree in assistive technology from Johns Hopkins University. In July 2004, she was named InterACT team leader. Comprised of Jacobs, six speech language pathologists, three special education teachers, two occupational therapists, a physical therapist, a media service technician, and a special ed paraeducator, InterACT collaborates with school teams to support MCPS students with severe communications disabilities who use augmentative communication and assistive technology systems.

Jacobs has taught courses at Johns Hopkins and has presented at national and regional conferences. About her career choice, she says, "I've been so energized by working with professionals in my field, but particularly by students who only needed access to the means to express themselves."

Supporting our interview with Ms. Jacobs are resources to assist parents and others in understanding the value of school teams. We also feature members of our Knowledge Network. The members spotlighted this month are organizations created to aid children with disabilities, parents and schools in furthering special education and the appropriate use of educational strategies that employ AT. We invite you to contact these members for further information.

Please share this newsletter with other organizations, families and professionals who may benefit from it. We invite you to contact us at <http://www.fctd.info>. We welcome feedback, new members and all who contribute to our growing knowledge base.



**Family Center  
on Technology  
and Disability**

[www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info)

## The Quest for the Next "Sweet Moment" Propels Her

**An Interview with Marilyn Jacobs,  
Special Educator and InterACT Team Leader**



Marilyn Jacobs

"In my time as a special educator, especially during the years I've spent with InterACT, I've seen our organization add accelerant to the spark generated by the desire among kids with disabilities to express themselves. Our job has been to recommend the right technology to feed the flame. And I've seen the technology work. I saw a young man who was non-verbal use a voice output device to yell at his sister for the first time and it was a sweet moment for him, for his parents, for us and probably even for his sister."

Consisting of 16 members, InterACT is staffed and supported by the Montgomery County (MD) Public School System's (MCPS) Division of Preschool Special Education and Related Services. InterACT, which Jacobs has headed since 2004, collaborates with school-based teams to support MCPS students with severe communication disabilities and to increase the students' ability to communicate via alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices and other AT.

The team, she says, "started at the grass roots level with the speech and language department asking [speech and language pathologist and MCPS augmentative communication pioneer] Kathy Abrams, 'Can you spend half a day a week taking care of these children who have more complex augmentative communication needs?'" That, Jacobs said, was the beginning of the development of the InterACT team, which now has professionals from different disciplines – speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and education.

### Maturing Technology Was the Impetus

In the 80's, Jacobs remembers, the technological revolution was already underway and life-changing innovations were being developed for both the general population and for people with disabilities.

"The technology started to mature to the point where professionals were needed who could spend some time mastering that technology and then helping school staff become more proficient in implementing its use among the students," she says. The demand for technology-proficient staff "pushed MCPS speech and language department to recognize the need to focus on this issue and not let it fall through the cracks."

**The demand for technology-proficient special educators “pushed MCPS speech and language departments to recognize the need to focus on this issue and not let it fall through the cracks.”**

Reflecting the increased demand for its expertise, the InterACT Team has also changed greatly since those early days, she notes.

“Need caused us to become an interdisciplinary organization very early,” she points out. Students with complex access needs required support from an occupational therapist with expertise in alternate access solutions. The Physical Disabilities Program allocated time for an experienced therapist, Denise DeCoste, to address this area. “In time, we were no longer subsumed by separate departments and became more of an entity in our own right. That was a big step for us as a team to gain that recognition.”

### **The Interdisciplinary Concept Gradually Catches On**

Such interdisciplinary teams were uncommon at first, but the concept is catching on, not just in Montgomery County but in school districts across the nation as well.

In some jurisdictions, she says, “appropriate disciplines are pulled in for specific cases on an as-needed basis. From there they decide: Do they need to keep a team intact? Does the population of students that they serve require that level of staffing? We certainly need it in our jurisdiction. Our county is very big. We’re fortunate in having a large team to address the scope of our needs.” The mission of the InterACT Team is to address the needs of students who are nonspeaking or severely limited in speech and/or unable to produce written output due to severe physical disabilities and whose needs exceed the resources available at the school level. “We have been trying to build capacity within school teams and within programs so that they can handle some these demands. But when those resources are maxed out or they need help, that’s when we are called upon to come in and help serve the needs of those students,” Jacobs notes.

“We try to emphasize the ownership and the expertise [at the school team level],” she insists. “Where it really happens is in the schools. But we know that there are situations where the regular resources are just not enough to get things moving forward for these children.”

### **“The Demand for Training Is Always There”**

Technological evolution requires a commitment to staff development for school and team staff. “The demand for training is always there,” Jacobs says. “That demand



is increasing because the technology is becoming more sophisticated and is changing so rapidly that we need to invest in training, not only because of the technology issues but because there are staff changeovers.” She adds, “We need to keep abreast of those changeovers and bring the incoming staff along in their maturation of their skills and expertise.”

Technological evolution and the needs of students and school teams, in turn, have caused an ongoing evolution within InterACT. InterACT staff, she explains, are selected to match the students the team is summoned to help. “We need more speech support because that discipline brings certain strengths that meet a current need.” However, she adds, “If we see that there is an increase in access-related needs, for example, we will ask to see if we can increase the time to meet those needs via the OT or PT position.” The addition of special educators to the team adds strength to the ability to successfully integrate technology into the curricular activities.

### **Location, Location, Location**

Location, she says, is a major factor in her organization’s ability to attract top-notch professionals with AT expertise. “We have the great benefit of being located near Johns Hopkins University, which has a very strong AT program,” she remarks. “Many professionals in the Montgomery County school system will look to Hopkins for professional development opportunities. We nurture that.”

Hopkins students, she says, do field work in MCPS classrooms “and tap into us to better understand what we do.” Some members of the InterACT Team teach classes at Hopkins. “That’s a win-win for us and for Hopkins,” she points out. “We’re getting great candidates within the school system, which gives us a foundation to build on in the field and then to pull into the team as needed.”

Fortunately, she notes, her InterACT team has experienced very little turnover, “yet we’ve added some new faces, which is always good for a team.”

Through the years, as technological advances in the educational environment have evolved, the disciplines of InterACT staff have evolved as well. “One of our special educators came to us with a Masters degree from the Hopkins AT program. She’s not only bringing her educational experience and understanding but also her technology background and the understanding of AT that she got from the Hopkins program. One of our OTs has a similar background,” Jacobs notes. Each team members’ expertise adds to the overall strength of the team and team members value learning from each other.

## “An AT Support Staffer Extraordinaire”

One of her most important staffers members, however, has no Hopkins background or advanced degrees. “Our fulltime supporting service person is now a 12-month employee who is classified by the school system as a ‘media services technician.’ To me, though, Lisa Stombaugh is an assistive technology support staffer extraordinaire in terms of arranging for repairs and performing crucial tasks like soldering loose connections, programming devices and backing up devices.”

As a team, Jacobs, says, “we value what she does so much and the fact that she has been able to mature technically. She has taken some college-level courses in information technology and other related areas to supplement her background. She has done a phenomenal job, which has allowed our professionals to focus their time and energy on the language and educational aspects of their [consultative] jobs so that we’re not bogged down with some of the time consuming nitty-gritty technical problems. That’s been a huge, huge success for us.”

Ms. Stombaugh, Jacobs says, had been working with students with disabilities in an autism program and came to InterACT with high recommendations because she excelled at using IntelliTools software and other software applications to create activities and materials. “She understood how to program devices. She started with us as a part timer. We’ve been advocating for her to continue developing her skills by learning from the vendors.” She has learned Excel, Kurzweil, Word and other software titles by attending classes and by teaching herself.

### One of Our Superstars

When Jacobs speaks with professionals from other jurisdictions, “I say to them, ‘Don’t you have some tech people?’ Some jurisdictions do, some don’t. We do. We are very fortunate and we consider Lisa to be one of our superstars.”



Today, having a staff position like Lisa’s is no longer a luxury for a team, Jacobs claims, it’s a necessity. “Otherwise we’d have staff professionals spending their time on the phone troubleshooting and that is not in the best interest of students in terms of a professional’s use of time.”

### Working with School IEP Teams

Unlike the InterACT team, school-based IEP teams may experience staff turnover, presenting a major challenge to teams like InterACT. “We have to be able to get everyone together on a regular basis. Sometimes IEP teams have itinerant physical therapists or occupational therapists or a speech pathologist who

works only two days a week. Coordinating with the IEP team and making sure that we all understand what it is the child needs to do and how we are going to plan to help that child achieve his/her goals is a significant and ongoing challenge for us.” When an IEP team achieves stability, Jacobs says, progress is usually readily apparent.

Demands on teacher time present another growing challenge, Jacobs points out. “We are seeing a sharp increase in demands on teachers as other priorities take shape and become more imperative.” Those priorities, she explains, can include mandated assessments. “We see that the priorities-juggling act is draining the energy level of teachers. As a team, we have to be respectful of that reality and work our consultation and support in a way that is very sensitive to those teacher requirements.”

No Child Left Behind demands, she declares, are real and ongoing. “We have seen in the past couple of years how they have impacted the focus of the principal, the focus of our central office staff. That, in turn, impacts school teams. We have to respect what they need to do and work with them on that.”

Nevertheless, she emphasizes, “NCLB is here and school professionals must align their learning outcomes with the state and federal guidelines. Once we figure out a good accountability measure, and we will, the furor over NCLB will begin to settle down.” Such measures, she notes, are in the developmental stage for the low incidence disability population.

### Keeping Abreast of the Pace of Technological Change

Keeping abreast of technological change impacts all phases of American life, including the functioning of a school team. In striving to keep pace in the classroom, Jacobs says, the major challenge she and her team face is time.

“I wish we had more time,” she declares. “There are competing demands on professional development priorities on a moment-to-moment basis. I wish we had the magic wand of time to give to the individuals who need it - to help learn ... and to integrate that knowledge.”



Yet, she adds, “one of the very exciting things I often see is families and students coming to the table with wonderful ideas. When that happens we can problem-solve together to make the growth that we seek happen in a classroom.” Sharing knowledge about how to program an AT device, for example, “can be a wonderful and very useful experience for all.”

## AT Trends: “Let’s Make Sure We Know What the Child Needs”

With technology moving ahead so fast, she warns, “You have to stop and say, ‘Let’s not always get carried away with the latest and greatest advance. Let’s make sure we know what the child needs and if this new device is going to be the answer for that child.’”

Still, the embedding by computer manufacturers of features, like voice recognition, into mainstream technology, she says, opens up accessibility options for all users, including children with disabilities. “That’s a very exciting development,” she acknowledges, but again cautions against becoming diverted by a device’s bells and whistles.

The miniaturization of technology also holds great promise, she says. “Look at what’s happening with cell phones. Look what’s happening with iTunes and iPods. All these devices are going to be more and more available to children with special needs. How is it going to change their life? How is that going to change their educational experiences? We’re going to be challenged to use these devices to aid children whose disabilities make visual accessibility increasingly important. Can you imagine just a hand-held battery- operated device being able to provide a child with great information in a video story format for a child who struggles to read? What a benefit that will be!”

iPod video technology, she predicts, “will have a huge impact on visual learners. This is extremely exciting for our kids who are unable to turn the pages of a book or who struggle with written text. I hope that school systems are energized to explore that with all students, but especially those who truly struggle with access.”



### Is Ed Tech/AT Convergence a Benefit?

With educational technology and AT on a convergence course that may help in the long term to ease school district budget woes, will school teams and students benefit from a universal design approach?

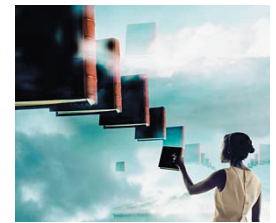
“We are recognizing that the universal design for learning is a tremendous force in terms of what textbook companies may be able to provide digitally to schools,” she says. Such a development, she acknowledges “will be so powerful for our youngsters who are struggling and need alternative ways for managing information or outputting information.” In Montgomery County, she continues, “our special ed technology experts have been working very closely with our general ed technology professionals to try to create a joint approach.”

Montgomery County, she adds, has been very fortunate technologically. “We have a technology modernization program in which our computers are refreshed on a four-year cycle. Software that supports students with special needs is included in this modernization project. This approach, she notes, benefits all children, “whether they are part of special ed services or are struggling with reading because of English as a second language or due to other issues. This is helping all learners with their different learning styles.”

### Transitioning from Print to Digital: The Impact

Major educational publishing companies estimate that their transition from print-based educational publishing to digital may be complete in five years. How will this evolution impact school teams and the children they are designed to aid?

“The impact would be huge,” Jacobs insists. The hours spent by staff scanning a book would no longer be necessary. With time an issue for all teachers and teams, “digital books would help the staff make optimum use of available time.” She adds, “If a book was in a digital form in which, say, you needed to add a contrast or a size difference because of a child’s needs, you’d be able to do that with a couple of clicks of the mouse.”



These technologies have the potential to “allow a child to be able to read his/her text at home, thanks to a hand-held device that may even provide the child with the video s/he needs to support it, which will have an enormous affect on children with physical needs, like those who need only to move an eyebrow to turn a page, Jacobs says. “We have to make sure, though, that digitalization takes these kids, even though they are a small minority of the special needs population, into account because it must be made available for their independent participation in the curriculum.”

### The Future

Gazing five years or more into the future, Jacobs hopes that technology can be used by staff to help them to more efficiently track student progress and make better instruction decisions.

She’s excited by the potential widespread availability of text in a digital format: “Students who need access to written materials through technology will have increased opportunities to read and respond when text is in a standardized digital format from publishers.”

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She’s encouraged by developments in portable device technology “which may allow music, recordings, text and video to be at our fingertips.” With alternate access for students with physical disabilities, she adds, “there is no barrier to providing information for learning and for entertainment.”

Future computer features she foresees the inclusion of, as standard equipment, a variety of alternate input, such as touch screens and digitizing pens on portable computers, and the inclusion of accessibility options, such as voice recognition and speech feedback, in more software applications. WiFi capabilities, she notes, will provide even more opportunities for connectivity and communication for people who need augmentative communication solutions.

As mainstream consumer technology incorporates additional accessible features, “we will see more affordable solutions for people who need assistive technology. My hope is that staff who support the use of it will also find it simpler to set up and incorporate into the school day.” In the same vein, she predicts, improvements in battery technology will allow voice output devices and computers to be functioning for longer periods of time.

Still, she says, even as technology morphs at an amazing pace, the image she keeps taped to her brain remains the same: the young man who used a voice output device to yell at his sister for the first time. “Empowering individuals like him is what motivates me every day to keep pushing ahead.”



**Make a date to join our  
September online discussion!**

**(It’s a date you can go on in pajamas.)**

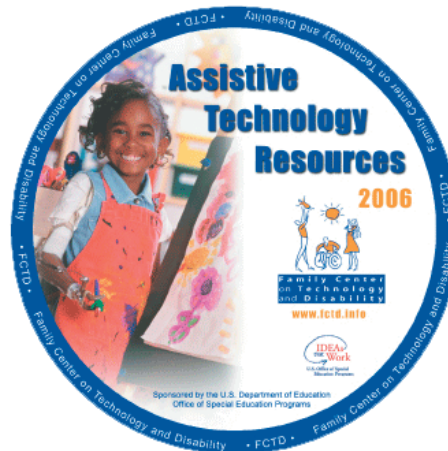
## **Assistive Technology Research to Practice**

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University of Kentucky  
National Assistive Technology Research Institute  
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## RESOURCES

### Articles

#### Special Needs Technologies: An Administrator's Guide

By Terry Lankutis  
techLearning - 2004

Written from the perspective of a team that is responsible for designing and implementing an IEP, the article describes the composition of an IEP team and how team members collaborate to determine the direction and goals for a student's academic year and what AT is needed to help meet the goals that are established for the student. The author shares techniques for implementing an IEP evaluation, maintaining information and designing an AT program that will prove successful for child and school. Goals for the IEP are discussed and examples of correct terminology are presented. Emphasis is placed on including all members of the IEP team in the decision-making process, especially the student and parents. The article is available online. Cost: no charge.

<http://www.techlearning.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=47204593>

#### The Assistive Technology Assessment: An Instrument for Team Use

By Nancy E. Shuster  
Journal of Special Education Technology - 2001

Written for both the layperson and professional, the article covers issues related to AT assessment with an emphasis on the team approach to the assessment process. Writes the author, "The actual student use of AT is often the less stressful aspect of the [AT assessment] process, and is often the reward for the team's efforts. For example, it is frequently easier to train a student to learn a specific software application than it is to develop team consensus about the use of AT or cope with the financial process related to the procurement of the technology. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine how and when to integrate the technology within the existing curriculum, including the intricate issues pertaining to the daily logistics, when to use which strategy or tool, or when to use a tutorial approach versus student involvement with the classroom group. Teams are frequently challenged to develop creative coping techniques regarding the logistics and specific educational demands for AT use within the classroom and expansive school environment; they must also determine when and how to use various AT strategies as correlated with multiple educational demands." This article is available online. Cost: No charge.

<http://jset.unlv.edu/17.1/asseds/ashton.html>

### School-based AT Teams

By Cheryl Temple  
Integrated Technology Services (ITS) - Winter 2006  
Describing an ITS initiative aimed at establishing school-based AT teams, the author writes, "The purpose of a school-based AT team is:

- to empower school-based staff to make initial decisions related to the AT needs of students;
- to use school resources to meet AT needs when all that is needed is equipment;
- to utilize the expertise of Integrated Technology Services (ITS) staff when AT support is needed;
- to involve more school-based staff so that discontinued use of AT will not be so prevalent;
- to improve student achievement and high-stakes testing scores."

The author continues, "The majority of students with disabilities are capable of being educated in general education classrooms with their peers who do not have disabilities. AT devices and services can often reduce the barriers that prevent many of these students from actively participating in general education settings with their peers." The article is available online. Cost: No charge.

<http://www.fcps.edu/ss/its/techtalk/0506/06Feb/index.htm#atteam>

### Handbooks

#### The Grosse Pointe Parent Handbook: Special Education Services – A Team Approach

Grosse Pointe Public School System, Department of Student Services, Grosse Pointe MI - 2003  
Produced by the Grosse Pointe, MI Public School System, this parent handbook, accessed in three parts, describes the special services available in one of the nation's most prominent suburbs. The handbook is accessible via email at [http://www.gpschools.org/ss/new\\_page\\_1.htm](http://www.gpschools.org/ss/new_page_1.htm). For more information, contact:

The Grosse Point Parent Handbook  
Grosse Point Public School System  
Department of Student Services  
20090 Morningside  
Grosse Pointe Woods, MI 48236  
Phone: (313) 432-3850

#### Disability Resource Book

Utah Parent Center - 2006  
Updated this year, this resource book, available online, provides information about and links to special education and disabilities-related resources in Utah.

<http://www.utahparentcenter.org/docs/DRB2006.pdf>

## Fact Sheets

### Frequently Asked Questions

Maine Parent Federation - 2006

The MPC provides online access to fact sheets on the following disabilities-related topics: Early Intervention in Maine, Getting Your Child Ready for Testing, Understanding Test Results, Does My Child Need Special Education?, Pre-School to Public School: Preparing for the Transition, Preparing for Your Child's Individual Evaluation, Preparing for Your Child's Pupil Evaluation Team (PET), The Individualized Education Program (IEP), Special Education Checklist, 504/IDEA – Ideas That Work for Students, Understanding Behavior Assessment.  
<http://www.mpf.org/SPIN/FAQ.html>

## Newsletters

### The Parent Connection

Maine Parent Federation, Inc. - 2006

This quarterly online newsletter provides information to families of children with disabilities and professionals. Issues also feature news of upcoming workshops and events and updates on all Maine Parent Federation projects. MPF offers access to videos, books and other informational materials via the organization's lending library.

<http://www.mpf.org/SPIN/newsletter.html>

### E Connections

Katie Rowley, Editor

Utah Parent Center

August 2006

This monthly publication of the Utah Parent Center is available online and features articles on a wide range of disabilities-related topics as well as news about pertinent upcoming events in Utah.

<http://www.utahparentcenter.org/docs/news/UPCCurrent.pdf>



## KNOWLEDGE NETWORK MEMBERS

### North DuPage Special Education Cooperative (NDSEC)

NDSEC is a cooperative involving eight public school districts within



DuPage County, which is located in Chicago's northwest suburbs and has a student population of more than 11,000 students. The co-op delivers a range of services to students with special needs ages 3-21.

NDSEC is responsible for assisting its member districts in ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations and in programming for students with disabilities, providing technical assistance to member districts and serving as an extension of each district by providing program options for students with more severe and/or multiple disabilities.

NDSEC's programs for students identified with cognitive, physical or multiple disabilities utilize a cross-disciplinary team model in supporting their developmental needs. The co-op's programs for students with emotional disabilities utilize a modified "Boys Town" model of teaching and integrating pro-social behavior.

NDSEC operates Lincoln Academy, the alternative school for NDSEC. Lincoln's program is designed for junior high and high school students with emotional needs that cannot be successfully met within a traditional school environment.

For more information on the North DuPage Special Education Cooperative, contact:

North DuPage Special Education Cooperative (NDSEC)

132 East Pine Avenue

Roselle, IL 60172

Phone: (630) 894-0490

Contact: Dr. Rita Stevenson, Executive Director

[rstevenson@ndsec.org](mailto:rstevenson@ndsec.org)

<http://www.ndsec.org/>

### Butte County (CA) Office of Education: Special Education

Headquartered in Oroville, CA, the Butte County special education department provides educational services to individuals with disabilities ages 0-22. The program covers a range of services in a variety of settings and operates Mesa Vista School as well as individual classrooms on satellite sites.

Many of the county's special education programs are located on general education campuses. Programs and services in-



clude those available to students with working IEPs, students with learning disabilities who require small-group instruction, severely disabled students, deaf and hard-of-hearing students and early education programs for infants and toddlers.

For more information, contact:

Butte County Office of Education: Special Education  
1859 Bird Street  
Oroville, CA 95965  
Phone: (530) 532-5792 Fax: (530) 532-5794  
Contact: Corin Meester, Director  
<http://www.bcoe.org/sps/se/>

### Children's Center of Monmouth County (NJ)

The center offers educational services, training in adaptive living and pre-vocational skills for students, ages 3-21 with multiple disabilities or a diagnosis of autism and pervasive developmental delays. Each Children's Center student is provided with a functionally based academic curriculum, as dictated by his/her IEP.



The center's staff utilizes a collaborative model for providing services. The related services therapists (speech, occupational and physical therapies) and teachers work together to develop and implement each student's IEP. This model allows for natural generalization of skills and hands-on training of all staff on specific strategies for promoting a student's best performance. Additionally, individual sessions of related services can be provided for students based upon the students' IEP requirements.

In addition to the classroom curriculum, the Children's Center provides extracurricular activities, which include weekly instruction in art, music and physical education under the direction of a specialist in each of those fields. An AT specialist provides computer services for all students, including equipment adaptations.

The Children's Center also offers a community integration program aimed at fostering life skills that include shopping and the use of community resources, as well as training in the use of community recreational and leisure opportunities.

For further information, contact:

The Children's Center of Monmouth County  
1115 Green Grove Road  
Neptune, NJ 07753  
Phone: (732) 922-0228 Fax: (732) 922-8133  
<http://www.ccprograms.com>

### Utah Parent Center

Utah's Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) provides workshops and presentations on the following topics:



*Parents as Partners in the IEP*

*Process*, a workshop that aids parents in understanding their role, rights and responsibilities in the IEP process;

*Constructive Communication - Tools to Build Effective IEP Teams*, in which parents learn and practice five basic communication skills and the principles of interest-based negotiation;

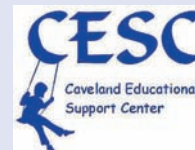
*Gifts and Challenges - Having a Child with Special Needs in Your Family*, where parents get and give ideas for coping with feelings, appreciating the gifts and managing the challenges.

For additional information, contact:

Utah Parent Center  
2290 East 4500 South, Suite 110  
Salt Lake City, UT 84117-4428  
Phone: (801) 272.1051; 800.468.1160 (toll free)  
Fax: (801) 272.8907  
Español: (801) 272.1067  
[upcinfo@utahparentcenter.org](mailto:upcinfo@utahparentcenter.org)  
<http://www.utahparentcenter.org/>

### Caveland Educational Support Center

The Caveland Educational Support Center is a federally funded special education cooperative that serves seventeen school districts in south-central Kentucky. The Center offers professional development on various topics, and provides multi-disciplinary and assistive technology assessments and general assistance to the schools they serve.



Caveland has an extensive Lending Library, which offers books, tests, and assistive technology for loan to member districts. Among the library's AT items are: adaptive computer equipment, software, switches, toys adapted for switch use, picture exchange communication systems and more. The books at the library cover many topics, including academic intervention, autism, functional behavior assessment, and transition. The tests that are available are directed toward adaptive behavior, achievement, speech/language, cognitive abilities, and miscellaneous other topics.

In collaboration with the River Region Cooperative, the

Cavland Educational Support Center created a Deaf/Hard of Hearing Support Network for the region they serve. This group comes together to network and share ideas about how they can work together to solve the problems that this population of students may encounter.

In addition to the Deaf/Hard of Hearing Support Network, the Center has established the Cavland Parent Support Network. The network conveys important information to parents about opportunities available to them. It also informs parents and teachers about special education issues. The parents involved support each other and work alongside the districts in order to make sure their children are receiving the best possible education.

For more information on the Cavland Educational Support Center, please contact:

1790 Normal Drive  
Bowling Green, KY 42101  
Phone: (270) 745-5363  
Fax: (270) 745-6892

<http://www.grrec.coop.k12.ky.us/cavland.htm>

Contact: Pam Coe, Director

Email: [pam.coe@grrec.ky.gov](mailto:pam.coe@grrec.ky.gov)

### Maine Parent Federation, Inc. (MPF)

The federation is a statewide umbrella organization that includes the following disabilities-related projects:



*The Statewide Parent Information Network (SPIN)* is the federally funded Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for Maine, through which parents of children with disabilities and the professionals who work with children and families are provided information, referral, support and training.

*The Maine Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC)* provides information, training and support to parents of children with disabilities.

*Parents as Teachers*, which is offered under the Maine PIRC, is a home visiting program focused on a child's early years. The program offers parents practical ways to encourage learning, manage challenging behavior, and promote strong parent-child relationships.

*Project REACH* provides state-level leadership and community focus in the establishment of Health Care Information and Education Centers for families of children with special health care needs.

Family Voices is the Maine chapter of the nationwide organi-

zation emphasizing access to health/health-related services for children with special health care needs.

For more information, contact:

Maine Parent Federation, Inc. (MPF)

P.O. Box 2067

Augusta, ME 04338

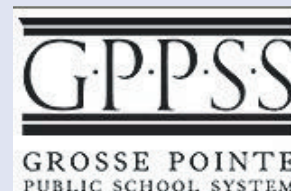
Phone: (800) 870-7746 (in state only); (207) 623-2144

Fax: (207)-623-2148

<http://www.mpf.org/>

### Grosse Pointe Public Schools: Special Education

The Special Education Department within the Grosse Pointe Public School System (GPPSS) offers a full continuum of programs and services to students who are eligible to receive them.



This school district believes in providing services in the least restrictive environment (LRE), with most students fully included in mainstream classrooms. The district does, however, have designated schools where alternative programs are available.

The district offers many programs to the students within their special education program. The Elementary Resource Center (ERC) is a support center for children who need a program of modified studies in order to be successful. Specially trained ERC teachers work with these students to develop accommodations for their individual learning needs. The Secondary Resource Center (SRC) follows ERC and works to meet the learning needs of middle and high school students who spend the majority of the school day in a mainstreamed classroom.

GPPSS offers programs for specific disabilities. They have a program that is tailored to meet the needs of students on the autism spectrum. They also have programs for students with emotional impairments, cognitive impairments, learning disabilities, and hearing impairments.

In addition to their many programs, GPPSS provides students with a variety of service options to enhance their academic careers. They provide adaptive technology, diagnostics and evaluation, ESL, extended day kindergarten, family outreach through the Family Center of Harper Woods and Grosse Pointe, hearing/vision screenings, occupational and physical therapy, Section 504 programming, speech and language services, and transition services. Their parent handbook helps families identify the services that are appropriate for their child.

For more information about the Special Education Depart-

ment of the Grosse Pointe Public Schools, please contact:  
200090 Morningside Drive  
Grosse Pointe, MI 48236  
Phone: (313) 432-3854  
Fax: (313) 432-3852  
[http://www.gpschools.org/sp\\_se\\_overview.htm](http://www.gpschools.org/sp_se_overview.htm)  
Contact: Pamela Lemerand  
Email: [Pamela.lemerand@gpschools.org](mailto:Pamela.lemerand@gpschools.org)

### **Northern Suburban Special Education District – NSSED**

The Support and Training for Exceptional Parents, Inc. The Northern Suburban Special Education District (NSSED) is a special education joint agreement in the north shore suburbs of Chicago. This agreement includes nineteen member school districts – fifteen elementary and four high school districts with a combined population of 40,000 students. NSSED is committed to providing responsive and accepting programs and services that improve the quality of life for students with special needs.



NSSED offers five main programs: Early Childhood Program, Educational and Life Skills, North Shore Academy, North Shore Academy – Elementary, and Low Incidence Cooperative Agreement (LICA).

Their Early Childhood Program (ECP) works to support families by providing learning opportunities for their young children. Their mission is to implement individually and developmentally appropriate practices to support children's development from infancy through kindergarten. They do this by collaborating with families, member school districts, community preschools and agencies that serve young children with special needs. This collaboration helps families and the other professionals learn new skills and become more knowledgeable in the field. ECP implements the use of technology to support children's learning, staff development activities and program development efforts. ECP works to make learning environments as inclusive and accessible as possible.

The Educational and Life Skills (ELS) Program is a community-based program that provides instruction in academic and life skills to students with moderate to severe cognitive and multiple disabilities, ages six through twenty-one within the integrated school setting. The program consists of an education team, comprehensive curriculum, assistive technology, a consultation model, peer interactions, and post-school transition program/services.

North Shore Academy is a public school that is highly structured with individualized therapeutic programs that serve

elementary, junior high and high school students with emotional and behavioral problems. They offer many programs and services to their students, including family services, a mentor program, service learning, a technology department, a transition program, an after school program, and transportation.

Finally, LICA is an agency that consists of forty-three local school districts in the north and northwest suburbs of Chicago. This agency works to provide educational services to students who are deaf and hard of hearing, birth to age twenty-one.

For more information on NSSED, please contact:  
255 Revere Drive, Suite 100  
Northbrook, IL 60062  
Phone: (847) 291-7905  
Fax: (847) 291-9641  
<http://www.nssed.org>  
Contact: Nancy Kind  
Email: [nkind@nssed.k12.il.us](mailto:nkind@nssed.k12.il.us)

### **North East Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center**

The North East Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center (NEOSERRC) serves the forty-one public school districts, county educational service centers, vocational planning districts, non-public schools, community schools, universities, community agencies, county boards of mental retardation, the state residential institution, and parents of students with disabilities within Ashtabula, Mahoning, and Trumbull Counties. NEOSERRC is an affiliate of Ohio's SERRC Network, whose mission is "to improve the achievement of children and youth with disabilities by assisting educators and families in the development and delivery of specially designed instruction aligned with Ohio's academic content standards, and to assist districts and agencies in complying with federal and state laws/regulations to ensure the full participation of children and youth with disabilities in the school community."

In order to fulfill the mission of the Network, NEOSERRC offers a range of services. NEOSERRC services focus around the following areas: administration, instruction, assessment, early childhood, and assistive technology. Another major area of service for NEOSERRC during the past two years has been the Ohio Integrated Systems Model for Academic and Behavior Supports (OISM).

There is a Learning Center in each of the three counties served. The Center offers many resources which link instruction of students with disabilities to Ohio's Academic Content Standards. They also have assessment instruments for loan

to qualified examiners to use during identification, service development and progress monitoring activities in educational settings. Finally, the Center provides production services that are directed to school personnel and parents working with children with special needs.

NEOSERRC's early childhood services are meant to assist local school districts and educational institutions. Through this aspect of their program, instructional resources are made available for teachers, parents and others to examine and borrow for use in classrooms or homes. They also provide in-service education opportunities that are adjusted to meet the needs of those participating. Technical assistance and support is available along with information for families and personnel of local early childhood programs and services.

Finally, their assistive technology services include workshops and presentations on a range of AT topics and devices. Interested individuals can view their collection of devices and software available for loan at the Trumbull Learning Center. Included in this collection are AAC devices, adapted toys, low and mid tech tools (LoTTIE Kits), various keyboards (e.g. Intellikeys, AlphaSmart), adapted books (including Start-to-Finish), software, and other computer accessibility accessories.

For more information on the North East Ohio Special Education Regional Resource Center, please contact:

5555 Youngstown-Warren Road, Unit 696

Niles, OH 44446

Phone: (800) 776-8298 x104

Fax: (330) 544-1000

<http://www.neoserrc.k12.oh.us/index.html>

Contact: Jim Earnhart, Assistive Technology Coordinator

Email: [mcoe\\_je@access-k12.org](mailto:mcoe_je@access-k12.org)

### North Coastal Consortium for Special Education

The North Coastal Consortium for Special Education (NCCSE) is made up of fourteen school districts in the north coastal area of San Diego County. The NCCSE coordinates special education programs and special education student placements for over 12,000 students from



birth through age 21. They provide and support the district with many services. They offer staff development activities and parent education so that everyone is up-to-date on current information available in the field. They also help with the identification of unique needs within local school districts. NCCSE provides legal and technical assistance as well as raises awareness and disseminates information about current

best practices. Finally, they hold forums for problem solving.

Within the Consortium, there is a Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC is a committee that advises the superintendents of the NCCSE school districts on special education services. Representatives on this committee are parents and staff from the NCCSE school districts and also staff from other local agencies. The committee holds meeting once a month for eight months of the year. Each of these meetings is followed by a special education-related presentation, which is open to the public and anyone interested in the topic. CAC holds a Parent Symposium each February, which is a free half-day parent conference that provides opportunities to learn about special education law and services, to speak with representatives from local disability-related agencies, and to meet other families whose children receive special education services.

For more information on the North Coastal Consortium for Special Education, please contact:

255 Pico Avenue, Suite 101

San Marcos, CA 92069

Phone: (760) 761-5126

Fax: (760) 510-6063

<http://www.nccse.org>

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[www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info)