

Seattle Special Education PTSA Newsletter

Volume IV, Issue 6

February 2010

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• **Mark Your Calendars - Save These Dates!**

Our PTSA General Meetings will be held on the third Tuesday of every month at 7 pm. Locations will be indicated in the General Meeting Announcement sent out in the weeks prior to the meetings.

Our board meetings will be held at 9:45 am on the first Wednesday of each month at the Zoka café at 2901 NE Blakeley Street, Seattle, WA 98105.

Board meetings are open to all. If you have an item to include on the board agenda, please email it to **seattlespedptsa@gmail.com** 48 hours in advance.

Sat., March 6 -- Transition Planning Workshop, 9 am - 1 pm, Auditorium at the John Stanford Center, 2445 3rd Ave South.

Tuesday, March 16 -- TBD

Tuesday, April 20 -- IEP and 504 Legal/Procedural Rights, Elections

Tuesday, May 18 -- TBD

• **Transition Planning Workshop - Saturday, March 6**

Families with children who have disabilities often find themselves focusing on day-to-day issues and, when they get a spare moment to reflect on the future, may feel overwhelmed. Well, our program on March 6 will give families a "guided tour" of the future as it relates to Transition Planning with your school team. What are the issues you and your child's educators need to be discussing to prepare your child for life after school? When do you begin this process? What kind of paperwork is involved? What are the timelines?

Special Education Supervisor Martha Lawson will walk parents and guardians through the Transition Planning

Conference

The Third Annual King County Transition Resource Fairs

Special Ed Meeting at Hamilton for Incoming Families

process, including how to start thinking in transition terms when children are young. She will help families develop a broad framework for dealing with transition issues throughout a child's schooling and then provide some specific training on developing transition IEPs in grades 9 through 12. A panel discussion will follow Ms. Lawson's presentation and address a variety of post-secondary pathways. The panel will include representatives from the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Debra Zawada of the UW's Do-It Program, and PTSA member Lynne Tucker with information on testing preparation and timelines.

The Workshop will be held in the Auditorium at the John Stanford Center, 2445 3rd Ave South, on Saturday, March 6, from 9 am to 1 pm. Coffee and light snacks will be available. We hope you can join us!

Who We Are

2009-2010 Executive Board:

Elected board members

President, Janet Anderson

Co-Vice President, Joyce Israel

Co-Vice President, Heidi Bond

Treasurer, Marti Bosma

Secretary, Peg Petersen

Commitee Chairs

Membership/Outreach,
Linda Scott

Legislative, David Garrick

External Relations, Rose Yu

Inclusion Working Group,
Susan Sturms

Twice Exceptional
Working Group, Lynne
Tucker

• Wrap-up of Family Engagement Meeting

On Tuesday evening, February 9, about two dozen PTSA members met with Bernardo Ruiz, SPS Family and Community Engagement Manager, and Eric Anderson, SPS Gates Data Fellow, to discuss the annual school climate survey. They are redesigning the survey to provide better data on the learning environment, the effectiveness of school leaders and professionalism of staff, the level of parent involvement, and the general school climate including discipline, safety and social trust. Mr. Ruiz and Dr. Anderson were specifically interested in soliciting input from families of children served by special education.

Our discussion lasted over an hour and a half and centered on discerning the best way to gather, in such a general survey, the data that specifically addressed the concerns of families of children with disabilities. Many specific issues were raised by participants, including how well do teachers and staff collaborate, understand specific disabilities, differentiate curriculum, and welcome children with disabilities. Dr. Anderson was receptive to the notion of running a separate survey to specifically solicit feedback on special education issues and will discuss this idea with the Special Education Services department.

We were fortunate to have the assistance of Andrea Baumgarten, a former PTA President at View Ridge

Severely-disabled/Medically-Fragile Working Group, Joyce Israel

President Emeritus, Nancy Speer

Newsletter Editor, Jo Cross-Whiter

Please, Pass It On!

Please send a copy of this newsletter to a friend, your child's teacher, and your school-based PTA. Just click on the "Forward email" button below to pass it on. Many thanks.

This newsletter is edited by Jo Cross-Whiter. Any inquiries regarding its content may be directed to Jo Cross-Whiter at cross-whiter@comcast.net.

Se puede conseguir un folleto sobre esta PTSA en espa ol en nuestro website

[To access our website, please click here.](#)

cross-whiter@comcast.net **cross-whiter@comcast.net**

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<http://www.seattlespecialdptsa.org>

[g](#)

Elementary, to frame and record our input to Dr. Anderson. He has promised to get back to our PTSA within the next two weeks with a summary of our feedback and how it is being used in the final draft of the survey. Initial field testing of the survey will occur in mid-March, and the actual survey is projected to be up and running in May. Many thanks to all our participants.

• February Update: Welcome to a New Semester!

"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."- Mary McLeod Bethune

Welcome to February and a new semester, and thank you for your ongoing partnership with us as we work to build and sustain communities in which ALL learners can thrive. When I was nine years old I was given a biography of the great educator Mary McLeod Bethune for my birthday. Her story, her passion, and her commitment to social justice inspired me to become an educator, and her words still ring true today! As a district and as a department we are working to "change old ideas and practices" while building on the remarkable work that has taken place in the past so that all students may realize their "powerful potential."

Here are a few key updates:

- Our Inclusion Task Force has been meeting to review practices, structures, strategies, and outcomes in our special education services. We are reviewing data from staff and family surveys, academic data, current structures and resource allocations, and data from school visits to help inform recommendations for next steps as we move toward more powerful, inclusive learning in Seattle. Many thanks to our talented and committed task force members for their time and commitment, and thanks to schools and teachers who hosted team visits in January! By the end of March we hope to have a three- year schedule of recommendations that will work in partnership with the District's Excellence For All goals and initiatives.
- Our Emotional/Behavioral project team is up and running, prepared to visit schools and create a template for effective emotional/behavioral service delivery. Stacey

McCrath-Smith is our team lead in this project, and again we are grateful for the talented and committed staff members who are working on this key initiative.

- We continue to offer Professional Development to all staff, and are excited by the partnership we've formed with Curriculum and Instruction. Our skilled staff are co-teaching the mandatory modules in Math, Literacy, and Writer's Workshop so that a) general education teachers learn how to differentiate instruction and support ALL learners, and b) teachers of special education learn core curriculum along with their colleagues. Cassie Martin, specialist from the University of Washington, continues to provide Professional Development in inclusion with a focus on students on the Autism spectrum, and we are preparing for an full day of professional development on the March 19th waiver day.
- I recently met with leaders from the teacher education programs at City University, Seattle University, Seattle Pacific University, and the University of Washington. Students in these pre-service programs are strongly advised to work toward two endorsements--one in a content area and another in special education, reading, or ELL, recognizing that most districts are working toward providing inclusive services. Teacher preparation programs are also training new teachers to work on collaborative teams, and as they place student teachers they want them to experience collaboration and co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. We look forward to deepening our partnerships and aligning our practice with our university colleagues.
- Last week I was able to do a learning walk at Ballard High School, looking for evidence of differentiated instruction, high leverage teaching moves, and students with IEPs having access to general education curriculum. I was impressed by Ballard students and staff and the supportive community they have created.

Executive Director, Marni Campbell,

For information about enrollment and school open houses. click on the link below.

[School Enrollment and Open Houses](#)

• **Focus Group on Inclusion using the Appreciative Inquiry Research Method**

On Saturday, February 6th, approximately twenty Seattle Public School stakeholders, including principals, parents, general education and special education teachers came together to participate in a focus group on inclusion in Seattle Public Schools. Stakeholders used a research method called Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in order to analyze data on what is working to support students with disabilities in Seattle Schools.

Appreciative Inquiry is a research method and organizational tool that relies on identifying and enhancing what the organization does best. Different from many problem-solving approaches, AI relies on the basic assumption that the behavior in an organization is not a "problem" but a "solution". The goal is to generate new knowledge and to carry forward that knowledge in ways that successfully translate intention into reality and belief into practice. The AI process is used to help the organization discover and get more firmly in touch with the strengths it already has. Moreover, AI recognizes that stakeholder participation is a critical component when attempting to elicit organizational change. Therefore, stakeholders were asked to participate in all phases of the research.

This project started in November with forty interviews with principals, special educators, general educators and parents (hereafter referred to as stakeholders), where the primary researcher asked questions about what was working in educational programs to include students with disabilities. Five themes were identified from the primary researcher's first pass at the interview data. These included: Communication and Collaboration with Families; Putting Children Before Labels; Professional Learning Communities; Using Flexible Service Delivery Models; and Issues of Clarity: Philosophy, Roles, and Responsibilities.

Interview transcriptions for each of the five themes were brought to the stakeholders who were asked to resolve any discrepancies and to further clarify some of the points communicated in the original data. In small groups, stakeholders read through the data and identified stories that they felt connected to and best described the overarching themes under the umbrella of "what works." At this point, the groups transitioned to the next phase of analysis and discussed, "What could be." This phase was practical in the sense that it

is grounded in the organization's history - using stories about "what already works" to generate ideas about "what will be." It was also generative in that it sought to expand the organization's potential, keeping in mind the voices and hopes of its stakeholders. After smaller groups were finished discussing, they returned to the larger group to share out what they had discussed. This resulted in one of the most powerful conversations of the day where stories were shared, ideas were generated, and there was a collective wisdom established in the room with ideas being built on top of one another.

After the discussion, stakeholders returned to their small groups to participate in the next phase of data analysis - the design phase. This process involved stakeholders producing provocative propositions - which are like design principles in that they are statements about what the organization wants to achieve. Provocative propositions entail thinking in a confident and assertive way and are intended to stretch the organization as it moves to realize them. These statements include such language as "There will always be..." and "Everyone will..." ; there are no caveats or conditions. Provocative propositions were generated, such as: "Every teacher who comes to work in the Seattle Public Schools will understand and will be prepared to teach whatever kind of student comes into their classroom. If these teachers require help and support, they will have a specific plan to follow in order to acquire the support they need, the response will be efficient, and resources within the building will be considered first. ICS will be a term we use to describe all services we are providing our students who qualify for special education services. We don't have some kids who "belong" in ICS and some who "don't belong." All of our students are receiving ICS services in the way that meets their individual learning needs."

The final phase of small group work was to generate professional development objectives based on the provocative propositions. These recommendations for professional development, along with a summary of all the work completed by the focus group, will be submitted to Marni Campbell, Executive Director of Special Education.

We hope that Seattle district leadership will consider using these objectives to design professional development around inclusion. We further hope that district leaders will think about the research method that was used, specifically around issues of stakeholder

input, the need to discover "what is working," and how positive conversations can support positive organizational change.

Cassie Martin, Doctoral Candidate at University of Washington's College of Education

• **ICS/Inclusion Task Force Update**

The ICS/Inclusion Task Force is scheduled to conclude its work by March 30, 2010. The goal of the Task Force is to submit recommendations for implementing and improving ICS over the next three years. I am not confident that all members of the Task Force share a vision for the fundamental and far-reaching changes necessary in Seattle Public Schools for successful inclusion of children receiving special education services. However, I continue to advocate for full and meaningful school community membership for all children in Seattle Public Schools.

I am serving on a subgroup of the Task Force which is focusing on Resource Allocation and Staffing. I completed some independent work and recommendations and submitted this to the subgroup. My work and recommendations include:

- Rough analysis of the number of additional certificated special education teaching staff needed to fully implement ICS at the elementary and K-8 levels with a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:10. Also included was an estimate of salary cost for this additional staff.
- Identification of elementary and K-8 schools that provide limited special education services (i.e., schools that have only Resource Room [7 schools]; only Resource Room/ICS [4 schools]; only Resource Room/ICS and developmental preschool [3 schools]). I recommend that special education services be expanded at these schools by enrolling the full range of learners that live in these schools' reference areas and increasing special education staffing accordingly.
- Examples of how the "Weighted Staffing Standards Model" affects opportunities for inclusion for students receiving special education services. Even though the Weighted Staffing Standards Model does not allocate a full general education seat to students receiving special education services at Level 3, Level 4A, Level 4B, or Level 4E, this should not be used as an excuse to deny them opportunities to be included in the general education classroom.
- Recommendation that building principals should

make it a priority to provide shared planning time for their general education and special education teachers for collaboration and advance opportunity to modify instructional materials.

Susan Sturms

- **Next Twice Exceptional Group Meeting in Seattle on March 16**

The next NW Exceptional Children meeting for parents, educators and advocates of children with disabilities and giftedness, also known as Twice Exceptional or 2e, is scheduled for Tuesday, March 16 from 7-9 pm, in the auditorium at the John Stanford Center.

This meeting will be dedicated to reconnecting with others in our Twice Exceptional communities! Join us for small group conversations about pre-k and kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school aged children and to discuss the unique needs of these age-groups. Ask questions and share your experiences about school choices, successful programs, challenges and understanding providers.

Get updates on recent events impacting twice exceptional children and available community resources. Hear about speakers who have expressed interest in providing information to our 2e community. Network with other parents and educators and give your input on speakers and topics for upcoming meetings.

This meeting is free and open to the general public. All parents, educators, administrators and advocates of Twice Exceptional are encouraged to attend.

For more information, e-mail: contact@nwexceptionalchildren.org or call 206-708- 6343

- **Washington State Legislature is Busy with Bills Supporting Students with Disabilities**

This short legislative session has brought about a flurry of activity surrounding the work of the Quality Education Council (QEC) and the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (AGOAC), a legislated group to look at education needs of diverse communities. House Bill 3026- Enforcing Civil Rights

and Senate Bill 6629-Convening a Work Group for Highly Capable, shows great promise to support our students with disabilities!

House Bill 3026-Enforcing Civil Rights

Puts the recommendations of the AGOAC into action, granting the Office of State Superintendent, (OSPI), the legislated power to enforce federal and state civil rights and Section 504 laws currently on the books. As it stands, Washington legislature has not given OSPI the power and authority to ensure that local school districts are in compliance. This bill would create a mechanism for corrective actions, with holding funding and dissolving programs for those school districts with on-going, flagrant violations.

Earlier this month, a contingency from Seattle's special education community traveled to Olympia to testify in support of HB 3026. Parent Anne Sheeran, Seattle Special Education PTSA President Janet Anderson and NW Exceptional Children and Seattle Special Education PTSA Twice Exceptional representative Lynne Tucker testified about the real need for this bill because of the lack of administrator respect towards students with disabilities, problems found in Seattle's 2007 Special Education audit still in existence, special education over-identification of students of color and students with disabilities not being identified or appropriately served in Seattle's highly capable programs.

HB 3026 was approved by the House and is under review in the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee. On February 18th, HB 3026 is scheduled to have public testimony, so be sure to contact the senate committee legislators to support this bill! The link for Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education contacts is:
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/Senate/Committees/EDU/Pages/MembersStaff.aspx>

Be sure and follow HB 3026 bill as it makes its way through the legislature at:
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=3026&year=2009>

Senate Bill 6629- Convening a Work Group for Highly Capable

A second bill, SB 6629 will carry on the important work of the OEC by preparing our schools for the move of

highly capable students into general education programs and comes with a need to develop standards, guidelines, and outcomes for our state's highly capable programs. This work group would be charged to look at identification, funding structure and must address students with disabilities, those from diverse communities in highly capable program and is scheduled to report back to the legislature December 2010.

Because of the recent experiences for Seattle students with disabilities and families who provided input about highly capable programs, Lynne Tucker from Seattle Special Education PTSA Twice Exceptional work group and NW Exceptional Children worked with legislators to introduce this bill so that provisions for all students would be ready for 2011 roll-out. Early February, Lynne and Christie Perkins from the Washington State Special Education Coalition, testified in support of this bill and recapped the many reasons why this bill is so important for all communities, and especially for students with disabilities. SB 6629 was approved by the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee and is scheduled to make its debut on February 19th at the public hearing in the House Education Committee.

Be sure to contact the House Education committee legislators and encourage their support of SB 6629. The contact link is:
www.leg.wa.gov/House/Committees/ED/Pages/MembersStaff.aspx. Click on the link below to follow the bill's progress.

Although the education budget is looming over legislators, there have been many rays of hope for our students with disabilities. **For more information or questions please contact, Lynne Tucker at lynnetucker@mac.com**

[Bill SB 6629](#)

- **Elections Are Coming!**

At our April 20th General Meeting we will elect officers for the following PTSA positions: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. With the exception of Treasurer, the duties of each position can be shared. Our Nominating Committee members -- Joyce Israel, Elizabeth Purswell, and Cherylynne Crowther -- are actively seeking potential candidates for each of these offices. If you are interested in running or know

someone who you would like to recommend as a candidate, please contact the Nominating Committee via Joyce Israel at **rijoyce@comcast.net**.

- **Award Nominations**

Each year our PTSA presents awards to individuals selected by our members as an Outstanding Educator and Outstanding PTSA Volunteer (called the Golden Acorn Award). We will be giving out these awards in the spring, so now is the time to start considering who you would like to honor with such an award.

The Outstanding Educator Award was created to recognize individuals who have provided outstanding educational opportunities for children and youth that are beyond the normal scope of their jobs. A Golden Acorn Award is presented, by a local PTA unit or council, to a volunteer in recognition of his/her dedication and service to children and youth. A contribution in the name of the recipient(s) is made by the honoring PTA to the Washington State PTA Scholarship Program. From these contributions, WSPTA is able to provide grants to freshman students entering post-secondary education.

Please click on the link listed below to download copies of the award nomination forms. Please send completed forms as an attachment to

seattlespedptsa@gmail.com or mail to Seattle Special Ed PTSA, 1037 NE 65th Street, Suite # 155, Seattle, WA 98115.

[Nomination Forms](#)

- **Special Education Family Support Group at Bagley Elementary**

Daniel Bagley Elementary has approximately 33 students in an inclusion program and in ICS/Resource Room this year. Last year, one of the parents worked with the special education staff to set up a family support group. That group met once a month for most of the year and got the kids together for a Pump-It-Up party. In September, we kicked off the school year with a family picnic. This year the parent group meets every other month (sometimes more) and we have our 2nd family gathering this month at the Montlake Terrace Pool.

Our parent meetings focus on giving parents a chance to relax and talk about our highs and lows of the

month. We spend time brainstorming solutions for individual issues, coming up with questions and suggestions for the school and staff, and talking about district meetings and plans for special education. We had Cassie Martin, from UW, join us for part of one meeting and hope to have other expert visitors to share their ideas and experiences with us. We have had neighborhood parents join us who do not have children at Bagley but who might in the future and who appreciate the support and insights the group offers. The parent support group gives us a chance to build community and lend support to one another and to staff.

Our family events give the kids' time together, including typical siblings. We are looking forward to blowing off steam together at the pool this month, and hope to get back to the bouncy houses later in the year. If you have any questions about the family and parent support group at Bagley, feel free to contact Kate O'Leary at kate.oleary@hotmail.com for more information.

- **2010 Special Education Conference**

Rehab Seminars is sponsoring a two day conference at the Shoreline Conference Center on March 11 and 12. The purpose of the conference is to provide up-to-date research and treatment strategies on a wide variety of special education issues. Twelve contact hours can be credited with completion of the two day course. **For more information go to: www.rehabseminars.org or phone 360-379-6994**

- **The Third Annual King County Transition Resource Fairs**

On Saturday, March 13, at the North Seattle Community College, and Thursday, March 25, at the Highline Community College.

Since the School-to-Work project started in the 2005-2006 school year, we have seen great improvement in the employment outcomes for young adults with developmental disabilities. Educators and Adult Service Providers have been pooling resources and collective wisdom to help students and families make a smoother transition to life after school. However, we still have a lot of work to do to make sure students and families know what to expect after school and how to begin to plan and prepare to be ready to work when they leave

school.

For more information about the transition resource fairs please contact Kelley Faulkner of King County at Kelley.Faulkner@kingcounty.gov or Lyn Andrews of O'Neill & Associates at Lyn@oneillandassociates.com. Or click on the link below.

[Third Annual King County Transition Resource Fair](#)

• Special Ed Meeting at Hamilton for Incoming Families

On March 19, Hamilton International Middle School will be holding a meeting for incoming families who have students with special needs. The meeting will be from 1-3pm in Room 308 at Hamilton.

Please bring your student's current IEP or the goals your student has been working on all year.

For more information please contact Patty Chacon at **pachacon@seattleschools.org**