



The Parent Leadership Project's Parent E-Perspective

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"Ways to get Involved—Ways to Share!"

May 2016

IN THIS ISSUE

Federation for Children with Special Needs
Visions of Community 2016

A Parent Perspective by Grace's Mom

Snacking Made Easy...But Is It Too Easy?
Blog Reprint

Sampling of our FaceBook & Twitter Posts

Resources

FCSN Visions of Community 2016

Federation for Children with Special Needs

By Carole Darrah, Grace's Mom



I am a shy person by nature so the trip into the big city to attend the Federation for Children with Special Needs: Visions of Community Conference was a big step for me. But I really wanted to go. My three year old daughter Grace needed me to go. At first I walked around feeling a little like a kid on her first day

of school. I didn't know where to go and was a little overwhelmed by the sheer number of people walking around. But before you know it someone smiled at me and commented on the weather. Then someone offered to talk to me about the literature they had to share. Then there were even a few familiar faces that were happy to see me. All this before the keynote speaker had even started! Suddenly instead of being unsure, I felt ready to embrace the day. It was a safe place and I was surrounded by people seeking the same as me. Information to help our children!

I was attending because my beyond brave and beautiful daughter was not getting her needs met in her new school. I needed some help. My help came in many ways. First, the keynote speaker's message of setting high expectations was exactly how I felt. It was so validating to hear the message I was seeking delivered in such a wonderful way. Second, the information I collected on resources I could tap into to support her learning was such a relief. Who knew there were so many people willing to help our children? Finally, during the workshop on IEPs, I sat next to two strangers that each in their own way helped me. One was a Mom on the same journey as I was about to undertake. It was so nice to be able to commiserate together without needing to explain each and every part of the story...sometimes that's so exhausting! When you need to vent, but the person you're venting to does not know what it's like, it rarely feels satisfying because you have to retell so much of the story. It just gets me hot and bothered instead of releasing stress!! The other woman I spoke with was a Mom who was a lot further along on the journey than I am. She was so kind and welcoming. She gave me some sage advice about trying to start over with the school department. Advice that I took and hopefully it restarted our journey to get Grace the help she needs.

When I left the Conference I left with a bag full of information on organizations that had some help to offer us, knowledge about our rights that empowered me to keep going on the path to stand up for my daughter's needs, and a feeling of I can't wait until next year because I now know what it feels like to be part of this common cause. I am not a new kid in school and next year I may even run into some familiar faces again!!

Federation for Children with Special Needs Visions of Community 2016

On March 5, 2016, the Federation for Children with Special Needs hosted their annual Visions of Community conference at the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston. This year's conference hosted over 50 workshops offered in many languages, over 799 exhibitors, and more than 1,100 attendees.

This year, Rich Robinson, Executive Director of the Federation, presented eight **2016 Community Partnership Awards**. The Community Partnership Awards recognize and celebrate the contributions and commitment of: Community Leadership Award: **Susan Smith**, Children's Services, Beaman Memorial Public Library, West Boylston, MA; Community Outreach Award: **Lynne Adams**, New Bedford Family Resource and Development Center, School Liaison, New Bedford, MA; General Education Teacher Award, **Kristin O'Toole**, Wilmington Public Schools, Kindergarten Teacher, Wilmington, MA; School Administrator Award: **Katie Grassa**, The Curley School, Principal, Jamaica Plain, MA; Health Advocacy Award: **Rhonda S. Fogle, MD**, Private Practice, Pediatrician, Melrose, MA; Inclusive Recreation Award: **Lotte Diomedede**, SMILE Mass, Community Outreach, Sudbury, MA; Parent Advocacy Award: **Lisa O'Connor**, Parent Advocate & Special Education Surrogate Parent, Groveland, MA; Special Education Teacher Award: **Sherry Elander**, Westfield Public Schools, Transition Program, Westfield, MA. To learn more about these awardees, please visit www.fcsn.org/voc/cpa-nominations/.

Federation for Children with Special Needs

Visions of Community 2016 Continued

Keynote speaker **Dr. Josie Badger**, Youth Director at the PEAL Parent Center in Pennsylvania and Co-Director of the national RAISE Center's Technical Assistance to six Parent Training and Information Centers funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the US Department of Education, addressed the conference attendees with humor and words of empowerment. As the chair of the #IWantToWork Campaign, her mission is to improve employment opportunities for youth with disabilities. Missed Dr. Badger's keynote? View it here www.fcsn.org/voc/keynote/.

Interested in what you may have missed or want to revisit it? Visit www.fcsn.org/voc/workshops/ to view YouTubes or download workshop handouts and/or presentations! The Federation is a center for parents and parent organizations to work together on behalf of children with special needs and their families. Organized in 1975 as a coalition of parent groups representing children with a variety of disabilities, the Federation offers workshops and training, advocacy and resources to parents of children with special needs and the professionals who serve them.



Receive up to the minute information and opportunities.

Receive this newsletter electronically!
E-mail your name and e-mail address to: eiplp@live.com. Thanks!



Snacking Made Easy... But Is It Too Easy?

Rachel Colchamiro and Louisa Paine
Reprint, MA DPH Blog



My kids haven't been toddlers in many years, but I am lucky to have a few nieces and nephews to enjoy watching go through that stage all over again. As a nutritionist, I probably pay more attention to food than most, but I have noticed one big difference between when my kids were little and now...all of those fruit and veggie pouches!

Those pouches have several perks. You get nutrient-dense food in an easy-to-use package that offers independence... and let's face it, less mess. Unfortunately, there is a down side to relying too heavily on the pouches for your baby or child's fruits and vegetables.

If kids eat fruit and veggie pouches too often...especially the same brands and flavors...they don't get a chance to get used to other food tastes and textures. This can make them less likely to want to eat a variety of foods, and could contribute to picky eating behaviors. Also, limiting textures that toddlers and preschoolers eat to pureed food means they won't be using all the muscles in their tongue and jaw—crunchy and chewy foods exercise these muscles to make them stronger. Lacking strength in the tongue and jaw may cause eating problems later on.

Pouches can also make it easy to overdo snacking, which may lead to your toddler eating more food than he or she needs. Too much snacking can also make kids less hungry at mealtimes. And, while super-convenient, offering pouches on the go all the time also means your child might not get used to sitting and eating at the table, which is an important habit to establish. Your child may also be missing out on learning socializing and talking skills which are often practiced during meal time – and don't forget about table manners!

I remember those early years and being a mom on-the-run very clearly! How tempting it would have been to give my kids fruit and veggie pouches all the time to reduce struggles around food and make meals and snacks easier. For the best development and nutrition outcomes (and probably the best outcome for your wallet!), try to balance those pouches with age-appropriate spoon-fed or finger-fed fruits and veggies at meals and snacks. After all, those messy faces make for great photo ops and great memories down the road.

Louisa Paine is a Dietetic Intern at Simmons College

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#MotivationalMonday



#DidYouKnow The Department of Public Health is the lead agency for EI in MA?



#DidYouKnow MA has an Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC)? It's an opportunity for stakeholders to get together, share and inform the DPH Massachusetts Department of Public Health



#MotivationalMonday



#DidYouKnow The EIPLP published it's first Parent Perspective newsletter in 1993? You can receive current editions electronically by emailing us at eiplp@live.com.



Social-emotional learning starts at birth! <http://commonwealthmagazine.org/.../social-emotional-learnin.../>

#DidYouKnow The MEIC Conference is celebrating it's 37th year with over 45 workshops? #parentopportunities #resources

#DidYouKnow The EIPLP is celebrating it's 25th year?!? Happy Birthday to all of our EI parent leaders!



RESOURCES

Welcome to the Web Page for the PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

...your source for information about the
Massachusetts Early Intervention System

EIPLP.org
1-877-35-EI-PLP
eiplp@yahoo.com



Massachusetts Department of Public Health
**Children & Youth with
Special Health Care Needs
Program**

[MA Family-to-Family Health
Information Center](#)



THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The EI Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP) strives to develop an informed parent constituency, promote leadership and lifelong advocacy skills for parents and family members, facilitate family participation to ensure that Early Intervention Services are family-centered and support EI programs to identify, train and mentor families to take on roles across the EI and Early Childhood system. The Project is a parent driven endeavor, which continually seeks family involvement and input regarding the needs of families enrolled in Early Intervention and is implemented by parents whose own children have received EI services. The Project staff consists of a Director, a Media Coordinator, a Statewide Monitoring Coordinator and a Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

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NEXT DEADLINE: We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles. The next deadline is **June 30, 2016**. Please call our toll-free number (877) 353-4757 or email the newsletter editor at kris.levine@state.ma.us.

The ***Parent Perspective*** newsletter is published by the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, through funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. If you would like to be removed from this mailing list, please contact eiplp@live.com