



# Family Connections

A Family Newsletter from OASIS  
Oklahoma Areawide Services Information System



## ON THE ROAD FAMILY PERSPECTIVE CONFERENCES

Next one will be Monday, November 6, 2006 in Woodward, OK.

If your community would like to host a one day conference and want more information— Call Sally Selvidge at OASIS at 1-800-426-2747 or email her at Sally-Selvidge@ouhsc.edu

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Fall 2006

### Benefits of Laughter. Learning to Find Humor Through the Tears: Raising a Child with a Disability.

By Sally Selvidge

The benefits of laughter have been known for centuries, but often seen by many as a “negative” instead of a “positive.” If you like to laugh or find humor in your life, people are inclined to not take you seriously. Your ideas, skills, and knowledge of complex situations are often not honored or respected because you have found a way to laugh in the face of adversity. But being able to laugh at yourself is a sign of maturity and having excellent coping skills.

Laughter not only equips us with the tools to rise above the cruelty, ignorance and prejudice that society often throws at us but also, has medical benefits by lowering blood pressure, changing our biochemical state, protecting the heart, giving the body a good workout, improving brain function, and relieving stress. It can dissolve anger and unite families in times of trouble and enables people to look at a problems from a different perspective to make them less terrifying. A lack of a sense of humor is often directly related to the lack of self esteem and is unhealthy if laughing at oneself leads to self humiliation or shame. Laughter can replace uncertainty with peace for parents of a child/adult or family member with a disability as they cope with the frightening, difficult, and often painful experience of facing a life they hadn’t planned on.

Emily Pearl Kingsley wrote in her prose, “Welcome to Holland,” As a parent of a child with a disability you have suddenly found yourself in a different place and a place you didn’t plan on going, but now that you are there— “ If you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn’t get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.” So as everyone is busy coming and going from Italy don’t spend the rest of your life saying, “Yes, that’s where I was suppose to go.” Reach inside and find the laughter, smiles, and humor that has been missing from your life, recapture it, and pass it on to others. You might suddenly find yourself able to cope with the sudden change in plan and learn to accept all the good things that your child who has the disability has brought into your life.

Remember, laughter costs nothing, it enriches those who receive it, only takes a moment, creates happiness in the home, promotes goodwill in business, and is the countersign for friendship. Laughter brings “rest to the weary”, cheer to the disheartened, and sunshine to the sad. It cannot be bought, borrowed or stolen. So when people are too tired to laugh, give them some of yours, as no one needs laughter so much as the one who has no more to give. *Unknown author*

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS



## On Going Events:

**Arthritis Community Education and Self Help Courses:** Contact Marisa New, Oklahoma Arthritis Network for schedule - (405) 271-9444, ext. 56410 or by e-mail: [marisan@health.state.ok.us](mailto:marisan@health.state.ok.us)

**Oklahoma Respite Resource Network** meets the first Tuesday of each month from 1:00 – 3:00 pm, usually in the Green Room at the Lincoln Plaza Office Complex, 4545 N. Lincoln in Oklahoma City. The ORRN is a collaboration of agencies, organizations and individuals working to increase the availability of respite care for families in Oklahoma. Anyone interested is welcome to attend. Meeting times and dates are subject to change, so check with OASIS at (800) 426-2747 to confirm.

**Statewide Training and Regional Supports (STARS)** The mission of STARS is to support the provision of individualized, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, family-centered, community-based programs and services for people with disabilities through a coordinated training system. Staff and contractors of the SoonerStart program, local public schools, and DDS, as well as families accessing services from these agencies may attend STARS trainings at no charge. Others are welcome to register and attend STARS trainings on a “space available” basis for a charge of \$50.00 per person per workshop. A list of workshops and more information can be found at: [http://www.ah.ouhsc.edu/tolbert/courses\\_workshops/](http://www.ah.ouhsc.edu/tolbert/courses_workshops/)

**The Olmstead Strategic Planning Meetings.** These meetings are held the first Thursday of each month at the Oklahoma State Capitol in Room 419C from 1:30 - 3:00 p.m. They are open to the public and anyone interested in having input on how to implement the Olmstead Strategic Plan for people who have a disability to live in the community is welcome to attend. Please call Rose Ann Percival at (405) 522-0600 for more information.



## Upcoming Events, Conferences and Workshops:

**September 27 – 29: 14<sup>th</sup> Oklahoma Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect & Healthy Families Oklahoma 2006.** National Center for Employee Development in Norman, Oklahoma. Early Bird Registration deadline is September 1, 2006. For information and to register contact Jessica Shatley, 405-271-8858, [Jessica-shatley@ouhsc.edu](mailto:Jessica-shatley@ouhsc.edu) or visit <http://devbehavpeds.ouhsc.edu/ccanconference.asp>

**October 25 -27: National Respite Conference.** Doubletree Hotel Downtown. Omaha, Nebraska. For more information go to <http://archrespite.org>

**November 6, 2006. On The Road Family Perspective Conference.** Woodward, OK. For more information call Sally Selvidge at OASIS toll free (800) 426-2747 or email her at [Sally-Selvidge@ouhsc.edu](mailto:Sally-Selvidge@ouhsc.edu).

## Listening to Student Voices: Increasing Student Participation In Their Transition IEP Meetings

Juan Portly and James Martin  
University of Oklahoma  
Zarrow Center for Learning Enrichment  
August 2006  
Email: jemartin@ou.edu

Special education law requires that students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) be invited to attend their transition IEP meetings. Why? Because students' interests, strengths, and needs will be discussed to determine post-high school goals, which will then be used to formulate the remainder of the IEP. Post high school goals will direct the completion of students' course of study, transition activities, and objectives.

Across the country, about 80% of transition age students now attend their IEP meetings, which represent a large improvement from a few years ago when few high school students attended their IEP meetings. But does student attendance at IEP meetings actually result in active student discussion at their educational planning meetings?

### What Happens at Typical Middle and High School IEP Meetings?

Research by OU's Zarrow Center faculty and staff, along with colleagues from the University of Colorado, examined what students and IEP team members think about the typical, educator-directed secondary IEP transition planning process. Students and team members reported that students know what to do, understand what was said, know the reasons for the meeting, and talked less than any other IEP team member. Not surprisingly, students reported the lowest level of satisfaction about their IEP meetings of all team members, and students felt less comfortable sharing their thoughts and suggestions more so than all other IEP team members. Special education teachers talked the most at the meetings. Parents and special education teachers talked more about student interests than did students.

Our research in Oklahoma schools found that many special education teachers thought their students participated a lot during IEP meeting discussions. But, our direct observations of secondary IEP meetings, found that students on average talked 3% of the time. Why the discrepancy between the perception of special education teachers and actual observed student behavior? Could this discrepancy imply that special education teachers simply equate attendance with participation and are satisfied with nothing more? If students attended their meetings and only talked 3% of the time, perhaps students did just what educators expected.

It seems rather naïve to believe that students will participate in their meetings and learn what to do through serendipity, but this is just what traditional educator-directed IEP meetings expect. Continued on page 6

## CHILDREN ORAL HEALTH COALITION

Meets Every Second Wednesday at  
the Oklahoma Dental Association  
317 NE 13th St.  
Oklahoma City, OK  
(405) 848-8873

Everyone is Welcome who has an interest in Improving the Quality and Access to Oral Health for Children with and without a disability in Oklahoma.

For more information or questions, call Sally Selvidge at (800) 426-2747 or email her at Sally-Selvidge@ouhsc.edu



Brothers and Sisters  
**A Special Part of Exceptional Families,  
Third Edition**  
By Peggy A. Gallagher,  
Ph.D., Thomas H. Powell,  
Ed.D., & Cheryl A.  
Rhodes, M.S.

Going to College  
**Expanding Opportunities  
for People with Disabilities**  
Edited by Elizabeth Evans Getzel, M.A.,  
& Paul Wehman, Ph.D.

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# Department of Rehabilitation Services

## Part II

[www.okrehab.org](http://www.okrehab.org)

### **Employer Services**

Oklahoma's smartest employers save time and money by hiring capable employees qualified to meet specific job requirements at no charge through DRS's Business and Employment Team (BEST).

The agency's job development and placement experts offer free recruitment and placement assistance, pre-employment testing, job-related training, on-site analysis, information about special technology and training on how to use it, as well as information about tax credits and deductions available to employers who hire workers with disabilities.

For more information about BEST, phone the Employer Hotline at (877) 739-3419.

### **Library Services**

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (OLBPH) offers services for persons who are blind, visually impaired and those with disabilities which prevent them from using standard print materials. Thousands of books on audio tape, playback equipment and Braille formats are mailed to patrons free of charge every year. The Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center at OLBPH also houses and loans Braille textbooks and other specialized instructional materials to public and private school students, who cannot use standard print. AIM assists students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade and those who receive services from SoonerStart, a cooperative project of several agencies serving children from birth to age three with developmental delays or disabilities. The Library for the Blind may be reached at (405) 521-3514 in Oklahoma City or (800) 523-0288, toll free and (405) 521-4672, TTY.

### **Oklahoma School for the Blind**

The Oklahoma School for the Blind (OSB) located in Muskogee provides fully accredited education options for students from infancy through age 21, who are blind or visually impaired and living on campus during the school week or commuting from home. In addition to academic coursework offered in other public schools, OSB provides specialized training in independent living skills, Braille, abacus, assistive technology, tactile graphic, orientation and mobility, adaptive equipment and low vision utilization. Staff also offer free academic, counseling, health care and physical therapy assessments; speech and language therapy; and audio logical evaluations. Students enjoy recreational activities, sports and interscholastic events and are transported home for weekends, summers and holidays.

As a statewide resource center, OSB offers critical outreach services, including summer school programs, in-service training and recommendations for adaptations to improve learning environments, evaluations and expert consultations.

To reach OSB, call (918) 781-8200, phone/TTY or (877) 229-7136, toll free in Oklahoma.

### **Disability Determination**

DRS's Disability Determination Division makes medical eligibility determinations on applications for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for the Social Security Administration (SSA). These determinations are based on federal rules and regulations. An application for benefits must be made at a Social Security Administration Office. [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

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## Department of Rehabilitation Services



### Oklahoma School for the Deaf

The Oklahoma School for the Deaf (OSD) in Sulphur provides residential, satellite pre-school, early intervention and outreach education services at no charge to families of students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Residential students and those who commute from home participate in educational, vocational and campus life programs. They benefit from support services that address intellectual, physical, and social and emotional needs through curriculum, extracurricular activities, transition programs, counseling, physical therapy and health services. OSD also provides preschool programs at regional sites in Sulphur, Broken Arrow and Edmond. Secondary school students receive vocational and technical training and work experience through Occupational Training Opportunities for the Deaf.

OSD functions as a statewide resource center offering outreach services, including an early intervention program, summer school classes, in-service training, and recommendations for adaptations to improve learning environments, evaluations and expert consultations. The school is able to offer unique expertise and resources in limited supply elsewhere, including highly skilled and experienced educators, customized equipment and specialized curriculum adapted for children who are deaf.

OSD also operates the Oklahoma Telecommunications Program, which provides special telecommunications equipment, such as TTYs, at little or no cost for individuals with hearing or speaking problems that prevent them from using the telephone. For more information about this program, phone (580) 622-8812 Phone/TTY or (866) 309-1717 Toll Free Phone/TTY, or contact Patricia Baldwin at [pbaldwin@drs.state.ok.us](mailto:pbaldwin@drs.state.ok.us)

For more information about other OSD programs, contact (580) 622-4900, phone/TTY, or (888) 865-3323, toll free phone/TTY.

### Transition from High School to Work

Beginning at age 16 (younger, if appropriate), a statement of needed transition services will be addressed by the IEP team. The IEP must include, if appropriate, a statement of interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. If a participating agency fails to provide transition services described in the IEP, the LEA shall reconvene the IEP team to identify alternative strategies. Every student with disabilities must be referred to a vocational rehabilitation counselor (Voc Rehab) by the age of 16. The vocational rehabilitation counselor and representatives of any other agency that are likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services must be invited to IEP meetings. IDEA does not relieve DRS or any participating public agency of the responsibility for services that the agency would otherwise provide under eligibility criteria of that agency (refer to Transition Services section). There are 21 Voc Rehab and 20 Visual Services offices across the state. Some of these are offices are co-located together.

Vocational Rehabilitation and Visual Services are a division of the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) that have cooperative agreements with many high schools in Oklahoma that help the transition process for students to be able to work in the community or at school while they get pre-employment skills, work experience and high school credits.

Both divisions offer summer programs with limited enrollments for students participating in the Transition program during the school year.

For more information or locate the Vocational Rehabilitation office nearest you call (800)487-4042 toll free and follow the instructions.



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## Transition IEP Meetings

Our direct observation of Oklahoma educator-directed IEP meetings also found that middle and high school special education teachers talked on average 51% of the time, with family members talking during 15% of the meetings. Administrators and general educators talked an additional 18% of the time, with support staff talking during 6% of the meetings. Multiple conversations happened during 5% of the meetings and no conversations occurred 2% of the time.

Students, who represent the newest member of the IEP team, contributed little to the IEP meeting discussions, and appeared to simply be token members of their IEP teams. Under this condition, how much ownership and responsibility do students feel? How can students become more actively involved in their IEP meetings?

### Teaching Students to Become an Active IEP Meeting Member

Numerous research studies from across the country have demonstrated that students can learn the skills to actively participate in their IEP transition meetings when IEP team members expect student participation, and educators teach IEP meeting terminology, roles, and what to do. Many of these studies used an instructional program called the *Self-Directed IEP*. Our research in Oklahoma middle and high schools also found that the *Self-Directed IEP* instructional program did indeed increase student participation in their IEP meetings. We found that students on average increased their participation from 3% of the time to almost 13% of the time after receiving *Self-Directed IEP* instruction. This represents a statistically significant and powerful finding.

As a result of instruction in what to do at their IEP meetings and changes in teacher expectations, many students: introduced themselves and their IEP team members, stated the purpose of their meeting, reviewed their past goals and progress toward the goals, asked for feedback, asked questions if they did not understand what was said, expressed their interests, skills, and limits, discussed goals, and finally closed their meetings. In comparison to students who did not receive *Self-Directed IEP* instruction, those who did receive the instruction reported much higher positive perceptions of their meetings, and higher rated transition discussions.

Our Oklahoma study, along with those done by other researchers across the country, clearly demonstrated that the *Self-Directed IEP* instructional program increased student IEP meeting participation. Teacher expectations influenced the extent that students engaged in their IEP meetings. Those teachers that taught students what to do and expected them to actively participate obtained more student input into the meeting compared to the teachers who expected only minimal input.

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## Transition IEP Meetings

Parents need to also encourage their children with an IEP to actively participate in their IEP meetings as a way to increase engagement in their own education and to increase students' self-determination skills. Parents can assist this process by:

1. Encouraging your child to set goals based knowing their interests, skills, limits, and disability.
2. Encouraging your child's expression of their thoughts and feelings during IEP meetings.
3. Asking your child about their progress on IEP goals and transition activities.
4. Encouraging family discussions about where your child will work, live, and go to school after graduation from high school.
5. Ask your child's special education to teach him or her the needed skills to become more involved in the next IEP meeting and then expect active student participation.

When students and parents become actively involved in the transition planning process, the IEP team becomes complete. With parents and students actively talking at the IEP meeting about interests, preferences, strengths, and needs, the post-high school dreams will emerge and form the foundation of the IEP document. This process will also provide students with disabilities the opportunity to begin to learn how to advocate for themselves.

### **About the Authors**

Juan Portley holds a Sooner Scholar fellowship and is a doctoral student in the University of Oklahoma's special education program.

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Or mail to OASIS/OUHSC, PO BOX 26901, OKC, OK 73190

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