



The Urban Advocate

November 2006



A New IDEA: What Changes Will Mean for Families, Students and Schools

The United States Congress reauthorized the federal Special Education law, The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-2004) in December 2004. The new federal regulations for the reauthorized IDEA took effect on October 13, 2006. The changes made to IDEA-2004 present a number of new opportunities and challenges for everyone involved with the education of children with disabilities, and, for the first time, children who have not yet been identified as having a disability.

Changes in the federal law means there will also be several changes in how Chapter 766, the Massachusetts State Special Education law is implemented. And again, while some changes will present new challenges for families, the six basic principles of the special education law that have guaranteed the rights of children with disabilities and their families for more than 30 years ago are still strong, they are:

- ❖ **FAPE:** Parent and student rights to a *Free and Appropriate Public Education*
- ❖ **Appropriate Evaluation:** Including educational and assessments conducted by knowledgeable and trained evaluators in all areas of suspected disability; using tests and other procedures selected and administered so as not to be discriminatory on a racial or cultural basis and, conducted in a language most likely to yield accurate information.
- ❖ **IEP** or *Individualized Education Plan*
- ❖ **Least Restrictive Environment or LRE:** Which is the presumption that children with disabilities are most appropriately educated with their non-disabled peers.
- ❖ **Parent and student participation** as equal partners in the IEP TEAM process, and;
- ❖ **Procedural Safeguards:** or certain rights which are guaranteed by Federal law.

“...while some changes will present new challenges for families, the six principles under IDEA that guarantee the rights of children with disabilities and their families that were codified in the law when it was initially passed more than 30 years ago are still strong...”

IDEA-2004 also includes new requirements to strengthen appropriate service delivery to culturally and linguistically diverse students and have made significant strides in addressing the over-representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education. The new regulations clearly define steps that must be taken to address the problem of disproportionality in special education and has mandated that funds be allotted for Early Intervening Services. (Called Instructional Support Services in Massachusetts) Research has shown that early intervening strategies assist in reducing the number of inappropriate referrals to special education.

A Better Definition and Process for Transition Planning

Recent changes to IDEA-04 have also strengthened the requirements for transition planning to improve results for students with disabilities once they leave school.

First, "Transition Services," in IDEA now states that activities should focus on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child to better support movement from school to post-school activities. Additionally, the definition of transition has been expanded to include transition services based on the student's strengths, as well as their preferences and interests. The transition planning process is to be "results-oriented" indicating a clear intent to ensure that the transition process includes activities designed to produce success for the student.

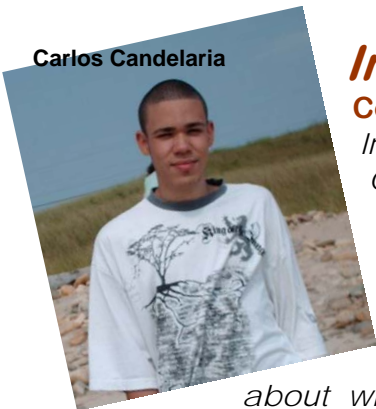
IDEA-04 has established one clear starting age requirement for the start of transition planning. IEP Teams must now include transition planning in the first IEP that will be in effect when the child is 16 years of age. Of course, IEP Teams are still free to determine that planning should begin earlier for a student.

Over the next several months of the school year, Urban PRIDE will conduct a series of workshops titled "What Parents Need to Know," which will provide more detailed information on these changes, the basic rights of families and students, and what parents and students need to know about these changes to work more knowledgeably and effectively as an equal member of the IEP TEAM.

We will also be conducting a series of workshops each month at the Dudley Library. These workshops will focus on best practices in educating and supporting all students, and inform parents about additional changes in the special education law that are significant for the education of all students, *both with and without disabilities*.

If you would like to schedule a "What Parents Need to Know" workshop for a parent or neighborhood group, or if you would like to make sure you receive this newsletter, information about ongoing neighborhood workshops, and/or the Dudley Library Workshop Series, please contact Shannon at 617-338-4276 on Mondays, Tuesdays or Fridays. She will work with you to set up a time, date and location for a workshop or add your name to our email or snail mail list.

Carlos Candelaria



Interview with Carlos Candelaria

Conducted by Shannon Batten

In the last issue of our newsletter, we conducted an interview with Carlos Candelaria about his experience at the Youth Leadership Retreat for transition aged youth. Carlos currently attends a BPS high school, but he and his mother feel that he's neither receiving the educational and transition services he needs for his particular learning style, nor the support to investigate and achieve his personal vocational goals and interests. Carlos is approaching his 18th birthday and trying to make a decision about whether he should remain in school because he feels he's "not getting anything out of it". He has decided he would like to find another school that will allow him real opportunities to explore his vocational goals and interests and, most of all, help him achieve his goal of improving his ability to read. We've decided to follow Carlos through this school year as he seeks support in preparing for his transition from school to adult living. In this two-part interview, we're interviewing him again about his visit to another high school, and about this past weekend, when he had his first chance to experience first-hand auto-mechanics training. The West Roxbury Media Communications Technology High School was the first visit. The Media Communications Technology High School is a college preparatory program that provides students with the opportunity to explore the importance of media and communications in our world today through courses in television production, web design, photography, and graphic arts. Students experience connections to media literacy across the curriculum with an emphasis on developing skills in reading, writing,

speaking, presenting, listening, and critical thinking. We think the visit went positively, but you can decide for yourself based on what Carlos has to say.

S: "Carlos, what school did you go to visit last Thursday?"

C: "We went to the West Roxbury Media Communications Technology High School."

S: "What were your first impressions about it?"

C: "Well, the first thing I noticed is that it is big, I mean *really big*. It has escalators; I've never seen that in a school before. Did you know that they have four schools in the same building and four principals?"

S: "No, I did not know that; then it really must be a big school!"

C: "Yeah."

S: "So what was your visit like? Did you talk to anyone there?"

C: "Yeah; we talked to the principal and to a lady there named Carlene. They were very friendly and helpful, and they showed us around.

S: "What kind of programs do they have there? Was there any program that you really liked?"

C: "They had a computer program, a photography program, a T.V. program – like how to be a cameraman, and video game design. That's the program I'm interested in, video games, and the T.V. thing; you get to hold the camera, right?"

S: (Smiling) "Yes, you get to hold the camera."

This past weekend, Carlos and Shannon went to visit Shannon's uncle and aunt, (Gary and Rebecca Ijams), where Carlos got first-hand auto-mechanics training from Gary. Gary reports that Carlos is an eager student and learner.

S: So Carlos, what kind of car did you and Gary work on?

C: A blue Ford Taurus; its Rebecca's car.

S: What was wrong with it?

C: The breaks were out.

S: What did you do to fix it?

C: He bought some tools and we fixed it.

S: Was it hard work?

C: Yeah, putting one of the screws in for the brake took two almost hours. We kept having problems.

S: What did you learn from this experience?

C: I learned how to fix brakes; maybe I could do it again.

S: How did Gary teach you to work on cars?

C: He showed me things and then told me to do something and let me do it. The second screw we put in, the one I worked on went real easily.

S: You guys got to ride in Gary's Porsche to go to the store for parts, how did you like it?

C: It was fun. It was my first time riding in a Porsche.

S: Was that your first time working under a car?

C: Yeah, but I hope not my last. I really liked the work. I'd like to continue working in car mechanics and learning how to be a mechanic.

Announcements and Events

Urban PRIDE Transition Workshop "Getting a Life"

On December 9, 2006, from 10:00am to 1:30pm we will build on our summer parent and youth leadership retreat activities with a half-day intensive workshop called "Getting A Life," Transition from School to Adult Living for Students with Disabilities.



This intensive workshop is for parents and students who are between the ages of 15 and 22.

This will be a great opportunity for parents and youth to learn about community services and supports for young people leaving high school, including higher education options. In addition, it will be a great opportunity for young people to learn more about how to work on being their own best advocate with their teachers, schools, IEP TEAMS and community support people.

This workshop will be a great learning opportunity with a range of innovative activities for both families and youth that we hope will help folks not just think about life after high school, but also to think about what we need to do to Get a Life after High School. The workshop will end with a delicious lunch in celebration of the holidays. As always, child care will be provided for younger children.

For more information about upcoming events and workshops, see the back page of this newsletter, or, go to www.urbanpride.org

Web-based Resources for Families and Professionals

The Assistive Technology (AT) Training Online Project provides information on AT that help students with disabilities learn in elementary classrooms. The website includes information on the basic use of AT; low and high-tech adapted computer technology solutions for today's classrooms; commercial and specialized software programs to support writing, reading and math; and, technology options designed to meet the needs of disability specific groups of students. For more information to <http://atto.buffalo.edu/>

Making the Leap to College: What Students with Learning Disabilities Need to Know

November 28, 2006 and December 13, 2006

The number of students with learning disabilities attending colleges and universities has grown dramatically over the past thirty years- so have the number of issues faced by students, parents, and educators. Exploring post-secondary options is often complicated for parents and students, but with the right planning, support, and information this can be a positive and truly successful next step for every student. A student with a learning disability who is planning to attend college needs to do several things to prepare for selecting the right college and for a successful college experience. During this webcast, experts will answer your questions on preparing for college success, choosing the right college for a student with learning disabilities and transition planning, test scores, assistive technologies and more. Go to <http://www.ldtalk.org/> for more information and registration.

Early Childhood Online Workshops

The Early Childhood Technology Integrated Instructional System (EC-TIIS) at Western Illinois University has developed nine online workshops for educators and families of young children. The trainings are free and cover a variety of topics such as curriculum integration, emergent literacy, and family participation. Each participant needs to register and complete a survey and pre-assessment before viewing the workshops. For more information, visit the EC-TIIS website at <http://www.wiu.edu/ectiis/>.

NEW Circle of Inclusion Home Page!

The ***Circle of Inclusion Web Site*** is for early childhood service providers and families of young children. This web site offers demonstrations of and information about the effective practices of inclusive educational programs for children from birth through age eight.



Updated Parent Guide to IDEA 2004 Now Available National Center for Learning Disabilities has updated its IDEA 2004 Parent Guide to reflect new regulations approved by the U.S. Department of Education. To read the updated Parent Guide online, go to www.nclld.org.

Described and Captioned Media Program

The Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) provides a variety of services for educators and others searching for accessible media for students. The DCMP Web site at www.dcmp.org includes a section for kids to access information as well as searchable databases to access resources from educational and consumer groups.

Local Parent Events and Resources

Urban PRIDE Dudley Library Trainings

Urban PRIDE is conducting a series of monthly trainings at the Dudley Library for families living in Boston who have children in special education.

Remaining Training Dates

- ◆ **Dec. 9**, Saturday, 10:00am-1:00pm: Transition from School to Adult Living, Workshop for Parents and Students
- ◆ **Jan. 11**, Thursday, 5:30-7:30pm Topic TBA
- ◆ **Feb. 8**, Thursday, 5:30-7:30pm Topic TBA
- ◆ **Mar. 10**, Saturday, 10:00am-1:00pm TBA
- ◆ **Apr. 26**, Thursday, 5:30-7:30pm Topic TBA
- ◆ **May 17**, Thursday, 5:30-7:30pm Topic TBA
- ◆ **June 9**, Saturday, 10:00am-1:00pm TBA

Where: The Dudley Library, 65 Warren Street, Roxbury, MA

How to Register: call 617-338-4508

Registration is FREE

Dinner and childcare are provided, but you must register!

Call 617-338-4508 or 617-338-4276 for more information

Americorp City Year's Community of Champions Breakfast

Americorp City Year is hosting a breakfast and information session on Thursday, December 14, at the Boston Centers for Youth and Families (3rd fl. conf. room) located at 1483 Tremont St. The meeting is open to parents and community leaders of color to discuss ways of recruiting more young people of color to become Corps Members and future community leaders. City Year has many opportunities available for youth of color between ages 16-24 in the Greater Boston community. City Year Boston enrolls 140 corps members who spend an intensive year of tutoring, leading, and mentoring children, delivering in-school and out-of-school programs that focus on social justice, domestic violence awareness, literacy, community service, and leadership development. For more info about City Year Boston, go to <http://www.cityyear.org/boston/> or, RSVP by November 30 to Mr. Roscoe Thomas at rthomas@cityyear.org.

Supplemental Educational Services

Your child may be eligible to receive free tutoring after school through the Boston Public Schools Supplemental Educational Services (SES) Program. To be eligible, your child must be going to one of the schools which receive services through the SES Program. Also, your child must be on the free lunch program. If your child meets both of these requirements, then the school is responsible for sending application and enrollment information home with your child. For more information about eligibility and the SES Program, call the BPS' Curriculum and Instruction Dept. at 617-635-9414. Applications for SES will be accepted until January 27, 2007.



For updated information on local workshops, web-based resources and publications, check out our new web-site at www.urbanpride.org

Urban PRIDE is a non-profit organization founded to improve availability and access to culturally responsive support to urban families who have children with disabilities and young adults with disabilities in living in the city of Boston. We work with families in ways that build on their strengths and existing resources in the community. We provide direct support to families of children with disabilities and young adults with disabilities from birth through 26 years of age. We facilitate parent support groups and provide training and resources on a range of topics of interest to urban families and young adults living with disabilities including:

- Parent Information and Support on the special education process and parents' and student rights
- The Urban Advocates newsletter
- Special education advocacy to assist families and transition aged youth with problem-solving strategies
- Referral to educational, community services, and support groups
- The "What you need to know about..." Training Series, including training on:
 - ❖ Changes in the IDEA
 - ❖ Understanding Your Child's IEP
 - ❖ Transition - School from to Adult Life
 - ❖ Accommodations & Modifications to Support Students in Inclusive Settings
 - ❖ Positive Behavior Support
 - ❖ Using technology to Meet the Needs of Diverse Learners
- Annual Summer Leadership Retreat for families and Transition Aged Youth held in August
- Information on Best Practices for supporting students with disabilities

If you have questions or concerns about your child, or would like to schedule training, call 617-338-4508



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