



evanston citizens for  
appropriate special education

Spring Newsletter, 2010

I hope everyone had a relaxing, or at least less hectic, spring break. It is IEP season and the home stretch for the school year. Please let us know if you have questions or concerns about your child's IEP and services for next school year. We are here to be a resource for you.

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Sincerely,

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Cari Levin, LCSW

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Founding Director

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Evanston CASE

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**SAVE THE DATE!!**

**IEP WORKSHOP: What you need to know about your child's IEP**

**Date: Thursday, April 22nd**

**Time: 7-8:30 PM**

**Location:**

**BooCoo Cultural and Music Center**

**1823 Church Street (corner of Church and Dodge)**

**Presented by:**

**Cari Levin, LCSW**

**Special Education Advocacy and Consulting**

**Founding Director of Evanston CASE**

Ms. Levin will share real-life strategies, tools and information to help you prepare to advocate for services during the IEP process. You will learn how to interpret your child's IEP document, habits to

help you stay organized, and communication strategies to ensure that your concerns are addressed. Ms. Levin will share tips to help you get the services your child needs and deserves.

**You must register in advance to reserve a copy of the workshop materials.**

Call (847) 556-8676 or email [mail@evanstoncase.org](mailto:mail@evanstoncase.org) to register

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**Purchase of refreshments from BooCoo is appreciated**

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## **Kindergarten Task Force**

At last month's PTA Council meeting a group of parents, District 65 administration and board members discussed issues of concern to parents and brainstormed some solutions. One particular topic that came up over and over again was the transition to kindergarten. One concern was the registration process. Many parents also felt that there was insufficient information communicated to parents entering D65. For example, many parents were surprised to discover how academic kindergarten has become. They were not prepared for their children to be learning to read in kindergarten.

The PTA Council is creating a Kindergarten Task Force to come up with a collection of suggestions to bring to the district to make the process of transition into D65 easier for kindergarteners and their parents. If you would like to participate, please contact Mindy Wallis, PTA Council president, at [mindywallis@gmail.com](mailto:mindywallis@gmail.com).

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## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

### **Margie Lenoir-Davis has been appointed permanent Director of Special Services**

CASE advocated for a nationwide search for someone highly qualified with experience in the implementation and evaluation of a district-wide inclusion plan to fill this critical role. Although the Administration posted the position in publications with nation-wide reach and received more than a dozen applicants, in the end, the Administration opted to promote Margie Lenoir Davis (who had been serving as interim director) into the permanent position.

We offer our support and congratulations to Ms. Lenoir and hope that she will be a staunch advocate for our children and an accessible and supportive resource for parents.

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## **LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING SUMMARY**

**Members of the Inclusion Leadership Team met again on Wednesday, April 7<sup>th</sup>. The following**

**is a summary of that meeting.**

We reviewed the Illinois State Board of Education LRE (Least Restrictive Environment) data on the numbers and percentages of kids with IEP's and eligibility categories as compared to State average data. The most significant findings were:

The percentage of kids with ED and cognitive disabilities placed in separate facilities was high when compared with the State average – ED 39.2% in D65 compared to 26.5% in the State; Cognitive Disabilities 37.5% in D65 compared to 15.3% in the State. The overall % of children in separate facilities with all eligibility labels was 8.4% in D65 and 4.8% in the State. In addition the race/ethnicity data showed that black students are placed in separate facilities 11.4% and whites 7.4%. Also, 20.4% of black students and 9.3% of white students with IEP's are placed in self-contained classrooms.

Dr. Cole shared information from the meeting of the inclusion teachers the night before. The teachers were asked to share "celebrations of success" and Dr. Cole read an exhaustive list. The issues that stood out for me were that IEP goals are being met and discontinued faster for younger kids but not that is not true of older kids in inclusion classrooms; that social supports from gen ed students has been remarkable and beautiful; that IEP student behavior has improved, and that IEP kids are being pushed harder and expectations are higher. The primary concerns included the need for increased planning time between co-teachers, and the need for kindergarten inclusion staff to communicate with first grade inclusion class before next year.

Assistant Superintendent, Mike Robey talked very briefly about the plans to "roll up" inclusion for next year. He gave very little detail as he "didn't want to confuse us" with too much information. What I took away was they will continue the pre-k and kindergarten, Orrington and Washington inclusion plans. They will roll forward the kindergarten inclusion classes into first grade and "continue what we are doing." He said as for co-teach that "we intentionally overstaffed this year, so co-teach will not be 50/50 time, but could be anywhere from 10% to 70% depending on kids needs. He described some "outliers" who have had an aide in gen ed kindergarten and may need them to continue in first grade. He said the numbers in the Oakton self-contained program "shrunk" and they feel they can accomplish K-5 inclusion there with the same staff they already have. They are looking at inclusion at Dawes for the K-2 cross-cat students, but not the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade students because there needs are too extreme (in other words they are too behaviorally challenging).

Dr. Cole said there is an "Inclusion Celebration" for teachers scheduled for May 19th and the Leadership Team has been asked to attend. She also said that an inclusion survey for parents (not gen ed) went out as well as a survey for special needs kids to fill out. None of the content of these surveys was shared.

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## **School Board meeting, April 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm**

Members of the CASE board and others will be addressing the financial implications of Dr. Cole's continued presence in the District. Dr. Cole receives \$1,500 a day for consultation work and travel expenses. As of now, her contract is open-ended. No goals have been identified that would signal the completion of her work. With the RIF (Reduction in Force) notices to 29 teachers, cutbacks in early childhood education funding from the State, proposed elimination of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade geometry program, cap and transfer to manage student enrollment numbers at certain schools, and the District's budget shortfall it is important to examine all of the fiscal decisions the Board is making. Now that Ms. Lenoir has been appointed permanent Director of Special Services, the District should utilize the free consultative support for inclusion training from Project Choices, an ISBE sponsored program and other professional development resources.

If you have concerns about the budget and fiscal decisions the Board is making, this is an important meeting to attend. If you want to sign up to speak, contact Pat Markham before noon on the 19<sup>th</sup> at (847) 859-8067.

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## **SAVE THE DATE**

### **District 65 School Board meeting May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7:00 pm JEH Administration Building**

During this working board meeting, the administration is scheduled to give a report on the progress of the inclusion plan. CASE will be presenting our annual report at that meeting, as well as our own assessment of the inclusion initiative since last June.