



evanston citizens for
appropriate special education

Evanston CASE Spring Newsletter April 2009

Dear CASE members:

Spring is finally here and with it comes the season for IEP annual reviews and transition planning for the fall. Sometimes spring can be frustrating as schools seem to be stalling in implementing services “since the school year is almost over.” Particularly if the service or technology is newly recommended, IEP teams may be slow to respond. Just remember that anything written into the actual IEP must be implemented on the date that IEP is written, unless otherwise specified in the IEP. It is always a good idea to get a start date written into the document to give you leverage if you need it.

Another important thing to consider is Extended School Year services. This is different than “summer school” for non-IEP students. ESY services means special education and related services (OT, PT, Speech, etc.) that are provided to a child with a disability in accordance with the child’s IEP, continue to be implemented through the summer, at no cost to the parents. Students with special needs are entitled to ESY under the law if:

- There is evidence that regression would occur without continued services and it would take significant time for the child to catch up from an extended school break
- If existing IEP goals were not met
- If ESY services would address slow progress due to nature/severity of disability
- If necessary to prepare the child for participation in the following school year

As you work with the IEP team this spring make sure to discuss ESY. If you think your child needs these services, the school must provide evidence that it isn’t necessary in order to deny it. This is the link to the Illinois State Board of Education standards on ESY.

http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/pdfs/memo_esy_01.pdf

Also, if you find that your child needs an evaluation and you are told that it will be done in the fall because staff aren’t available over the summer, this is not District policy. If the information gained through an evaluation is critical to planning for and implementing services in the fall, the evaluation must be done in advance. Children deserve to begin a new school year with staff and services already in place to support them.

Check out the website www.wrightslaw.com for more information about IEP’s and your rights.

COLE REPORT

Dr. Cassandra Cole has been working on a re-assessment of the Special Education in the District. I understand that her random surveys have been received by some parents. If you got one, it is very important that you take the time to fill it out and return it. This information will be critical to the understanding of how parents experience the special services system in District 65. In addition, if you haven't had a chance to write to Dr. Cole, you can still do so. Her email address is: cmcole@indiana.edu. She plans to finish her report by the end of the week, so don't delay.

CASE ANNUAL REPORT

Evanston CASE is planning to present our Annual Report to the School Board at the meeting on May 18th. I will be sure to send a copy to all CASE members via email in advance so that you can review it. Included in this report will be an overview of the primary issues that parents contacted us about over the last year. We are doing this in an effort to promote understanding of the issues most important to parents, and to educate the Board and Administration about the areas critically in need of change. We will also include information about programs and services that are working, and staff that are doing an exceptional job.

If you are willing to speak about your concerns and experiences, positive and negative, at the May 18th Board meeting it would be very helpful. CASE has made a lot of progress over the last year, but there is still resistance to change. The most effective strategy is an organized voice from parents. If you are not comfortable speaking, filling the Board room with concerned and involved parents also makes a powerful statement. If you would like to submit something in writing, feel free to send it to us and we will include it in our report. We will be keeping specific identifying information confidential in our report, and only presenting the trends and facts that were most common.

May 18th is a Regular Board meeting. To formally address the Board at Regular Board meetings, you must call the Board Secretary at 859-8067 after the agenda is posted and before noon on the meeting day to sign up.

We appreciate your support in helping us advocate for children with special needs in District 65.

SUMMER CAMPS

Finding appropriate summer programs for kids with special needs can be a difficult task. Here are a few ideas to consider.

Keshet offers a variety of programs with the aim to include children with special needs in summer programs with typically developing children. They provide support staff to make the experience successful and fun.

- Joy of the Game Recreational Sports Program
- Swim and Gym at the Meyer Kaplan Jewish Community Center
- Keshet Summer Overnight Camps

- Day Camps: Campers register through Keshet who then hires, trains, and supervises staff to work with the children within the larger camp setting. All activities are adapted as needed.
- Special Kids Network Keshet Teen Camp
- Jacqueline Besser Special Olympics Program

To see details about all of these programs, go to www.keshet.org/print_recreationsummer.html.

Camp STAR summer treatment for ADHD and related issues. “Camp STAR is Chicagoland’s only evidence-based therapeutic program where children learn to manage behavioral, emotional, social and learning issues in a fun day camp setting.” It’s a 7 week day camp for children 5-12 years. For more information, see www.jcys.org/campstar.

Camp Kodiak is a unique, integrated, non-competitive program for children and teens with and without ADHD, LD, NLD, and Asperger Syndrome. It is an overnight camp for 6-18 year olds located near the town of McKellar, Canada. It’s a very expensive, but highly regarded program. Visit www.campkodiak.com for details.

Camp Buckskin describes itself as “helping youth with social skills and academic needs to become more successful.” The program serves children 6-18 with ADHD, LD and Asperger’s Syndrome located in Ely, Minnesota. For more information, see www.campbuckskin.com.

Evanston McGaw YMCA, Camp Echo is an overnight camp located in Freemont, Michigan. This is a camp for typically developing children, however they have a full time nurse and social worker on staff to provide support. In addition, on an as needed basis, they will provide an additional counselor to provide one on one support. The camp focuses on “physical, emotional and spiritual well-being” and they are very strict about teasing and bullying. For more information visit, www.ymcacampecho.org.

The City of Evanston’s Special Recreation Program provides recreational programs for adults and children with special needs. Programs emphasize individual development in a wide range of leisure areas including sports, culture, social, after-school and special events. Visit www.evanstoncity.com/departments/parks/recreation/ or call (847) 448-8044.

If anyone has had a good experience with a summer program, please let me know and I will pass it along to our members.

That’s all for now.

Sincerely,

Cari Levin, LCSW
 Founding Director, Evanston CASE