



evanston citizens for  
appropriate special education

## October, 2008 Newsletter

Dear CASE Members:

I hope that everyone has adjusted to the new school year successfully. Transitions are difficult for most of our kids. With time and the right supports in place, your child should be settled into the routine. If things aren't going smoothly, please consider reaching out to us for support. We have all been there.

### CASE Fall Activities

- Members of the CASE Board of Directors have participated in all four of the town hall meetings regarding the District's 5-Year Strategic Plan. The meetings have been casual conversations with reciprocal discussion between members of the school board and the public. CASE presented our report outlining recommended goals for inclusion in the plan. We discussed some of our recommendations including: creating an Ombudsman position to respond to parent's concerns, implementing a disability awareness curriculum, changing some of the language to be inclusive of students with disabilities, and strengthening support services to allow for successful inclusion and integration of students with special needs into general education classrooms. You can read the content of the report on our website under "CASE Recommendations to the D65 Board."
- I, along with two members of the CASE Board, met with Dr. Hardy Murphy to discuss some of the issues affecting families of children with special needs. He was generous with his time, and was receptive to our concerns. He came to the table with a copy of our recommendations report regarding the strategic plan. We had a respectful and candid discussion. He said we may not always agree with him, but that he is always willing to explain his point of view. He suggested that we communicate with him directly whenever a serious issue arises rather than going to the school board first. We agreed to do this, but also emphasized that we are an advocacy organization and we will continue to use all avenues to advance our mission. I consider this a positive step toward opening the channel of communication. After all, we would prefer to work collaboratively whenever possible to effect positive changes for our families.
- The behavior program at Haven school has continued despite our vigorous objections. We have communicated to Dr. Murphy, Geneva Oatman (Director of Special Services), Kathy Roberson (Principal at Haven School) and Dr. Marcy Canel (Special Services Supervisor) the ways in which this program violates the student's rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and

the Rehabilitation Act. The complaint filed by one of our members to the Office of Civil Rights is moving along. The OCR agreed to investigate and we are waiting to hear their decision. We will keep you informed. If you haven't had a chance to review this program, I have included it as an attachment to this email. If you know anyone with students in the Haven self-contained ED/BD program please let them know about the OCR complaint. If anyone else steps forward about this, we are more likely to succeed in suspending this inappropriate and illegal program.

- We have also been advocating on behalf of families with children at Park School. CASE heard from parents who were upset by the fact that their children were not receiving crucial physical therapy services. This is due to the fact that the district did not renew the previous PT's contract due to fiscal concerns and was left without anyone to staff the position. The students have not received PT services since the summer. CASE has informed all members of the school board, we have spoken to Dr. Murphy and have inquired with Geneva Oatman, Director of Special Services. Unfortunately we have not had an acceptable response. We would encourage anyone affected by this to write a compliance complaint with the Illinois State Board of Education. If you are uncertain about how to do this, contact me and I would be happy to talk you through the process.

CASE continues to work hard on behalf of children with special needs in District 65. We encourage you to get involved with us in any way you can. Serve on a committee, become an advocate for your own child, spread the word about problems in the special education system, and come to the school board meetings to voice your concerns. We appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

Cari Levin, LCSW

Founding Director, Evanston CASE

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

(847) 556-8676