

# The Special EDGE

Winter/Spring 2007

Volume 20

Number 2

## New Regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

# A Walk Through IDEA 2004 Highlights

# A

by José Martín, Attorney at Law

About every five years, the U.S. Congress undertakes the painstaking process of reauthorizing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The modern reauthorization process primarily consists of a thorough review and revision of various provisions of the federal special education law. After Congress concludes its task, the job of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) begins, since it is that agency's responsibility to establish detailed regulations that clarify how the law is to be implemented by state and local educational agencies. The final regulations, which were issued in August 2006, answer significant questions and provide guidance for the nuts and bolts of how the law actually plays out in every public school in the

land. To accurately understand IDEA 2004, we must examine the impact of the federal regulations on various key areas of the law's reforms.

### Identifying Learning Disabilities

Students with learning disabilities (LDs) account for half of all students who are identified as needing special education services. Understandably, the most eagerly anticipated regulation deals with the process of identifying LDs. A complex new regulation allows use of a response-to-intervention method as an alternative to the discredited "discrepancy" model, which simplistically compared students' IQ scores to achievement test results. Section 300.309 allows schools to instead focus on first providing high-quality, research-based interventions to struggling students; and later assessing their response to those interventions in order to better identify students with true LDs. The regulation points the way to an improved and more accurate model for evaluating the existence of LDs.

Schools, however, may also use standardized testing as part of the assessment process to look for patterns of strengths and weaknesses in test scores that may be indicative of LDs, rather than merely comparing two sets of numbers, as under the straight discrepancy model. The LD regulation also stresses the importance of determining that a student's lack of achievement is

not due to lack of appropriate instruction in general education. The regulation requires data-based documentation of repeated performance assessments so that an assessment team can objectively determine whether a student has received appropriate instruction in general education. Thus, if a child is given appropriate instruction, and if frequent monitoring of the child's performance shows he or she is still not making adequate progress, educators can legitimately suspect an LD and refer the child to special education.

The provision is a significant departure from previous methods for evaluating LDs, and we can expect confusion and serious questions to arise—at least initially—while both parents and schools adapt to a more complicated and advanced model for identifying the largest eligibility category within special education.

### Discipline

Appropriate discipline for students with disabilities has always raised difficult questions of policy priorities. With the new regulations, this has not changed. There exist two needs: the first is to protect students from the discriminatory application of school discipline rules, and the second is to maintain safe learning environments for all students, which entails increasingly challenging school mandates. In 2004, the Congress re-shifted the precarious balance of these policy priorities, and the regulations

Regulations, *continued on page 10*

### Contents

## IDEA 2004: The New Regulations

Visit from OSEP and OSERS

3

Exemplary Early Childhood Program

4

A California RtI Model

8

Research in Autism

16

Director, Special Education Division, California Department of Education	Mary Hudler
Contract Monitor and Project Liaison	Janet Canning
Editor	Mary Cichy Grady
Editorial Assistants	Donna Lee Holly Byers Ochoa
Editorial Board	Maureen Burness Linda Landry Maureen Burness Geri West
Project Managers	Linda Blong Anne Davin
Special Contributors	Diana Blackmon Carolyn Cook-Flores José Martín Sally Rogers Chris Wright

*The Special EDge* is published tri-annually by Sonoma State University's CalSTAT Project (California Services for Technical Assistance and Training). Funding is provided by the California Department of Education, Special Education Division, through contract number 0127 with Sonoma State University's California Institute on Human Services (CIHS). Contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of Sonoma State University or the California Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement.

Circulation: 50,000

The information in this issue is in the public domain unless otherwise indicated. Readers are encouraged to copy and share but to credit CalSTAT. This issue is available on disk, audiotape, and in large type upon request. By going to CalSTAT's Web site—[www.calstat.org/infoPublications.html](http://www.calstat.org/infoPublications.html)—you can download PDF versions of this and previous newsletters in both English and Spanish.

Contact *The Special EDge* by phone at 707-849-2275; or mail to the following address: *The Special EDge*  
c/o Sonoma State University, CalSTAT/CIHS  
1801 East Cotati Avenue,  
Rohnert Park, California 94928  
or email [donna.lee@calstat.org](mailto:donna.lee@calstat.org).



*Informing and supporting parents, educators, and other service providers on special education topics, focusing on research-based practices, legislation, technical support, and current resources*



Mary Hudler, Director,  
California Department of Education,  
Special Education Division

I hope you find this issue of *The Special EDge* informative and instructive. It takes a closer look at the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), especially its regulations and their implementation. I encourage you to review each of the articles and discuss them with your colleagues. For implementation to be successful, it is important we do not forget our work: addressing the needs of students with disabilities and their families.

I think it also behooves us to remember the original purposes of the IDEA. Congress recognized that many students with disabilities were excluded from educational opportunities and some students were inappropriately identified as exhibiting disabilities. Because of the positive impact of IDEA over the

past 30 years, during its reauthorization Congress strengthened those components of the law that deals with accountability, access to the general education curriculum, and high-quality personnel. Because we at the Special Education Division believe strongly that these regulations will help achieve the original intents of IDEA, the California Department of Education (CDE) completed and planned numerous activities to facilitate implementation of the regulations. CDE facilitated the visit to California of John Hager, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services Assistant Secretary, and Alexa Posny, Office of Special Education Programs Director. On November 14, 2006, they hosted a public forum where they discussed and demonstrated resources to ease implementation of the new IDEA regulations (see page 3). Art Cernosia, a noted expert attorney in federal special education law and regulations, provided an online training to special and general education personnel on the final federal regulations implementing IDEA, as amended in 2004. CDE recorded and archived the training as a webcast for ready access and training. CDE is planning follow-up online training opportunities dealing with IDEA regulations. CDE aligned the Verification Review and Special Education Self-Review item tables and references with the new regulations. In addition, the division narrowed the questions in its parent survey to obtain more specific and helpful information with regard to the regulations.

The California Legislature is considering two bills in response to the new federal regulations. Assembly Bill 1663 (Evans/Lieber), *Special Education Conformity to Federal Requirements: Federal Regulations and Policy*, is being considered to bring state statute into conformity with federal law and regulation. Reauthorization of the IDEA and subsequent revision to the code of Federal Regulations has policy implications that are not reflected or addressed in current Education Code. Issues addressed include response to intervention (RtI), private schools, individualized education programs, and due process. Assembly Bill 685 (Karnette), *Special Education Conformity to Federal Requirements and Regulations*, also involves aligning California statute with that of the newly released IDEA federal regulations and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations.

As we strive to guarantee that all California students receive a free and appropriate education, please take every opportunity to familiarize yourself with these regulations. Be assured, CDE and I will continue to facilitate their full implementation. ♦

## IDEA 2004 Generates Forum and Supports

**J**ohn Hager, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), and Alexa Posny, Director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), traveled to numerous cities across the country to host community-based meetings where educators and parents could ask questions about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended in 2004 (IDEA 2004), and its regulations. This was part of a federal and state roll-out of supports for the implementation of the IDEA 2004. Hager and Posny visited Sacramento for this purpose on November 14, 2006.

### IDEA Forum

The evening opened with Posny describing the federal resources being developed to help parents, students, teachers, service providers, and all stakeholders realize the mandates and intents of the IDEA 2004, especially the larger agenda of aligning special education legislation with those broader mandates of the No Child Left Behind Act. The most noteworthy supports exist in the form of Web resources, described in the sidebar to the right.

James Bellotti, California Department of Education Administrator for the Special Education Division, then discussed the efforts California was making to align its efforts with those of OSERS and OSEP. After this more local overview, Hager opened the evening to questions from the audience.

What emerged was wide-ranging—from descriptions of how “dreams happen” to stories of frustration. There were questions and concerns about the California High School Exit Examination and the existing discrepancies between what a student might need to be successful in life and what schools want students to learn; about how children who are moving from the services and supports provided in Part C of IDEA

to those of Part B, particularly children with autism, did not always experience a smooth transition; about how more attention needs to be paid to transition services in general; about how the due process system in the state sometimes fails; about how the state was spending too much money on lawyers and not enough on teacher improvement. Individuals representing diverse concerns spoke: school psychologists, parents, teachers, lawyers, and policymakers.

Hager and Bellotti fielded every question with candor. They expressed a shared frustration for many of the issues raised and talked about how sometimes the necessary money for much-needed and legitimate services is simply not there; about how sometimes, particularly in a state the size of California, with almost 700,000 students with disabilities (10 percent of the national total), the system breaks down, and when this happens, individual lives are affected in ways that can be significant; about how these stories become particularly poignant when they involve children with disabilities and the parents and professionals who are dedicated to serving them. Both Hager and Bellotti described and suggested various avenues of recourse and supports, with Bellotti specifically discussing California’s efforts to improve the state’s system of due process.

It was clear that everyone in the auditorium—regardless the side of the dais he or she occupied—was a passionate advocate for children with disabilities. Perhaps the line delivered early in the evening—“I’m not perfect, but parts of me are excellent”—applied throughout this event to everything discussed and everyone discussing it.

### Model Site Visitations

Earlier in the day, Hager visited three Sacramento-area programs that receive state and federal funding: Sacramento County Office of Education’s Infant

Development Program, a model of how supports for children with disabilities and their families are provided in natural environments; Arlene Hein Elementary School, a response to intervention (RtI) implementation model; and the MIND (Medical Investigation of Neurodevelopmental Disorders) Institute at UC Davis, an innovative research institute in the area of autism spectrum disorders. The exemplary efforts embodied in these three places are profiled in the following pages of this newsletter. ♦

### IDEA Web Resources

<http://idea.ed.gov/>

#### Building the Legacy: IDEA 2004

This site, created to provide a “one-stop shop” for resources related to IDEA 2004 and its implementing regulations, will change and grow as resources and information become available. When fully implemented, it will provide searchable versions of IDEA and the regulations, access to cross-referenced content from other laws (e.g., the No Child Left Behind Act), video clips on selected topics, topic briefs on selected regulations, links to OSEP’s Technical Assistance and Dissemination (TA&D) Network, a Q&A Corner where users can submit questions, and a variety of other information sources.

[www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/lr/ideareathztn.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/lr/ideareathztn.asp)

#### Reauthorization of IDEA 2004

The California Department of Education, Special Education Division, provides numerous resources for educators, parents, students, and service providers: the new regulations, legal statutes, and technical assistance and other resources and training opportunities.

## Centering on Families

# One Model of Early Intervention Services

**F** by Chris Wright, PhD, Coordinator of Staff and Family Support, Sacramento County Office of Education, Infant Development Program

or many programs that support the development of infants with disabilities, adapting a family-empowerment model can represent a significant philosophical shift. After all, like other professionals, those who work with young children train hard to become experts in their fields. So, making parents central to a program and giving them equal authority in regard to their children can present some interesting challenges. Despite these challenges, however, the Sacramento County Office of Education Infant Development Program is successfully making this very change.

### Historical Perspective

Three developments in the field of early intervention services helped to shape the Infant Development Program (IDP) and continue to provide the impetus for change and improvement. First, over the past decade, the models for early intervention services to young children and their families have undergone major paradigm shifts. This included a movement from professionally centered “expertise” models—based, in turn, on a deficit model focused on the family’s problems and weaknesses—whereby professionals determine what the family needs, to the current family-centered model with asset-based practices and relationship-based approaches. In the new model, the professional is responsive to the family’s needs and priorities and uses the family’s skills and knowledge in developing services and linking them to community resources. Relationship-based approaches are grounded in the knowledge that the parent-child relationship is important in promoting a child’s optimal growth and development. In successful early intervention services, there are other relationships that also need to be nurtured, supported, and conducted with mutual respect. The professional-to-parent, parent-to-

community, professional-to-community, and staff-to-staff relationships are also essential to providing supportive services that strengthen and empower families and communities.

Second, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) legislated that early intervention services to young children with disabilities and their families should be provided in natural environments. These were defined as the home and community settings where children most typically participate in activities with their families. This legislation had a major impact on where early intervention services were delivered, shifting the location from a school or center to the home.

Third, in 1995, WarmLine Family Resource Center and the IDP held seven Family Focus Groups to talk with current and “graduate” families about the services they were receiving. The parents in these groups consistently emphasized the importance of meeting other parents to share information, receive emotional support, and gain strength.

### Program Profile

The IDP embraced the mandates explicit in these three developments: the family-centered delivery of early intervention services, the home-based location for those services, and the absolute importance of parent-to-parent support. For IDP, as for all programs, a critical overlay to these approaches involves the specific characteristics of the place itself: its demographics, its culture, its history—in short, its people in all of their uniqueness.

Sacramento County covers almost 1,000 square miles in the middle of the Central Valley. This rural and urban region includes 28 cities and towns, and 16 public school districts. According to the 2000 Census, while the median family income is \$50,717, almost one-

fourth of young children live in poverty and one-fourth reside in single-parent households.

The families in Sacramento County are ethnically diverse (45 percent Caucasian, 34 percent Hispanic, 10 percent African American, and 11 percent other ethnic groups) and speak many languages: English, Spanish, Hmong, Russian, and American Sign Language.

Embracing the community demographics that include vast distances, poverty, and cultural diversity, the IDP has created an effective system for providing early intervention services to 275 families throughout Sacramento County, working with eligible infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months of age, who have developmental delays. The county was divided into four geographical regions, each served by a multidisciplinary team that provides early intervention services, information, and links to a wide variety of community resources ranging from financial aid to housing. The program is fortunate to have staff who speak Spanish, Hmong, and Chinese, as well as English. For those families whose primary language is not one of these four, the program finds additional interpreters and translators.

### Program Philosophy and Design

Ten years ago, IDP administration began searching for a service model that represented best practices for early intervention services to young children. Early in this effort it became clear that intensive training by nationally recognized experts was needed. The Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute provided training in the family-centered model, and Victor Bernstein, PhD, has been instrumental in offering ongoing training in using a relationship-based approach and reflective supervision. Sufficient staff time was allocated to develop, learn, practice, and implement the new practices and the necessary financial

support for these activities was obtained. The philosophical shift and change in intervention practices was accomplished over a three-year period.

The philosophy embraced by the IDP is that the parents are the experts on their children and are the first and primary teachers. The role of program staff is to listen to the family; align their efforts to reflect the family's concerns, needs, and service desires; and support the family through activity-based instruction and other learning techniques that reflect the child's interests and the family's daily routine. In addition, the IDP strives to provide culturally sensitive, individualized support and specialized services through supportive, caring, helping relationships. Finally, the primary goals of the staff are to strengthen and guide the education of children and to create a link between families and their community. Since the family is the most important influence in the development of an infant, the staff seeks the active participation of family members in the program; everything the program does centers around the family and works to develop relationships that support the family.

The IDP uses a team approach to provide or procure services that take advantage of the family's available assets—their skills, knowledge, and interests, as well as community resources. With the family-centered model focusing on the partnership of the family with the early intervention professional, the IDP looks to family members to bring their knowledge of their child to inform the overall effort. This is combined with the expertise of the professional staff in the areas of child development, nursing, early childhood mental health, speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, hearing, and vision.

One member of the team becomes the family's primary home visitor, with other team members providing support and consultation. In addition, each regional team, clerical support and intake staff, and the administrative team attend monthly meetings that involve reflective practice. This gives the staff an



*John Hager (center) with families at SCOE's Infant Development Program*

opportunity to think about what they are doing in a setting that encourages creativity and thoughtfulness and that provides time for considering what is working and what needs adjustment.

In the development of the IDP over the past decade, five major components have become cornerstones: participatory leadership, family-centered home visitation, family connections, community partnerships, and adult education.

### **Participatory Leadership**

Partnerships and participation among all stakeholders are central to the way the IDP serves its families. This is also the way the program operates internally. The administration and staff work closely together to sustain the philosophy of the program; and parent-professional partnerships—from service delivery to program design and implementation—have become integral to all of its efforts. The information and perspectives that parents provide are regularly sought and used. Parents bring more than just a unique perspective; they bring the core direction for the children the program is working to serve. Specifically, this kind of participatory leadership takes on a number of different faces:

- The Leadership Group, the program's "think tank," meets quarterly to discuss topics related to program design, implementation, and evaluation. The members include the program administrators, staff representatives, and a parent leader.
- An Advisory Committee, the policies and procedures decision-making arm of the program, meets monthly. The program administrators, a parent leader, support staff, and representatives from each regional team and professional discipline attend these meetings.
- There is a monthly staff meeting attended by everyone. This meeting includes discussions of policies and procedures and a presentation of community resources.

### **Family-Centered Home Visitation**

The IDP provides numerous specialized services to infants and toddlers and their families:

- Developmental assessments that celebrate the child's abilities and address family concerns and desires, individualized for each child's learning style and needs
- Family support, educational activities, and parent-to-parent connections
- Personal visits with the parents and children in the child's home or child care setting, as determined by the parent
- Group activities with parent participation in a variety of community settings
- Assistive technology to enhance learning in natural environments
- Consultation to child care providers and toddler programs to support them with information and resources to best serve each child
- Assistance in transition to other programs and services, as the needs of the family and child change

*Infant Development, continued on page 6*



## Family Connections

Two parents involved in the program are recruited from each of the four regional areas and hired as parent leaders. Their major duties involve collaborating with staff in planning center and program-wide activities and aiding parent-to-parent support. Parent leaders receive training in parent-to-peer support and attend monthly support meetings to discuss their experiences.

Through formal and informal gatherings—spaghetti dinners, for example, or a trip to a local petting zoo—parents have the opportunity to meet other parents, to share and exchange information and resources, to celebrate their child's new skills, and to gain mutual support and skills for advocacy and day-to-day living.

In addition, the IDP offers two program-wide events: a harvest festival in the fall and a family picnic in the spring. Current and graduate families are invited to attend these food- and entertainment-filled activities. As evidence of their success, the attendance at these events has increased steadily over the past four years, and survey results have shown the value parents place on meeting informally and talking with other parents who share similar experiences. It's also interesting, but not surprising, that families report they are more likely to attend one of these "Family Connection" events when they know that their home visitor will also be present. This is a tribute to the importance of the parent-home visitor relationship.

## Community Partnerships

### *Inclusive Community Activities:*

A wide variety of community locations are used by the IDP to enhance the learning opportunities for the child and family. Naturally occurring community groupings, such as parks and recreational areas, the local library at story time, child care centers, neighborhood play groups, Early Head Start center programs, and child development programs operated by local, community, and state college systems offer valuable

opportunities to facilitate child and family learning using an activity-based approach. Several community-based playgroup activities (e.g., Bodies in Motion, Planet Gymnastics, Come Out and Play) provide inclusive, community-based activities for young children with special needs.

The IDP offers Spanish-language play groups and family support meetings in the northern and southern regions of Sacramento County. These family support services are open to the community and often include current and graduate families from IDP.



*Gabe at SCOE's Infant Development Program with Mary Hudler, Director, Special Education Division, California Department of Education*

**Interagency Collaboration:** The IDP works closely and collaboratively with other community agencies—Alta California Regional Center, WarmLine Family Resource Center, Sacramento Trans-Agency Resource Collaborative, the Quality Child Care Collaborative, Early Head Start, Fiesta Educativa, and many others. This extensive collaboration maximizes the resources available to families—resources that may go unused unless centrally coordinated. This collaboration has leveraged resources in other ways by leading to joint trainings for families and the professional com-

munity and the development of special projects funded by the Sacramento First 5 Commission and the State Council on Developmental Disabilities.

## Adult Education

**Families:** WarmLine Family Resource Center and the IDP partner with each other to provide educational forums for families and adult learning opportunities for the parents of children receiving early intervention services. The topics offered just this year include Challenging Behavior; Handling Family Outings; Feeding, Sleeping, and Toileting; Transition to Preschool; Complementary Therapies; and Heartache to Hope. IDP staff, as well as professionals drawn from the local area, serve as the speakers at these events. In addition, parent education classes are offered in infant massage, the Hanen language program, and transition to preschool.

**Professional Development:** Staff development and ongoing training is fully supported by the IDP administration. Each staff member is given a limited training budget that offers him or her the opportunity to attend conferences and workshops to enhance knowledge, develop skills, and learn new technology.

The program nurtures the professional development of parent leaders and families, as well. They are encouraged to attend local, state, and national conferences (e.g., Supported Life, Infant Development Association, etc.). Information about upcoming events is shared with families, and the IDP either provides limited financial support, when possible, or assists families in applying for scholarships.

The California Department of Education has recognized the Sacramento County Infant Development Program as a model early intervention program for providing comprehensive services and for its work in assistive technology, parent involvement, and interagency collaboration. ♦

The Infant Development Program is a SEEDS (Supporting Early Education Delivery Systems) Visitation Site. If you'd like to learn more, please contact SEEDS at 916-228-2379.

One at the University of Washington (go to <http://depts.washington.edu/uwautism/research>) is a large, randomized controlled trial of the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), under the direction of Dr. Geraldine Dawson in collaboration with Sally Rogers, PhD. The study involves 48 young children with autism, ages 18 to 30 months. They are enrolled either in intensive, one-on-one treatment in their homes or in community intervention services. This study is still in progress and results will be examined in 2009.

### Home Intervention

Yet another study at the MIND Institute, led by Drs. Laurie Vismara and Sally Rogers, examines the ESDM as a parent-delivered home intervention. Parents learn how to implement the model in their homes with their young children recently diagnosed with autism. Parent and children involved in this program come to the MIND Institute for a one-hour session each week for 16 weeks to learn the approach, and they practice it at home in natural routines on a daily basis. Parents learn to capture their children's attention, to motivate their children to communicate, to develop imitation and play skills, and to engage in interactive play with strong positive emotional significance. Parents also learn the principles of applied behavioral analysis, and they learn how to apply these principles within their interactive play routines.

Current data from this study demonstrate that parents can successfully learn to carry out the intervention in approximately eight weeks and that children respond very positively in their gains in speech, attention to their parents, and initiations of communication with their parents and with their therapists. Furthermore, children showed excellent maintenance of the skills after the end of the sessions and were able to generalize their new skills with new people. This project was featured on national television during a broadcast of *60 Minutes* in February 2007.

### The PROMPT Method

A recently published paper involved a collaboration between the MIND Institute and the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. This study compared two methods of teaching speech to young children with autism who were not yet verbal. The methods involved the ESDM approach and the PROMPT method. The Denver Model fuses developmental, behavioral, and relationship-based approaches into an integrated model that can be applied in a variety of settings and by a variety of people. It specifies the content or curriculum that is taught and the teaching



procedures to be used. The PROMPT method, developed by Deborah Hayden of the PROMPT Institute in Santa Fe (go to [www.promptinstitute.com](http://www.promptinstitute.com)), was designed originally for adults who had lost speech as a result of brain injury. This particular research approach focuses on the motor aspects of speech production: it uses multisensory cues to stimulate the speech-motor mechanism during meaningful communication. As adapted for young children with autism, it also stimulates genuine, intentional communication and assists children to produce phonemes from their intentional vocalizations.

Yet another MIND Institute study, now just beginning, involves training for parents and their toddlers, ages 12–18 months, who are at risk for autism or diagnosed with autism. Under

Dr. Rogers' direction, the study will enroll 36 young children and their parents and randomize them to either the parent-delivered ESDM or to community intervention. Children and parents in the ESDM will receive one 1.5-hour therapy session per week for approximately 16 weeks (this is in addition to any other treatments they are receiving). The children's progress in language, play, social skills, and behavior will be compared to children receiving other interventions. The institute also received funding to replicate this study in some community settings in order to examine how easily it can be learned and used outside a university setting.

### Interventions for Older Children with Autism

Dr. Blythe Corbett and colleagues at the MIND Institute recently completed a pilot study to determine the effects of the Tomatis Method (go to [www.tomatis.com](http://www.tomatis.com)) of sound-based auditory therapy on receptive and expressive language skills in a heterogeneous group of children with autism. The Tomatis Method is an intervention implemented to improve communication skills by changing brain responses to sounds. Music from sources like Mozart and Gregorian chant is passed through specialized equipment that attenuates low frequency sounds and amplifies higher frequency sounds that fall within those of the English language. The results from this study indicated that although the majority of the children demonstrated general improvement in language over the course of the study, it did not appear to be related to the Tomatis treatment condition, since children in the control condition also showed gains. Although this well controlled study was small, the findings were similar to previous studies of auditory integration therapy, in that they showed little effect of the treatment.

This kind of finding can be disappointing. However, it is absolutely critical to test interventions in this way. Interventions cost money and take the time and energy of children and their

MIND Institute, continued on page 12

## Homegrown Efforts Prefigure National Trends



While response to intervention, or RtI, first appeared in federal law in 2004, it was not a new concept. Researchers and educators both—and sometimes together—have been developing RtI models for over 15 years; and many teachers are calling it one of the most effective approaches to educating all students that schools have seen. RtI is not, however, a concept that fits easily into a nutshell. Any attempt to synopsize it suggests the educational equivalent of the plotline to *The Marriage of Figaro*: both involve many twists, turns, and variations—but, when executed with integrity, produce happy outcomes every time.

Here's one attempt at a large nutshell: RtI is the process of discovering what each student needs in order to learn—what instructional strategies work best. It incorporates research-based approaches, highly trained staff delivering the instruction, regular assessment, and the use of data derived from assessments, which then are used to determine the best instructional next-steps. RtI provides individualized education for all students, primarily in a general education setting. Most RtI models describe three or four tiers of intervention, with each consecutive tier offering an increasing intensity of supports. The first tier provides quality instruction to all students; the second tier offers various levels of intensive, targeted instruction as soon as students show the first sign of stumbling academically; and the third tier may incorporate an individualized education program (IEP) and may consist of special education services. An RtI approach gains a great deal of educational traction because of one key element: its core components eliminate the possibility of “curricular or instructional disability” being the cause of a child's failure to learn.

### Severe Discrepancy Model

Across the educational landscape, interest in this approach is growing, in part because of its link to a significant change in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) that eliminated the requirement for schools to determine that a student show a “severe discrepancy” between intellectual ability and academic achievement in order to be identified as having a specific learning disability (SLD). Before this change, a student could not be identified as having an SLD unless a discrepancy was found in certain areas of performance: oral expression, listening comprehension, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, and mathematical calculation and reasoning. Under this model, students needed to fail for an extended period of time, sometimes years, before they qualified and received special education services.

As part of federal regulations for special education since 1977, this discrepancy requirement has been questioned for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it represents a model that has proven to be flawed. Much current research suggests that the longer a student fails, the slimmer the chances of recovering and resuming performance at grade level—certainly the slimmer the chances of ever exiting special education and claiming a place next to general education peers.

In addition, the discrepancy model does not address issues of culture, poverty, or language. A kindergartner might be three years behind age-mates in language abilities (pre-reading skills, for example) because the student's single parent works three jobs and doesn't have time to read; because the parent cannot afford to have children's books in the house; or because the child lives in a household where English is never spoken. These conditions, while they

do not preclude a learning disability, certainly do not create one.

In the face of this, RtI offers a clear benefit: it may be one sure way of determining whether or not a student does in fact have a learning disability and thus qualify for special education services—instead of just needing time and intense supports to catch up to age-mates because of experiential or cultural differences or inadequacies. Within an RtI approach, the decision to assess the child for a disability is not based on anyone's instinct or feeling, or even on a child's first performance. It is based on data gathered from regular assessments, which remove much of the guesswork around eligibility. Further, decisions are not made until the child is given consistent, targeted instruction over a period of time. And then, either a child is making sufficient progress on defined, measurable goals, or is not. If a student receives solid curriculum and proven instruction in a general education setting, and then given targeted instruction at increasingly intensive levels specifically geared to individual needs, and still makes no progress, then the child may in fact have a learning disability. And referring the student for special education evaluation becomes warranted.

### Neverstreaming

Long before IDEA 2004, many educators around the country were puzzling over how to move away from the discrepancy model. Over 15 years ago in California, one school district in particular started laying its own groundwork for doing just that, and it hatched its own, homegrown version of RtI—inspired not by legal mandates or even research, but by the realities of its students.

Elk Grove Unified School District in southern Sacramento County is located in what was not long ago a sparsely populated, culturally homogeneous area of the state. But in the nineties, the

district suddenly found itself in the middle of a population boom and thus faced the task of educating the hundreds of new students that this boom brought with it—students who spoke 80 different languages and who came from vastly different socioeconomic levels. This created daunting challenges, and the district didn't quite know what to do at first except try to find room for all of the new bodies—and survive.

To complicate matters, the population spike brought with it a dramatic increase in the number of students identified as having SLDs. While most districts have about 10 percent of their students identified with SLDs, Elk Grove was suddenly coming in at 16 percent. Pre-population boom, when students were not making academic progress, they were referred to special education. Immediately post-boom, this didn't change and is what accounted for the 16 percent. But the problem was not going to go away under the existing structure, and in many of the district's schools, the student support systems were cracking under the strain.

Beginning in the 1994–95 school year, a change took place: Elk Grove gathered 90 educational professionals who met for more than two years to develop an early intervention program for students with potential learning disabilities. This program, originally called Neverstreaming, was designed to “front-load” services as soon as students showed the first signs they might be foundering academically. Neverstreaming, as the name implies, means never allowing a child to leave the advantage of the mainstream, the general education classroom. As Elk Grove shaped this approach, it included more intensive help than what was needed by most of the other students in general education, thus providing preventive services as soon as the need was detected. The main goal was to make sure that a student would never fall so far behind that catching up would be next to impossible.

Neverstreaming was a success, effective in breaking the “fail first” requirement that many educators believed

was inadvertently established by the discrepancy model. The approach has evolved over the past decade, but it continues to use research-based instructional approaches and assessments in the general education classroom, in combination with a commitment between both general and special educators to discover what strategies work best for each student—and to remediate at the first sign of trouble. Essentially, RtI.

Those schools in the Elk Grove district and elsewhere that are using an RtI model are living proof that there are many choices schools can offer before they have to consider special education. A concrete example in the



Elk Grove district of how this works is Arlene Hein Elementary School (AHE).

### **RtI at Arlene Hein Elementary**

One of the keys to the success of AHE's program is its Cooperative Conference, or Co-op, which regularly brings together general and special education staff to discuss the needs of all students. At this meeting staff determine the appropriate interventions and supports that will allow each student to succeed. The Co-op provides a forum for teachers to quickly identify those students who are struggling, as soon as their struggle begins.

“Our first level of response if a student is struggling,” according to Carolyn Cook-Flores, Resource Specialist teacher at Arlene Hein, along with Resource Specialist Patti Teale, “is to meet with the teacher and talk about the evidence, about what is being done, about the resources that are available. This is where special education teachers are the primary support for the general education

teachers. We help them figure out more intense and focused interventions that meet the specific need of the struggling child.”

“If the teacher's efforts in the general classroom aren't enough for the student to make sufficient progress, then our Learning Center comes into play. This is our ‘tier two’ intervention, where students are grouped according to ability and given intensive, small-group help. While we have about 35 children (not including Speech/Language) with IEPs, we support an additional 45–50 students in the Learning Center. Many of these are students who will sooner or later go back into tier one, or the general ed. classroom and curriculum, and will never be placed on an IEP. We work very hard to get the students ‘up and out’—up to speed on their skills and learning, and out of tier two and back to tier one.”

AHE is one example of how RtI works; it also shows *that* it works. In general, the process has yielded improved school-wide academic performance, student progress toward standards and goals, and a heightened sense of staff collaboration. And, in contrast to the standard in most schools of ten percent of students diagnosed with learning disabilities, Arlene Hein comes in at considerably less. While the school had the advantage of a built-in tiered model of instruction from its inception in the form of a Learning Center, the efficacy of its RtI approach continues to be evident: the number of children who are referred for special education services declines each year. There are additional benefits, many in terms of efficiency. “When we go for testing [for special education eligibility],” according to Cook-Flores, “we're ‘pretty on’ for who qualifies.” And “many of our students get the same level of support, whether or not they have an IEP.” The school's resources are available for everyone.

There are psychological advantages, as well. According to Cook-Flores, when a child starts to struggle, everyone gets nervous: the parent, the teacher, and the student. Once a child has been given

*Homegrown RtI, continued on page 11*

clarify the areas of reform. They also provide some much-needed guidance in unclear areas.

The regulations re-establish the authority of the schools to remove students from school for periods of up to ten school days per offense, or less, for violations of school rules. The commentary to the regulations also clarifies in-school suspensions: Essentially, when a suspension is accompanied by services sufficient to afford students an opportunity to participate in their curriculum, together with any required related services, it does not constitute a disciplinary removal under IDEA. The USDOE also states that suspensions for parts of school days count toward the tally of total disciplinary removals, as well as suspensions from special education transportation (unless the school offers alternative transportation). In addition, the regulations reassert past guidance that limited the ability of schools to remove students from school on a short-term basis too much or too frequently. A provision states that factors such as the length of individual short-term removals, the overall number of days a student has been removed, how close the removals are to one another, and the similarity of the misbehaviors, must be examined to see if a series of short-term removals in fact constitute a pattern of removal that should be seen as an overall significant change in placement. At some point, accumulations of valid, short-term removals become a pattern of exclusion that triggers the same procedural safeguards as would a long-term removal.

Although the regulations reassert the requirement to provide students with a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) during periods of long-term removals (more than ten consecutive school days), the provisions do not require exact duplication of educational programs in alternative disciplinary settings. They instead opt for an individualized approach to providing services in disciplinary settings that recognizes both the student's unique needs and the

inherently different features of disciplinary programs.

The manifestation determination requirement, whereby schools must determine if a student's behavior is related to his or her disability before making a disciplinary change in placement, remains in the new statute, although in a stricter form. The commentary to the regulations reiterates that the revised standard requires a closer degree of relationship between behavior and disability—a causal, or direct and substantial link—than under IDEA 1997. The commentary calls on schools to look at patterns of behavior across settings and time in making the determination, since a long-term pattern of similar behavior may be indicative of a substantial relationship between behavior and disability.

IDEA 2004 added offenses involving serious bodily injury to the list of special offenses (drugs and weapons) that call for 45-day removals, even if related to a student's disabilities. The regulations, however, clarify that the new provision is reserved for only the most serious of assaults: those involving risk of death, disfigurement, or extreme physical pain.

Finally, the regulations require that students faced with disciplinary changes in placement remain in the disciplinary settings even if their parents initiate legal proceedings to challenge the disciplinary actions (unless the school and parents agree otherwise). This limited exception to what is known as the IDEA's "stay-put" provision also calls for expedited timetables for these legal challenges in cases where parents can show an impartial hearing officer that the disciplinary action or manifestation determination was conducted inappropriately.

### Hearings and Procedural Safeguards

Special education litigation between parents and schools has become common enough to catch the attention of the Congress. As a result, the new law sets forth reforms to the due process hearing mechanism. This includes strengthening the notice requirement

for parties that initiate legal proceedings, requiring schools to respond in writing to due process hearing complaints, and providing a resolution process for parents and schools to resolve their differences at the earliest stage of the dispute.

The regulations state that defending parties may object to the "sufficiency" of a written complaint if they believe it does not provide clear notice of the precise legal claims and relief requested; defending parties also are not required to specify the reasons they believe the complaint is insufficient. In other words, the new provisions require that parents and their attorneys state with clarity and specificity exactly what they are complaining about in their initial due process filings. If they do not, schools may object to the filing and seek that the hearing officer order a more specific and clear complaint statement.

In the reauthorized law there is also a new pre-hearing resolution meeting requirement. The USDOE provides a strong incentive to attend the meetings, stating that parents who fail to participate risk dismissal of their legal claims. Conversely, schools that fail to convene the resolution meetings risk immediate commencement of hearing timelines. Detailed hearing requirements and procedures are, within the basic framework of the law, left up to the preferences of individual states. Some states' rules, for example, allow formal requests for the production of documents and subpoenas (orders for persons to appear at the hearing), much like in state or federal courts. Others do not allow these formalities, but rather call for the hearing officer to take an active role in ensuring the parties have the evidence they may need at the hearing.

Finally, the commentary to the regulations acknowledge the impact of the Supreme Court's opinion in *Schaffer v. West*, which establishes that in IDEA proceedings parents bear the legal burden of proving that a school violated the IDEA. This issue had been in dispute prior to the Supreme Court's opinion; and, in some states, schools were

required to prove they had not violated the IDEA in due process hearings.

### IEP Team Flexibility

Clearly, the Congress was concerned with the large amounts of time school staff and parents are asked to devote to IEP team meetings, often for minor IEP changes between annual meetings. In addition, IEP teams are required to include staff whose input may not be required for the topic addressed at the meetings. In response, the Congress allowed schools the flexibility to agree with parents to make minor changes to IEPs without the need for meetings, as well as to excuse IEP team members from participating in person under certain circumstances.

The regulations restate the new areas of flexibility while clarifying that any required IEP team member can be excused from participating in a meeting if the parent agrees and the members' input will not be necessary in the meeting. If a school seeks to excuse a member whose input will be needed at the meeting, it must obtain parental consent, and the member in question must provide written input in advance of the meeting to the remaining IEP team members and parent. The regulations explain that the first flexibility area merely requires parental agreement, whereas the second requires informed written consent of the parent. This is because excusing a member whose area will be discussed is more serious than excusing a member who will not be required to provide input.

### Related Services

For the first time, the IDEA regulations include as a recognized related service "interpreting services" of various types for students with auditory impairments. In addition, the new regulations clarify that services required to maximize or optimize the functioning of a surgically implanted device, such as mapping a cochlear implant, are not considered related services that public schools must provide under the IDEA. The Congress and the USDOE believed that this was a matter more in the realm of medical services than of edu-

cational services, and thus the responsibility of private insurance companies and Medicaid. Nevertheless, schools must continue to monitor and maintain medical devices (such as ventilators and feeding machines) that may be necessary to maintain the health and safety of students while they're in school.

### Conclusion

The USDOE's issuance of the final IDEA regulations completes the legislative and regulatory cycle of the IDEA reauthorization of 2004. Inevitably, further questions will arise regarding the law, questions that were unanticipated by the drafters of the regulations. Those questions will require further clarification by hearing officers and courts. Nevertheless, a review of key highlights of the regulations and their accompanying commentary is an essential step to achieving an understanding of the requirements and limits imposed by the IDEA. ♦

*{See sidebar on page 3 for more about federal regulations.}*

### Homegrown RtI continued from page 9

targeted tier-two instruction in the Learning Center, "things cool off and slow down. Teachers are so happy that the child is getting extra help, and this makes students happy, too. They love to improve and see their own progress. It makes them feel good about themselves.

"We had one English Learner (EL) student who was having problems; we gave him Learning Center support and in one semester he made a 30-point improvement on the California Standard Test (CST). While he still wasn't quite up to Basic according to the ELA (English Language Arts) section of the CST, it demonstrated that this child was responding to the intervention.

"It's important to note that the child was still performing at the Below Basic level. We never promise that we can get a child on grade level; we just need to show that they are making gains. This is one of the many advantages of keeping and using data to make decisions about where to place kids and the kinds of

supports to give them. He clearly wasn't learning disabled. He was learning like crazy with the right strategies."

Cook-Flores speaks with enthusiasm about the nearly magical change in attitude she sees when general education teachers embrace the school's full inclusion policy. In her experience, when teachers believe that the best—or only—way to deal with struggling students is to refer them for assessment for special education, they end up with a kind of "pass-off" mentality. "When that's the school's pattern, there would be no reason for that teacher to do otherwise. It's only human nature to hold a temporary attitude toward someone who is not going to be around. But when you know that person is someone you will be working with for a long time, your attitude toward a problem immediately changes. You start getting very creative and committed about solving it."

### Collaboration at the Core

The best news for everyone involved, particularly the student, is that no teacher is left to individual creativity. This is where the expertise of the special education staff becomes a significant benefit for everyone. "We're immediately there helping that teacher if the student isn't making progress; asking what has been done, what has been tried, what has been accomplished. And one of the greatest results of all of this is that the general education teachers, in the process, learn how to be better teachers." As Cook-Flores describes it, their arsenal of strategies, their ability to instruct, their instincts for what works just get bigger, better, and stronger. So they end up being more effective teachers for all students.

While, in its perfect incarnation, RtI efforts include mathematics as well as language skills, the primary focus at AHE is currently on reading—what Cook-Flores refers to as "the gateway" skill. In general, AHE's philosophy around both education and RtI is that any progress a student makes is worth a teacher's effort. And this belief, in her mind, makes a commitment to

*Homegrown RtI, continued on page 12*



continuous student assessment all the more important. Data gathered from assessments are critical to demonstrating whether or not a student is progressing. “One challenge we face,” according to Cook-Flores, “involves helping parents adjust to the time it takes to get students working at grade level. We celebrate all progress, and that’s what we look for. We try to respect the unique gifts each student has and the unique challenges each faces. Change does not happen overnight.”

Cook-Flores came from a Title I school that had a very different population and different hurdles—“more money,” she acknowledged “because of its Title I status.” She admits that having less money at AHE (not a Title I school) makes putting together an RtI model slightly more complicated.

But, as in most RtI schools, “at Arlene Hein we make very creative use of all of our Instructional Assistants (IAs), well beyond their specific assignment. This is where special education supports contribute to the progress of all children, not just those in special education. The IAs are out there helping those who need it. And there is an amazing and admirable lack of territoriality among all of our teachers.” She talks about the roles of each teacher and IA as having “fluid lines.” “If I’m teaching three students with disabilities and other students without IEPs could benefit from my instruction, I include them.”

According to Cook-Flores, “Our approach, call it RtI or what you will, is really about people rolling up their sleeves and working together to find and complement what works best for each child. It’s about everyone taking responsibility.” ♦

families. We want to be sure that we are using treatments that are helpful. Thus, this negative finding is every bit as important as a positive finding in helping us discover the most effective treatments for the various symptoms or effects of autism.

### Social Skills and Autism

Researchers at the institute have developed and professionally produced DVDs and videos that focus on understanding other people’s emotions. These videos are available to clinicians and families (contact the research lead, Dr. Blythe Corbett, at [blythe.corbett@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu](mailto:blythe.corbett@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu)).

Other studies address building social skills for older children. Drs. Marjorie Solomon and Beth Goodlin-Jones developed and published an empirically supported 12-week

## TA Provider Recognizes Outstanding Programs in Education

With news headlines replete with disaster stories about failing schools, eleven model programs in California recently joined an ongoing effort to reverse that trend. While the locations of these programs vary—in elementary, middle, and high schools; in city school districts and county offices of education; in small towns and large cities across the state—they all have certain things in common. They’ve realized success in their programs, which translated into success for their students; they demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement; and they are passionate about helping other schools replicate their success.

Four of these programs were awarded for their work in supporting positive behavior among students: Bidwell Junior High School in Chico; Irvine High School in Irvine; Vista Verde Elementary School in Irvine; and Walter Reed Middle School in North Hollywood. Three programs were awarded for their success in supporting collaboration between special education and general education: Sequoia Middle School in Pleasant Hill; Spring View Middle School in Rocklin; and East Mesa School (a Juvenile Court and Community School, San Diego County Office of Education) in San Diego. Another three programs were awarded for their success in securing for students with disabilities a successful transition into the world of education, work, and adult life after high school: Atascadero High School in Atascadero; Transition Resources for Adult Community Education (TRACE) in the San Diego City Schools; and Transition to Adult Living in the Washington Unified School District in West Sacramento.

Finally, Mesa View Middle School in Huntington Beach was awarded for its successful literacy program.

These programs were announced as award recipients after a competitive application process. As awardees and designated “leadership sites,” they have joined a group of 21 programs throughout the state that have been working for over seven years to create what some have called “a contagion of excellence.” This Leadership Site Award Program is federally funded by a state improvement grant (SIG) awarded to California and administered through California Services for Technical Assistance and Training (CalSTAT) at the California Institute on Human Services (CIHS).

This community of educators gathers every year at a State Leadership Institute, which provides a venue for them to share their efforts with each other, brainstorm solutions, and mentor and inspire those in attendance. A virtual community is also in place, providing an ongoing “online institute” that allows its members to share information and solutions beyond the physical, yearly event. Then, to additionally spread their expertise, the teams visit other sites that aspire to new levels of excellence, working with them over time in an effort to effect lasting change. Finally, each of these schools receives a monetary award, not just to travel to the institute and to mentor other schools, but also to improve its own efforts to help all students.

More information about the Leadership Site Award Program and the participating entities is available at [www.calstat.org/leadershipSiteAward.html](http://www.calstat.org/leadershipSiteAward.html).

intervention program for families of children with autism spectrum disorders based on Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT; McNeill & Hembree-Kigin, 1995). PCIT has proven to be successful with children with oppositional, conduct, and hyperactivity disorders. The sessions targeted deficits in behavioral compliance, improving social skills, scaffolding language development, increasing behavioral flexibility, and improving emotional awareness and expression. The PCIT program involved coaching parents using “bug-in-the ear” technology and a two-way mirror. Results of the intervention demonstrated significant changes on measures of children’s psychological well-being. Teachers and parents reported a diminishment of behavioral problems compared to a group of children who did not receive the intervention. As a result of this study, intervention groups for children and support groups for parent are now available from these researchers at the MIND Institute.

### Conclusion

Some researchers at the MIND Institute are working to determine which commonly used, but relatively untested, interventions are effective, and which are not. Other investigators at the institute are developing and testing new interventions and educational strategies to try to improve learning rates and learning outcomes for children with neurodevelopmental disorders. Improving outcomes in these types of disorders is partly dependent on developing better teaching methods and increasing children’s learning rates. The IDEA revisions stress the importance of educational interventions with established efficacy—the kind of background research that is central to the MIND Institute’s mission. With continued collaboration among parents, autism interventionists, scientists, and the medical community, the MIND Institute will continue to spearhead research focused on alleviating the disabilities caused by neurodevelopmental disorders and on promoting optimal learning for children. ♦

## 2007 Calendar

### April 25–26 (Redwood City)

#### May 31–June 1 (San Diego) Using Parent Involvement to Increase Student Success and Academic Achievement

This conference, sponsored by the California Parents Center, is recommended for participants from all schools. It is especially designed to assist Program Improvement districts and schools. Topics include using successful partnerships at elementary, middle, and high school levels; using research-based recruitment strategies to increase parent and community participation in partnership activities; finding funds to support partnership activities; and more. For more information, call 619-594-4756 or go to <http://parent.sdsu.edu/services/conferences/default.htm>.

### May 3–5

#### California Council for Adult Education (CCAEE) 2007 Conference

This conference supports the mission of the California Council for Adult Education: to promote adult education; to provide professional development; and to effect change to best serve the needs and interests of adult education, the CCAEE membership, and the people of California. Fresno, CA. For more information, call 916-444-3323 or go to [www.ccaestate.org](http://www.ccaestate.org).

### May 15

#### Transition to Meaningful Adult Roles: You Can’t Put a Square Peg in a Round Hole—A Journey

Offered through the Community Rehabilitation Program’s Regional Continuing Education Program, this Web cast features Marilyn Henn, national speaker on transition and mother of a daughter with severe autism. This presentation, told in words and video, gives the 30-year story of Marilyn and her daughter, who has held a full-time job in the community with supports and full benefits for over 12 years. It is part of a series of seven Web casts on topics related to customized employment strategies and individual choice.

For more information, call 804-828-1851 or go to [www.worksupport.com/training/webcastSeries.cfm](http://www.worksupport.com/training/webcastSeries.cfm).

### May 17–19

#### West Coast Literacy Conference

Sponsored by the Foundation for Comprehensive Early Literacy Learning, the strands of this conference focus on literacy learning from preschool to high school, with particular emphasis on the needs of classroom teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers, and school administrators. The event addresses issues of oral language, reading, writing, spelling, and phonics. For more information, call 909-335-3089 or go to [www.stanswartz.com/conferences/wclc.htm](http://www.stanswartz.com/conferences/wclc.htm).

### June 22–23

#### Literacy—Literature and Character Development: A Hands-On Conference

Sponsored by the University of San Diego’s Character Development Center at the School of Leadership and Education Sciences, this conference explores how to use literacy instruction, principal and parent involvement, and collaborative classroom techniques to support the development of positive character qualities in students. San Diego, CA. For more information, call 619-260-2250 or go to <http://charactermatters.sandiego.edu>.

### July 8–13

#### Leadership Institute in Reading Apprenticeship®

Sponsored by the Strategic Literacy Initiative at WestEd, this institute offers eight days of professional development designed to help teams of educators improve reading across the curriculum. The event is designed specifically for educators who are experienced leaders in adolescent literacy, secondary subject area curriculum and instruction, and/or professional development. Oakland, CA. For more information, call 510-302-4245 or go to [www.wested.org/cs/we/view/we\\_e/474](http://www.wested.org/cs/we/view/we_e/474).

The RiSE (Resources in Special Education) Library lends materials to California residents free of charge. The items listed on this page are just a sampling. Go to [www.php.com](http://www.php.com) for the library's complete holdings and to request materials by email. To order by phone, call Judy Bower at 408-727-5775.

## RTI Books

### *Response to Intervention: Policy Considerations and Implementation*

National Association of State Directors of Special Education. While grounding response to intervention (RtI) in law and policy predating IDEA '04, this book walks the reader through issues and challenges related to the implementation of RtI. NASDSE: Alexandria, VA; 2005. 60 pp. Call #23770 & 23771.

### *Response to Intervention: Principles and Strategies for Effective Practice*

National Research Center on Learning Disabilities. This book presents the foundations of an RtI approach and a clear, ten-step model for conducting RtI procedures with students who are experiencing learning difficulties. New York, NY: Guilford Press; 2005. 176 pp. Call #23893.

## RTI DVDs

### *Response to Intervention: Training for California Educators*

Sacramento County Office of Education. This DVD set includes *RtI: Why Now?*; *What Is RtI?*; *RtI—Getting Started*; *Instruction in RtI Systems*; and *Administrative Issues in RtI*. California Department of Education: Sacramento, CA; 2006. 5 DVDs. Call #23867 & 23868.

### *RTI Tackles the LD Explosion: A Good IDEA Becomes Law*

Karen Norlander. This video describes RtI: its requirement to assess a child's response to research-based reading instruction in general education as a prerequisite to special education referral and its elimination of continued reliance on the now-discredited discrepancy model. National Professional Resources: Port Chester, NY; 2006. 57 min. Call #23936.

## Autism Books

### *Helping Children with Autism Learn: Treatment Approaches for Parents and Professionals*

Bryna Siegel. This book explains how to take an inventory of a child's particular disabilities, breaks down the various kinds of disabilities unique to autism, discusses our current knowledge about each, and reviews the existing strategies for treating them. Oxford University Press: New York, NY; 2003. 498 pp. Call #23539.

### *I Need Help with School: A Guide for Parents of Children with Autism and Asperger's Syndrome*

Rebecca Moyes. This book offers accessible information for parents of children with autism who need to be able to navigate special education law while supporting their child. Future Horizons: Arlington, TX; 2003. 191 pp. Call #23457.

## Autism DVDs

### *Family to Family: A Guide to Living Life When a Child Is Diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder*

Alyson Beytien. This video is designed to help families deal with the daily challenges of autism spectrum disorders. Starfish Specialty Press: Higganum, CT; 2004. 90 minutes. Call #23399.

### *Visual Strategies Workshop Video Program: Working with Autism and Related Communication and Behavior Challenges*

Linda Hodgdon. This multimedia training package offers professionals and parents concrete methods to improve communication, reduce behavior problems, and increase social interaction with students who have autism spectrum disorders. Quirk Roberts Publishing: Troy, MI; 2003. Five videos and one CD-ROM. Call #23451.

## IDEA 2004 Books

### *Getting to Know Special Ed: The General Educator's Essential Guide*

Gerry Klor. Written specifically for general education staff, this book clearly and simply describes everything they need to

know about meeting responsibilities under the IDEA 2004. LRP Publications: Horsham, PA; 2007. 61 pp. Call #23940.

### *A User's Guide to the 2004 IDEA Reauthorization.*

Robert J.D.Silverstein. This guide addresses the major new policies included in Part A (General Provisions), Part B (Assistance for Education of All Children with Disabilities), and Part C (Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities) of the IDEA 2004. Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy: Washington, DC; 2005. 56 pp. Call #23744.

### *Writing Measurable IEP Goals and Objectives: Complete Updates for IDEA 2004*

Barbara Bateman & Cynthia Herr. Authored by special education and IEP law specialists, this book provides guidance for writing measurable goals and objectives for students' Individual Education Programs. Attainment Company: Verona, WI; 2006. 140 pp. Call #23875 & 23876.

## IDEA 2004 DVDs

### *AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) and Assessment of Students with Disabilities: Understanding the Merger of IDEA and NCLB Requirements*

Melinda Baird. This DVD explains the specific legal requirements of IDEA. LRP Publications: Horsham, PA; 2005. 17 min. Call #23767.

### *IDEA Training*

Art Cernosia, Esq. These DVDs capture a two-day training given by IDEA legal expert Cernosia who explains the changes in the law. California Department of Education: Sacramento, CA; 2005. 4 DVDs. Call #23780 & 23781.

### *Understanding the Requirements of the Law*

Melinda Baird. This DVD can help parents and educators understand the new legal changes in IDEA 2004. LRP Publications: Horsham, PA; 2005. 38 min. Call #23765.

# Web Resources

## Autism

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

### Center for the Study of Autism (CSA)

CSA provides information about autism to parents and professionals and conducts research on the efficacy of various therapeutic interventions. Its Web site offers a wealth of free video and print information in numerous languages.

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

### Autism Speaks

This organization funds global biomedical research into the causes, prevention, treatments, and cure for autism; raises public awareness about autism and its effects on individuals, families, and society; and brings hope to all who deal with the hardships of this disorder. Its Web site provides free publications and links to numerous resources for parents of children with autism.

## Early Childhood

[www.wested.org/cs/wel/view/pj/198](http://www.wested.org/cs/wel/view/pj/198)

### California Early Intervention Technical Assistance Network (CEITAN)

Focusing on early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities

and their families, CEITAN provides training, technical assistance, and support to agencies and programs. The California Department of Developmental Services funds this project.

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

### The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

This organization serves as a central source of information on disabilities in infants, toddlers, children, and youth. The Web site provides links to the most recent Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) legislation, compiles disability-related resources in each state, and makes available State Resource Sheets. The sheets locate organizations and agencies within a state that address disability-related issues.

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

### The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC)

NECTAC supports a national implementation of the early childhood provisions of the IDEA. Its mission is to strengthen systems at all levels to ensure that children (birth through five) with disabilities and their families receive

and benefit from high-quality, culturally appropriate, and family-centered supports and services.

### IDEA 2004 (also see page 3)

[www.nclld.org/content/view/900/456084/](http://www.nclld.org/content/view/900/456084/)

### IDEA Parent Guide

The National Center on Learning Disabilities offers this accessible and informative guide to IDEA for parents.

[www.calstatecec.com/agenda.htm](http://www.calstatecec.com/agenda.htm)

### A Summary of Significant Changes in the Final IDEA Regulations

The Web site of the California State Council for Exceptional Children provides a series of informative documents to help stakeholders understand the new IDEA regulations, including comparison charts and information on specific learning disabilities relative to IDEA.

[www.osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/index.asp](http://www.osepideasthatwork.org/toolkit/index.asp)

### A Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students with Disabilities

This resource is available through the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs in an effort to bring together current, accurate information and supports designed to improve instruction, assessment, and accountability for students with disabilities. The intended audience is families, teachers and other school staff, and state personnel.

## Response to Intervention

[www.bestnetsacramento.org/video/rti/conversations/rti\\_c1.mov](http://www.bestnetsacramento.org/video/rti/conversations/rti_c1.mov)

### Conversations on Response to Intervention

The California Department of Education (CDE) developed five Web conferences for use in "RtI Conversations" across California. The first conversation, available at the above URL, focuses on the role of RtI in the determination of a specific learning disability (SLD). The panel included practitioners who were experienced in using RtI in identifying SLDs.

## Mail this in for your free subscription to *The Special EDge*

### Subscription Request

- New subscription     Address change     Unsubscribe  
 E-subscription: *The Special EDge* will be emailed to you as a PDF

### Position

- School administrator     Educator  
 Family member     Other \_\_\_\_\_

### Mailing Address

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
School/Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

### Other Interests

- Online courses     Workshops and training  
 Parent leadership     Educational consulting

### Mail To

Sonoma State University  
CalSTAT/CIHS  
1801 East Cotati Avenue  
Rohnert Park, CA 94928  
707-849-2275  
[donna.lee@calstat.org](mailto:donna.lee@calstat.org)



## Shaping New Directions in Autism Research

By Sally J. Rogers, PhD, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, the MIND Institute, University of California at Davis

Several components of the reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as amended in 2004 (IDEA), highlight ongoing research activities at the Medical Investigation of Neurodevelopmental Disorders (MIND) Institute. Both the institute and law focus on empirically supported practices to teach core skills, particularly those practices directed at reading instruction and individuals with learning disabilities.

Created in 1998 as a primary research institute, the MIND Institute was established to increase understanding of the causes, treatments, and possible cures for autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders, such as learning disabilities. The MIND Institute also serves as an advocate for families of children with autism and is committed to thoughtful collaborations with UC Davis and the California State Legislature.

Known for its biological research program, the MIND Institute also addresses the behavioral and intervention sides of autism and other studies, with a particular emphasis on research that informs education. The goal of this article is to highlight current activities at the MIND Institute that converge with the ideas and priorities of IDEA 2004.

### Literacy Intervention Study

One study, directed by Ingrid Leckliter, PhD, examines interventions for children with learning disabilities. Called Spell Read PAT (phonological auditory training program; go to [www.spellread.com](http://www.spellread.com)), this effort examines the effectiveness of literacy intervention with students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and reading disorders. About 15–20 percent of the U.S. population has a reading disability. Within this population, 25–40 percent also has ADHD. While scientific

evidence demonstrates that systematic reading interventions are beneficial, it is uncertain whether these interventions also help children who have both a reading disability and ADHD. Their patterns of inattention and distractibility, even when managed appropriately, might cause children who have both reading disorders and ADHD to experience less success than children who only have reading disorders.

At the conclusion of the study we hope to answer whether a systematic, proven reading intervention improves the reading accuracy, speed, and comprehension of children who have both reading disorder and ADHD; and whether the improvement is at a level that is consistent with that found among children who have only a reading disorder. We also hope to demonstrate that the intervention improves the language skills, mood, and behavior among all participants over their own pre-intervention functioning.

### Early Intervention Studies

Other research activities at the MIND

Institute involve testing the efficacy of instructional or intervention practices for young children with autism. One project, directed by Ann Mastergeorge, PhD, involves studying a method of teaching joint attention behaviors to young children with autism. These behaviors include showing objects to others, pointing to objects of interest to draw another person's attention to them, sharing emotional reactions to various objects or events by sending clear facial expressions and eye contact to others, and following other people's gestures and gaze to determine their focus of attention. These kinds of behaviors represent a core deficit in early autism, and they influence language development in all children—those with typical development as well as those with neurodevelopmental disorders.

### The Early Start Denver Model

Several early intervention studies of the Early Start Denver Model, a comprehensive early intervention approach for toddlers with autism, are in progress.

MIND Institute, *continued on page 7*

Sonoma State University  
CalSTAT/CIHS  
1801 East Cotati Avenue  
Rohnert Park, CA 94928-3609

Non-profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Sonoma State  
University