

August 2011 Advocacy Newsletter

Information gathered by the Education, Family Engagement and Legislation/Resolutions Coordinators and the Health and Special Education Specialists to assist you in your advocacy efforts.



Education

- The Governor's office has announced that New York State will apply for **Federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge** funding intended to support state planning for dramatic improvement of early childhood learning programs: <http://governor.ny.gov/press/071511race>.
- **ASCD and the Common Core Standards Initiative** have published several resources related to the issues and challenges surrounding the Common Core State Standards. Here are a few highlights:
 - ASCD Common Core Data Sheet: <http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/policy/CommonCoreStds.pdf>
 - Other ASCD Common Core Resources: <http://www.ascd.org/public-policy/common-core.aspx#commoncore>
 - Overview of the Common Core State Standards Initiative: <http://www.corestandards.org/>
 - Common Core State Standards Initiative Math: <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/mathematics>
 - Common Core State Standards Initiative ELA: <http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards>



Environment

- Many products used in home construction and remodeling can damage indoor air quality. **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)** that release toxic gases are common in paint, varnish, carpets and manufactured wood products, but safer, VOC-free materials are also available. For more information on indoor air quality, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq>; iaq.aklung.org; <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/indoorairquality/index.html>; <http://www.iaqa.org>.
- **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** encourages the prevention and control of pests through low-impact methods that do not harm human health or the environment. Studies over the past decade show that schools using IPM not only use much less pesticide, but also save money and have fewer complaints about pests. For the full story see "School IPM: Good for Children, Easy on the Budget": <http://www.northeastipm.org/about-us/publications/ipm-insights/school-ipm-good-for-children-easy-on-the-budget1>.
- In July 2011 the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the **Cross-State Air Pollution Rule (CSAPR)**, which will improve air quality in the US by requiring 27 states to reduce power plant emissions that cross state boundaries and cause ozone and fine particle pollution in neighboring states. For interactive maps and more information go to: <http://www.epa.gov/crossstaterule/basic.html>.

- **Hydraulic fracturing (“hydrofracking”)** is a technique to extract natural gas located in deep shale deposits. Concerns over water and air pollution associated with this procedure (see <http://www.grassrootsinfo.org/fracking.html>) resulted in a moratorium on drilling in New York State due to expire in July 2011. The NYSDEC recently released a controversial Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on proposed HF mining in New York State; the entire report and details on the public comment period can be found at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/>.



Family Engagement

- National PTA supports the passage of the bipartisan **Family Engagement in Education Act**, which creates guidelines and incentives for school districts and states to use research-based means of achieving meaningful family engagement. This legislation was introduced in the House of Representatives (H.R.1821, co-sponsored by Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, 4th Cong. Dist., NY) and in the Senate (S.941) in May 2011, but at present both bills are still in committee. You can press for action by urging NY Senators Gillibrand and Schumer and your local member of Congress to help sponsor the Family Engagement in Education Act of 2011. Go to the Public Policy page of <http://www.pta.org> and click on “Take Action Now!”
- The summer days are waning, but **have you done your summer reading yet?** Most school children are expected to do summer reading, but what about Mom and Dad? Shared reading is a richly rewarding experience for parent and child, whether they literally read a book together, or read the same book separately and then talk it over together (a good method with teens). What better way to highlight the importance of reading while sharing in your child’s educational experience? Need a good book to start? Try the NYS library system’s recommended reading lists at: <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/libdev/summer/readlist.htm>.



Health and Wellness

- The US Department of Agriculture has revised its dietary guidelines, changing from the food pyramid to **ChooseMyPlate**. If you are using food pyramid materials, they should be discarded. For more information and handouts, go to: <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>.
- There are **research-based community education programs** available for your units/councils to use. You can review these programs at the Partnership For Drug Free America website at: <http://www.drugfree.org/community-education>.
- **Recent Product Recalls:**
 - TYLENOL® Extra Strength Caplets** 225 Count, Lot Number ABA619, UPC Code 300450444271. Consumers who purchased product from the lot in this recall should stop using the product and contact McNeil Consumer Healthcare at either <http://www.tylenol.com> or 1-888-222-6036 (Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time) for instructions about receiving a refund or product coupon. Consumers with medical concerns should contact their healthcare provider; any adverse reactions may also be reported to the FDA's MedWatch Adverse Event Reporting program: <http://www.fda.gov/medwatch/report.htm>.
 - Mini Stars Building Sets** recalled by Edushape due to choking hazard. For additional information, contact Edushape at 1-800-404-4744: <http://crtest.typepad.com/safetyalerts/2011/07/mini-stars-building-sets-recalled-by-edushape-due-to-choking-hazard.html>.
 - Target expands recall of **Circo Child Booster seats**: <http://crtest.typepad.com/safetyalerts/child-restraint-seats/>.



Special Education

- There were **three policy briefs** issued in May. The topics included Behavioral Intervention Plans, Functional Behavioral Assessments and Use of Time Out Rooms. This information can be found at: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/topicalbriefs/home.html>.
- The **Offices of Special Education and Operations and Management Services** have issued a memo about the relationship between approved preschool programs that provide Special Education Itinerant Teacher services and the special education teachers providing those services. The link is: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/SEIT-jointmemo.htm>.
- The New York State Education Department has posted information about upcoming **Professional Development workshops**. These include: Developing a Quality Individualized Education Program; Testing Accommodations; and Training of the Parent Member of the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) or Committee on Special Education (CSE). The dates /locations of the trainings have yet to be announced. Continue to check the New York State Education Department for additional information: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/rsetasc/profdevelop.htm>.
- **Disability.gov** is a Federal government website that has many different resources. Check out the Parent Involvement section. It has great resources on a wide variety of topics. https://www.disability.gov/education/parent_resources/parent_involvement.
- **NICHY (National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities)** provides a lot of information to help parents and educators in English as well as Spanish. There is a quick link which allows easy access to information at <http://www.nichy.org>. NICHY also has a page that combines resources for families as well as community members in one place: <http://nichy.org/families-community>.
- **It is never too early for our students to explore career opportunities.** JobTIPS is a free program designed to help individuals with disabilities explore career interests. The information can be found at: <http://www.do2learn.com/JobTIPS/index.html>.
- September will be here before we know it. **Back to school** can be a stressful time for all children, including those with special needs. Information to help make it less stressful can be found at: <http://www.education.com/topic/back-to-school/>; <http://www.specialeducationadvisor.com/top-ten-back-to-school-tips-for-parents-whose-children-have-an-iep/>.