



NEWSLETTER

CT FEAT PARENT RESOURCE MEETING

UNDERSTANDING EVALUATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

And What They Mean to Your Child's Education

Erica Roest, Principal of the Connecticut Center for Child Development in Milford, will discuss how evaluations and assessments can serve as the foundation to a successful intervention program at the upcoming CT FEAT Parent Resource Meeting on December 9, 2004.

The meeting will be held at the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill. Directions and a driving map to the Rocky Hill Congregational Church are available on the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org (see *Parent Resource Meetings*).

Ms. Roest is a frequent presenter at local, na-

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BOOK REVIEW

How to Compromise With Your School District Without Compromising Your Child

By Gary Mayerson

(Reviewed by Denise Buckenheimer)

Too often, parents walk out of their first IEP (Individualized Educational Plan) meeting feeling like they've been subjected to the special education version of "shock and awe." That won't happen to those who have read

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CT FEAT PARENT RESOURCE MEETING

tional, and international conferences focusing on assessment and diagnosis, generalization of skills into home and community environments, and teaching language and social skills to learners with autism. She holds a Master's degree in school psychology, a second Master's degree in Counseling Psychology, and a specialist certificate in infant and early childhood development. She has worked with children with autism and their families for over 12 years, is a certified school psychologist, and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst.

This meeting is open to parents and family members only and is free of charge. The other requirement is that participants agree to respect each other's confidentiality. There is no childcare available.

For more information, email us at ctfeat@ctfeat.org, or call the CT FEAT hotline at (860) 571-3888. Also check the CT FEAT hotline for SNOW or other weather-related cancellations. ▣

CT FEAT NEWSLETTER is published two times a year by Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment, Inc. (CT FEAT), a non-profit organization providing information, resources and support for the families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), including Autism (Autistic Disorder), Asperger's Syndrome, and other Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD). It is edited by Roberta Daversa and made possible through the generous contributions of supporters of CT FEAT.

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PLEASE SUPPORT CT FEAT

Your contributions help to pay for the costs associated with the CT FEAT web site, hotline, parent meetings, presentations, and other activities designed to provide information and support.

You can be sure that your contribution will go *directly to provide resources* that will enable families and other interested persons to learn about effective autism treatment and to help children with autism achieve their full potential.



Please consider sending a check to CT FEAT (address below), or participating in any of the following:

SBC COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

If you are a SBC customer, SBC will pay CT FEAT 5% of every dollar you spend on long distance calling. You can sign up today by calling 800-635-7638.

The UNITED WAY

Even though CT FEAT is not listed on the pledge card, it is eligible to receive your donation. Most United Way organizations will forward your gift to us if you write the CT FEAT address (below) and telephone number (860-571-3888) on the pledge card, or write the information in on your electronic pledge (click on "Write-In" on the designation page).

Donations should be sent to:

**CT FEAT,
P.O. Box 370352,
West Hartford, CT 06137**

Thank You!

Dear Readers

This past spring, CT FEAT published its *ABA Resource Guide*, a listing of reviews of books, videos and articles on effective intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders, in place of our usual Spring newsletter. Since then a number of you have inquired about the newsletter. I'm happy to reassure our readers that the CT FEAT Newsletter is alive and well, and I hope you will find this issue worth the wait.

At the top of our list of exciting news to share with our readers is the **ongoing development of college and university programs** within our state, aimed at meeting the growing need for qualified professionals in autism intervention for children of all ages. Advocacy and efforts to increase awareness of, and access to, effective treatment and education programs, by CT FEAT and other organizations, has played

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From the CT FEAT Board of Directors

This issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter received additional support from memorial contributions in honor of L. Peter Cornwall of Stamford and New Canaan CT. Mr. Cornwall, a retired pilot, was also a noted author, railroad historian and founder of the Danbury Railroad Museum.

Additional funding was also received in honor of Michael Neag, Sr., of Torrington CT. Mr. Neag, a retired police officer, was a devoted family member of a child with autism.

CT FEAT appreciates the generosity of the friends and families of Mr. Cornwall and Mr. Neag, and the thoughtfulness of these special gifts to help provide resources to the autism community in Connecticut.



Holiday Gift Ideas for Children

(Beth Lambert)

This is the time of year many of us are faced with choosing an appropriate present for a child with special needs. This can be very difficult because the child must have the skill to use the gift and also enjoy playing with it. I generally look for toys and other gifts that will encourage my son to use and generalize what he has learned "at the table" to new situations and materials, or will help develop appropriate play skills. Below are a few places to look for a variety of gifts that can make your child's holiday special. Some also offer gift certificates.

Different Roads to Learning specializes in educational materials needed for autism intervention (ABA or Verbal Behavior) programs and offers a good selection of games and puzzles that facilitate appropriate play and generalization of skills. They also offer parents and educators a broad selection of books, videotapes and electronic resources to run an effective intervention program.

Different Roads to Learning 1-800-853-1057 www.difflearn.com.

Pocket Full of Therapy was conceived and established in 1989 by Michelle Tobias and Ilene Goldkopf, who are Occupational Therapists. Their initial goal was to assist occupational therapists and others concerned with the development of children in finding materials needed to provide effective, appropriate, motivating and fun pediatric therapy and learning. Their catalog is arranged into categories pertinent to development. This makes classroom, home programs and gift giving recommendations easier.

Pocket Full of Therapy, Inc. 1-800-PFOT-124 or www.pfot.com.

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SERC Focus on Autism

Designing and Evaluating Discrete Trial Intervention for Young Children with Autism:

A Workshop for Experienced Practitioners

Dr. Kathleen Dyer, Clinical Supervisor of the River Street Autism Program (Hartford), will lead a training workshop for professionals and family members who are experienced in discrete trial teaching and data methods for young children with autism. The workshop will focus on the integration of discrete trial



teaching with a comprehensive, best-practices treatment approach. A data-based, decision-making approach to intervention will be presented with emphasis on continuing program evaluation and adjustment.

Opportunities for follow-up training and on-site consultation will be made available to a select number of Birth to 3 and public preschool teams who attend this workshop.

Dr. Dyer, a Certified Speech Language Pathologist and a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, has over 25 years of research and intervention experience in autism. She has collaborated with many pioneers of the field including Ivar Lovaas, Robert Koegel and Andrew Bondy. Dr. Dyer has been a faculty member at several colleges and universities, including the University of Massachusetts and Temple University.

Workshop participants will learn methods for initial evaluation of students' strengths and needs, how to understand preference (reinforcer) assessments and how to design initial intervention programs. Dr. Dyer will coach participants in identifying and utilizing best practices as a foundation for discrete trial programs.

The conference will be held on Tuesday, January 11, 2005 at the Radisson in Cromwell, from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Registration fee is \$30 and the **deadline to register is December 14, 2004**. Additional information and registration forms are available at <http://www.ctserc.org/calendar/autism.shtml>. Contact: Carol Hotz at (860) 632-1485, ext. 232.☐

Social Competence and Adolescents with Asperger Disorder

Peter F. Gerhardt, Ed.D.

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the October 2004 issue of the Organization for Autism Research Newsletter, The OARacle. For more information about OAR, please visit them on the Web at www.researchautism.org where you can read current and back issues of The OARacle. You can also contact OAR by telephone at 703-351-5031.

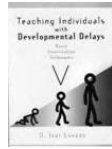
Dr. Gerhardt will discuss Sexuality and Autism Spectrum Disorders at a CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (ASRC) workshop on January 15, 2005 as part of the "Pre-Teen/Teen Parenting" series. For more information, call CT-ASRC at 203-248-5222 or visit them on the Web at www.ct-asrc.org.

Introduction

At the heart of an Asperger Disorder (AS) diagnosis, and subsequently, any intervention, lies the issue of social understanding, skill sets and, ultimately, social competence (e.g. Tantum, 2002). But what do we mean by social competence? Gesten, *et al.* (1987) noted that social competence refers to a generalized "summary judgment of performance" (p.27) across environments. Social

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BOOK REVIEW



Teaching Individuals With Developmental Delays: Basic Intervention Techniques

By Ivar Lovaas, Ph.D.

(Reviewed by Grace Conroy)

Ivar Lovaas, a professor of psychology at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and director of the Lovaas Institute for Early Intervention (LIFE), is widely regarded as the father of behavioral treatment for autism spectrum disorders. For over 40 years, he and his colleagues have been conducting research designed to develop an optimal autism treatment protocol.

This book provides a theoretical overview of “Lovaas” style treatment (as it is popularly referred to), as well as a detailed description of its teaching techniques and goals.

Lovaas departs from a lot of the mainstream thinking about “autism” in his refusal to attach much importance to the various categorical “labels” (e.g. “autistic disorder,” “PDD-NOS,” “Asperger syndrome”). Likewise, he is fairly scornful of efforts to articulate some sort of comprehensive “theory” to explain autism. Over the course of his long career, Lovaas has witnessed how frequently these labels and theories get revised and how little they have contributed to the development of effective treatment approaches.

Regardless of the specific label, these children typically exhibit behavioral excesses (e.g. self-stimulation, repetitiveness) and deficits (e.g. imitation, motivation, attention) that, if untreated, completely derail the development of normal social and learning behaviors.

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Key Innovations of the UCLA Young Autism Project

(Roberta Daversa)



In his 1987 paper, *Behavioral Treatment and Normal Educational and Intellectual Functioning in Young Autistic Children* (a copy of which can be found on the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org),

O. Ivar Lovaas documented remarkable gains for many of the children in his study. Almost half of the 19 children who received early intensive behavior modification achieved normal intellectual functioning within 3 years. They learned to speak and were able to successfully pass first grade and achieve normal IQ scores on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-R).

It's important to note that the children in the intensive therapy group received 40 hours of systematic treatment based squarely on the principles of learning, and that their parents and other caregivers extended therapeutic interaction with the children beyond their one-to-one learning sessions. The idea was to replicate the intensity and repertoire of learning that a normally developing child experiences. Keeping the child engaged as much of the time as possible also minimized the amount of time that the child could spend practicing inappropriate behaviors.

Other clinicians had used behavior modification (applied behavior analysis) in autism treatment and research, but the treatment protocol designed by Lovaas introduced significant innovations to autism treatment, and hastened its transformation into a community-oriented, science-based, and effective standard of treatment.

• Place of Intervention

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The place of service was moved from the institution to the child's home and community. The objective was to teach the children to function in the real world. Home based intervention also eliminated the influence of inappropriate behaviors from other children with autism.

▪ **Intensity of Intervention**

Lovaas hypothesized that the intensity of instruction for these children, 40 hours a week of direct one to one with additional carryover by parents (to extend teaching to almost all waking hours) would approach the influence of the natural environment on a typically developing child.

▪ **Age of Intervention**

All children in the UCLA Young Autism Project were under 4 years of age when they began the program. Lovaas speculated that younger children would maintain and generalize skills more easily than older children and that it would be easier to successfully mainstream children into preschool than to attempt mainstreaming an older child into a higher grade. He assumed that social integration with young peers would be easier to teach because of the relatively simple dynamics of social relationships of young children.

▪ **Role of Parents and Other Significant People**

Parents and other adults in the child's community were trained to be actively involved in teaching the children. In this way, the parents could maintain and support the gains made by the children. *Lovaas empowered parents and utilized them as part of the solution rather than considering them part of the problem as had previously been the case.*

▪ **Teaching Behaviors in Small Units: "Discrete Trials"**

Normal behaviors were broken down into

simple steps and taught in a specific hierarchy.

▪ **Joy in Learning**

Learning programs were designed to be more rewarding to the child than engaging in self-stimulatory or other inappropriate behaviors, and to foster a sense of competence in the students.

One of the goals was to make it more fun to tune in and learn than to spin or flap or wander around the room . . . the two fundamental goals, apart from the content being taught, are to make the child want to learn and to make the child feel that he can learn. That he is competent. (Lovaas quoted in Johnson, 1994.)

▪ **Systematic Data Collection**

Comprehensive data were recorded and used to document the child's learning and to guide program decisions.

▪ **Development of a Training Manual**

Another major contribution of the UCLA Early Autism Project was the publication of a comprehensive, reader friendly "how to" book for parents and teachers. *Teaching Developmentally Disabled Children*, also called The ME Book, was published in 1981 (PRO-ED, Inc) and gave parents, teachers and other interested people clear instruction on how to establish appropriate behaviors and how to effectively avoid or address problem behaviors in children with autism. Dr. Lovaas' revised training manual, *TEACHING INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS: BASIC INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES*, published in 2002, is reviewed elsewhere in this issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter.

References:

Johnson, C., (1994). Interview With Ivar Lovaas, The Advocate (Autism Society of America), Nov-Dec 1994

Lovaas, O.I., (1981). *Teaching Developmentally Disabled Children: The Me Book*. Baltimore : University Park ☐

Lovaas Interview Available On-line
Parents and educators interested in learning more about Lovaas' work, without the common misconceptions, will find this article from the Autism Society of America helpful. http://www.asotoronto.org/PDF/IBI_Lovas_interview.pdf

BOOK REVIEW
State of Connecticut
Autism Resource Guide

Edited by
CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center

(Reviewed by: Denise Buckenheimer)

One of the most difficult things as a parent of a child (or adult) with autism is to find and avail yourself of the resources available here in Connecticut. Up until this point, there really has not been any guide as comprehensive as this one in listing resources specific to autism in our state. The Connecticut Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT ASRC) should be commended for the arduous task of compiling all this data in one book; all families with children on the autism spectrum can benefit greatly from it.

This guide is divided into three sections: the first dealing with family issues (lifespan, healthcare, toilet training), the second deals with the resources here in our state which I've already mentioned, and the third with special education law and tips on dealing with the school.

The first section is the weakest, perhaps because it veers from touching on some very specific teaching issues (i.e. toilet training) to poems on special needs (i.e. Welcome to Holland) to helpful hints for raising a child with Asperger's disorder. It includes a very basic guide to treatment options. However, when a child is first diagnosed, this is the most crucial information of all and well deserving of a more thorough and thoughtful analysis. While I found some good information here, this is not the place to start for new parents.

The second section on resources includes a listing of all state agencies and programs that may be helpful; schools, camps and recreation programs, catalogs, and things to do with the kids. This section is extremely helpful for families looking for state

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How To
Improve Your ABA Program

Christina Burk, M.A

Editor's Note: Christina Burk is a consulting behavior analyst in private practice in New York. She specializes in home programs for early learners based on the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA), including verbal behavior (VB) and natural environment teaching (NET). Ms. Burk offers regular training programs for parents and professionals. For more information, visit her web site at www.christinaburkaba.com. The following article appears in its entirety at the author's web site and is reprinted in an abridged form here with permission.



Often I hear of children "plateauing" in their home programs. While one can't just say that "a kid is bored" or "a team is boring" without knowing that child and the situation specifically, the things mentioned here are effective teaching practices that should always be in place.

First of all, **effective use of reinforcement:** It's easy to forget what reinforcement is -- it's not what YOU think should be reinforcing (even if it usually is, or was in the past) but what functions as a reinforcer for your child at any given moment. Something that's usually not a strong reinforcer (water, for example) can become one if the situation is set up in a certain way (after feeding the child a lot of salty pretzels). Conversely, something that's usually a very strong reinforcer will lose its effectiveness once the child is satiated.

Reinforcer effectiveness and preference need to be assessed constantly. That's one reason why I tell all my teams to probe every few trials with a mini-preference test. It's very easy. Hold up two reinforcers (A

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and B) and say, "What do you want?" or "Which one?" or some sort of choice antecedent. If the child chooses A, then offer a choice between A and C. If the child still chooses A, you know it's a strong reinforcer. This only takes a minute and it ensures that the child is always working for something s/he wants. Whatever form of reinforcer assessment you use, just make sure to note whether the item is truly functioning as a reinforcer. Is the behavior you're targeting increasing in occurrence as a result of the consequence you're delivering? If not, the item is not functioning as a reinforcer.

Schedule of reinforcement is another important element of effective teaching. You can be assessing reinforcers constantly, have a buffet of preferred items, and still not be using the reinforcers effectively enough because the schedule is too thin, too thick, or static. Are you increasing the frequency of reinforcement for difficult tasks? Thinning the schedule of reinforcement for easier tasks? Are you differentially reinforcing depending on the task? If the rate is good, are you reinforcing correctly? Shaping up responses through effective consequence of those responses? If the child is working really nicely, are you ultimately punishing that behavior by working him/her too long or too hard, since s/he's "on a roll"? Are you trying to make yourself more reinforcing, rather than giving up or getting frustrated, if the session isn't going well? Are you reinforcing collateral behaviors, such as attending, and "catching the child being good"? Are you yourself a reinforcer for the child? There's a lot more to reinforcement than meets the eye.

Another consideration is the **rate of teaching**. Is the material presented too quickly or too slowly? Are all therapists familiar enough with the curriculum to be truly engaged in teaching or are they paying more attention to the data, or the materials, and not enough to the child? Are they running the programs correctly? Are they prompting enough? Too much? Are they attuned to the

child such that their teaching behavior is shaped by the child's behavior? Finally, are the tasks appropriate? If the teaching is top-notch and the child is still not learning, then the task itself is probably the culprit.

There are so many variables in an ABA program to keep track of, but the teaching is probably the most important; curriculum is a close second. The behavior of an effective therapist is constantly shaped by the child's behavior. Teaching is a collection of moment-to-moment reactions and decisions.



Data are the record of whether or not the child is learning and are to be used as a guide for effective teaching and program changes. If you're not seeing ascending trends and criteria being met, something in the teaching needs to be changed.

What I try to impart to team members when I train them is not to copy one particular person's teaching style, but to **internalize the science** as much as possible. I think therapists get into trouble when they think that a certain implementation IS the science of ABA.

Teach the skill, not the materials. A curriculum is a list of skills that you want to teach your child, not a list of specific programs that are divorced from real life. You can target the same skill in many different ways, which I think is the true message of natural environment teaching (NET). If you think of the skill, and allow yourself to see all the different ways in which that skill shows up in the environment, you open your eyes to all the teaching opportunities in the environment. I feel that if I can get staff to really understand that, they're on their way to becoming more effective teachers. ▣

Rhythms of Grace

Torrington Church Welcomes All to Child Centered Worship Service

(Roberta Daversa)

Editor's Note: Quality programs that support families of special needs children in ongoing community activities, such as the one described here, are uncommon yet extremely important assets to the families that CT FEAT serves. We encourage readers to contact us about other community outreach programs that we can highlight in the CT FEAT newsletter, including other faith-based or secular opportunities. You can send suggestions directly to the CT FEAT Newsletter at EditorCTFEAT@aol.com, or contact us through our web site, www.ctfeat.org.

On the first Sunday of most months the Trinity Episcopal Church in Torrington welcomes special needs families from all faith traditions to an informal worship service.

The service starts with a relaxed get-together in which children and their families "hang out" and welcome one another. The informal chapel is prepared with kid-centered play items and children are encouraged to explore and interact during the gathering. Then a short, adapted bible story sets the theme for supported play time in several related learning centers, which have included favorites like a water table, shaving cream art, parachute toss and various musical activities. Worship with music and the breaking of bread follow for those who wish to participate.



Last month we celebrated St. Francis Day with an interactive story, complete with props, about St. Francis' love for animals and other nature. While the children partici-

pated by answering questions about specific animals and such, family members could take a few moments to reflect upon the spirit of the story beyond the concrete elements that were highlighted for our children. After the story we played with a variety of toy animals, then moved outside into an enclosed courtyard for a scavenger hunt of leaves and pinecones. Back inside, we could decorate our nature prizes with paints

The services, which start at 1 PM, offer families an opportunity to introduce children to group worship in a supported environment.

and markers, or play hide and seek with our found objects in a large pail of rice before gathering on pillows on the carpet for communion.

The services, which start at 1 PM, offer families an opportunity to introduce children to

group worship in a supported environment. My son enjoys the play centers and I appreciate the opportunity for modified group worship in a stress-free zone. The church is a few minutes off Route 8 in Torrington. The quiet, picturesque ride through the Waterbury-Torrington corridor adds an extra nice break from our regularly traveled paths for us.

The program is open to all families. It is lovingly run and skillfully adapted by the Reverend Audrey Scanlan, Curate, and Mrs. Linda Snyder, Director of Children and Youth Ministries of the Trinity Episcopal Church, 220 Prospect Street in Torrington. The Fall 2004 program will continue with services on Sunday, December 5, 2004 and Sunday, January 2, 2005 at 1 PM. Directions and service schedules are available at the Trinity Episcopal web site, <http://www.trinitytorrington.org/>. You can call Audrey or Linda with further questions at 860-482-6027. □



LACASA Seeks to Expand Membership and Services in Northwest Corner

Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association, Inc. (LACASA) is currently seeking nominations for members to its Board of Directors. It welcomes participation on all levels from family members and professionals who share an interest in working toward improvement of education, treatment and support services for individuals and families with autism and related disabilities.

LACASA is a non-profit partnership, established in 2001 by a group of dedicated families and professionals. It strives to develop parent support networks, form professional learning communities, infuse best practices into local programs and services and create programs of study that focus on autism.

One of the main projects of LACASA has been the formation of the **Northwest Connecticut Education Partnership for Autism Spectrum Disorders and Related Disabilities**, a collaboration of state agencies, the University of Connecticut, Northwestern CT Community College, CT FEAT and various service providers and public school administrators. The Partnership is committed to develop higher education and other professional training programs for individuals interested in working with persons with autism and related developmental disabilities. This endeavor has resulted in the development of specialized autism focus degree and non-degree programs through NWCC and UConn, and has set the groundwork for the establishment of a state-wide, nationally approved certification program in applied behavior analysis (ABA) through the UConn Bachelor of General Studies Program. (See page 13 of this

newsletter for more information on those programs.)

For more information on joining LACASA, please contact Diana LaRocco, President, via email at lacasa@hartford.edu. Board nominations will continue through December 30. ☐

Northwest CT Parents and Professionals

Needs Assessment

Convenient On-line Survey Available

Please Help Us to Help You

The **Northwest Connecticut Education Partnership: Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Related Disabilities** is interested in understanding the needs of professionals and families working with individuals with ASD and related disabilities in Northwest Connecticut. Needs assessment results will be used to develop strategies to assist families and professionals to work more effectively with these individuals. Please take a few minutes of your time to help us meet YOUR needs by answering questions about:

- *Needs of Students and Families with ASD and Related Disabilities.*
- *Needs of Service Providers for Students with ASD and Related Disabilities*
- *Potential Services*

To participate in this convenient on-line survey, please contact John Mongeau at Education Connection by e-mail at mongeau@educationconnection.org or by telephone, (869) 567-0863.☐

(Continued from page 3) **DEAR READER**

an important role in the development of these higher education opportunities for people who have an interest in working with children with autism spectrum disorders. This issue highlights 3 of these new academic programs, the Behavioral Studies Program at Northwestern CT Community College (NCCC), the Applied Behavior Analysis Certification Program at UConn, and the undergraduate ABA degree program at Eastern Connecticut State University. The two former programs resulted from the successful collaboration of parent groups (including CT FEAT), state agencies, UConn, NCCC, school districts and community human service providers. The Northwest Partnership was organized by Litchfield County Autism Spectrum Association (LACASA) a few years ago.

Parents and professionals alike will be interested to know of the other important learning opportunities that SERC, The CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (ASRC), and others are offering in the coming months, listed in our Conferences section. As usual, the newsletter includes excellent book reviews of recently published autism resources, and a helpful article on finding special gifts for special children.

In addition to the newsletter, CT FEAT has been very busy planning a number of parent resource meetings and parent-professional workshops for the coming year.

The **CT FEAT ABA Scholarship recipients**, certified special education teachers Elizabeth Freitas of Wethersfield, and Stephanie Jacius of Ellington, have begun their graduate-level ABA certification programs. Both of these outstanding professionals have been working with children with autism in ABA based public school programs for quite some time and we are pleased to support their continued professional development.

This year, the CT FEAT Board of directors approved a program of donations to public and academic libraries of books and videos on effective autism intervention. And we continue to network with other advocacy groups in our state.

Our **CT FEAT Telephone Hotline volunteers and web site managers** have been busier than ever, keeping up with the need to provide information to families and service providers.

All this is possible through the generosity of our supporters and volunteers. We are grateful for all of their help.

CT FEAT is now in our 8th year of providing **information and networking that empowers parents and those who work with our children to be more effective in helping them reach their full potential.** Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution to help us sustain and expand these important services.

On behalf of the CT FEAT Newsletter staff, and the CT FEAT Board of Directors, I wish you joy and peace during the holiday season and throughout the New Year.

Roberta Daversa
Editor, CT FEAT Newsletter

www.ctfeat.org

ABA Job Connections

Updated Conference Listing

CT FEAT Newsletter Archives

Recommended Resource Materials

ABA Programs and Consultants Listing

How to Join CT FEAT PARENTS ONLY LISTSERV

Eastern Connecticut State University
UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM IN BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

Deirdre Lee Fitzgerald and Marcie Mastronunzio
Eastern Connecticut State University

Eastern Connecticut State University has been recognized as the first Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB) approved undergraduate training program in Connecticut. Students are provided with learning opportunities that include coursework and practica within the program. Research opportunities are also available for students who wish to further their knowledge and challenge their interests in behavior analysis.

Behavior analysis coursework at Eastern meets 2005 BACB standards. Coursework within the program includes approved courses in Principles of Learning, Behavior Change, and Behaviorism and Learning Theory. Through these courses, students are taught basic ideologies of behavior analysis, the application of these principles and ethical concerns related to the implementation of behavior analysis programs. Students are given in-classroom instruction, and are able to develop their skills through contact with consumers.

Additional elective courses are offered in Educational Technology, Organizational Behavior Management, Childhood Disorders, and Within Subject Research.

The program offers opportunities through the community and local businesses for students to gain single course experiences in the field of behavior analysis including: teaching assistantships in home and center-based programs, special education classrooms, and inclusive classrooms. The practica also offers full semester Advanced ABA Internships for students who want to gain experience in more professional

environments.

Each component of the Behavior Analyst Program at ECSU is structured to fit the individual needs of students who are striving to become behavior analysts.

The program is currently accepting students and seeking community partnerships for employment placement networks.

Remote training is another benefit of the behavior analysis program at ECSU. Distance education as well as on-site training with custom designed programming are offered.

Objectives of the Behavior Analysis program at Eastern are to guide students through the appropriate steps to becoming Board Certified Associate Behavior Analysts (BCABA), and to contribute to the growing pool of highly qualified behavior analysts.

The program is currently accepting students and seeking community partnerships for employment placement networks.

For more information on the undergraduate Behavior Analyst Program at ECSU, or to discuss community employment partnerships, please contact:

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Applied Behavior Analysis University of Connecticut

ABA Courses Begin January 2005
On-line Courses Slated for Fall 2005

The need for well-trained and professionally certified behavior analysts to work in schools, homes, residential settings, and other human service sites is rapidly growing. UConn is now offering courses in applied behavior analysis based on national standards in preparation for certification as a Board Certified Associate Behavior Analyst (BCABA).

The proposed BCABA program is intended to meet the needs of a diverse audience and is specially tuned to the needs of working professionals, especially:

- Teachers
- Early Interventionists
- Paraprofessionals
- Therapists working with children with special needs, including individuals with autism
- Individuals with Bachelor's degrees in Psychology, Social Work, Education, Human Services, and others

Options for students at UConn are varied to meet individual needs. Students may opt to complete:

- a Bachelor of General Studies degree with a Focus in Behavior Analysis
- they may take the behavior analysis courses in conjunction with another baccalaureate program
- or they may also opt to take only the courses post-baccalaureate to prepare them for certification.

Interested students, faculty, or employers are encouraged to contact Deirdre Fitzgerald, Ph.D., BCBA, Program Director at deirdre.fitzgerald@uconn.edu.

Behavioral Studies Program at Northwestern Connecticut Community College

The NCCC Behavioral Studies Associate Degree program provides students with the strong background in basic psychology needed to be successful in a BS degree program, or to prepare for a career as a paraprofessional. Graduates of this program may transfer easily to programs such as those offered through the University of Connecticut BGS program at the Torrington campus, UCONN Neag School of Education, and UCONN School of Family Studies in Storrs. The UCONN programs further prepare students for positions in Human Services and Special Education.

ASSOCIATE IN SCIENCE DEGREE Program Outcomes

Upon successful completion of all program requirements, graduates should be able to:

- Understand the psychosocial, cognitive, and physical changes that occur across the life span.
- Demonstrate proficiency in understanding the legal and ethical responsibilities of working with individuals with developmental disabilities.
- Identify educational issues pertinent to varying levels of ability.
- Understand the importance of consistency in treatment across settings.
- Demonstrate proficiency in following simple behavior modification programs.

Courses include:

- PSY* 204 Child and Adolescent Development
- PSY* 208 Psych of Adult Development & Aging
- PSY* 245 Abnormal Psychology
- RLS* 122 Therapeutic Recreation
- PSY* 260 Psych of the Exceptional Child
- PSY* 298 Special Topics in Psychology
- PSY* 258 Behavior Modification

For more information, please contact Robert Beck at rbeck@nwcc.commnet.edu, or call the NCCC registrar (860) 738-6314. □

CONFERENCES, WORKSHOPS AND LECTURES

This conference listing focuses on effective autism treatment practices primarily in and around Connecticut. The information also appears at the CT FEAT web site (www.ctfeat.org). It is periodically updated and circulated on the "parents only" CT FEAT listserv. Details about joining the listserv are available at the CT FEAT web site. At www.ctfeat.org.

Other presentations of interest and fundraising events are listed separately.

Please verify registration deadlines with event sponsors.

DECEMBER 2004

December 3, 2004, White Plains NY
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. (registration begins at 8 a.m.)
ACQUIRING TOOLS FOR TEACHING INDIVIDUALS WITH LEARNING CHALLENGES

Presented by the New York Society for Applied Behavior Analysis (NYSABA)

Total of 16 workshops, 4 track sessions of 90 minute talks.

** CEUs available for BCBA's & Speech Therapists

Speakers will include:

Mark Sundberg, David Celiberti, Ray Cepeda, Bobby Newman, and others.

Cost: \$75.00 (include a year's membership in NYSABA)

Group discounts are available.

Additional information and registration forms are available at the NYSABA web site, www.nysaba.org, or by contacting Dr. Bobby Newman at darkoverlordaba@prodigy.net.

December 4 & 5, 2004, Brookville, New York
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
ANALYZING AND AMELIORATING LANGUAGE ACQUISITION BARRIERS FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Dr. Mark Sundberg BCBA

Sponsored by The Elija Foundation

This workshop is designed for those individuals who have already participated in an introductory verbal behavior workshop, or have a working knowledge of B. F. Skinner's analysis of verbal behavior. The first day will focus on a detailed

analysis of several types of "language barriers" that may impede language acquisition. The second day of the workshop will focus on language skills such as advanced manding, intraverbal and RFFC (listener skills), beginning sentences, and the use of reading as a teaching tool. A new sequence (curriculum) of these verbal skills will be presented. Additional topics discussed over the two day workshop will include staff training, behavior problems, vocal development, classroom design, IEPs, augmentative communication, inclusion, peer interaction, self stimulation, common teaching errors, and the power of Behavior Analysis as an ongoing conceptual tool to guide the intervention program. Fee: \$175 Elija Members/\$200 Non-Members/\$250 walk-in/late. Registration information and forms are available at the Elija web site, www.elija.org, or by calling the Foundation at 516-433-4321.

December 15, 2004, Cromwell, CT
AN INTRODUCTION TO AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Marianne Barton, Ph.D.

Presented by SERC Focus on Autism Initiative

This awareness-level session will enhance the knowledge of school personnel and families to meet the educational needs of students with autism spectrum disorders. The variability of student needs and learning profiles will be discussed. Information on instructional strategies, interventions, and curricular accommodations and modifications for students in kindergarten to grade 8 will be provided.

Participants will: explore various characteristics

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of autism spectrum disorders, in addition to diagnosis and assessment considerations;

discuss how to connect diagnostic and assessment information to the student's IEP in order to improve student success and achievement; and examine strategies and intervention options for school-aged children with autism spectrum disorders in kindergarten to grade 8, including specialized treatments and inclusive strategies, and how they enhance student outcomes.

\$25/person. Additional information and registration forms are available at <http://www.ctserc.org/calendar/autism.shtml>

Contact: Carol Hotz (860) 632-1485, ext. 232

JANUARY 2005

January 7, 2005

Addressing the Social Skills Needs of Elementary School Students with Autism Grades K-5

Kari Dunn Buron, MS

Presented by SERC Focus on Autism Initiative

Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) struggle to make sense of an overwhelming and often confusing social world. This session will allow participants to explore the programming and teaching of social understanding in various settings for students with ASD in kindergarten to grade 5. Participants will expand their knowledge base with respect to curriculum components, instructional strategies, and available supports and resources relating to the social skills development of elementary school students with autism spectrum disorders. Additional issues will be explored, including staff training, development of quality Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), assessment of social skills, and strategies and techniques for addressing social skills deficits.

\$25/person. Register by December 10, 2004

Additional information and registration forms are available at <http://www.ctserc.org/calendar/autism.shtml> Contact: Carol Hotz (860) 632-1485, ext. 232

January 11, 2005, Cromwell, CT

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

DESIGNING AND EVALUATING DIS-

CRETE TRIAL INTERVENTION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN WITH AUTISM: A WORKSHOP FOR EXPERIENCED PRACTITIONERS

Kathleen Dyer, Ph.D., CCC-SLP. BCBA

Clinical Supervisor, River Street Autism Program, Hartford

Sponsored by SERC Focus on Autism Initiative

(Please see page 4 of this issue of the CT FEAT Newsletter for more information on this workshop.)

Participants (parents and professionals) will:

- learn methods for initial assessment of strengths and needs;
- understand methods of assessing the preferences of young children, ages birth to 5;
- design initial intervention programs;
- identify how best practices in the field of autism provide a foundation for discrete trial intervention;
- employ an ongoing, data-based, decision-making model for program evaluation and adjustment in order to improve the development and achievement of young children with autism.

Interested persons should **register by December 14, 2004.**

\$30 per person. Registration forms are available at <http://www.ctserc.org/calendar/autism.shtml>. Contact: Carol Hotz at (860) 632-1485, ext. 232.

Opportunities for follow-up consultation and on-site training will be made available to a select number of Birth-to-Three and public preschool teams who attend this workshop. Contact SERC for more information.

January 15, 2005, Hamden, CT

SNOW DATE: January 22, 2005

9 am to 1 pm

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR CHILD'S CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS AT HOME AND IN THE COMMUNITY

Michael Powers, Psy.D.

Sponsored by the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT ASRC)

Dr. Powers has extensive background in working with children with autism, families and school districts involved in autism treatment. He is considered one of the country's leading

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experts in autism spectrum disorders. He is the Director of the Center for Children with Special Needs in Glastonbury, CT and is on staff at Yale Child Study Center Developmental Disabilities Clinic. He has published numerous articles on the subject of ASD and written a number of well received books on this topic. Coffee/Tea and bagels will be served during 8:30 am check-in.

\$30 per person. Registration information and forms are available at the CT ASRC web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at (203) 248-5222.

January 15, 2005. Hamden, CT
SNOW DATE: January 22, 2005
9:00 am to 1:00 pm

SEXUALITY AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS

Peter Gerhardt, Ed.D.

Sponsored by the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT ASRC)

This workshop is designed for parents of pre-teen and teen-aged children with autism spectrum disorders. An important topic and one that is often neglected. Dr. Gerhardt is truly an expert in this area. Dr. Gerhardt has been on faculty at Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology. He was Director of Transition and Employment Services at the Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center where he worked extensively with people on the Autism Spectrum. He has founded Social Skills and Support Groups for persons with Asperger's Syndrome. Coffee/Tea and bagels will be served during 8:30 am check-in.

\$30 per person. Registration information and forms are available at the CT ASRC web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at (203) 248-5222.

January 19, and March 8, 2005, Wethersfield, CT

CONDUCTING FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENTS AND DEVELOPING BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS

Gary Stoner, Ph.D.

University of Massachusetts Amherst
Regina Oliver

Consultant, SERC

Sponsored by SERC Positive Behavior Support Initiative

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is an analysis of challenging behavior and the context in which it occurs. It considers the predictors of problem behaviors, consequences that may maintain or discourage the behavior, and the function or need that the behavior serves for the student. Upon completion of an FBA, a team has a set of information that can be used to develop an

effective Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). This awareness level session will focus first on observational methods for conducting an FBA and summarizing the collected information into a hypothesis statement. Participants will then conduct an FBA back in their school and are asked to bring their data back on day two. Subsequently, participants will use their hypothesis statement and FBA information to formulate a BIP that includes modifications for instruction and the learning environment, skills to teach the student, and consequences that reinforce positive behaviors and minimize inappropriate ones. Participants in this session will:

- explore various instruments and methods to collect, document, and understand the function of student behavior;

- utilize the collected data to formulate hypothesis statements that stipulate the contextual and functional components of student behavior;

- determine appropriate antecedent strategies, alternative skills, reinforcement strategies, and consequence strategies among students, grades K-12, who present challenging behaviors; and

- collaborate to write behavior intervention plans for students in order to improve student outcomes. Register By: December 23, 2004
\$40.00 per person, \$60.00 per team (up to four team members)

Contact: Cortney Sharpe (860) 632-1485, ext. 245

January 28, 2005, Brookville, New York
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

FROM SCHOOL TO REAL LIFE: THE APPLICATION OF BEHAVIORAL TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN NATURAL SETTINGS

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Randy Horowitz, M.S.Ed., S.A.S.

Sponsored by The Elija Foundation.

Children with autism often demonstrate difficulty generalizing the skills and behavior they learn in structured teaching settings to “real life” settings. In addition, some children have difficulty acquiring appropriate skills and behavior in natural contexts. This workshop is designed to provide parents and educators with strategies that can promote skill acquisition in home and community environments. Particular attention will be paid to designing and implementing effective skill acquisition and behavior reduction programs that prepare individuals with autism for participation in less structured environments; (e.g., doctor and dentist exams, haircuts, eating out, running errands and recreational activities). Skills that occur across multiple environments and those that improve the quality of life for individuals with autism and their families will be outlined. A model of providing effective support will also be described. Videotapes will illustrate the application of research based teaching techniques in “real life” activities. \$75.00 Non Members - \$50.00 For ELIJA Members - \$100.00 For WALK IN/LATE (after 1-21-05)

Registration information and forms are available at the Elija web site, www.elija.org, or by calling the Foundation at 516 433 4321.

FEBRUARY 2005

February 3, 2005, Cromwell, CT

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS, KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5

Sheila Wagner, M.Ed., Assistant Director Monarch Program, Emory University

Sponsored by SERC Focus on Autism Initiative

The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires school personnel to carefully consider placement of children with disabilities in general education settings. Responsible inclusive practice refers to ensuring and maximizing student success in general education classrooms by providing classroom

teachers with the support to meet a student’s needs. Research suggests that success is determined by the ability of school personnel and the family to match education approaches, interventions, and program components to the child’s unique profile of social and academic needs (Dunlap, 1999). This workshop will focus on a rationale and philosophical foundation for implementing responsible inclusive practices for elementary-aged children with autism spectrum disorders in grades K-5. Strategies and content topics may include:

Assessing the learning environment

Addressing social skills needs

Training typical peers

Providing Positive Behavior Supports

IEP development

Teaching strategies

Data collection

Transitions

Home/school partnerships

Interested persons should register by January 5, 2005.

\$25 per person. Registration forms are available at <http://www.ctserc.org/calendar/autism.shtml>. Contact: Carol Hotz at (860) 632-1485, ext. 232.

February 4, 2005, Cromwell, CT

9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

EDUCATING STUDENTS WITH AUTISM IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS, GRADES 6 THROUGH 12

Sheila Wagner, M.Ed., Assistant Director Monarch Program, Emory University

Sponsored by SERC Focus on Autism Initiative

(See description above, Educating Students with Autism in Inclusive Settings, Kindergarten to Grade 5)

Interested persons should register by January 5, 2005.

\$25 per person. Registration forms are available at <http://www.ctserc.org/calendar/autism.shtml>. Contact: Carol Hotz at (860) 632-1485, ext. 232.

February 12, 2005, Brookville, New York

9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Morning Topic: ***I CAN DO IT MYSELF: BE-***

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HAVORAL STRATEGIES TO INCREASE THE INDEPENDENCE OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Afternoon Topic: ***LET'S PLAY: INCORPORATING PEERS IN THE TREATMENT OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM***

Presenter: Bridget Taylor, B.C.B.A

Sponsored by The Elija Foundation

This is a two topic presentation.

Morning: With the advance of behaviorally based programming, children with autism can learn many skills never thought possible. Children with autism can learn to talk, play with toys, socialize with their peers and become active functional participants in their families and communities. The goal of any intervention program however, is to help individuals with autism perform these responses without supervision and direct prompts from adults. This presentation will review specific skills that enhance the independent functioning of individuals with autism across a range of curriculum areas and behaviorally based teaching strategies to achieve independence.

Afternoon: Teaching children with autism to socialize and interact with peers is an important component to a comprehensive behavioral program. Teaching children to benefit from these interactions, however, requires systematic programming based upon the principles of applied behavior analysis. This presentation will review the research base supporting peer directed programming for children with autism and specific strategies that promote successful interactions. Videotaped samples of prerequisites skills and teaching interventions will be presented.

\$100.00 Non Members - \$75.00 For ELIJA Members - \$125.00 For WALK IN/LATE (after 2-5-05)

Registration information and forms are available at the Elija web site, www.eliya.org, or by calling the Foundation at 516 433 4321.

MARCH 2005

March 4, 2005, Hartford, CT

8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

TEACHING NINE CRITICAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

ASHA CEUs available

Jo-Anne Matteo, M.S., CCC/SLP, Pyramid Educational Consultants, Inc.

This workshop describes 9 critical functional communication skills required by all communicators, independent of their communicative modality. When people cannot initiate or otherwise calmly use these skills, many serious behavior problems are likely to arise. These skills are broadly divided between those needed by 'speakers' (often referred to as expressive skills) versus those needed by 'listeners' (often referred to as receptive skills). Speaker objectives include requesting significant desired items and activities, help, break, and responding 'yes' and 'no' to "Do you want...?" inquiries. Listener skills involve responding to simple directions, following schedules, responding appropriately to "wait," as well as learning to calmly handle transitions between activities or other changes in routines. The workshop will describe effective training strategies for children who speak or sign as well as those using augmentative or alternative communication systems.

\$175 per person. Registration information and forms are available at the PECS web site, pyramid@pecs.com or by telephone at (888) 732-7462.

March 15 & 16, 2005, Middletown, RI
2-DAY PICTURE EXCHANGE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM (PECS) TRAINING

Anne Hoffman, M.Ed.

The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is an initial language training package that is used to teach communication skills rapidly to those with limited functional speech. PECS is a unique training program that does not require lengthy prerequisite training, and promotes communication in a social context that the user initiates. Rather than building to spontaneity, as promoted by other systems, PECS begins with spontaneous actions. Tuition includes a copy of the Picture Exchange Communication (PECS) Training Manual, detailed handouts, and a certificate of attendance. Pyramid offers generous discounts to parents and groups of 5 or more (parents or professionals). Contact Pyramid directly for group discounted rates and cancellation policy. Early Registration: \$345 per person if paid by credit card, \$375 per person, if paid by check or PO. Parent Registration: \$235 per person. Registra-

tion information and forms are available at the PECS web site, pyramid@pecs.com or by telephone at (888) 732-7462.

APRIL 2005

April 16, 2005, Hamden, CT
9 am to 1 pm

LANGUAGE INTERVENTION IN CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM: LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, LANGUAGE USE, RELATEDNESS (RDI) , AND VERBAL REASONING

Nancy Schwartz, Ph.D.

Sponsored by the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT ASRC)

Dr. Schwartz is a speech and language pathologist practicing in Weston. She has extensive experience working with children and teens on the autism spectrum. She is a lecturer and currently consults for a number of school districts in CT and has just recently been certified in RDI Training. Dr. Schwartz will provide practical hands-on experience that will help with your child. Coffee/Tea and bagels will be served during 8:30 am check-in.

\$30 per person. Registration information and forms are available at the CT ASRC web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at (203) 248-5222. ☐

Other Presentations of Interest

DECEMBER 2004

December 9, 2004
Rocky Hill, CT

CT FEAT Parent Resource Meeting

UNDERSTANDING EVALUATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS AND WHAT THEY MEAN TO YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

Erica Roest, M.Ed., M.A., BCBA

(Please see the article on page 1 of this newsletter for more details.)

Ms. Roest, the principal of Connecticut Center for Child Development in Milford, CT, will discuss evaluations and assessments of children with autism and how they lay the groundwork for effective autism intervention and the development of appropriate IEPs. The meeting will be held at the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill. Directions and a driving map to the Rocky Hill Congregational Church are available on the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org (see *Parent Resource Meetings*). This meeting is open to parents and **family members only** and is **free of charge**. The other requirement is that participants agree to respect each other's confidentiality. There is no childcare available. For more information, email us at ctfeat@ctfeat.org, or call the **CT FEAT Hotline** at (860) 571-3888. Also check the CT FEAT hotline for SNOW or other weather-related cancellations.

FEBRUARY 2005

February 5, 2005 , Hamden, CT
SNOW DATE: February 19, 2005
9:00 am to 1:00 pm

HOW TO BE EFFECTIVE AT YOUR CHILD'S PPT

Stacy Hultgren

Sponsored by the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT ASRC)

Ms. Hultgren is the Co-Director of the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center and the mother of

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a child with autism. She is one of the leading advocates for ASD families in the state and has conducted training for parents, educational professionals and is involved with the State Bureau of Special Education's Continuous Improvement Planning Team. Coffee/Tea and bagels will be served during 8:30 am check-in.

\$30 per person. Registration information and forms are available at the CT ASRC web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at (203) 248-5222.

February 5, 2005

9 am to 1 pm

Hamden, CT

UNDERSTANDING TRANSITION LAW

Karen Stigliano

Sponsored by the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT ASRC)

Many parents are not aware that there is a provision in state and federal law that encourages districts to include a transition program as part of the IEP at age 14. Often our ASD children graduate without proir, systematic transition programs. Ms. Stigliano will help you to clearly understand what realistic expectations you should have of your district, and how to go about getting an appropriate transition plan in place. Mrs. Stigliano is a transition consultant with SERC our Special Education Resource Center here in Connecticut. Coffee/Tea and bagels will be served during 8:30 am check-in.

\$30 per person. Registration information and forms are available at the CT ASRC web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at (203) 248-5222

MARCH 2005

March 26, 2005 SNOW DATE: April 2, 2005

9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Hamden, CT

HANDS ON SENSORY STRATEGIES PARENTS CAN DO AT HOME

Tara Glennon, Ed.D., OTR/L, BCP, FAOTA

Sponsored by the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT ASRC)

Dr. Glennon is an Associate Professor of the Occupational Therapy Program at Quinnipiac University and Director of the Center for Pedi-

atric Therapy with offices in Fairfield, Greenwich, Madison and Wallingford. She is an author and lecturer and an expert in sensory integration . She has works extensively with children and adults with ASD. Hands-on participation in presented sensory experiences will help parents understand how to incorporate these strategies into everyday naturally occurring activities. Coffee/Tea and bagels will be served during 8:30 am check-in.

\$30 per person. Registration information and forms are available at the CT ASRC web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at (203) 248-5222.☐

Holiday Fundraiser



ASCONN is excited to present its own exclusive line of fine jewelry!

Available exclusively through the Autism Society of Connecticut, this collection of unique, hand made, fine jewelry is sure to generate conversation and autism awareness!

One of our very own Connecticut members, mom to a daughter with autism and a local artisan for over 25 years, has combined her passions for quality design and workmanship with the desire to promote autism awareness. Finely crafted charms and bracelets make gift-giving extra special this year! Prices start at only \$12. Visit the ASCONN web site at www.autismsocietyofct.org for more information and pictures of these unique pieces.

All profits from the puzzle charm jewelry go to ASCONN for support and expansion of programs, services, and research.☐

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TEACHING INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

Lovaas finds it much more constructive to view autism spectrum disorders as involving “developmental delays.” The number and relative severity of these delays varies enormously across the autism spectrum - from the comparatively mild delays found in Asperger syndrome to the more severe problems experienced by a nonverbal child with autistic disorder. Regardless of the specific label, these children typically exhibit behavioral *excesses* (e.g. self-stimulation, repetitiveness) and *deficits* (e.g. imitation, motivation, attention) that, if untreated, completely derail the development of normal *social and learning* behaviors.

While Lovaas’ focus is on providing parents with the tools to set up an intensive (30-40 hour) home-based treatment program, his book should be of interest to anyone wanting a better understanding of how children with autism learn. Even if you are pursuing a different kind of ABA treatment program (e.g. center-based, school-based, or for an older or less impaired child), you’ll probably find it very worthwhile to read Lovaas’ insightful analysis of the various behavior problems commonly associated with autism spectrum disorders (e.g. motivation, attention, self-stimulation, tantrums) .

Lovaas’ approach has been extremely effective for many children, especially those he describes as “auditory” learners. Like most children with autism related disorders, “auditory learners” have tremendous difficulties with language and communication. But with early and intensive behavioral treatment, they demonstrate a relatively rapid ability to acquire *verbal imitation* and *expressive language*. These skills provide the foundation for teaching an enormous range of other behaviors necessary for developing more “normal” degrees of social relatedness and learning. With intensive treatment, a significant percentage of this

subgroup can attain fully “normal” levels of functioning in every domain.

Only about half of the children diagnosed with autistic disorder meet this profile. Other so-called “visual” learners may benefit from a communication program developed by, Nina Lovaas (Ivar’s spouse) and her colleagues called “The Reading and Writing Program” (R&W). In a section devoted to “strategies for visual learners,” there is a chapter describing the R&W program, as well as a chapter on the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) developed by Andy Bondy and Lori Frost.

The first four sections of the book are authored by Lovaas: “Basic Concepts,” “Transition into Treatment,” “Early Learning Concepts,” and “Expressive Language.” Most of the chapters in the three remaining sections (“Strategies for Visual Learners,” “Programmatic Considerations,” and “Organizational and Legal Issues”) are written by various collaborators, including Tristram Smith, Jacqueline Wynn, Andrew Bondy, Lori Frost, Nina Lovaas, Svein Eikeseth, and Attorneys Gary Mayerson and Kathryn Dobel.

Lovaas considers this to be a “basic” manual and has plans to publish a second volume of “advanced” programs focused on more sophisticated skills. But if your child is ready for more challenging material, don’t wait for that book. At least in my experience, parents who have fully absorbed the extensive theoretical and technical information presented in this book will have the foundation for devising whatever more advanced programs their child may need.

***Teaching Individuals with Developmental Delays: Basic Intervention Techniques* by O. Ivar Lovaas** is a 492 page paperback, **published by** Pro Ed (October 2002) , **ISBN:** 0890798893. It is available for purchase through Pro-Ed, www.proedinc.com (telephone 1-800-897-3202) and through other book sellers.□

CT ASRC
**SUPPORT GROUP FOR
ADULTS WITH AUTISM
SPECTRUM DISORDERS**

Mr. Michael Carley, an adult with Asperger Syndrome and the President of GRASP, the Global and Regional Asperger Syndrome Partnership, a New York organization, will lead this newly formed support group. It is the first support group for adults with ASD in Connecticut.

Mr. Carley also leads successful support groups in New York City and Long Island. Participation is free and open to people 18 and older who have an autism spectrum disorder.

Meetings take place the second Friday of every month at the High Road Student Learning Center, 29 Village Lane in Wallingford CT. Directions are available at the CT Autism Spectrum Resource Center (CT_ASRC) web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at 203.248.5222. ■

(Continued from page 7)
AUTISM RESOURCE GUIDE.

assistance for respite, medical care, vocational training and the like. It also has a good listing of lawyers, advocates, behavior consultants as well as dentists, naturopaths, optometrists, psychiatrists and other professionals. Phone numbers and addresses are provided with a brief description of services. Summer camp listings as well as the transition/secondary programs are included here.

The last section goes over some of the laws covering special education and includes excellent ideas on how to prepare for a PPT and develop a partnership with the school system.

This guide goes a long way as a resource for parents that need to know who-to-call, rather than what-to-do. That is, it is not necessarily the best place to start your journey into the world of autism, but a good guide for the bumps that come up along the way. It is evident that a great deal of devotion and work went into the making of this guide and it will be helpful for many families.

The Guide is available in print format for a contribution to CT ASRC of \$25 (plus \$5 shipping and handling charge). Information on ordering the guide is available at the CT ASRC web site, www.ct-asrc.org, or by calling the Center at (203) 248-5222. ■

(Continued from page 1)
HOW TO COMPROMISE...

Gary Mayerson's new book, **How to Compromise With Your School District Without Compromising Your Child: A Practical Field Guide for Getting Effective Services for Children With Special Needs.**

Gary Mayerson is the founding partner of the only law practice in the country dedicated to representing individuals with autism spectrum disorders and related disabilities. As such, he is extraordinarily knowledgeable about using the law to gain access to effective educational programs.

Unlike most of the existing books concerned with special education law, this one does not focus on explaining all of the pertinent statutes, regulations and court decisions. It does survey the most important legal rights and responsibilities. But the book's main purpose is the avoidance of costly litigation whenever reasonably possible.

Written in plain language, with the busy and often beleaguered parent in mind, the book is short (140 pages), focused, and full of

(Continued on page 23)

(Continued from page 22) HOW TO COMPROMISE WITH YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT.

concrete suggestions and examples.

In his own words, Mayerson seeks to “provide parents with *practical* approaches and strategies that are relatively easy to implement, and to sensitize parents to the various dynamics that motivate school districts administrators to take appropriate action... These very same strategies also can assist parents to be meaningfully prepared for the situation when, after all is said and done, due process litigation proves to be unavoidable.”

The book’s first chapter, “Why Is There Often So Much Conflict at IEP Meetings?” sets the stage by providing a “behind the scenes” look at the complicated dynamics – political, economic, psychological, and even personal – that may be affecting the school district’s behavior.

Mayerson points out that “While the overwhelming majority of school district administrators are caring and compassionate human beings who truly *want* to do the right thing, it usually does not occur to parents that some...administrators might be following entirely different agendas or political mandates, or that they might not even *know* about or have access to the special expertise that is necessary to be ready, willing and able to do the right thing.”

One of the principal causes of conflict at IEP meetings concerns the level of specialized training and expertise that exists (or doesn’t exist) within the district. “It is only natural that special education personnel want to believe that they have all the training and expertise they need to be able to effectively do their jobs.” But, unfortunately, it’s all too frequently the case that they don’t.

Chapter 2, “Be Aware of the Language of Intimidation,” provides more than a dozen examples of the kinds of statements school

staff and administrators typically make to persuade parents to accept the district’s judgment about what a child needs. Many of these will be familiar to anyone who has attended an IEP meeting where the parents are questioning the district’s recommendations or expertise. For example, “I have been in special education for 30 years. Believe me, I know what I am doing,” or “We have had many children just like yours who have done well with the same level and type of service you are resisting...”

Chapter 3 explains “Why Getting the Right Evaluations Early on is Critical.” In Mayerson’s view, “the assessment process probably is the most critical stage since it serves to identify the child’s special needs and provides an initial template for treatment and intervention...” In addition to explaining why assessments are so important, Mayerson provides concrete suggestions for how parents can go about obtaining appropriate ones.

Chapter 4 addresses the often-overlooked “legal relevance of your child’s potential,” emphasizing the importance of making IEP goals and objectives sufficiently challenging.

The next four chapters focus on helping parents to understand the legal importance of the IEP record and their own role in assuring that the record accurately reflects their child’s needs. Chapter 5 (“The Importance of Making and Preserving the ‘Record’”), Chapter 6 (“Making a Record When Your School District is Being Less Than Forthcoming With Direct Answers”) and Chapter 7 (“Do Not Allow Your School District to Create a Record of Unreasonableness or ‘Inequitable Circumstances’”) provide practical advice on the proactive steps parents can take to build a record supporting their child’s need for specific services.

The book’s longest chapter, “The IEP Meet-

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(Continued from page 23) HOW TO COMPROMISE WITH YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT.

ing and Development of the IEP,” pulls all of these elements together and demonstrates how the diligent preparation outlined in the previous chapters can lead to a satisfactory outcome for all concerned. It includes sample letters and documents that illustrate how one goes about creating a “paper trail.”

In the remaining chapters, Mayerson shares his thoughts on some of the other leading hot topics in special education law: “The Thorny Issue of ‘Least Restrictive Environment’”; “Making the Case for ‘Extended School Year’ and ‘Extended Day’ Services”; “Psychopharmacology”; “School Discipline”; and “The Mediation Process.”

This is a book written for parents. Mayerson understands the urgency parents feel about helping their child. He knows how “the search for answers and effective remediation is something that usually permeates a parent’s every conscious and subconscious thought” resulting in many a sleepless night.

Despite his focus on what *parents* need to know to be effective advocates for their children, Mayerson is exceedingly respectful toward *all* of the participants in the often stressful, high-stakes process of devising an appropriate educational program for a disabled child. He even characterizes some school administrators as being positively “heroic” in their efforts to do the “right thing.”

Without detracting from the seriousness of his topic, Mayerson manages to inject some humor into his book. Each chapter begins with a pithy quotation or aphorism, like John Stuart Mill’s “One person with a belief is equal to a force of 99 who have only interests.”

Here’s one more aphorism that *could* have appeared in this book, summarizing its es-

sence: “forewarned is forearmed.”

(This book costs \$24.95 and can be ordered from Different Roads to Learning at www.difflearn.com)²⁴

(Continued from page 4) SOCIAL COMPETENCE...

skills, the authors contend, are then best understood as discrete, verbal and nonverbal, component skills that enable us to meet our needs and avoid unpleasant circumstances. Social competence involves the behavioral, cognitive and affective domains (Topper, Bremner & Holmes, 2000) and incorporates the fluent use of such diverse, yet discrete, skills as establishing and maintaining appropriate eye contact (micro-skills) and engaging in conversation and relationship building (macro-skills) (Gesten, *et al.*, 1987).

Further, social competence and its assessments are, to a very large degree, context bound. As noted by Topper, Bremner & Holmes (2002), “Everyone is socially competent in at least one situation and no one is socially competent in all.” (p. 35). As such, any assessment of social competence for a learner with AS, on either a micro- or macro-level, needs to be recognized for what it is; a snapshot of abilities at a given time in a given environment. And while it is useful in providing a direction (or context) for intervention, its utility in predicting success in different environments for all but the most challenged learner may be somewhat limited. When the issue of social competence is discussed relative to persons with AS, there needs to remain an awareness of the temporal nature of competence as a function of both individual skill sets and the context in which the skills are utilized.

Moving Beyond Social Survival

In practical terms, this is of critical importance as the adolescent learner with AS prepares for the world of post-high school adulthood. As part of this transition, what was once a familiar, generally consistent, environment in the form of a structured school

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day rapidly comes to an end. At that point, skills and abilities that may have been appropriate and functional during the school day may be ineffective and dysfunctional in future environments. Failure on the part of the individual's transition team to take this into account and to provide multiple opportunities to become socially, emotionally and physically comfortable with the "transition to" environment offers little, if any opportunity for the individual to succeed.

In the absence of fluent social competence however, addressing what may be referred to as social survival skills may be a necessary first step. Social survival skills are those base, minimum skills necessary for one to successfully navigate one's environment. In a way, they are like the turn signals on a car in that knowing their use is truly necessary for safe vehicle navigation but hardly a sufficient condition for competing on the NASCAR circuit. For another example, we can examine the job interview process both from the point of view of social competence and social survival. Under ideal circumstances, a degree of social competence would be considered highly desirable during a job interview process (e.g. establish rapport, talk about last night's game, discuss *alma maters*, etc.). But in the absence of these skills, there are some social survival skills (i.e., establishing eye contact, smiling when greeting interviewer, avoidance of controversial discussion topics, some ability to self promote) that may be sufficient to highlight one's employability and allow one to gain access to employment.

Instructional strategies and packages for developing individual social skills and, to some extent, small areas of social competence have been reported in the literature (e.g., Baker, 2000; Barnhill, et al, 2002; Gray, 1995, Koegel & Koegel, 1995) What is, however, somewhat less discussed is the concept of reinforcement as a critical variable in developing social skill repertoires. Social skills are generally recognized as functional in that their use results in ei-

ther the receipt of positive outcomes or the avoidance of negative ones. That is to say, social skills are reinforced (strengthened) in individual repertoires by their naturally occurring consequences. A compliment offered to a colleague after a recent talk may be reinforced by subsequently having greater access to the colleague and their work or by having them show interest in your work. Similarly, for the learner with AS offering the compliment, the potential reinforcement may be an immediate and detailed three hour discussion on the topic. Anything other than that is then recognized as undesirable and would, therefore, reduce that likelihood that "compliment giving" will become a fluent part of the individual's repertoire. As such, there would appear to be a significant need to better understand, on a case by case basis, what individual outcomes would function as powerful reinforcers and, therefore, be capable of maintaining a particular social skill if we are to help develop lasting social skill repertoires.

The closest (if still somewhat distant) parallel in the Applied Behavior Analysis literature may be the functional analysis of the conditions maintaining problematic behavior (e.g. Iwata, et al, 1982). In brief, functional analysis involves the manipulation of potential consequence conditions so that those conditions reliably determined to be maintaining the behavior may be further manipulated to effectively reduce the behavior in question. Of critical importance is that these identified conditions are individualized, idiosyncratic and often complex in nature.

Similarly, those same descriptors (individualized, idiosyncratic, and complex) most likely apply to the conditions that support effective social behavior. Without a fairly comprehensive understanding of what an individual with AS hopes to get out of a friendship and in what context he or she expects that to occur, strategies to teach

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the development of friendships may only rarely be reinforced and, subsequently, generally ineffective. As such, assessments of individual learners with AS within the context of the systems in which they live, work and play, may prove to be critical if effective interventions are to be developed and individual learners are to move further away from social survival and closer to social competence.

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(Continued from page 3) HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS FOR CHILDREN

Therapro originally offered specialty products and publications for mainly school-based and pediatric practices. Today it also provides products that address the needs of people in every stage of life, helping serve the occupational concerns of not only occupational therapists, but speech therapists, physical therapists, and educators as well. Parents will find a variety of gift items that encourage sensory and motor skills such as eye-hand coordination, and fine motor and gross motor activities.

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New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Marketplace was established to provide information and access to equipment and devices that can change the lives of people of all ages, with all types of disabilities, both temporary and permanent. They operate under the auspices of the Connecticut Institute for the Blind/Oak Hill, in Hartford, CT. The new headquarters building of the NEAT Marketplace provides 25,000 square feet of space for product demonstrations, expos, classes, computer use, research and equipment restoration. If you call and make an appointment they will show you what they have: refurbished bikes & other special needs equipment, software and modified computer accessories, adaptive tools to make everyday living easier. New England Assistive Technology (NEAT) Marketplace can be reached by calling (toll free in CT) 866-526-4492. Visit them on the Web at www.neatmarketplace.org

Julie Swanson, a parent of child with autism, had a segment of **Your Special Child** on Good Morning Connecticut on WTNH-TV, Channel 8 that addressed toys for special needs children. The toys that she discussed can be found at her web site www.yourspecialchild.com. It includes the name of the toy as well as a link to the web site where it may be purchased. □

ABOUT CT FEAT

Formed in 1997 by parents and relatives, **Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT)** is a non-profit organization created to provide information and support to the families of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

PRINCIPAL GOALS:

- To provide information and resources that enable families to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of current treatment approaches;
- To support families seeking or implementing behavioral intervention programs;
- To expand the availability of high quality professional services by supporting education and training opportunities in applied behavior analysis (ABA);
- To increase public awareness regarding the high incidence of Autism Spectrum Disorders and the availability of effective, scientifically validated treatments.

RESOURCES:

- An **"Information Hotline"** by which **Connecticut** families can learn about CT FEAT's activities and request an information packet. Parents also can request to speak in confidence with another parent about issues related to ABA-based treatment. Call (860) 571-3888.
- **Parent Support Group meetings**, which take place in Rocky Hill, CT. The only requirement for participation in the meetings is that parents agree to respect each other's privacy and confidentiality. Please call the Parent Hotline (860-571-3888) or visit the CT FEAT web site, www.ctfeat.org, for information about future meetings.
- An **Unmoderated "Parents Only" Internet Mailing List** that provides **Connecticut parents** of ASD children with a forum to discuss issues of concern. **To subscribe to the list**, send an E-mail message to ctfeat@ctfeat.org, providing your name, e-mail address, and mailing address. Also please state why you want to join the list, **and** your explicit agreement to honor the confidentiality requirement.
- The **CT FEAT Newsletter** which contains news of interest (e.g. book reviews, conference announcements, etc.). To subscribe (free), please contact send an e-mail to ctfeat@ctfeat.org or call the Parent Hotline (860-571-3888).
- The CT FEAT web **site**, www.ctfeat.org, provides extensive information resources including

book and video reviews, conference listings, an 'ABA Job Connections' employment section where prospective employees and employers can find each other, Spanish language resources, and back issues of the information-packed CT FEAT newsletter.

- Advocacy and resources to expand the availability of high quality professional services for children and families.

CT FEAT Bylaws provide that all members of the Board of Directors shall be parents or family members of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. There is Board representation from throughout the state.

Connecticut Families for Effective Autism Treatment (CT FEAT) is a non-profit organization staffed by **volunteers** and funded through the generosity of caring supporters.

If you are a **Connecticut parent or professional** and would like to be a volunteer for CT FEAT activities, you can call (860) 571-3888, write to P.O. Box 370352, West Hartford, CT 06137-0352 or E-mail ctfeat@ctfeat.org. We'd like to hear from you!

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