

May 2004

### Especially for Parents

- Dr. Ronald B. Leaf, Autism Partnership, presented *Behavioral Strategies for Children with Autism – Part IV* on May 11 and *A Framework for Teaching Children with Autism & Related Disorders* on May 11 and May 12.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Chatterbox Fun Fair, sponsored by ITS in partnership with the FCPS Department of Human Resources, will be held Saturday, May 22 from 10:00 – 1:00 at Kings Glen Elementary School. This is a one day fun fair event for preschool through fourth grade students (and their families) who are using picture boards or devices with sound to help them with communication and are currently receiving assistive technology support from Integrated Technology Services. It is also an opportunity for children to meet and talk with other children who use devices or picture boards, a chance for parents to meet and talk with other parents, and a chance to see devices used in the school system. Games, food, entertainment, and prizes will be provided.
- The Parent Resource Center has offered several sessions of 1-2-3 Magic for Spanish-speaking parents. Carmen Noonan, a parent liaison at the PRC, is a native Spanish speaker and has been offering the program at various locations throughout the county. 1-2-3 Magic is a discipline program that uses both structure and humor to provide positive behavior supports to children. Sessions held so far include:
  - March 25 – Kingstowne Library (Part 1)
  - March 31 – Reston Library (Part 1)
  - April 22 – Kingstowne Library (Part 2)
  - April 27 – Braddock Elementary School (Parts 1 & 2)
  - April 29 – Meadows of Chantilly (Part 1)
  - May 5 – Reston Library (Part 2)
  - May 13 – Meadows of Chantilly (Part 2)
  - May 14 – Falls Church: Hispanic Alliance (Parts 1 & 2)
- Karen Dickerson, a student at Edison High School, was accepted to the 2004 Virginia Youth Leadership Forum being held July 19-23, 2004 at Christopher Newport University in Newport News. Through a statewide competitive selection process, 25 students are chosen who have demonstrated leadership potential in their schools or communities. Applicants must complete an application and essay, and provide letters of recommendation. This annual leadership training is sponsored by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities.
- At the May 6<sup>th</sup> county-wide Low-Incidence Department Chair/Lead Teacher meeting, a Robinson teacher shared that one of her students with Asperger's Syndrome won top honors in the Regional Science Fair. This student will attend the International Fair in Oregon.

### **Especially for Staff**

- School teams from 10 elementary schools participated in *Step-by-Step for Inclusive Schools: Together is Better* on March 30 & 31 and April 27. This three day workshop provided schools with opportunities to assess current practices, explore ways to use multi-level instruction, and discuss collaborative strategies for in-class support for students as they build an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all students.
- Registration for the *Paraprofessional Summer Institute* will begin this month. All paraprofessionals who support students in special education programs are eligible to register for this two day workshop that will focus on both behavioral strategies and instructional strategies for diverse learners. Workshops on Monday and Tuesday, August 9 & 10, are developed for paraprofessionals who work with elementary students and Thursday and Friday, August 12 & 13, are developed for secondary. A stipend is available to all paraprofessionals who participate.
- The Early Childhood/Elementary Team continues to work collaboratively with staff in the Office of Elementary Instruction to plan *2004 Summer of Learning* offerings and the *Academic Diversity Institute* (August 23 and 24, 2004). Offerings will focus on providing teachers with training in differentiated instruction to address the needs of all learners in the classroom. The Office of Special Education will sponsor 12 sessions at the Institute.
- Teachers of students with low-incidence disabilities received training on the Brigance Inventories and Vineland Scales on April 17. These evaluations are used for eligibility determination and instructional planning.
- Therapy Services hosted Cindy Daniel and Sheri Sobkowiak from the ARC, Evan Braff from Therapeutic Recreation, and Ann Long and Debbie Hill, FCPS Employment and Transition representatives on Monday, April 26. The two hour session focused on supports available to students and their families as they explore post-graduation options for secondary students.

### **Other News**

- A secondary team representative attended the state Family Life Education Task Force in Richmond on April 6<sup>th</sup>. The task force is an on-going group that is looking at up-dating the state guidelines for providing modified family life education for special education students.
- Staff members at Integrated Technology Services (ITS) have selected 150 Technology Outreach Program Support (TOPS) teachers for the 2004-2005 school year. These teachers work closely with their ITS case managers to provide assistive technology support and training in their buildings. They also attend two full day training sessions and submit one or more activities that can be posted on the ITS Intranet site. The final TOPS meeting this year will be held on Wednesday, May 26, from 12:00 - 3:00 at the Government Center. At this meeting demonstrations from each topic group will be shared.
- The Office of Special (OSE) Education Elementary Literacy Committee has identified priorities and implementation plans in the following areas: early intervention in literacy; consistent data collection and analysis of student achievement in literacy to monitor student progress and plan appropriate instruction; staff development on teacher skills to assess, plan and deliver instruction to address the literacy needs of all special education students; the development of a longitudinal record/reading instruction card to track treading progress and instructional interventions; and parent education to provide opportunities for parents to learn how they can support the development of literacy skills in their children.

- Joyce Suydam and Ginny Brennan met recently with Felicia Blakeney from NVCC Center for Employee Development as a follow-up to a letter sent from Dr. Farling to Dr. Templeman, NVCC President, requesting that we explore collaborating on a pilot model for some of our older students. The meeting was very positive and a follow-up meeting was scheduled for May 12<sup>th</sup>. Jeanette Baker has agreed to represent the ACSD on the committee working on this pilot.
- Join your school speech-language clinician in celebrating May is *Better Hearing and Speech Month*. This year's theme, "Communication for Life" reminds us of the important role that communication plays in all aspects of life, including academics, vocation, and social interactions. Speech and language clinicians will share their many ways of celebrating this exciting event with their school staffs at their monthly in-services on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004. To learn more about *Better Hearing and Speech Month* or information about the professions of audiology or speech and language pathology, visit the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) website at [www.ASHA.org](http://www.ASHA.org).

### Special

- Fairfax County Board of Supervisors (BOS) has instituted new guidelines for funding graduates this year. Of the 48 individuals who will age out of public school in June, the 17 most disabled will be funded through the CSB budget. The remaining 31 graduates may get some funds from a "scholarship fund" of \$500,000 the BOS has set aside to help offset costs. The official BOS language follows:
 

"The FY 2005 budget included proposed changes to the County's special education graduate program. While many of the administrative and planning recommendations will be helpful, the proposed program for FY 2005 will direct new funding toward those graduates with the most profound level of mental retardation and medical and physical challenges. As a result, it is estimated that approximately 31 graduates will go without County support for services. As a result, the Board directs staff with input from the Human Services Council, the Community Services Board and advocacy groups to develop a "scholarship" approach to the MR Graduates program with goals of County involvement in identifying and facilitating placement but County funding based on need and circumstances. The report should be provided to the Board by Fall 2004. A funding reserve of \$500,000 has been included in the budget for potential General Fund requirements of the scholarship program. In addition, options concerning a private foundation to supplement County funding are to be reviewed. This funding should be focused primarily on direct service provision."
- Recommendations have been submitted to the School Board by a joint planning group which included parent representatives, for providing Enhanced Services for Preschool and Elementary Students with Autism. These recommendations include continuing to retain consulting services in applied behavior analysis (ABA) and in verbal behavior (VB); offering increased training opportunities that incorporate VB concepts; allocating nine Instructional Coach positions to provide direct classroom based training, assessment, and technical support to autism teachers and assistants during the regular school year and summer; retaining a Lead Instructional Coach/Administrator to provide technical training, supervision, and support to the Instructional Coaches; adding additional instructional assistants to result in an elementary autism ratio of 2:1; hiring a pool of instructional assistants who can be deployed to provide students with augmented teaching assistance where needed during the regular school year and summer including 1:1; enhancing summer

program services by providing eight-week, three-hour/day services for all students enrolled in preschool autism classes; improving the elementary student teacher ratio to result in one teacher and two assistants per summer school class; providing for an evaluation of the enhanced program's cost effectiveness at the completion of its third year of implementation. It is also recommended that staff meet quarterly, particularly during the first year, with designated parent representatives who would provide advisory support regarding implementation of the enhanced program.

- The School Board will vote on new targets on May 27, 2004. The target related to inclusive schools may be discontinued since it has been achieved; however, students with disabilities are included in several other draft targets as well as in the overarching draft statement which introduces the targets. The school division is committed to inclusive schools and efforts in this area will continue.