

# PENews

Winter 2010

"Respecting the Rights of Parents to Make Educational Decisions for Their Children"

## *Reading & Mental Retardation (Intellectual Disability)*

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- Would You Like To Help Your Child Learn To Read or Become a Better Reader?
- Do You Want To Learn More About DPW and PDE Early Learning Standards, How To Access Services For Your Child, and Parent-School Partnerships for Reading Success?
- Go To: [www.parentednet.org](http://www.parentednet.org) for a listing of upcoming "Literacy" trainings in April and May.

**Reading is an imperative skill not only during a child's early years of education but throughout a person's lifetime.** Everyone learns to read in a different manner. Some may learn through isolated phonics instruction, others may learn through whole language and yet others may learn through a combination of both skills. Although children learn to read through an array of approaches, there are still thousands of students each year who are diagnosed with some form of reading disability.

**According to IDEA 2004, students with disabilities must have access to the same challenging content taught to non-disabled students.** Despite a disability, every student should be included with the regular education children to the maximum extent possible. This concept is known as the least restricted environment (LRE), and this requirement includes children with mental retardation or intellectual disability.

The American Association of Mental Retardation (AAMR) defines MR as a "...disability characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior...". Numerous individuals believe that children with MR or Intellectual Disability should be taught in separate classrooms and/or schools; however, researchers argue that setting high goals for students with MR with the same general expectations as regular educational students will improve their learning and education outcomes.

Since all students learn to read in a distinct method, children with MR or Intellectual Disability are no different. **There are two approaches that researchers believe will teach MR students to learn to read.** The first approach, which is sometimes called the traditional or direct instruction approach, focuses on subset skills such as phonics and sight word recognition and involves drill and practice. The second approach is a holistic approach that teaches comprehension, critical thinking, phonologic awareness, decoding and vocabulary (<http://www.readingassessment.info/resources/>)

It is believed by many researchers that one approach is not necessarily more effective than the other; rather, many students with Intellectual Disabilities will learn to read through a combination of direct instruction and the holistic approach. (<http://www.readingassessment.info/resources/>)

According to research, there is not one exact research-based reading program that "fits" every student with MR or Intellectual Disability. Typically, teachers will gather various skills from numerous programs. *The Edmark Reading Program* has been very successful

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## Check Out These Parent Resources

- ✓ The (U.S.) Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is offering Question and Answer documents on their website concerning the following topical areas: Discipline, Disproportionality, Monitoring, Procedural Safeguards and Secondary Transition: <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>
- ✓ The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning has developed parent training modules that help families promote children's social and emotional skills: [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/resources/training\\_parent.html](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/resources/training_parent.html)
- ✓ The National Center for Learning Disabilities has issued special education scorecards for every state in the nation, to access the scorecards go to: <http://www.nclld.org/on-capitol-hill/policy-related-publications/special-education-scorecards>

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- ✓ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has created a Parent Portal at [www.cdc.gov/parents](http://www.cdc.gov/parents) to provide parents with easy access to health care information for their families at various stages in life.
- ✓ The (PA) Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services recently released a bulletin entitled "Guidelines for Family Involvement with Youth Who Are in Residential Treatment." Go online to: <http://tinyurl.com/yfkbkkv>
- ✓ [www.twiceexceptional.org](http://www.twiceexceptional.org) Twice-Exceptional Students: Gifted Students with Disabilities: An Introductory Resource Book can be found at:

### Are You Interested?

In receiving information regarding PEN workshops, webinars and educational news alerts?

Sign up for our

**Advocacy/Parent Support Preparation Project:**

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

<http://tinyurl.com/nu5lkm> or call PEN for a written copy of the document.

## Reaching Out To Military Families

Military families lead complex lives. Frequent relocations can be difficult for families that have children with an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

The following resources may ease the transition process for military parents and their children with educational and/or medical needs:

- STOMP (Specialized Training of Military Parents) is the national Parent Training and Information Center (PTI) for military families across the U.S. They provide support and advice to military parents. Telephone: (800) 5-PARENT or [www.stompproject.org](http://www.stompproject.org)
- Military Home Front is a website for military families that have children with special needs: [www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil)

- Another family resource: Military One Source: [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)
- Military bases have organizations that assist military families that have family members with special needs. **Contact STOMP** for the organization and the base coordinators from the support organization for your branch of service.
- **Contact STOMP or PEN** to find the PTI in the state where you are moving. Ask for help learning about local resources and contacts for your child.
- Contact the new "receiving" school district as soon as possible to inform them of your move. Establish a special education contact and discuss with them your child's IEP support needs.

- Take a copy of your child's IEP to the new school district, and request that the school send for your child's official records from the former school.
- Discuss with your special education contact your child's IEP, specific support needs and a timeline for IEP review.
- Discuss Extended School Services (ESY) with your new school. Notify the school before you move, if the relocation will occur in the spring or summer.
- Expect comparable services for your child. They may not be the same, *but should not be less*.

**With permission, adapted from an article by Adriana Martinez, Assistant Project Director, STOMP.**

## *Use of Restraints: A Measure of Last Resort*

The **PDE, Bureau of Special Education**, has issued the following information concerning the use of restraints, as required by Chapter 14, Section 14.133.

Chapter 14 requires that positive, rather than negative measures form the basis of behavior support programs to ensure that all students shall be free from demeaning treatment, the use of aversive techniques and the unreasonable use of restraints.

When an intervention is needed to address a problem, behavior, the types of intervention chosen for a particular student or eligible young child shall be the least intrusive necessary. **The use of restraints is considered a measure of last resort**, only to be used after other less restrictive measures, including de-escalation techniques, have been utilized.

The use of restraints to control the aggressive behavior of an individual student or eligible young child shall cause the Local Education Agency (LEA), including school districts and charter schools, to notify the parent of the use of restraint and shall cause a meeting of the IEP team within 10 school days of the inappropriate behavior causing the use of restraints, unless the parent, after written notification, agrees in writing to waive the meeting.

At this meeting, the IEP team shall consider whether the student or eligible young child needs a functional behavior assessment (FBA), reevaluation, a new or revised positive behavior support plan or a change of placement to address the inappropriate behavior.

The use of restraints may only be included in a student's or eligible child's IEP when the following conditions apply:

- The restraint is utilized with specific component elements of positive behavior support.
- The restraint is used in conjunction with the teaching of socially acceptable alternative skills to replace problem behavior.
- Staff are authorized to use the procedure and have received the staff training required.
- There is a plan in place for eliminating the use of restraint through the application of positive behavior support.

An updated Guideline document concerning the use of restraints in educational programs can be viewed on the PaTTAN website:

<http://www.pattan.net/partners/Restraints.aspx>

Individuals may contact PEN to receive a printed copy.

## *Reading & MR-Intellectual Disability* *continued from page 1*

for samples of kindergarten and first grade students as the students were able to generalize their reading ability to untaught words and the program developed critical pre-reading skills such as left to right progression. ([www.proedinc.com](http://www.proedinc.com))

Another reading program that has been researched and successfully utilized with children with MR (Intellectual Disability) is Patricia Cunningham's *Four Block Model*. This model includes four components, namely Guided Reading, Working with Words, Writing, and Self-Guided Reading. All four of these components involve critical components in learning to read and the simple exposure to the *Four Block Model* exposes MR students to literacy activities and the literacy experience (Locke, 2000).

No matter what the approach, all students, including children with MR/Intellectual Disability, need to learn the critical skills of reading. Whether a student learns through phonics isolation or through the holistic or whole language approach, as long as a child learns to read, that student can be more successful in life.

Locke, Peggy A. (2000). *Literacy: Everyone Can Benefit*. Retrieved on September 17, 2008, from Promoting the Participation of Literacy for Individuals Web site: [www.csun.edu](http://www.csun.edu).

*Reading and Students with Mental Retardation*. Retrieved on September 15, 2008, from [www.readingassessment.info/resources/](http://www.readingassessment.info/resources/).

The *Edmark Reading Program* and the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

Retrieved on September 17, 2008, from Website [www.proedinc.com](http://www.proedinc.com).

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❖ *PEN does not endorse any reading programs referenced above. The decision about what reading program is appropriate for your child is a team decision based upon your child's unique needs and progress.*

## ***Standards Aligned System (SAS)***

The **Pennsylvania Standards Aligned System (SAS)** combines research and good practice, and identifies six distinct elements, that when used together, will provide schools a common framework for continuous educational improvement.

Research shows that “great” schools have **six common elements that ensure student achievement**. They are:

1. Clear Standards
2. Fair Assessments
3. Curriculum Framework
4. Instruction
5. Materials & Resources
6. Interventions

**What are standards?** Pennsylvania standards describe **what students should know and be able to do, and what students should be able to achieve** as they progress through school.

**Standards provide consistent targets** for students, teachers and parents to assist our students in becoming educated at the highest level.

Pennsylvania Academic Standards:

- Define what each student should know and be able to do in core subjects.
- Provide students with a solid foundation in the basics.
- Provide a measure of student achievement.
- Help parents, teachers, schools, and districts track student progress from year to year.

Chapter 4 states that students with IEPs must have their goals aligned with the academic standards.

Alternate Reading and Mathematics Standards describe what students with the most significant cognitive disabilities should know and be able

to do at four grade levels span (third/fourth, fifth/sixth, seventh/eighth, and eleventh).

Grade level academic standards have also been reinterpreted to link the learning goals for students with significant cognitive disabilities with those of their nondisabled peers.

English Language Proficiency Standards for English Language Learners (ELPS for ELLs) have also been developed to meet the requirements of Title I, Title III, of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Complete information about the Standards Aligned System (SAS) can be found online at PDE:

<http://www.pdesas.org>

► For more information related to SAS, or a written copy of the **PDE and PaTTAN publications**, contact the PEN office.