

CONNECTIONS



*A Quarterly Newsletter
From the Parent Network of the Capital Region*

SUMMER 2013

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The mission of the Parent Network of the Capital Region is to provide parents with the knowledge, skills, and resources to facilitate productive relationships with their school districts ensuring an appropriate education for their child. These services are offered free-of-charge.

Career Development Occupational Studies Commencement Credential Ready to Roll Out

By: Heather Loukmas, Special Education Resource Specialist

The New York State Board of Regents (the policy-making body that sets state education policy) recently adopted new regulations to create an alternative to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Diploma for students with disabilities. In January 2012, the Regents eliminated the IEP diploma as of July 1, 2013 and created the Skills and Achievement Commencement Credential (SACC) for students with disabilities eligible to take the New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA). As this is a very small percentage of students with disabilities in New York State, an alternative to the IEP diploma for the majority of students with disabilities was needed.

by the Regents at their June 2013 meeting and as a result, the credential will be available to eligible students immediately. The purpose of the credential is to demonstrate that the recipient student has demonstrated entry-level work readiness. The CDOS will be available only to students with disabilities and can be granted as a supplement to a local or Regents diploma or as a stand-alone exiting credential. The CDOS is NOT considered a regular high school diploma in accordance with State standards or for federal accountability purposes. A student with a disability who exits school with only the credential is entitled to continue school until the student turns 21 or until they receive a regular high school diploma.

Regulations creating the new alternate credential, known as the New York State Career Development Occupational Studies Commencement Credential (CDOS) were approved

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Friendship Development in Children with ADHD

By: Adene Karhan, Special Education Resource Specialist

Take a few moments and think about what you remember most about your school-age years. There is a good chance that your most salient memories don't revolve around your grades or academic achievements, but are related to events that you shared with your friends. According to child development experts, the ability to initiate and sustain mutual friendships is one of the markers of healthy development. Developing and maintaining friendships buffers children from secondary mental health disorders such as depression, and helps to protect kids from bullying. Some professionals contend that the desire to develop bonds of friendships is so fundamental to human need that adolescents would rather form bonds with deviant and defiant peers than suffer from social isolation. Studies have shown that having even one reciprocated friendship in 5th grade buffered risk for negative outcomes twelve years later.



While the benefits of peer relationships are clear, the path to achieving close friendships can be difficult to navigate, particularly for children with disabilities. Initiating and maintaining friendships involves hundreds of social skills. Many children pick up on these skills naturally over time simply by observing and interacting with others. Research has shown, however, that a majority of children with ADHD suffer from peer isolation and/or rejection. It's estimated that more than half of children with ADHD are rejected by peers, and this rejection often occurs within minutes to hours of meeting new peers, especially in middle school and high school.

Looking at the bigger picture, as parents and professionals, our focus needs to expand beyond peer acceptance and rejection, and must encompass the degree to which children with ADHD and other disabilities are able to form and sustain mutual friendships over time with other children. After all, a child can be accepted by peers and free from bullying, but still suffer from loneliness and social isolation. Studies have shown that 56-76% of children with ADHD have no reciprocal friends, as compared to 32% of children without ADHD. It has been found that more accurate reports regarding friendships are usually obtained from parents and teachers, because the children with

ADHD themselves often overestimate the degree to which they are accepted by their peers. Children with social skills deficits sometimes fail to recognize the extent to which they are teased or isolated from peers.

While it has long been recognized that children with combined and hyperactive types of ADHD struggle with peer relationships, more recent studies have revealed that even those with the inattentive traits of ADHD (or ADD) struggle with social isolation. Research conducted with girls with inattentive ADHD have shown that, even when they are able to attract friends initially, they lack the active engagement, focus, and persistence needed to maintain these friendships over time. In fact, some studies have revealed that those with inattentive ADHD may be less accepted by peers, at least in the primary grades, than those with the hyper and combined types. Children with hyperactive and combined types often have a great deal of energy and enthusiasm, and can be very lively and funny. They also tend to be very confident, and are comfortable initiating social contact with others. Children with inattentive forms, on the other hand, are often more quiet and withdrawn, and are described by teachers as "perennial wallflowers". It appears that for some children, the social distance may be created by their own choice, but even those who stand on the sidelines by choice often desire to feel more comfortable interacting with peers. They often just lack the knowledge of how to become more connected to their peers socially.

In recent decades, significant time and energy has been placed into developing medication and other treatments to more successfully address the core symptoms of ADHD. While these treatments have been shown to decrease aggression and intrusive behavior that lead to less overt rejection and bullying from peers, they have been shown to have little effect on improving peer friendships. In fact, a 2005 study revealed that, even after receiving state-of-the-art treatment under ideal conditions, a number of children in the study with ADHD remained "profoundly impaired in peer functioning".

So what does all of this research mean to us as parents and professionals? It means that it is essential that we make ourselves available to help our children navigate the complex arena of friendships throughout childhood and adolescence. We also have to be more intentional about providing opportunities for children to interact with one another in unstructured one-on-one settings. Children with ADHD often don't initiate get-togethers with friends on their own, it's simply something that they don't think about or aren't comfortable doing. However, research has shown that "play dates" and get-togethers outside of school are the cornerstone to friendship development. No matter how much children interact with peers at school or in structured extra-curricular activities, they are less likely to form lasting mutual friendships with other children without one-on-one alone time together.

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Summer Reading Tips and Resources

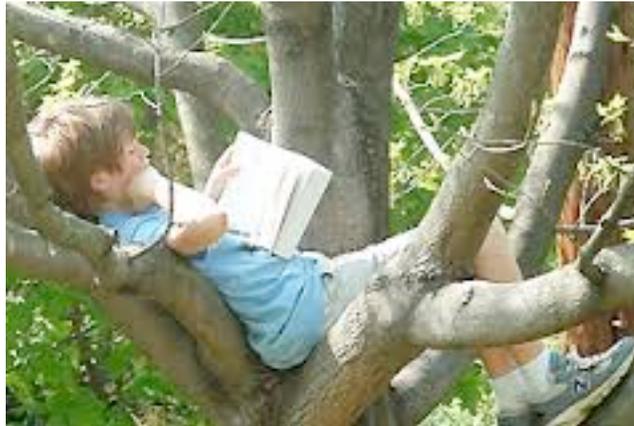
By: Elizabeth De Libero, PNCR Director

Teachers and experts agree that it is critically important for kids to read over the summer to maintain their reading skills. This is especially true of struggling readers who can lose skills without practice over the summer. For kids with reading disabilities this loss of skills can be significant. Experts refer to this as the "summer slide." While keeping in mind that summer is a time for relaxation and fun, don't forget to make reading a regular part of your summer routine! Below are some tips that will help you and your child to enjoy reading, and will also help your child maintain the skills they have learned over the school year. A great resource (anytime) for individuals with print disabilities is

<https://www.bookshare.org/>.

You have to become a member to access the resources, but for individuals with print disabilities membership is free!

1. **Be a Role Model.** Children will pick up good reading habits if they see that you are enjoying reading. So, turn off the television and the computer and open books (electronic or otherwise) and read together. Set aside a time each day that you can devote to reading to and with your child.



2. **Let kids choose.** During the school year, kids often have required reading that is not of great interest to them. Summer is a time to let them choose what they would like to read. What topics are they interested in? Visit your local library and let them browse for books that interest them. If children have the opportunity to listen to, discuss, and read books on topics that they select, they will develop background information, which can serve as a basis for their own independent reading.

3. **Read to your child.** Most kids really enjoy being read to, even after they have acquired good independent reading skills. In addition to having your child read to him/herself, read to him. You may also take turns reading. When reading together, perhaps you alternate reading every other line or paragraph. Make it fun! Read in voices and with enthusiasm. You can even read like you are performing a play or reader's theater and make an audio recording of your reading together.

4. **Talk about what you are reading.** Discuss themes and predications about what might happen in the story but don't pepper kids with basic questions. The idea here is to talk about the book with discussion about character motive, what they think about the story, the style of the author etc. Avoid basic comprehension questions like "what color was the girls dress?" If your child is frustrated attempting to read unknown words or phrases you can gently help them, but if they still don't get the word just give it to them. Remember,

you want to make reading FUN, not frustrating. You are not attempting to teach new skills; rather you want your child to maintain the skills that they have already acquired through practice. For older students who are able to read a novel, read the same book and discuss as you go along and/or when you finish the book.

5. **Help your child select books.** Children often choose books that are too difficult for them to read independently. Teach your child to use the five-finger rule. Choose a book and have them read 50 words of the book. If they are unable to pronounce more than 5 words, this book is probably too difficult for them and they should make another choice. Use the more difficult book as a read aloud. Many school districts have summer reading lists. Some school districts require the students to choose books from a list that they supply by grade level. Be sure to visit the website of your school district or ask your child's teacher for the list. Usually these lists are quite varied and there is something for everyone. If your child is reading below grade level choose books at the appropriate level or choose books from their grade for read aloud only. Another good source for choosing books is the "*Jim Trelease Read Aloud Handbook*." For more information and additional resources go to <http://www.trelease-on-reading.com/>

6. **After you read a book watch the movie or the video together.** If your child is older and reading chapter books or novels, let them know that you can watch the video or movie of the book once they have completed the book. Many kids begin to see that books are most often better than the movies!

7. **It's not just about 'books'.** If your kid loves electronics look for electronic ways to share books such as books on tape, or using a Nook, Kindle or iPad for reading. Also look for reading opportunities other than books. Subscribe to magazines like *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, *Highlights for Children*, or *National Geographic World*. Other reading practice opportunities include reading recipes while cooking, comic strips, baseball cards, the newspaper, joke books, traffic signs, billboards and grocery lists. Look for a wide variety of opportunities to practice reading print- especially for young children who are just learning to read.

8. **Play with Language:** Building a strong vocabulary, including a wide variety of descriptive words, will help your child improve reading skills. You can play these simple games on your summer road trip or when you're hanging at home.

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Summer Reading - continued

- **"What's another word for....?"** Your child gets points for every synonym he can come up with. Ask your child, for example, "What's another word for couch?" He'll likely suggest 'sofa' or 'futon'. To help him build his vocabulary, you can add 'divan' and 'settee'.
- **Sentence building.** Special educator [Jennifer Little, PhD](#), recommends constructing sentences to help your child enhance and use her descriptive language. Start with a flower, for example, and ask your child the color of the flower. If she replies, "red," create a full sentence ("The flower is red,") and ask her to repeat it. Ask for more information about the flower. If she says that the flower has green leaves, help her incorporate that detail into the sentence: "The red flower has green leaves." Keep building until your child has created a long sentence, for example, "The red flower with green leaves grows under the trees in my backyard."
- **Board games.** Boggle, Scrabble, Bananagrams, and other word games provide hours of entertaining word play. You can create a system of bonus points for longer words, or words your child has recently learned. Have a tournament and get the entire family involved!

9. Head to your local library! Summer Reading at New York Libraries is an annual program that brings children and families into local public libraries for reading and activities. Public libraries partner with schools and local organizations to help promote and create the program. Children are encouraged to discuss, write about, and report on the books they read. Library staff help children select reading materials and provide literacy-enhancing programs such as storytelling, music, creative arts, and performances. For more information go to <http://www.summerreadingnys.org>

The Amsterdam Free Library is holding a READS Summer Reading Program to encourage grandparents, parents and kids in grades 5-high school to come to the library to read and discuss together. The program is held on 4 Tuesdays in the month of July. For more information or to register for this free program, call 842-1080 or visit www.amsterdamlibrary.com.

Happy Summer Reading!



UPCOMING PNCR EVENTS

Please visit "Upcoming Events" on our homepage at www.pncrny.org for complete program descriptions and to register for these events.

Parent Support Group: Talking With Your Child About His/Her Disability

Monday, July 8, 2013
7:00pm-8:30pm
Latham, NY

Summer Movie Series: *Who Cares About Kelsey?*

Tuesday, July 9, 2013
10:00am-12:00pm
Latham, NY
OR
Thursday, July 18, 2013
6:00pm-8:00pm
Latham, NY

Special Education Record Keeping Workshop

Tuesday, July 9, 2013
6:00pm-8:00pm
Latham, NY
OR
Tuesday, August 6, 2013
6:00pm-8:00pm
Latham, NY

Understanding Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and the Impact on Children at School

Monday, July 15, 2013
10:00am-12:00pm
Latham, NY
OR
Monday, July 22, 2013
6:30pm-8:30pm
Latham, NY

Summer Movie Series: *Misunderstood Minds: Searching for Success in Schools*

Tuesday, July 23, 2013
10:00am-12:00pm
Latham, NY
OR
Thursday, August 8, 2013
6:00pm-8:00pm
Latham, NY

Summer Movie Series: *It's So Much Work to be Your Friend*

Tuesday, July 16, 2013
10:00am-12:00pm
Latham, NY
OR
Thursday, July 25, 2013
6:00pm-8:00pm
Latham, NY

Summer Movie Series: Collaborative Problem-Solving/ Video Clips with Dr. Ross Greene

Thursday, July 11, 2013
6:00pm-8:00pm
Latham, NY
OR
Tuesday, August 6, 2013
10:00am-12:00pm
Latham, NY

Vacation Tips for Families Who Have Children With Special Needs

By: Mary Fornabia, Special Education Resource Specialist



I don't know about you but it is usually about this time of the year when I start thinking about going on a vacation and getting away from all the homework, school meetings, CSE meetings, therapy appointments, carpooling, need I go on? The idea of a sun-kissed beach or mountain views with a cocktail in hand sounds so much more inviting. Yet, the idea of all the planning that goes into travelling with a child with special needs is overwhelming and daunting.

I have wonderful, fun memories of vacationing with my family as a young child and I have always wanted my children to have a similar experience. "Family fun" away from home. A place where we can escape the day to day routines and maybe, just maybe relax and let the kids see that mom and dad can be fun and not just the homework police!

With that said, it would be so much easier to stay put, in the comfort of my home where everything is familiar to my kids, where there is a routine and where I can attempt to control their surroundings. But then in the back of my head I hear the words from all those teachers; "expose him to new things, break the routine, create teachable moments", etc. So what better way to do this than to get out of our home and see something other than the grass that needs mowing or the walls that need to be painted.

Planning is key to a successful (or at least partially successful) vacation.

- 1- **Be Brave:** as I mentioned families of kids with special needs may be scared of trips away from home. The thought of dealing with a behavioral outburst in public or in front of family can be too overwhelming to contemplate. Unless a doctor has ruled out travelling for medical reasons, don't let fears take over. Everyone needs to get away.
- 2- **Planning is Key:**
 - o Map out your trip and select destination and rest stops that can accommodate your child's needs.
 - o Think of your child's daily routine and the items he or she likes or needs and bring them along.

- o Buy some small inexpensive toys or books that he or she can play with during the journey or when you arrive at your vacation spot. If he or she only plays with one of those items, try to find a duplicate and see if you can "break it in" before the trip.
- o Do not wash any items (including plush toys) before the trip as your child may want the "home" smell on his/her cherished item.
- o Put together a monthly calendar with departure date clearly marked and have your child cross off each day until departure. Bring the calendar with you and mark off number of days in one place or on the trip always having a return date indicated.
- o Put together a picture and word "travel book" of what means of transport you are using, who you are going to see, where you will sleep, or what you will do or see at your destination. Go over it with your child so that they can become familiar with what to expect. It will become a storybook to help prepare for the trip. You can use a 3 ring binder and add extra pages or insert the calendar as mentioned above for use on the trip.
- o Travel environments such as airports, train stations, are areas that involve a lot of waiting. Teaching the "waiting" skill will make life a bit easier. Ask your child's teachers for suggestions on working on this skill. However, as an adult I have a hard time waiting when in these environments so once again plan ahead. Call the airline ahead of time explaining to them about your child's special needs. If you have a travel agent that you are working with ask about special guidelines for passengers with disabilities.
- If you have a child that is sensitive to loud noise or sudden unknown noises, have earplugs on hand or head phones to block out some of that noise. Or if they like music, have an i-pod or some musical device on hand to drown out the noise.
- Know your child and family. If you have a child that likes to have a scheduled routine, plan ahead to have those activities set. Become familiar with the vacation destination or area you will be visiting so that you can adequately plan. Some kids/families need scheduled "down time" to "veg. out" and relax doing nothing. If this is your type of family, planning ahead to build this time into the vacation is important.
- A good source of detailed information about the logistics of planning accessible travel is **"Barrier-Free Travel: A Nuts and Bolts Guide for Wheelers and Slow Walkers"** by **Candy Harrington**.

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Friendship - continued

If you would like more suggestions on how to build friendship and social skills with your child with ADHD, please e-mail adenekarhan@wildwoodprograms.org.

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Vacation Tips - continued

Vacation is all about doing something other than “ the daily grind”. A twist on the vacation is a “Staycation”. This is when you don’t leave home, but change the routine and do some fun activities right in your own home and community. Most “staycationers” follow a set of rules, such as setting a start and end date, planning ahead, and avoiding routine, with the goal of creating the feel of a traditional vacation. ^[4]Letting the kids help plan some “ fun rules” will definitely help in the success of this type of vacation. Some examples of this may be:

- invite some friends over
- have breakfast for dinner
- do some activities in your community that you don’t typically do. Maybe going bowling one day, see a local museum, play miniature golf, or visit a local zoo.
- check out your local Pennysaver/newspaper for coupons and community activities.
 - get “take out” a few nights. Cooking is often one of those things that parents don’t enjoy.
 - create a “theme dinner” or

You can have the kids do arts and crafts to decorate the home like a hotel, cabin or rental property with a particular flavor. Get recipes and grocery shop for food that would be served in local restaurants at your ideal vacation spot. Do something different, eat or watch t.v. in a room you normally don’t use for that purpose. Sleep in a different location, for example, the living room, basement, or a tent outside.

The most important thing to remember about vacations is to take time off or away from the usually routine. Whether you decide to travel or stay home, either can be accomplished with just a bit of preparation. Taking some time to recharge your battery is essential, especially for parents of children with special needs. Before we know it we will be hearing the loud engine of the bus pulling down the street, or we will be sitting in the carpool lines out in front of the school, all to start off the school year. So remember it isn’t how much time you spend somewhere that makes it worthwhile, it’s how you spend the time!

CDOS Commencement Credential – continued

So, what does a student need in order to receive a CDOS Commencement Credential? The process begins with the student having meaningful access to participate and progress in general education. The purpose of this is to ensure that students are provided an opportunity to earn a regular high school diploma. In support of this concept, the Regents and State Education Department built a provision into the regulations that states if a school district awards the credential to more than 20% of the students in the cohort, where it is not a supplement to a regular high school diploma, they will be required to allocate a portion of their IDEA Part B funds to ensuring that students with disabilities have appropriate access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum needed to earn a regular high school diploma. Additional requirements a student must meet in order to receive the credential include the creation of a career plan created by the student. The career plan must be reviewed annually and revised as appropriate. In the plan, the student needs to identify his or her career interests, career-related strengths and needs; career goals and coursework and work-based learning experiences the student needs to achieve their career goals.

Students will also need to receive instruction on the Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) learning standards. The CDOS learning standards are part of the New York State learning standards and are comprised of three different levels, elementary, intermediate and commencement level. In order for a student to receive the CDOS credential, they need to be able to demonstrate that they have mastered the knowledge and skills necessary for the commencement level of the CDOS standards. To learn more about the CDOS standards, visit the following website:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/cte/cdlearn/documents/cdoslea.pdf>.

There is no “test” given to the student to assess whether or not they’ve attained the commencement level on the CDOS standards but rather, an employability profile will need to be completed by appropriate staff at the school within one year of the student exiting that will document the student’s completion of the standards.

Students also need to complete 2 units (216 hours) of study in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and/ or work-based learning. Of those 216 hours, 54 of them need to be school-supervised work-based learning hours. These hours can occur during 9th-12th grade and do not have to all be “job” based but can include in-house school based learning, job-shadowing, community service/ volunteering, service learning, senior projects and more. If a student attains a nationally-recognized work readiness credential such as Skills USA, National Work Readiness Credential, National Career Readiness Credential-ACT WorkKeys or Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems Workforce Skills Certification System, than they do not need to complete the 216 hours of CTE.

As there is no exit exam associated with the CDOS Commencement Credential, how will a student demonstrate he or she has met all of the criteria necessary to receive the credential and who will make the decision as to whether the

student should receive the credential based on the documentation? As noted earlier, designated staff and/or individuals knowledgeable about the student will be required to compile a student Employability Profile within one year of the student’s exit from school. This Employability Profile will include documentation that the student has indeed achieved the commencement level on the CDOS standards; that the student has completed the necessary hours of CTE/ work-based learning experiences; the student’s updated career plan and any additional information related to the students performance on industry-based assessments and other work-related academic achievements.

The CDOS commencement credential will ultimately be issued by the local School board of Education or Trustees, or in a private school, by the principal. If a student is receiving the credential as a supplement to a Regents or local diploma, the student would receive the credential at the same time the diploma is awarded. If the student is receiving only the credential, the certificate could be issued any time after a student has attended school for at least 12 years (excluding Kindergarten), or has transferred from an area where he/she received an equivalent education, or at the end of the school year in which the student turns 21.

The certificate awarded will be similar in format to the diploma that the local school district issues, however, it will not use the term “diploma” but will indicate that the student has earned a New York State Career Development Occupational Studies Commencement Credential endorsed by the New York State Board of Regents as an indication that they are ready for entry-level employment. The certificate will be documented in the student’s transcript as well.

In recognition of the short-time frame and the fact that the IEP diploma is no longer being awarded to students with disabilities currently enrolled, the regulations allow for a phase-in period. Students who exit school prior to July 1, 2015 may still receive the credential even if they have not completed all of the requirements if the school principal in consultation with relevant staff, determine the student has otherwise demonstrated the appropriate knowledge and skills required to attain the credential.

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