

CONNECTIONS

A Quarterly Newsletter From the Parent Network of the Capital Region



The mission of the Parent Network of the Capital Region (PNCR) 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. All services are offered free-of-charge.



PNCR – What’s Happening?

By: Liz De Libero, PNCR Director

We are pleased to announce that our contract with the New York State Education Department has been renewed for an additional five years. We will continue our work as one of 14 Parent Technical Assistant Centers in NY State. The New York State Education Department is committed to providing special education information and resources to families so they can work collaboratively with their school district to ensure that their child receives an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. We look forward to our continued work and partnerships with families, schools, community agencies, and service providers. In our first five years we conducted 476 parent information sessions that were attended by 4,438 families or professionals! In addition to the trainings we conduct each year, we also meet with families in person or by phone to assist them in navigating the special education process. At our location at 1190 Troy-Schenectady Rd in Latham, we have a resource library with a variety of books, journals, articles and videos covering a wide array of special education and disability related topics. We are committed to providing our services to families and agencies in all of the 13 counties in our catchment area and will travel to meet with family members, school personnel or service providers. If your agency or school is interested in hosting a training, please call us and we will do our best to assist you.

Many thanks to the families and professionals who attended our trainings, or met with us individually and provided us with feedback. We have learned much in our first 5 years and hope to continually improve our services!

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2014 Autism Awareness Information Fair

By: Mary Fornabia, Special Education Resource Specialist

The Law Office of Wilcenski & Pleat, PLLC, presented the 3rd Annual Autism Awareness Information Fair on Sunday, April 27, 2014 from Noon-3:00pm at the Saratoga Springs City Center.

The Parent Network of the Capital Region and Saratoga Bridges, in cooperation with the Skidmore College Psychology Department, once again hosted this event in an effort to connect individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorders and their families with providers and resources in the Capital District area. The event included over 60 vendors from around the Capital District including summer camp programs, adaptive and therapeutic sports programs, clinical services, college programs, and much more.

This year the Autism Information Fair had over 700 individuals in attendance, a 57% increase from last year. Moving the venue from Skidmore College, a space that we outgrew, to the Saratoga City Center was a big move. It allowed us to accommodate our growing number of attendees, as well as expand vendor participation by 65%.

New to the fair this year was an art exhibit that displayed the artwork of individuals with Autism and other Developmental Disabilities. It was a huge success with over 100 pieces of artwork. Upon entering the fair, families were greeted by beautiful paintings, drawings and sculptures on display. Some samples are included with this article for your viewing pleasure.

Skidmore Psychology Department oversaw the arts and crafts and bounce house for children who attended the fair. Some of the activities included face painting, spin art, sand art, and bowling. Additionally, we provided a separate sensory area that was more of a quiet area for children.

An Autism Awareness Information Fair Directory was made available to those in attendance. This directory lists all vendors that participated in the fair this year and in years past and includes their contact information, and a statement about the

services they provide. You can download a copy of the resource directory by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Be sure to view our website for more information as we begin to plan for the 4th Annual Autism Awareness Information Fair in April, 2015.



The Sibling Experience

By: Sheri Gaylord, Special Education Resource Specialist



As the parent of a child who is impacted by the challenges of Autism, I often wonder what impact my son's disability is having on his siblings' relationship with him.

Equally, John and I often find ourselves questioning how we parent each child and the resulting family dynamics. Are we too harsh? Too lenient? Are we considering each situation and child individually? Fair DOES NOT mean equal, right? Will these boys love, oversee and ensure the proper life and care for Aiden when we are gone? These concerns and questions are not unfamiliar to any family with multiple children particularly when one or more siblings have a developmental disability or chronic medical/health issues. As unique as each family member is so too are the challenges and joys experienced by each individual member.

My boys are ages 13, 12 and 7. Aiden, my 12 year old has Autism. Looking back, I don't remember many, if any, sibling issues between him and his brother Trey, age 13. They are so close in age, the developmental differences/challenges of Autism were not as "obvious" to Trey because the age gap of 16 months wasn't expansive. By the time it was apparent enough to notice, it didn't matter; Trey was forging his place in school and expanding his friendships and relationships beyond the family. In his eyes, Aiden was his brother, he had his quirks, screamed a lot and didn't share many of his toys. Nothing more, nothing less. Trey unconditionally loves Aiden and is patient, accommodating and forgiving beyond words. Equally, Aiden loves and embraces Trey's presence. He is bonded with him in a way that I cannot describe with words but have the privilege to witness daily.

Sounds warm and fuzzy, right? Enter stage door left, my now 7 year old son, Vincent. Vincent is full of life, doesn't miss a beat and has a contagiously zealous personality. I have always said he has an

old soul full of wisdom and knowledge beyond his years. It is this little boy who struggles with his role and relationship with his brother Aiden.

It was clear to Vincent around age 4 or so, as he outgrew cartoons and preschool shows and Aiden continued to love them, that something was VERY different. Vincent is constantly questioning and struggling with the differences in responsibilities, rewards, consequences, privileges, etc between the two of them. He constantly struggles to understand what autism "means" and how it impacts Aiden and by default himself. He shares more negatives than positives about Aiden and is almost always critical of him. "He's mean!", "He cheats!", "He doesn't have to do as many chores. That's not fair!", "Why does he get more time on the iPad?", "He broke my toy!"

Admittedly, both Vincent and Trey have witnessed more than any child should from another sibling. Aiden has experienced intervals of significant behavioral challenges including aggressions directed at them, as well as John and I. Trey and Vincent love Aiden dearly but have each experienced being his brother in vastly different ways. This in part because of their age differences but also because their personalities are distinctive.

In the end, the path we travel as parents and siblings is often confusing, conflicted and troublesome. Not every day is gloriously filled with laughter, sunshine and roses. Thankfully, seemingly small wins eventually overshadow the conflicts, confusion and frustration. Somewhere in the core of being a mom, dad, brother or sister, we realize although we are affected by the struggles and question every decision and challenge, we ARE doing something right and everything WILL be OK.

The following describes my most recent win. During school, Vincent was instructed to write about something he really loved. He would recite his work to parents and classmates at the end of the year writing celebration. He kept it a secret until the event, sharing only these words, "You are going to love what I wrote

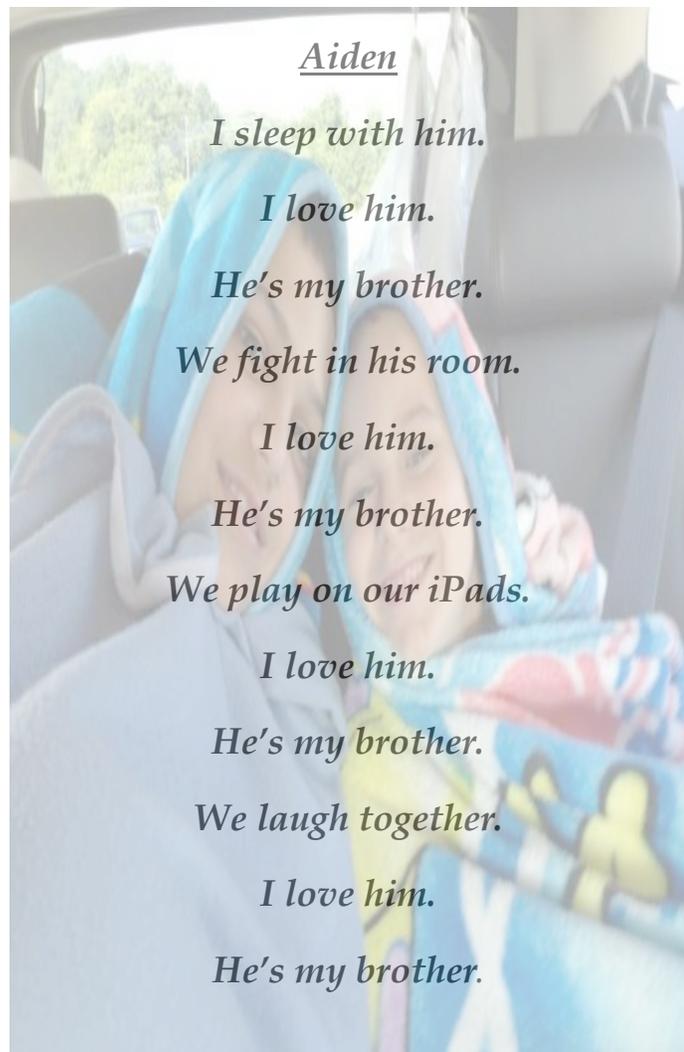
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The Sibling Experience

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Mom.”. The feelings he expressed by way of written words are seeds of love and compassion planted deep within. It did my heart well to hear him read the words that represent his love for Aiden.

The following was written by Vincent Gaylord and is shared with his permission.



Local Sibling Support Resources

The Bus Stop Club

(Not Disability Specific)

Ages 5-15

www.busstopclub.com

Wildwood Programs Sib Groups

(Not Disability Specific)

I'm Special Too, ages 8-12

Teen Sibs, ages 13-17

Contact Stefanie Pivar at:

spivar@wildwoodprograms.org

518-640-3327

iFocus On The Why - Technology In Education

By: Mark Giufre, Instructional Technology Specialist

Wildwood Programs

As an Instructional Technology Specialist for Wildwood School, my primary goal is to ensure the pairing of good instructional practices and 21st century resources. Much of my time is spent working with staff in all areas and helping them see the power technology can have when embedded in an already rich and goal-oriented lesson.

Wildwood School is part of the larger Wildwood Programs. Nestled away in Eastern Upstate New York, Wildwood Programs provides comprehensive supports and services to well over 1,500 people and their families every year. Our students include those with complex learning disabilities, adolescents with autism, and adults with developmental disabilities.

When iPads were introduced to the campus a couple of years ago, I wondered how our educational landscape would change. First and foremost, it was necessary to cut through all of the hype and media and focus on the fact that the iPad is a tool that can enhance instruction, learning, and skills, but it is not a miracle that will change everything in and of itself. An iPad alone is relatively powerless until it is immersed in good pedagogy where clear goals and purpose of use are established.

At Wildwood, we are fortunate to have a more than adequate number of iPads. Similarly, many of our families have iPads at home and use them in a variety of ways with their children. While the technology is very exciting, I cannot stress enough how important it is to change the way teaching occurs when you introduce the device.

The staff and families at Wildwood understand the importance of sound pedagogy in the technology integration process. They always start with the "why." Why am I using an iPad? Is it to enhance instruction? Enhance my own productivity? Teach a skill in isolation that can then be generalized? Create an iMovie about a subject for class? Directly teach using an app

that will help someone live a more independent life?

There is a growing understanding that this shiny device is more than just a substitution or replacement for traditional tools. It is a powerful instrument that should be used to extend learning and creativity. Unless we use "why" as our starting point, we get dangerously close to just adding the iPad to a laundry list of tools we have and thereby miss the focus both on its possibilities and the hard work needed to integrate it effectively into the classroom.



After the "why" is identified, the "what" and "how" become the focus, and that usually means navigating the infinite sea of apps that exists. There are many rubrics, alignment tools, charts, and lists available that discuss apps and try to make navigating them a little easier. You can find some good rubrics and alignment tools at : <http://www.ipads4teaching.net/critical-eval-of-apps.html> and www.schrockguide.net/app-for-that.html.

Quality, not quantity, must be our focus. Apps are not purchased on a whim, but rather after carefully looking at the app in depth, reading reviews, and even sometimes speaking with the developer. Similarly, the built-in features of the iPad should be fully utilized.

Due to the diversity of students we serve and their unique needs, we are constantly reviewing and analyzing apps to meet our needs without losing sight of the "why." From academics to occupational therapy to speech and beyond, every department has some favorite apps that they rely on, apps that

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iFocus On The Why - Technology in Education

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are trending towards the creation side and away from mere consumption.

The following will list some of their favorite apps and look at some “why’s” and “how’s.”

Education/Teaching

Aurasma helps you create, share, motivate, and amaze. Bring augmented reality to a whole new level, bring assignments to life, share information with families, create real life scavenger hunts - the possibilities are endless.

Explain Everything helps you create, collaborate, communicate, and consume content at any age or ability. Show and explain the steps of a process, an assignment, anything. Now you can annotate video while playing and recording.

Book Creator allows you to create a beautifully laid-out “book” to retell a story, create social stories, or whatever your imagination dictates. You can add photographs, pictures, sound, video, speech, and music. It is easy to share stories and is great for the Common Core.

For All Rubrics (website) can be used to create, complete, and compute rubrics right from your tablet, and it is easy to use as well.

Music Therapy

Tempo allows you to slow a song down without changing the pitch. Once you decide on a new tempo, you can save the file in DropBox or email it for future use. Sometimes the perfect song has too many verses or a long introduction that can easily be shortened. Just import it into GarageBand and edit to the desired length.

GarageBand makes it easy to record student improvisations and vocal work. They can listen to the recordings and even edit their work. Loops can be made so that a successful performance can be repeated. Through simple editing, songs can also be shortened or adapted as needed.

iMovie lets students see themselves on screen. It is not only motivating to see direct feedback of your actions, but you can also create titles and transitions, culminating in a cool music video (you can use this in conjunction with the audio created in GarageBand).

Songify turns speech into song. The speech has altered special effects such as the vocoder, and the music has contemporary beats. It is highly motivating and addresses language skills and concepts, as well as creativity.

Behavior Support

Preference & Reinforcer Assessment by Touch Autism and Behavior Tracker Pro by Marz Consulting. Both integral to running effective behavior change programs. Preference & Reinforcer Assessment helps stay current with a student’s preferences and what items will serve as reinforcements for desired behavior. Behavior Tracker Pro is a great way to keep data collection current and easy so that it may be done with integrity.

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Speech

My Playhome by Shimon Young features a cartoonish home with several scenes including a kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, living room, and yard. It is fun and interactive in part because the objects and people are movable and make sounds when touched. This app can target language in several possible ways, including following directions, “wh”-questions, identifying objects by feature, function and/or class, and labeling functional vocabulary, just to name a few.

First Phrases by Hamaguchi Apps teaches students word order and phrase usage. The student touches the words in order, and they are paired with visual and auditory feedback. Then an animal character acts out a phrase like “turn off the light.” Following this trial, the student can record the phrase for him or herself. After a successful recording, the animal character acts out the student’s phrase. Students enjoy hearing their own voice and watching the characters complete actions which mom or dad might not be happy with (i.e. The bear says “Sorry, Mom. I’m going to jump off the bed!”)

Articulate It by Smart Ears allows you to pick multiple phonemes to target, as well as manner of production, phonological process, and number of syllables. It uses real photographs, which can target sounds at the various levels, including the word, phrase, or sentence level. The students enjoy the option of recording and listening to their own voices and the silly sounds that are created. It is helpful to therapists for tabulating the student’s accuracy level, saving user data, and managing general information such as age.

Occupational Therapy

Dexteria works on prerequisites to printing, visual tracking, visual motor, dexterity, pincer grasp, and letter formation. The app has a setting for obtaining and recording data for collection.

Dexteria Jr. works on less refined prerequisite motor movements, and the regular Dexteria works on more refined fine motor movements.

Letter School can be set to HWT settings, which are widely used, and is an extremely effective printing program. This app gives the student the ability to practice consistent, slow, and precise letter formation skills and then generalize.

Injini helps develop skills in a fun and challenging way. Beautiful illustrations captivate children while working on fine motor, cause and effect, spatial awareness, visual processing, and memory. There is a “no penalty” philosophy to the games, and subtle level changes support different stages of development.

Social Work

Expression Arcade is a free app created at Wildwood School that allows the user to learn and improve social skills. This app has a corresponding website at www.expressionarcade.com.

Middle School Confidential and Companion Books are great for dissecting social situations and teaching coping skills.

iMovie can be used to role play social situations and create interactive videos for discussion.

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iFocus On The Why - Technology in Education

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Work-Based Learning

Time Timer is meant for students to set and learn about elapsed time/how much time remains in relation to tasks to be completed. This means student workers begin to internalize concepts of productivity.

Choice Works helps students to sequence, time, and check off work task sequences, using pictures or icons of jobs. This means less dependence on job coaching for reminders of what to do next.

Scanner Pro lets students scan and file written directions and procedures. It also can develop job sites around scanning, filing, and associated tasks.

Speech and Language

Picture the Sentence provides an opportunity to target multiple goals while controlling various levels of support. You can control presentation modalities to match your students' individual needs, and the app can be formatted to teach skills in a hierarchy.

Magical Concepts allows you to select specific language concepts with real life photographs. It allows you to work on as many or as few targets as needed for your student.

Fun with Directions is one of my favorite apps to target receptive language skills. It reinforces attending skills and draws attention to specific language while rotating through various language concepts.

The article you just read appeared in the November 2103 issue of TCEA's techEdge magazine and is reprinted with permission from TCEA (www.tcea.org).

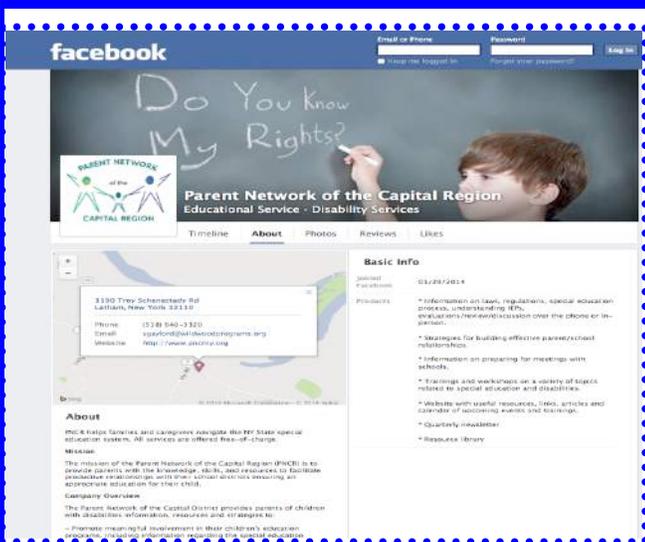
Follow Mark Giufre on Facebook to keep this conversation going:
facebook.com/deTective1sEdTechPage. Also check out his blog at: markgiufre1.com.

Announcements and Looking Ahead

Coming Soon....

PNCR is excited to announce we will soon offer some of our trainings via webinar using GoToWebinar software.

Our goal is to expand our reach and provide information sessions and trainings to busy families and professionals who often have a difficult time attending our on site sessions. Individuals will be able to "attend" many of our training sessions from the convenience of their home, local library, or office location. Watch for an announcement later in the fall.



PNCR has a Facebook page!!!!

We use our page to share special education related information including workshops, articles and resources from other local and national agencies, NYSED announcements/updates, and specific disability related information.

Like our page by [Click Here](#).

As the summer season winds down and everyone begins the process of preparing for "back to school", we at the PNCR would like to encourage you to visit our website at www.pncrny.org and check out our upcoming trainings and workshops offered throughout the Capital Region. To access our training calendar simply click on the [Trainings & Workshop](#) tab at the top of our site and then click the [Training Calendar](#) tab. A few of our offerings for the months of August, September, and October include:

- * Starting Off On The Right Foot
- * Anatomy of an IEP
- * Homework Help
- * Diploma Options
- * Anxiety/Depression in Student w/Disabilities
- * iPads, Tablets and Apps, Oh My!
- * Common Core Learning Standards and Special Education - Guest Speaker Kate Gerson, Senior Regents Research Fellow for Common Core with the Regents Research Fund
- * Special Education Overview
- * Special Education Record Keeping
- * NYS Alternative Assessments (NYSAA)
- * Transition 101
- * Fetal Alcohol Effects