



IN THIS ISSUE:

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| <i>EPICS attends Alliance Conference in</i> | front |
| <i>How to keep connecting with the</i>      | 2     |
| <i>Classroom Expectations</i>               | 2     |
| <i>Questions to ask concerning an IEP</i>   | 3     |
| <i>Communicating with People with</i>       | 4     |
| <i>Effective Communication through lis-</i> | 5     |
| <i>Calendar of Events</i>                   | 6     |

Points of Interests

- EPICS attend 2008 Annual Alliance Conference in Washington, DC
- Classroom Expectations
- Questions to ask before and after an IEP meeting
- Outreach Ideas - Communicating with People with Disabilities

Educating for  
Parents of  
Indian  
Children with  
Special Needs

## EPICS at the 11th Annual Alliance National Conference— Washington, D.C.

The EPICS project director participated at the 11th Annual Alliance National Conference held in Washington, D.C. January 30—February 1, 2008.

“This year’s conference was the most rewarding and exciting conference I have ever attended”, stated the project director of EPICS. As always the conference provided an opportunity for Parent Center leaders across the country to come together and share their commitment to improving outcomes for children with disabilities.

The conference was attended by more than 100 parent centers across the country (Parent Information and Training Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers). EPICS project is a Community Parent Resource Center serving the American Indian families in New Mexico. It is home to 280,588 American Indians living in the 22 Indian communities, including Navajo and Apache tribes. EPICS is only one of two Indian Parent Centers in the nation.

The conference was designed to support our commitment serving families offering plenary sessions

with top-notch keynote speakers, and thought provoking breakout sessions that covered everything from leadership and management issues to the latest educational research affecting children with disabilities.

This year’s reception on the Hill at the Russell Senate Office Building was outstanding, says the EPICS project director. The Alliance National Conference reception was joined by many senators from the different states. The senators offered support and encouragements to the Parent Centers and their commitment to our families. EPICS had the opportunity to speak with Senator Jeff Bingaman’s staff person at the reception, and shared with her the many challenges faced by our American Indian parents with children with disabilities in New Mexico.

EPICS joined forces in Washington, D.C. with the new Oregon Indian Parent Center. EPICS will host the upcoming, in August 2008, the National Indian Parent Conference in Albuquerque. This would be the first Indian Parent Conference in New Mexico. We are excited and would like to see as many Indian families attend the conference. Look out for the information or call the EPICS project office.

## SEEDS FOR THE SOUL

*If we don't stand up  
for children, then we  
don't stand for much.*

*Marian Wright  
Edelman*

*Bitter are the tears of a  
child: Sweeten them.  
Deep are the thoughts  
of a child: Quiet them.  
Sharp is the grief of a  
child: Take it from  
him.*

*Soft is the heart of a  
child: Do not harden  
it.*

*Pamela Glenconner*

*I am only one,  
But still I am one.  
I cannot do everything,  
But still I can do  
something.  
And because I cannot  
do everything  
I will not refuse to do  
The something that I  
can do.*

*Edward Everett Hale*

## School Interactions

- After the IEP meeting, keep lines of effective communication open by identifying the most efficient ways to keep in touch with school staff.
- Involve and listen to your child. Encourage your child to express his/her concerns and needs. Help children with health issues understand how they feel impacts how they learn, how they perform and how they interact with others.
- Make sure you and your child's teacher are prepared for questions as your child compares himself or herself to typical peers.
- Ask your child's doctor what is appropriate and necessary to share with the school. Make sure the doctor has provided to the school a copy of all pertinent medical information and a copy of an emergency care plan. Make sure school staff are aware of warning signs or physical and emotional symptoms that require medical attention (e.g. problems with vision, motor task, eating, or stamina, or changes in mood, behavior, respiratory function, bowel/bladder habits, or color of skin.)
- Think about creating with your child/s physician a short one-page information sheet that outlines important facts and lists resources for additional information.
- Save and file all copies of pertinent educational plans, development evaluations, progress reports, school forms, specialist evaluations, etc.
- Seek guidance from a mentor who has walked a similar path. Your child's physician or teacher may be able to recommend another parent, person with a disability, or local support group.

## Setting Classroom Expectations

For all students, clear, positive and constructive classroom rules contribute to an effective and efficient learning environment. For students with disabilities and other special needs, how rules are established and implemented can be crucial. Here are some suggestions for creating classrooms rules:

1. Phrase rules concisely and in the students' language and post them in prominent place for frequent review.
2. State rules in positive terms (e.g. "Work at your desk" rather than "Don't leave your seat").
3. Follow the rules of firmness, fairness, and consistency.
4. Discuss negative consequences for breaking rules, rewards for appropriate behavior, and the reasons why classroom rules exist.
5. Administer, as promptly as possible previously agreed upon rewards and negative consequences.
6. Respond to misbehavior in a quiet, slow voice.
7. Refrain from becoming visibly irritated to avoid compromising the effect of the consequences.
8. Face the students when talking to them as facial expressions will teach students to use and understand proper body language.
9. Avoid being trapped into arguments, as this is a no-win situation.

How does each of these suggestions for implementation foster positive behavior in all students?

Duhaney, L.M.G. (2003) A practical approach to managing the behaviors to students with ADD. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 38, 267-279. Copyright 2003 by Pro-Ed, Inc.

## Questions for Parents to Think about before an IEP Meeting

Before your child's IEP meeting, consider what information you can provide to school professionals to help them better understand your child. Plan to ask questions related to how school staff will provide education services to your child and what you and your child should expect.

- What does my child do well?
- With what does my child struggle?
- What are my long-range goals for my son or daughter?
- What skills would increase the independence of my son or daughter?
- What goals would strengthen us as a family?
- Are there transportation or mobility issues?
- What do I want the school to do for my child?
- What particular things do I want the school to report to me?
- How and when are good times for the school to contact me when this is necessary?
- What if there is an emergency or crisis?
- How can I communicate with the school? Notes? Who and when should I call?
- What information should I give to the school on an ongoing basis?

## Questions for Parents to Ask during an IEP Meeting

After your child's IEP meeting, you should be able to answer (at a minimum)

all of the following questions. If you are unclear about any of these, ask the other members of the child team to clarify the information for you.

- What is my child's disability?
- What are my child's current strengths and weaknesses?
- What are my child's annual goals (and, if needed, objectives)? How are they being measured?
- What is my child's placement? Is this the "least restrictive environment" for my child?
- What accommodations and modifications are being made for my child?
- What related services is my child receiving, and what are the times and places for these?
- How will communication between the school and parents be accomplished?
- What do I need to be doing at home to reinforce my child's educational plan?
- How has functional skills development been addressed in this IEP for my child?
- What is the current transition planning for my child?
- What outside agencies, services, and supports should I know about and be looking into?

TeacherVision.com (2003), Preparing for an IEP, retrieved April 6, 2003, from [www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-5583.html](http://www.teachervision.com/lesson-plans/lesson-5583.html); Shea, E.M. (2002, October), Education advocacy: IEP checklist, retrieved May 20, 2003, from [www.arcnj.org](http://www.arcnj.org). Copyright 2002 by the Arc of New Jersey.



## SEEDS FOR THE SOUL *cont.*

*Effective leadership is putting first things first. Effective management is discipline, carrying it out.*

*Stephen Covey*

*To put the world right in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must first cultivate our personal life; we must first set our hearts right.*

*Confucius*

*Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family: Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one.*

*Jane Howard*

## Outreach Ideas—Communicating with People with Disabilities

Not only professionals but people in general often ask for guidance to increase their skills in working with people with disabilities or just plain how to communicate with them. Listed below are general tips for your information:

- ◆ Use people-centered language. For example say “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people.”
- ◆ If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- ◆ Don’t be afraid to ask when you’re unsure of what to do.
- ◆ Listen to the individual.
- ◆ Relax.

### Blind or Visually Impaired

- ◆ Speak to the individual when you approach.
- ◆ State clearly who you are; speak in normal tone of voice.
- ◆ When conversing in a group, remember to identify yourself and the person to whom you are speaking. When leaving state you are leaving.
- ◆ Never touch or distract a service dog without first asking the owner.
- ◆ Do not attempt to lead the individual without first asking. Allow the person to hold your arm and control her or his own movements.
- ◆ Be descriptive when giving directions. For example, if you are approaching steps, mention how many steps.

### Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- ◆ Gain the person’s attention before starting a conversation. A light tap on the shoulder works.
- ◆ Look directly at the individual, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face.

- ◆ Use short, simple sentences. Avoid smoking or chewing gum.
- ◆ If using a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- ◆ If you do not have TEXT Telephone (TTY), dial 711 to reach the national telecommunications relay service, which facilitates the call between you and an individual who uses a TTY.

### Mobility Impairments

- ◆ If possible, put yourself at the wheelchair user’s eye level.
- ◆ Do not lean on a wheelchair.
- ◆ Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- ◆ Do not assume the individual wants to be pushed—ask first.
- ◆ Offer assistance if the individual appears to be having difficulty opening a door.

### Speech Impairments

- ◆ If you do not understand something the individual says, ask the individual to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back.
- ◆ Be patient. Take as much time as necessary.
- ◆ Try to ask questions that required only short answers or a nod of the head.
- ◆ Do not speak for the individual or attempt to finish her or his sentences.
- ◆ If you are having difficulty understanding the individual, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask the individual if this is acceptable.

### Cognitive Disabilities

- ◆ Be prepared to repeat what you say, orally or in writing.
- ◆ Offer assistance completing forms or understanding written instructions and provide extra time for decision making.

Be patient, flexible and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.

## Effective Communication through Listening



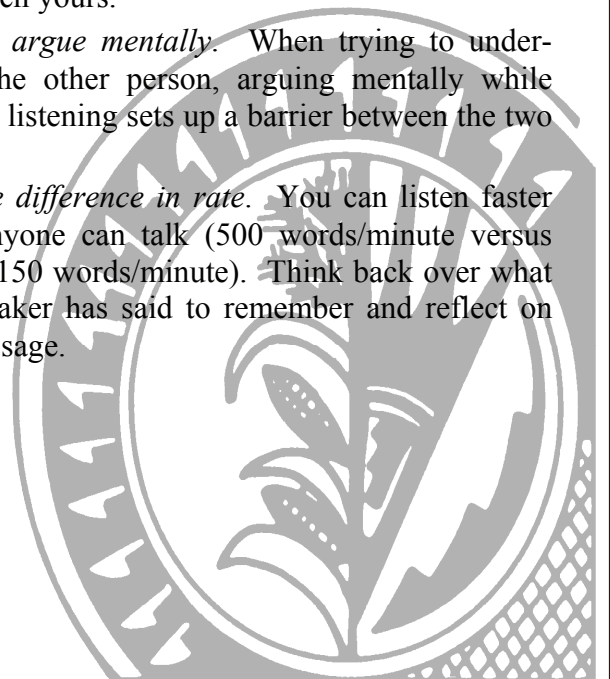
One of the first steps in refining our listening skills is to recognize factors that may interfere with your ability to listen. Here are some examples:

- ◆ You are in a hurry.
- ◆ You are distracted by what is around you.
- ◆ You are self-conscious.
- ◆ You are bored.
- ◆ You are thinking about what you are going to say.
- ◆ You are on mental overload.
- ◆ You are not responsible for the information.
- ◆ You are tired.
- ◆ You are confused by the topic or the speaker.
- ◆ You are daydreaming.

You can improve your listening skills for collaboration by following these suggestions, offered by experienced professionals:

- ◆ *Want to listen.* Remember, there is no such thing as disinterested people—only disinterested listeners.
- ◆ *Be a good listener.* Be quiet and alert, sit straight, lean slightly forward and make eye contact as appropriate and let your face radiate interest.

- ◆ *React positively.* The only time a person likes to be interrupted is when being “applauded” through nods, smiles, or comments. Be generous with your applause.
- ◆ *Empathize with the other person.* Try to put yourself in the other’s place so that you can see that point of view.
- ◆ *Ask Questions.* When you do not understand, when you need further clarification, or when you want to show you are listening ask questions. Avoid questions that will embarrass or criticize the other person.
- ◆ *Smile appropriately.* A smile can convey to the other person that you care about the topic. However, do not overdo it.
- ◆ *Leave your emotions behind (if you can).* Try to push your worries, your fears, and your problems away. They may prevent you from listening.
- ◆ *Get rid of distractions.* Put down any papers, pencils and other items you have in your hands.
- ◆ *Get the main points.* Focus on the main ideas.
- ◆ *React to ideas, not to the person.* Do not allow your reactions to the person to influence your interpretation of what is being said. Good ideas can come from people whose skills or personality do not match yours.
- ◆ *Do not argue mentally.* When trying to understand the other person, arguing mentally while you are listening sets up a barrier between the two of you.
- ◆ *Use the difference in rate.* You can listen faster than anyone can talk (500 words/minute versus 100 to 150 words/minute). Think back over what the speaker has said to remember and reflect on the message.



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**We're on the Web:**  
[www.epicsproject.org](http://www.epicsproject.org)

*Education for Parents of Indian  
Children with Special Needs (EPICS)*

*The EPICS Project is a community  
parent resource center for American  
Indian families who live in New  
Mexico and who have children with  
special needs.*

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Laguna Parent

**Andrea Shije**, Member  
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**Merlinda Latoma**, Member  
San Felipe Pueblo

**Rennita Henderson**, Member  
Navajo Parent

# 2008 Calendar of Events

- March**
- 7 IFSP Process, IDEA Part C (birth-3), Civic Center (200 W. Arlington) Farmington, NM , 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
  - 12 IEP Process & Advocacy —Gallup Educational Development Center— Gallup McKinley County Schools—1000 E. Aztec , Gallup, NM —10:00 am – 3:00 pm
  - 13 Parents Rights and IEP Process under IDEA Part B— Gallup McKinley County Schools— Tohatchi High School Library— Tohatchi, NM—10:00 am – 3:00pm
  - 25 Parents Rights and IEP Process under IDEA 2004—Gallup McKinley County Schools Navajo Pine High School Library— Navajo, NM— 10:00 am – 3:00pm
- April**
- 3 Mescalero Child Find —Mescalero Apache Early Intervention Program
  - 4 Part B & C – Procedural Safeguards—Mescalero Head Start Program
  - 8 Parent Rights and IEP Process under IDEA Part B—Cuba Independent Schools Cuba, NM— 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
  - 11 Parent Rights and IEP Process under IDEA Part B—Bernalillo Public School District Bernalillo, NM— 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
  - 17 Parent Rights/IEP Process under IDEA Part B—Gallup McKinley County Schools Crownpoint High School Library —10:00 am – 3:00 pm
  - 18 Parent Rights/IEP Process under IDEA Part B—Gallup McKinley County Schools Crownpoint High School Library— 10:00 am – 3:00 pm
  - 24 Part C – Procedural Safeguards—Jicarilla Early Intervention Program—Dulce, NM

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