



The Illinois State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities Newsletter

ISAC Council Members 2009—2010

Individuals with Disabilities

Anel Gonzalez (Forest Park)
Kyle Packer (Effingham)
Rahnee Patrick (Chicago)
Susy Woods (Springfield)

Parents of Children with Disabilities

Beth Conran (St. Charles)
Nora Donoghue (Highland Park)
Deb Fornoff (Washington)
Heather Munz (Freeport)
Rick Ramirez (Moline)
Kristine Stanley (Peoria Heights)
Stanley Valentine (East Peoria)

Teacher of Students with Disabilities

Carrie Janes (Aurora)

General Public

Jennifer Naddeo (Barrington)

Private Provider

Mike Otte (Oak Forest)

Public Charter Schools

Elizabeth Purvis (Chicago)

Special Education Directors

Jim Surber (LADSE—Lisle)

(open)

Vocational, Community or Business Organization Provider of Transition Services

Sharon Slover (McHenry County)

Regional Superintendent

(open)

LEA Superintendent

(open)

Higher Education

Suzanne Lee (U of I/Urbana)

DHS Secretary or Designee

Marjorie Olson

DCFS Designee

Frances Elbert

DJJ Designee

Lanée Walls

ICC Representative

Marva Campbell-Pruitt

ISAC FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE SHARES CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS WITH ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In December 2009, the ISAC Finance Committee submitted comments to the Illinois State Board of Education Finance and Audit Committee on the FY 2011 Budget, advocating for adequate and equitable funding for all mandated Special Education categoricals. ISAC is responsible for advising the State Board of Education as well as the Governor and Legislature on Special Education in the state of Illinois. ISAC's mandate is to ensure appropriate special education services are provided to all students in Illinois.

ISAC asked ISBE to acknowledge the regressive nature of the funding formulas related to personnel reimbursement and recommended indexed increases to the reimbursement rate, in order to keep up with inflation. To demonstrate the problem, the following figures were shared:

- The \$9,000 reimbursement rate received for certified special education teachers in FY 10 indicates only a \$1000 increase since 1985.
- In 1985 the \$8000 reimbursement represented 35% of the average teacher salary, and in 2008, the \$9,000 reimbursement represents 14% of the average teacher salary.

Despite increased demands on school districts to meet Special Education needs, state and federal funding remains stagnant.

ISAC also requested access to a Task Force report that was generated in response to House Joint Resolution 0024 (HJR 24). HJR 24 created a Task Force to study special education funding and directed the task force to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly by January 1, 2008. ISAC respectfully requested a copy of the Taskforce report and ample time to review and make recommendations to the ISBE prior to any action being taken relative to funding formulas in Illinois.

Members of the ISAC Finance Committee responsible for drafting these recommendations include Jim Surber of LADSE (Lisle), Mike Otte of Elim Christian School (Oak Forest), Marva Campbell-Pruitt of DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services, and Stanley Valentine representing Parents of Children with Disabilities (East Peoria).

ISAC wishes to thank Tere Garate (pictured right) for her many years of service to ISAC. Tere recently accepted a position as Illinois Department of Public Health Assistant Director.

Congratulations Tere!



ISAC Member Spotlight—Kyle Packer, Effingham



I'm Kyle Packer; I have served on the ISAC Board for the last 6 years. I represent People with Disabilities. I serve on several committees and was the Chair of the Accessibility Committee. I would like to tell you a little bit about myself. Growing up with cerebral palsy life was sometimes hard, but at the age of twenty-one my life changed. I'm grateful that my life went from being told "you can't do that" to taking on barriers and meeting challenges head-on.

I graduated from ISU in 1984 with a degree in Social Work. I got my first job working with an Independent Living Center as an Advocate. I advocated for the rights of people with disabilities on local, state, and national levels and worked my way up to Assistant Director.

While attending Idaho State University, I got involved with an organization called the Cooperative Wilderness Handicapped Outdoor Group (CWHOG). The "hogs", as they're called, did things I was told I could never do. Things I thought I couldn't do. Wrong. The "hogs" did everything from nights out on the town, white water rafting, and snow skiing and rock climbing. Anything that could be done they did. I came to find the only barriers in the outdoors are the ones you put on yourself.

My accomplishments have far surpassed what even my closest friends and family could ever have imagined. Things like a breath-taking excursion through wild white water in the Grand Canyon, and participating in a history-making trek to Mt. Everest base camp, supporting the first disabled climber to successfully summit Everest. In 2002 Callan Films asked if they could do a film about me. I couldn't say no, although I wasn't sure my life was all that interesting. "An Uphill Climb", which received five Mid America Emmy Awards, was the resulting film, and it's been shared with millions of viewers through PBS stations and the Starfish Network. In the spring of 2008, the film was subtitled in Chinese, and it has made its way around China, inspiring children with disabilities. The film has been both extremely gratifying and very humbling.

The best adventure of all, however, was meeting Sheryl. She became my wife in 1988, and then the mother of our three children Joshua, Quinton, and Kayla.

My most recent adventure, in the summer of 2008, was an attempt to summit Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest point in Africa. At 17,000 feet our support people began suffering the effects of altitude sickness, and we had to turn back. It's been ten years since I was part of the expedition on Mt. Everest, and I know first hand the profound effect that journey has had on those who have heard stories from it. Since then, I've dreamed of summiting myself, of reaching the top of a mountain, both figuratively and literally. Mt. Kilimanjaro is that mountain.

ISAC Requests Conflict Resolution Task Force

As a result of information shared by Andy Eulass of ISBE at the December 2009 meeting, ISAC requested that ISBE continue with its plans to develop a conflict resolution task force to reform the due process system. The following motion was approved by ISAC:

It is proposed that ISBE develop and organize a conflict resolution task force with the following goals:

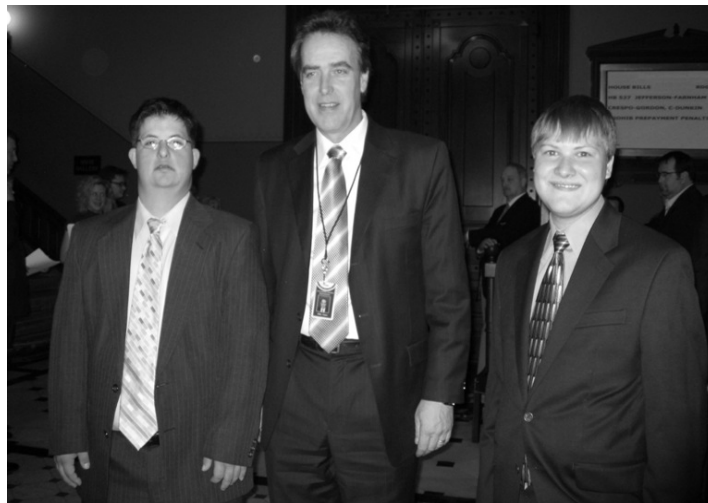
1. Examine and address family advocacy access issues;
2. Review the current due process system and make recommendations to improve the system based on input from a fair representation of the state's due process consumers;
3. Advise ISAC of its final work force membership selection;
4. Propose additional alternative conflict resolution options to all parties; and
5. Designate more than one full time ISBE staff person to coordinate and complete the work of the task force.

YOU'RE INVITED! ISAC Legislative Breakfast—April 14, 2010

On April 14th, 2010, students with disabilities from across Illinois, along with their parents and teachers will take the long but exciting journey to Springfield, Illinois, to attend the Legislative Breakfast hosted by the Illinois State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities (ISAC).

Students participate by preparing and serving food, passing out brochures to legislators and visitors, and preparing the decorations for the event. This annual event is held in the rotunda of the State Capitol and is an amazing opportunity for Illinois Legislators and their constituents to come together for a great breakfast while learning about ISAC.

Students often visit the office of their local legislators to see firsthand the hard work being done on behalf of Illinois residents as well as support ISAC and its role in increasing awareness of the educational issues facing students with disabilities and their families.



Students from Special Education District of McHenry County with Illinois State Representative Mike Tryon of Crystal Lake at the 2009 ISAC Legislative Breakfast.

Did You Know You Could Find These Important Items On The ISBE Website Under Special Education?

- The newly revised Parent's Guide - Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois
- The ISBE Annual State Performance Report

*Check it out at
www.isbe.net*



ISAC Member Spotlight—Beth Conran, St. Charles



Elizabeth Conran, Vice Chair of the Illinois State Advisory Council (ISAC) is an active citizen of the state of Illinois, championing for the rights of children with disabilities. She was assigned to ISAC in 2006 as a member at large and continues to serve on the Council as a parent and an administrator of Special Education. Beth is Chair of the Rules and Comprehensive Plan Review Committees as well as being an active member on the Transition Committee and Legislative Committees of ISAC. Beth's work outside of ISAC includes 25 years working with The Menta Group as a teacher, principal, Regional Director of Operations and currently serves on the Board of Directors. Other statewide involvement includes a gubernatorial assignment to the Illinois Council on Re-enrolling Youth, assignment to the Illinois Special Education Funding Task Force by General Assembly Membership, Illinois ASPIRE Statewide Advisory Committee, LEA Determinations Stakeholder Group, Northern Illinois Transition Committee, and several other committees whose mission focus' on supporting children with disabilities in Illinois. Beth works to improve the educational opportunities for children with disabilities and to increase local, state, and federal support for programs that will increase student outcomes preparing students for life after school.

5TH ANNUAL STATEWIDE TRANSITION CONFERENCE IN SCHAUMBURG SETS ATTENDANCE RECORD!



The Fifth Annual Statewide Transition Conference, entitled "Mission Transition: Destination Success" was held at the Schaumburg Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center On November 8, 9, and 10, 2009. Over 900 participants were in attendance and were invited to imagine the possibilities for students with disabilities in the areas of independent living, education and training, employment, community

integration, health care, and self-advocacy.

The goal of the 2009 conference was to increase understanding of how effective transition planning addresses all aspects of adult life for people with disabilities. Conference participants were able to obtain practical and evidenced-based strategies that addressed the following: family involvement, student self-determination, interagency collaboration, effective program structures and student development.

The target audience included transition-aged youth/young adults who have a disability, family members, health care professionals, caregivers, special education educators and administrators, vocational rehabilitation counselors and administrators, advocates and transition planning committees

Workshop sessions included informative presentations on best practices in transition planning, services and outcomes. The conference offered more than forty different break-out sessions for participants and also hosted exhibit booths as well as college and health fairs.

Participants were treated to a luncheon motivational speaker, Jonathan Edison, who presented on **The 5 A's of Success: Academics, Attitude, Attendance, Achievement and Asking for Help**. On Tuesday, Nov. 10th, the final day of the conference, attendees had the opportunity to participate in more than twenty break-out sessions as well as concurrent plenary sessions for each conference track.

Another conference highlight was an engaging luncheon presentation from Janice Fialka, a nationally renowned speaker, who provided an inspiring presentation on **The Dance of Partnership**.



Janice Fialka

MISSION STATEMENT

The role of the Illinois State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities is to be a proactive body, advising the Governor, Legislature and State Board of Education on current issues relating to the education of children and youth with disabilities, as well as the unmet needs of these children and their families. It is also the responsibility of this Council to encourage new strategies and technologies, while advocating high standards of excellence throughout Illinois.

PRIMARY ISAC ACTIVITIES

- Joint Agreement Withdrawal
- Commenting on Rules and Regulations
- Providing input on Continuous Improvement Plan
- Due Process and General Supervision input
- Serving on other assignments/committees
- Development of an Annual Report
- Providing guidance on state rules
- Implementing IDEIA

Please contact Rick Ramirez,
Ad Hoc Communications
Committee Chair, with any
comments or questions at
ramirez@netexpress.net
or 1-800-813-0392

This newsletter was printed by students from The Menta Group — Hillside Academy, Hillside, Illinois

Thank You!