On May 9th and 10th, the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference was held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough, MA. This conference brings practitioners, providers and parents together to educate, support and empower their work with the stakeholders of Early Intervention – children and families ages birth to 3.

This conference provides excellent resources for parents whose children are currently enrolled, or have been, in Early Intervention. The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP) was thrilled to be able to host at least one family from each program, at the Conference, with support from the Department of Public Health. Funding generously contributed by the Regional Consultation Programs (RCPs) allowed for additional families to attend the Conference this year.

This year’s keynote speaker was Howard Glasser, MA. Mr. Glasser is the founder of the Children’s Success Foundation, creator of the Nurtured Heart Approach and the author of many books including Transforming the Difficult Child and The Inner Wealth Initiative. His keynote entitled “Inspiring Greatness” was very well received and captured his belief that “children who are awakened to their greatness, act out greatness and manifest greatness in every aspect of their lives.” Mr. Glasser’s talk was dynamic and inspiring to the members of the EI community.

There was a breadth of workshops available at the MEIC Conference this year. They ranged from Having Fun with iPad Apps! to Yoga for the Child with Special Needs and Family, and everything in between. Many of the workshops were parent and family centered, offering families the opportunity to learn about topics that they were interested in, along side their professional partners.

On Wednesday evening, the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project was pleased to host the annual MEIC Parent Dinner. This year marked the 21st year of the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project. The evening began with an opportunity for parents to mix and mingle. Staff of both the EIPLP and Family TIES of Massachusetts parents were present. The EIPLP shared a heart-warming video of families who had been in Early Intervention. All in all, the MEIC Parent Dinner was a wonderful expression of parent commitment, creativity and initiative.
Dear Families,

Early Intervention programs distributed over 4,000 NCSEAM Family Surveys in March. In order for the Department of Public Health (DPH) to truly understand how Early Intervention services are working for families, we need to hear from you. Your input tells us, and your EI program how effective and useful provided services really are.

We hope you found the new, shortened version of the Family Survey easier to fill out. If you haven't already done so, please complete your Survey in pencil and return it in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. Surveys can be returned anytime up until December 1, 2012 and they will be counted. However, if you are like so many of us, "what doesn't get done today doesn't get done at all." Don't wait. Finish your Survey and send it back as soon as you can. Your voice counts! Make sure we hear it!

Thank You!

Family Survey Frequently Asked Questions

1. My EI services are great. I tell my Service Coordinator all the time so why do I have to fill out a Family Survey?
   
   *It's the only way the Department of Public Health can get your feedback directly. Please fill out and return the Family Survey.*

2. I'm still confused about the Family Survey and why it is so important.

   *Talk to your Service Coordinator and ask for more information and help in understanding the process. You may also contact the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project toll free at: 877-353-4757 to talk with another parent.*

---

Estimadas familias:

En marzo, los programas de intervención Temprana distribuyeron más de 4.000 encuestas familiares de NCSEAM. Para que el Departamento de Salud Pública (DPH) pueda entender la utilidad de los servicios de Intervención Temprana para las familias, necesitamos oír de usted. Sus comentarios nos informan a nosotros y a su programa del IT de la eficacia y utilidad real de los servicios provistos.

Esperamos que la nueva versión más corta de la encuesta familiar le haya resultado más fácil de llenar. Si aún no lo ha hecho, por favor complete su encuesta con lápiz y envíe en el sobre provisto con franqueo y dirección de destino. Las encuestas se pueden enviar hasta el 1 de diciembre de 2012 y serán contadas. Sin embargo, si usted es como tantos de nosotros y “lo que no se hace hoy no se hace nunca”, no espere. Complete su encuesta y envíe lo más pronto posible. ¡Su opinión cuenta! ¡Asegúrese de que la oigamos!

¡Gracias!

Preguntas comunes sobre la encuesta familiar

1. Mi servicios de IT son buenísimos. Se lo digo a mi coordinador de servicios todo el tiempo así que, ¿para qué contestar la encuesta familiar?

   *Es la única manera de que el Departamento de Salud Pública oiga sus comentarios directamente de usted. Por favor complete y envíe la encuesta familiar.*

2. Todavía estoy confundida con respecto a la encuesta familiar y por qué es tan importante.

   *Hable con su coordinador de servicios y pídale más información y ayuda para entender el proceso. También puede llamar gratis al Proyecto Padres Líderes de Intervención Temprana al 877-353-4757 para hablar con otro padre.*
This has been the second year that my daughter and I have attended the MEIC Conference. Every year I get excited to attend because I know it’s a two day "respite" for both of us. When I say respite, I mean my daughter gets two days off from her intense therapy program, six times a week. She has an opportunity to meet and play with her fellow Early Intervention buddies as well as splash in the pool.

For me it’s an overnight in a hotel where we get to enjoy an amazing family dinner with other families whose children are enrolled in EI. There are always heart-filled conversations with other families who have been through the hard road of having a child with special needs. We hear each others stories, give each other advice, wipe away each others tears and give each other hugs of strength and support. It is at the family dinner that we realize how amazing our little ones are and how they each give us the strength to carry them toward their next milestones.

As a parent of a child who has Cerebral Palsy, attending the two days of workshops and presentations, I got many amazing ideas on how to help me meet my daughter’s needs that I could then implement at home. Two of the workshops I was able to attend this year, were iPad Apps for children with special needs and Yoga for the special needs child. These two amazing workshops provided me with pamphlets and information that I was able to adapt and use at home to meet my daughter's individual needs.

The MEIC Conference is an amazing conference for both parents and professionals. It has been the most family-oriented conference I've attended thus far. Each presenter was welcoming and flexible with parents who had children with them. The Parent Leadership Project has a wonderful family room just for families to come together. There are snacks, waters, tissues and a comfortable space for families who need a little private time away from the large group. We have become part of this larger EI family at the conference and they have welcomed us all as their own.

My family feels privileged to have attended the MEIC Conference two years in a row. We are looking forward to our third year, in May 2013!

Este ha sido el segundo año en que mi hija y yo asistimos a la Conferencia de MEIC. Siempre me entusiasmo porque sé que será un respiro para ambas. Cuando digo respiro, significa que mi hija puede disfrutar dos días libres de su intensa terapia, que hace seis veces a la semana. Tiene la oportunidad de reencontrarse y jugar con otros niños de la Intervención Temprana, además de disfrutar de la piscina.

Para mí, es una noche de hotel donde disfruto de una cena de familia con otras familias cuyos hijos están en EI. Hay siempre conversaciones cargadas de emoción con otras familias que también han atravesado un camino difícil de tener un hijo con necesidades especiales. Escuchamos sus historias, intercambiamos consejos, limpiamos nuestras lágrimas y damos abrazos de fuerza. Es precisamente en esta cena de familia donde se puede realmente apreciar la increíble bondad de nuestros hijos y la fuerza que nos dan para seguir adelante en el camino hacia los próximos logros.

Como madre de una niña con parálisis cerebral, asistir a los dos días de talleres y presentaciones me dio muchas ideas increíbles sobre cómo responder a las necesidades de mi hija que pude poner en práctica en casa. Dos de los talleres a los que asistí este año, fueron sobre aplicaciones de iPad para niños con necesidades especiales y Yoga para niños con necesidades especiales. Estos dos talleres increíbles me dieron folletos e información que pude adaptar e integrar en casa para satisfacer las necesidades de mi hija.

La Conferencia de MEIC es increíble tanto para los padres como para los profesionales. Fue siempre más orientada hacia las familias de las que asistieron, al igual que el grupo presentado. Cada presentador se mostró abierto y flexible con los padres que tenían niños con necesidades especiales. El Proyecto Padres Líderes tiene una sala familiar maravillosa donde se puede reunir en privado. Hay bocadillos, agua, pañuelos de papel y un espacio cómodo para las familias que necesitan un tiempo privado. En la conferencia hemos pasado a formar parte de esta familia más amplia de IT que nos acoge como uno más.

Nos sentimos privilegiados de haber asistido a la Conferencia de MEIC dos años seguidos. ¡Ahora esperamos con entusiasmo nuestra tercera en mayo de 2013!
The Faces of MEIC
Parent Perspective

MEIC QUOTES

“It was nice to meet the people who have given me so much support through Facebook, in person!”

“It was great I learned a lot!! Thanks for having it!!”

“This was a great opportunity as a parent, to feel empowered to learn more about the Professional world of Early Intervention!”

“The information I learned was great, but the connections made were even greater.”

“A great experience to remind me that I’m not alone!”

“Very comprehensive! Well done!”

“The conference offers an opportunity to learn alongside the professionals the best methods to help our children.”

“I had a wonderful experience at this year’s conference. What an amazing way to end three wonderful years in EI!”

“Very informative and great to have the opportunity to network with other families and EI professionals”

“It was good, I think I could have done more to be involved & exposed. I felt a little out of place & navigating on my own.”

“We must all be positive and listen to our spirit.”

“Connecting with other parents has literally made my life better. It feels great that my family and child are "typical" in the world of EI and the MEIC. It is also wonderful to meet professionals committed to making my son's life better. Attending the conference makes me feel great about the world of EI.”

“MEIC Conference 2012 was another well organized event and it was wonderful to be able to attend. Thank you again for putting on another great conference.”

“This was one of the most exciting and fun things I have done as a parent since I have become a parent!!”

Family TIES of Massachusetts is pleased to announce that Deb Candeloro is our new Northeast Regional Coordinator. She will provide information and referral services to families looking for community-based programs to address their children's special needs. Call Deb to say hello and share your family's story at 978-851-7261 x4018, or email her at: dcandeloro@fcsn.org.

Families in other parts of the state are invited to contact a Regional Coordinator for similar reasons through our toll-free line: 800-905-TIES (8437) or visit our website, www.massfamilyties.org.

Remember, our Parent-to-Parent Program invites parents to connect with trained volunteer Support Parents who are happy to share family wisdom and experiences in caring for a child with special needs. The Listening & Learning training, the first step in becoming a Support Parent, will be offered in Northeast and Boston Regions in the Fall. Learn more about this valuable program through your Regional Coordinator, our website, or by calling Gloria Klaesges, Parent-to-Parent Coordinator: 413-586-7525 x1133.

Family TIES of Massachusetts is a statewide parent-to-parent information and support network for families of children with disabilities, special healthcare needs, or chronic illnesses. We are an Alliance Member of Parent to Parent USA, a national organization that provides technical assistance to parent-to-parent programs across the country. For more information, call 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or visit www.massfamilyties.org.

Family Opportunity

Digital Stories Training
Wednesday, June 27 from 10—2 p.m.
Tewksbury Hospital

Digital Stories are multimedia stories produced by ordinary people telling stories of their own lives. Digital storytelling may be used in a variety of ways including outreach and awareness campaigns, marketing, training, and recruitment. The EITC in collaboration with the EI Parent Leadership Project has developed several digital stories highlighting family experiences in Early Intervention.

To view a digital story visit:
To learn more or to register for this opportunity, contact us at 877-353-4757 or eiplp@yahoo.com.

“Like” us on Facebook

Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project
So Who is the Teacher?

Raising children results in a lifetime of learning. It’s been more than twenty years since my youngest son was born with complex health issues. I think back to the hours, days, weeks, and months when many wondered how will life turn out for this tiny baby, born with a most unusual health concern. Let’s just say it’s been interesting, a life I never could have dreamed up. As I look at him now, I realize that he has helped me to assemble a list of Top Ten Ways To Celebrate Life:

1. **Take a few minutes before starting every day to reflect on what you most look forward to today.** No looking back or beyond, just today. Maybe it’s getting on the floor with your children and a puzzle, looking up a favorite recipe that brings back fond memories, or talking with someone who always makes you smile. Start every day with hope.

2. **Whenever you shower, sing.** Few of us are gifted with a beautiful voice; that really doesn’t matter with the water running. Just sing the song that first comes into your head and realize the joy of the words and the music. Consider how this song fits into your life, and enjoy. If you’re alone in the car, try it there, too. You’ll notice a marked improvement in your general well-being.

3. **Remember to breathe.** There is nothing more important than breathing. Sounds silly, but it’s true. Anxiety, anger, and fear all steal our breath away. When you have the feeling you don’t know what to do, just breathe. Take 10 deep breaths, eyes closed and focus on filling your chest with air and then slowly exhaling. You’ll be surprised at how much better you feel with oxygen in your lungs.

4. **Once a month, cook a food that YOU love.** So often, parents get hung up on making sure their children get what they want. It’s important for us all to share that experience. Share a memory of enjoying the food with family or friends, to make it more interesting. If asked "do I like this," simply reply "you did last time you had it." This is a more palatable answer than "you’ve never had it," which triggers a fear of the unknown.

5. **Build walking (or another favorite form of exercise) into every day.** This is about keeping your body and mind healthy, and ultimately so you can continue to provide love and support to your family. Start small, with a walk around the block after your children are off to school in the morning and before you jump into the work of your day. This is a good time and place to consider the day ahead, the challenges on your mind, and enjoy nature.

6. **Consider the importance of friendship.** Friends are gifts we give to ourselves. These are the brothers and sisters who we choose, to teach us, guide us, support us. Remember to write a letter or card every month to at least one friend, as a reminder of the high esteem you hold for them. You’ll be sending a gift they will treasure. Share this lesson with your children, too.

7. **Facilitate learning.** There is nothing like life experiences to teach us how to manage life. Let others know about what you have learned, in a way that helps them, too. Be brief in your messages. Make the time to listen, too, for learning goes both ways.

8. **Realize you don’t always have to hurry.** Run to the store, race to the bank, hurry up the stairs with a bundle of laundry. Why? If you find you are overscheduled too often, sit with a pen and paper to strategize what needs to change so that I don’t feel constantly in a rush? Ask your family to assist in making the changes you identify. Simplify life. You’ll be glad you did.

9. **At the end of each day, remember to peek in on each child to remind yourself of a memorable moment.** Our days are full of individual flashes, but there’s always one that will elicit a smile. It could be acknowledging that dinner tonight didn’t end up with a food fight, or sharing came without prompting. You’ll find those end-of-the-day thoughts are the best way to fall asleep. If your child is not home with you tonight, remember a quiet, happy event together. Even a short life brings a lifetime of joy, just for having been.

10. **Remember that we all have special needs.** We all want to be heard, fed, healthy, and loved. Sometimes that’s easy, sometimes it’s not. With family, friends, and many devoted supporters along the way, we can have our needs met more than 50% of the time. For the balance, think positively of the times when they are. That time will come again.
**ACRONYMS DEMYSTIFIED...**

Try to find these commonly used acronyms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT</td>
<td>Physical Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT</td>
<td>Occupational Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>Parent Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFE</td>
<td>Schools Are For Everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LD</td>
<td>Learning Disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCLB</td>
<td>No Child Left Behind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Individuals with Disability Education Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualized Education Program/Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASSPAC</td>
<td>MA Special Education Parent Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The Parent Leadership Project was created to support parents whose children receive Early Intervention services. The Project’s main goal is to promote lifetime advocacy, leadership skills and the development of an informed parent constituency, which will encourage Early Intervention services to be increasingly family-centered. The Project is a parent driven endeavor, which continually seeks family involvement and input regarding the needs of families enrolled in Early Intervention and is implemented by parents whose own children have received EI services. The Project staff consists of a Statewide Director, a Communications Coordinator, an EI Program Focused Monitoring Parent Coordinator & Education Coordinator and Collaboration & Outreach Coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

EI Parent Leadership Project Team
Darla Gundler
413-586-7525 Ext. 3157
darla.gundler@state.ma.us

Kris Martone-Levine
978-851-7261 Ext. 4057
kris.levine@state.ma.us

Faith Bombardier
413-586-7525 Ext. 3119
faith.bombardier@state.ma.us

Contact Us:
Toll-Free: 877-35-EI-PLP
Email: eiplp@yahoo.com
On the web: www.eiplp.org
Like us on Facebook: Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project

Help us to save paper and postage!
Receive this newsletter electronically!
E-mail your name and e-mail address to:
eiplp@yahoo.com. Thanks!

IN THIS ISSUE

MEIC Conference Update. ........ 1
NCSEAM Survey Update .......... 2
English and Español
"What the MEIC Conference Meant to my Family " .......... 3
English and Español
The Faces of MEIC ............... 4
MEIC Quotes & Family TIES News . . . 5
"So Who is the Teacher?" ........ 6
Community Support Line & MA Universal Newborn Hearing Screening is on Facebook ................. 7

To receive the Parent Perspective Newsletter, a free publication, published four times a year by the Parent Leadership Project, call us toll-free at (877) 353-4757 and ask to be added to the PLP mailing list or email eiplp@yahoo.com

NEXT DEADLINE: We welcome your input and suggestions for resources and articles. The next deadline is August 15, 2012. Please call our toll-free number (877) 353-4757 or email the newsletter editor at kris.levine@state.ma.us.

The Parent Perspective newsletter is produced four times a year by the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project, through funding from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. If you would like to be removed from this mailing list, please contact eiplp@yahoo.com.