

# Wake SEPTA News

(Special Education PTA)

Volume 1 Issue 2

March 2006

## NEXT MEETING:

**Thursday, April 27th**  
**7:00– 8:30 PM**  
**Brooks Avenue Church**  
700 Brooks Ave  
Raleigh, NC 27607-4132

## "Learning Disabilities: How Hard Can It Be?"

Video Presentation followed by discussion with Dr Susan Osborne, Associate Professor with the Graduate Program in Special Education at North Carolina State University.

**Non-members welcome!**

## The SEPTA Story:

The Wake County Special Education PTA is a new, unique county-wide PTA designed to focus on children receiving special education services in Wake County Public Schools.

A group of parents and teachers chartered SEPTA in February 2005, elected officers, and opened the organization to new members. Since then, **161** people have joined.

SEPTA connects parents and teachers as well as with professionals, and other organizations that provide support, training and resources.

### To learn more or to join:

Call 788-2500  
or refer to our website at  
[www.WakeSEPTA.org](http://www.WakeSEPTA.org)

**Annual dues are \$5.**

## Wake SEPTA, So Far

Since the Wake County Special Education PTA formed last spring, we have had a enthusiastic response from many parents and teachers. Word is spreading and we now have 161 members. With almost 18 thousand children receiving special education services in Wake County schools, we still have a long way to go!

We have not reached our optimistic goal to have a parent or teacher representative from each school as a "liaison" volunteer but hope to by early in the next school year. These liaisons serve as links between the school PTA and SEPTA, sharing information about issues related to special education.

While our membership is predominantly parents (like most PTAs), I want to emphasize that *there is a T in PTA* and we do have a teacher serving on our board. We would love to expand membership of our teachers. Let your child's teacher know about SEPTA and offer to sponsor their membership so that they receive information directly from SEPTA.

At our January meeting, we elected Sheila Knapp as the new VP for the Elementary Level and Laurie Jaegers as the new VP for the High School Level. They will serve until the end of this academic year, filling positions that had been vacant. Now we are forming another nominating committee to present a slate of candidates for next year's Executive Committee. If you are interested in serving as a SEPTA board member for next year, the deadline for nominations is April 14<sup>th</sup> for the election at the April meeting.

We have had two general membership meetings so far this year and our next one is scheduled for late April (see upper left). If we are able to expand our membership and volunteer base before next year, we will be able to schedule more frequent meetings and address topics specific to the interest of parents whose children are in different age groups (preschool, elementary, middle and high school).

In the mean time, many have participated in our email discussion group where information is shared and questions are asked of each other regarding issues that affect children with special needs. This is an exclusive benefit of membership although our website does have information about local events and resources that is accessible to anyone.

Leigh Menconi  
President

*Vision without Action is a Daydream.  
Action without Vision is a Nightmare.  
Vision with Action creates the Future.*

## Dr. Marshall Raskind On What Is Success and How Do Kids With LD Become Successful

*This is the first question in a 4-part series on the findings of the Frostig Center's longitudinal study, "Patterns of Change and Predictors of Success in Individuals with Learning Disabilities." The following is an edited transcript of an interview conducted by SchwabLearning.org's [Ann Christen](#) with Dr. Raskind, on October 8, 2002.*

### SchwabLearning.org asks:

Dr. Raskind, based on your research of success attributes in people with learning disabilities, please define what success is and describe how kids with learning disabilities can become successful adults?

Dr. Raskind answers:

Success is really not easy to define. It really means different things to different people and it may mean different things at different times in a person's life. That said, I still think we can find certain commonalities among people in terms of the factors that might be considered important to being a successful individual, such things as having good friends, positive family relations, being loved, self-approval, job satisfaction, having physical and mental health, financial comfort, spiritual contentment, and an overall sense of meaning to one's life.

At the Frostig Center, where we've been doing our research on success attributes and learning disabilities, we have developed what we refer to as a multidimensional view of success. We include many things in that. Success here includes, again, positive relationships with one's family, positive relationships with peers, good feelings about one's self, life satisfaction, success in employment, and educational success, as well. In regard to the second question that you asked, "How do children with learning disabilities become successful adults?", we have to keep in mind that children with learning disabilities really become adults with learning disabilities, and the problems they have in childhood continue into and through adulthood.

It's been interesting for us to watch kids grow up over the years and move into adulthood. One of the things that we've seen and one of the things we've had questions about is why do some individuals with disabilities, end up doing well employment-wise, have good peer relations, family seems to be doing well, and who could be called "successful," while another group with similar backgrounds and similar types of disabilities may end up in really a difficult situation, barely able to keep their heads above water either emotionally, socially, or financially? So we're interested in why that happens, what factors or attributes contribute to success and what things really stand in the way of success. There have been a number of research studies, including our own, which I'll mention in a minute, that have pointed to a number of factors, personal characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors that lead persons with learning disabilities to successful life outcomes.

Some of the other studies that have been done in addition to our own have been by Dr. Paul Gerber, of

Virginia Commonwealth University, and Dr. Emmy Werner at the University of California, Davis. In our own study, we tracked over a 20-year period a group of individuals who had been identified at an early age as having learning disabilities.

In this research, we really tried to get as much information as we could directly "from the horse's mouth." We conducted two- to six-hour interviews in areas of social relationships, family and dependents, psychological health, education, and employment. We also went through diagnostic records over 20 years, case records, and even public records -- voter registration and court records -- to get some additional information about how they were doing and, ultimately, why. We made an effort to determine which individuals were successful, which ones weren't successful, and then to see if we could really pin down exactly why some were led to successful paths and others were still really struggling.

We were able to identify a number of **success attributes**, and I think one of the interesting things is that we were actually able to do that mathematically, statistically. We could really analyze things to a point where we could say that these specific success attributes lead to successful life outcomes. Now, some individuals who are successful will not necessarily have every single attribute, and other individuals who are not successful may have some of the attributes. The idea is that successful individuals are more likely to possess these attributes. And **these attributes are** — and we're going to go through these in a little bit more detail — but let me name them for you first:

- self-awareness
- proactivity
- perseverance
- goal setting
- the presence and use of effective support systems
- emotional coping strategies

Now, again, these success attributes don't guarantee success, but just increase the likelihood of more successful life outcomes. I think one of the things that was very fascinating is that the success attributes I just mentioned were more predictive of success than variables (as we refer to them) like academic achievement and IQ.

One of the things that we really hope we can do is sensitize parents to these attributes so parents can help foster these various elements, values, and behaviors in their children, to, hopefully, lead them to more successful life outcomes.