

# Minnesota Council for Exceptional Children

Newsletter

Vol. 15, No. 3

May 2004

## MNCEC Issues A Call for Political Action!

**Students with disabilities  
need your support at  
state and national levels!**

**Take a stand, make a  
commitment, and let  
your voice be heard."**



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## MNCEC Testifies at Commissioner Confirmation Hearing

A statement regarding MN CEC's position on confirmation of Education Commissioner Yecke has been submitted to the Minnesota Senate Education Committee. As of this printing, members of the MN CEC Board are also scheduled to testify at the committee's hearings. Testimony will bring attention to the following concerns:

- A lack of technical support, communication, and training regarding current implementation of *No Child Left Behind Act* as it directly relates to students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and under the protection of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). There is a great deal of confusion regarding interpretation and implementation of NCLB and minimal communication to professionals in special education.
- The MDE website makes it difficult to access information. Information that was previously available is either gone or extremely difficult to locate.
- The reduction in leadership and decision-making authority of the State Director of Special Education for Minnesota. It appears that current policy and practice decisions are made by individuals without the necessary skills, relationships, and experiences related to the education of students with disabilities.
- The elimination of the Supervisor of the Special Education Funding and Data Team. Management of special education funds without the expertise and understanding of special education mandates and policies has the potential to create significant confusion and errors. This raises serious concerns about the use and potential re-direction of targeted special education funds.
- The cancellation of an annual training grant with a history of more than a decade of successful and mutually beneficial collaboration between MN CEC and MDE. MDE insisted that the annual conference focus on implementation of NCLB or the grant would not be funded. The conference planning committee recognized the need to provide training regarding the impact of the act on students with disabilities but concluded that other disability specific sessions held high priority.
- The current definition of "Highly Qualified Special Education Teacher." Should Minnesota proceed with the proposed definition, the current shortage of special educators will increase due to the rigorous and restrictive nature of the definition.
- The current administration has created a political administration that has been controversial and negative. Frequent negative comments that portray Minnesota Public Schools as failing are demoralizing to education professionals. There is no acknowledgement of past successes or the recognition of current

*continued on page 4*



# Letter from the President

by Claudine Knoblauch

## I.D.E.A and N.C.L.B.— Are They On a Collision Course?

The 2004 school year is quickly coming to an end, and by now you and your students have faced the Minnesota Basic Skills Test (BST's) and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA's). Both of these state assessments will factor into your district and school's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) rating. How did this process work for your students, and were the IEP teams able to make individual decisions regarding student participation that were student focused? Did you have moments of feeling guilty that your students might bring the AYP rating down? Were you told by your district authorities that there was no choice, most, if not all, of your students HAD to participate in the testing, even if it was not appropriate for them to do so? If so, you were not alone.

On February 28, 2004, I was invited to participate in a community meeting conducted by Senator Mark Dayton and sponsored by Galtier Magnet School in St. Paul. The topic was the impact of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation, the current interpretation and implementation. Much of the discussion was how it affects English Language Learners and Special Education students. Parents, teachers, community members, state legislators and school administrators from several metropolitan communities were in the audience.

I was overwhelmed by the depth of understanding demonstrated by Senator Dayton and want to thank him for his continued commitment to children and youth with special needs. Each participant who spoke to the issues and concerns was very thoughtful and articulate.

I was stunned to hear educators report they had students who they knew would suffer emotionally, or because of attention skills or cognitive limitations could not pass the test and, yet, their district had told them that there was NO choice. Because each school and district must have 95% of ALL students participate in the testing. Only 1% of children in the disabilities subgroup could be exempted and given alternative assessments and the remaining 99% of children with disabilities had to be tested. Doesn't this challenge the very heart of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act?

How can this be when I.D.E.A. established in 1974 that all children with disabilities MUST have their educational programs determined through the IEP process? Doesn't that mean if the IEP team decides that a child should not participate in statewide testing and alternative measures should be utilized that the *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND* rules and regulations do not overrule I.D.E.A.?

The Minnesota Department of Education has provided alternative assessments and has included criteria for IEP teams to use as guidelines to help teams make the best decisions possible regarding statewide testing. Why would Minnesota Department of Education provide these guidelines if the teams are then told to discount that decision for 99% of the children with disabilities?

For example, in a district with 1,000 students, five students with Down Syndrome are having difficulty with reading compared to their same grade peers, but they are making nice gains in reading and are one to three years below grade level. Common

*continued on page 10*

## 2003-04 MN CEC Board of Directors

- President:** Claudine Knoblauch
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- Deb Johnson, CCBD
- Judy Swett, DEC
- Gary Lewis, CASE/MASE

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- Mary Voss/ Manuel Berrera,  
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- Steven Kaatz, Bethel
- David Rogers, St. Cloud State
- Linda Svobodny, MN State  
Moorhead

**Website:** [www.MNCEC.org](http://www.MNCEC.org)



**Thank you, Claudine, for your  
service as MNCEC President!**

# Interview with Claudine Knoblauch, Outgoing MNCEC President



By Marilyn Hukriede

## *How did you become involved in special education?*

When I was in high school, I was on a synchronized swimming team and our coach worked at Camp Courage in the summers. One summer, she invited us to come to Camp Courage and perform for the campers and staff. It was an eye opening and awesome experience for me. The next 2 years I volunteered to teach swimming to kids with physical disabilities on Saturdays in my hometown, Hibbing. I was hooked on their efforts, their smiles, and their challenges. Eventually, I worked at Camp Courage too.

## *What do you enjoy most about the field?*

I think what drew me in is what keeps me in. One of my core values is being able to answer, “Yes” to the question “Is this good for kids?” I enjoy the challenge of figuring out how to support, encourage, and dissolve road blocks. When there is success, students and staff make gains and feel good about who they are and what they CAN do, and that’s what I enjoy the most.

## *How did you decide to become a member of CEC?*

My first several years as a Special Educator I did not know about CEC. I was a member of several professional organizations that were specific and focused on my field of Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (D/HH). A good friend of mine, Donna McNear, is a teacher of Vision and Mobility and we often talked about similar expectations in our fields, especially in the area of indirect and consultation services. Donna was and

continues to be very active in the CEC Division of Visually Impaired, and she introduced me to CEC.

## *Why did you decide to become a member of CEC?*

I think I attended my first MNCEC State conference in the late 1980s. I remember that the keynote speaker, although not addressing my specific D/HH area, created excitement and opened my eyes beyond my field. I remember really enjoying the break out sessions and thinking how talented and skilled the presenters were, who like me, were teachers. I thought after ten (plus) years of teaching, I might have some ideas to share, but did not believe I could present as well as they had. I talked to Don Loe, one of my former directors, at that conference and he is the one who pointed me to the membership table, telling me that CEC could support efforts to try presenting. A year or two later, Donna and I presented together at both the state and national CEC conventions!

## *At what point did you become involved with the CEC Board?*

That also happened the year Don Loe was president of MNCEC. I think someone had to resign. He invited me to join the board and I did.

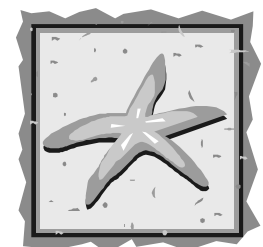
## *What was your greatest CEC experience?*

To date, the greatest experience was my first time in Washington D.C. for the CAN summer training. Jan Manchester was the MN CAN chair and she took me under her wing, made all the appointments on “the hill”. The national CEC staff showed

me how to manage the D.C. transportation system, maneuver the tunnels under the Capital, because at that time civilians could use them, and coached us on presentation and etiquette. Meeting with your representatives in Congress, having an opportunity to share your passion and present your message regarding what is required to meet the needs of children was a powerful and empowering experience for me. A close second would be the experience of being the MNCEC president in 1998, when we hosted the National CEC Convention. It was a lot of work and I learned a great deal about large efforts! But that’s another story!

## *What would you tell someone who is considering membership?*

I can only say it has been well worth it for me. I have met and worked with some of the most inspiring professionals. In order to maintain my focus and passion, I need times when I am networking and engaged with people who understand, who have similar passions, who challenge my perspectives and give me hope with stories of success. You determine your level of involvement, from simply reading the journals and newsletters, to volunteering on a committee, sitting on the board, or accepting an elected office. If you want to grow as a professional, CEC is an organization that will support you to do so.



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## Book Review

### Academic Success Strategies for Adolescents with Learning Disabilities and ADHD

by E. Minskoff and D. Allsop

Reviewed by Steven A. Kaatz, Ph. D., Graduate Special Education, Bethel College, St. Paul, MN

In an era of changing state standards, high stakes testing, accountability, and *No Child Left Behind*, this well-written, practical, 330-page work should find a valued place in regular and special education classrooms at both the middle and high school levels. Despite its exclusive sounding title, the strategies delineated can be used with populations other than those with learning disabilities or attention deficit hyperactive disorder.

The book is about learning strategies for the students, not instructional strategies for teachers. The authors label their approach to academic success, “the active learner approach.” The foundations of this method examine the unique learning characteristics of each student and analyze the educational expectations in an inclusive setting. An extensive introduction is given to instruction basics such as the difference between the effective learner and the ineffective learner, and using direct /systematic instruction.

In fact, the evaluation component of the active learning approach is not even introduced until Chapter Five. After the evaluation chapter, Section II offers strategies for eight academic areas; reading, writing, mathematics, advanced thinking, organization, test taking, study skills and note taking. One chapter is devoted to each area. Virtually all of the strategies are based on mnemonics.

A condensation of two of the many strategies follows. For the student who has trouble organizing ideas when writing research papers and essays, POWER is recommended; Plan, Organize, Write, Edit, and Revise. TASSEL is an intervention for the student who experiences distractions when note-taking; Try not to doodle, Arrive at class prepared, Sit near the front, Sit away from friends, End daydreaming and Look at the teacher.

Minskoff and Allsopp make the bridge from traditional print format to technology by offering the Learning Toolbox web site. According to the authors, the web



site was developed for students with learning disabilities and their teachers and parents.

Like at any book on instructional approaches, techniques or strategies, it should be read with the view that teachers know their students best and therefore suggestions need to be modified for individuals. This reviewer found some of the strategies for mathematics to be convoluted. He also wonders when the law of diminishing returns would set in. How many mnemonics can students, especially ones with learning disabilities and/or ADHD, memorize and practice before the strategies become jumbled in their minds?

A number of the book’s strengths should be mentioned. Each chapter begins with questions that are repeated as the main headings in the same chapter. Case studies are used extensively. Chapter Four, on Cognitive Learning Strategies and Systematic Instruction, would be valuable to neophyte teachers who desire a brief introduction to various learning strategies and the steps to use in direct instruction.

Also making the volume user-friendly are the appendices. Appendices A and B contain a copy of the active learning questionnaires for both teachers and students. Appendix C is a complete listing of all the strategies mentioned in the book. Student – Teacher Agreements (contracts) to use in the Active Learning Approach are found in Appendix D.

For any teacher searching for a complete approach to academics or for a teacher seeking learning strategies in a particular area, this book would prove helpful.

*Academic Success Strategies for Adolescents with Learning Disabilities and ADHD* was published by Brookes Publishing Co., Baltimore, MD, in 2003

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## MNCEC Testifies

*continued from page 1*

- special education programs, policies, and services provided in Minnesota that serve as national models.
- The board of directors of MN CEC has noted the significant “silence” from other educational organizations and finds it unsettling that professional organizations neither support nor oppose this confirmation in a public forum. Informal contacts with key stakeholders report fear of retribution and a hesitancy to speak out.

The full text of the statement is online at: [www.mncec.org](http://www.mncec.org).

# Special Educators' Conference Wrap-up . . .

By Melissa Schaller, Conference Chair

The 2004 MN CEC/CCBD Special Education Conference is over and the final details are nearly wrapped up. This year's conference, Differentiated Instruction: Supporting All Learners through the Curriculum Maze was held at the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center February 25<sup>th</sup> through the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Attendees this year included 181 people for the pre-conference workshop with Kathie Nunley and 625 people for the two-day regular conference. Nearly 40 breakout sessions on a wide variety of topics as well as thought provoking keynote addresses highlighted the conference. Fifty-five presenters shared their expertise and 25 exhibitors showed their products and services. Networking opportunities were everywhere at the conference, including a registration reception on Wednesday night that featured appetizers, entertainment, and door prizes, as well as, time to check out vendors. On Thursday night, CCBD and CEC hosted a joint reception.

Thank you to the five members of the planning committee for your dedication and hard work, Bryce Fornes-Bates, Larry Iwen, Claudine Knoblauch, Lonna Moline, and LaVonne See. Thank you to the administrators who sponsored teachers so they could attend. Thank you to those who took the time to design and present a session. Most of all thank you to all that attended.



Our Gold Conference Sponsors

## THANK YOU . . . .

to sponsors and exhibitors at the 2004 Special Education Conference! We couldn't have done it without you!

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Workable Assessments

## . . . On To Next Year's Conference! 2005 Minnesota Special Educators' Conference

*Plan to attend next year's MN CEC/CCBD Special Education Conference in February... It'll be amazing!*

Planning for the 2005 conference has already started with a lot of excitement and discussion about next year's site and theme! The 2004 conference committee would like to extend a big "Thank you" to all attendees who completed their evaluation forms which will help us to make next year's conference even better.

The 2005 Conference Planning Committee members are Larry Iwen-Conference Chair, Melissa Schaller, Mark Krug, Bryce Forne-Bates, Brad Benson from MNCEC and Lonna Moline and Deb Johnson from CCBD.

Tentative dates are February 23, 24, 25, 2005. Watch the newsletter as planning progresses to learn more!"

## Maximizing your Membership: A Model An Interview With Beverly Johns

by Mary Z. McGrath, Membership Chair

One of the benefits of CEC membership is the opportunity to meet others and find excellent educational role models. Following is an interview with someone in CEC who presents a fine role model for all members.

### *How long ago did you join CEC and why?*

I joined first when I was a graduate student in special education back in 1969. I went to my first national convention in Miami and remembered how beneficial it was. I then went to chapter meetings in southern Illinois. One of the first long time CEC members I met was Jean Preston who has remained a friend of mine since that time. I joined CEC because I was encouraged to do so by colleagues, Jean, Mary Burnett, Bonnie Bishop.

### *What professional opportunities have you gained through membership?*

1. I have met many wonderful people through CEC and have maintained friendships and professional relationships with them for years. When I was President of Illinois CEC, Jim Meeks was President-elect. We have remained excellent friends for many years and have traveled with them for years.

2. Through CEC, I have been long active in my chapter, the Illinois Federation, and divisions. I have learned how to organize meetings and conferences, promote memberships, and have learned so much about the field.

3. It is through CEC that I became very active in legislative advocacy. When I was President of Illinois CEC in 1981, we had to fight to keep special education. I learned how to

read and write legislation (an interesting phenomena), how to testify, and how to communicate with members about what was going on. I learned how to organize legislative training days and sessions and have been doing so ever since.

4. I have learned a great deal from attending conferences and reading the wonderful periodicals.

### *How has CEC service benefited you personally and professionally?*

Again I have met a lot of wonderful people who have remained friends for years. I have had the opportunity to meet the leaders in the field of special education. I have been able to stay current in the field of special education and to talk with people who were facing the same challenges as I. I may not have ever started writing if it would not have been for someone approaching me after hearing me speak at a CEC conference and asking me to consider writing a book about the topic on which I was speaking. I speak a great deal and that began with my own CEC Chapter and the Illinois federation and subdivisions. I started the Illinois CCBD subdivision and have maintained that involvement through the years which then grew into me becoming President of CCBD at the National level. I have enjoyed writing with and keeping in e-mail contact with many colleagues such as Mary. This has been very rewarding for me.

### *What might your career have looked like without CEC?*

Certainly my career would not have been very rewarding without CEC. I would not be a writer nor a speaker if it wouldn't have been for CEC and the divisions. I also would

## Winners! Winners! Winners!

As CEC members we are all winners in so many ways. To know details on how this is so, check the member section on the web site <http://www.cec.sped.org/>.

At our recent conference MN/CEC held a drawing for CEC logo products. The prize winners are as follows:

### **CEC Mugs**

Jean Lynch  
Kristo Oien  
Sharron Taultz  
C. Peterson

### **CEC Tote Bags**

Nan Records  
Nancy Steinleitner  
Vickie Wryk

### **CEC Water Bottles**

Jeff Jorgensen  
Jean Kronebusch  
Kim Torgeson  
Carol Buzzell

### **CEC Note Cards**

Dawn Penning

### **CEC Note Pads**

Kimberly Jones

### **CEC Tee Shirts**

Rachel Grabow  
Janet Knopik

### **CEC Denim Shirt**

Jennifer Gruenwald

Congratulations to all of you .....and to all of us who have chosen to access the benefits and make contributions to CEC!

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# SPECIAL Award Winners

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## Special Teacher

### **Matt Hoffman**

Matt is a dedicated educator that strives to meet the needs of all students in the general education setting.

Matt teaches first grade at Wildwood Elementary School in the Mahtomedi Public School district. Matt consistently goes above and beyond to make a difference in his students' lives both in and outside of school. He is dedicated to accommodating the educational environment to meet individual needs.



**Special Award Winners**  
Joanna Swett, Sarah Klein & Luke Warner

## Special Yes! I Can Students of the year

### **Sarah Klein**

*Sarah is a kind and compassionate young lady who enjoys life.* Sarah is a tenth grade student at AlBrook School who works hard and has a kind word for everyone she meets. Sarah is active in her church. She had a role in the school drama and is preparing to do secretarial work someday. Sarah is a role model for other students in her school.



### **Joanna Swett**

*She has always quietly persevered in the educational setting despite several challenges.* Joanna is a senior at Highland Park Senior High School. She is an honor student who finds time to help others. She clearly understands her strengths and limitations. Joanna has been a model student.



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## **Where Is She Now?** **An update on last year's Yes I Can** **award winner, Emily Bennett**

Last year Emily won the Special Student of the Year award while attending Mound Westonka High School. She graduated in June 2003 and is now enrolled at Normandale Community College.

Emily is deciding between a degree in either athletic training or physical therapy. Currently her coursework includes Chemistry, English, and Mathematics. She is doing well and has had numerous opportunities to practice her self-advocacy skills including going to the Math lab for extra assistance.

She runs in local events such as the Valentine's Day 5K but at this time is nursing a sore ankle received in a game of pickup basketball. Emily says exercise helps her clarify her thinking for school and things run smoothly when she regularly works out.



She also finds time to work part-time at Jubilee Foods in Mound. Emily thinks that using your time wisely is the most proactive thing you can do to succeed. 

## MNCEC Announces Election Results

The “new” election process continues to be a great success. Thanks to all MNCEC member who returned their ballots. And a special thanks to Mary Ellen Wade for coordinating this year’s elections. The results are as follows:

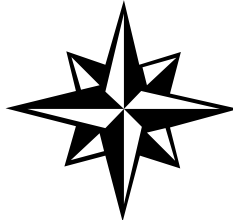
### Officers for 2004 – 2005:

*Melissa Schaller:* President

*Larry Iwen:* President-elect

*LaVonne See:* Treasurer

*Mark Krug:* Secretary



### Newly Elected Board Members:

*Roberta Kaufmann,* Teacher on special assignment, St. Paul Public Schools

*Nancy Recibe,* Special Education Coordinator, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan

*Jim Smith,* EBD Teacher, Stillwater High School

*Congratulations to all!*

## 23<sup>rd</sup> National Paraprofessional Conference:

### Catching the Wave of Excellence

The annual conference for paraprofessionals will be held at the Providence Biltmore Hotel and Conference Center May 20-22. Keynote presenters will be Crystal Kuykendall and Norb Ryan. Kuykendall has over 25 years of experience and service in education. She is one of the most dynamic individuals of our time and has been praised as a critical thinker, analyst, motivator, and mentor. Her book, *From Rage to Hope: Strategies Reclaiming Black and Hispanic Students* is a national best seller and considered a timeless treasure. Ryan will share his story about the importance of parent involvement and inclusive services for persons with disabilities. Born with cerebral palsy, Ryan received his education in an institution, a special school, and finally his hometown high school.

Conference participants will:

- Learn about *No Child Left Behind* implications for hiring, training, and supervising paraeducators,
- Strengthen the performance of paraeducators,

## Calendar of Events

### Assistive Technology Conference

April 26-27, 2004

Duluth Convention Center

Duluth, MN



### 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Minnesota Paraprofessional Conference

April 30-May 1

Ridgewater College, Hutchinson, MN

### Directors’ Best Practices Seminar

May 5-7

Kavanaugh’s Conference Center, Brainerd, MN

### 23<sup>rd</sup> National Conference for Training & Employment of Paraprofessionals

May 20-22

Providence Biltmore Hotel and Convention Center, Providence, RI

### Violence Prevention Under the Midnight Sun

June 20-22

Atwood Concert Hall Alaska Center for Performing Arts Anchorage, Alaska

Presented by Bye-Bye Bullies

Bye-byebullies.com

### WASE Summer Retreat

August 4-6

Ruttger’s, Grand Rapids, MN

### TED Summer Institute

August 5-7

Vail, CO

Contact Pat Harrison at [patriciaharrison366@msn.com](mailto:patriciaharrison366@msn.com)

### CEC-DDD 9<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference

October 11-12

Las Vegas, NV

Contact Dagny Fidler at [dagny.fidler@dmps.k12.ia.edu](mailto:dagny.fidler@dmps.k12.ia.edu)

- Hear about incentives for retaining a skilled paraeducator workforce,
- Explore standards and professional development models for preparing supervisors to work effectively with paraeducators and direct service providers.

For more registration and hotel reservation information check the National Resource Center on Paraprofessionals’ website: [www.nrcpara.org](http://www.nrcpara.org).



# Student MNCEC



Student CEC organized and represented their local chapters in an outstanding display of fund raising and support. Students from three local chapters attended this year's conference. These were Minnesota State University at Moorhead, St. Cloud State University and the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

The conference was a terrific success in all ways. In addition to great speakers and attendees, there were great exhibitors and wonderful opportunities for networking. Due to the success of this year's conference, the MNCEC Board was able to allocate funds to provide scholarships for student CEC members to attend the national convention in New Orleans. All three chapters are sending members to the conference in April.

Watch for exciting opportunities on the horizon. Two CEC members have come on board to facilitate Student CEC Advising. These delightful and enthusiastic board members are Marilyn Hukriede from Brainerd and Dan Gregory from Spring Lake Park. They come with experience and great ideas for how to enhance student involvement and benefits in the future.

Please welcome them and stay tuned; the best is yet to come!

Char Ryan  
Student Advisor



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## Beverly Johns Interview

continued from page 6

never have been involved in legislative advocacy without CEC giving me that opportunity. CEC and the wonderful friends I have met and the conferences I have attended have kept me rejuvenated and fulfilled in my profession.

### *What is your current CEC involvement?*

I am a voting member on the Illinois CEC Board as the Pioneer representative, chair Governmental Relations for Illinois CEC as well as for some of the Illinois Subdivisions. I serve on the Board for Illinois DLD, Illinois Pioneers. I am on the Illinois CEC Convention Committee. I am chairing the Illinois CEC Spring Conference Committee. Some years ago, the Illinois CEC Delegate Assembly gave me the title of Mrs. ICEC. At the national level, I am Representative Assembly Member for the Pioneers Division of International CEC and also editor of the Pioneer Press. I serve on the Professional Development Subcommittee for Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders. I am very active in my local CEC Chapter meeting—serving as chair of the Program Committee and the Government Relations Committee.

*Now that you have met Bev, keep your eyes open for the many other potential role models for you in the CEC ranks.*



## Need Ideas? Check out these websites!

By Angie Meyer

### **busyteacherscafe.com**

Classroom management, monthly resources, worksheets, learning centers, pen pals, and free graphics are just a few of the ideas you'll find at this busy site! Also includes education links for teachers.

### **sciencespot.net**

Science Classroom, The Nature Center, and The Puzzle Corner are some of the links you will find here. Stop by The Idea Factory to share ideas with other educators.

### **www.superkids.com**

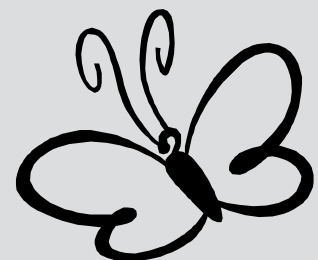
This fabulous site allows you to create math worksheets for students and print vocabulary builders. It also includes hangman in different subject areas and logic games.

### **aplusmath.com**

Create math flashcards and worksheets, or try the Game Room. Students can use Homework Helper to enter a problem and solution to figure out if your solution is correct.

### **teacher.scholastic.com**

Online activities as well as lesson plans, teaching strategies, and tools. Even a section for new teachers. Check out the writer's workshops separated by genre.



## President's Letter

*continued from page 2*

sense and research tells individual IEP teams that alternative assessments, perhaps out of grade assessments, must be used to measure the students' yearly progress. However, if only 1% can be exempted and measured with an alternative then only TEN students from the district can be exempted. What happens when there are also ten severely cognitively delayed students, five very easily distressed or distracted students with EBD and ten students with severe learning disabilities in reading? All qualify as exempt, but only TEN students' scores can be counted as "pass" and the other 20 students' scores on alternative assessments are considered "fail."

Are the case managers expected to steer each IEP team toward the "No choice" theory and the 20 students must take the grade level test knowing that all of them will more than likely fail? Won't the students be placed in a stressful situation on the day of testing? Won't the parents have the right to file a complaint with the Minnesota Department of Education or request a due process hearing to counter these actions? The ultimate question becomes "What does a Special Education teacher do?" Must you face the possibility of being insubordinate if you refuse to force students into stressful testing situations? Can you bare the weight that "your students" may cause the district to fall below making AYP?

Sitting here at this keyboard I know in my heart the answer is "DO NO HARM", you must "DO THE RIGHT THING". I also know that is easier said than done.

The 2004 school year is almost over, *No Child Left Behind* and all of its strengths and challenges are not and will not be over any time soon. Start now planning for the 2004-2005 school year.

How can you confront these questions in a positive and optimistic manner?

- Start by knowing the law. Learn all you can. Review what you know about I.D.E.A. and how it must be implemented.
- Call the Minnesota Department of Education and ask to talk to someone in Monitoring and Compliance. Ask the monitors for guidance and technical support.
- Be certain you have the most current copy of the Minnesota Alternative Assessments and the criteria that should be used to guide the IEP teams to good decisions.
- Contact the professional advocacy groups and ask for any printed materials or recommendations.
- Ask yourself, have you thoroughly considered each student's current skill level. Are you certain you have the data that tells you who should be exempt?
- Be sure you have a current copy the Accommodations and Modifications available from Minnesota Department of Education and a fully understand it.
- Armed with accurate legal information, as it relates to children and youth with disabilities, challenge your current system with thoughtful questions and requests for guidance. Challenge in a professional and graceful manner. Do not jeopardize your teaching position. You will not help any student if you are not there.
- Document or journal your communications, actions and results. Share with MN CEC newsletter editor Carol Long things that have worked well for you and your students in meeting this challenge. Continue to write to members of Congress. They are listening to this discussion.

We have been presented with an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to our profession, to advocacy, to involvement, to leadership and to making a positive difference in the lives of the students and families we serve. Encourage each other and do not lose faith.



## MNCCBD NEWS

By Lonna Moline



We want to toot our horns about our networking events! We had our first event January 22<sup>nd</sup> at the

Minnetonka Sheraton. The topic of the event was Making Positive Connections with Families. We had the honor of hearing Deb Saxhaug from the Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health as our speaker. She was wonderful and shared a great wealth of information.

People reported that they enjoyed seeing other professionals, networking, and having a chance to relax. We are excited about our new adventure and believe we are meeting the needs of professionals in the field of special education.

The events are open to anyone. Not just members, so you are all invited! Our final event of the school year will be on May 13<sup>th</sup>. Check our website for more information: [www.mnccbd.org](http://www.mnccbd.org).

We also want to thank all the people who visited our booth during the CEC/MNCCBD conference. That is my favorite part...meeting all of you! I think everyone had fun with our "Spin to Win". I was surprised at the number of people lining up for the chance to win our humorous prizes.

We want to congratulate once again our 2004 award recipients. Kris Melloy received the Frank Wood Award, Mary Beth Noll received the Sheldon Braaten Award, and Barbara Fisher received the Bruce Balow Award.

We hope to see you all at our next year's conference, if not sooner, at our networking events.

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# The CAN Report

by Bryce Fornes-Bates, CAN Coordinator

## Decisions to Make


All of us make decisions on a daily basis. The decisions we make affect us and those around us. What we often forget, in our daily lives, is that other people are making decisions too. Right now, the elected officials in our government are making decisions that will change our lives, whether we like it or not. The issues being examined, debated and proposed by our legislators at the present time probably will not include the reauthorization of IDEA or full funding for special education, but there are other issues that also affect you.

For example, education funding at the state level has not been increased for the past three years. Because of this, your local school district is most likely looking at major budget cuts. That will affect you. The *No Child Left Behind* legislation has changed our educational standards in Minnesota practically overnight, and there are more drastic changes to come. That will affect you. Soon, the term “highly qualified teacher” will be defined,

“Soon, the term “highly qualified teacher” will be defined, and it may drastically change how special education works. That will affect you.”

and may drastically change how special education works. That will affect you.

Regardless of the issue- you will be affected by the decisions your legislators make, both at the state and federal levels. Contact your officials and tell them what you think. Make sure to vote in every election. By casting your vote, you help to assure you are represented. Be aware, that elected officials are making decisions for you. It is your right to hold them accountable. After all, they are there to represent your interests.

To contact your national level legislators, visit [www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org) and click on the public policy/legislative action center icon along the left of the CEC homepage. To find out what is going on at the state level, and who represents you at the state level, visit [www.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.leg.state.mn.us). Be a part of the decision making process. 



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## Editor's Letter

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zigzagging through the rain forest to eight platforms, cruising through territory usually reserved for birds and monkeys.

On that first platform, as she waited her turn Audrey began to cry. I looked at her with relief. She was doing what I felt like doing. Her father gently explained that it was safe, that we all were doing it, and she would go with Pilo, our guide. He was a nice man and she would be attached to him.

As I write this now, the fear rumbles up from my stomach and explodes in my eyes. This is a third world country! No OSHA! No regulations! There was only Pilo to start us careening over the rain forest and Gustavo to stop us from slamming into the tree centered in the oncoming platform. Blessings on Gustavo, I have no doubt that he saved my life when I could not slow down and he caught me doing my George of the Jungle imitation.

As we progressed from one platform to another, our skills increased and our confidence did too. We were doing what few people in the world have experienced! Audrey even traversed the last cable by herself. Her smile stretched from one end of the cable to the other. She was one happy eleven-year-old.

Wow, were we proud of ourselves!!!!!! We had looked into the chasm of our own fears and prevailed. We finished the tour and all but kissed the ground, glad to be alive. Suddenly we were aware of our own potential and looking for our next challenge. We were invincible, proud, courageous, in love with life, and awed by our own daring.

How does this apply to teaching? Well, don't we, in a sense, attach ourselves to students? We send them on what can be a scary journey of learning. We ask them to trust us and we position ourselves to catch them if they fall. We are the ones who challenge them to do the things they think they cannot do. And, perhaps, they prepare us to take the next thing that comes along. 

## Happy Summer!



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## Letter from the Editor

by Carol Long



*You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, "I lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along."...You must do the thing you think you cannot do.*

Eleanor Roosevelt

*You Learn by Living (1960)*

Last summer I took two great trips. The first I mentioned in the fall newsletter was out west with my niece. The other was to Costa Rica, again with eleven-year-old Audrey, her parents, and a family friend. The five of us spent ten days exploring and enjoying the pleasures of a land of mountains, beaches, rain forests, and exotic animals.

We encountered howler monkeys on a walk through the rain forest and crocodiles along the roadside. One evening we watched a volcano erupt from the front porch of our cabin at Arenal. Squirrel monkeys showed up right



on time at an open-air bar near the Antonio Manuel National Park. We were awakened one morning by a parrot and the next by a toucan. At Gepos, we rented a house with a panoramic view of the ocean and the city. One night as it thunder stormed we turned off the lights and watched another spectacular show.

***"We ask them (our students) to trust us and we position ourselves to catch them if they fall. We are the ones who challenge them to do the things they think they cannot do. And, perhaps, they prepare us to take the next thing that comes along."***

It was at Arenal "we did the thing we thought we could not do." Costa Rica has many places where you can take a canopy tour. This means you climb steps up to a platform constructed around a tree. Your guide connects you by harness to a steel cable that is attached to another tree a football

field away and suspended over a chasm 300+ feet deep. He asks, "Lista?" Or more likely "Ready?" (Nearly everyone we met spoke enough English to deal adequately with American tourists) and when you hesitantly say you aren't sure, he pretends to not understand and sends you zipping across the abyss. Our tour had us

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