



Educating, Assisting, Supporting, and Informing
through this newsletter!
A newsletter for and by parents with sons & daughters
with disabilities and education advocates.

Families Together, Inc.

Administrative Center 3033 W. 2nd, Suite 106, Wichita, Kansas 67203 (316) 945-7747 www.families-together-inc.org
Wichita Center 1-888-815-6364 • Topeka Center 1-800-264-6343 • Garden City Center 1-888-820-6364 • Kansas City Center 1-877-499-5369
Statewide Spanish parent line 1-800-499-9443 (All toll free numbers for Kansas parents & education advocates)

Volume 67

Dec. 2005

Family-School-Community Partnerships

Submitted by Jane Groff, KSDE Student Support Services Consultant

"The research is abundantly clear; nothing motivates a child more than when learning is valued by schools and families/community working together in partnership.... These forms of family involvement do not happen by accident or even by invitation. They happen by explicit strategic intervention." Michael Fullan

More than 35 years of research has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt the positive connection between family involvement and student success. To support and strengthen this connection, Families Together, in partnership with the Kansas State Department of Education, is pleased to announce the new "Family-School-Community Partnership" (FSCP) curriculum. This curriculum will be presented for the first time, December 3rd, at the Families Together Conference in Wichita. It will target both general and special education students' families and school personnel (teachers and administrators), to challenge them to create partnerships that are beneficial to everyone, especially the student. The curriculum was developed to:

- Promote meaningful parent and family participation
- Raise awareness regarding the components of an effective partnership
- Provide guidelines for schools that wish to improve their programs

Decades of research show that when families are involved in a child's education, the **impact on student achievement** is as follows:

- Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Increased motivation, better self-esteem
- Lower rates of suspension
- Decreased use of drugs and alcohol
- Few instances of violent behavior

Even though the earlier in a child's educational process family involvement begins, the more powerful the effects, the benefits of family involvement are not confined to early childhood or the elementary grades, but last through high school.

The "amount of support from parents" was the number one factor people cited for why some schools are better than others. Teachers report that their lives are made easier if they get help from parents, and involved parents tend to have more positive views of teachers. The **impact on educators and schools** is as follows:

- Improves teacher morale
- Higher ratings of teachers by parents
- More support from families
- Higher student achievement

[Continued on page 2...](#)

Inside this Issue...

[TABOR..... p. 2](#)

[From the Director's Desk..... p. 2](#)

[Something for Nothing..... p. 3](#)

[Family Voices..... p. 3](#)

[Celebrating out Heritage..... p. 3](#)

[Family Story..... p. 4](#)

[Education Advocate Update.....p. 5](#)

[Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento Familiar en Español..... p. 5](#)

[Resources..... p. 6](#)

[The New IDEA and the IEP..... p. 7](#)

[Calendar of Events.....p. 8](#)

[Statewide Conference Registration..... insert](#)

Happy Holidays!



[...continued from page 1](#)

When teachers and parents are on the “same page,” they can engage in more individual and concrete discussions around student progress and develop realistic goals and plans of action that are linked to student achievement. Some of the **impact on parents** is as follows:

- Improved communication with teachers
- Increased education skills
- Improved attitude toward school and school personnel
- Higher degree of commitment to helping their child improve
- Increased trust

We know that there is no “one size fits all” answer to partnerships, but we believe that by making this curriculum available to parents and school personnel, we will be promoting best practice among our parents and schools.

To learn more about participating in a Family-School-Community Partnership training, please contact Lesli Girard at the Families Together Topeka Center.

TABOR

Submitted by [Susan Arnold](#), Topeka Center

2005 HCR (House Concurrent Resolution) 5015 is an amendment to the Kansas constitution, which if voter approved, would establish limits to the growth of state and local revenues or expenditures to a highly restrictive formula – the annual change in population plus inflation. This amendment proposal is called TABOR, and it stands for ‘Taxpayers’ Bill of Rights’.

In general, TABOR proposals impose spending limits on state government that increase each year based on the rate of inflation and population growth. Revenues that come in over the limit must be refunded to taxpayers.

Voter approval and spending limits are key factors to understand in TABOR. In effect, any efforts to raise the cap or increase taxes must be voted on by the public. Supporters say it is a good way to ensure government stays small and accountable to the people. Opponents say it removes discretion from state lawmakers and could jeopardize public services, such as education and social services.

TABOR deserves your attention to take an informed stance on the issue. You can see the developments, study the information available, and consider the effects of such a proposal for you, your family, your community and state by reviewing the positions at: Americans for Prosperity (www.afpks.org) or 785-354-4AFP, Coalition for a Prosperous Kansas (www.tabortruth.org), and Kansas Action for Children (www.kac.org) or 785-232-0550.

Families Together Home Page



[Connie Zienkewicz](#) receives a donation from Enterprise Rent-a-Car Foundation representative, Stephanie Warren

A Note From the Director’s Desk...

Dear Parents and Appointed Advocates:

December 5-9 is the 5th Annual National Inclusive Schools Week!! Families Together invites you to visit www.inclusiveschools.org for a FREE celebration kit.

To kick off this celebration, Families Together, Inc. is hosting “Our Combined Voices,” a statewide Inclusion Conference in Wichita on December 3. We hope that you have gotten information about registration and will plan to join with other parents and professionals to celebrate ways that all students can learn together. If you still need more information, go to the Families Together, Inc. website (www.familiestogetherinc.org) or call the Wichita Center (1-800-815-6364 statewide or in Wichita 945-7747).

A big thanks to all of the private financial contributors to Families Together, Inc. We also have great government partners in the Federal Department of Education, the Kansas agencies: Department of Education, Department of Health and Environment, Developmental Disability Council, Social and Rehabilitation Services. Other contributors to the services we provide are: the Western Kansas Foundation, Payless Shoes and Quick Trip Wichita Regional Office.

The staff at Families Together, Inc. wishes each of you and your families a joyful celebration of the holidays!



[Connie](#)

NICHCY

National Information Center for
Children and Youth with Disabilities

NICHCY Website

www.nichcy.org

- ★ All text-only publications have been reformatted to a new easy-to-read layout
- ★ A side-bar menu makes navigation easy
- ★ The ALL-NEW resource library featuring the Technical Assistance & Dissemination (TA&D) Network makes finding information a breeze

Call us or visit
our website!

1-800-695-0285
www.nichcy.org

Something for Nothing

Submitted by [Leia Holley](#)

There it lies on the table, a flier for Family Enrichment Weekend/Parent Networking Conferences (FEW/PNC). Free conferences promising to help me understand my child's educational program, opportunities to meet other parents who understand, and learn about community resources. While I search daily for anyone who understands my child's disability, I can't help but linger on one word, free. It sounds too good to be true. What's the catch? Nothing is ever free.

During the November Kansas City PNC, Merlin Lockett, Families Together, shared a similar story regarding her first memory of Families Together. She laid the flier aside and years later after struggling to find someone who could understand, she made that free phone call.

Families Together's staff members are parents, siblings and education advocates who have struggled to find resources; had doors closed because their child didn't fit the label needed for a service; sat in cold isolated doctors offices wondering "what's next"; and, listened as professionals talk about a child who can't be their child. The staff now has the privilege of being there for parents as they share their struggles and celebrate victories.

While administrators talk about budgets, test scores and AYP, Families Together provides toll free numbers for parents, workshops, FEW/PNC's, Parent to Parent matches and mini-conferences, all free to Kansas parents.

Free as defined by a parent who attended the Kansas City PNC :

"I spent months and hundreds of dollars trying to find the information this conference presented in 1 ½ days. I cannot thank you all enough for giving me hope that the child I love so much will become a happy, successful adult! It is help I would never have gotten anywhere else. For the first time, I feel knowledgeable and empowered!"

Family Voices

Submitted by [Susan Arnold](#), Topeka Center

Family Voices, as a leader in helping families of children and youth with special health care needs, has created a **Legislative Action Center** to keep families and others informed of what's happening in Congress that impacts health care policy and programs. The Legislative Action Center, funded entirely by private funds, provides an easy and convenient way for families to learn about legislative issues, write letters to Senators, Representatives, and journalists, read background information on policymakers and many other features all in one site! Check out the legislative Action Center by visiting the Family Voices website at www.familyvoices.org and linking to the center or go directly to <http://capwiz.com/familyvoices/home/>. Let those who make decisions that affect your families hear from you.

The Garden City Spanish FEW "Celebrating Our Heritage"

Submitted by [Laurie Gerber](#), Garden City Center

Trick or Treat, games, crafts, swimming and fun!!!! That's what happened at the Plaza Inn in Garden City, KS, October 21st and 22nd. Families Together Garden City Parent Center sponsored and presented our first Spanish Family Enrichment Weekend. While Mom and Dad were together getting to know the other moms and dads, the kids were making Halloween costumes. The theme was "Celebrating Our Heritage".

Traditionally, the presentations are all done in English and interpreted for the Spanish speaking only participants. Our challenge at Families Together, especially in southwest Kansas, is to get the much needed information to our families in their home language. These presentations were all done in Spanish. This was very well received by the parents participating. Many wanted more information and more workshops in Spanish, another challenge for us. The last event of the day was breaking the piñatas, "Celebrating Our Heritage". What a day! What a day! Que dia! Que dia!





Family Story

SIBLING STORY

Submitted by [Kristen McFarren](#), Kansas City Center

I had just celebrated my first birthday when two days later, I received the best birthday present ever: my very own little brother, Jeff. I took on the big sister role immediately. I gave Jeff lots of hugs and lots of attention. Our bond was established early on. When I was laughing and happy, so was Jeff. When I was upset and crying, so was Jeff. Because I was so young when he was born, I couldn't remember life without him and I only knew my brother, so it took me awhile to catch on that something was a bit different.

Sure, he didn't look exactly like the other kids; he was cuter. I was proud to show him off. Okay, he did take longer to learn things, but I was anxious and willing to teach him everything he needed to know. But, why did people stare at us at the grocery store? Why did the neighborhood kids call Jeff names? Why didn't he go to my school?

My baby brother was born with Down Syndrome. I don't remember the exact moment it hit me because I think I gradually sensed his uniqueness. I also don't remember my parents sitting me down and laying it all on the line. I think that they just answered my questions and explained along the way. What I do remember is the range of emotions and feelings I had as I gradually discovered that my brother was unlike any other and that my role as a big sister was to involve a lot more than I expected.

Jealousy, anger, sadness, guilt, love, pride, concern, fear, resentment and embarrassment are all emotions I have felt over the years in relation to my brother and our family situation. Some feelings I grew out of and some keep creeping back from time to time.

I experienced jealousy and anger a lot when I was younger because Jeff required a good chunk of my parents time, attention and resources. My parents also let him get away with destroying my toys (among other things) whereas if I were to do the same, I would be punished. This prompted me to tell my mom that I wish I had a disability. That's where the guilt comes into play. I have made my fair share of insensitive statements towards my parents and Jeff directly that I didn't really mean. In addition, I felt a sort of survivor's guilt in that I could have been the one born with a disability, so I put the pressure to achieve on myself. I felt that I had to overcompensate and make it up to my parents and Jeff.

I became angry when Jeff was the center of attention- all kids want to shine. I was embarrassed of his disability as I tackled high school because we all know that high school is about fitting in and not standing out. How could I fit in when Jeff came to my school to attend plays, band concerts and award ceremonies? Don't get me wrong- I love my brother- BUT for once I didn't want to explain why he was different or why he didn't go to my school. Why couldn't he be NORMAL?

My parents were great. They let me experience and work through my feelings without telling me I shouldn't feel that way. They provided me with knowledge and education so I could understand and explain Down Syndrome. I was never expected to be his caregiver or to cancel plans with friends or school to look after Jeff. They allotted me the freedom to choose the degree of involvement I wanted to have with Jeff. My mom and dad did the best they could for the both of us. We all faced and will continue to face many challenges and obstacles. We had bad times and good times, just like any other family without a child with a disability. Of course, it wasn't always easy, but whose family is perfect? Whose family is normal?

Throughout my childhood, adolescence and now early adulthood, I have measured people's "worth" by how they react and interact with Jeff. The people who talked to him, played basketball with him, weren't afraid of him, didn't make fun of him and treated him like a normal human being became my friends: they are good people! Dates and boyfriends were also subjected to the same test. Jeff tended to like one boy in particular: he claimed he was his best friend and that boy is now my husband; Jeff was a groomsman in our wedding at my husband's request!

Adult life is bringing with it all sorts of new issues and concerns. I've always been concerned about Jeff, mostly from fear of what his life would be like as an adult. I remember crying to my mom worried that he would never drive, never marry and never have a family of his own. Yes, his life will be different from mine, but that doesn't mean it will

[continued on page 5...](#)

[...continued from page 4](#)

be a bleak future by any means. I know that I will eventually be Jeff's support when my parents pass on. Fortunately, I married a man who has accepted Jeff and understands that we may have Jeff live with us in the future. Planning for our future and Jeff's future is difficult and interesting at the same time. We're all learning as we go!

As I reflect on my relationship with Jeff, I wouldn't change a thing even if I could. I enjoy telling people about my little brother, although he isn't so little anymore. At 27 years old, he loves movies and eating. He loves to laugh with his whole body! He likes dancing and singing at the top of his lungs, whether he knows the words or not. He is the most polite person I know. You'll never hear him yell or object to anything. It is through his personality and peaceful outlook that he has taught me unconditional love and wonderment at the world around us.

I was and still am Jeff's protector and defender. When we were kids, he'd seek comfort from me when he was upset or scared. Now, he knows that my house is his safe haven if ever he needs me. As kids, I'd stick up for him when kids would tease or be mean. Now, I try to inform myself about disability rights so I can defend his rights as a free-willing individual in our democratic society.

Of all the roles I take on or have had in the past, I am most proud of my role as Jeff's big sister! Neither Jeff nor his disability define who I am BUT I am the person I am today because of what I have learned from Jeff. He has overcome great barriers; he participates regularly in Special Olympics, he graduated from high school, he is enrolled in an adult day program that helps him enter the work force. We're not all that different. I see him on a frequent basis and he always greets me with his sly grin. My ears delight as he calls me his "sissy;" to me, it is the sweetest sound in the world. As his big sister, I couldn't ask for more.

Education Advocate Update

Submitted by [Karen Snell](#), Topeka Center

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

In Kansas, foster parents (and case managers or other workers) are **not** considered a "parent" for special education purposes, and should not be permitted to sign as such, unless trained by Families Together and appointed as the Education Advocate. For clarification see: kansped.org (go to "New Items" then "Parent Definition Clarification Memo")



Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento Familiar en Español

Sometido por [Nancy Hernandez](#), Garden City Center

Cada año Familias Unidas coordina un Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento Familiar y normalmente está en inglés con la excepción de una interprete en Español para las familias Hispansas. Este año Familias Unidas organizo nuestro primer Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento Familiar en Español. Este evento fue muy exitoso y nosotros recibimos muy buena contestación de parte de las familias. Yo sé que éste era un evento muy necesitado porque las familias Hispansas pudieron recibir la información y los talleres que ellos tanto necesitan en Español por ejemplo, el Desarrollo de IEP, Abogacia Eficaz, La Ley de Educación Especial, El Estres y temas de interés. Toda la información y el entrenamiento recibido en este Enriquecimiento Familiar fue dado en Español. Un agradecimiento muy especial a todos los Compañeros de los Niños que se pasaron el día con nuestros niños. Nos gustaria también agradecer a todos los negocios que contribuyeron a nuestro Fin de Semana de Enriquecimiento Familiar. Nosotros estamos viendo a ser este Enriquecimiento Familiar cada año para las familias Hispansas. Me gustaria agregar que nosotros también estaremos organizando un Taller sobre La Ley de Educación Especial para las familias Hispansas. Este taller estará más a fondo sobre La Ley de Educación Especial y se sostendrá en la Ciudad de Garden City, KS en la oficina de Familias Unidas el 13 de Enero de 2005. Me gustaria también mencionar que nosotros estaremos teniendo nuestra CASA-ABRIERTA el 16 de Diciembre de 2005, en la Ciudad de Garden City, KS en la oficina de Familias Unidas. Esta sería una gran oportunidad para las familias venir a nuestra oficina y simplemente conoser al Personal de Familias Unidas. Nosotros animamos a las familias Hispansas de venir y simplemente divertirse. Nosotros tendremos comida y bebidas para todos. También habra rifas y premios, necesitan llegar temprano. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta, por favor de llamar me al numero debajo, Gracias y Felices Fiestas.

1-800-499-9443



RESOURCES

Families Together toll free numbers:

Wichita 1-888-815-6364
Topeka 1-800-264-6343
Kansas City 1-877-499-5369
Garden City 1-888-820-6364
Spanish line 1-800-499-9443

www.familiestogetherinc.org

Make A Difference Information Network

1-800-332-6262

An information service for children and adults with disabilities, their families, and their service providers.

www.makeadifferenceks.org

KPIRC

Kansas Parent Information Resource Center
(A resource for parents of any child)

PO Box 320 • Lecompton, Kansas 66050

785-887-6711 • 866-711-6711 • fax: 785-887-6711

e-mail: nkraft@nekesc.org • website: www.kpirc.org



**ACCESSIBLE
ARTS, INC.**

*“Championing the arts
for children with disabilities”*

Interactive Arts Activities for Children:

Visual Arts
Drama & Storytelling
Music & Dance

Arts Workshops & Training for Adults:

Parents
Teachers & Arts Providers
Paraprofessionals & Social Workers

**For Information Call:
Accessible Arts, (913) 281-1133
Visit Our Website:
www.accessiblearts.org**

Check Out these Internet Resources!



Think college Youth with intellectual disabilities have not had many chances to go to college. This is changing as individuals across the country begin to create opportunities for these youth to reap the benefits of postsecondary education. This website will provide information and links to anyone interested in finding out more about the possibilities.

www.thinkcollege.net

Need an Answer--Ask HRSA At the Health Resources and Services Administration Information Center Web site, you can order free publications and materials developed by HRSA Bureaus and Offices. The Web site also features information on resources that may interest you, including organizations, news sources, and current HRSA initiatives.

www.ask.hrsa.gov

OZMO is for everyone... but especially for people with autism or asperger's syndrome. It is a new on-line store full of stuff that people with autism would love! Made to be safe and easy to navigate.

ozmofun.com

All Kids Can

All kids can understand and respect diversity in others. This website challenges you to explore the possibilities and add to their list of things that kids with developmental disabilities can do. Kids can let people know what they can do by answering the Can-Do Kid interview questions.

www.allkidscan.org

The Autism Perspective (TAP)

TAP is a comprehensive resource for information, services, options and treatments for Autism Spectrum Disorder. It provides the latest research findings and cutting-edge information related to ASD.

www.TheAutismPerspective.org

Inclusion

This website's focus is on developing schools and communities that are welcoming of all children and youth.

www.inclusiveschools.org

How can your clutter possibly help Families Together?

Check our website to find out how you can contribute to Families Together through e-bay!

www.familiestogetherinc.org

The New IDEA and the IEP



Submitted by [Lesli Girard](#), Topeka Center

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, enacted by Congress and signed by President Bush in December, 2004, includes significant changes to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process. Here are some highlights of IDEA 2004 related to IEPs.

Components of the IEP:

Present levels of academic achievement and functional performance – including how the disability affects involvement and progress in the general education curriculum (or appropriate activities for preschool children). This section would include the child's strengths, parental concerns, evaluation results, and the academic, developmental and functional needs of the child.

Measurable Annual Goals – including academic and functional goals designed to meet the child's needs that result from the child's disability to enable the child to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and meet other education needs related to the disability. IDEA 2004 only requires short term objectives or benchmarks for students who take alternate assessments aligned to alternate achievement standards.

Description of Progress – includes how this will be measured and when parents will receive periodic reports on progress toward reaching annual goals (such as through the use of quarterly or other periodic reports concurrent with the issuance of report cards).

Statement of Special Education; Related Services; Supplementary Aids and Services; Program Modifications; and/or Supports for School Personnel – that are based on peer-reviewed research. These services should help the child advance appropriately toward attaining the annual goals; be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum and participate in extracurricular and other nonacademic activities.

Least Restrictive Environment – a statement of the extent, if any, the child will not participate with nondisabled children in the regular class and other activities.

Accommodations on State and District-wide Assessments – any necessary individual appropriate accommodations required to measure academic achievement and functional performance on these tests. If the IEP Team determines the child should take an alternate assessment, why the child cannot participate and the appropriate alternate assessment to be used.

Specifics about Services and Modifications – including projected dates for beginning and the anticipated frequency, location and duration of the services and modifications.

Transition Plan – to include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills. The plan should specify transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the child in reaching transition goals. No later than 1 year before the child reaches the age of majority (age 18 in Kansas), a statement that the child has been informed that parental rights in IDEA will transfer upon reaching the age of majority. Note: Although federal law now requires transition planning to begin no later than age 16, **Kansas law requires transition planning to begin no later than age 14.**

IEP Team – members include the parents; not less than one regular education teacher (if the child is, or may be, participating in the regular education environment); not less than one special education teacher or special education provider; the local education agency (LEA) representative knowledgeable about the availability of resources, qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of special education services and who is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum; a professional who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results (may be an individual serving in another capacity); other individuals at the discretion of the parent or agency, who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel; and, the child, when appropriate.

IEP Team Meeting Attendance Not Necessary – at all or part of a meeting if the parent and LEA agree attendance is not necessary. The parents and LEA can excuse an IEP Team member for all or part of meeting when it involves modification to or discussion of the member's area of the curriculum or related services if member submits, in writing, input prior to the meeting. The parent agreement and consent must be in writing.

Alternative Means of Meeting Participation – such as videoconferences and conference calls are allowed if the parent and LEA agree.

IEP Modifications – Parent and LEA may agree to develop a written document to amend or modify a current IEP without convening IEP meeting. Changes can be made by amending the IEP rather than redrafting the entire document. Upon request, parent shall receive a revised copy of the IEP with the amendments incorporated.



Winter 2005 Calendar of Events



Date	Event	Contact
<i>Dec 3, 2005</i>	<i>Families Together Statewide Conference, Wichita</i>	<i>888-815-6364</i>
<i>Dec. 3, 2005</i>	<i>Families Together Board Meeting, Wichita</i>	<i>888-815-6364</i>
<i>Jan 20-21, 2006</i>	<i>Families Together Native American Parent Networking Conference, Topeka</i>	<i>800-264-6343</i>
<i>February 10-11, 2006</i>	<i>2006 KMOM (Kansas Mission of Mercy) project , Wichita</i>	<i>785-272-7469</i>
<i>Feb 11, 2006</i>	<i>Families Together Statewide Conference, Kansas City</i>	<i>877-499-5369</i>
<i>Feb 17-18, 2006</i>	<i>Families Together Family Enrichment Weekend, Garden City</i>	<i>888-820-6364</i>
<i>Mar 31-Apr 1, 2006</i>	<i>Families Together Parent Networking Conference, El Dorado</i>	<i>888-815-6364</i>
<i>Apr 7-8, 2006</i>	<i>Families Together Family Enrichment Weekend, Manhattan</i>	<i>800-264-6343</i>

Families Together, Inc.
501 Jackson, Suite 400
Topeka, KS 66603

