



PARENT CONNECT

An Anchorage School District link to Special Education

Parent Connect is a bi-annual newsletter distributed each school semester to families of Anchorage School District Special Education students. It is produced by the ASD STEP Center (Student-Parent-Educator Center), a resource center for everyone. To subscribe to this newsletter: Call 742-3872 or email STEP@asdk12.org.

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In this issue:

Page 1: Update on ASD Assessments

Page 2:

- STEP Center
- FASD Awareness Day

Page 3: Bits and Pieces: Agencies

- Alaska Down Syndrome
- Nine star
- Challenge Alaska
- ATLA
- Stone Soup Group

Page 4:

- AK State Special Education Conference
- ASD Dates to Remember

Statement of non-discrimination: The Anchorage School Board is committed to a policy of non-discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sex, age, national origin, economic status, handicap, and other human differences protected by law. No person shall be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of educational opportunities and services, academic or extracurricular, offered by the district.

What's New in Alaska for Assessing Student Progress

www.asdk12.org/ae/assessments/

What is Alaska Measures of Progress?

Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) is the new Alaska assessment for students in grades 3-10. It replaces the Standards Based Assessments (SBA). AMP is aligned to the State of Alaska English language arts and math standards which were adopted in 2012. Like the SBAs, students will take the AMP test to help determine their progress over the course of the year. The AMP assessment will take place in the spring of each school year and will have two subtests, English language arts and math. Although the assessment is not timed, each subtest will take most students between 90-150 minutes.

How is AMP administered?

AMP is a computer-based assessment, whereas SBAs were paper and pencil.

When do students take AMP?

Since students will be using technology to complete AMP, the spring testing schedule is different than in prior years. Students will test during a 5-week window with each grade testing during specific weeks.

Parents can use the schedule below to plan their family calendar. Within this testing window, principals will craft the schedule for their building. Parent questions about scheduling should be directed to their child's school principal.

There is a statewide testing window for the following grades:

- Grades 3 and 7: March 30 to April 10
- Grades 4 and 8: April 6 to April 17
- Grades 5 and 9: April 13 to April 24
- Grades 6 and 10: April 20 to May 1



Attendance during the testing dates is very important.

No More HSGQE! . . . Now What?

The High School Graduation Qualifying Exam was officially repealed by the Alaska Legislature in the last legislative session. With the repeal of the HSGQE and in accordance with House Bill 278 which was signed into law in May 2014, students who seek a diploma will be required to take the SAT, ACT or WorkKeys assessment (College and Career Readiness Assessments). The State of Alaska will incur the cost of one test administration per student. More details, including ASD test dates and locations, will be provided once further information from the Department of Education & Early Development is received. Students are NOT required to earn a specific score to graduate.

Alternate Assessment (AA)

The Alternate Assessment (AA) is used as way to measure achievement on an alternate set of state standards and is given to students in grades 3-10 with severe cognitive disabilities. The AA is given in the spring as part of the Standards Based Assessment used to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

For more information go to this web address: www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/assessment/alternate.html

The STEP Center (STudent Educator Parent Center) Resources & Services

The STEP Center, a division of the Anchorage School District Special Education Department, is YOUR resource center. Whether you are a parent of a special needs child or just need parenting resources, you are sure to find information specific to your needs. A staff person is available to help answer your questions. Located in the ASD Education Center (5530 East Northern Lights Blvd), the STEP Center provides the following services:

COMMUNITY AGENCY INFORMATION: The Center maintains a collection of informational brochures specific to local and statewide agencies. These agencies cover a range of topics such as early childhood, vocational information, high school graduation, disability assistance, etc. Also included are organizations that focus on special needs such as autism, down syndrome, traumatic brain injury, to name a few.

WEB RESOURCES: The STEP Center website provides access to comprehensive disability topics and resources. The site contains links to agencies and resources in the Anchorage area as well as national websites providing valuable information on disabilities.

LENDING LIBRARY: The library has books and media that cover a wide range of information on disabilities along with other topics of interest such as academics, classroom inclusion, social skills, parenting help, attention deficit, anxiety, autism, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, mental health issues, behavior issues, social-emotional learning, life skills, transition, and much more. To search the library database go to: www.asdk12.org/STEP

THE ALASKA FAMILY DIRECTORY; Funded by a grant from the State of Alaska and maintained by the STEP Center, the Alaska Family Directory is a disability information website for the entire state. Each of the 5 geographic regions of the state have calendars of events that include support groups, parent trainings, conferences, and activities for special needs individuals. *You can visit this website by going to:*

www.asdk12.org/AFD



The Step Center will be closed
for the ASD Winter Break:
Dec. 22nd to Jan. 2nd.

It will reopen on January 5th.

We are sorry for any inconvenience.

For more information contact:
The STEP Center: 742-3872

Or visit us:
ASD Education Center
5530 E. Northern Lights Blvd.

Hours: M / W / F: 8am-1pm, 2-5pm
T / Thurs.: 8am-1pm, 3-6pm

NONE for NINE: No Alcohol for Nine Months of Pregnancy Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day Sept 9, 2014

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is 100% Preventable

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is an umbrella term that describes a number of permanent birth defects caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Each year, FASD Awareness Day is celebrated internationally on Sept. 9, the ninth day of the ninth month to help spread the word that there is no safe amount of alcohol consumption during the nine months of pregnancy (None for Nine).

The Anchorage Council on FASD joined with folks from all over the globe by sponsoring an event to raise awareness of FASD on Sept. 9th. This event took place at the ASD Education Center from 5:30 to 8:30pm. There were over 25 informational booths by agencies and individuals working in the field of FASD. Some of the guest speakers included Senator Kevin Meyer, AK Dispatch News reporter Kyle Hopkins, FASD consultant for the Anchorage School District Deb Evensen, and speakers from the Governor's Council on Disabilities. Community members, families and professionals gathered together to show their support for continued efforts to stop prenatal alcohol consumption. For more information and resources about FASD call the STEP Center (742-3872).



Bits and Pieces: Local Agencies

The Alaska Chapter of the National Down Syndrome Congress

The Alaska Chapter of the National Down Syndrome Congress is a non-profit organization of parents, relatives, professionals and friends of individuals with Down syndrome. Their library of resources is being housed at the Anchorage School District STEP Center. Materials can be checked out of the lending library. Visit this agency's new website for more information on how to join this supportive group:

www.akdownsyndrome.org

Nine Star Education & Employment Services

Nine Star's Mission, through education and employment services, is to help Alaskans get a job, keep a job and advance on the job. They assist youth in attaining a diploma through their credit completion program. For individuals who are interested in passing the GED exam (in lieu of a high school diploma), Nine Star can assist in test preparation and administering the tests.

www.ninestar.com

Challenge Alaska

Winter Fun: Challenge Alaska improves the lives of people with disabilities, their families, and the whole community through adaptive sports, therapeutic recreation and education programs. They also have adaptive equipment for rent. For information on rentals, call Jeff (344-7270) or go to their website:

www.challengealaska.org

Assistive Technology of Alaska

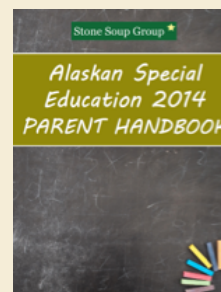
Assistive Technology of Alaska (ATLA) is Alaska's only comprehensive assistive technology (AT) resource center. AT can be the key to greater independence and productivity for people in their home, school, community, and/or place of employment. ATLA also provides demonstrations, information, and device loans to help Alaskans make informed decisions and select the AT that best meets their needs. For more information visit their website:

www.atlaak.org

or Call: (907) 563-2599

A New Resource from Stone Soup Group (SSG)

Stone Soup Group recognizes that parents play a vital role in the education of their children who may be receiving special education services. By becoming familiar with the special education process, learning about the services and being aware of procedures, they can make better informed decisions regarding their child's education. Stone Soup Group has put together a handbook to assist parents in understanding the world of special education and developing an Individual Education Program (IEP). Download the manual from this webpage: www.stonesoupgroup.org/School_Support.html



Thread's Parenting Series

Thread's Parent Talk is a free group where parents learn, ask questions, and share ideas about the joys and challenges of parenting. Attendees enjoy a free dinner, giveaways, as well as resources, children's activities and more. Parent Talk meets from 6-7:30pm at Thread (3350 Commercial Dr.)

Pre-registration is required:

Phone: 265-3100

www.threadalaska.org

Dec. 4, 2014: Peaceful Parenting & Healthy Communication: Learn proven techniques to limit battles and make transitions smoother through respect, consistency, setting and enforcing healthy boundaries, and creating a stable home environment for all ages.

Jan. 8, 2015: Emotional Intelligence: Gather tips on teaching children how to manage their emotional world and build strengths for overcoming life's challenges, increased self-confidence, and healthy relationships.

Feb 5, 2015: School Options & Educational Insights: ABC, Optional, Charter, Montessori, Immersion...it's all so confusing! Learn about all of the school options in Anchorage and different ways to find the right fit for your child.

March 5, 2015: Building Resilience: We all know sometimes life is tough. Explore ways to help yourself and your children overcome life's challenges while building strengths.

April 2, 2015: Ages & Stages 3-6 Years: The Preschooler, "Ready for School": Preschoolers are full of energy and they love to learn. Discover skills your preschooler needs to give them a strong start during their first years of school & for long-term success.

May 7, 2015: Summertime Fun & Exploration: Come to share, learn and trade summertime activity ideas, tips, and tricks. Take home some quick and easy educational activities that you and your kids will surely enjoy!

**The 24th Annual Alaska Statewide
Special Education Conference
Hilton Anchorage Downtown
www.assec.org/**

**Pre - Conference February 7 -8, 2015
Main Conference February 9 - 11, 2015
Post Conference February 12 - 13, 2015**

Keynote presenters for main conference:

Monday, February 9, 2015 - "Capturing the Benefits of Visual Strategies for Meeting Communication & Social Learning Needs in Autism" Linda Hodgdon, M.Ed., CCC-SLP

Tuesday, February 10, 2015 - "Sitting On Both Sides of the Table", Amanda Coffman, M.Ed, BS, Tourette Syndrome Association, Inc. Education Advisory Board Member

Wednesday, February 11, 2015 - "You Can't Fight the Frontal Lobe!" ... What ALL Adult Brains Should Know About ALL Children Brains! Strategies to assist in responding to challenging behavior demonstrations... Jo Mascorro, M.Ed.

**Anchorage School District Dates to Remember
Second Semester of 2014-15 School Year**



End of Second Quarter: December 19, 2014 (State released grading day, no school for students)

Winter Break: December 22nd through January 2, 2015

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-No school: January 19, 2015

President's Day: February 16, 2015 (No school)

Parent Conference Days: February 18 & 19, 2015 (School schedules and student-release times vary. Check with your school for the specific schedule.)

State released professional development day: Feb. 20, 2015 (Students do not attend school)

End of Third Quarter: March 6, 2015 (State released grading day, no school for students)

Spring Break: March 9-13, 2015

Alaska Measures of Progress (AMP) state testing window from March 30 to May 1, 2015

End of Fourth Quarter: May 21, 2015 (Last day of school for students)