



Resources for families  
of children with disabilities.

**Summer 2016**

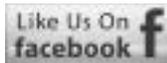
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***Circuit** is a quarterly printed and electronic publication providing in-depth information around a central theme for each issue.*

EMPOWERING FAMILIES FOR OVER 30 YEARS

# Circuit

Offering information and assistance to parents and families caring for children with a disability or special need.



## What Parents Should Know... About Their Child 's Transition to Middle School

### Preparation, Partnership, Persistence Lead to a Successful Transition

*Getting ready to transition to middle school for youth with disabilities requires preparation, partnership and persistence. Parents will want to review the elementary school IEP, visit the middle school to learn about how it is organized, think about the kinds of experiences their son or daughter will need to keep him/her on a path for inclusive, positive life outcomes, and understand parents' rights and responsibilities in the special education process. Building relationships with a team of teachers in middle school will require time and effort on parents' part. Asking questions, sharing options, and ensuring that the IEP is written to address the goals and supports needed requires persistence.*

*One family's story of preparation, partnership and persistence paid off in the transition to middle school.*

"Our son recently finished his 6th grade year in school. In September 2015, we were anxious and excited for this new educational opportunity in our son's life. He had spent all of his elementary years at the same school and was included in the regular classroom with the exception of going to the Resource Room for math and reading, and speech and

*(Continued on page 2)*

# Preparation, Partnership, Persistence Lead to a Successful Transition to Middle School

(Continued from page 1)

occupational therapy sessions. We had become pretty comfortable and had established relationships in the elementary setting and really did not know what to expect with his middle school transition.

Well, we could not have asked for a better school year for our son! He came home from school on the last day of 6th grade a different child than he was on the first day of school. His self-confidence had grown immensely along with his independence. The progress that he made throughout the school year socially and academically was amazing.

Here's how we helped him have a successful 6th grade year:

**1. One-Page Introduction** - Prior to the first day of school and the school open house, we had a meeting with the school administration, his teacher/case manager, speech therapist and other 6th grade teachers. First, we introduced our son to the staff by presenting his one-page introduction, which we have presented every year to his teachers since he was in 1st grade.

## What is a one-page introduction?

A one-page introduction captures all the important information about a young person in a positive way on a single sheet of paper under three simple headings: *What People Like and Admire About Me*, *What's Important to Me*, and *How Best to Support Me*. A one-page introduction helps those who will be with your child develop a relationship plus also give them insight into how to support your child.

Those gathered around the table did not know our son, some of them might have observed him in his 5th grade classroom but no one really knew who he was and what makes him tick. Since we really wanted to make sure that he had inclusion opportunities and was able to continue on his path of inclusion, we had updated his one-page introduction to include what was important to him and his family for being included in general education. For example:

- To be with other 6th graders and make new friends
- To have supports in place to be successful at school

## Charting The Life Course Tool for Developing a Vision

Forming a vision and beginning to plan for the future in each phase of life's domain helps plot a trajectory or path for a full, inclusive quality of life in the community.

Life Domain	My Vision for My Future	Rank	Curent Situation Things to Work On	Rank
 Daily Life Employment				
 Community Living				
 Social & Spirituality				
 Healthy Living				
 Safety & Security				
 Citizenship & Advocacy				
 Supports for Family				
 Supports & Services				

Source: SD Dept. of Human Services in partnership with Missouri Family to Family

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- To feel comfortable at school
- To have opportunities to learn, explore new interests and to be challenged
- To have assignments like my classmates

His one-page introduction also told them that he likes music and sports. So, the topic of discussion at the meeting based on his one-page introduction was — How can he have 6th grade opportunities that are important to him? The meeting ended with his schedule for 6th grade to include the following general education classes: band, social studies, art, physical education and home economics. Copies of his one-page introduction were given to all his teachers and education assistants that would be with him during his 6th grade year. Also, our son carried his own copy with him in his binder to show to someone new.

**2. Communication** - Not only was it important for our son to develop relationships in his new school but for his parents to develop a relationship with those that worked directly with our son. We did this by making sure that we were open to being contacted with any questions or concerns that may arise during the year. This open communication led to consistency in our son's day and helped him and those around him to have a good day!

We asked our son's teacher at the end of the year about the one-page introduction and he shared the following comments:

- Eased the anxiety for the teachers, educational aides and the school staff — told us what interested him (his likes and dislikes) and could have interactions based on the one-page introduction information.
- Knowing how to strategize/support him in a frustrating situation.
- Helped with knowing his likes and dislikes.
- Easy to look at.

Based on his successful 6th grade year and his growth, we can make some changes in his *How Best to Support Me* section of his one-page for 7th grade!"

*To learn more about One Page Introductions, Building Parent/Professional Partnerships, and Rights and Responsibilities in Special Education, contact South Dakota Parent Connection [sdpc@sdparent.org](mailto:sdpc@sdparent.org) or visit our website [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org). We are committed to connecting families to training and resources to empower them to advocate for their son's or daughter's unique needs to ensure positive life outcomes.*

## SDMyLife Tool Helps Students Build Their Future

Since 2008, the SD Department of Education has offered SDMyLife, an online program assisting students with navigating the career development process. SDMyLife is for students with differing abilities and is introduced in middle school to begin the process of learning about careers. With the support of teachers, counselors, and parents, SDMyLife's goal is to help students better understand themselves and how their interests, skills, and knowledge relate to real-world academic and career opportunities. South Dakota students use SDMyLife to research, select, and plan their careers.

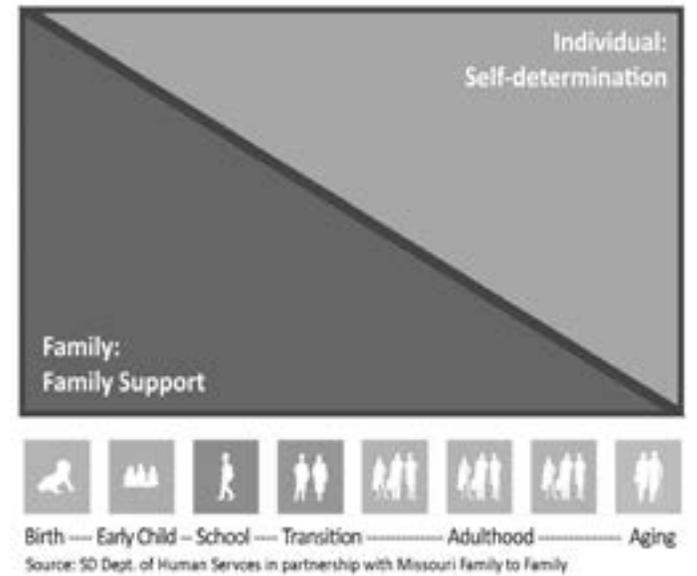
To find a good match, students take interest and ability assessments. They can explore by career cluster, keyword, or school subject. Students can also research post-secondary education and training options, build a portfolio, study with Method Test Prep and find out about scholarships opportunities.

As students progress through high school, they can map their education careers and build a Personal Learning Plan. They can also save assessment scores, log career planning activities and extracurricular involvement, and even build a resume! Visit [www.sdmylife.com](http://www.sdmylife.com) to learn more.

# Encouraging Self Determination in Middle School

Throughout childhood and youth, skills and habits can be learned and practiced to realize a vision of a quality of life in adulthood. During the early years a child is more dependent on the parent or family unit. While always an important part of the person's life, as children grow they take on different roles and assume a larger role in making their own choices and decisions about how they will live their lives. This is self-determination.

Historically, families and professionals don't start thinking about teaching or instilling self-determination until a person with a disability reaches the age of transition from school to adulthood, or even later. In reality, self-determination is part of the life course journey from the very beginning. The *Supporting Real Lives Across the Lifespan* folder, distributed by the SD Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities, helps families to understand this self-determination process. Self-determination can be viewed as a quality or characteristic of a person, similar to good manners, or other qualities that parents work to develop in their children. Like other desirable qualities, children can start learning to be self-determined from birth by having opportunities to make choices, learn about new places and things, build community connections, develop skills and learn responsibilities.



Some examples of self determination questions from the Lifespan folder for children and youth include:

- How am I included in school with all classmates, including those without disabilities?
- Am I learning social skills as well as daily living and academic skills in my school experience?
- Do you ask me what I want to be when I grow up?
- Am I learning about lots of different jobs from my family, teachers and others?
- Do you make sure I have responsibilities at home, such as daily chores?
- Are you giving me the opportunity to make choices and decisions about everyday things (like what I wear, what I eat for a snack)?

In 2015, the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine Center for Disabilities proposed implementation of a training and technical assistance project for promoting self-determination and self-advocacy by middle school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The program entitled Advocacy and Leadership Project (ALP), provided training to staff in three middle schools which focused on the Self-Determination Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) and person-centered practices provided through collaboration with South Dakota Parent Connection.

As research evidence demonstrates youth with higher levels of self-determination achieve better post-school outcomes related to employment, postsecondary education, and independent living, the project supported teachers in active participation and engagement in self-determined behaviors including

- student led presentations at IEP and transition meetings
- advocacy regarding personal learning styles and strengths
- self-awareness of support needs and accommodations

This program focused on middle school students as this population is currently within the formative years of emotional and cognitive development. Gains in leadership and self-determination may address the substantial difference between the experiences of youth with and without disabilities and increase participation in dating, proms, goal setting, problem solving, self-management, and supported decision making.

# “Future Doctor” Learning About SDPC Families



South Dakota Parent Connection is hosting a “future physician” this summer to introduce him to the challenges faced by families of children with disabilities or special health care needs. Toluwa (Tolu) Omole is an undergraduate student at Arizona State University with plans to become a physician working in public health with minorities or other underserved populations. “I am hoping this experience in South Dakota at SDPC will broaden my horizons in understanding the many aspects of health care for families of children with disabilities and the unique challenges they encounter,” said Tolu. “I am particularly interested in the relationship between biomedical and social factors that influence underserved populations.”

Tolu’s internship is through the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine Center for Disabilities as part of the RISE-UP (Research Initiatives for Students) Program. USD is one of only three host universities in the nation for the learning track. RISE-UP is collaboration of Kennedy Krieger Institute and the US Health and Human Services’ Maternal and Child Health Bureau, and is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. RISE-UP provides public health training opportunities for undergraduate students interested in reducing health disparities to encourage and support the pursuit of graduate degrees.

By promoting a more diversified and equal health system, the program strives to introduce highly qualified undergraduate students from under represented groups to the field of public health.

The RISE-UP Program has an impressive success story:

- 100 percent of students completed the program.
- 100 percent of the students who applied for graduate, post-baccalaureate, or medical school were accepted.
- 95 percent of RISE students who graduated from college or graduate school are working, seeking employment, or continuing their education in public health.
- 89 percent of abstracts submitted to national meetings were accepted.

During his internship Tolu will be exposed to many aspects of working with families of children with disabilities or special health needs, including advocacy, training, assistance and research. “This experience will provide me valuable practical experience that I can apply on the academic side when I return to school,” concluded Tolu.

## SDPC Receives Grant from Midco



*SD Parent Connection Executive Director Elaine Roberts (right) recently accepted a \$2,000 check from Nancy Weber Sweere, Account Executive with Midco. The grant will be used for technology upgrades for SDPC training equipment to deliver workshops to families and professionals. Over the past three years SDPC has provided training to more than 1,200 families and professionals.*

## Resources for Middle School Students

Researchers have found that students anticipating the move to middle school worry about three aspects of the change: logistical, social, and academic. Your child with learning or attention difficulties shares the same worries as her peers, and may be afraid the change will be even harder for her.

While you won't be able to calm your child's fears completely, with some advance planning and open discussions you can substantially ease his mind. The first step is understanding what may worry your child. Read ***Smoothing Your Child's Transition to Middle School from GreatKids/Great Schools*** at <http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/smoothing-your-childs-transition-to-middle-school/>

Research suggests that roughly half of adolescents with autism, intellectual disability, speech impairments and learning disabilities are bullied in school. Bullying often occurs when students are in middle and high school. Pacer has written book for middle and high schoolers, ***Bullying 101: Guide for Middle and High Schoolers*** available at <http://www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/bullying101tab.pdf>.

For a copy of ***Supporting Real Lives Across the Lifespan*** (see references on pages 2 and 4) contact the SD Department of Human Services at 1-800-265-9684 or SDPC at 800-640-4553 or [sdpc@sdparent.org](mailto:sdpc@sdparent.org).

## Person Centered Transition Assessment Can Provide Achievable Path to Future



Your child is entering a time filled with change, growth and excitement called transition. It's never too early to begin planning for your son or daughter's future. SD Parent Connection, the SD Division of Developmental Disabilities and SD Council on Developmental Disabilities have implemented a program to help parents plan for their child's life after secondary

education.

The Person Centered Transition Assessment (PCTA) can provide a positive achievable path to the future by ensuring self-advocacy, increasing parent involvement and determining students' interests and abilities. With the support of certified PCTA facilitators, the PCTA is completed with and by the student, family, school staff and service providers (i.e. Vocational Rehabilitation) and anyone else the student wishes to have a part in the conversation. It takes about two hours to complete. The assessment will identify goals for work, independent living and recreation, and self-advocacy. Each assessment includes an action plan agreed upon by the team which may be incorporated into the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP). This assessment meets the transition requirements in IDEA-A to determine a results-oriented plan of action and develop a summary of performance.

A PCTA can answer these questions:

- How can I work to maximize my son or daughter's potential?
- What employment opportunities are available?
- Where can my son or daughter meet friends and socialize?
- What living opportunities are available?
- For what programs does my son or daughter qualify?
- What types of support will be available after graduation?
- What will my son or daughter's day look like after school is over?

The PCTA was developed by the Institute for Person Centered Practice, a collaborative effort between the Center on Disability Studies and the University of Texas at Austin and the Center on Disability and Development at Texas A&M University. The assessment is based on the skills taught in the Person Centered Thinking training that was created by The Learning Community for Person Centered Practices.

With support, person centered thinking, and a good plan, transition can be a rewarding and successful journey to a great life. To inquire about a Person Centered Transition Assessment, contact [sdpc@sdparent.org](mailto:sdpc@sdparent.org) or 800-640-4553 or Brenda Smith at [mbsmit@msn.com](mailto:mbsmit@msn.com).

# National Speakers at Dare to Dream Conference in Watertown on July — Register Today!



While training in cross country at an International level in Bloomington, Indiana, **Steve Heidenreich**, a Watertown, South Dakota native, was hit by a drunk driver. He went from having a 90% chance of making the 1976 Olympic team to a 5% chance of living. Left with the mental age of a two year

old, Steve battled back to earn three Masters' Degrees, become a successful coach and Special Education teacher. His is an amazing story of community, family, commitment. Steve's mission is to inspire others who have encountered setbacks and unexpected turns of events. You won't want to miss the opportunity to connect, or re-connect, with Steve at his presentations, *Miracles* and *Achieve Your Dreams!*



**\$25 Cost  
Includes Lunch!  
CEUs Available**

**Saturday, July 9  
Watertown Event Center**

**9 a.m. - 4 p.m.**



**Jo Mascorro**, M.Ed., is an author and outstanding national speaker with over 30 years experience in education. Jo's presentation, *Don't Look Now, YOUR Behavior is Showing! What ALL Adult Brains Should Know About ALL Younger Brains...* and *Working with Parents, Teachers, and Others:*

*A Team Approach to Meeting the Needs of Students with Challenging Behaviors* will provide specific techniques to assist you when responding to challenging behavior demonstrations while keeping in MIND how the individual brain learns. Information discussed will emphasize taking a closer look at how to enrich all your present intervention strategies as you attempt to provide a safe and effective learning/teaching experience.

#### **What Sioux Falls Dare to Dream attendee said about Jo's presentation:**

*"Loved it! So funny and informative."*

*"Many applications for all kids, not just kids with special needs."*



**Terri Couwenhoven**, MS, will offer two sessions, *Moving From UnHealthy to Healthy Sexuality* and *Building the Foundation for Healthy Sexuality: Nuts & Bolts of Providing Sexuality Education*. Terri is an author, AASECT certified sexuality education consultant, Clinic Coordinator for Down Syndrome Clinic of Wisconsin, and mother of two daughters, one of whom has Down syndrome.

Learn more about these sessions and other breakout sessions during the conference at [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org) (Dare to Dream). Lunch and vendor exhibits are included in the \$25 per person registration fee. Register at [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org) (Dare to Dream, Registration) by June 30. Visit [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org) (Dare to Dream) for more information or call 800-620-4553.

Following the conference, Joy Ranch will host a tour of the accessible recreation camp.



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*SDPC provides resources, training and individual assistance to families across South Dakota at no cost. You can support our work by making a donation at [www.sdparent.org](http://www.sdparent.org).*

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## Partners in Policymaking Can Be Life Changing...

Partners in Policymaking is a training program designed for parents of children with disabilities, self-advocates, and family members. Over 500 South Dakotans have successfully completed the training and many say it has been life-changing. South Dakota will be starting its 25th year of Partners in Policymaking in November 2015.

Partners learn about current issues and best practices and become familiar with the policymaking and legislative processes at the local, state, and national levels. The overall goal is to achieve a productive partnership between people needing and using services and those in a position to make policy and law. Partners attend two-day training sessions, six times a year, with each session beginning on Friday morning and concluding mid-afternoon on Saturday. Each session is devoted to specific topics with nationally known presenters.

Participant lodging and meals will be paid for while at the training session. Participants will be reimbursed for mileage and meals to and from the sessions. Respite care and personal assistance services will also be reimbursed to the participants.

To receive an application, contact Sandy Stocklin Hook at 1-800-658-4782 or you can apply on line at [www.sdadvocacy.com](http://www.sdadvocacy.com).

SD Parent Connection is a sponsor of Partners in Policymaking. Other sponsors are South Dakota Council on Developmental Disabilities, Lifescape, and Sanford School of Medicine University of South Dakota Center for Disabilities.

*"I now have the knowledge to be more successful when dealing with those who oppose my views. I know that the word NO is by no means the last word and should be considered a challenge."*

Partners Graduate