



# The Parent Leadership Project's Parent Perspective

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**"Ways to get Involved—Ways to Share!"**

**Spring 2015**

## Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference Update

**O**n May 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference was held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough, MA. This conference brings providers and parents together to educate, support and empower their work with the stakeholders of Early Intervention – children and families ages birth to 3.

This conference provides excellent resources for parents of children who are in or have been in, Early Intervention. The Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP) was thrilled to once again be able to host at least one family from each EI program, at this Conference. The EIPLP was able to host due in large part to the support of the Department of Public Health. Additional funding was generously contributed by Criterion Child Enrichment, Thom Child & Family Services and the Regional Consultation Programs (RCPs) allowed for additional families to attend this Conference.

There was a breadth of workshops available at the MEIC Conference this year, ranging from *Infant and Toddler Development* to *Techniques and Tips for Your Sensory Tool Kit* to *Telling Your Story: A Workshop for Fathers*, and eve-



rything in between. Of course, families were welcome to attend any workshops being offered – and there were plenty, over 45 this year!

On Wednesday evening, the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project was pleased to host the annual MEIC Parent Dinner. The evening began with an opportunity for parents to mix and mingle. Both EIPLP and Family TIES of Massachusetts staff were present. The EIPLP shared a video of families throughout their day at the conference, whose experiences had been impacted by Early Intervention. All in all, the MEIC Parent Dinner was a wonderful expression of parent commitment, creativity and initiative.

**"Ways to get Involved—Ways to Share!"**

## This Dad's View of MEIC

**B**oth years I've attended the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) conference, I find myself leaving with feelings of warmth, support, and excitement. This year, I was able to go to some different workshops to learn new techniques and therapeutic approaches to try with my son. A music therapy workshop awoke my inner Cat Stevens, and I try to sing to Jackson as much as possible, in an attempt to communicate in a more fun and engaging manner with him. I went to another workshop that invited me to make "calm my new normal." It gave me plenty of great relaxation techniques to use for myself and with my son. I also took advantage of attending the "Father" focused workshop for the second year in a row, led by two local pioneers in father advocacy, Paul Melville and Gabriel Fonseca. We painted a mural to express what it means to us to be a father, and discussed the important roles and biases that exist for fathers in the healthcare and Early Intervention settings.



Thinking about last year's MEIC Conference, the workshop that still resonates with me was one led by Barry Brown. The focus was on "mindfulness" and its application to both the Early Intervention model and its usefulness in everyday life for any individual. Barry led an inspiring discussion, touching on his own personal experience with mindfulness and meditation, and his appreciation for his own teachers, such as Thich Nhat Hanh.

Both years, I was pleased to be invited to the parent dinner, hosted by the EI Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP). The food is always excellent and the guests in attendance are people that I can relate to better than most of my extended family, so the conversation is invaluable and remarkably therapeutic. As the hotel staff waited patiently to clear our

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### **This Dad's View of MEIC (continued)**

table, my wife and I found ourselves being amongst the last to leave. We took full advantage of befriending and networking with such amazing families that shared many of our unique challenges. Darla Gundler and her team at the EIPLP should be commended for providing parents an opportunity to educate and empower themselves in a life situation that often has caregivers feeling like curling up into a ball and hiding.

The dynamic of EI providers and parents attending the same conference is unusual, but brilliant. It allows both sides to share and communicate in a mostly warm and inviting atmosphere, although there remains a palpable tension in the room. At times it seems both sides are wondering why the other is there, but the most appropriate workshops with the more skilled facilitators are able to bridge that void beautifully and provide an eye opening experience that I encourage any parent or EI provider to take part in.



**"¡Maneras de participar-Maneras de compartir!"**

### **La perspectiva de este padre acerca de la conferencia del Consorcio de Intervención Temprana de Massachusetts**

Por Liam Girouard

Los dos años en que asistí a la conferencia del Consorcio de Intervención Temprana de Massachusetts (*Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium, MEIC*), terminé con sensaciones de afecto, apoyo y entusiasmo. Este año pude participar en diferentes talleres donde aprendí nuevas técnicas y enfoques terapéuticos para probar con mi hijo. El taller de musicoterapia despertó al Cat Stevens que llevo dentro mío. Ahora trato de cantarle a Jackson lo más posible para tratar de comunicarme de una manera más divertida e interesante. En otro taller me invitaron a "hacer de la calma mi nueva normalidad". Aprendí muchas técnicas buenísimas de relajación para usar conmigo mismo y con mi hijo. También aproveché la oportunidad de participar por segundo año consecutivo en un taller dirigido a papás ofrecido por Paul Melville y Gabriel Fonseca, dos pioneros locales en apoyo a padres. Pintamos un mural para expresar lo que significa para nosotros ser papás y hablamos de las importantes funciones y prejuicios que existen con respecto a los padres en los ámbitos de cuidado de la salud e Intervención Temprana.

Al recordar la conferencia de MEIC del año pasado, el taller que aún reverbera en mí fue el que presentó Barry Brown. El tema central era el de la "atención plena" ("mindfulness" en inglés), su aplicación al modelo de Intervención Temprana y su utilidad en la vida cotidiana para cualquier persona. Barry fue el moderador de un intercambio inspirador y habló de su experiencia personal con la atención plena y la meditación, y de la gratitud que siente hacia quienes fueron sus maestros, entre ellos Thich Nhat Hanh.

Los dos años me complació ser invitado a la cena para padres auspiciada por el Proyecto Padres Líderes de Intervención Temprana (*EI Parent Leadership Project, EIPLP*). La comida es siempre excelente y, con los invitados, me

identifico más que con muchos miembros de mi familia más amplia. La conversación es valiosísima y notablemente terapéutica. Cuando vimos que el personal del hotel esperaba pacientemente para recoger los platos, mi esposa y yo nos dimos cuenta que éramos los últimos. Aprovechamos la oportunidad para hacer amistades y conectarnos con familias increíbles que comparten con nosotros muchos de los mismos desafíos únicos. Darla Gundler y su equipo del EIPLP merecen un elogio especial por ofrecerles a los padres la oportunidad de aprender y fortalecerse ante una situación de vida de la que a menudo sentimos que queremos escapar.

La dinámica de una conferencia de Intervención Temprana a la que asisten simultáneamente proveedores de servicios y padres es poco común, pero brillante. Permite que ambos lados compartan experiencias y se comuniquen en un ambiente cordial y acogedor, pese a lo cual en la sala seguía habiendo una tensión palpable. Por momentos parecía que cada lado se preguntaba por qué estaban los otros allí. Pero los talleres más adecuados con los moderadores más habilidosos lograron tender un puente maravilloso y ofrecieron una experiencia reveladora que recomiendo a todos los padres y proveedores de servicios de Intervención Temprana.



Watch the Early Intervention Training Center calendar for up-to-date opportunities...all are welcome to participate in the online courses available! [www.eitrainingcenter.org](http://www.eitrainingcenter.org)

## NCSEAM Family Survey Update

## Información sobre la encuesta familiar de NCSEAM

Dear Families,

March was NCSEAM Family Survey month. If your child has been enrolled in Early Intervention (EI) for at least **six** months and you did not complete a Survey in October 2014, you should have received a Survey from your Service Coordinator in March. Hopefully you filled it out and returned it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

If you didn't have a chance to return the Survey you received in March, you can still complete and return it. This is your opportunity to make your voice heard and tell the Department of Public Health (DPH) and your EI Program what is working well and what needs some improvement.



**Thank you for taking the time!**

### Family Survey Frequently Asked Questions

1. My EI services are great. I tell my Service Coordinator all the time, so why do I have to fill out a Family Survey?

**Results of the Family Survey are analyzed every year and sent to DPH. This is the only way the Department of Public Health can get your feedback directly. Please fill out and return the Family Survey.**

2. I'm confused about the Family Survey and why it is so important.

**The information you provide on the Family Survey tells the DPH about your family's involvement in Early Intervention. These are Family Outcomes, which the DPH reports to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). OSEP provides funds to EI so that children and families get the services they need.**

**Talk to your Service Coordinator and ask for more information and help in understanding the process. You may also contact the Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project toll free at: 877-353-4757 to talk with another parent.**

Estimadas familias:

Marzo fue el mes de la Encuesta Familiar de NCSEAM. Si su niño ha estado inscrito en Intervención Temprana durante al menos **seis** meses y no completó una encuesta en octubre de 2014, debería haber recibido una de su coordinador de servicios en marzo. Esperamos que la haya completado y enviado de vuelta en el sobre con franqueo y dirección de destino.

Si no pudo completar y enviar la encuesta que recibió en marzo, todavía está a tiempo de hacerlo. Esta es su oportunidad de hacerse oír y de informar al Departamento de Salud Pública y a su programa de Intervención Temprana qué cosas funcionan bien y cuáles necesitan mejorar.

**Gracias por su ayuda.**

### Preguntas comunes sobre la encuesta familiar

1. Mis servicios de Intervención Temprana son excelentes. Se lo digo a mi coordinador de servicios todo el tiempo. Entonces, ¿por qué tengo que contestar la encuesta familiar?

**Los resultados de la encuesta familiar se analizan cada año y se envían al Departamento de Salud Pública. Es la única manera de que éste reciba los comentarios directamente de usted. Por favor complete y envíe de vuelta la encuesta familiar.**

2. Estoy confundida con respecto a la encuesta familiar y por qué es tan importante.

**Sus respuestas a la encuesta familiar informan al Departamento de Salud Pública sobre la participación de su familia en la Intervención Temprana. Estos son los resultados para las familias, que el Departamento de Salud Pública informa a la Oficina de Programas de Educación Especial (Office of Special Education Programs, OSEP). OSEP proporciona fondos para la Intervención Temprana a fin de que los niños y las familias reciban los servicios que necesitan.**

**Hable con su coordinador de servicios y pídale más información y ayuda para comprender el proceso. Para hablar con otros padres, también puede llamar al Proyecto Padres Líderes de Intervención Temprana al 877-353-4757 (la llamada es gratuita).**



Federation for Children with Special Needs

[www.fcsn.org](http://www.fcsn.org)

800-331-0688

**Turning Three**—Provides information about the required process for transitioning a child from Early Intervention (IE) to special education. Discussion includes EI transition planning, special education eligibility, the Team process and the parent's role in planning, making decisions and monitoring their child's progress.

**Basic Rights**—Provides families with the foundation knowledge needed to understand other special education workshop topics. This workshop introduces participants to the federal and state special education laws, special education process, parent and student rights and how to resolve differences with the school.

**"Ways to get Involved—Ways to Share!"**

## **This Mom's View of MEIC**

By Launa Kazeroi

I am a mother of two beautiful daughters, who are four and two years of age. My husband and I were informed moments after our youngest daughter Chelsea was born that they suspected she had Down syndrome. This was confirmed a couple weeks later when we received the results of the karyotype – a test to identify and evaluate chromosomes. Two months into her short life we found out that Chelsea also had Hirschsprungs Disease and would need to have corrective surgery. This was a very emotional and overwhelming time for me as a mother. I had a "normal" pregnancy, I never expected to hear the words "your daughter has Down syndrome" and two months later "daughter needs surgery."

When my developmental specialist informed me about the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) Conference I was reluctant to attend. My daughter was only 7 months old and I was still processing everything we had been through and if I'm being honest, I was an emotional, anxiety ridden wreck, what would people think of me?

I convinced my father to get a room, so he could watch the girls while my husband and I attended MEIC for the first time. MEIC was an experience of feeling educated, supported, loved, and I realized for the first time in 7

months that I was not alone. I was not only able to get educated through the sessions that they offered, or resources from the vendors that were on site, but I was able to network and connect with other families who were riding on the same rollercoaster of life with their child(ren) with disabilities.

Fast forward three years and I have just attended my 3<sup>rd</sup> MEIC Conference. After attending for three years I still leave MEIC with new information that will allow me to assist Chelsea in reaching her full potential. I have made great friends who I look forward to seeing yearly at MEIC. I enjoy connecting with the new families in the parent room that is set aside for families to get a snack, make a pin of your child to wear, take a break or have a good cry. I also enjoy the family dinner that is put on by the EI Parent Leadership Project, the buffet has never disappointed and the company is great!

If you have not had the opportunity to attend MEIC I would suggest clearing your calendar for 2016, you will not be disappointed. You will leave MEIC feeling accepted, educated, invigorated and ready to take on the next year caring for your child(ren).

*"¡Maneras de participar-Maneras de compartir!"*

## **La perspectiva de esta madre acerca de la conferencia del Consorcio de Intervención Temprana de Massachusetts**

Por Launa Kazeroi

Soy madre de dos hijas hermosas de cuatro y dos años de edad. Momentos después del nacimiento de nuestra hija Chelsea, nos informaron a mi marido y a mí que sospechaban que tenía el síndrome de Down. Esto se confirmó una semana más tarde cuando recibimos los resultados del cariotipo, una prueba para identificar y evaluar los cromosomas. Dos meses después supimos que Chelsea tenía también la enfermedad de Hirschsprung y que iba a necesitar una cirugía correctiva. Fue un período muy emocional y abrumador para mí, como madre. Había tenido un embarazo "normal". Jamás esperé que me dijeran, "Su hija tiene síndrome de Down", y dos meses después, "Su hija necesita una operación".

Cuando mi especialista en desarrollo infantil me informó acerca de la conferencia del Consorcio de Intervención Temprana de Massachusetts (MEIC, por sus siglas en inglés), estaba indecisa. Mi hija tenía apenas siete meses y yo todavía estaba procesando todo lo que nos había sucedido. Para ser franca, estaba en un estado emocional y de ansiedad calamitoso. Así que me dije, ¿qué van a pensar de mí los demás?

Convencí a mi padre de conseguir un cuarto para que mi marido y yo pudiéramos asistir a la conferencia por primera vez mientras él cuidaba a nuestras hijas. La experiencia de MEIC me hizo sentir informada, apoyada y querida, 4

y por primera vez en siete meses me di cuenta de que no estaba sola. Además de aprender mucho en las sesiones y con los recursos ofrecidos por los proveedores presentes, pude conectarme y establecer contactos con familias que tenían niños con discapacidades y pasaban por experiencias similares.

Ahora, tres años más tarde, acabo de asistir a mi tercer conferencia de MEIC. Aún después de tres conferencias, sigo saliendo con información nueva que me permitirá ayudar a Chelsea a alcanzar su máximo potencial. Formé amistades maravillosas que espero con interés volver a ver cada año. Me encanta conectarme con familias nuevas en la sala especial para padres, donde las familias pueden comer algo, hacer insignias para sus hijos, tomarse un descanso o, cuando hace falta, desahogarse llorando. También disfruto de la cena familiar organizada por el Proyecto Padres Líderes. Los platos son siempre deliciosos y la compañía es maravillosa.

Si no han tenido la oportunidad de asistir a MEIC, les sugiero que lo anoten en el calendario para 2016. Verán que realmente vale la pena. Saldrán sintiéndose aceptados, informados, vigorizados y listos para seguir atendiendo a sus niños el año siguiente.



**"Ways to get Involved—Ways to Share!"**

## **This Mom's View of MEIC**

By Hillary McEwan

I was fortunate to be able to attend the MEIC conference in Marlborough, MA this year as a guest of the EI Parent Leadership Project. I was excited to attend, and since my son has received EI services, I have been interested to learn all I can to help his progress. In reading the list of workshops that were being held, there were some very beneficial workshops to help me learn about how to deal with his needs as well as my own. My son is a picky eater, so I was excited to see two intensive workshops just on that subject. There were many workshops over the two days, and it was difficult to pick and choose which ones to take, but with the help of the EI Parent Leadership Project I was able to narrow down which would work best for me.

The conference was fantastic and lived up to my expectations as a parent. The sessions were great and extremely helpful as was the EI Parent Leadership Project team. This conference is geared toward the EI professional, so the EI Parent Leadership Project team makes every effort to make parents feel comfortable by networking and getting to know each other. They provided networking events, a special parent dinner, and a quiet room that had a comfortable place to sit, take a break, have a snack or, as in my case, a place to feed the baby. I really appreciat-

ed that!

Along with my son, I also have a 6 month old daughter who needed to attend the conference with me, and because this conference is for early intervention families and professionals, it was very family friendly and my daughter was greeted with open arms and warm smiles by everyone.

There was also a vendor area that held information about resources available in the state, or just fun, educational items for kids. I was surprised to find this area extremely valuable and got information regarding insurance, social security disability, autism resources, and even dental information with some free toothbrushes for both my kids.

The two day conference was definitely intensive and there was a lot of information to take in. The speakers provided copies of all the slides that were presented and I took a lot of notes, as well as took as many handouts as I needed to be able to remember the information. Upon returning home, I was able to immediately institute some of the things I had learned with my son, and it has already been very beneficial. I was so glad that I was able to attend this conference and I really feel that it has immense value for EI parents.

**"¡Maneras de participar-Maneras de compartir!"**

## **La perspectiva de esta madre acerca de la conferencia del Consorcio de Intervención Temprana de Massachusetts**

Por Hillary McEwan

Este año tuve la buena suerte de poder asistir a la conferencia de MEIC en Marlborough como invitada del Proyecto Padres Líderes de Intervención Temprana. Esta oportunidad me entusiasmaba mucho. Como mi hijo ha recibido servicios de IT, estaba interesada en aprender todo lo posible para ayudarlo a progresar. Al leer la lista de talleres que se ofrecían, encontré algunos muy útiles para ayudarme a responder a las necesidades tanto de él como mías. Como mi hijo es antojadizo con las comidas, me alegró ver que había dos talleres intensivos precisamente sobre ese tema. Durante los dos días había muchos talleres para escoger y me resultaba difícil decidir a cuáles ir. Pero con la ayuda del Proyecto Padres Líderes de IT pude elegir cuáles eran los más convenientes para mí.

La conferencia fue fantástica y cumplió con mis expectativas como madre. Las sesiones fueron excelentes y muy útiles, al igual que el equipo del Proyecto Padres Líderes de IT. La conferencia está orientada a los profesionales de IT. Pero el equipo del Proyecto Padres Líderes hace todo lo posible para que los padres se sientan cómodos ayudándolos a conectarse y conocerse. Organizaron un evento para hacer contactos, una cena especial para padres, y había una sala tranquila con un lugar cómodo para sentarse, descansar, comer algo o, como en mi caso, alimentar a un bebé, algo que agradecí mucho.

Además de un hijo, tengo una beba de seis meses que tuvo que ir a la conferencia conmigo. Como este evento es para familias y profesionales de IT, estaba bien adaptado a nuestras necesidades y mi hija fue recibida de brazos abiertos y con sonrisas por todos.

Además, había una sala de proveedores de servicios, con información sobre los recursos disponibles en nuestro estado y artículos divertidos o educativos para niños. Me sorprendió lo útil que fue. Pude obtener información acerca del seguro, la discapacidad del Seguro Social, recursos para el autismo e incluso información sobre salud dental con cepillos de dientes gratuitos para mis dos hijos.

Esta conferencia de dos días fue definitivamente intensiva, con mucha información para absorber. Los presentadores entregaron copias de todas las diapositivas que mostraron. Tomé muchas notas y recogí todas las hojas informativas que necesitaba para recordar todo. Al regresar a casa, pude poner en práctica de inmediato algunas de las cosas que había aprendido con mi hijo. Y ya he podido notar los beneficios. Me alegró mucho poder asistir a esta conferencia, que creo que tiene un valor enorme para padres con hijos en Intervención Temprana.



**DPH Spotlight**

**Massachusetts Home Visiting Initiative**

How long does it take you to answer the following simple questions: "How do you like to spend your free time" and "What is your favorite hobby?" When parenting a child with special needs, you may find that your TO DO list is incredibly long. Let's start with the everyday needs of an infant or toddler: feedings, diaper changes, cuddling, play and socializing (even at the very beginning). For our babies, there may be more frequent medical appointments, Early Intervention visits, possibly therapeutic services. And maybe, just maybe, you are juggling work and a very busy family life, too.

There is one important routine that we encourage you to start early and continue, fully understanding that this is important not just for YOU, but for the health of your family. That routine is – taking time out to relax and rejuvenate.

So often, parents are exhausted with the schedules and stressors related to the needs of their children and family as a whole. It may seem frivolous or selfish to schedule time for a haircut, walk around the block, or visit to a dear friend. How can these activities be justified, when there is so much to do at home?

Truth is, parents need to take time to address their personal needs. If not, there are a number of signs and symptoms that may begin to take hold of a parent: sleeplessness, exhaustion, fear and anxiety, new or increasing health concerns of your own, reduced enjoyment of life. These issues may lead to a lack of concentration, neglected responsibilities, waning enjoyment of favorites, growing feelings of resentment, or depression.

Start slowly, with a single activity that is just for you. Here are a few steps to get started:

- Think about how to spend your time away: a walk around the block, a coffee or tea break with a friend (in person or by phone), a shopping trip that does not include baby clothes or toys.
- Consider who can take care of your child while you are out. Schedule a time when it's easiest for you to be out (maybe nap time for that first time). Do you have a family member, a trusted friend, or in-home nursing care that can help?
- Note the outing on your calendar, to remind yourself of the event. If an emergency postpones your outing, make sure to reschedule as soon as is practical.
- After you tuck your child into bed on the evening after your break, take note of how you are feeling, now that the day is ending and you had a break. Consider when you can take your next time off and how you'll enjoy yourself.

The Massachusetts Home Visiting Initiative (MHVI) delivers home visiting services in cities across the state. MHVI contracts with Early Head Start, Healthy Families, Healthy Steps and Parents as Teachers programs in Boston, Brockton, Chelsea, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, North Adams, Pittsfield, Revere, Southbridge, Springfield and Worcester to provide family-support home visits and parenting groups.



Expecting parents or families with infants and children aged five years or younger, in the 17 cities, may be eligible to receive services in their own home. All home visiting programs address mother and child health, positive parenting, child development, school readiness, and injury prevention including safe homes. The home visiting programs also introduce parents to education and employment opportunities. The home visitor connects families to resources and supports that can help strengthen the families' health, development, and future.

If a need is identified, the home visitor will provide a family with a referral to an Early Intervention program in their community. A family is often eligible for both Early Intervention services and family support-home visits. To learn more about MHVI or to find a home visiting program in one of the 17 MHVI communities go to [www.mass.gov/dph/homevisiting](http://www.mass.gov/dph/homevisiting).



As you come to enjoy periodic breaks, you may appreciate your time with family even more; that is due, in part, to knowing that you can take breaks and everyone is still happy.

For more ideas about coordinating your caregiver breaks, contact your Family TIES Regional Coordinator. As parents too, our staff appreciates your situation and can offer helpful suggestions and resources.

**Family TIES of Massachusetts** is a statewide parent-to-parent information and support network for families of children with disabilities, special healthcare needs, or chronic illnesses, and their providers. We are a proud Alliance Member of Parent to Parent USA, a national organization that provides technical assistance to parent-to-parent programs across the country. For more information, call 1-800-905-TIES (8437) or visit [www.massfamilyties.org](http://www.massfamilyties.org).

## MEIC 2015 Quotes

"It was a wonderful experience attending the workshops and exhibitions at the 2015 MEIC Conference. On the very first day when we entered, we were unaware of what to expect and how the workshops would be helpful. As the day passed by, we realized it was the right decision to attend this conference and we wished we would have attended the previous ones as well. We left with the precious information and contacts of the families whose journey is very similar to us. It was a great opportunity for learning and networking. For the parents of the kids with special needs it is always so encouraging and supporting to know that there are people out there who understand us and are ready to provide help and resources. Workshops had mixed audiences including EI providers, family members, educational consultants, researchers etc. That gave us valuable perspective and views from each side and that is the best & comforting thing any parent would love to know!" – Nirav

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They provided me with important information I could apply and improve my children's life today. Taking time from work to attend the conference is truly an investment in my kids' life and mine." – Penny

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"I met a lot of GREAT people who gave me so much info. My daughter loved the hotel pool and all the 'free goodies' she got from the vendors." – Jessica

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"I am so thankful for the opportunity to attend the MEIC Conference! It was really wonderful to be able to connect with other families in similar situations. The workshops which I attended provided an abundance of information which was relevant to my family. (I attended workshops on Sensory Processing Techniques, Feeding Picky Eaters, the Mind-Body Techniques for self-calming, and Parenting: Creating Helpful Habits and Supporting Positive Behaviors)" – Susan

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"MEIC is always a conference I enjoy attending because the EIPLP does such a stellar job of including families and family voices. As the mother of recent EI graduates as well as a policy researcher in the early childhood field, I appreciate MEIC as an opportunity to talk with early intervention professionals and families. EIPLP is a leader in how to make sure families are "at the table" for discussions of practice, research, and change!" – Lindsay

"The best part of the conference was the opportunity to network with other parents. We learned a lot and were glad we could participate." – Kelly

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"I'm happy I was able to attend this year's MEIC! It's always such a good experience to learn about new strategies and therapies to try with my son in the workshops while also meeting parents like myself and networking with different services, organizations, and vendors." – Liam

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"The conference was amazing! I got to meet other parents, I walked away with a ton of information, to help me help my 2 children, and I will definitely be returning next year!!!!" – Marie

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"I felt great to know I'm not alone. There were so many people willing to help out, share resources and just LISTEN. It was amazing! I will absolutely attend another one." – Ginny

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"The amount of work, caring, and support shines through in each presentation. The 'Ignite' session held by parent representatives was strikingly inspiring! I surely walked away with a more positive outlook and approach to working as part of a team with my children's schools. As always thank you to all the staff and parents for their hardwork and courage in presenting." – Melissa

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"As an RN, as well as a part time caregiver to my micro-preemie grandson, Mason --- I found that the sheer volume of resources available were staggering. I feel blessed that we have needed so few but it is still a comfort to know what is available. The staff members were, across the board, helpful, generous and supportive. Of the 5 classes that we signed up for, our favorites were the beginning sign language and the talk on finance. My daughter and I are very much looking forward to next year's event.

Thank you for making this possible for the many parents, grandparents, and educators who are involved with early intervention. I listened to the stories around me from parents who have come back year after year. The networking available has been a lifesaver for many!" – Lisa

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"I loved the MEIC Conference. I was able to learn some new ways to help my son through the challenges of his issues. I am so glad I was given the opportunity to attend." – Hillary

# THE PARENT LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The EI Parent Leadership Project (EIPLP) strives to develop an informed parent constituency, promote leadership and lifelong advocacy skills for parents and family members, facilitate family participation to ensure that Early Intervention Services are family-centered and support EI programs to identify, train and mentor families to take on roles across the EI and Early Childhood system. The Project is a parent driven endeavor, which continually seeks family involvement and input regarding the needs of families enrolled in Early Intervention and is implemented by parents whose own children have received EI services. The Project staff consists of a Director, a Media Coordinator, a Statewide Monitoring Coordinator and a Statewide Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator. Please feel free to contact any of them with your thoughts, suggestions, and concerns.

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**NEXT DEADLINE:** We welcome your input, suggestions for resources and articles. The next deadline is **August 1, 2015**. Please call our toll-free number (877) 353-4757 or email the newsletter editor at [kris.levine@state.ma.us](mailto:kris.levine@state.ma.us).

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