

**The Daily Schedule****Thursday, December 15<sup>th</sup>****6:00-7:30 p.m.**

This workshop focused on the importance of visual as a tool for negotiating transitions and participating in daily routines and activities more smoothly. The psychologists talked about the difficulty many of our children have shifting sets and engaging in flexible thinking, which are necessary executive brain functions that enable us to transition from one activity to another with relative ease. The speech and Language Pathologists explained how visual aids enhance communication and an understanding of sequences and the variety of ways in which they can be utilized. All parents left the workshop with a visual schedule they had made that addressed a difficult transition specific to their child and materials with which to make more visual schedules at home as needed.

**Follow then Leader****Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>****6:00-7:30 p.m.**

The importance of play, its relationship to cognitive, social and emotional development, and some play techniques were addresses at this workshop. The developmental sequence of play was highlighted along with the value of finding time to play with their child everyday. Parents had the opportunity to see how we enhance, guide, and promote play through observing a role-play and to practice some play techniques with each other that had been discussed. Parents left with a hand-out summarizing how to facilitate communication through play, turning daily situations into high interest activities, and tips on how to play with their child.

**Finding a Balance****Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2006****6:00-7:30 p.m.**

All parents struggle with balancing the needs of their child(ren) with their own needs and those of their partners, if they have one. This becomes even more difficult for parents of children with special needs as daily living is often consumed by the needs of these children. As stress increases, relationships can easily become strained and personal needs put on the back burner. However, parents need to stay physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy in order to be physically and emotionally available to their children and partners. In this interactive workshop, parents were guided by the psychologists through the process of defining how they see themselves and then identifying what makes them feel good, when they last engaged in these activities/pleasures and what has kept them from doing them. The focus then shifted to how to support one's relationship with ones' partner. Participants identified what activities they enjoyed doing with their partners, when they last engaged in these activities, and what resources were available to them so that they could once again partake in these activities. Tips for supporting one's partnership were discussed and parents left the workshop having identified one thing they were going to do for themselves in the coming week and one thing they were going to do with their partner. Participants also left with some little treats in hand to help them feel cared for.

**Fostering Independence****Tuesday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2006****6:00-7:30 p.m.**

Fostering independence in children is a process of gradually shifting the responsibility for a child's behavior from the parent to the child. Engaging in this process is one of the most important goals a parents has, because the development of self-sufficiency allows for greater opportunities and choices in the child's future. Doing for oneself also builds

confidence and self-esteem as one masters a variety of skills, especially those that, at first, seem difficult. Fostering independence, though, can be challenging for parents, especially when one's child has special needs. In this workshop, the psychologists engaged parents in reflecting on why fostering self-sufficiency is so important and why it is more challenging for this parent population. We then explored together what needs to be considered when targeting a skill to address. This involved reflecting on what skills parents were presently performing for their child, which skills their child wanted to learn to do on their own, and which skills their child was ready to learn. All parents left the workshop having chosen a skill they were going to focus on helping their child develop as well as a tip sheet for fostering independence in children with special needs.