



P.G. Chambers School – *Discovering the unique potential within every child.*

## Focus on Vision

### Back to School 2006-2007

*Karen Kowalski, MPH, OTR/L,  
Clinical Supervisor of OT Department,  
and Margie Skup, OTR/L*

**Bookbag? ✓**

**Pencils? ✓**

**Gym shoes? ✓**

### Annual eye examination?

If you have not checked this off of your list yet, you should make immediate plans to have your child's eyes examined before the start of school.

Often in the "Back to School" rush, we overlook the all-important trip to the eye doctor, forgetting the significant role that vision plays in our child's school success.

The American Optometric Association ([www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org)) estimates that 25 percent of school-age children have visual problems. This number increases in children who have other medical conditions, such as cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, and low birth weight.

The AOA recommends that a comprehensive examination be performed prior to the first grade, with a follow-up evaluation every one to two years thereafter.

Most people believe that a successful score on a 20/20 test signifies that vision is normal. This is not necessarily true. Two visual component areas, "efficiency" and "processing," must be taken into consideration when determining the functional ability of the visual system. "Efficiency" involves the ability to clearly and comfortably see material. Difficulty occurring within this visual component area is referred to as an "efficiency disorder," which may include diagnoses of nearsightedness, farsightedness or astigmatism. Complaints associated with this disorder often include headaches, watery eyes and squinting.

"Processing" involves the ability to interpret, or make sense of, visual information. Evaluating the ability to process visual information is not based solely upon the strength and coordination of the eye structure, although this may have an impact. The follow-



*Summer is scanning to locate the letters in her name. Margie, her OT, is encouraging Summer to visually attend.*

ing difficulties may be observed in a "processing disorder": sloppy handwriting, inability to maintain letters on a line, inability to recognize letters/shapes, inability to learn left/right concept.

Students are often referred to an occupational therapist for visual "processing" concerns, which may include difficulty with visual motor integration and visual attention. In addition to individual therapy, an occupational therapist may make classroom recommendations to help the student and teacher tailor an approach to learning that works for that particular student and focuses on strengthening visual processing capabilities.

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# Good Posture = Effective Learning

*Julie Haggerty, PT, DPT, PCS, and Cathy Holden Pope, PT, DPT, Director of Physical and Occupational Therapy*

**A**s the school year begins, the therapists and teachers at P.G. Chambers School are busy ensuring that each child's posture in various sitting positions maximizes his or her learning potential in the classroom.

Many students attending programs at P.G. Chambers School have difficulty staying up against gravity, maintaining a middle position, and keeping an erect spine with a straight back. This can affect vision, attention to classroom work, hand use, ability to speak, or to access a communication device. Some children have weakness in those muscles that help them stay upright. Other children have stiffer muscles that may cause them to lean in one direction. Many children have compromised balance when sitting, and a few children have specific orthopedic concerns that can make sitting a challenge. The postural concerns described above can all affect a child's learning.

The primary goal of a proper sitting position is to maintain good alignment in all major joints, which include:

- Head in the middle and eyes facing forward
- Shoulders back
- Shoulders over hips
- Spine erect and straight
- Hips level with legs mildly apart
- Feet flat on floor with toes slightly outward

The functional benefits of a good sitting posture include the ability to use vision efficiently; to turn the head in all directions; to reach with either hand toward desired locations; to assist with digestion; to maximize lung expansion for bet-



*Physical therapists Julie Haggerty and Mary Carroll along with the durable medical equipment vendor, Kim Martin, OTR/L assess Brandon's positioning in his new power wheelchair.*


ter breathing and speech production; to allow peer interaction; to enhance communication; to prevent skin redness; to promote proper bone growth, and to improve attention in the classroom so that learning can take place.

For children with special needs, the benefits of a good sitting posture can be achieved by adapting existing classroom chairs, such as making a higher back insert to assist with head control, adding trunk supports to promote midline positioning, or by providing a footplate or foot straps for a stable base of support. At times, more specialized equipment such as wheelchairs or positioning chairs may be needed to meet a child's individual needs.

P.G. Chambers School offers a Wheelchair/Equipment Clinic once a week on Wednesday afternoons. The clinic provides opportunities for families, private therapists and school therapists, and equipment vendors to come together to assess, try out, and order equipment. It is coordinated by a physical therapist using a team approach involving all disciplines – physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, teachers, and parents. The Clinic is open to children enrolled in P.G. Chambers School as well as children attending other private and public schools.

Although seating in classroom chairs, manual and power wheelchairs, adapted strollers and floor sitters, is the primary focus of the clinic, many families are also assisted with items for the bathroom such as toileting and bathing; items for

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**P.G. Chambers School**  
15 Halko Drive, Cedar Knolls, New Jersey 07927

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*This publication is designed to promote awareness of P.G. Chambers School programs, services, accomplishments and needs. For more information about P.G. Chambers School, call 973-829-8484.*

# Welcome Back Students and Families

## Curriculum Overview

Heather Gilliland, Assistant Principal

Students at P.G. Chambers School will be welcomed to the 2006-2007 school year with new curriculum materials in Reading, Science, Mathematics and Social Studies. Teachers and support staff have been busy organizing instructional activities and participating in training in preparation for an exciting year of instruction and growth.

Reading as a leisure, functional and academic skill is an important component of the school program. We will continue to use the *Edmark Functional Word* series to teach recognition of words frequently encountered in community places such as restaurants, office buildings and shopping stores. In addition, two new Reading programs will be introduced this year. The *Reading Milestones Program* is a sight-word-based program that incorporates sign language, interesting picture cues and stories related to everyday activities. Many of our students will be taking home readers from this series to share with their families. The second program to be introduced this year is the *S.P.I.R.E.* reading and language arts program which addresses all skills recommended by the National Reading Panel. These skills include: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Instruction is multi-sensory with an emphasis on decoding and spelling words through mastery of the rules of phonics. Our fluent readers will enjoy many new stories designed to further comprehension skills. As an added bonus, several popular children's books on tape have been added to our library to compliment these instructional programs.

Our science curriculum this year will focus on a hands-on, inquiry-based program called *Full Option Science System (FOSS)*. Students in kindergarten age classes will learn about trees in their many different seasons and stages as well as animals, their habitats, and how to care for them. Some of the new concepts to be introduced to our students at the first and second grade levels are insects, balance and motion, solids and liquids and rocks and minerals. For our older students working at grade 3 and above, the new science concepts are magnetism and electricity, the human body and earth materials.

The *FOSS* incorporates many experiments into the curriculum. Beautiful, large class-sized and individual books are part of the kits so that the science concepts can be reinforced through language arts activities. It also has web-based resources for parents and teachers. If you are interested in learning more about the science curriculum in

## Movement With a Purpose

Sarah Ehinger, MSW, Early Intervention Program

In September, 2006 P.G. Chambers School will initiate a new movement class for children with gross motor challenges under the age of 3 years.

The goal of the new program is to allow both parents and toddlers to participate in activities tailored to each individual child's needs while performing group activities. Parents will learn how to adapt play and have fun with their child using the school's gym equipment. Songs, movement and actions will stimulate the senses.

Come join us for a morning of fun. To register contact Sarah Ehinger, MSW at P.G. Chambers School at 973-829-8484 or ehingers@ChambersSchool.org.

preparation for the upcoming school year, the website is [www.fossweb.com](http://www.fossweb.com).

Math instruction at P.G. Chambers has been guided by the *Everyday Mathematics* curriculum. Our teachers participated in a full day of training this past school year in order to enhance awareness of materials and refine instructional strategies. *Everyday Mathematics* is a spiral curriculum that utilizes concrete modeling as a vehicle for understanding abstract ideas, and incorporates activities for varied learning styles. Concepts are repeated over time and in many different contexts to reinforce the application of math to real life situations. This program is used successfully in many of the local public school districts, has been extensively researched, and offers instructional opportunities at multiple levels. Families can expect our *HOME LINKS* assignments each week. These are fun application activities that students can complete at home to foster generalization of skills. For additional information on the Everyday Mathematics program visit [www.everydaymath.uchicago.edu](http://www.everydaymath.uchicago.edu).

*Macmillan/McGraw-Hill Publishing Company* has teamed up with the *National Geographic Society* and the *National Council for Social Studies Standards* to produce a lively and colorful curriculum designed to support students in active understanding of their community, their government, our world and our history. P.G. Chambers School teachers will use "big books," role playing activities and technology to share the many interesting facts, ideas and concepts of this program with students.

**Families can look forward to learning more about our new curriculum materials during Back to School night, which is scheduled for October 12th.** Mark your calendars and watch your child's backpack for additional information about this important evening.

## Concert In The Park Welcomes More than 600 Guests A Wild West Roundup Celebration

Over 600 children and families kicked up their heels and joined in an afternoon of good old western fun and entertainment at P.G. Chambers School's *Concert in the Park* on Saturday, June 10th.

Funds raised from this year's *Concert in the Park* are being used to support P.G. Chambers School's new Technology Laboratory for students in both the *Private School* and *Kids Count Child Care Program*. Construction of the Technology Laboratory's physical space was completed in August. Hardware and software installations will be completed in the fall. Staff are currently planning how the new Technology Lab will be used to support the various needs of our students, and the types of training and curriculum necessary to support these needs.

The Concert was an overwhelming success and we'd like to thank the event planning committee, which consisted of many parents; our event Co-Chairs Catherine Connelly and Joyce Beyer for their dedication to the school and commitment to making the event a huge success; and all of the sponsors, donors and contributors that made this very special day possible for the children and their families.



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## Fall/Winter Professional Development Conferences

Please visit the conference section of our website at [www.ChambersSchool.org](http://www.ChambersSchool.org) for more detailed descriptions of 2006 and 2007 conferences. Here is a list of upcoming conferences:

**September 29-30, 2006** – “Visual/Vestibular Treatment to Improve Sensory Processing, Motor Skills and Behavior.” Presented by Debra Dickson, OT. Contact Educational Resources at 1-800-487-6530.

**October 27, 2006** – “Pediatric Positioning with Tripplewall.” Presented by Nancy Altshuler, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

**December 1-2, 2006** – “NDT for Infants and Toddlers.” Presented by Jane Styer-Acevedo, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

**December 3-4, 2006** – “NDT for Pediatric Gait.” Presented by Jane Styer-Acevedo, PT. Sponsored by P.G. Chambers School. Contact Nancy Altshuler at 973-829-8484.

## Menus for the Mind 2006-2007 Welcomes Lisa Ling and Dr. Joy Browne

We look forward to a fantastic *Menus for the Mind* Lecture/Luncheon series this year. Our first special guest is Lisa Ling, the former host of ABC's *The View* and current host of National Geographic's *Explorer*, who will be our speaker on November 2, 2006. On May 3, 2007 our special guest speaker will be best-selling author and radio talk show host, Dr. Joy Browne.



*Lisa Ling*



*Dr. Joy Browne*

*This year's Menus for the Mind Presenting and Lecture Sponsors include: sanofi-aventis, The MCJ Foundation, Pfizer, and The Walsh Family.*

Each lecture/luncheon will be held at the Fairmount Country Club in Chatham, from 11:30am – 2:00pm. A ticket for the series is \$260. A private reception (*limited to 50 participants*) will be held with our guest speaker prior to each luncheon. Tickets are an additional \$35 each. Please contact JoAnn Hansen, Development Director at 973-829-8484 for tickets or additional information.

Essex Golf  
Everything But Water  
Florham Park Roller Skating Rink  
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Suburban Chiropractic Center  
Talbots Kids- The Mall at Short Hills  
The Brick Oven, Florham Park  
The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center  
The Diamond Exchange  
The Hilton at Parsippany  
The Image Maker  
The Original Pancake House

The Shakespeare Theatre of NJ  
The Teaching Room  
Tomahawk Lake Water Park  
Trendz Color & Design Salon  
Cathy Walsh  
Whippany Railway Museum  
Wild West City  
William G. Mennen Sports Arena

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Talbots Kids

# Knowing What To Say

## Social Skills and Autism

Kimberly Stucky, M.A., CCC-SLP, and  
Rachel Collins, M.S., CF-SLP

As Robert comes bouncing into the room, his mom follows with a big smile on her face and says, “Guess what Robert did at a birthday party this weekend? He asked one of his friends ‘Can I play?!’” Social language skills in young children are often overlooked and taken for granted. These skills are as simple as a wave hello/goodbye, making eye contact, a finger pointed to a familiar friend, asking a friend to play, taking turns, and joining in playing games such as “Duck, Duck, Goose.”

*If you would like more information on social skills, the following web-sites are recommended:*

[www.socialskillstrainingproject.org](http://www.socialskillstrainingproject.org) (Jed Baker)

[www.autismsocialskills.com](http://www.autismsocialskills.com)

[www.autismlink.com/info/social.php](http://www.autismlink.com/info/social.php)

Autism is a developmental disorder which affects a child's ability to communicate and socially interact with others. Children with autism often struggle to learn language, and they also struggle with personal relationships. They may not appropriately make eye contact, initiate play, or share with others. Children with autism do not easily acquire these skills naturally from their environment, like their typically developing peers.

Like many other skills, social skills for children with autism must be taught directly. Social skills groups, like the one offered through P.G. Chambers School's *After School*

*Program*, provides an opportunity for children with autism to learn and practice basic skills. Skills taught include: saying hello/goodbye, making eye contact, taking turns, sharing, waiting, listening, and having a conversation.

Children with autism best learn a new skill when it is broken down into smaller parts. For example, when teaching a child to join in a game, the skill is taught as follows: 1. Wait and watch your friends; 2. Walk over to where your friends are playing; 3. Ask, “Can I play?” This skill is then practiced in the context of a simple game, such as “Duck, Duck, Goose.” The child is rewarded with verbal praise for using the skill and is allowed to join the game.

If you are interested in enrolling your child in our Wednesday afternoon social skills group, “Knowing What to Say,” please contact Kimberly Stucky or Rachel Collins at 973-829-8484.



*The children enjoy a game of ‘Duck Duck Goose’ with speech therapist Kimberly Stucky as part of our afternoon Social Skills Program.*

## Good Posture = Effective Learning

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mobility such as walking devices and adapted bicycles; and transportation needs such as car seats, ramps and lifts, and standers. Due to generous equipment donations by many families, past and present, the School has a wide variety of equipment available for assessment, practice, and trial use.

The Clinic also helps families prepare the required paperwork for insurance claims, secure letters of medical necessity, and obtain physicians' prescriptions for needed equipment. In addition, the Clinic is responsible for maintaining the School's adapted equipment, and for assisting families with repairs and adjustments to their children's personal equip-

ment. With its proven success in our school program, the clinic is now also open to the community, providing these same services to children with special needs who attend other private and public school programs. For additional information or to register for a clinic, please contact Julie Haggerty at 973-829-8484 or [haggertyj@ChambersSchool.org](mailto:haggertyj@ChambersSchool.org).

Proper seating is one of the keys to promoting opportunities for effective classroom learning by allowing children to concentrate on the activities in the class instead of excessive attention to sitting upright. P.G. Chambers School recognizes this important goal by supporting the treating therapists in obtaining effective classroom seating for each child and providing the services of the Wheelchair/Equipment Clinic.

## P.G. CHAMBERS SCHOOL TRIBUTE FUND

### *In Honor Of:*

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**Joan and Morgan Murray**  
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Joan and Morgan Murray

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*Gifts to our Tribute Fund are a thoughtful way to remember or honor a friend, associate or relative, while providing needed funds for the programs offered at P.G. Chambers School. Whether it be a birthday, anniversary, birth of a child, wedding, memorial, or a thank you, we will send an acknowledgement to the person that you would like to recognize, as well as a confirmation to you that your gift is tax-deductible. Your name and the purpose of your gift is also listed in this newsletter, our very own **Connection**. Thank you for helping to build strong communities and brighter futures for families and children with special needs.*

## Focus on Vision: Back to School 2006-2007

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Examples may include:

- Writing on a vertical surface (such as chalk board, slant board, or paper taped to wall).
- Pre-marking paper to indicate the location for name/date/subject (using highlighting, bold lines, or color coded lines).
- Using graph paper for math (boxes help to line up numbers into correct columns).
- Taping an alphabet strip to the top of the student's desk for easy referral.
- Using color coded paper/raised line paper.
- Using bingo chips as a marker between words to assist with proper spacing.
- Sky writing (writing the letters in the air with fingers)
- Providing time to organize desk/materials

Here are some fun activities that families can do at home to work on visual skills:

- Flashlight tag

- Bubbles – blow/pop/try to catch bubble on spoon or wand
- Paper/pencil tasks, such as connect the dots, mazes, word searches
- Ping-pong, badminton, tennis
- Squirt toys
- Ring toss
- Lite-Brite
- Dancing games that require visualization of target area or person to understand dance movements, such as “Limbo” and “Chicken Dance”

That should fill your book bag with ideas to get your eyes ready for this school year!

### **Correction**

The illustration used in the last issue of the *Connection* newsletter in the article entitled “You Can Sign Too!” was incorrectly printed. The editorial staff apologize to any readers that may have been confused or offended by this error, and to the author of the article.

### *Staff – Fall 2006 Newsletter*

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### **P.G. CHAMBERS SCHOOL BIRTHDAY BOOK CLUB**

The *Birthday Book Club* invites families and friends to honor their child's birthday or other special occasion by purchasing a book for P.G. Chambers School's Library/Resource Room. The child's name is permanently inscribed on each book that is donated. A special thank you to parents who have supported the *Birthday Book Club*. For more information about *Birthday Book Club*, please contact Jill Mullen at P.G. Chambers School.

#### ***Birthday Book Club Honorees and Donors:***

**Emily Baio** from Monica and Tom Baio

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**Resource Center - 15 new hard covered books** from Cendant

### **WISH LIST**

- Toddler Single Stainless Steel Basin Portable Sink (\$1,245)
- Avanti 2.5 cubic ft. compact refrigerator (\$160)
- Toddler Book Shelf (\$56)
- Kids Coat Locker (\$290)
- Wall Mount Art Drying Rack (\$102)
- Pediatric treadmill for use with Light Gait Walker (\$1000)
- Hi Ho Cherry O Adapted Switch Game (\$130)
- Hungry Hungry Hippos Adapted Switch Game (\$100)
- Table Top Spring Scissors (\$25)
- "Going to the Heart of Autism" The Relationship Development Intervention (RDI) DVD by Dr. Gutstein (\$150)

*If you find it more convenient, we would be happy to use your contribution to directly purchase a Wish List item in your name.*