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NJ•ARCH Features:

- Chat Rooms
- Lending Library
- Warm Line
- Resource Directory
- Training Workshops
- Support Group Advocacy
- Upcoming Events
- Speakers Bureau



www.cafsnj.org

BACK TO SCHOOL KIT: IDEAS IN BRINGING ADOPTION INTO THE CLASSROOM

It's the end of August and thoughts turn to purchasing school supplies, going shopping with your child, and cleaning his room in preparation for school. Each year, you wonder whether you should do an adoption-related event or activity in your child's school. Will he even allow it?

The following are ideas from *Adoptive Families Magazine* in how to educate our teachers, students and fellow parents on adoption.

www.adoptivefamilies.com/articles.php?aid=1455

Write a letter to your child's teacher. Briefly explain your family's background and provide her with language to use when talking about adoption in the classroom. To find several sample letters to use when composing, log on to <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/school>.

Parental involvement is often the key to a successful

school year. Let the teacher know that you're an ally. Schedule a one-on-one meeting early in the school year to introduce yourself and your family. This will give you a chance to:



- Let her know how to handle adoption-related topics that may come up in the classroom.
- Ask if she's planning assignments (family tree, first baby picture, etc.). Present alternatives as illustrated in the "Adoption and the Schools" book by Wood and Ng.
- Offer to give a classroom presentation, talk to other teachers, or simply be on call for questions that arise. Help her understand that adoption is not unmentionable.

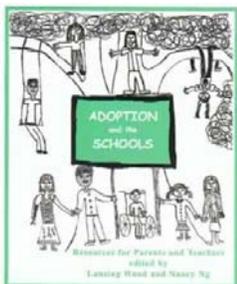
Read an adoption storybook to the class during story time. Use a book to begin an adoption presentation, or simply offer to read to the class during regular story hour. Some favorites include the books listed on page two of this newsletter. Consider donating a set of books to your child's classroom or school library.

Give an adoption presentation when your child is in first or second grade. This is a wonderful way to educate your child's peers, and teachers are usually enthusiastic. Explain adoption in a general way, rather than tell your child's particular story. For articles describing adoption presentations for students of all ages, visit <http://www.adoptivefamilies.com/school>. (Continued on pg 2)

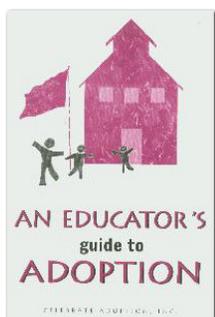


DID YOU KNOW?

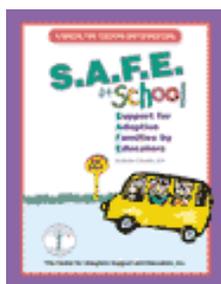
YOU CAN BORROW THESE BOOKS FROM NJ ARCH LIBRARY; THEN PURCHASE DIRECTLY FROM VENDOR FOR YOUR SCHOOL!



ADOPTION AND THE SCHOOLS
BY WOOD AND NG



AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO ADOPTION
BY INSTITUTE FOR ADOPTION INFORMATION



S.A.F.E. AT SCHOOL
BY THE
CENTER OF ADOPTION SUPPORT AND EDUCATION (CASE FOUNDATION)

BACK TO SCHOOL KIT:

Continued from Page 1

Suggest a community service project around National Adoption Month or National Adoption Day: This year, National Adoption Day is Saturday, November 21st. This day celebrates the adoptions of children in foster care throughout the U.S. Your child's class could accept donations of food and clothing for foster families, make cards thanking foster parents for their important work and/or donate and wrap holiday gifts for local foster kids. Visit nationaladoption-day.org for more ideas.

Introduce the topic of racial differences in people around the world. Many children, especially those who live in relatively homogenous communities, benefit from learning how children around the world look, what they wear, and how they live. These books are good places to start:

- *We're Different, We're the Same*, by Bobbi Kates (Random House; ages 3-8).
- *Children Just Like Me*, by Anabel Kindersley (Dorling Kindersley; ages 8-12).
- *If the World Were a Village*, by David Smith (ages 8-12).

Celebrate your child's adoption day at school. Just as children often celebrate birthdays at school, adoptive families may plan classroom festivities to honor their children's adoption

day. Visit your child's classroom and read a book—like *We Adopted You*, Benjamin Koo, by Linda Walvoord Girard (ages 4-8), or *Happy Adoption Day*, by John McCutcheon (ages 2-6). If you adopted an older child, ask him if he'd like to celebrate his finalization or naturalization with his classmates.

Help the teacher blend adoption into the curriculum. Mentioning adoption from time to time in a matter-of-fact way helps kids see that adoption is a normal life experience for many families. For example, when studying biology and genetics in science class, adoption can be discussed in the context of nature vs. nurture. In a unit on immigration, the teacher can tell students that more than 20,000 young children become U.S. citizens each year via international adoption.

Donate a packet of educator materials to the school. For even more talking guidelines, alternatives to tricky assignments (first baby picture, family tree, etc.), and strategies for making the classroom a supportive, welcoming environment for all children, provide your child's teacher or school with copies of:

- *Adoption and the Schools*

By Wood and Ng. (fairfamilies.org). A great resource for parents and teachers.

- *An Educator's Guide to Adoption* (adoptioninformationinstitute.org). A reference booklet about creating a parent-teacher partnership.
- *S.A.F.E. at School* (adoptionssupport.org). Strategies from the Center for Adoption Support and Education for ensuring an adoption-friendly school environment.

Other book ideas to read to younger children:

- *All About Adoption*, by Marc Nemiroff (ages 4-8).
- *How I Was Adopted*, by Joanna Cole (ages 4-8).
- *A Mother for Choco*, by Keiko Kasza (ages 3-6).

Tell Me Again About the Night I Was Born, by Jamie Lee Curtis (ages 4-10).

If you would like to borrow a book or article mentioned in this piece, please call our NJ ARCH Warm Line at 877-4ARCH NJ (877-427-2465). Happy fall!



ASK OUR EXPERTS

E-MAIL US YOUR QUESTIONS AT WARMLINE@NJARCH.ORG

Question: *We have been taking care of my relative's child for the last several years. We initially thought this would be short term, but the mother has not "gotten her act together" and the child is now part of our family. While the mother talks about going to court for custody from time to time, she is constantly moving and is not capable of taking care of her child. Her visits and calls are inconsistent. Do you have any advice?*

Similar questions have been coming up at our Kinship Legal Guardianship Clearing House (KinKonnnect). Some callers are concerned because the parent claims to have "gotten their act together" but the caller thinks that the child should remain with him or her.

Tens of thousands of New Jersey children are raised by their grandparents and relatives. Working out caretaker arrangements can be difficult. You may want to make the current living arrangement more legally permanent, but are concerned about "rocking the boat" by raising the issue. You may be afraid that it may not work out the way you want it to. You want to do what is best for the child.

There can be a risk to pursuing a more legally permanent arrangement than legal custody, such as adoption or kinship legal guardianship. The purpose of this article is not to resolve the

emotional aspects of your situation, but to give you information with which you can make informed decisions. It is always recommended that you speak to an attorney about the specific facts of your case.

Adoption: Adoption is permanent, i.e. providing a "forever" family for the child. When you adopt a child, the law views you as the person who gave birth to the child. You gain full legal rights and responsibility over the child. The parental rights of the biological parents must be terminated before any adoption can take place.

Kinship Legal Guardianship

(KLG): A caretaker having a biological, legal or emotional attachment to the child and custody of the child for at least one year can seek to become the child's KLG, if the parents suffer from a serious incapacity that is unlikely to change for the foreseeable future (e.g. drug or alcohol addiction, severe mental health issues, long-term incarceration, etc.). If KLG is granted by the court, the guardian assumes the responsibilities of a parent and commits to raising the child to age 18 or when the child graduates high school, whichever event occurs later. The parent retains his or her right to seek visitation with the child and the obligation to pay support. Unlike an adoption, a KLG order can be changed if there is

clear evidence that the biological parent's incapacity no longer exists and guardianship is no longer in the best interests of the child.

Financial supports: There may be a KLG subsidy available but that subsidy may affect other benefits. Relatives can apply for Medicaid for children through NJ Family-Care at www.njfamilycare.org, public assistance and/or food stamps through their county social service office. For adoptive parents, low-income families may be eligible for public assistance, food stamps, and child care vouchers. Uninsured children may be eligible for health insurance through NJ FamilyCare. See the website for eligibility requirements.

If the child was placed in your home by DYFS, there are other issues that must be addressed such as reunification with the biological parent(s) and/or permanency for the child. You should talk to your caseworker or child's law guardian about legal standards. The final decision regarding what action to take should be based on the particular facts of your situation. Older children should be involved in the decision-making process as well. Remember, there are many resources available to help you make an informed decision. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions. Best of luck to you.

DO YOU KNOW?

**MEET OUR GUEST EXPERT,
MARY E. COOGAN, ESQ.
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN
OF NEW JERSEY**



**INTERESTED IN
KINSHIP CARE
INFORMATION OR TOPICS?**

**CHECK OUT THE NJ
KINSHIP LEGAL
GUARDIANSHIP RESOURCE
CLEARING HOUSE
KINKONNECT
AT
WWW.KINKONNECT.ORG
OR CALL 1-877-KLG-LINE**

*Have a question
that needs
expert advice?
E-mail or
call the warmline;
we would be happy
to assist you!
Frequently asked
questions and responses
from the staff will be
published in future
newsletters.*

DID YOU KNOW?

NJ ARCH OFFERS THE FOLLOWING WORKSHOPS FOR SUPPORT GROUPS. THESE WORKSHOPS ARE ALSO APPROVED FOR DYFS RESOURCE PARENT TRAINING HOURS:

ADOPTION: A LIFE LONG LOSS

TELLING YOUR CHILD DIFFICULT HISTORY

TRANS-RACIAL ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE

BASICS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN NEW JERSEY

ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE IN THE SCHOOLS

FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE CARE SITUATIONS: WORKSHOP TO HELP FOSTER PARENTS DEAL WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIORS

GROUP FACILITATION FOR SUPPORT GROUP LEADERS

FROM TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS (TPR) TO ADOPTION: THE JOURNEY TO PERMANENCY

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SCHEDULE A WORKSHOP, PLEASE GIVE US A CALL OR E-MAIL DWFRIED@NJARCH.ORG

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT AND YOUR CHILD

Has your 15-year-old done something that makes absolutely no sense? Is your college student really as mature as you had hoped?

According to *"The Adolescent Brain,"* by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, June 2005, brain development does not fully occur at the end of childhood, but continues with remarkable changes during the second decade of life and into the third.

According to the article, studies have shown that over time, "...the cells of the brain change their architecture in order to meet the increasingly difficult cognitive and emotional chal-

lenges that adolescents are being asked to master." This means that the brain rewires itself over time in order for an individual to make coherent and mature decisions. A part of the brain called the "prefrontal cortex" controls behavioral and cognitive functions, such as making complex decisions, impulse control, inhibiting inappropriate behavior, setting priorities among tasks and goals, empathy, insight and more.

"A large and compelling body of research on neurological development of teens confirms a long-held, common sense view: teenagers are not the same as adults in a variety of key areas such as the ability to make sound judgments when con-

fronted by complex situations, to control impulses, and the ability to plan effectively... Teens are full of promise, often energetic and caring, making contributions to their communities and able to make remarkable spurts in intellectual development and learning. But neurologically, they are not adults. They are a work in progress..."

So the next time you look at your teen in bewilderment and cannot understand your teen's thinking or actions, keep in mind their behavior may be linked to the fact that their brain, despite their age, is simply not yet fully developed.

DYFS WAITING CHILD: STEPHANIE, BORN DECEMBER 1992



Meet Stephanie—a motivated teenager who felt that it was important for families to read a profile that she created about herself: "Brave, intelligent, creative, fun, are only a few of the many words to describe 16-year-old Stephanie. A future

RN, she is attending a vocational school to achieve her career goals. She enjoys singing, dancing, and cheerleading during her spare time. Stephanie's talent is writing poetry about her past experiences, for example:

A little girl's eyes,

The pain and misery living with people you don't know
Being cold and alone with no place to call home.

Being different

A little girl's eyes.

Stephanie wants a place to call home, or a place she can say is hers. She is really looking for a mother to parent her and not to have as a best friend. She would succeed best in a family who would treat her as they would their own biological children—with patience, love and support.

A financial subsidy and medical assistance are available to the family who can open their hearts and home to Stephanie. Stephanie is waiting!

For more information about Stephanie, contact 800-99-ADOPT.

NATALIE'S LIBRARY CORNER

Hello Readers!

Welcome to Natalie's Library Corner.

After looking at the many books I have reviewed, I noticed that I never touched upon the subject of Reactive Attachment Disorder or RAD. Below are two books that I have reviewed on this subject:

***More than Love: Adopting and Surviving Attachment Disorder Children*, by Sherril M. Stone, Ph.D.**, is the detailed account of the author's personal experience in parenting three attachment disorder adopted boys. She describes candidly her and her husband's frustration at the system for not providing the help they were promised before the adoption.

This book takes its readers through the emotional roller coaster experienced by both Dr. Stone and her husband as they searched for answers from therapists, psychologists, social workers, clergy, teachers, friends and family. It details the boys' deviant behaviors and describes the behaviors observed by outsiders. "Others only witnessed charming, sweet, and 'good boys.'"

"Unfortunately, children with attachment problems are experts at manipulation and often dupe others, including those trained to detect such deceitfulness. Tragically, these parents finally had no choice but to let

go of the boys in order to protect their family, friends, and society."

"'More than Love' began as a daily journal by Dr. Stone, and ultimately, became a testament of endurance covering nine years of parenting attachment disorder children."

***We Adopted a Dusty Miller: One Family's Journey with an Attachment Disorder Child*, by Phyllis K. Bosley**, is a real cliffhanger, an unusually frank narration of the roller coaster ride parents experience when they love a difficult child and are not successful in finding help. A strong marriage, a supportive family, a sense of humor, a persistent attitude, and the ability, finally, to let go of a heartbreaking situation combine to reveal a picture of the difficult journey many parents endure.

The author tells in succession the experiences and feelings that are common to parents of children suffering from RAD, and/or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effect. The book describes the behavior usually present in children who are in need of therapeutic care. It provides an argument for the development of wrap-around services for these children and their families, demonstrating the need for community understanding and support. Having survived the experi-

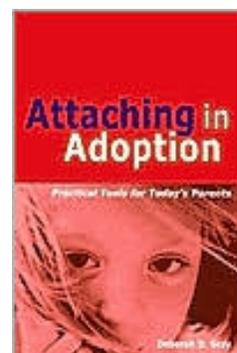
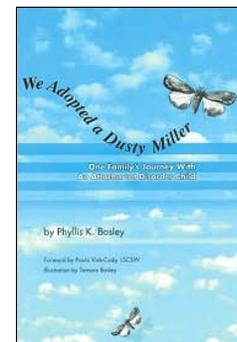
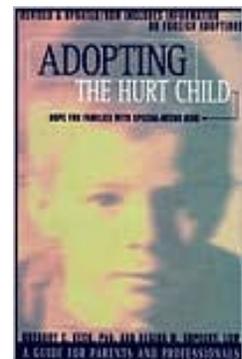
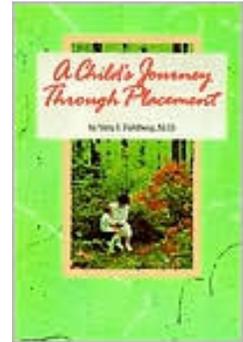
ence with marriage intact, the Bosleys resolved to offer friendship and encouragement to other families traveling this difficult path in the hope that their daughter's story will not be repeated.

Based on my readings, this is what I learned about what it means to "be attached." When a baby needs comfort, protection or support, he usually looks to a primary caregiver to respond to his needs. The caregiver feeds, changes, rocks, soothes and surrounds him with nurturing and love. These behaviors cause the baby to "attach" or to achieve a closeness or "bond" with his mother/father (or primary caregiver). The baby begins to realize that he can count on his caregiver to come to him when he cries and that he will feel comfortable and safe. A child can attach to multiple caregivers.

A lack of attachment may occur when, for example, a child is neglected, emotionally abused, lives in orphanages for long periods of time with inadequate care and/or possibly, suffers multiple moves in foster care. Lack of attachment may also occur when the primary caregiver suffers from a physical or emotional illness and is unable to meet the physical and emotional needs of the child.

DID YOU KNOW?

The NJ ARCH Lending Library has a variety of books to borrow



NEW JERSEY ADOPTION RESOURCE CLEARING HOUSE

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SOUTH ORANGE, NJ 07079

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WWW.KINKONNECT.ORG



*The one-stop
resource
for those
touched
by adoption.*

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CONFERENCES AND MORE

Looking for an easy place to learn about adoption, foster care, and/or how to deal with issues that may be related to adoption?

Attending a conference could be the perfect solution to finding the answers you were looking for.

The following are conferences scheduled in the next few months. For details, log onto the "Conference" page on www.njarch.org.



Saturday, November 7th:
Concerned Persons for Adoption (CPFA) 28th Annual "Let's Talk Adoption" Conference, co-sponsored by the NJ

Interagency Adoption Counsel, Rutgers University School of Social Work, Institute for Families, Continuing Education and Professional Development Program. Rutgers University, Piscataway, NJ. **Keynote performance by Alison Larkin**, adoptee, internationally acclaimed comedienne and bestselling author of *The English American*, a novel. For more information, log onto www.cpfanjanj.org.

Sunday, November 22nd:
Adoptive Parents Committee (APC), 29th Annual APC Conference. St. Francis College Brooklyn, NY. **Keynote speaker, Holly van Gulden**, Adoption Counselor and co-author of "Real Parents, Real Children". For more information, log onto www.adoptiveparents.org.

NOVEMBER IS NATIONAL ADOPTION AWARENESS MONTH! To FIND OUT WAYS TO CELEBRATE, LOG ONTO
[HTTP://NATIONAL-ADOPTION-MONTH.ADOPTION.COM/](http://NATIONAL-ADOPTION-MONTH.ADOPTION.COM/)



WANT TO CHAT ABOUT ADOPTION? VISIT OUR LIVE CHAT ROOMS
GENERAL:
THURS. 4-5 PM
2ND AND 4TH SAT. OF THE MONTH 11-12 NOON
TUES. 7 PM - 8 PM
SPANISH:
1ST THURS. OF THE MONTH
4-5 PM
SEARCH AND REUNION:
2ND AND 4TH SAT. OF THE MONTH; 12PM-1PM