



# MADSEC Newsletter

Winter 2008  
Volume 1 Issue 2

Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities  
675 Western Ave., Suite 2, Manchester, ME 04351  
www.madsec.org info@madsec.org 626-3380 (Ph) 626-3347 (Fax)

## President's Article

*By Dominic DePatsy*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1-2** Presidents' Article
- 3** Sponsorship
- 4** Regional Rep Board
- 5** MADSEC Calendar  
Lou Fontana Scholarship  
Award Recipient
- 6** New Developments in  
Complaint Investigations
- 7-8** Is the glass half full or half  
empty? By Will Burrow
- 9** Maine Support Network  
Winter Retreat
- 10** eInstruction!
- 11-12** ACTEM A/T Cooperative  
Continues in 2009
- 13** Pine Tree Society &  
Spurwink offer SMAC

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...

[Charles Dickens](#), *A Tale of Two Cities*  
*English novelist (1812 - 1870)*

There is no question these times present challenges for our country, our state, our communities, our schools, our families and to each of us in the many facets of our daily lives. The reality is that the financial times are what they are. We have no real control over much of what is happening.

What we do have control over is shaping our attitude and outlook each and every day. We can control our own professional learning to support improved student achievement. We can continue to lead lives of consequence that will make a difference for each student.

As we watch the happenings in the world, our country, our communities and our state, if we let the news break our hearts and spirit, that is our own fault. If we let our dismay seep into our daily efforts and stop the most important work each of us does, we would be failing. We believe and know that education is hope, is power, is the key to the future. We can control our work of deliberate, specific actions we take together with colleagues and parents to support each student.

---

*"Behavior is  
communication – listen  
to what the message is."*

---

*Please see President's Article on page 2*

(Continued from Page 1)

Today and each new day to dawn is a new day, a new opportunity for us to use as best we can to continue the good work for students. As we close 2008 and welcome 2009, I am confident that of you will strive to continue to make a difference with colleagues, parents and students. As leaders in your districts you are charged with awesome responsibilities: to define reality, provide appropriate services for each learner, and provide support needed for staff. "Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves." Stephen Covey, *8<sup>th</sup> Habit*.

In times of challenge, sustaining energy is key to success. I want to close with the author of *The Energy Bus*, Jon Gordon's 10 Rules to help us through a bumpy ride.

1. You're the driver of your bus.
2. Desire, vision, and focus move your bus in the write direction.
3. Fuel your ride with positive energy.
4. Invite people on your bus and share your vision for the road ahead.
5. Don't waste your energy on those who don't get on your bus.
6. Post a sign that says NO ENERGY VAMPIRES ALLOWED on your bus.
7. Enthusiasm attracts more passengers and energizes them during the ride.
8. Love your passengers.
9. Drive with purpose.
10. Have fun and enjoy the ride.

Jon Gordon, *The Energy Bus*

<http://www.jongordon.com/theenergybusbook.html>

## MADSEC Executive Board

Dominic DePatsy	President
Erin Chase	President-Elect
Frank Sherburne	Vice President
Sharon Goguen	Secretary
Dorothy Marecaux	Treasurer
Carrie Thurston	Past-President

MADSEC *NEWSLETTER* is published three times during the school year by the Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC). Executive Director: Jill V. Adams; Administrative Assistant: Pamela Ouellette.

This publication is available in alternate formats to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities. It is also published on the web at: [www.madsec.org](http://www.madsec.org).

MADSEC Publications Committee members: Jill Adams (MADSEC), Anna Perkins (Good Will-Hinckley).

Kennebec Centre  
675 Western Ave., Suite 2  
Manchester, ME 04351  
Phone 207-626-3380 • Fax 207-626-3347  
E-Mail: [info@madsec.org](mailto:info@madsec.org)  
Web: [www.madsec.org](http://www.madsec.org).

Offering Maine's only  
**Unified General Education/Special Education  
Extended Teacher Education Program (ETEP)**

Graduate-level programs for those aspiring to be highly qualified educators in inclusive elementary and secondary school environments

Contact: USM's teacher education advisor at (207) 780-5413 or [pmew@usm.maine.edu](mailto:pmew@usm.maine.edu)  
[www.usm.maine.edu/cehd/ted](http://www.usm.maine.edu/cehd/ted)



UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MAINE

MADSEC grants permission to copy articles that appear in this publication, unless otherwise noted. The material published in this newsletter does not necessarily reflect the opinion or views of MADSEC.

MADSEC invites readers to submit articles for consideration for publication in this newsletter. Contact Jill Adams, Executive Director, if you are interested. In addition, if you have a need that can be met through this newsletter, please contact the MADSEC office.

MADSEC is grateful for the financial support of the providers of goods and services advertised in this publication. MADSEC solicits paid advertisements for the purpose of helping defray the costs of this publication and other services provided for our membership. The association does not intend to create a public forum for the expression of ideas by advertisers or any other segment of the public. As set forth in policy, MADSEC reserves the right to refuse to publish certain advertisements which may not serve its best interests. Publication of advertisements should not be considered an endorsement by MADSEC of the goods and services therein.

#### Mission Statement

The Maine Administrators of Services for Children with Disabilities (MADSEC) believes in, and advocates for, the right of all students to receive a free and appropriate public education. We provide support to our members, opportunities for professional growth to Maine educators, and leadership in shaping policies and practices which impact the quality of education for children with disabilities.

### The Special Education Quarterly

An essential tool to keep Maine Special Educators up-to-date on the latest developments in Special Ed law, published by Drummond Woodsum's Special Education Team!

Subscribe on line at [www.SchoolLaw.com](http://www.SchoolLaw.com).

The MADSEC website is a good source of information. Check it out to find things like:

- Professional development calendar
- Interesting and important articles written by fellow educators



**spurwink**  
services

*Special purpose schools for  
children and adolescents*

Going the distance,  
*Changing lives.*

Auburn Brunswick Casco Chelsea Cornville  
Portland So. Portland

1-888-889-3903  
[www.spurwink.org](http://www.spurwink.org)

ACCREDITED  
  
COA

## MADSEC Regional Representative Board

Aroostook	Rick Umphrey - Caribou School Department
Bridges	Will Burrow - Union # 44 - Sabattus Alt/Lisa Hanson - MSAD #61 -- Naples
Capital	Deb Marshall - Monmouth School Department Alt/Donna Madore - Augusta School Department
Central	Stacy Shorey - MSAD #53 - Pittsfield Alt/Cheryl Mercier - MSAD #47 - Fairfield
Cumberland	Alison Marchese - Scarborough School Department
Hancock	Kelley Rush Sanborn - Union #98 - Mt. Desert Alt./ Lynn Maddocks - Ellsworth School Department
Katahdin	Cheryl Morin - MSAD #67 - Lincoln
Merrymeeting	Susan Matthews - Union #30 - Lisbon
Mid-Coast	Judy Gove - MSAD #28 - Camden Alt./Karen Ethridge - MSAD #50 - Thomaston
So. Penobscot	Lesley Snyder - MSAD #23 - Carmel & #38 - Etna Alt./Sharon Brady - Union #87 - Orono
Tri-County	Janet Morse - MSAD #48 - Newport Alt./Norleen Fleming - MSAD #48 - Newport
Waldo	Sharon Goguen - MSAD #56 - Searsport
Washington	Mary Maker - Union #102 - Machias
Western	Brian Foster - MSAD #9 - Farmington Alt./
York	Ruth Venell - MSAD #60 - N. Berwick Alt./Jean Beetz - York School Department

### Liaisons Who Serve On The Representative Board:

Special Purpose Private Schools - Anna Perkins - GoodWill Hinckley  
Child Development Services - Greg Armandi

## MADSEC 2008-09 Calendar

January

9 Rep. Board Meeting

February

12 Rep. Board Meeting

March

20 Rep. Board Meeting

April

16 Rep. Board Meeting

May 2008

1 Rep. Board Meeting

June 2008

*Directors' Academy has been suspended for this year.*

### A. Leigh Phillips Scholarship Award Recipient

Craig Popper, a senior at Nokomis Regional High, is the son of Christopher and Bonnie Popper of Bangor, where he attended school through grade 8. He has been a student at Nokomis, in Newport, since 2004. In his junior year he represented Nokomis at the National Young Leaders Conference in Washington D.C. As a member of the Nokomis Warrior Broadcasting Program, he has provided play by play broadcasts for the Lady Warriors. He has played wheelchair basketball since he was five and has dreamed of playing competitively at the college level. That dream was realized when he was recruited by Southwest Minnesota State University, one of only 13 college wheelchair programs in the country, where he will compete with the SMSU Rolling Mustangs in the fall of 2008. He plans to major in Health and Physical Education with a minor in coaching.

MADSEC would like to encourage you to consider submitting an article for publication in this Newsletter. One of our goals, in addition to providing current information, is to provide a resource. If you are taking a class, and perhaps writing a paper for it, please think about how valuable your data or insights might be to fellow educators and administrators. Each article submitted is reviewed by the Publications Committee and recommended for publication, if appropriate.

PineTree  
Society

DISCOVERING  
ABILITIES TOGETHER

Offering a full range of services designed to support the education of Maine children with special needs.

Complete Assistive Technology and Augmentative Communication services

High-quality, affordable adaptive equipment

Case management services

Accessible recreation opportunities

(207) 443-3341 • [www.pinetreesociety.org](http://www.pinetreesociety.org)

## NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS

For those of you who may have missed Jon Braff's presentation at the Fall 2008 MADSEC conference, following are some new additions to the complaint investigation process instituted since Jon's arrival. One is Jon himself, representing the first time the DOE has had one of its own employees act as a complaint investigator. The plan is for Jon to do all complaint investigations unless there are too many coming in during the same period, in which case there are other investigators available to back him up.

Another new development is the inclusion of a complaint investigation meeting in the process. The meeting will occur after mediation (if there is one) and before a response and documents are due to be submitted to the investigator. In addition to the investigator, the director and the parent are expected to attend, although others may attend as well (superintendents/board chairs and advocates have so far attended some meetings). The purpose of the meeting is to streamline the process by: focusing and clarifying the allegations; stipulating to uncontested facts; identifying categories of documents to be submitted; identifying the party who will submit the documents; and identifying categories of interviewees. After the meeting, if appropriate, the investigator will issue a list of stipulations, and may also issue a revised allegations memo.

The meeting is not intended to resolve issues, just to make the investigation of the issues more efficient. Our experience so far is that directors (as well as the investigator) leave the meetings with a better sense of what the issues are and what needs to be provided to the investigator in order to present the SAU's side of the dispute.

As another new development, the investigator will conduct an initial screening of the allegations in the complaint for viability. Non-viable allegations would include those: that were resolved in prior due process proceedings;

that are untimely; or that raise issues not covered by IDEA or MUSER. In the past, investigators included most every allegation in the investigation, and non-viable allegations were reported as "no jurisdiction found" in their reports' conclusions. The new approach will hopefully avoid having the parties spend time and resources on issues that cannot be resolved through the complaint process. Of course, if viability is uncertain but possible, the allegation will be investigated.

The Due Process Office recently received a complaint that contained both systemic allegations along with allegations pertaining to an individual student. Both parties agreed to engage in mediation, but this raised the issue of whether the systemic issues were subject to mediation. The DOE ruled that the parents filing the complaint were not able to represent the class of parents potentially affected by the systemic allegations, and therefore could not mediate those issues. Mediation was allowed to proceed on the individual allegations only, with the proviso that if a mediation agreement was reached, the parents would have to decide whether to withdraw the systemic allegations or continue to have them investigated. As it developed, the mediation was successful and the parents agreed to withdraw the systemic allegations as a part of the mediation agreement.

Finally, the Complaint Investigation Handbook has undergone a revision, and can be accessed here:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/speced/duprocess/complaintprocedures.html>

## Is the glass half full or half empty? The state of the diploma in Maine

Written by Will Burrow

Since early August a varied group of about twenty interested parties have met seven times to reconsider the conditions under which a diploma should be issued to students attending Maine's public high schools. The deliberations of the group were civil and honest. Each person at the table had his/her group to represent, but all demonstrated an interest in promoting excellence in learning outcomes for all of Maine's children.

In the early stages of the discussion there was an apparent unanimous agreement that whatever was decided that one outcome had to be an improvement in the current dropout rate of approximately 25%. There was agreement that a standards based diploma should replace the current credit system so that student performance and not "seat time" created the foundation for the updated system of awarding diplomas. There was agreement that students should be able to demonstrate their knowledge in a variety of ways and program settings. There was agreement that multiple sources of data would be used to make critical decisions and that no high stakes test would be used.

The final document that was supported by all but two members indicated that in order to earn a diploma, that ALL students would have to meet or exceed MLR standards on four core standards; one standard of personal choice, and partially meet the standard on the remaining three standards. There was no mention of any exceptions, although the Commissioner pointed out that the provision in the current Rule 127 that permitted an exception for students with disabilities with

an IEP could meet standards according to the provisions of their IEP. The DOE has no plans for changing this provision in the new law.

MADSEC raised the prospect of a large increase in referrals to special education due to the stringent requirements. The committee did not believe this would be an outcome. MADSEC raised the issue of equity because many students who are not identified as in need of special education have virtually identical performance levels and instructional needs as currently identified students. The other members appeared to believe that the current system of identification would not permit such a situation to exist because planned interventions would permit the non-handicapped low performer to meet standards. The Commissioner did point out that current funding supports interventions to address this concern. No data was provided in support of this assumption. However, an agreement was reached to collect data over the next two to three years and in 2012 reconsider the need for a process to provide exceptions to those students who failed even after interventions were provided. The final rules would consider such a system of exceptions prior to the final implementation of a standards based diploma. There was no assurance that such a system would be included in the final regulations in 2012.

Commentary: I am pleased to have participated in the Diploma process. I believe that all of the participants were sincere in their beliefs, but beliefs are no substitute for data and experience.

*(Continued from Page 7)*

At least 40% of the current 8<sup>th</sup> grade class did not meet standards on one or more of the standards, some of which are not even assessed at this point in time. Money for intervention has been in place for three or more years and yet we still see a high failure rate. Research tells us that closing the achievement gap between current performance and current expectations becomes exponentially more difficult as children move out of third grade and move toward high school. To create a major performance change at the high school level is enormously expensive and only a few exceptional schools have been successful in doing so.

If the data is correct and over 40% of students currently fail one or more standards coming into high school then the expectation that ALL, except special ed students, will meet the 4 +1 +3 criteria is, at best, delusional. If implemented, the proposed system has the potential to relegate a significant portion of the next generation to a life of substandard living and social marginalization. As a state we can not afford to let good intentions override hard data. Before any new system is put into place we need to be certain that ALL students have a real opportunity to earn a diploma. We must hold schools and students equally accountable for socially responsible outcomes. The proposed system holds only students accountable at this time.

The issue of IEP exceptions is a difficult one. The Committee, with one exception, repeatedly rejected anything but a single standards based diploma. The assumption that only special education students need intensive small group or individual instruction is not commensurate with the data on achievement. To assume that there is a bright line between people with disabilities and those without disabilities is inconsistent with the facts and with court decisions and current federal legislation. Most legal disabilities do not represent identifiable neurological impairments, but "soft" conditions with likely origins in the interaction between the

individual and the environment. NCLB was founded on research that objectively demonstrated that many identified students were instructional casualties, not genuine classical disabilities. Until we can guarantee every student a scientifically based instructional program delivered by competent staff we will have identified and non-identified students who need remedial instruction. All of these students, not just the ones fortunate enough to have been identified as disabled, must have access to the best we can offer. We are a long way from that goal. Until the state can assure real equity of opportunity it has no ethical right to grant diplomas to some students and not to others, regardless of their technical status. There must be an IEP or equivalent option for all students who fail to meet standards, not just at the high school, but at all grade levels.

Gaining access to a diploma is a basic property right. There is a need to update our current process for granting a diploma. There is a need to hold all students to a high standard. There is also a need to provide true equity of opportunity for ALL students. Until we can achieve that goal we need to be very careful about the future process we use to give or withhold a diploma.

**2009 Maine Support Network Winter Retreat**  
**All Aboard for a Journey of Learning on the MSN Express**  
**Focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders**  
**Point Lookout, Northport, ME**  
**Saturday, January 24 - Monday, January 26, 2009**

The Maine Support Network Winter Retreat 2009 is being held at a new and fabulous venue: Point Lookout in Northport Maine. As you know, MSN is well known for hosting engaging, entertaining and topical Retreats. This year's Retreat will certainly hold to that standard. With our focus on Autism Spectrum Disorders, we are pleased to present **Dr. Stephen Shore** and **Sue Rubin** as our featured speakers.

**Dr. Shore** will be presenting a parent session entitled *Using Our Strengths to Achieve a Productive Life* on Saturday, January 24th, and an educator session entitled *Promoting Social Inclusion of People with Autism and Other Disabilities in Education and Preparing for Adulthood* on Sunday January 25th. Dr. Shore was diagnosed with "Atypical development with strong autistic tendencies." He was viewed as "too sick" to be treated on an outpatient basis and recommended for institutionalization. Nonverbal until four, and with much help from his parents, teachers, and others, Stephen completed his doctoral dissertation at Boston University focused on matching best practice to the needs of people on the autism spectrum. President emeritus of the Asperger's Association of New England, Dr. Shore serves on the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, for the Board of Directors for Autism Society of America, Unlocking Autism, MAAP, the College Internship Program, and USAAA.

**Sue Rubin** will be presenting a breakout session entitled *What Worked and Why: My Experiences as a Student!* Sunday, January 25th, and the closing session on Monday, the 26th, *Challenging Prevailing Notions*. **Sue Rubin** was born in La Mirada, California. At the age of 4, she was diagnosed as being severely autistic. When she was 13 years old, she was introduced to Facilitated Communication - a method of communication which allowed her to type her thoughts. With Facilitated Communication (FC), it became clear she was very autistic and lacked a method of expressing herself. Using FC, she graduated from Whittier High School in Whittier, California, with honors, and is now a student at Whittier College, typing independently. In addition to her school work, she travels around the country doing presentations. She also wrote and starred in the Oscar nominated *Autism Is A World* documentary.

**Breakout sessions will include:** Music & Children with Autism, Reintentioning Internal Space, Identifying and Teaching the Social Script and Social Skills, Theater and the Autism Spectrum: A Social Learning Experience, Youth With Special Health Care Needs Share How They Made School Work for Them!, Techno-Teaching!, Evidence-Based Practice: What Does the Research Really Say About What Works in Teaching Students With Autism Spectrum Disorder?, Bullying Issues & Asperger Students, and Response to Intervention (RTI) and more. Check out the Agenda online at [www.mainesupportnetwork.org](http://www.mainesupportnetwork.org) for more information about sessions.

Come and join us for a vibrant, energizing, and learning-rich journey! All Aboard!

## eInstruction!

### “Clicking into Instruction, Assessment, and Learning”

Technology is providing a variety of ways to engage all students in learning. Different program software and accessories are making it possible to ensure students have access to instruction, materials, text books, and real time learning. More teachers are using these programs to provide students with extra support, real time assessment, and tutoring.

The Maine Support Network staff was recently introduced to one of these technologies that allow teachers to engage students in instruction and provide important assessment information. With this interactive accessory, gone are the days of students raising their hands so only one student can answer a question and in are the days where every student can respond.

We were so excited about the possibilities of this program that we researched the “Clickers” and found that eInstruction was the company selling them. We invited eInstruction representatives for Maine (Chuck Pirello and Dan Breslin) to meet with our staff and demonstrate the clickers and their possibilities. Well, to our surprise Chuck and Dan donated a full set of clickers to the Maine Support Network. We are using these fun technological devices to model new ways to engage students in classroom instruction with GEAR UP staff. These instruments allow teachers to pose questions and gather instantaneous assessment reports. These reports can be used to check for overall student understanding as well as to identify areas where specific students may need additional instruction. The clickers provide meaningful opportunities for students to work independently or work in cooperative groups to respond to questions or challenges. These devices allow individuals or groups to respond to questions posed for the whole class to see using an LCD projector and a computer. The responses, although anonymous to all but the teacher, allowed the class to see how others answered the question.

...at the Mind Meld:

What was the first year Maine received a GEAR UP grant?

- a) 1990; b) 1999; c) 2001; d) 2005

...at Portland High School:

How can I tell how much college will cost me?

- a) Look up the cost of attendance for the college
- b) There's no way to know until I'm accepted to the college and get my financial aid package
- c) Schools that have lower tuition will cost me less
- d) Private schools will cost me more

...at the MEEOA conference workshop:

There were approximately 1,000 internet devices in 1984 and 1 million in 1992. How many were there by 2006?

- a) 5 million
- b) 100 million
- c) 600 million

How would you answer?

For more information, or to arrange for a demonstration in your school, please visit the eInstruction web site at <http://www.einstruction.com> or contact:

Dan Breslin, New England eConsultant, phone: 781-696-2388 email: [dan.breslin@einstruction.com](mailto:dan.breslin@einstruction.com)

Or, Chuck Pirello, Integrated Classroom Technology, phone: 781-864-7116 email:

[chuck.pirello@einstruction.com](mailto:chuck.pirello@einstruction.com)

If you would like to talk to someone at the Maine Support Network about how we have used the clickers, please contact Pam Flood at 207-685-3171 or [floodps@yahoo.com](mailto:floodps@yahoo.com).



## ACTEM A/T Cooperative Continues in 2009

The cooperative A/T buying consortium managed by ACTEM (Assn. of Computer Technologies of Maine) in partnership with the Maine DOE, MaineCite Coordinating Center and MADSEC will continue through 2009. For information email Craig Dickinson ([cdickinson@actem.org](mailto:cdickinson@actem.org)) or see a partial list of products on the SOFTWARE page at [www.actem.org](http://www.actem.org).

ACTEM is believed to have the lowest price available for the popular NoteShare and NoteShare Server titles. Newly available is NoteShare Express offering the ability for Windows users to edit NoteShare notebooks using a web browser.

Due to the interest in the MacSpeech Dictate speech recognition tool, ACTEM now stocks the program in their Wells office for immediate shipment. MacSpeech Dictate includes a headset and is offered for \$149, plus \$8 shipping. SAD 50 Director Chris Tofani noted in an email, "The software (MacSpeech Dictate) has been a TREMENDOUS support for our student."

For Windows users Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred v.10 is \$145 and includes a headset. A variety of A/T products for Mac and Windows from Origin Instruments (including "Ghost Reader") are also available.

Parallels Desktop for Mac offers the ability to employ a Windows operating system on a MacBook and has proved useful for Special Educators who need Case-E installed on their MLTI machines. The new Parallels v.4 is \$42 from ACTEM. ACTEM also offers a legal license to install Windows Vista or XP Pro on a MacBook for \$99. The CD or DVD necessary for installation is \$30.

Mac OS 10.5 (Leopard) includes "VoiceOver," the fully-functional screen reader usable by anyone, anytime. A single Leopard license is available for \$49, the price usually reserved for purchases of 100 licenses or more. If media is needed to install it the price is \$15. ACTEM plans an aggregate order on August 1, 2009 which will offer OS 10.5 licenses for \$39 each.

Adobe new CS4 product releases include options for those having difficulty with vision, hearing and/or mobility. Adobe Acrobat 9 includes an "Accessibility Checker" to help evaluate the accessibility of documents created within the program. ACTEM offers significant discounts for schools on Adobe products, as well as Microsoft. Inspiration and Kidspiration are also available at discounted prices.

ACTEM hopes to aggregate an order for AlphaSmart keyboards in July 2008 if there is sufficient interest.

## **ACTEM Assistive Technology Cooperative Continues in 2009**

The Cooperative Assistive technology (AT) Buying Consortium managed by ACTEM (Assn. of Computer Technology Educators of Maine) in partnership with the Maine DOE, MaineCite Coordinating Center and MADSEC will continue through 2009. For information email Craig Dickinson ([cdickinson@actem.org](mailto:cdickinson@actem.org)) or see a partial list of products on the SOFTWARE page at [www.actem.org](http://www.actem.org).

In 2008, 32 school districts bought AT through ACTEM's Buying Consortium. The retail cost of this AT would have been more than \$7000. Through ACTEM, \$3000 was saved.

ACTEM is believed to have the lowest price available for the popular NoteShare and NoteShare Server titles. Newly available is NoteShare Express offering the ability for Windows users to edit NoteShare notebooks using a web browser.

Due to the interest in the MacSpeech Dictate speech recognition tool, ACTEM now stocks the program in their Wells office for immediate shipment. MacSpeech Dictate includes a headset and is offered for \$149, plus \$8 shipping. SAD 50 Director Chris Tofani noted in an email, "The software (MacSpeech Dictate) has been a TREMENDOUS support for our student."

For Windows users Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred v.10 is \$145 and includes a headset. A variety of A/T products for Mac and Windows from Origin Instruments (including "Ghost Reader") are also available.

Parallels Desktop for Mac offers the ability to employ a Windows operating system on a MacBook and has proved useful for Special Educators who need Case-E installed on their MLTI machines. The new Parallels v.4 is \$42 from ACTEM. ACTEM also offers a legal license to install Windows Vista or XP Pro on a MacBook for \$99. The CD or DVD necessary for installation is \$30.

Mac OS 10.5 (Leopard) includes "VoiceOver," the fully-functional screen reader usable by anyone, anytime. A single Leopard license is available for \$49, the price usually reserved for purchases of 100 licenses or more. If media is needed to install it the price is \$15. ACTEM plans an aggregate order on August 1, 2009 which will offer OS 10.5 licenses for \$39 each.

Adobe new CS4 product releases include options for those having difficulty with vision, hearing and/or mobility. Adobe Acrobat 9 includes an "Accessibility Checker" to help evaluate the accessibility of documents created within the program. ACTEM offers significant discounts for schools on Adobe products, as well as Microsoft. Inspiration and Kidspiration are also available at discounted prices.

ACTEM plans to aggregate an order for AlphaSmart keyboards in July 2009—contact us to place your order.

FMI: [cdickinson@actem.org](mailto:cdickinson@actem.org) or [www.actem.org](http://www.actem.org)

## **Pine Tree Society and Spurwink Services to offer first annual Southern Maine Autism Conference**

Pine Tree Society and Spurwink Services are pleased to present the first annual Southern Maine Autism Conference on Sat., March 28 at the Wyndham Portland Airport Hotel in South Portland.

This one-day conference will provide practical information and valuable support for families, parents and other caregivers of children and adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Participants will have an opportunity to share stories, network, exchange information and gain meaningful insight.

The event welcomes Jason McElwain and his parents to Maine for an inspirational kick-off to the day. Jason, or J-Mac, is a young man with Autism who was thrown into the spotlight while managing his high school basketball team in 1996. In the final home game of the season for Greece Athena High School in New York, Jason was put in for his first and only appearance on the varsity team. The 5-foot, 6-inch team manager hit six 3-point shots and a 2-pointer, scoring a total of 20 points in four minutes! He was carried off the court on his teammates' shoulders. A video of Jason's performance circulated on YouTube and in no time everyone was talking about his triumph. Jason also co-wrote his memoir, "The Game of My Life."

Following the McElwains' morning presentation, participants will have the opportunity to attend four breakout sessions. In addition, the exhibit hall will be filled with representatives from a wide variety of businesses and organizations.

Admission is free and online registration will open in January 2009. For more information, please visit: [www.maineautismconference.org](http://www.maineautismconference.org).

### **Pine Tree Camp applications available in January**

Application to attend Pine Tree Camp's 2009 summer season will be available in January. The camp, located in Rome, offers an innovative, fully accessible summer camp experience to children and adults with disabilities.

Though it is not a school-based activity, Pine Tree Camp offers tremendous educational benefits to children with disabilities. From practicing motor and communication skills in a new setting to participating in a social setting away from his or her primary caregiver, Pine Tree Camp offers a child with disabilities opportunities to take risks, grow and increase his or her sense of success and self-esteem in a safe, loving environment.

The steadfast commitment of our administrative, counseling and medical staff, offers families the opportunity to enjoy a respite from the sometimes overwhelming demands of caring for a child with a disability. And, because of the support of thousands of people in Maine and beyond, no child is ever turned away because their family is unable to pay tuition.

Pine Tree Camp offers a traditional overnight camping experience for children ages 8 to 18 as well as a day camping experience for children ages 5 to 12. Applications for Pine Tree Camp will be available in January. Applications for Camp Pine Cone, Pine Tree Camp's day camp, will be available in February.

Spaces are limited and filled on a first-come, first-served basis. If you know of a family who could benefit from the services provided by Pine Tree Camp, please pass on this information, or contact us to request an application. To request an application, please contact Heidi Labbe at 443-3341 or [hlabbe@pinetreesociety.org](mailto:hlabbe@pinetreesociety.org).

**Please visit [www.pinetreesociety.org](http://www.pinetreesociety.org) to learn more about Pine Tree Society.**