

Speaker's Symposium on learning and developmental disabilities to focus  
on research, best practices; school-to-community transition  
*April 4, 2008 event in Philadelphia to be first of an annual symposium*

**PHILADELPHIA** — Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Dennis M. O'Brien – longtime champion of individuals with autism, dyslexia, attention deficit and other disorders – will conduct the first in what is to become an annual symposium to address the needs of individuals with developmental and learning disabilities.

The April 4, 2008 event, to be held at the Union League on Broad and Chestnut streets in Philadelphia, will have two simultaneous tracts: best practices for transitioning young adults with disabilities from school to living and working in their community, and exploring learning disabilities from the latest research to best practices for parents, professionals and policymakers.

The transition tract, which is sponsored by Verizon and organized by Elwyn Division of Education in Elwyn, PA, aims to establish strategies and accommodations for young adults transitioning from school to adult life, expand employment and postsecondary education opportunities, and build on the business community's knowledge and understanding about employing young adults with disabilities.

Featured speakers are three experts in the fields of special education and autism:

- **Joanne Cashman**, executive of the IDEA Partnership, National Association of State Directors of Special Education.
- **Peter Gerhardt**, president of the Organization for Autism Research, and a nationally recognized author and expert on autism and Asperger's syndrome.
- **Edward M. Levinson**, chair of the Department of Education & School Psychology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a leading authority for transition issues for learning disabled students.

The second tract is presented by the Academy In Manayunk – a research to practice school in Philadelphia, PA, founded in conjunction with The Lab School of Washington® – and the Pennsylvania Branch of the International Dyslexia Association.

Studies show that 50 percent of all students in public school special education have learning disabilities; approximately one third of them drop out of high school – twice the rate of their non-disabled peers. Attendees will leave with the recent research in learning disabilities, reading difficulties, and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and information on how to put those insights into practice.

Featured speakers are four experts in the fields of learning disabilities and ADHD:

- **Anne Ford**, past president of the National Council on Learning Disabilities, mother of a child with learning disabilities, and author of *Laughing Allegra* and the newly released *On Their Own*; with John-Richard Thompson.

- **Marianne M. Glanzman**, M.D., developmental pediatrician, Center for Management of ADHD, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.
- **Nancy Hennessey**, past president of the International Dyslexia Association, 30-year teacher and administrator, and national trainer for Wilson Language and LETRS.
- **Laura W. Kaloi**, public policy director, National Center for Learning Disabilities.

O'Brien encourages school principals, transition coordinators, special education directors, legislators, business people, adult social service agencies, higher education entities and parents and family members to attend the day-long symposium.

"This is an important first step of gathering together a unique cross-section of experts, educators, practitioners and families, all focused on better understanding the needs of young people with disabilities and the best practices that will ultimately shape their lives going forward," O'Brien says.

O'Brien has formed a foundation, the Keystone Charities Fund ([www.keystonecharities.org](http://www.keystonecharities.org)), to provide funding for schools, agencies and organizations that work with developmental and learning disabled individuals.

The symposium is scheduled from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, April 4, 2008 at the Union League, Broad and Chestnut streets in Philadelphia. The \$30 cost per person includes continental breakfast, lunch, snacks and all materials.

For information contact: AIM, (215) 483-2461 or PBIDA, (610) 527-1548 or [www.pbida.org](http://www.pbida.org). To register visit [www.aimpa.org](http://www.aimpa.org).