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than placement in a child's home district, general education classes and multi-disability special education programs where they don't have access to effective communication with their peers."

As for Rolinger's daughter, Madeline is attending the Rochester Institute

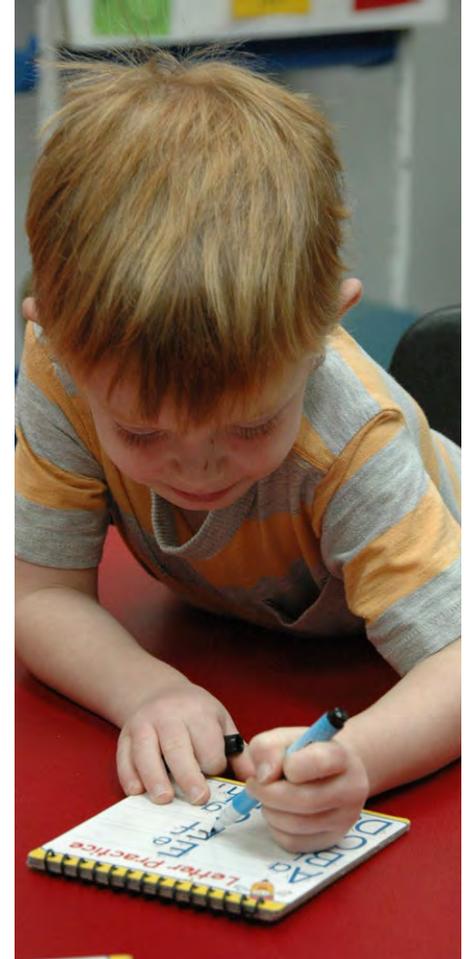
of Technology in Rochester, N.Y., where she is studying public policy with the goal of becoming a disability rights attorney.

"She has critical mass for the first time in her educational career," she said. "There are 1,200 deaf and hard of hearing students there. You can

imagine she loves it."

Rolinger considers her daughter lucky to have thrived in the mainstream. But she worries about those who don't.

"Let's not wait for them to fail before we send them to the regional academy," she said.



*Teacher Jessica Menchak teaches at the North East Iowa Regional Academy. Here, she works with one of her charges, who is making the same kind of academic progress as his peers.*



## Save the date!

The Iowa Department of Education will be holding a special education symposium June 11 and 12. Put it on your calendar and make plans to attend! Details will come later.

### Heather Howland tip

The special education team uses group coaching cycles to learn about and implement instructional practices and explore resources/materials. We meet once a week to plan instruction and review data. The instructional coach visits each classroom 2-3 times a week to observe, model, co-teach and provide support. There are opportunities built in for peer observation and reflection. On average coaching cycles last 4-6 weeks.



Teacher Leader Heather Howland, Janesville CSD

### Cooperative teaching? Check this out

When it comes to cooperative teaching, both co-teachers play equally important roles. Five planning themes have been identified by co-teachers who considered themselves to be effective co-planners:

- confidence in partner's skills;
- design of learning environments for both the educators and students that require active involvement;
- creation of learning and teaching environments in which each person's contributions are valued;
- development of effective routines to facilitate in-depth planning; and
- increased productivity, creativity, and collaboration over time. Participants in collaborative programs agreed that the time required for planning does not decrease during the year, but the quality of instruction continues to improve.

*Courtesy Teacher Vision*

### Tips for student engagement in the IEP process

#### Before

- Throughout the school year, particularly as students come closer to transition age, parents and educators should speak with the student about the contents of their IEPs. Putting the contents into student-friendly terms can help students become more conversational about their IEPs. Students should be taught what an IEP is, their rights and the importance of their participation in the IEP process.
- For student-led IEP meetings, help the student prepare well in advance. It's normal for students to be nervous but practicing by using a script or other support can help them relax and take an active role during the meeting.

#### During

- Using their script or other aids, students will share their strengths, interests, and preferences and also provide input into various aspects of the IEP, as appropriate.
- Engaging other members of the IEP team by assigning specific questions to ask the student can make the meeting seem like less of a presentation and more of a conversation.

#### After

- Students should continue to be a part of the IEP implementation and planning process. Engaging them in activities that look at their goal growth, transition plans, appropriateness of accommodations, etc., on a long-term basis can increase their investment in their own plan.

*Courtesy Keystone AEA*

*Have a tidbit you'd like to share? Send to [jim.flansburg@iowa.gov](mailto:jim.flansburg@iowa.gov).*