



September  
October  
2010

# Friends of Different Learners

2010/2011

## MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m.  
Birmingham Covington School  
(BCS)

1525 Covington Road  
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301

Meetings are on the first Thursday of the month unless indicated by an \*.

Meetings begin with a brief business meeting followed by the Guest Speaker and topic presentation.

Informal Networking opportunities are available after every meeting to share ideas about how to help our different learners and to learn from each other.

*Friends meetings and functions are open to everyone!*

**October 7**

*What's Happening  
in Special Education?*

with Kelly Friedland-Lovik and  
the rest of the Special Ed  
Administration

**November 4**

*Curriculum Modification*

**December 2 • Holiday Bazaar**

**January 20, 2011\***

*Camp & Resource Fair*

**February 3**

*Disability Awareness  
Workshop*

**March 3 • Social Skills**

**April 14\* • Networking**

**May 12\***

*Appreciation Awards*

**June 2 • Wrap Up/Planning  
Meeting/Board Elections**

More meeting information in the  
sidebars on pages 2 and 3.

## President's Letter

*Dear Friends,*

Hello and welcome to the 2010-11 school year with Friends of Different Learners! With changes to the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) forms and new assistive technology on its way, this year is off to an exciting start already. Both the new IEP forms and the roll out of assistive technology should prove to be positive developments for our kids.

The new IEP form varies from the old in four main areas: 1) the present level looks completely different; 2) the goals are written a little differently; 3) there is a separate form that tells you when you have officially been offered Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE); and 4) there is no place for the parent to sign at the end of the IEP process.

The change that is most alarming to parents, your Friends Board included, is the removal of the parent signature line. Here are a few points to remember about the absence of the line:

- BPS continues to believe that parents know their child best.
- BPS staff has been told that the removal of the signature line does not diminish the parents' involvement.
- The parent's signature was never required. Signing signaled agreement, but the IEP would have gone into effect even if you didn't sign, unless you filed for due process or requested mediation.
- While some districts are keeping the parent signature line, this is not just a Birmingham change. This is a change on the State model IEP form, intended to bring Michigan forms more in line with national standards.
- The absence of the line does not mean that the parent is no longer an important part of the IEP team. Your opinion is still just as important as ever.

If you have had an IEP meeting with the new forms, and you feel that you were not treated as a team member, let someone know. You can do this by filing for due process, requesting mediation, contacting Kelly Lovik, contacting PAC, or contacting Friends of Different Learners. If you let us know that you were disappointed in the process, but chose not to request due process or mediation, we will report that back (without revealing your identity) to the district. If enough parents indicate that they feel marginalized, we will be in a stronger position to tell the district that they need to bring the signature line back.

I have discussed the removal of the signature line with Kelly Lovik from our district, with Francis Paris from Oakland Schools, and with an attorney who represents districts in Wayne County. They all agree that the parent's role in the IEP process has not changed. The new IEP form and the offer of FAPE form are both available on the district's website. Please take a look at them before your next IEP meeting.

As for the Assistive Technology, Birmingham has placed a huge order! The materials are starting to come in, and Robert Kotrba has been named Assistive Technology Integrator. Bob will be working with staff to train them on the new technology. Friends will be hosting an event with the district to introduce parents to the technology as soon as it is all here — probably in the late fall or early winter.

We're off to another great year! Please join Friends and make a difference.

*Warm Regards,*

*Diana Moak, President*

*Kids First. Understand their differences. Focus on their needs. Educate all.*

## Administrator's Letter

*Welcome Back to the 2010-11 School Year!*

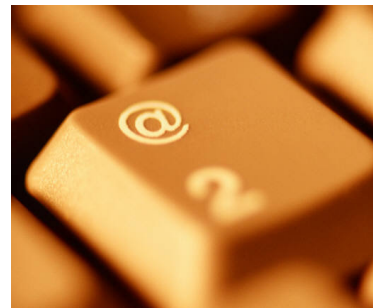
As always, it is so hard to believe that the halls are filled with students and the school year is already well underway. Although the year has just begun, many changes have already taken place and many are yet to come.

The summer was very busy as much of our focus was on hiring staff. We are happy to say that the majority of the hiring is done. To date, we have hired over 15 staff including an ASD supervisor, teachers, psychologist, social workers and paraeducators. We are continuing to secure paraeducators in positions that have become available since the start of the year. It is very exciting to have Stefanie Hayes in the position of ASD Supervisor. She brings much experience and knowledge specific to autism to this role and will undoubtedly provide strong leadership to our ASD program.



Another exciting change you have likely already noticed is the Birmingham Public Schools website. Our special education page has been updated also, which includes our Specific Learning Disability eligibility determination statement. Please visit our webpage on a regular basis to obtain updates and information including resources and upcoming dates of events. While visiting our webpage, please remember to sign up for eNews, if you haven't already done so.

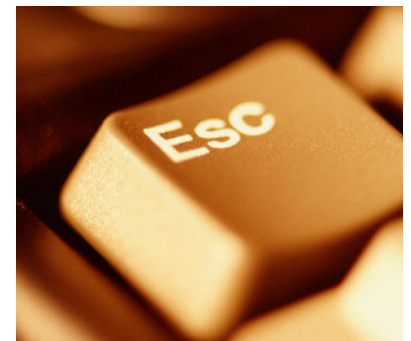
Building coffees and Coffee with Administration have been scheduled (they are posted on the web). We are very appreciative of the willingness of Friends of Different Learners to host the coffees at each of the buildings. This is a great opportunity for you to meet building staff, special education staff and network with families. We are looking forward to seeing many of you there. Our first Coffee with Administration is scheduled for October 27th from 10-11:30 at the administration building. Similar to last year, we will be offering two evening coffees this year to allow those of you who are unable to attend during the day to join us. Dr. Larson and I will be in attendance to provide you with up to date information and the opportunity to ask questions.



We are in the final year of ARRA and will continue to determine needs and monitor spending throughout the year. As was determined last year, Maria Power will continue as the Special Education Liaison through October, 2010. We are working on phasing out this position in a manner that will ensure sustainability. Maria has surpassed our expectations and has done much to enhance communication with parents. As discussed previously much training will

be provided to staff related to the assistive technology that has been purchased with ARRA monies. Due to the magnitude of this need, we are excited to have Bob Kotrba in the position of Assistive Technology Integrator this year to provide this training to staff as well as opportunities for parents to become familiar with the purchases and intended uses thereof. We have begun discussions with Friends of Different Learners to schedule an opportunity to view purchases in a hands-on approach.

This is just a very brief overview of some of the many things happening. I am looking forward to this year with much anticipation of new and exciting things to come. I look forward to seeing you on October 7th at the Friends of Different Learners meeting where I will be joined by Dr. Larson and all of the special education supervisors. I will be reviewing our updated department goals and we will be focusing on the changes to our IEP form, as well as addressing topics such as personal curriculum, student achievement and others.



*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kelly Friedland-Lovik  
Executive Director of Special Education*

### Disability Awareness Workshop

The Disability Awareness Workshop (DAW) is a hands-on, activity-based workshops whose main emphasis is to help students understand the challenges of daily living for individuals with disabilities. *Friends* presents the DAW annually to every fourth grader in the district (5/6 at BCS). To date more than 9,000 students, teachers, transportation staff, and parents have learned through this experience that people should be respected no matter how they look, act, walk or talk. If you are interested in helping to coordinate the DAW at your school, please contact JoEllen Schwartz at [joellen11@comcast.net](mailto:joellen11@comcast.net).

### Appreciation Awards

The May meeting is devoted to honoring our partners in education, BPS teachers and staff, who have made a significant difference in the life of a different learner. *Friends* members select up to two individuals who have gone the extra mile for a different learner and those education partners are honored at an evening reception that is filled with entertainment, heartwarming stories and an awards presentation. If you are interested in helping with the Appreciation Awards, or even in co-chairing this event, please contact Aryn Zwierchowski at [arynz@comcast.net](mailto:arynz@comcast.net).

## Special Education Building Coffees

Friends of Different Learners in collaboration with BPS hosts coffees at every building. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet with your building Principal, Special Education Supervisor and other parents who have students receiving special education services in your building.

The purpose of these coffees is to: 1. connect parents at the building level and provide a setting where acquaintances can be made and the potential for further parent networking can begin, and to, 2. give parents the opportunity to ask questions at the building level and to meet in a close setting with their building Principal and Special Education Supervisor.

<i>Pembroke</i>	<i>September 22, 2010</i>	<i>9:15-10:15 a.m.</i>
<i>Seaholm</i>	<i>September 24, 2010</i>	<i>8:30-9:30 a.m.</i>
<i>Pierce</i>	<i>October 4, 2010</i>	<i>9:15-10:5 a.m.</i>
<i>Greenfield</i>	<i>October 6, 2010</i>	<i>9:15-10:15 a.m.</i>
<i>Berkshire</i>	<i>October 7, 2010</i>	<i>8:30-9:30 a.m.</i>
<i>Groves</i>	<i>October 12, 2010</i>	<i>8:30-9:30 a.m.</i>
<i>Quarton</i>	<i>October 14, 2010</i>	<i>10:30-11:30 a.m.</i>
<i>Beverly</i>	<i>October 18, 2010</i>	<i>9:15-10:15 a.m.</i>
<i>Derby</i>	<i>October 21, 2010</i>	<i>8:30-9:30 a.m.</i>
<i>Harlan</i>	<i>October 28, 2010</i>	<i>9:15-10:15 a.m.</i>
<i>BCS</i>	<i>November 3, 2010</i>	<i>9:00-10:00 a.m.</i>
<i>West Maple</i>	<i>November 4, 2010</i>	<i>9:30-10:30 a.m.</i>
<i>Bingham Farms</i>	<i>November 10, 2010</i>	<i>9:15-10:15 a.m.</i>
<i>Midvale</i>	<i>November 16, 2010</i>	<i>9:30-10:30 a.m.</i>



### *Camp & Resource Fair January 20, 2011*

Held annually in January, the Camp and Resource Fair is an information fair servicing families in Southeastern Michigan seeking summer and year round programs that accept children with special needs in both self-contained and inclusion environments. The 2011 Camp and Resource Fair will be at Groves High School Commons on January 20. If you are interested in helping to organize the fair, or in having a booth for your organization, please contact Aryn Zwierzchowski at [arynz@comcast.net](mailto:arynz@comcast.net).

### *The LINKS Program*

LINKS is a peer-to-peer support program facilitated by BPS social workers and staff. Students are able to build new friendships as well as learn to relate to people with different needs and develop an understanding of individual differences. If you are interested in helping with LINKS, please contact Leigh Herbster at [leigh-herbster@yahoo.com](mailto:leigh-herbster@yahoo.com).

### *Holiday Bazaar December 2, 2010*

The December Holiday Bazaar offers unique holiday shopping showcasing local artisans and handmade crafts by students and organizations that support students with special needs. Jewelry, food, cards and many other gifts can be purchased for teachers, friends, family and kids of all ages. Proceeds support the work of *Friends* and the community of different learners. If you are interested in helping with the Bazaar, or if you would like to reserve a table to sell your goods, please contact Maureen Gibbons at [Maureengibbons@comcast.net](mailto:Maureengibbons@comcast.net).

## VISION 2015

The Vision 2015 was presented at the September 16, 2010 meeting of *Friends*. Formal adoption of the revised vision, mission, and bylaws will take place at the October 7, 2010 meeting. If you have any questions please let us know by writing to [info@friendsofdifferentlearners.org](mailto:info@friendsofdifferentlearners.org) and/or by participating in our open meeting. You may find the draft vision and bylaws on the *Friends* website.

### Mission

Friends of Different Learners (*Friends*) is an independent organization of parents, staff, and community members dedicated to maximizing the potential of Birmingham Public School students with different abilities.

### Meeting Notes

The June 3, 2010 meeting of Friends of Different Learners was called to order at 7:10 p.m. The slate of proposed officers for the 2010-11 school year was introduced, as follows: Diana Moak - President; Karen Selby and Debby Suris - Co-Vice Presidents; Cheri Taunt - Financial Treasurer; Kristy Barrett - Membership Treasurer; Kimberly Fitzgerald and Peggy Branch - Co-Secretaries. By a unanimous vote, the officers were elected to the positions to which they were nominated. The meeting adjourned at 8:00.

Minutes of September 16, 2010 Friends of Different Learners Meeting

President, Diana Moak, called the meeting to order at 9:15 am.

Kelly Lovik, Special Education Director, welcomed everyone and introduced Dr. Larson, Maria Power and Stefanie Hayes (new ASD Supervisor).

Diana Moak reviewed *Friends* meeting schedule and introduced *Friends* Officers, Building Representatives and LINKS Representatives and their responsibilities.

*Friends* VISION 2015 Mission was presented along with its' four (4) goals: Support and Guide parents, Partner with Schools, Promote Acceptance, and the Sustainability of *Friends*.

The subject of Bylaw changes was brought up and it was noted that the changes would be voted on at the October meeting.

It was stated that the Vision 2015 Mission statement and Bylaw changes could be found on the *Friends* website if anyone wants to review them.

Annual Projects were reviewed: Holiday Bazaar (12/2), Camp & Resource Fair (1/20), Appreciation Awards(5/12), Disability Awareness Workshop and LINKS Groups.

The various *Friends* Committees and open positions for 2010 – 2011 were presented, i.e. Greenfield School Rep., Pierce School Rep., Pierce LINKS Rep., and *Friends* CECAC Rep.

“*Who Do I Call*” process was reviewed; flyers were available at the meeting and also on the BPS website.

The new State Model IEP form was discussed. Touched on changes, i.e. more specific performance dates and removal of the parent signature line.

Special Education Building Coffee schedule was presented; all meetings scheduled to occur between mid-September and mid-November.

Diana told meeting attendees about Kroger Community Rewards program re: *Friends*.

October 7 at 7:00 pm is next meeting – “What’s Happening in Special Education”

JoEllen Schwartz presented Power Point presentation on the history of *Friends*.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:00 am.

*Respectfully submitted,*  
Peggy Branch

#### 2010-2011

##### Friends Board

Board President  
Diana Moak  
248-644-7222  
DPMoak@aol.com

##### Co-Vice Presidents

Debby Suris • 248-645-0535  
dfbsuris@gmail.com

Karen Selby • 248-885-8213  
selbykl@udmercy.edu

##### Co-Secretaries

Peggy Branch • 248-647-4010  
Peggybranch@comcast.net

Kim Fitzgerald • 248-642-7681  
fitzfamil@comcast.net

Treasurer • Cheri Taunt  
248-258-2874  
ctaunt@tauntlaw.com

Membership • Kristy Barrett  
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kristybarrett1@yahoo.com

##### Past Presidents

Maureen Gibbons • 248-593-8251  
maurengibbons@comcast.net

Jill Skornicka • 248-792-2052  
jmskor@comcast.net

# BPS Purchases Disability Awareness Workshop Kit!

By Jo Ellen Schwartz

Friends of Different Learners and BPS's Special Education department have been collaboratively presenting the Disability Awareness Workshop to every fourth grade student in the Birmingham Public School district (5/6 at BCS) since 2000. For the past ten years the district has been able to use the DAW kit of equipment free of charge from Oakland Schools but due to budget cut backs Oakland Schools discontinued the workshop at the end of 2009-10.

Fortunately for our students, BPS valued the workshop enough to authorize the purchase of a kit of equipment in order to continue presenting this very popular and meaningful experience to BPS students. Unfortunately we were not able to purchase a Disability Awareness Workshop kit directly from Oakland Schools. Since DAW kits are not readily for sale on the internet, I was honored to assist BPS in researching and organizing the purchase of all the items necessary for a complete DAW kit of equipment. With fantastic input from several BPS staff members; Janet Armil, Christine Buchanan, Susan Dilgard, Ann Fish, Sue Hummel, Rick Joseph, Nancy Kocsis, Maria Power, Cara Tennes, and Jenni Tuomi I have been able to bring together a BPS DAW kit that not only ensures the continuation of this workshop but will improve the delivery of the workshop for BPS students for years to come.

I would like to thank Kelly Lovik for authorizing and approving the purchase of the DAW kit and also express my gratitude to Maria Power, Judy Howe, Brian Liuska, and the many BPS staff members in the finance office who made purchasing the 160 items painless and easy. I would also like to thank Nancy Kocsis and all the students in the summer program who assisted with cutting, counting and bagging several of the DAW items that will be used this coming year. Lisa Kowalski, one of the original women who created the Disability Awareness Workshop for Oakland Schools has provided the manual, paperwork, and invaluable expertise and advice that is deeply appreciated.

Having a BPS DAW kit will allow elementary principals to select any date during the year to present the workshop and will not restrict them to one specific month as they had been in the past when we only had access to the kit for a one month period. It will also allow any principal or school group that would like to present the workshop at their school the ability to do so. Friends of Different Learners will continue to supply the volunteer support to manage and maintain the DAW kit for the district. Schools just need to supply two large spaces and approximately twenty volunteers.

Friends of Different Learners will showcase the new BPS DAW kit at the February 3 meeting. Everyone is invited to see the kit in action and try some of the new hands on experiences like trying to get dressed without the use of thumbs and elbow bending! The workshop continues to be an excellent lesson in understanding the challenges of daily living for individuals with disabilities. To date more than 9,000 students, teachers, transportation staff, and parents have learned through this experience that people should be respected no matter how they look, act, walk or talk. Thanks to BPS's Special Education department the workshop will continue to teach these valuable lessons.

## Help Wanted

*Friends* needs Web Savvy Individuals!

Friends of Different Learners has benefited from several talented volunteers, including some currently in high school, who have helped develop and maintain our web site. We could use additional help from anyone who is able to navigate their way around a web site. If you can help *Friends* update and improve our web site please contact Jo Ellen Schwartz at 248-646-5172 or [joellen11@comcast.net](mailto:joellen11@comcast.net).

*Friends* is also in need of articles for our next newsletter. From allergy sensitive recipes to book reviews we want to hear from you our loyal readers. If you write an article that you would like to see published, please send it to Karen Selby at [selbykl@udmercy.edu](mailto:selbykl@udmercy.edu). Feel free to forward completed original work or ideas for articles. If you include pictures please remember that we will need releases.

Friends of Different Learners is a non-profit organization that depends upon our willingness to work together. Want to help *Friends*, but don't know where to start? Contact Diana Moak for volunteer opportunities by phone 248-644-7222 or email [DPMoak@aol.com](mailto:DPMoak@aol.com).

2010-2011 Friends  
Committee Chairs

Appreciation Awards  
Aryn Zwierzchowski  
248-552-1335  
[arynz@comcast.net](mailto:arynz@comcast.net)

Building Reps.  
Suzanne O'Leary  
248-988-8464  
[suzanneoleary@comcast.net](mailto:suzanneoleary@comcast.net)

Camp & Resource Fair  
Aryn Zwierzchowski  
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Amy Tyrrell • 248-594-2225  
[amy@zeal-us.com](mailto:amy@zeal-us.com)

Communication & Publicity  
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Community Relations  
Diana Moak • 248-594-7245  
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Disability Awareness Workshop  
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Ann Adams • 248-288-3711  
[duff514@wowway.com](mailto:duff514@wowway.com)

### LINKS

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[leighherbster@yahoo.com](mailto:leighherbster@yahoo.com)

Membership  
Debby Suris • 248-645-0535  
[dfbsuris@gmail.com](mailto:dfbsuris@gmail.com)  
Kristy Barrett • 248-258-3449  
[kristybarrett1@yahoo.com](mailto:kristybarrett1@yahoo.com)

Social • Sara Scott  
248-645-8764  
[scottclan@comcast.net](mailto:scottclan@comcast.net)

## Who is a Different Learner?

Different Learner is an inclusive term. Some different learners have identified disabilities such as autism, AD/HD or dyslexia and others simply have unique learning styles that present challenges in the classroom. Topics addressed by *Friends* may be specific to students with special needs or may be relevant to all students.

## Earn Money for Friends every time you shop at Kroger

It's Easy... just shop, swipe your card & earn!

Follow these simple instructions to register Friends of Different Learners as your designated Community Rewards recipient with your Kroger Plus Shopper's Card on-line. Kroger will pay up to \$500,000 on a quarterly basis to participating organizations based on their percentage of spending as it relates to the total spending of all participating Kroger Community Rewards organizations.

- Go to [www.kroger.com](http://www.kroger.com).
- Click on the picture of the Kroger savings club card.
- If you have not registered your card online, click on the registration link. Kroger will send a confirmation e-mail for you to complete before proceeding to the next step.
- If you have registered your card online, sign in, and edit your savings card information.
- Under Community Rewards type "Friends of Different Learners" or use NPQ number 90711.
- Select "Friends of Different Learners" and click Save Changes.
- Your card will now be registered and you will start earning points for *Friends* every time you shop at Kroger!



## Fall links

- 1) *Friends of Different Learners Links* to upcoming events — <http://www.friendsofdifferentlearners.org/7.html>
- 2) *CHADD of Eastern Oakland County* — [www.chadd.net/527](http://www.chadd.net/527)  
Monthly meeting and parent-to-parent class information.
- 3) *Birmingham Bloomfield Families In Action (BBFA)* — [www.bbfaprevention.org](http://www.bbfaprevention.org)
- 4) *Autism ASK* is in a new building in Waterford, located at 4345 Meigs Ave., Suite A, 48329, 248-618-1ASK(275) or email ASK at [info@autism-ask.com](mailto:info@autism-ask.com) if you want to make sure someone will be there. They have a resource room that will be open and accessible to visitors any time the building is open.  
Building Bridges will be sharing space with ASK and providing the following services at the new location: Speech / Language therapy & evaluations; Social Language Groups; Occupational Therapy & Assessments; Sensory Integration; Interactive Metronome; Fine Motor/handwriting; Eating (picky eaters); and more! Call 734-454-0866.
- 5) *The Michigan Youth Leadership Forum* is for high school juniors and seniors with disabilities who have demonstrated leadership potential in their communities and schools. The five-day MYLF includes many exciting, educational activities to help students toward their career goals. The Michigan Youth Leadership Forum will take place June 18-22, 2011 at Michigan State University, East Lansing. For information on how to apply please see the Friends website, or [www.MYLF.org](http://www.MYLF.org).

2010-2011

School Representatives

Elementary

Beverly • Amy Reed

248-731-7631

[amycannareed@gmail.com](mailto:amycannareed@gmail.com)

Bingham Farms

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Harlan • Anna Leslie

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Quarton • Sarah Donovan

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High School

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Seaholm • Sue Weed

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Post High School • Cheri Taunt

248-258-2874

[cltaunt@tauntlaw.com](mailto:cltaunt@tauntlaw.com)

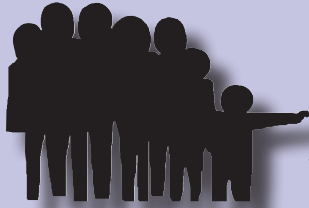
District Wide Schools

Midvale • Open

Covington (BCS) • Amy Tyrrell

248-594-2225

[amy@zeal-us.com](mailto:amy@zeal-us.com)



# Friends of Different Learners

## 2010-2011 Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

School(s) My Different Learner(s) Attend: \_\_\_\_\_

School(s) My Other Children Attend: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be listed in the Membership Directory for publication.     Yes     No

### I would like to help on these committees:

- Appreciation Awards
- Camp & Resource Fair
- Disability Awareness Workshop
- Membership
- Building Reps
- Communication & Publicity
- LINKS
- Social

I am a:     Parent     Educator     Other \_\_\_\_\_

2010-2011 Membership Dues            \$ 10.00

Additional Donation                    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total                                        \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: "Friends of Different Learners."

Mail to: Friends of Different Learners  
P.O. Box 233  
Birmingham, MI 48012-0233

*Friends is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization*

### 2010-2011 LINKS School Representatives

#### Elementary

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Harlan • Anna Leslie  
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Pembroke • Leigh Herbster  
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#### Pierce • TBD

Quarton • Sarah Donovan  
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#### Kim Miles

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#### Middle School

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Derby • Suzanne O'Leary  
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#### High School

Groves • Aryn Zwierzchowski  
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