

October 27, 2007

It is with great pleasure and urgency I write this letter to endorse the start of the Soaring Eagle Academy in the Chicago, IL area. The need for educational programs which understand the needs of children who have developmental and learning challenges is great given the increasing incidence of children with regulatory and autism spectrum disorders. This increase is evident across the country and the world, including the Midwest of the United States.

It is eleven years since the Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders assumed the mission and responsibility to educate parents, educators and other professionals in the use of the DIR®/Floortime™ model of assessment, intervention and education. Our follow up studies indicate children can make significant gains and reach the intellectual, educational, emotional and social levels of typical children. Tens of thousands of participants have attended our annual conferences, over five hundred professionals are completing the educational programs at the DIR® Floortime™ Institute, and hundreds of programs across the United States have adopted our model to be used in a wide range of programs including diagnostic and clinical services, early intervention, and educational programs. Our DIR® schools can be found in Atlanta, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Jersey and New York.

We see significant needs for a DIR® school program in the Chicago area which at this time does not have a DIR® school even though it has the largest network of DIR® providers in the country. The co-founders of Soaring Eagle Academy are three Speech Language Pathologists: DIR® Institute Faculty member, Michele Ricamato; DIR® certified therapist, Linda Cervenka; and Deanna Tyrpak, a parent of a teenager with Autism who has been using the DIR® model with her daughter and clients for 13 years. The importance of this is that the Soaring Eagle Academy will have highly trained educational staff and therapists who will be able to serve the children and families to optimize their development and provide the foundations needed for successful futures.

The Soaring Eagle Academy will be able to meet the needs of many children who need the individualized programs which provide the range of educational services to learn successfully. ICDL and the DIR®/Floortime Institute will be happy to support their efforts and share the educational models we are expanding year by year.

I see the Soaring Eagle Academy meeting crucial needs in your community and becoming a model program.

Best wishes for your campaign to establish the school. We are here to help you in every way we can.

Sincerely,

Serena Wieder, Ph.D.

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