**Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN) Annual Visions of Community Conference (VOC)**

By Jack Witkowski, Parent/EIPLP

This was my first year attending the Federation for Children with Special Needs – Visions of Community Conference. I was excited to attend not only because it got me out of the house (I am a stay-at-home dad), but I was able to learn information that would help me advocate for our four-year-old son. I was awakened especially early by my twenty-month-old, so that he could make sure, that I would miss him during the day. Then I was off to meet very cheerful and energetic mothers and caregivers on the bus, as we made our way to Boston.

We had two great keynote speakers to kick off the morning, Pam Nourse, the Executive Director of the FCSN, and Maximo Pimentel. Pam gave an energetic speech about her passion for her work and the outlook for the FCSN. Maximo, however; stole the show with his powerful speech about his journey through the education process and what a struggle it can be for students to advocate for themselves.

Through the breakout sessions I had the opportunity to learn what is feels like to children and adults with sensory overload. I gained fresh insight into my child’s perspective related to social competency challenges. I also learned that dealing with IEPs and getting your child what they need can be an ongoing struggle, even though some progress is being made.

Even though the struggles and challenges we face as parents might be different we are not alone and together we can move forward to a brighter tomorrow.