

# PACERSETTER

*A news magazine of PACER Center, Inc. by and for parents of children and young adults with disabilities*

## IDEA reauthorization process continues

*By Patricia Bill*

Reauthorizing (updating) and amending the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is in limbo as the 2004 general election approaches. Many refer to IDEA as the civil rights act for children with disabilities, because it provides them with a free, appropriate public education.

Rep. John Boehner (R-Ohio), chair of the Education and the Workforce Committee, said in early August that a new IDEA is not likely to pass before the elections. Others agree, saying that controversy in the bills could affect lawmakers seeking re-election.

Boehner said there is a small window of opportunity to pass IDEA legislation after the November elections and before the 108<sup>th</sup> (current) Congress adjourns at the end of the year.

Many parents and advocates for children with disabilities, however, say they hope that current legislative proposals die with the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, because both the approved House and Senate bills contain provisions that weaken education rights. They say they believe that passage in a lame duck (sitting members of Congress who failed to be reelected) situation could be detrimental to children with disabilities, because such representatives are less likely to respond to parent concerns.

If legislative action on IDEA *does* continue in the current Congress, the next step is to appoint members of both houses to a conference commit-

tee that will reconcile the bills. If that happens, Congress could approve a combined bill and send it to the president for signing into law.

Parents and others say they are concerned about the bills, because among other things, the proposals

- eliminate short-term objectives in children with disabilities' Individual-

ized Education Programs (IEPs);

- allow three-year IEPs;
- eliminate the right of a child with a disability to "stay put" in an education placement in certain conditions, as guaranteed in the current IDEA;
- lack a mandatory appropriation of the promised full federal funding for IDEA.



### Technology Center open house Oct. 2

Children, parents, professionals: You are invited!

PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) annual Open House for families of children with disabilities and professionals working with them is **Saturday, Oct. 2, from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m.**

The popular event offers:

- Activities and interactive games for children with disabilities from the ages of preschoolers to young adults
- Demonstrations of assistive technology devices, software and resources
- Hands-on learning
- Screening of "Freedom Machines," a 50-minute PBS movie on assistive technology at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m., with panel discussions following
- Creation Station "Accessible Make and Take Projects" for young children (a one-hour project per child)

The Open House, at PACER Center in Bloomington, is free, but guests must register by Sept. 30. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Please call PACER at (952) 838-9000 for directions and to register.

# PACER Center and the Alliance work nationally

By Patricia Bill

Whether it's explaining newly issued federal regulations to parent advocates, designing a parent center database, developing a national curriculum, or advising a parent center director on a management matter, PACER Center provides help as the National Center for technical assistance for the nation's 106 Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs).

"I have witnessed first-hand the positive outcomes for families and their children with disabilities as our growing network of Parent Centers has been strengthened and unified through the multitude of collaborative activities offered by PACER Center," said Nancy Prescott, executive director of Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Inc.

In participation with six regional offices called Regional Technical Assistance Centers (TACs), the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance) project at PACER supports the staffs of parent centers across the United States. The regional offices are in California, Colorado, Ohio, Florida, North Carolina, and New Jersey.

Parent centers help parents and schools understand the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (the IDEA) and issues affecting children with disabilities.

The Alliance project's scope is enormous, with the potential to affect

the families of 6.6 million children with disabilities from Maine to Hawaii. In the 2002-03 fiscal year, parent centers had contact with 11 million parents of children with disabilities and professionals working with them. The contacts came through telephone calls, one-on-one consultations, trainings, meetings, letters, e-mail messages, newsletters and Web site visits.

Established by a federal grant in 1997, the Alliance project approaches the second year of a new five-year grant. Over the years, the Alliance project counts many accomplishments. Among them:

- Led the nation's parent centers into the computer age. All parent centers now have viable computer technology, including access to the Internet
- Published curricula on "Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?" and "Understanding ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)," numerous handouts, booklets, and other resources
- Translated resources into Spanish, Hmong, and Somali
- Collected data to document the effectiveness of parent centers
- Developed a database system applicable to individual parent centers
- Directed parent centers to research-based information
- Conducted institutes and trainings each year and an annual national conference to examine specific issues affecting children with disabilities and parent center management strategies
- Established nationwide collaboration

with business, government agencies, and other nonprofit organizations to help children with disabilities

"The effort and energy of the parent center network are fantastic," said Paula F. Goldberg, PACER executive director and project co-director. "The centers are committed and do a wonderful job of serving families. We at PACER are delighted to work as the national center with them in helping to make a difference for children with disabilities."

In addition, to Goldberg, Sue Folger and Sharman Davis Barrett are Alliance project co-directors.

## PACESETTER

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PACER Center expands opportunities and enhances the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families. Our mission is based on the concepts of parents helping parents and working in coalition with others. An Equal Opportunity Employer, PACER is funded by grants from the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and other sources, and from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Departments or other donors. Contributions to PACER are tax-deductible. For information, call Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



### 8th Annual Alliance National Conference Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington D.C. ■ Feb. 2-5, 2005

Planned for a new location, the 2005 national conference of the Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers promises the innovative, interesting, informative, high-quality sessions that parent centers have come to expect.

For information, visit [www.taalliance.org](http://www.taalliance.org) or call 888-248-0822

(An annual Reception on the Hill is privately funded)



## PACER receives EP service award

Paula F. Goldberg, PACER executive director, (right) accepted the *EP* Maxwell K. Schleifer Distinguished Service Award for PACER's work for children with disabilities and their families. Frank Murphy, president and CEO of the EP Foundation for Education, Inc. (left) presented the award on Disability Awareness Night at the Aug. 3 Minnesota Twins major league baseball game.

PACER provides monthly articles to *EP* (Exceptional Parent), a national magazine for parents, families, physicians, professionals, and others in the special needs community.

The award recognized PACER's 25 years of serving children with all disabilities. Several of its 30 programs are national in scope. They range from early childhood intervention to helping young adults make the transfer from high school to employment and living in the community.

## PACER Center publishes a new publication delivered by e-mail

PACER Center has introduced a colorful new *E-News* publication using up-to-date technology to deliver important information quickly to

parents of children and youth with disabilities and professionals serving the children and their families.

To receive current news on disability and special education issues by e-mail, families and professionals can subscribe to the free, privately funded e-newsletter.

To be put on the e-mail list visit the

PACER Web site at [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org). Click on "Contact Us" in the left-hand column. Complete the form that pops up, check the e-newsletter box, then return the form electronically.

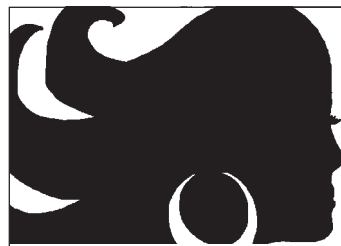
The brief e-newsletter covers news ranging from legislative issues to PACER workshops or newly produced products.

## Creation Station schedules arts and crafts sessions

PACER's Creation Station for arts and crafts begins its fall schedule Saturday, Oct. 2, with the Simon Technology Center Open House. Preschool and early elementary children can do "Accessible Make-and-Take Projects" from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., at the event.

The Creation Station is open on selected Saturdays in the fall and winter and for special projects and events. Many events are targeted to particular age groups or types of projects.

Check PACER's Web site at [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org) and the *E-News* for Creation Station activities or telephone (952) 838-9000



*Save the date*

***It's a HOT Party,  
for a Cool Cause***

**Last year's HOT Party was a sold-out success. Order tickets early!**

Featuring Boogie Wonderland

Jan. 29, 2005 ■ Marquette Plaza, Minneapolis

*HOT Party is a social event of the Friends of PACER Advisory Board that supports PACER's work for children with disabilities. HOT party co-chairs are Michele Heimes, Sarah Johnson, Amy Lucas, Evie Simon*

**Call PACER at (952) 838-9000 or visit [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org) for tickets**

# Summer, fall events commemorate

From baseball and bread to beautiful memories, three events celebrated PACER Center's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of helping families of children with disabilities.

They were PACER Day at the Dome (July 21), a Change for Children Celebration at Panera Bread in St. Louis Park (Aug. 20), and an anniversary dinner (planned at *PACESETTER print time*) at Le Meridien (Sept. 20).

Kathy Graves, parent of a son with a disability and former PACER board president, is anniversary chair.

"The events are a wonderful way to commemorate the efforts of so many people who have made a difference in the lives of children," said Paula F. Goldberg, executive director and PACER co-founder. "PACER could not have come this far without the help of those who contributed their time,

ideas, energy, and other assistance to serving children with disabilities. We are delighted to celebrate the individual successes of children and young adults, as well as the steadfast support from PACER parents, volunteers, staff, and friends."

Day at the Dome, for PACER families, was made possible through PACER's

*At right, Twins fans Matt Engel, PACER Fun Times volunteer, and Zach Schwartz are ready to head into the Dome, PACER Hankie in hand.*



*To left, Brandon Ziemke receives a little encouragement from Twins mascot TC, before throwing out the game's first pitch.*



*Right, Panera Bread provided the picnic for several hundred PACER supporters.*



*PACER volunteer puppeteer Leona Ringo (row 1, right) waited for the game to begin with her daughter and a friend.*



*At right, Panera Bread announced a donation to PACER in pregame activities. From left are Mary Schrock, PACER development director; Tom Wolfe, Panera; Jim Rand, Panera; Jeff Betchwars, PACER board president; and Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director.*

# PACER Center's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary

partnership with the Minnesota Twins and Panera Bread. A free picnic, with food provided by Panera, preceded a Twins-Tampa Bay baseball game, with tickets provided by the Minnesota Twins. Thousands of fans received PACER Hankies or baseball banks designed for the celebration.

Autographs by Twins infielder Justin Morneau, music by Riverfolk, and free kids' meals for children returning filled

baseball banks headlined the Change for Children celebration. Change for Children encourages philanthropy in children and benefits PACER's work.

Contributions can be brought to any Panera Bread and to PACER Center.

The Anniversary Dinner topped off the anniversary activities. Co-chaired by Melanie Barry and Rosemary Fish, the dinner and accompanying events honored PACER friends, supporters,

volunteers and staff. It included recognizing young adults who used PACER services; volunteer awards; a commemorative quilt designed by Muffy Bennett and Mary Frey; photo displays; entertainment; and other activities.

Anniversary committee members are Graves, Barry, Fish, Bennett, Frey, Joanne Davidson, Sarah Johnson, Sandy Klas, Ruth Levine, Jackie Olson, Karen Reynolds, and Donna Roback.

*At right, anniversary committee member and volunteer PACER puppeteer Sheila Jones welcomed children and their parents to an Aug. 20 event at Panera Bread in St. Louis Park. Below, children watched the puppets at the Panera picnic before the Twins game.*



*Below, Twins infielder Justin Morneau autographed a cap for Charlie and Henry Wolfe at the Panera-Twins-PACER Aug. 20 event.*



*Below, Alex Johnson and his mom Sarah contributed their Change for Children at the Aug. 20 event. Sarah Johnson is the co-chair of the Friends of PACER Advisory Board, and she chaired PACER Day at the Dome.*



*Above, Chloe Engstrum, baseball bank in hand, attended the July 21 Panera Picnic and Twins game. Chloe has spina bifida.*



# The election process must include

By Jodi Legge

On Nov. 2, the nation's eligible adults will go to their respective polling places to cast their vote for the next president of the United States. Individuals with disabilities, including young adults who recently reached voting age, have the same rights and responsibilities as any other citizen when it comes to voting for president, senator, school board representative, or any other issue of importance in their communities.

"The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) was signed into law on Oct. 29, 2002, and requires all states to ensure voting rights for people with disabilities," said Mai Thor, voting outreach coordinator with the Minnesota Disability Law Center (MDLC). "HAVA was put into place to provide accessible polling places, accessible ballots, accessible voting equipment, independence and privacy while voting, assistance to people with disabilities at the polls, and protection and advocacy for persons with disabilities."

Thor is traveling throughout Minnesota conducting workshops to make sure that all eligible voters, especially

those with disabilities, understand their rights and responsibilities when it comes to voting. Thor said workshops on the accessibility requirements of HAVA have also been provided for county and city clerks and other election officials in the state.

The workshops include information such as:

- How to fill out the voter registration cards (cards are available during the workshop for eligible voters to complete and leave with Thor)
- How to vote on election day
- How to vote using an absentee ballot
- What accessibility means and options available for people with disabilities
- Why it is important to vote
- Locations of the polling places
- A synopsis of the issues affecting persons with disabilities
- Information on all political parties and candidates

Thor said the workshops will be conducted until Election Day, and they are free and open to anyone interested. Call Mai Thor at the MDLC at (612) 746-3716 for more information on the workshops.

Jane Johnson, a parent advocate from PACER Center and the mother of an adult child with disabilities, advises individuals with disabilities to plan early.

"I don't think enough people with disabilities that are able to vote actually vote," said Johnson. "As parents, it is not only our job to encourage our adult children to vote, but to understand the issues affecting them and to know who the candidates are."

"Pre-registration is the first step to a successful voting experience; being informed is the next step."

Johnson said organizations such as the MDLC and the Minnesota State Council on Disability are working together to make sure that polling places are accessible, even in the rural areas, and that election officials have an understanding of the requirements under HAVA.

Margot Imdieke Cross, an accessibility specialist with the Minnesota State Council on Disabilities, noted that while the state is working to make the polls as accessible as possible, there are still some remote, rural areas that are difficult for persons with specific

## Alice Seagren named education commissioner



Alice Seagren was appointed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty as the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) in July. As Commissioner, she is responsible for MDE operations and policymaking for all aspects of K-12 education, implementing the *No Child Left Behind Act* in Minnesota, early learning, libraries, and adult, career and technical education, as well as special education.

Before her nomination, she served six terms in the Minnesota House of Representatives. During her legislative career she was chair of the House Education Finance Committee and member of the Education Policy, Educa-

tion Finance, Ways and Means, and Transportation Policy committees. Before winning election to the legislature, she served on the Bloomington School Board and has been a volunteer in her church and in the community. She is currently a board member of the Normandale Community College Foundation Board and Fraser Community Services, an organization providing services to people with disabilities. On the national level, Representative Seagren has served as chair, Education Committee, National Council of State Legislatures, Assembly of State Issues, reflecting her commitment to education and helping people become self-sufficient.

Seagren graduated in marketing from Southeast Missouri State University. She is married to Fred Seagren and is the parent of two adult children. Seagren has been very involved in special education issues.

# young adults, others with disabilities

disabilities, such as those using a wheelchair, to access.

“The law has a very limited definition of accessibility,” said Imdieke Cross. “Although I anticipate most polling places will be accessible, there will probably be some problems in rural town halls with stairs or other barriers for people with disabilities.”

Imdieke Cross said that if the polling place isn’t physically accessible to an individual, curbside voting is an option for people with disabilities. During curbside voting, two election judges, from different political parties, must come outside to assist the voter with a disability. All polling places must provide curbside voting.

Another option for people with disabilities is to vote via absentee ballot. This must be done at least 20 days prior to the election.

Johnson recommends the individual with disabilities go to the polling place before Election Day to assess the situation.

“Find out if there is a ramp available or if sets of stairs will make it more difficult to enter the building,” she said. “Know ahead of time what you are up against and plan accordingly.”

Imdieke Cross agrees. “It is all about the comfort level of the person with disabilities,” she said. “While everyone eligible has the absolute right to vote on Election Day at the polling place, each person should do what makes them the most comfortable, and this may mean voting by absentee ballot.”

Whatever option is chosen for voting, pre-registration is encouraged for all eligible voters.

“Voter registration applications are available at your local polling place, city hall or at the secretary of state’s office,” said Imdieke Cross. “If you pre-register and there is a problem, you will be notified by the state auditor ahead of time and the issue can be resolved before Election Day.”

Johnson also recommends that

people with disabilities bring a parent, guardian or staff person along when voting on Election Day. If this is not possible, she suggests bringing their voter registration card, state ID card, and a copy of their guardianship papers to the polling place.

Johnson noted that unless specifically stated in the guardianship papers, people with disabilities retain their right to vote.

Thor said the MDLC will have a hotline set up for individuals to call on Election Day if they are having any issues with accessibility or the right to vote. Eligible voters can also call the election judges at their polling place to report a problem. Individuals are also encouraged to report the problem to the Secretary of State so officials can correct the situation in future elections.

“However you decide to do it, remember that your vote matters,” said Imdieke Cross. “Your vote can determine the future of laws that affect people with disabilities.”

## Concerned about disability issues? Please vote

Americans with disabilities are 20 percent less likely to vote than other adults. If you or a loved one have a disability, voting is an important process that has a direct impact on your life. Those elected into office influence the issues affecting daily living. Here are some issues that are relevant to persons with disabilities and their families:

**1. Transportation** – The government helps pay for the city buses, rural transportation services, Metro Mobility, and other forms of transportation. The government also funds several of the programs that help make transportation accessible to people with disabilities.

**2. Health care** – The government provides funds for medical coverage for health needs. Programs such as Medical Assistance (including waived services and TEFRA), Medicare, and Minnesota Care play a valuable role in health care. The government also regulates private health care providers and services in a variety of ways. The person elected can advocate for coverage that best suits you.

**3. Education** – The government provides funding for

schools to implement programs and curriculum for children. The success of early intervention, special education, No Child Left Behind, and other programs can be traced back to who you select as your elected official.

**4. Employment** – Programs such as vocational rehabilitation, day training and habilitation centers, workforce centers, and independent living centers all receive funding from the government. Your elected officials play crucial roles in deciding how much money each program will have to help people with disabilities find and keep jobs.

**5. Housing** – The government spends a large amount of money each year on housing programs including Section 8, waived service programs, immediate care facilities, nursing homes, and programs providing personal care attendants that allow people with disabilities to live in their homes.

If you aren’t registered to vote in the general election, you have until October 12 to pre-register—or you can register at the polls on Election Day. If you *are* registered, take advantage of your right to vote.

*(Information provided by the Minnesota Disability Law Center)*

# Telling classmates about your child's

By Patricia Bill

Parents often become experts on their child's disability. Through their own learning process, many see the value of teaching their child's classmates about the affect of the disability at school.

Parents and professionals find that if classmates understand a child's disability, they may become allies in helping the child. The children may also be less likely to view accommodations or individual support as unfair advantages.

One of the best ways to teach children about a disability is to talk to them at school. For many families, presenting at school is an annual event.

Sometimes, an IEP team writes it into a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) document. The event is an opportunity to

- discuss why a child may look or behave differently from other children in the class
- point out the many ways in which the child is *like* classmates
- offer classmates tips for interacting with the child

"I found that children rose to the occasion when they understood the reasons for my son's challenges," said one mother. "When there's an obvious difference and no one is talking about it, children become confused and think

there must be something 'bad' about it. When the children understood that the disability was not bad, but just different, many were eager to help him."

Several PACER advocates suggest how to talk to students about a child's disabilities or health needs.

## The parent will probably need to begin the project.

Because parents know their child better than anyone else does, they are the ones to broach the subject. Schools and teachers are very concerned about sharing private information about students. They know that parents have varying attitudes about publicly discussing a child's disability. For example, the

## EXITE Camp helps girls explore technology, math

Twenty-seven middle school girls began school this fall with a new understanding and appreciation for math and science.

The second annual EXITE Camp (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering), sponsored by PACER Center's Simon Technology Center (STC) and IBM, offered the girls a different way to think about technology. Whether tearing down a PC, building a circuit, making ice cream, or conducting quality tests on M & M's, the girls had the opportunity for hands-on learning.

IBM's EXITE Camps, offered free to participants, were conducted at various IBM locations throughout the globe. They were designed to encourage attention to math, science and technology, areas of study in which girls ages 11-14 often lose interest. PACER's EXITE Camp, organized by Kristi Hansen and Janet Peters of the STC and Heidi

Kraemer of IBM, is one of two camps in the world specifically for girls with disabilities. The other is in Japan.

"EXITE Camp offered the girls a chance to become excited about technology," said Hansen. "The activities, group discussions and guest speakers opened up a whole new world of opportunities and a whole new way to think about math and science."

PACER's partnership with IBM began last year after Heidi Kraemer, manager of IBM's community relations, contacted PACER staff about a possible collaboration. This year, 27 IBM employee volunteers assisted the girls during camp. Many will continue as mentors to the girls throughout the school year.

In addition to hands-on learning, the girls listened to guest speakers, including KARE-11's weather reporter Belinda Jensen. The camp ended with a day-long tour of the IBM Plant in Rochester.





# disabilities may foster acceptance

family of a child with an obvious physical disability may feel comfortable talking about the disability because curious people have probably asked about it before. The family of a child with a less apparent disability, however, may not wish to draw attention to it.

If a family wishes to explain the disability to their child's classmates, a telephone call to the school or teacher can begin the process. Parents find most teachers and schools open to the idea.

Some parents may not feel comfortable speaking in the classroom. In that case, someone else from the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, such as the special education teacher, school nurse, or a therapist, may be able to speak to the children. Also, the classroom teacher may wish to lead the discussion. If the students are in middle school or older, bringing in a disability expert or other professional may be the way to go. An older student with disabilities may do the presentation him- or herself after practicing with parents or staff.

## Work with the teacher or school

Involving the teacher early is important. It is the courteous thing to do, and the teacher may need to change lesson plans to provide for the session. Some teachers use the session as a springboard for other classroom discussions and may already plan similar sessions with other families. Helping to plan the presentation may also encourage a teacher to learn more about the child's challenges.

Most parents (or others) talk to their child's classmates early in the school year. A parent whose child is physically vulnerable may need to confirm that an IEP or Section 504 (of the Rehabilitation Act) supports are in place, then address students the first week of school about

the child's safety issues. Another parent may prefer to wait a couple weeks into the school year so that others are more familiar with the child.

If someone other than the parent talks to the class, the speaker and family should confer ahead of time to convey what the family intends.

## Ways to present

The age of the class determines the content, amount of presentation time, and who should give the information.

If presenting to young children, parents can keep the session short and simple.

Sometimes discussions occur during "circle time." Most parents advise, "Leave time for questions." One mother said the session was more about the children's need to have their questions answered than it was for her to inform them about the specifics of her son's disability.

Including a child in the presentation and class discussion is an individual choice. Participating may become more awkward as a student grows older. Many parents who spoke at their child's preschool or elementary school ask someone else to present in middle school and high school. As youngsters grow up, they may be less comfortable having Mom or Dad at school.

Props may be used, particularly with young children. One mother found a picture book about disabilities to launch discussion. She then donated the book to the school. Another parent illustrated "brittle bone disease" by using a piece of uncooked spaghetti and a licorice stick to compare the child's bones with those of classmates. Someone else brought along their younger child

because she wanted the class to see that "I was just a mom and that my son had a little sister, just like another family might have."

Children are usually fascinated by technology. If the child with a disability uses assistive technology, showing how it works will often hold the class's attention. Speakers can also explain that such an item is not a toy and must be handled with care.

Written pieces can augment class discussions. One parent wrote a brief article about her child's disability for the school newspaper after speaking to the class. Another made a small card with the child's photo and a brief "All About Me" description to hand out at the session (and in other situations where people were meeting her child for the first time). While a "live"

presentation offers an immediate opportunity for students to ask questions, other methods can deliver information. As

**If a parent is not comfortable speaking, someone else may be**

students enter middle school and high school with multiple classrooms and teachers, parents may find it more practical to use written materials to inform staff and classmates about a student's disability. Others may wish to do a short video or overhead presentation, if they have the resources.

## Results

Most families who talk to children at school about their child's disability find improvement in the way their child is perceived and treated. In addition to informing current classmates, doing such presentations helps prepare for the future.

As one mother put it, "It was a wonderful way to show my child self-advocacy—to give him the words and ways to speak for himself."

**Most schools and teachers are open to the idea**

# Early start may encourage literacy for

By Jodi Legge

Literacy, the ability to read and write, is crucial to every child's success in education, as well as to most other areas of life.

Experts define literacy as the ability to read, write, speak, and solve problems at levels necessary to function at school, in society, and on the job. Reading is part of literacy and includes both word recognition and comprehension.

Children with cognitive, learning, and other disabilities often struggle with reading. Some will need the help of trained professionals. However, many children, with and without disabilities, benefit from early exposure to literacy.

"Starting early is the key to childhood literacy," said Trish Mengel, from the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC). "It really makes the difference in a child's ability to communicate through oral and written approaches."

Mengel said parents can begin to teach children early literacy skills at home by sharing books and other items that have printed words on them, such as food items, toys, puzzles, etc. "Expose young children to the print around them and talk to them about what they see. Make shopping lists, tell them you are looking up a neighbor's number in the telephone directory, explain what items are on a menu—the opportunities are endless. This is how young children begin to develop concepts of print."

Mengel noted that researchers have changed the way they feel about early literacy and how important it is to support the process at home. Recent research has suggested that by simply reading to your youngster, their awareness of the written language will be stimulated, encouraging them to learn.

A recent study commissioned by the National Research Council selected several child care centers in Northeast

## IF I COULD READ...

If I could read...  
I wouldn't get so angry.  
I wouldn't get so mad.  
I wouldn't have to go to Special Ed.  
I wouldn't have to struggle.  
I wouldn't get frustrated at myself.  
I could be better at a lot of stuff.  
I could read by myself.  
I could read my own tests.  
I could do my own homework.  
I could enjoy school more.

By Minnesota student Andrew L.

Louisiana to find out what literacy strategies were used at the homes of children ages 3 through 5 years. The study did not consider gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.

Parents in the study were asked eight questions, all dealing with literacy strategies used in the home. Findings indicated that reading books and pointing out letters of the alphabet in books and the environment, together, were the favorite ways for parents to encourage reading. Books, blocks and teaching nursery rhymes were other common methods the parents used. The parents reported that they also used mass media as a source to teach literacy skills, including reading from magazines and watching television programs with their children.

From this study, researchers were able to determine that children respond well and appear to benefit from reading books, combined with other literacy strategies, such as using nursery

PACER Center's "Let's Talk" activity cards are fun for children ages 2 to 6 and an easy way for parents to teach their young children with disabilities vocabulary and speaking skills—the first steps in learning to read.

For information, see page 16

rhymes, flashcards, and blocks to teach words. Preschool children who were encouraged to experiment in writing their names and scribbling words also reinforced the concepts needed for successful reading skills.

"Book reading is a shared event in which children should be active participants. Ask questions such as, 'What do you think will happen next?' 'Which animal do you think will run the fastest?' 'How can you tell that the little boy is sad?' have children retell a favorite story, use assistive technology when appropriate to ensure that nonverbal children can be actively involved. You might program a Big Mac [a technology device] with a repeated line from the story so that the child can 'read' that page," said Mengel.

Several PACER projects, including the Early Childhood project, are active in promoting early literacy skills as part of childhood development. One project developed a fact sheet for parents to teach early literacy skills. Some early literacy tips from the fact sheet include:

## Teach reading basics

To be a good reader, your child must be able to do two things at the same time: decode the words on the page and understand what the words mean.

## Encourage your child to do more reading

The best way to become a better reader is to spend more time reading. Reading aloud to your child while he or she looks at the page, turning on the closed caption screen while watching television, or writing simple notes to your child can help.

## Read aloud to your child and with your child

Read out loud together with your child. Let your child pick the material. Point to words as you pronounce them. Read clearly and with expression. Read at a pace that is comfortable for your

# children with and without disabilities

child. While not always as effective as reading with your child, some children can benefit from reading out loud with a recorded book-on-tape or with software on a computer. Books-on-tape are available at most neighborhood libraries.

## Good fluency instruction includes learning about the rhythm and expression of our language

You, or the voice of the speaker on a book-on-tape, are role models for reading with expression. By listening to an expressive reader, your child is learning how to group words into meaningful phrases.

## Use mnemonic techniques for older children with specific learning disabilities

Mnemonic strategies are ways to help your child do a better job of encoding information. This will allow him or her to do a better job of retrieving the information on demand.

■ **The keyword method** – This method pairs a new word with a key word. The keyword sounds like the new word and can be easily pictured (i.e. a barrister is another word for lawyer, so tell your child to picture a bear in a courtroom to help him or her remember the new word).

■ **The pegword method** – This method is used when numbered and ordered information must be remembered. Peg words are words that rhyme with numbers (i.e. use the pegword sticks to be the number six in your example – picture insects walking on sticks to

remind your child that insects have six legs).

■ **Letter strategies** – Use an acronym made up of the first letters of the item to remember (i.e. the acronym HOMES can be used to help students remember all the names of the Great Lakes – Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie and Superior).

Research shows that children

with disabilities can be taught to use these mnemonic techniques, resulting in better test scores and easier learning at school.

“Whatever the choice, keep reading to your child,” said Mengel. “Let your child know that you feel reading and literacy are important.”

For more information on early literacy skills and techniques, contact PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 or visit the PACER Web site at [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org).

*Most people want to read and write well. The following tells why*

## A Struggle for Success

Hi. If you know how to read, you have probably never thought about what it is like not to be able to read. I am a kid who has had that experience, and I would like to tell you about it. ...

I am really a normal kid in most ways. People have told me that I am a good looking sixth grader. I am good at sports. I understand everything I hear in school. I am at the eighth grade level in comprehension. I like to ride my bike, shoot hoops, skateboard and jump on the trampoline. I like the TV program 7<sup>th</sup> Heaven and I like to play Spiderman on the computer. However, I have one big difference... I probably have a brain injury. Therefore, I cannot read, write or do math easily... You may be wondering why it is such a big deal to me that I can't read. Here are some reasons why:

1. Not being able to read makes it hard for you to have friendships. I guess my only true friends are my dog and fish. Even though they can't talk, they can listen, and they are fun. My dog likes to run and so do I. At my age, some kids find it amusing to put someone down. They think they are bigger than me (even though physically they are smaller).
  2. You can't enjoy books like other kids do. I love good stories, but I have to listen to them on tape or have someone read them to me. My favorite books are "The Broken Blade," "Wintering," and "Pearl Harbor."
  3. Board games and video games are hard to play when you can't read.
  4. At a restaurant, you have to ask your mom to read you the menu. One time she said the choices too loudly and I was really embarrassed. It is nice when the restaurant has pictures and numbers because then I can order by myself.
  5. It is really hard to cook if you can't read directions. However, my mom has shown me how to cook a few things, and since I have a good memory I can remember how to fix those things, like hot ham and cheese.
  6. In school you can't be in the spelling contest, you can't read out loud like the other kids and you can't do worksheets by yourself.
  7. You can't write anything personal because you always need help with spelling. You also can't write notes like other kids do in class...
- If you can't read, and you are having someone else read this to you, I want you to know that you aren't the only one. Keep trying and keep believing that one day you will be able to read this on your own or read better than you do now. Stay hopeful and stay confident. Having people around you who don't give up on you will help you learn to live with your disability. Know that you can have a good life and a good future even though some things are hard for you.

*By Minnesota student Derek R. as told to his speech/language teacher  
(Adapted for PACESETTER)*

# Transition planning for students with EBD is vital

*Planning for transition from school to adult life is a challenging process for anyone. For parents and their youth with mental health needs, careful transition planning is often the key to preparing the youth to live, work and play in the community as fully and independently as possible, according to the Parent Partnership Project at PACER Center.*

The Parent Partnership Project serves families of children, ages birth to 21 who have emotional and behavioral disorders. It helps them to nurture their children by learning how to access services and resources, be successful advocates for their children in educational, correctional, health and social services settings, and develop skills to make an impact and reform children's mental health policies in Minnesota.

The transition process takes time, said Renelle Nelson and Paula Watts of the Parent Partnership Project. They said it should be driven by the dreams and desires of the youth and include input from their parents or caregivers.

Initial planning for students with disabilities who qualify for special

education services must begin by age 14, according to federal law. Decisions on specific services for transition must begin by age 16 (in Minnesota, both transition planning and services must begin by age 14 or grade 9).

The student and his or her parent play an important leadership role on the individualized education program (IEP) transition team. The team must include a regular education teacher of the child, a special education teacher of the child, someone to interpret evaluation results (if evaluation is being discussed) and a school representative who is knowledgeable about the general curriculum and the resources of the district.

The Parent Partnership Project staff advises the transition team to consider including other service providers, (for example, job coaches or Vocational Rehabilitative services) who can assist in developing a program to meet the student's specific transition interests and needs.

When considering transition planning for a student with mental health needs, the Parent Partnership Project suggests families think about the following:

- Has a vocational assessment been done that will help to understand the student's interests and aptitude?
- Are there supports and services needed to help the student understand their mental health needs and its impact on employment or living as independently as possible?
- What skills need to be developed for employment and living in the community?
- Does this student need help accessing community experiences or acquiring daily independent living skills?

For many students with mental health needs, post-high school activities can include postsecondary education, vocational training, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living services or community participation. Not all students have needs in each transition area, but it is important to consider each area when developing the transition IEP. For many students with mental health concerns, learning to understand and manage their symptoms in the life areas of school, work, community and home is the essential ingredient in transitioning to a successful adult life.

For more information on transition planning for youth with mental health needs, call the Parent Partnership Project at (952) 838-9000.

## PACER Center's Housing Resource & Information Fair

**Saturday, Oct. 9, 2004 - 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

**Where will your child live when he or she grows up?  
PACER can help you find the answer!**

PACER Center's first Housing and Information Fair offers a setting that encourages parents and providers to collaborate. Sessions offer an opportunity to listen, meet and discuss housing with:

- Housing providers
- Housing information and referral organizations
- Other parents

The goal of PACER's Housing Program is to develop information and resources that help parents of children and young adults with disabilities understand their options for independent living and housing.

Attend the fair to receive a free copy of PACER's new book, "Where Will Our Children Live When They Grow Up?"

**For information, call PACER at (952) 838-9000 or visit [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)**

## Organizing affects success at school:

# Good records are important

By Jodi Legge

Keeping student records organized is important for parents of children with disabilities. Student records not only provide key information for parents and educators, but also allow parents to keep track of the communication between home and school.

“Special education records are an essential part of the special education process, which is based upon federal and state laws,” said Carolyn Anderson, a PACER advocate and parent of children with disabilities. “Parents should save these important records in an organized way to use for Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning and to track their child’s educational progress.”

PACER Center recommends parents keep the following special education records:

- IEP reports (advocates recommend keeping the current IEP and at least the past two IEPs)
- Evaluation Summary Report (advocates recommend keeping all of them)
- IEP progress reports
- Behavioral reports (including bus reports, detentions, suspensions)
- Procedural Safeguards Notice
- Copies of signed release of information forms
- Annual student handbook
- Standardized test scores
- Notes the parents take at IEP meetings and conversations with IEP team members
- Parent records of telephone calls made and meetings attended
- Records of evaluations done outside of school
- Communication notes between home and school

### ■ Meeting notices

Regular education records to keep include:

- Report cards and academic testing information
- Awards and samples of school-work
- Attendance records
- Health records (including immunizations, information about ongoing health issues and any notes sent home by the school nurse)
- Student handbook and policies
- Behavioral or discipline records

Anderson said parents have many different options when it comes to organizing their child’s special education records. “The key is to find a system that works best for your family’s lifestyle,” she said.

PACER Center has developed record-keeping folders for parents to help them keep their records organized. There is one for children with disabilities in special education and another for children who do not have disabilities.

There are other methods of organization to consider:

- Keep a box or drawer dedicated to storing all education records
- Keep a three-ring binder and notebook (with a three-hole punch)
- Keep a file folder or folders labeled with the topics listed above

“Keeping good records also improves communication between the parent and the school,” said Anderson. “By keeping records, situations that may arise during the school year often can be quickly resolved.”

## For the record...

PACER Center produces *Record-Keeping Folders* to help parents organize their child’s important school records. There are folders for children with disabilities in special education, as well as for children without disabilities. The folders are in English, Spanish, Hmong, or Somali.

The special education folder expands to contain seven individual, attractive and informative files for storing important records by category. One special education folder is available free to Minnesota parents of a child with disability. Additional folders are \$10 each, or \$8 each for orders of 10 or more.

PACER also has record-keeping folders for regular education. They are \$10 each, or \$8 each for orders of 10 or more.

To request a folder, call PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 (voice) or (952) 838-0190 (TTY), or use the publication order form on page 17).



# Guardianship: Should you consider

By Jodi Legge

Appointing a guardian for their grown child with disabilities is a big decision for most parents. Local guardianship attorney Bob Gunderson said it is important to consider the issue before a child reaches the age of majority. In Minnesota the age of majority is 18-years-old; however, it may vary in other states.

“The purpose of the guardianship is to protect the person and the property of an individual over the age of 18, who, due to incapacity, is incapable of managing his or her own affairs,” said Gunderson. “An incapacitated person is defined as an individual, who, for reasons other than being a minor, is

impaired to the extent of lacking sufficient understanding or capacity to make, or communicate, responsible personal decisions.”

Personal decisions can be related to medical care, nutrition, clothing, shelter, safety or personal finances.

Note: In Minnesota, having a guardian does not disqualify an individual from voting. Unless the guardianship specifically states that the individual cannot vote, he or she retains the right to vote.

PACER advocates recommend that parents start thinking about the guardianship issue when their child or children are small and start discussing the issue with family members before

the child reaches the age of 18.

Gunderson recommends contacting an attorney at least six months before their child reaches the age of 18, to begin the legal guardianship process.

“If the person with the disability acknowledges they need assistance, and the family, together with their attorney and other advisors, believe such assistance is necessary to protect the person, then guardianship is appropriate,” said Gunderson.

The guardian is typically one or both parents, but can also be a sibling or friend. Gunderson said that often a parent and sibling share responsibilities as co-guardians.

“One of the neatest things I’ve experienced in my practice is when mom and dad start out as a guardian for as long as they are able,” said Gunderson, “then the siblings, or even a niece or nephew has agreed to take over.”

Guardianship duties and powers are very specific and include only what is necessary to support the individual with disabilities.

“The court is always looking for the least restrictive alternative when it comes to guardianship,” said Gunderson. “This includes those duties that will encourage the development of the person’s maximum self reliance and independence.”

Guardianship duties can include one or all of the following:

- Where will the person with a disability live?
- What will his or her day look like (i.e. will he work, be involved in a specific program, or go to school)?
- Are there any medical issues?
- How will he support himself?
- Will he or she receive state or federal benefits?
- Does he or she need constant supervision or someone to oversee his or her situation in a more general “hands-off” way?

Gunderson said that someone with a mild disability may pick and choose the

## Volunteer!

### Join PACER in helping families

*PACER serves the community by helping families of children with disabilities. You can participate in this important work through various projects of PACER. Take a look at the opportunities below and think of how you can help make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities. For information, call Rianne Leaf at PACER (952) 838-9000 or (800) 537-2237 (toll-free in Minnesota).*

#### Volunteer Opportunities

- Puppeteer for
  - COUNT ME IN
  - LET’S PREVENT ABUSE
- Help arrange and publicize a workshop
- Help with PACER Center’s Benefit on May 7, 2005
  - Donate Silent Auction items
  - Contact friends, businesses for
    - Silent Auction donations
    - Playbill ads
    - Corporate sponsorships
  - Help on the day of the Benefit
- Do clerical tasks at PACER

#### Donations

- Include PACER in my will or life insurance policy
- Obtain and use PACER memorial/special occasion envelopes
- Bring Change for Children to PACER
- Contribute to PACER at Panera Bread locations
- Make a tax-deductible gift to:
  - COUNT ME IN Puppet program
  - Simon Technology Center
- Purchase PACER water and merchandise

To learn of other opportunities, visit PACER’s Web site at [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

# it for your child with a disability

guardian's responsibility. For example, if someone can handle his own affairs so long as he is on medication, the guardian may have power over only the medical affairs.

## Timeline

The decision for guardianship often involves a team approach. In addition to family members, a team may include professionals who work with or care for the individual. If all parties agree, the guardianship process takes approximately six to eight weeks (it typically takes four weeks to schedule the guardianship hearing on the court calendar).

"The court will consider input from the team," said Gunderson. "This means the person's team of supporting staff and professionals are consulted to determine whether a guardianship and/or conservatorship is warranted, and if it is in the best interests of the person with disabilities."

## Costs

Generally, if the court determines that an individual needs a guardian and the individual's income fits the requirements, the county will pay for the associated costs, including court costs and attorney's fees.

## Guardianship of person versus conservatorship of estate

"If a person has assets, the individual will need financial protection, and conservatorship of the estate may be necessary," said Gunderson. "Often, a person with a development disability doesn't have an estate," said Gunderson. "Therefore their income, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and any other benefits are used up for cost of care with no leftover assets to provide for, and a guardianship is sufficient."

Gunderson noted that an individual with a disability who has a certain

amount of assets may not qualify for government benefits. In that case, the family or guardian may wish to establish either a "supplemental needs" or a "special needs" trust. The individual's personal funds are then placed into the trust and out of the person's name, so that he or she may still qualify for state and federal benefits.

"The best thing to do when making the decision about a guardianship or conservatorship is to consult with your attorney," said Gunderson. "Each situation is different and unique."

## Letter of Intent

Gunderson said the court will only appoint one guardian, or two co-guardians, at a time. "If parents are concerned what will happen should they die, they should prepare a statement or "letter of intent" as part of their estate plan, to express their wishes as to who will be their child's next guardian."

PACER recommends that parents discuss their wishes with the individual

or individuals that they would like to appoint as their child's guardian before drafting a letter of intent.

Gunderson noted that usually the court will follow this statement and take the parent's wishes into consideration when appointing the new guardian.

## Guardianship need not be forever

The guardianship can be reviewed occasionally by the court to make sure it is still appropriate. If the individual with disabilities is restored to capacity, the guardianship can be revoked. "We typically don't see this happen with our clients," said Gunderson, "But the person with disabilities must be reminded annually of this possibility."

"Guardianship is not about focusing on what a person can't do," said Gunderson. "It is about focusing on a person's vulnerability and need to put protections in place for that person to have a safe and productive life."

*Editor's note: PACER plans workshops on guardianship in Spring 2005.*

## Run, Walk, and Pledge for Team PACER

*Going places? With Team PACER, your support for PACER can travel with you.*

Team PACER started a few years ago with a few Twin Cities Marathon runners collecting pledges for PACER. Now Team PACER includes a group of families and athletes across the nation who participate in local athletic events on behalf of PACER. To join, visit PACER's Web site at [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org) and search for races in your town or destination. Events include everything from family fun-runs to triathlons. Pledges received for your participation can be made and paid online.

By joining Team PACER, participants can translate their training into something tangible for their community. All donations to Team PACER directly benefit children and youth with disabilities and their families.

### Upcoming races to consider:

In Minnesota:

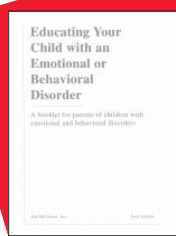
- Twin Cities State Capital, Family Run
- Twin Cities Marathon - 10 Mile Run
- Edmund Fitz 100K Solo, Team, Relay
- Run for the Apples 5 Mile Run
- Santa Shuffle 5K
- New Year's Eve Fun Run

Throughout the Nation:

- Chicago Marathon
- NYRR Staten Island Half-Marathon
- 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Red River Run, Fargo ND
- Silicon Valley Marathon, family races
- New York City Marathon
- Dallas White Rock Marathon

## Resources

### Educating Your Child with an Emotional or Behavioral Disorder



This first edition booklet tells parents what they need to know to make special education work for their child with an emotional or behavioral disorder. Written clearly and to the point, it includes questions to think about and covers issues ranging from evaluation and the individualized education program (IEP) to least restrictive environment and residential placement.

■ \$5 10+ copies, \$4 each PHP a21

### Let's Talk Activity Cards



The activity cards are an easy, entertaining way for parents to help their young child build vocabulary and speaking skills—the first steps in learning to read. No special supplies are needed, just you, the colorful cards, and your child. Simple instructions and comfortable handling make the cards enjoyable and easy to use. For ages 2-6.

■ \$4 each set. 10+ sets, \$2.50 each; 100+ sets, \$2. PHPa27

### Here to Stay (Video)



The 15-minute video for professionals offers a glimpse of how the Minnesota's special education services affect children with disabilities in the Hispanic community.

"Here to Stay" focuses on four families. As they relate their experiences, the parents offer insights that can inform and assist school staff working with the Hispanic community. Spanish and English are exchanged throughout the video.

\$35 Rental \$10 (three weeks) VID-27

### Parents Can Be the Key



Parents rely on this popular handbook that describes basic special education laws and procedures. Written in easy-to-understand language, it offers insight on important aspects of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA '97).

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a1

### Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?

The new, one-of-a-kind, 30+ page curriculum for parent audiences has just been released by PACER. The appealing design and easy-to-understand suggestions are sure to inform and encourage families as they address this troubling problem.

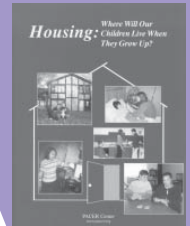
Transparencies are on CD-ROM or in three-ring binder. \$15 CD-ROM ALL-19 (English) or ALL-19sp (Spanish) \$165 color transparencies and script in a notebook binder ALL-20 (English) or ALL-20sp (Spanish)



### Where Will Our Children Live When They Grow Up?

This long-awaited resource offers concise, easy-to-read and understand information about housing options for people with disabilities. Whether their child is near adulthood or a newly diagnosed preschooler, parents of children with disabilities will find that the book answers many of their questions about housing and future choices to make with their child.

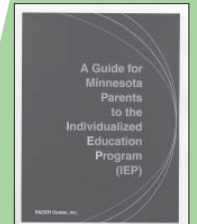
■ \$8 10+ copies, \$6 each PHP-a26



### A Guide for Minnesota Parents to the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

The 2004 edition of this popular booklet continues as a staple for Minnesota parents of children in special education. It explains why parent involvement at IEP meetings is so important and guides families through the IEP process, clarifies the Minnesota forms, and explains the information parents need to make informed decisions about their child's education. The booklet is a "must" for families of children with disabilities.

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a12



### Record-Keeping Folder

This organizational tool helps parents manage important papers related to their child's education, such as communications with school staff, artwork or awards, and attendance records. It also offers helpful tips for working with your child's teachers. Sets are designed records of student in special education *or* regular education. (See page 13)

Regular education: \$10 Price breaks for quantities MPC-6  
Special education: ■ \$10 Price breaks for quantities PHP-a5



## Resources

### Working with Doctors:

*A Parent's Guide to Navigating the Health System*



The book helps parents be effective advocates for their children in the health care system. The easy-to-read content covers information such as effective advocacy, communicating with medical professionals, choosing a physician, medical record keeping, and other important topics.

■ \$8 10+ copies, \$6 each HIAC-h11

### Honorable Intentions:

*A Parent's Guide to Educational Planning for Children with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders*



This third edition carries up-to-date information on issues challenging parents of children with EBD. A comprehensive 172-page guide for parents, advocates, and others, it addresses assessments, IEPs, school discipline, mental health services, communication, resolving differences, and more.

■ \$15 10 + copies, \$12 each PHP-a29

PACER's *Catalog of Publications* lists more than 200 items for families of children with disabilities and the professionals working with them. For your free copy, call PACER at (952) 838-9000 or (888) 248-0822 (toll free).

## To order the listed materials...

1. Specify how many you want of each item and the cost
2. Total your order, adding appropriate sales tax
3. Enclose payment with your order
4. Mail to: PACER Center  
8161 Normandale Blvd.,  
Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

Prices include postage and handling. A discount may be available if 10 or more of the same item number are ordered.

■ indicates one item is free to Minnesota parents of children with disabilities or young adults (age 14 and older) with disabilities and their parents or guardians. For foreign orders, please telephone or e-mail PACER (see page 2). Payment will reflect postage rates and must be made in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank.

The items listed on these pages are also available through PACER's *Catalog of Publications*.

Order number	Name of publication/video ordered	Quantity	Per item cost	Total item cost
Total cost of all items ordered →				

**Amount of order:** Sales tax: \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Minnesota residents, 6.5 %; Minneapolis residents, 7%)

Please complete the following:

Parent       Professional       Other \_\_\_\_\_

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

Organization (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Telephone: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*If a parent:*

Birth date of child with disability: \_\_\_\_\_ Disability: \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me a PACER *Catalog of Publications*

## Workshops

### Early Childhood

#### Assistive Technology and Early Childhood

Assistive technology isn't necessarily expensive computer equipment. The workshop, which involves PACER's Simon Technology Center, shows how common items can be part of everyday routines to help young children with disabilities.

Oct. 27, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER Center)

#### Creating a Literacy-Rich Environment in Your Home

This new workshop features Joan Blaska, parent, special education expert, professor emeritus, and author. With PACER staff, she offers empathetic insight and practical ideas.

Oct. 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

#### Father's Workshop on IDEA

A panel of fathers discusses IDEA and the involvement of dads in their child's early intervention and education plans.

Nov. 6, 9 to 11:30 a.m. (PACER)

#### Understanding Early Childhood Special Education

The workshop introduces parents of young children with disabilities to how early intervention services work in Minnesota.

Oct. 16, 9:30 to noon (PACER)

### Emotional Behavioral Disorders

#### Individual Advocacy Plan

A workshop for parents and caregivers of children with mental health needs, it focuses on organizing records and developing additional information to assist their child across systems.

Sept. 30, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

#### Successful Strategies for Youth with Emotional, Behavioral, and Mental Health Needs

A workshop for parents and caregivers of children with mental health needs, it focuses on positive behavioral supports, communicating with professionals, and understanding the Minnesota children's mental health system.

Oct. 7, 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

#### The Grandparent Connection

Grandparents raising grandchildren with mental health needs face many challenges. The workshop offers information, tips, support, and an opportunity to connect with other grandparents rearing grandchildren. Lunch is included.

Oct. 27, 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. (PACER)

#### Transition Planning for EBD

The workshop provides information on understanding how to develop individual transition goals and plans for youth with emotional, behavioral, and mental health needs. Transition into adulthood, as well as transition to and from separate sites will be discussed.

Oct. 12, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

### Parent Training & Information

#### Coordinating School and County Service Plans Using the IIP Process

This workshop offers parents helpful tips and tools for what they can do before, during, and after a multi-agency planning meeting.

Oct. 14, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Apple Valley)

#### Housing Information-Resource Fair

PACER's first Housing and Information Fair. (See page 12)

Oct. 9, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (PACER)

#### Housing: Where Will Our Children Live When They Grow Up?

This new workshop is an opportunity for families to begin to explore their vision for their child or young adult and future housing options.

Nov. 3, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

#### Individualized Education Programs

The IEP (Individualized Education Program) workshop explores the essential components of IEP development, including evaluation, team planning, reaching agreements, and an expanded section on writing measurable goals.

Sept. 27, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Bemidji)

Sept. 28, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Blaine)

Oct. 19, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (St. Cloud)

Oct. 26, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Austin)

Nov. 8, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (St. Paul)

#### Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?

The workshop offers intervention strategies for parents of children with disabilities who may be targeted by bullies at school or other places in the community.

Nov. 8, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Alexandria)

#### No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

The workshops will help parents understand the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and its implication for students receiving special education.

Oct. 14, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

This session pertains to elementary school.

Oct. 28, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

This session pertains to middle and high school.

#### Strategies to Intervene Against Bullying

PACER has developed a nationally approved curriculum to help parents address bullying at school and to help children with disabilities learn strategies to protect themselves.

Nov. 4, 7 to 9 p.m. (Anoka)

#### Understanding the Special Education Process

This workshop outlines the basic principles of special education with new materials for helping parents organize their child's special education records. Topics include FAPE (free appropriate public education), evaluation, resolving disagreements, and the IEP (Individualized Education Program).

Sept. 28, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Detroit Lakes)

Oct. 4, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Willmar)

Oct. 5, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Hinckley)

Oct. 9, 9 a.m. to noon (Shakopee)

Oct. 18, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Minnetonka)

Oct. 25, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Worthington)

### Simon Technology Center

#### Assistive Technology and Early Childhood

(See Early Childhood)

#### IBM Web Adaptation Technology

This workshop offers a hands-on demonstration of Web software that dynamically manipulates Web content to make Web sites more accessible to individuals with disabilities. PACER's Simon Technology Center is piloting the IBM software. Register early; space is limited.

Oct. 18, 6 to 8 p.m. (PACER Center)

Dec. 6, 6 to 8 p.m. (PACER Center)

Feb. 7, 6 to 8 p.m. (PACER Center)

#### Project KITE - Using Multimedia to Support Early Learning

This free KITE (Kids Included Through Technology are Enriched) interactive workshop is the second of five sessions for parents and professionals. It examines using multimedia technology to promote early learning and inclusion for preschoolers.

Nov. 20, 9 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

#### Project KITE - Using Visuals and Graphics to Support Inclusion

The KITE workshop is the third of five sessions for parents and professionals. It will teach learners to use images, graphics, and text to support inclusive classrooms.

Jan. 15, 9 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

## Workshops

### STC Open House

*PACER's popular annual event for children with disabilities. Registration is required.*

**Oct. 2, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (PACER)**

### Technology for Girls – Forensic Science

*For girls with disabilities in Grades 6-8, the free workshop is led by women employed in technical fields at IBM. A hands-on group activity illustrates the importance of math and creative problem-solving. Information about next summer's EXITE camp is presented.*

**Sept. 27, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

### Technology for Girls – Engineering

*For girls with disabilities in Grades 6-8, the free workshop follows the same format as the forensic science event listed above. Information about next summer's EXITE camp is presented.*

**Jan. 10, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

### Transition

#### ADA and Postsecondary Education

*This workshop answers questions about the Americans with Disabilities Act and how it affects disability-related accommodations in college and other training facilities. Robin Jones, director of the Great Lakes ADA and Accessible IT Center, University of Illinois – Chicago, will present. She shares her insights and respected expertise on many issues affecting transition-aged young adults with disabilities.*

**Nov. 8, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER) or**

**Nov. 8, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

#### Packing for Transition

*For families of youth with disabilities that are in the transition process (age 14 and older), the workshop looks at opportunities*

*and strategies as youth enter and complete high school and move to post-secondary options.*

**Oct. 14, 7 to 9 p.m. (Minneapolis)**

#### Solving the Employment Puzzle

*The workshop is for families of youth with disabilities that are in the transition process (age 14 and older). It will help families look to the future as they learn about numerous options for postsecondary education, employment, and adult services.*

**Oct. 7, 7 to 9 p.m. (Anoka)**

**Oct. 21, 7 to 9 p.m. (Marshall)**

#### SSI and the Ticket to Work

*The workshop provides information on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and work incentives for families of youth with disabilities age 17 and older. A Social Security representative will present.*

**October (Minneapolis)**

## Workshop Registration

*To register for the workshops, call PACER Center at (952) 838-9000 or (800) 537-2237 (Greater Minnesota) or clip and mail or fax the form below to PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437. Fax: (952) 838-0199*

### September

- Sept. 27, IEPs (Bemidji)
- Sept. 27, Technology for Girls (PACER)
- Sept. 28, IEPs (Blaine)
- Sept. 28, Understand Special Ed (Detroit Lakes)
- Sept. 30, Ind. Advocacy Plan (PACER)

### October

- Oct. 2, STC Open House (PACER)
- Oct. 4, Understand Special Ed (Willmar)
- Oct. 5, Understand Special Ed (Hinckley)
- Oct. 7, Positive Behavior Interv. (PACER)
- Oct. 7, Employment Puzzle (Anoka)
- Oct. 9, Housing Fair (PACER)
- Oct. 9, Understand Special Ed (Shakopee)
- Oct. 12, Transition-EBD (PACER)
- Oct. 14, IIIP (Apple Valley)
- Oct. 14, NCLB-elementary (PACER)
- Oct. 14, Pack for Transition (Minneapolis)
- Oct. 16, Understanding Early Childhood (PACER)
- Oct. 18, IBM Web (PACER)

- Oct. 18, Understand Special Ed (Minnetonka)
- Oct. 19, IEP (St. Cloud)
- Oct. 19, Literacy Environment (PACER)
- Oct. 21, Employment Puzzle (Marshall)
- Oct. 25, Understand Special Ed (Worthington)
- Oct. 26, IEPs (Austin)
- Oct. 27, Asst. Tech-Early Chldhd (PACER)
- Oct. 27, Grandparent Connection (PACER)
- Oct. 28, NCLB-secondary (PACER)
- October, SSI (Minneapolis)

### November

- Nov. 3, Housing workshop (PACER)
- Nov. 4, Bullying - Strategies (Anoka)
- Nov. 8, ADA-daytime (PACER)
- Nov. 8, ADA-evening (PACER)
- Nov. 6, Father's workshop (PACER)
- Nov. 8, Bullying - Target (Alexandria)
- Nov. 8, IEPs (St. Paul)
- Nov. 20, KITE-Multimedia (PACER)

### December

- Dec. 6, IBM Web (PACER)

### January

- Jan. 10, Technology for Girls (PACER)
- Jan. 15, KITE-Inclusion (PACER)

### February

- Feb. 7, IBM Web (PACER)

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (H) \_\_\_\_\_

(W) \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date of child w/disability: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's disability: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(If a professional)*

# About PACER...

PACER Center is a Minnesota and national parent center located in Minnesota for families of children and youth with special health needs and all disabilities. PACER provides varied resources such as publications, workshops, and individualized assistance. It

helps families make decisions about education, vocational training, employment, and other services for their child with disabilities.

### What are PACER hours?

PACER's switchboard is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Voice

mail is available if you wish to leave a message. Federal holidays are observed.

### How do I contact PACER?

By telephone, Internet Web site, e-mail, or fax. When parents call for help during PACER office hours, a staff member answers the telephone, takes information, and directs the caller to the appropriate staff person. Voice mail is available when PACER is closed.

Parents and professionals can reach PACER at:

**(952) 838-9000**  
**(800) 537-2237 (Minn. toll-free)**  
**(888) 248-0822 (national toll-free)**  
**(952) 838-0199 (fax)**  
**pacer@pacer.org (e-mail)**

### Where can I learn more?

PACER's Web sites include:

**www.pacer.org**  
**www.taalliance.org**  
**www.fape.org**

## United Way can fund PACER

The United Way accommodates employees who want to support PACER through workplace campaigns—even though PACER is not a United Way agency. PACER benefits from the Greater Twin Cities United Way, Tri-State United Ways, and others.

Please consider writing "PACER Center" in the appropriate pledge card section.

**B.**  **Specific organization:** \$ Your gift  
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Name of Agency PACER Center  
Address 8161 Normandale Blvd.  
City Minneapolis, MN 55437

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