

# PACESETTER

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

## IDEA marks 35 years!

PACER staff joined legislators, advocates, people with disabilities and federal officials to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) on Nov. 18 in Washington, D.C.

Passage of the 1975 federal law—formerly the Education For All Handicapped Children Act—guaranteed students with disabilities the right to a free, appropriate public education.

Because of IDEA, America's 6.7 million infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities are able to achieve educational levels that were not possible prior to the law's enactment.

Before the law was passed, millions of students with disabilities were denied access to a public education. Until 1969, for example, one state statute made it a crime for parents to insist that a child with disabilities be allowed to attend school if the superintendent denied access.

Today, 57 percent of students with disabilities spend at least 80 percent of their day within the regular school environment. In 2007, nearly 60 percent of students with disabilities graduated high school with a regular diploma, compared to 32 percent 20 years earlier.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Ready to Rock?

## Benefit features Sheryl Crow

Grammy Award winner Sheryl Crow will rock the house during PACER Center's 29th Annual Benefit at the Minneapolis Convention Center on Saturday, May 7.

With a solo career spanning nearly 20 years and seven albums, the singer-songwriter has a long list of modern rock hits to choose from, including "If It Makes You Happy," "Every Day Is A Winding Road" and "A Change Would Do You Good."

Crow's first smash hit, "All I Wanna Do," hit the charts in 1993, seven years after her stint as a backup vocalist for Michael Jackson's Bad World Tour. Her latest soul-inspired album, "100 Miles from Memphis," was released in 2010. Along the way, Crow has earned nine Grammy Awards for her crowd-pleasing music, including Best Female Rock Vocal, Best Female Pop Vocal and Best Rock Album.

Benefit tickets include the performance as well as silent and live auctions. A pre-Benefit gourmet dinner is available by separate ticket, and a post-concert patron party is available for people purchasing Benefit tickets of \$140 or more.

Proceeds from the Benefit support PACER Center programs for children with disabilities and their families. To reserve tickets for the Benefit, see page 2, visit PACER.org or call 952-838-9000.



*Sheryl Crow*

# PACER supporter, symposium founder dies

Longtime PACER friend and supporter Roberta Mann-Benson passed away Oct. 27, 2010. For the past five years, Mann-Benson partnered with PACER to provide the Ted and Roberta Mann Foundation National Symposium About Children and Young Adults with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities. She founded and funded this annual educational symposium for parents and teachers.

“Roberta had a heart of gold. She was a visionary, and through her sup-

port the lives of countless children and adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues have been changed,” says Paula Goldberg, PACER’s executive director. “Over the years, thousands of people participated in the Symposium, and the impact of Roberta’s support will ripple throughout many generations.”

A sixth Symposium is planned for 2011. At the request of her family, memorials in memory of Mann-Benson may be made to PACER Center.



Dr. Roberta Mann-Benson

## BENEFIT RESERVATIONS

To reserve your tickets for the 2011 PACER Benefit on May 7 featuring **Sheryl Crow**, please complete the form below and fax or mail it to PACER Center. Reservations can also be made at PACER.org or by calling 952-838-9000.

**Benefit Tickets:**

Please send me:

- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$65<sup>1</sup> Friend
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$90<sup>1</sup> Supporter
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$140<sup>2</sup> Patron\*
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$200<sup>2</sup> Benefactor\*
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$275<sup>3</sup> Sponsor\*
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$550<sup>3</sup> Champion\*
- Total amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Dinner Tickets (\$95 per person)**

Number of tickets: \_\_\_\_\_  
Total amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Contribution/  
Volunteer Opportunities**

Please contact me about:

- donating**  
\_\_\_\_\_ (item)  
**to the Silent Auction**
- being a Corporate Sponsor  
(including ticket package and ad)
- advertising in the Benefit payroll
- volunteering on a Benefit committee

Tax values are listed in the following categories:  
1 = \$40 value; 2 = \$50 value; 3 = \$60 value. The ticket price in excess of the value is tax deductible.

\* Includes post-performance patron champagne and dessert party

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*If you wish to sit with friends, the reservations must arrive at the same time.*

I need:  Wheelchair seating (number of spaces)  Sign language interpretation  
 Assistive listening device  Other \_\_\_\_\_

My checks, separate for the Benefit and dinner, are made payable to PACER Center and are enclosed. *(Tickets will be mailed April 29.)*

Total charge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to  VISA  Mastercard  AmEx  Discover  
# \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

I am unable to attend the Benefit. Please accept my gift:  check  charge  
 \$550  \$275  \$200  \$140  \$90  \$65  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Many companies match gifts. Please ask your employer for a matching gift form and enclose it with your contribution or ticket order.

Names of persons for whom you are purchasing tickets (including yourself):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please mail or fax to: PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044 Fax: (952) 838-0199

# Minnesota Supreme Court affirms access to after-school activities for special education students

By Julie Holmquist

**A** recent Minnesota Supreme Court decision affirmed a federal law guaranteeing access to extracurricular activities for special education students.

In upholding a Minnesota Department of Education decision on Oct. 7, the Supreme Court affirmed regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation.

The Supreme Court agreed that a Minnesota school district violated IDEA when it refused to consider including supplementary aids and services in

a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) that would allow the fifth-grader to participate in extracurricular activities.

The decision "prevented a misreading of federal law," says attorney Dan Stewart of the Minnesota Disability Law Center. "This makes it clear that children with disabilities have the right to participate in extracurricular activities and that the IEP team is responsible to ensure that."

The decision stemmed from a complaint filed with the Department of Education by the parents of a student. The parents had asked their child's IEP team to determine which supplementary services their child would need to play volleyball and participate in after-school clubs.

The Department of Education found that the district violated the law when it failed to convene an IEP meeting. The district appealed that decision to the Minnesota Court of Appeals, arguing that it did not have to use the IEP team to determine appropriate accommodations for a student's extracurricular activities if those activities were not "required for the education" of the student.

The Court of Appeals determined that the IEP team should consider whether an extracurricular activity should be included in the IEP, but decided that schools need to provide supplementary aids and services only when "such ac-

tivities are required for the education of the child." The Department of Education then asked the Supreme Court to review the Appeals Court decision.

## The Minnesota Supreme Court found that under IDEA:

- IEP teams must consider special education services for students with disabilities wanting to participate in extracurricular activities,
- that those activities are not limited to ones required for educational purposes, and
- that a student's IEP determines which supplementary aids and services are appropriate and necessary for the student to participate in the extracurricular and nonacademic activities.

"PACER is pleased that the Department of Education appealed the decision of the Appeals Court," says Virginia Richardson, manager of parent training at PACER. "Children with disabilities should be free to choose extracurricular activities like all children in school. We believe this legal clarification will be helpful to both parents and school staff."

Parents should realize that the law doesn't guarantee students the right to participate in any extracurricular activity they choose, Stewart says. The IEP team must consider an activity, but it may decide that the activity is not appropriate for the student. "That's perfectly legal," he says.

## ALLIANCE hosts Topical Institutes in D.C.

The ALLIANCE National Parent Technical Assistance Center, a project of PACER, hosted the Topical Institutes for parent center staff on Jan. 25-27 at the Hyatt Regency in Crystal City, near Washington, D.C. Topics in-

cluded: technology, management and leadership, and addressing challenging behaviors. Conference materials will be posted on [Parentcenternetwork.org](http://Parentcenternetwork.org) in the future.

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PACER website: [PACER.org](http://PACER.org)

ALLIANCE National PTAC site:

[ParentCenterNetwork.org/national](http://ParentCenterNetwork.org/national)

FAPE site: [fape.org](http://fape.org)

C3 site: [c3online.org](http://c3online.org)

BULLYING: [PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org](http://PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org)

[PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org](http://PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org)

MN SEAC site: [mnseacinfo.org](http://mnseacinfo.org)

(Alternate format is available upon request.)



# New checklist aids parents in filing

When parents believe a school district is not following special education laws and inform the district's special education director, the issues are often resolved to the satisfaction of both the parents and the school district.

Parents who are unable to resolve issues they believe are violations, however, may consider filing a state-level complaint with the Minnesota Department of Education.

"To make the process more user-friendly for families, PACER Center has provided parents with an easy-to-follow checklist for filing a complaint," says PACER Advocate Pat Anderson.

Anderson encourages parents to first contact the school district's special education director about the issue prior to filing a complaint. "It may be an issue that can be resolved by talking with the director," Anderson says. "Sometimes a parent's issue may also be a district-wide problem that the director is not aware of and can address."

"We also encourage parents to call and talk to a PACER advocate before filing a complaint, just in case we can help them resolve the problem at the local level," she adds.

Anyone who is aware of a violation can file a state-level special education complaint. A complaint must be made

in writing and contain the following:

## Basic Information

- Current date, your name, address, e-mail address (if applicable) and a phone number to reach you if the complaint investigator needs to ask for additional information
- Student's name, address (if different than yours), grade and birth date
- School district name, name of the school and the school's address

## Statement of Violation

- State why you believe a state or federal law was violated and that it occurred during the last calendar year (12 months from current date).

## IDEA marks 35 years

(Continued from page 1)

"This landmark law has improved the lives of so many children," says Paula Goldberg, PACER's executive director. "Since 1977, PACER has worked to help families understand their child's rights under this federal law. But we need to keep working to maintain those rights and to expand educational opportunities for children with disabilities."

Speaking at the celebration in Washington, D.C. were: U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; members of Congress; Alexa Posny, Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; and Melody Barnes, Domestic Policy Advisor to the President and Director



Attending the IDEA Anniversary event were: (L to R) Sharman Davis Barrett, PACER; Judy Heuman, formerly with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services and U.S. Rep. George Miller, who was a congressman when IDEA was passed; Paula Goldberg, PACER's executive director and Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education.

of the White House Domestic Policy Council. Sharman Davis Barrett of PACER also spoke about how IDEA influenced the life of her daughter, who had autism and was deaf. U.S. Senator Tom Harkin and U.S. Representative George Miller spoke eloquently, Goldberg says, as did three young adults.

At an evening reception, chaired by Goldberg and co-sponsored by PACER, awards were presented to Tom Gilhool, Paul Marchand and Ed Martin for their leadership in ensuring the educational rights of students with disabilities.

# state special education complaint

- Keep your focus on facts, events and people involved.

- Make a list of each violation you believe the school committed.

## Statement of Facts

- For each violation, list the facts to support your claim.

- Describe events with specific dates, names of individuals involved or contacted and a brief description of what happened. Include any additional facts to support your claim.

## Proposed Solution

- Identify proposed solutions to your complaint.

- List solutions that would be acceptable to you in resolving the complaint.

- The Minnesota Department of Education will complete an investigation, propose solutions and consider your proposed solution.

To learn more about filing a complaint, parents can refer to the full PACER handout “Filing a Complaint with the Minnesota Department of Education,” which is listed on PACER’s new dispute resolution web page ([www.pacer.org/disputeresolution/index.asp](http://www.pacer.org/disputeresolution/index.asp)) under publications. The web page also provides links to specific Department of Education resources that provide

additional guidance in filing a complaint. For more information about dispute resolution, call 952-838-9000 and ask to speak to an advocate, or visit [PACER.org](http://PACER.org).

Parent Information Cards are also available for order at [PACER.org/disputeresolution/index.asp](http://PACER.org/disputeresolution/index.asp). A single copy of these laminated 3- by 5-inch cards are free to Minnesota parents and detail parental rights and responsibilities in special education, as well as topics of discussion for the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP).

## Examples of possible violations

**A.** The school district did not complete a special education evaluation within 30 school days. It took the school 50 school days to complete the evaluation. My son has now failed his math class.

**B.** The classroom teacher has not been providing the accommodations listed on my daughter’s IEP, so she hasn’t received assistive technology for written assignments.

**C.** For the last three months, my son’s special education teacher has been on sick leave. He has not received the special education instruction written in his IEP.

## Examples of possible resolutions:

**A.** Since the special education evaluation was not completed within the timelines required, I feel it needs to be completed immediately.

**B.** Because my child could not use assistive technology for written assignments, she should be allowed to redo those assignments for an accurate grade.

**C.** My son has not received his special education instruction in more than three months. Services need to be provided to compensate my child for the specialized instruction he has missed.

## New federal disability legislation passed in 2010

In October 2010, President Barack Obama signed two significant pieces of legislation for people with disabilities.

“**Rosa’s Law**” changes references in federal statutes from “mental retardation” to “intellectual disability.” Rosa’s Law is named after 9-year-old Rosa Marcellino, who has Down syndrome. Her family worked to have

the words “mentally retarded” officially removed from the health and education code in their home state of Maryland.

**The 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act** will make it easier for people who are deaf, blind or living with a visual impairment to take advantage of modern

technology, from more accessible smart phones to closed captioning on the Web.

This new law was passed to ensure full participation in technology for Americans with disabilities. It establishes new safeguards for disability access to Internet-based and digital communication technologies.

# PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center brings message to millions across the nation

By Julie Holmquist

When several incidents of bullying made national headlines in the fall of 2010, national media and others turned to PACER as a resource on the issue. During National Bullying Prevention Month last October, Julie Hertzog (National Bullying Prevention Center director), Lynn Miland (PACER advocate) and Michael Keller (PACER's marketing board chair) were able to bring PACER's message to millions.

PACER received coverage on NBC Nightly News, CNN, The Today Show and Geraldo At Large, as well as in Woman's Day, Family Circle and People magazine, to name just a few of the media outlets that quoted PACER staff or promoted PACER resources during National Bullying Prevention Month.

"People are realizing—now more than ever before—that bullying is a serious issue and that we need to change the culture that allows it," Hertzog says.

James Jones, the Florida father who made national headlines in October 2010 after his daughter with cerebral palsy was bullied on a school bus, found help for his family at PACER, and he worked with PACER to promote National Bullying Prevention Month.

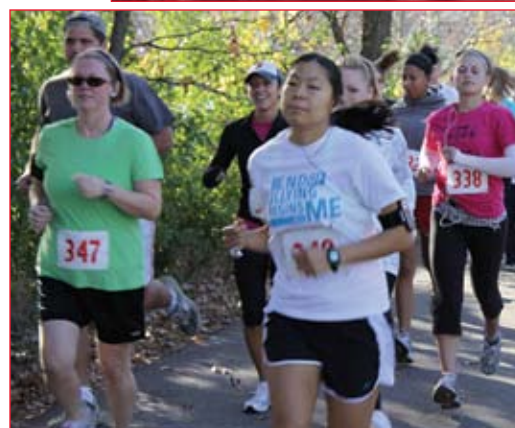
Many others also joined with PACER during October to educate the public about the issue. Yahoo!Kids featured PACER's KidsAgainstBullying.org website, and Facebook promoted the month in several ways, including posting a video message about PACER's TeensAgainstBullying.org website.

The Ellen DeGeneres Show website listed PACER as one of three bullying prevention resources, and Cartoon Network also listed PACER on its site so its audience of young children and tweens could find bullying prevention resources. The New York Times sponsored an event called "Bullying – A National Crisis" and invited Hertzog to participate on the panel.

## Run/Walk/Roll event promotes bullying prevention in October

*Farm Law sponsored the "Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying" event held at Mt. Normandale Lake in Bloomington, Minn.*

*Clockwise from top: families and many other groups finish the 1.5-mile walk; runners start the four-mile race; Michael Keller, PACER marketing board chair; Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director; and Doug Nill, of Farm Law, the major sponsor of the event, pause after the race; Julie Hertzog speaks to the crowd.*



Locally, more than 200 people attended PACER's first-ever "Run, Walk, Roll Against Bullying," showing support for the cause and for PACER's bullying prevention work. Minnesota's FOX 9 News provided in-depth coverage of the issue and sought PACER's expertise in multiple interviews, and local radio station myTalk 107.1 continues to give PACER and the cause extensive air time.

To learn more about the National Bullying Prevention Center's resources, visit [PACER.org/bullying](http://PACER.org/bullying). The Center's popular websites include [KidsAgainstBullying.org](http://KidsAgainstBullying.org) for elementary-age children and [TeensAgainstBullying.org](http://TeensAgainstBullying.org) for teens.



# Tween girls explore careers at EX.I.T.E. Camp

By Ashley White

Many 12-year-old girls dream of becoming a movie actress or a rock star. But Elora Engebret, a sixth grader from Savage, Minn., has other ambitions. When she grows up, she wants to be a meteorologist – a career she discovered at PACER Center’s EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering (EX.I.T.E.) day camp last summer.

At the camp, Elora had the chance to meet a professional meteorologist and ask her questions about the field. “She talked about how weather reacts and how you can read a map,” says Elora, who has multiple disabilities. “It sounds like a really fun, interesting job.”

Elora’s parents, Scott and Vivian Engebret, say that EX.I.T.E., which teaches middle school girls with disabilities creative ways to use science, has piqued her interest in these careers and helped her excel in her science and math classes at school. At past camps, girls have learned alongside scientists, engineers and professionals from major corporations. The 2010 camp hosted volunteers from Accenture, IBM, Medtronic, Target and 3M.

“When she got home from camp, she would go on and on with factoids she had learned,” Vivian says. “At

the same time, the camp kept it fun with hands-on activities. EX.I.T.E. helped her realize that science isn’t just about sitting in a lab wearing a lab coat.”

Scott says EX.I.T.E. not only taught Elora math, science and technology, but also boosted her self-confidence. Elora and the rest of the campers even had the chance to meet professionals from 3M and IBM who have disabilities themselves. These volunteers proved to the girls that having a disability doesn’t limit their career options in fields such as science or technology.

“The camp inspires them to see beyond any preconceived notion of limitation,” says Paul Davies, Senior Intellectual Property Specialist at 3M, which sponsors EX.I.T.E. and provides volunteers for one day of camp each year. “If it weren’t for programs like Camp EX.I.T.E., these girls may not have awareness of what opportunities are available to them.”

After Elora attended EX.I.T.E. last summer, the Engebret family decided



*Elora Engebret takes part in PACER’s 2010 EX.I.T.E. camp with help from Jay Carter, an EX.I.T.E. volunteer from 3M.*

to try more of PACER’s services, particularly the ones offered by PACER’s Simon Technology Center (STC). Through the STC Lending Library and consultations with staff, Elora and her parents are learning what software and services will benefit her the most.

“What they’ve pointed out has been so specific to her needs,” Vivian says. “We’re finding out that there are so many neat things for kids with disabilities.”

With a little help from EX.I.T.E. and the STC, Elora is on her way to becoming an expert meteorologist. But Scott and Vivian don’t need a professional to predict their daughter’s forecast: It’s looking bright and sunny.

## Apply now for 2011 EX.I.T.E. Camp

This year’s ninth annual EX.I.T.E. camp will take place in August 2011. Applications will be accepted until May 1.

Visit [www.PACER.org/stc/exite/camp.asp](http://www.PACER.org/stc/exite/camp.asp) for more information, or call PACER’s Simon Technology Center at 952-838-9000.

Many companies generously donate funds and volunteers to EX.I.T.E., including Accenture, Medtronic, Target, 3M, Xcel Energy and IBM.

## New e-mail address?

Please let us know! Don’t miss PACER’s monthly e-news with breaking news affecting children with disabilities or the latest updates on PACER events.

Send your new e-mail address to: [PACER@PACER.org](mailto:PACER@PACER.org).

# Helping youth develop “soft” skills

Most parents of youth approaching adulthood want to know what they can do to help their sons and daughters succeed in the workplace. One way family members can help is by working with and encouraging youth to develop traits known as soft skills.

Even though many parents may be unfamiliar with this term, they will discover that they are actually very familiar with these everyday, common-sense skills that are important in all aspects of life. Soft skills can help youth succeed in life no matter what they are doing. By improving these skills, a youth can enhance his or her social life, do better in postsecondary education settings and be more successful at finding and maintaining employment.

For youth with disabilities, who face much higher unemployment rates than their peers without disabilities, soft skills are especially important. Families of youth with disabilities play a key role in helping their youth learn expected behaviors, understand the unspoken rules of the workplace and deal with personality conflicts.

In addition to promoting these skills at home, families can make sure that the development of soft skills is adequately addressed in their child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) during the transition-planning process of high school.

What soft skills should parents focus on? Work readiness standards include communication skills, interpersonal skills and lifelong learning skills.

Youth who have these skills are more likely to be hired and less likely to be fired. Families can use several strategies to help their child develop soft skills.

## What are Soft Skills?

“...being dependable, responsible, punctual, adaptable, honest, honorable, well-mannered, positive toward work, and appropriately dressed and groomed. Soft skills also refer to such attributes as the ability to get along with others, work in teams, attend to tasks, work independently, and provide excellent customer service, both within the company and externally.”

**National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth**

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

A considerable amount of communication is nonverbal. However, some disabilities make it difficult for people to read the nonverbal communication of others, such as eye contact, facial expressions or gestures. Family members of youth with such disabilities can use a variety of techniques to help their youth learn to perceive and better understand nonverbal social cues.

### How You Can Help

- When watching a movie or television show, point out facial expressions and body language used by the actors. Explain how actors use gestures to convey their emotions.
- Encourage your youth to ask questions when he or she doesn’t understand what someone says. Asking questions shows people that your youth is listening carefully, even when not making eye contact.
- Help your youth look at a person’s nose or cheek if looking in someone’s eye is too distressing. It will appear as though he or she is making eye contact.
- Demonstrate an acceptable distance between two people who are not family members. Have your youth practice this. In Western culture, the acceptable amount of personal space between two

people is 1.5 to 4 feet, depending on how well you know the other person.

- Have your youth join a self-advocacy social group outside of school to improve communication and active listening skills. Such groups are often offered by centers for independent living, self-advocacy or other disability organizations.
- Enlist the help of other people in your youth’s life to provide guidance in social standards. For instance, a teacher might need to tell your youth that he can shake her hand instead of hugging her.
- Discuss other potential strategies with your youth’s IEP team. Include a related goal in your son or daughter’s IEP.

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Good personal hygiene and appearance promotes social interaction with others, while poor hygiene can give employers and co-workers a bad impression.

### How You Can Help

- Discuss personal cleanliness with your son or daughter, stressing that most workplaces require employees to dress appropriately and to be clean.
- Require that your youth be dressed appropriately and have good hygiene



# Tips for job success: tips for parents

when attending school, family functions or places of religion.

Employers are also looking for employees with good people skills. While especially important in jobs where employees interact with customers, these skills can also help youth interact with their co-workers, avoid conflict and stand out from other job applicants or employees.

## How You Can Help

- Teach youth phrases they can use on the phone: “May I please speak to Mr. Smith?” or in the workplace; “I’m Deborah. It’s nice to meet you.”
- Teach youth to allow others to finish speaking before beginning to talk.
- Have your youth answer the phone at home in a professional and courteous manner.
- Identify areas of social difficulty for your youth and role play how to handle new or unfamiliar situations. Role playing gives youth an opportunity to practice what they would say and do in various situations.
- Sign your youth up for social skills trainings at school, centers for independent living, disability groups or

self-advocacy organizations. These trainings provide youth with a structured opportunity to learn and practice social skills such as taking turns or giving compliments. Have them practice what they have learned with you at home.

## LIFELONG LEARNING SKILLS

Personal responsibility, initiative, self-management and perseverance are other important qualities employers look for in a new hire.

## How You Can Help

- Have youth take responsibility for waking up on time, setting an alarm clock and getting ready for school or work.
- Find opportunities for youth to take on a project from start to finish, such as planting a garden.
- Have youth visit a parent’s workplace if the job allows this. Youth can learn different tasks associated with the job or follow other employees to learn what is involved in their jobs.
- Enroll youth in a mentor program. Mentors can help youth on many levels: building self-esteem, learning

to stick with challenging activities, managing time and communicating with other adults.

- Ask youth to identify a simple, fun skill to learn. This could include cooking a certain recipe, working with a specific computer program or learning a new game. Have a young person research information on steps for learning the skill, and then help him or her follow and complete the steps.

This article was adapted from an Information Brief and series of podcasts PACER originally created for the National Collaborative on Workforce & Disability for Youth (NCWD-Youth) with support from the U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Disability Employment Policy. “Helping Youth Develop Soft Skills for Job Success: Tips for Parents and Families,” published by NCWD-Youth, will be available at [www.ncwd-youth.info](http://www.ncwd-youth.info).

A PACER CD titled, “Top Secret Job Skills: Declassified,” is also helpful and can be ordered by calling 952-838-9000. View a clip online at: [PACER.org/publications/transition.asp](http://PACER.org/publications/transition.asp).

## Families can preview technology at STC library

The Simon Technology Center (STC) Library offers an inexpensive way to preview software and assistive technology (AT) devices for children and young adults with disabilities before purchasing them. Anyone can visit and view the 2,500 items available at the library. Minnesota parents, individuals and professionals who are members may borrow them.

For hours or more information about the STC Library, contact Tara Bakken at 952-838-9000 or visit [PACER.org/stc/library](http://PACER.org/stc/library).

For more information about how assistive technology may help your child with a disability, contact the STC at 952-838-9000 or visit [PACER.org/stc](http://PACER.org/stc).



# New study shows strong parent-community ties are essential for school improvement

A new study from the Consortium on Chicago School Research identifies “strong parent-community ties” as one of five essential supports for school improvement.

“This research identifies parent and community involvement as necessary for improving schools,” says Heather Kilgore, director of the Minnesota Parent Center.

“It’s one more study that shows how important strong parent-school involvement is,” she says. “Educators and parents can work together to help improve children’s learning. That’s why the MN PIRC: Minnesota Parent Center is here. We provide services and support to parents and schools to strengthen those ties and benefit students.”

## MINNESOTA PARENT CENTER

### Minnesota PIRC A project of PACER

The long-term study of many schools in Chicago sought to find common strategies that improved school performance. According to “Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago,” by Anthony S. Bryk, the research identified “five essential supports for school improvement” that must be in place for classroom learning to improve.

Schools that were strong in all five areas were 10 times more likely to improve than those that were not. Five essential supports for school

improvement cited by the study are:

- Strong and organized curriculum and guidance for teachers
- Quality teachers who work together to improve teaching

- Strong parent-community-school ties
- A student-centered learning climate
- School leadership that drives change

“This study shows that schools must reach out to help parents support their children’s learning, understand their students’ home culture and community, and access resources in the community,” Kilgore says. “If schools are to improve, working with families is a necessity.”

## MN PIRC: Minnesota Parent Center supports parent-school ties

The MN PIRC: Minnesota Parent Center is designed to help families and schools build stronger ties to benefit students. It provides free research-based training for Title I schools, helpful information for ways parents can be more involved in their child’s education and individual assistance.

The Center’s information handouts for parents are offered in English, Hmong, Somali and Spanish and are available in print and online at [PACER.org/mpc](http://PACER.org/mpc), where parents and professionals will find many other resources.

The Center also provides a free publication called “Par-

ent Pages” to schools and parents. It’s available at [PACER.org/mpc](http://PACER.org/mpc), where past issues are also archived and have included such topics as “Preparing for Parent-Teacher Conferences” and “How to Help Your Child Meet Academic Standards.” Parents and professionals can also subscribe to the Center’s free electronic newsletter, which provides up-to-date news and resources. To subscribe, visit [PACER.org/mpc](http://PACER.org/mpc) and click on E-News.

Minnesota Parent Center is Minnesota’s PIRC (Parental Information and Resource Center) and a project of PACER. To learn more about the Center’s resources and services, call 952-838-9000 or visit [PACER.org/mpc](http://PACER.org/mpc).

## Say thanks with certificates during Teacher-School Appreciation Day March 3

Teacher-School Appreciation Day on Thursday, March 3, is a perfect time to say thank you to a school staff member who has made a difference in your child’s life. One way families

of children with disabilities can say thank you is by presenting specially designed certificates of appreciation. These free certificates can be ordered from PACER or downloaded from

[PACER.org/help/teacher.asp](http://PACER.org/help/teacher.asp). Families can then complete the certificates and present them to school staff members they wish to recognize.

# PACER staff member wins Mentorship Award

By Ashley White

As part of her work at PACER, staff member Andrea Moore embodies the essence of mentorship by supporting youth with disabilities as they transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment.

Whether it's helping students practice phone skills, reviewing a bus schedule with them, or simply showing faith in their abilities, Moore acts as a valuable mentor to these youth at a challenging time in their lives.

On Oct. 14, Moore was recognized for her work when she received the Mentorship Award from the Minnesota State Council on Disability (MSCOD).

The Mentorship Award is given to an individual who has substantially

helped youth with disabilities make the transition from high school to postsecondary education or employment.

"It was an honor to receive this award, because I'm already doing work that I believe in and love doing," Moore says.

At PACER, Moore led the launching of Project C3, which provides online resources to youth about opportunities after graduation. Going above and beyond her job description, Moore worked directly with 157 young adults on the project to help them gain the skills and confidence they need to be successful in either postsecondary education or the workplace. Several of these students



Andrea Moore

still come to her for guidance, advice and support.

"Many of the youth Andrea worked with on the project found employment, became interested in postsecondary education, or stayed in school as a result of her efforts,"

says PACER Projects Director Sean Roy. "She has a true passion for mentoring youth, and it shows in the great outcomes this project produced."

Project C3 has become a resource that now includes more than 1,100 listed Minnesota organizations that help youth make the transition after high school. To use the C3 resources, visit [c3.ilivehere.info](http://c3.ilivehere.info).

## PACER receives family support training grant

PACER Center has received a grant to provide effective family support services and leadership training to underserved and underrepresented families of individuals with developmental disabilities from birth to age 25 in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area.

The five-year Families Accessing Communities Together (FACT) Project grant was awarded in September by the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities.

During the project's first year, PACER will plan with family members and community organizations about effective ways to

meet families' needs. The project will use that information during the following four years to work with families and organizations using a family-centered approach.

Many families have expressed the need for help in navigating the various public and private systems that offer services to meet the complex needs of their families.

The FACT Project's innovative process will provide family-centered support services, improve the community's capacity to serve individuals with developmental disabilities and their families, and support systems change activities.

Through family-centered activities, families will learn to use and build on their strengths and to participate in systems change activities that promote family-centered community practices and structures.

"We are excited that PACER has the opportunity to work with families and community organizations using a new family-centered approach," says Virginia Richardson, PACER's manager of parent training and co-coordinator of the project with Shauna McDonald, PACER's national projects director.



New

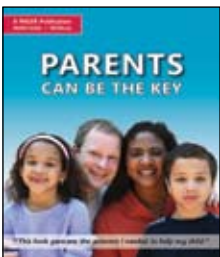


**Transition Trek Game**

Updated! An innovative and engaging board game that helps youth and young adults plan for life after high school. Players draw cards with questions related

to careers, independent living and self-determination. Six game pieces included. 2010.

\$25 each ST-23



**Parents Can Be the Key**

This handbook describes basic special education laws and procedures.

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a1



**Families Are Important! An Early Childhood Guidebook for Families of Young Children**

Helps families of children with disabilities or delayed development understand Minnesota's early intervention system and how to access services

for their child.

■ \$7 10+ copies, \$5 each PHP-a9



**High Expectations**

Having and maintaining high expectations for your child with a disability is very important. This booklet outlines how to have high expectations, challenge your child and encourage high expectations from others.

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2.50 each PHP-a34



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

Helps parents work with schools to address each child's special needs through understanding the required components of the IEP. Includes examples from the Minnesota state-recommended form.

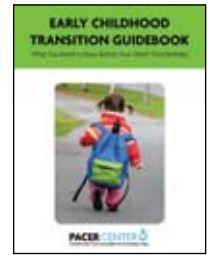
■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a12

New

**Early Childhood Transition Guidebook**

Helps parents understand the process that guides their child's transition from infant and toddler intervention services to other early childhood services at age 3 and includes strategies to use for a successful transition. 2010.

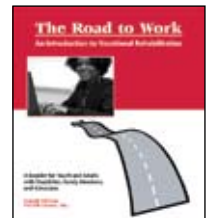
■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2.50 each PHP-a40



**The Road to Work An Introduction to Vocational Rehabilitation**

Discusses the issues related to the Rehabilitation Act, including eligibility criteria for vocational rehabilitation services, transition planning for high school students, the Individual Written Rehabilitation Program, appeals procedures, legislation and self-advocacy skills. Fourth Edition. 2009.

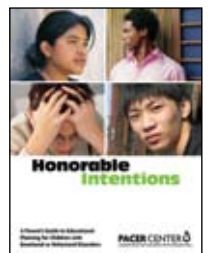
■ \$8 10+ copies, \$6.50 each VO-1



**Honorable Intentions: A Parent's Guide to Educational Planning for Children with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders, Fourth Edition.**

This updated comprehensive guide includes information on comprehensive evaluation, functional assessments, positive interventions, effective communication and writing meaningful Individualized Education Programs.

■ \$15 10+ copies, \$12 each PHP-a29



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

Parents of youth with disabilities will find that this attractive, easy-to-use book answers many questions about future housing choices to make with their child. From housing options to a resource directory, this book has a wealth of information.

■ \$8 10+ copies, \$6 each PHP-a26



## Resources



### Discover How Assistive Technology Can Help Your Infant or Toddler Learn and Grow

Provides information on assistive technology (AT) use with infants and toddlers for families and professionals. Also includes tips on how to find more information about AT. Contact PACER regarding bulk orders. 2010.

■ \$1 10+ copies, \$.50 each    STC-21

### K is for Kindergarten

Offers skill builders to help you prepare your child for kindergarten. In addition to fun activities, you'll find specific information on state guidelines and tips for choosing a school. 2009. (One copy free for any Minnesota parent)



\$5 10+ copies, \$4 each    MPC-21

## 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 or guardians of children with disabilities and to Minnesota young adults (age 14 and older) with disabilities. For foreign orders, please telephone or e-mail PACER (see page 3). Payment must be 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:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Minneapolis residents, 7.4 % Hennepin County residents, 6.9 % Anoka, Ramsey, Dakota, Washington counties, 6.75 % Most other Minnesota residents, 6.5% ) Sales tax varies with specific location.

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: \_\_\_\_\_

## Workshops

PACER Center workshops are free to Minnesota parents. For information and to register, call 952-838-9000 (metro area) or toll free at 800-537-2237 (Greater Minnesota) or visit [PACER.org/workshops](http://PACER.org/workshops).

### Early Childhood

#### Understanding and Addressing Challenging Behaviors

Parents of young children with developmental delays and/or disabilities will learn about brain development and behavior, different temperament types, stages of development and strategies to provide children with acceptable ways to have their needs met. Call 952-707-4150 to register.

**March 8, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Diamondhead Education Center, Burnsville)**

#### Early Childhood and Assistive Technology (AT)

This workshop will help parents and professionals understand the evaluation process used to determine if early interventions (birth to age 3) or early childhood special education (ages 3-5) services are appropriate. It will also address how AT—from low-tech devices such as crayon grips to high-tech tools such as computers—may benefit young children.

**March 15, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

#### Everything You Need to Learn Before Your Child Turns Three

This workshop will help families understand the transition process from Part C Early Intervention services to Part B preschool services.

**April 16, 9 to 11 a.m. (PACER)**

#### Communicating Strengths and Needs with Early Childhood Professionals

This workshop will help parents learn how to understand their child's developmental delays or disability and share important information with others in order to enhance their child's development.

**April 14, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

#### Family Leadership Summit

This one-day training will help parents of young children with special needs enhance their communication and leadership skills, and will include skill-building sessions as well as networking opportunities.

**May 14, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (PACER)**

### Housing

#### Creative Housing and Services Options

Explore creative housing options and services. This interactive workshop will provide an opportunity for parents, young adults and providers to share their journeys through the housing process.

**March 16, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

### Parent Training

#### IFSPs & IEPs: The Building Blocks of Early Childhood Special Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires states to provide certain services to eligible children with developmental delays or disabilities. This workshop will help parents of children from birth to age 5 understand the essential components of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, including the evaluation, team planning, writing goals and resolving differences.

**Feb. 28, 7 to 9 p.m. (Winona)**

#### IDEA: Understanding the IEP

This workshop explores Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements and components of IEP development, including evaluation, resolving disagreements and an expanded section on writing measurable goals.

**April 5, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (St. Cloud)**

#### IDEA: Understanding the Special Education Process

This workshop outlines the basic principles of special education. Topics include free appropriate public education, evaluation, resolving disagreements and the Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**Feb. 28, 7 to 9 p.m. (Winona)**

**March 10, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)**

**April 4, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Alexandria)**

**April 12, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Duluth)**

#### Six Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy

Learn six important skills you can use to become a more effective advocate for your child with a disability.

**March 28, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Austin)**

#### Tips for Talking with School Staff

Parents will learn effective skills to communicate with school staff about their child in special education and practical tips for working in partnership with schools.

**Feb. 24, 7 to 9 p.m. (Northfield)**

**March 3, 6 to 8 p.m. (Albert Lea)**

#### Students with IEPs and Minnesota's Statewide Assessments

Parents of students receiving special education services will learn why testing is done, what types of tests are given, and what the scores mean, as well as tips for helping children prepare for and do their best on the tests.

**March 1, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

#### IDEA: Blueprint for Understanding the Special Education Process

The special education process is like building a house. There is a logical order to both. This workshop will cover how to use the building blocks of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to develop appropriate services for your child.

**March 21, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Princeton)**

#### Children Taking Medication for Mental Health Reasons

Parents whose children are already taking medications will learn techniques to talk to their children about the medications, listen to their children's feelings about taking medication and encourage their children to take medication as prescribed.

**March 22, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

#### A Life of Hope

Award-winning author, speaker and educator Jonathan Friesen will share his life journey as a person with Tourette syndrome and epilepsy, and highlight the messages he most needed to receive from his parents in order to move from pain to joy.

**March 31, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**



## Workshops

### Special Education: What Do I Need to Know

This workshop, presented in English and other languages, will help parents understand special education and learn how to communicate with school staff to encourage positive outcomes for children with disabilities.

April 11, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Hibbing)

### If I Knew Then What I Know Now

A panel of experienced parents of children with disabilities will share insights gained while raising and educating their children. Participants will be encouraged to ask questions and share their own insights and experiences as well.

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

### Anxiety and Elementary-aged Children

Parents of children with disabilities will learn from a nurse practitioner how to recognize anxiety and learn strategies to help teach their child how to become calm when feeling anxious.

April 26, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

### Life Planning for Persons with Disabilities

These two sessions cover different information, including guardianship-conservatorship laws, power of attorney, trust and other issues. Participants should plan to attend both sessions.

May 12, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

May 24, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

## Juvenile Justice

### Juvenile Justice and Special Education: What Parents Need to Know

In this workshop, parents will learn why youth with disabilities may be at higher risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system, how to address their needs in their IEP and how to prepare for court.

April 7, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

## Simon Technology Center

### All About Digital Media: Programs & Devices for Reading Digital Books

Hear a brief overview of digital book terminology and file formats, and then learn about various technologies, software and devices for reading digital books.

March 3, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. (Webinar)

### Exploring Organizational Development, Tools & Methods

Parents and professionals will learn about the process of developing organizational skills, as well as how to select tools and methods that will help an individual create an organizational strategy and system.

March 24, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

### All About Apps for Education

Learn how to navigate iPods or iPads to make the most of these powerful tools and discover the large variety of apps (applications) that can be educationally helpful for students with disabilities in and out of the classroom.

May 5, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Webinar)

## Transition

### Social Security for Transition-age Youth

A Social Security representative will speak about programs for transition-age

youth. Topics include the difference between Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance, what the "Ticket" program involves and what "PASS" means for young adults (age 17 and over).

March 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Alexandria)

### The Journey to Adulthood: What Parents Need to Know

Families of youth with disabilities (age 14 and over) will learn about the physical, emotional and social changes of puberty and adolescence, as well as tools they can use at home as they prepare their youth for the changes that adolescence brings.

April 7, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Minneapolis)

April 11, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Rochester)

### Focus on Transition

Families of youth with disabilities (age 14 and over) will learn about opportunities and strategies for youth as they enter and complete high school and move toward postsecondary education, work and adult services.

May 3, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Grand Rapids)

## Free multi-cultural brochures available

PACER Center offers a series of eye-catching brochures for reaching families from diverse cultures who may have concerns about their child's development, including a new Russian publication.

The materials are free to Minnesota organizations and school districts and were developed under a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education.

The easy-to-understand brochures and accompanying handouts are available in culturally specific versions for families who speak Hmong, Somali, Spanish and Russian. English

versions, available to all parents but especially directed toward American Indian and African American parents, also accompany each order of translated materials.

For more information about ordering hard copies, contact Barb Ziemke at [bziemke@PACER.org](mailto:bziemke@PACER.org) or 952-838-9000. View brochures online at [PACER.org/ec/news.asp](http://PACER.org/ec/news.asp). PACER also offers a new archived webinar on this subject called: Practical Tips for Working Effectively with Culturally Diverse Families of Young Children. Find it at [PACER.org/pacerwebinars](http://PACER.org/pacerwebinars).

## Creative Kids Contest is Feb. 26

Children with any disability are invited to join guest artist Anthony Whelihan at PACER Center's sixth annual Creative Kids Contest on Saturday, Feb. 26, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Bloomington Art Center.

Completed projects may be entered into a contest, with the winner's artwork becoming the cover of the official 2011 PACER greeting card. For more information or to register, call 952-838-9000 or visit [PACER.org](http://PACER.org).

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## Change Service Requested

## Officials concerned about evaluation delays

An educational strategy known as “response to intervention” (RTI) cannot be used by schools to delay or deny an evaluation for children suspected of having a disability, say federal education officials.

In a letter sent to state special education directors in January, Melody

Musgrove, director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), said some schools may be using the strategy to delay an initial special education evaluation.

Read the full letter at [PACER.org/newsandevents](http://PACER.org/newsandevents).

## Teens sought for youth advisory board

The Minnesota Statewide Family Network, a parent-directed, nonprofit organization that supports parents and their children with mental health needs, is currently accepting applications for membership on its Youth Advisory Board. Any teenager with a mental health diagnosis is encouraged to apply.

Board members meet monthly to provide peer support and develop self-advocacy and leadership skills. Activities include making presentations at state conferences, maintaining a website and learning to influence children’s mental health policy. To apply, call 952-838-1360.

## May Benefit features Sheryl Crow!



**Full story page 1**

Stay connected on PACER’s Facebook page, Twitter page and YouTube channel!

