

PACESETTER

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

Creative Kids events planned for March

Free Creative Kids workshops for children and youth wanting to explore and use their artistic talents are March 3 and 17 at 11 a.m. at PACER Center. The events are for youngsters with all abilities, aged 3-17. They must be preregistered to participate.

The year-old project has two facets:

- The workshops. They provide art materials, guidance from professionals, and encouragement to create art.
- An art contest. Children can submit projects from the workshops or home. The grand prize winner's work will be featured on PACER note cards. If they wish, the 10 contest finalists can donate their work to PACER's Benefit Silent Action.

Creative Kids is the brainchild of Anthony R. Whelihan, internationally known artist and long-time supporter of PACER Center and children with disabilities. Whelihan will be working with the children and youth at the workshops.

For information about Creative Kids, call (952) 838-9000.



PACER fantastic 25th Annual Benefit

Jennifer Hudson to perform

Dynamic vocalist, acclaimed actress, vibrant performer—Jennifer Hudson has the world's attention.

She will be front and center stage Saturday, May 5, at the Minneapolis Convention Center as the featured performer of the 25th Annual PACER Center Benefit.

- Hudson is Oscar winner and star of the hit movie, "Dreamgirls"
- Winner of prestigious Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild Awards
- "American Idol" show favorite

Variety magazine commented on Hudson's performance in "Dreamgirls:" "[Hudson] calls to mind debuts like Barbra Streisand in 'Funny Girl' or Bette Midler in 'The Rose,' with a voice like the young Aretha."

"In 'Dreamgirls,' a star is born the moment Jennifer Hudson opens her mouth to sing," said the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

"We feel incredibly fortunate in having this sensational performer for the Benefit," said Paula F. Goldberg,



Jennifer Hudson

PACER executive director. "This year is the silver anniversary of PACER's Benefits, and we thought it deserved extra special entertainment. We have that in Jennifer Hudson. She will most certainly provide a fantastic program."

Preceding the performance, PACER's Benefit also includes silent and live auctions. A pre-Benefit gourmet dinner is available by separate

ticket, and a patron party for holders of Benefit tickets of \$140 and more follows Hudson's performance. Proceeds from the event support PACER Center programs for children with disabilities and their families.

Benefit Honorary Chairs are Bill and Tani Austin. General co-chairs of the Benefit committee are Jessica Broyles, Colleen McGough Wood, and Danna Mirviss. Corporate sponsor co-chairs are Don Davidson and Jim Orrichio. Silent Auction co-chairs are Patricia Alkire, Nancy Keyes, and Lisa Miller.

To reserve tickets for the Benefit, see page 2, visit www.pacer.org, or call (952) 838-9000.

BENEFIT RESERVATIONS

To reserve your tickets for the 2007 PACER Benefit featuring Jennifer Hudson, please complete the form below and fax or mail it to PACER Center. Reservations can also be made at PACER's Web site (www.pacer.org) or by telephoning (952) 838-9000.

Benefit Tickets:

Please send me:

- \$55¹ tickets
- \$85¹ tickets
- \$140² Patron tickets*
- \$200² Patron tickets*
- \$275³ Patron tickets*
- \$550³ Patron tickets*

Number of tickets: _____

Total amount: \$ _____

Dinner Tickets (\$85 per person)

Number of tickets: _____

Total amount: \$ _____

Other Contribution/ Volunteer Opportunities

Please contact me about:

- donating** _____
to the Silent Auction
- being a Corporate Sponsor
(including ticket package and ad)
- advertising in the Benefit Playbill
- 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 the last week of April.)

Total charge \$ _____ to VISA Mastercard American Express

_____ Exp. _____

- I am unable to attend the Benefit. Please accept my gift: check charge
 \$550 \$275 \$200 \$140 \$85 \$55 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

Teacher-School Appreciation Day is March 12

The annual Teacher-School Appreciation Day is March 12, 2007. Begun by PACER Center a decade ago, Appreciation Day provides families of children with disabilities with a special way to honor teachers and other school staff.

Families can order free certificates of appreciation from PACER or download them from www.pacer.org/help/teacher.htm. Families or students can then complete the certificates and

present them to those they wish to recognize. Parents may wish to also write a brief note or make a telephone call of appreciation to people at school who work with their children.

Virginia Richardson, PACER parent training manager, created the event in 1997. She said, at the time, "Teachers have a great influence on the lives of students. Often, we don't go back and tell teachers the impact they've had on our child's life.

Everybody likes to be told they're doing a good job... Teachers who work well with our children need to be praised and encouraged."

While the first Appreciation Day was directed to teachers, it later expanded to include all school personnel. As Richardson said, "Many people at school work hard to make a difference in the lives of our children with disabilities."

Combating Autism Act signed into law

President George W. Bush signed the Combating Autism Act into law in late December. It authorizes \$945 million over five years for autism research, screening, and treatment. Autism affects an estimated 1.5 million Americans.

Mary Powell, executive director of the Autism Society of Minnesota, said she is hopeful the bill will result in better outcomes for many children and families. "We need improved screening, diagnosis, and research," she said.

In addition to obtaining new information about causes and treatment for autism, the act's research component may provide the evidence that particular practices work. Service providers, educators, funders, and policymakers require the verification, Powell said.

Screening children for autism is also an important part of the law, Powell said. Professionals generally agree that the

earlier a child is diagnosed and receives help, the more successful the interventions. Children can be reliably diagnosed as young as 24 months, Powell explained.

Parents concerned about their child should contact their school district about an evaluation, she continued. The Minne-

sota Department of Education has provided training for educators on the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS), the standard diagnostic tool for autism, and schools have developed skills at identifying children for services in early childhood, Powell said.

PACER collaborates on health care project

PACER Center is collaborating with a new national organization, Opening Doors for Children and Youth with Disabilities and Special Health Care Needs, in Boston.

PACER will advise on national health care policy issues and integrate research findings into parent education resources.

Opening Doors was established through a National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research grant to the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI). ICI is a partnership of Children's Hospital Boston and University of Massachusetts Boston. As a pilot project, Opening Doors focuses on

interventions for underserved children. In addition to PACER, key collaborators are the Massachusetts Consortium for Children with Special Health Care Needs and the YMCA of Greater Boston.

Opening Doors will concentrate on three areas: the transition from adolescence to adulthood; access to community recreational activities; and screening and early identification for young children.

For information, link to Opening Doors under "National Technical Assistance Projects" at www.pacer.org/tatra/index.htm.

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PACER Web site: www.pacer.org

Alliance site: www.taalliance.org

FAPE site: www.fape.org

C³ site: www.c3online.org

Bullying: www.pacerkidsagainstabullying.org

(Alternate format is available upon request.)

PACER presents leadership awards

PACER Center presented PACER 2006 Leadership Awards to Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Charlie Weaver, members of the PACER Advisory Board.



Sen. Klobuchar



Weaver

support all children and families."

Weaver's award noted his "strong commitment to PACER's work as a member of the PACER Center Advisory

Board; his insight as the parent of a child with disabilities; and his efforts in making a difference for Minnesota families of children with disabilities as a legislator, government official, and leader in the private sector."

Weaver heads the Minnesota Business Partnership.

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Weaver heads the Minnesota Business Partnership.

Minnesota plans new alternate assessment

Minnesota is developing a new alternate assessment, the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS), for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. It is a state effort to comply with requirements in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) and No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). IDEA requires that all children with disabilities be included in general state and district-wide assessment programs, including the NCLB tests that hold schools accountable for student performance.

The MTAS replaces two former Minnesota alternate assessments, the Alternate Assessment-Academic and

the Alternate Assessment-Functional. The MTAS aligns with grade level academic standards and is designed to measure the extent to which students are making progress in the general curriculum. The MTAS will include performance tasks in reading (grades 3-8 and 10) and performance tasks in mathematics (3-8 and 11). Teachers will individually administer the assessment to appropriate students during a five-week window in April and May of 2007. Results of MTAS testing will be shared with parents in the same manner all accountability test results are shared with parents in a school district.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, including the parent, chooses the appropriate assessments for each student based on individual student needs. For guidance in making the determination, IEP teams may refer to Minnesota Department of Education's document, *Participation in the Minnesota Test of Academic Skills*. Parents can find this document, as well as other information on the MTAS, by linking to the Minnesota Department of Education through <http://www.pacer.org/links/minnesota/agencies.htm>. Questions may be e-mailed to mde.testing@state.mn.us and Eric.Kloos@state.mn.us.

The ALLIANCE conducts its 10th annual conference

The 10th annual conference of the Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers, in Washington, D.C. Jan. 25-26, attracted special education stakeholders from parent center staff to policymakers. PACER Center is the National Technical Assistance Center for the ALLIANCE and planned and facilitated the conference. Codirectors are Sue Folger, Sharman Davis Barrett, and PACER Executive Director Paula F. Goldberg.

More than 350 persons represented the nation's 100 Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) or Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs). In addition, officials of the U.S. Department of Education and other government agencies, disability- and education-related organizations, business, and universities were present as participants or speakers.

Entitled "Parent Center Leaders United: Common Experience, Uncommon Commitment," the conference featured more than 40 events from workshops to plenary sessions. Featured speakers included Michael Keller, chief brand officer, International Dairy Queen; Doug Fuchs, Vanderbilt University professor; Richard Tedlow, Harvard Business School professor; John Maag, University of Nebraska professor; Jan Moss, author and University of Oklahoma faculty member.

A reception (funded by Best Buy) at the Hart Senate Office Building, preceded the conference. Twelve U.S. senators attended, with 11 speaking briefly to the crowd. Minnesota Senators Norm Coleman and Amy Klobuchar were among those speaking.

Parent centers provide education and disability resources and information to parents of children with all disabilities.

From left are Don McNeil, PACER board president, Mary Schrock, PACER's director of development, and Michael Keller, Advisory Board.

Below, the Iowa Parent Center delegation met with Sen. Tom Harkin, third from left. Jule Reynolds, National Coalition of Parent Centers coordinator, is second from right.

Paula F. Goldberg, PACER's executive director, conversed with Yoshiko Dart, wife of the late disability activist Justin Dart.



PACER event features head of U.S. Special Ed

Attendance topped more than 500 parents of children with disabilities and professionals at an Oct. 25 PACER meeting featuring John Hager, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS).

Members of the audience came from as far as Ohio, Idaho, and Texas to obtain information on the newly released regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004).

Hager was joined at the podium by Barbara Troolin, director of special education policy, the Minnesota Department of Education, and Dixie Jordan, nationally recognized PACER parent advocate. Troolin and Jordan were last-minute stand-ins for scheduled U.S. Department speakers whose flight was delayed.

Hager stressed the importance of



From left, Barbara Troolin, John Hager, and Dixie Jordan spoke on new IDEA regulations Oct. 25.

the regulations as they affect the IDEA and providing special education to children with all disabilities.

“What we have is a new world of procedures, processes, tools, and ideas,” he said. It will elevate the whole education system for children with disabilities, he continued.

Hager added that the regulations signal

a paradigm shift in which children with disabilities are general education students first, then special education students.

Among materials presented at the meeting were CDs, “IDEA 2004 Part B Final Regulations,” and “Tool Kit on Teaching and Assessing Students with Disabilities.”

The Tool Kit can be ordered through www.edpubs.org or seen and downloaded by linking through “What’s New at PACER” at www.pacer.org.

In addition, a new Tool Kit for parents was introduced at the Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers conference in January. Trainings on the new regulations for parent centers from across the nation are in progress. A future issue of *PACESETTER* will discuss the 2006 regulations.

Minnesota Parent Center PIRC grant helps *all* children

A new PACER Center project, the Minnesota Parent Center, addresses education issues for *all* students—without and with disabilities.



Mary Loberg

The Minnesota Parent Center was established in October through a federal Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) grant. Mary Loberg is the director of the center.

A major component of the grant is to improve student achievement in Title I schools across Minnesota by increasing parent involvement. Early childhood programs are a specific focus. Title I

schools are those with a high percentage of students from low-income families.

The project aligns with the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, in which parent involvement is a key provision.

As part of the PIRC grant, the Minnesota Parent Center is collaborating on multiple levels with the Minnesota Department of Education and local school districts. The Minnesota Parent Center is developing free, research-based, easy-to-read materials explaining to families how they can be active in and encourage their children’s education. In addition to printed copies, the resources will be posted at www.pacer.org/mpc/index.htm.

“We know from experience that parent involvement affects the academic success of children. The Minnesota Parent Center

will provide training and information to help parents from many backgrounds learn how they can be more effective partners with schools,” said Loberg.

“We are happy to be able to share PACER’s expertise on education in another way,” said Paula F. Goldberg, PACER executive director. “As a state-wide parent center, we have worked with schools and parents in many ways over the years.”

“PACER has an excellent reputation as an organization that employs a diverse, multicultural staff,” said Alice Seagren, Minnesota Department of Education commissioner. “They have also built a network on relationships throughout the provider community to reach families in cooperative, collaborative ways.”

Lifting state funding cap on special ed

By Patricia Bill

Minnesota parents, teachers, and school administrators may sometimes have different perspectives, but they are united in urging legislators to remove a 2003 funding cap that limits Minnesota's state aid to local school districts for special education.

In effect, the cap shifts a major portion of special education costs from

the state to local school districts. Many districts already have tight budgets and say they find it difficult to assume additional expenses. The result is what Minnesota legislators and educators call a "cross subsidy"—local schools moving funds from their other education accounts to pay more of the costs for special education services.

Special education stakeholders say

that unless the Legislature takes prompt action, local districts will feel even more financial stress. The Minnesota Department of Education shows that, in 2003, local schools (as a group) spent \$356 million more to educate children with disabilities than what they received in special education state aid. With the current cap, the difference is expected to be \$633

PACER cosponsors first Indo-U.S. AT conference

India's first national conference on assistive technology confirmed PACER Center's international presence and laid the groundwork for further Indo-United States collaboration.

PACER was instrumental in planning what is considered a major step in international collaboration affecting children and others with disabilities.

"Information Technology Uses and Needs for Children and Adults with Disabilities: An Indo-U.S. Partnership Conference," conducted Dec. 5-6 in Bangalore, drew 120 invited blue-ribbon participants from across India. Those attending represented the government, businesses, universities, parents, advocates, and NGOs (Nongovernment Organizations). Twelve Americans, including three from PACER, attended.

The Indian National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped (Dr. L. Govinda Rao, director) and PACER Center (Paula F. Goldberg, executive director) cosponsored the conference. The Indo-



The assistive technology conference in India was hailed as a major event.

U.S. Science and Technology Forum, New Delhi, funded it. Paul Ackerman, international consultant on disability, was conference organizer, and Kristi Wieser, IBM executive and a member of PACER's Advisory Board, assisted with the conference.

Conference presenters included representatives of PACER; the University of Washington; Target Services, India; Google, India; Microsoft, India; and many other Indian groups.

As a result of the conference's success, discussion is underway to establish many assistive technology projects, similar to PACER's Simon Technology Center, in India.

"Our colleagues in India did a

fantastic job of planning and facilitating the conference," said Goldberg. "The people attending the conference were very knowledgeable about technology and disabilities. Across India there is a broad interest in assistive technology, as well as in the conference. A press conference

attracted more than 30 journalists from Indian publications.

"The India-PACER relationship is a natural," Goldberg continued. "India is a leader in technology, and it has millions of people who will benefit from assistive technology. Many of its large companies have ties to the U.S. The two nations also have mutual interests in educational research and providing a competent workforce for the future.

"It's been a great match. I believe that high quality partnerships, such as we have with India, can truly make a difference in the world for people with all disabilities," she said.

is critical for children, communities

million by fiscal 2009.

“The underfunding of special education in Minnesota is becoming a crisis,” said Paula F. Goldberg, PACER Center executive director. “It’s more than dollars. When money is tight, it may affect community and school district attitudes about providing services for children with disabilities.”

Several factors affect Minnesota’s funding situation. They include:

- Federal funding
- Rising education costs
- Tight local budgets

Federal funding. In 1975, Congress passed what became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). Often hailed as a civil rights law, it provides a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to children with disabilities. At its inception, federal

lawmakers committed to funding 40 percent of the cost of special education. The current level of federal funding for special education is now at approximately 17 percent. States and local districts pick up the remainder.

Rising education costs. Many factors contribute to the rising cost of education, in general. They include inflation, changing enrollments, energy prices, and providing current curricula and technology. Special education services usually cost more on average per student than general education services.

Tight local budgets. Referendums are not an answer to special education funding, said Goldberg. Districts are no longer allowed to implement local levy options for special education. Even if they were, many districts would not be able to pass a referendum or the rev-

enues would be minimal, observed Goldberg. In response to tight budgets, local districts are faced with reducing education services, staff positions, and other crucial costs for educating students with disabilities.

“The situation is a major dilemma for schools and families, as well,” said Goldberg. “We know that the quality of education affects the futures of individual children, as well as society as a whole. When children with disabilities receive appropriate education services, they are more likely to obtain jobs, pay taxes, and be part of the community.

“We can’t afford to ignore the education of the nearly 120,000 Minnesota children with disabilities who receive early intervention and special education services. Minnesota’s businesses need the students to fill their workforce needs,” she said.

Special ed funding: It’s more than ‘just talk’ for Keyton

By Patricia Bill

On Tammy Klein’s birthday, her son said, “I love you, Mommy.”

“I don’t usually cry, but I did then,” said Klein, who lives in Grygla, Minn.

They were tears of joy—and for good reason. Klein’s 6-year-old son, Keyton, has apraxia. It is a speech disorder, which caused him to be nonverbal. On Klein’s birthday, May 21, 2006, Keyton spoke those words for the first time.

Only a couple months before, Klein had testified to Minnesota legislators about special education and told them, “My dream is to one day hear my child say, ‘I love you, Mommy.’”

Special education funding made that dream a reality, said Klein. It provided early childhood special education, a paraprofessional, speech services, and an occupational therapy consultant to help Keyton.

Without intensive services, Keyton would not be where he is today, said Klein. From age 3, he used sign language, but he could say only about eight words. His birthday greeting to her was a breakthrough. Since then, the words have “just been flowing,” Klein said. Now Keyton speaks in short sentences, and his verbal skills are expanding.



Keyton worked with his speech teacher, Diane Aandal.

Klein describes her family as “fortunate” in their relationship with their local school district. “We have wonderful support here—the superintendent, principal, teacher, Head Start aide, and paraprofessional,” she said.

She understands that circumstances may be different for families in other areas, she said. She has met parents at PACER workshops and trainings and in other settings who are struggling to obtain services for their children. Their situations remind her of her fear and frustration in Keyton’s early years when she sought help for her son and an agency said that he was not entitled to services. A call to PACER and help from a PACER staff advocate informed her about Keyton’s education rights and obtaining services.

Because of the services and the funds that provide them, “my world has completely changed,” she said.

“The services made a difference in Keyton’s life. His para [paraprofessional] put on a note just this week that it is so awesome to see Keyton speaking to his friends,” she said.

“I always prayed that one day he would talk—and now he’s doing it.”

Resolving differences: Knowing the

Parents, teachers, and school administrators—all have the best interests of children at heart. Because their perspectives are different, however, they may not always agree on how to educate individual children with disabilities.

Good parent-school communication can settle many differences informally. PACER Center's staff members point out that resolving a school problem informally goes a long way toward building a positive school-family relationship that ultimately benefits the student.

The following depicts how parents and the school might resolve a problem informally:

The math scores of a child with a

learning disability dip. The student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team (which must include the parents) meets. The team agrees to change the IEP, and, as required, the school follows up by sending a new IEP document to the parents. The parents notice, however, that some items agreed upon at the meeting are missing. What next?

"A polite telephone inquiry from the parents that doesn't put blame on anyone may solve the problem," said Pat Anderson, a PACER staff member.

"Assume that the school staff had honorable intentions—they made an honest mistake in omitting the items," suggested PACER staff member Carolyn Anderson.

Then when the school sends a new

copy of the IEP with the agreed-upon items included, the problem is solved—without anyone becoming upset.

When problems cannot be solved, however, there are ways to address the situation. Federal and state laws provide dispute resolution processes. In Minnesota, they are conciliation, mediation, a facilitated IEP meeting, a state complaint, and a due process hearing. The adjacent table explains the differences.

For more information on resolving differences on Minnesota special education issues, visit www.pacer.org or call PACER at (952) 838-9000 or (800) 537-2237.

Age of majority may signal a change in rights

Parenthood may be forever, but most moms and dads learn there are changes when a child reaches the age of majority (18 years in most states, including Minnesota).

Minnesota state law provides for the transfer of educational rights at age 18 for students with disabilities who have Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and are not under guardianship.

The law requires the following:

- At least one year before a student turns 18, the student's IEP must include a statement that the student has been informed of the rights that will transfer to him or her on reaching age 18.
- Special education notices will then be provided to the student. They will continue to be provided to the parent(s) as well.
- All other rights given to parents transfer to the student, including students who are in correctional institutions.
- If the school receives notice that the student is under guardianship, no rights

transfer to the student at age 18 and the IEP need not include a statement regarding the transfer of rights.

- The school must notify both the student *and* parent of the transfer of rights.
- The student or the school district may invite the parent to attend the IEP meetings as an individual with knowledge regarding the child.
- Minnesota state law provides that if a student is still claimed as a dependent on the parent's income tax form, then the parent continues to have legal access to the student's educational records.

Most youth with disabilities will not be under a guardianship, either because they do not qualify or because the parent has decided against it, pointed out Carolyn Anderson, PACER staff member. Yet, a young adult may not feel comfortable making decisions on his or her own.

While not written into the law, there are best practices regarding majority

rights that families may wish to consider as their child grows up, she continued.

First, it is wise for a parent to include the child in the IEP process while the child is young. "As early as possible," recommended Anderson. That way, he or she will have a history of involvement and experience in making education decisions by the age of majority. In addition, federal law requires a student to be invited to any IEP meeting in which transition (post high school) services or needs are discussed. In Minnesota, transition must be addressed by age 14 or ninth grade.

Second, a student reaching the age of majority may *want* to maintain parent involvement in the IEP process. In that case, the student can write a letter stating that his or her parent should continue to participate in all IEP meetings and be involved in all education decision making and that the letter be inserted in his or her permanent file. "Most schools are happy to do so," added Anderson.

options can decrease problems

IDEA 2004 introduces resolution meetings

A resolution meeting is a new conflict resolution option established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). The following information comes from material of the Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers at PACER and the Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE).

According to the IDEA, a resolution meeting must be conducted within 15 calendar days of when a school district receives notice of a parent’s due process complaint (Minnesota uses the

word “hearing”) is filed—unless the parent and school district agree, in writing, to waive the meeting or use mediation.

A resolution meeting has parents discuss the due process complaint (hearing) issue and supporting facts, so that the school district has an opportunity to resolve the dispute. The meeting allows the parents and school to work together to avoid a due process hearing.

Resolution meeting participants include the parents, a school district representative who can make decisions on the school’s behalf, and members of

the child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team who have relevant information on the issue(s) of the dispute. The parents and school district decide which IEP team members will attend. The school district cannot bring an attorney to the meeting unless the parents do.

The resolution meeting is meant to offer parents and school a last chance to resolve the dispute before going to due process. Parents and schools have 30 days to resolve the issue before the 45-day timeline for the hearing begins, unless they agree to waive the meeting or to mediate.

Resolving Special Education Differences in Minnesota

Procedure	Issues	Who usually is involved	Decision makers	Timeline	Cost to parents
Facilitated Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Parent(s) and school cannot develop an IEP acceptable to both	IEP team and a facilitator	IEP team with support from a facilitator	Scheduled in a timely manner	None
Conciliation Required if parent requests	Parent(s) and school disagree on identification, evaluation, education placement, or services	Special education director, district staff, parent(s)	Parent(s) and district	A conciliation conference must be conducted within 10 calendar days of the parent request. The school district must give the parent(s) a written memo that describes the district’s final proposed offer of service, including any proposed IEP resulting from the conference, within five business days after the final conference.	None
Mediation Voluntary for both parties	Parent(s) and school disagree on identification, evaluation, education placement, or services and other non-IEP issues that need to be resolved	Mediator, school district staff, parent(s), and other persons of the parent(s) choosing	Parent(s) and school district	Scheduled in a timely manner	None
Due Process Hearing Required if either party requests it (See the article on resolution meetings)	Parent(s) and school disagree on identification, evaluation, education placement, or services	Hearing officer, parent(s), district staff, expert witnesses, attorneys	Hearing officer. If the hearing officer’s decision is appealed, a court decides.	A decision is given in not more than 45 calendar days after the 30-day resolution time period. (There are exceptions to the ruling.)	Attorney, expert witness fees. If parent(s) prevail, they may recover attorney fees
Resolution meeting A facet of due process procedure		Parents, school district representative, IEP team members	Parent(s) and school district	Scheduled within 15 calendar days of the receipt of the due process complaint (hearing)	None
State complaint	The school district does not follow a law or regulation	Parent(s), organization, any citizen, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) Office of Compliance and Assistance	The MDE Office of Compliance and Assistance following an investigation	The complaint must be filed within a year of the issue precipitating it. A final decision is made within 60 days from filing.	None

A surprise bequest honors PACER,

By Patricia Bill

A PACER Center staff member said it is “like a gift from above.” Marge Mann of Marshall, another staff member who has worked for PACER in western Minnesota since 1996, is sure that it is. She knew the giver.

The gift is a \$209,000 bequest to PACER from the late Helen Balcerzak of the Milwaukee area. A distant relative of Mann, she died at age 93 in 2005. The bequest, to be applied to the PACER endowment fund, will support PACER programs for children with all disabilities and their families into the future.

Before Oct. 31, 2006, Mann had no inkling of Balcerzak’s assets, her ongoing support of PACER, the bequest, or her affection for Mann’s oldest son, Brian, who has disabilities.

When Mann considered why Balcerzak would make such a gift to PACER, “things began to add up. I just got goose bumps,” she said.

Balcerzak was the widow of Stan Balcerzak, a cousin of Mann’s mother.

The Balcerzaks never had a family, but they liked children, said Mann. Stan worked for Dupont in South America for many years. Their periodic trips to Milwaukee during Mann’s childhood were a highlight for friends and relatives, said Mann. She recalled Stan’s humor and Helen’s quiet smile.

“I’m sure she researched PACER up one side and down the other.”

“They were fascinating and just a joy to be with,” said Mann. “They were always interested in hearing about what everyone else was doing, although their experiences could have topped anything we had.”

Eventually the Balcerzaks retired to New Jersey. Mann grew up, married, and she and her husband, Ron, began their family. The couples stayed in touch, mainly through holiday letters and occasional coinciding visits to Milwaukee. Mann’s mother often relayed family news. The Balcerzaks always inquired about Brian.

After Stan died in 1991, Helen

Balcerzak moved to the Milwaukee area. On a visit there, Mann told Balcerzak about how PACER had helped her family, her job with PACER, and how honored she felt to be in a position to help other families. A short time later, Balcerzak made a small contribution to PACER.

Over the years in holiday letters, Mann would mention Brian’s struggles and triumphs, the challenges and humor of rearing a family, and her rewarding PACER work. Balcerzak quietly continued to donate to PACER. Shortly before she died, she asked Mann’s mother how Brian was doing.

After Balcerzak’s death, an attorney informed PACER that Balcerzak had made a bequest to PACER. He did not mention an amount.

“We were so pleased and honored that Helen Balcerzak had thought of PACER,” said Paula F. Goldberg, PACER Center executive director. “When the letter came stating the amount of the bequest, however, we were astonished,” she said.



Helen Balcerzak, 2004



Brian Mann



Marge Mann and her mom, Martha Beck

a parent advocate, and her son

Goldberg quickly telephoned Mann. Goldberg began with, "Marge, you're not going to believe this."

It was hard to believe, Mann said. "When Paula said \$209,000, I couldn't breathe."

Balcerzak would have put a lot of thought into making the bequest, said Mann. "She was a shrewd business woman. I'm sure she researched PACER up one side and down the other."

"I feel so honored that she cared so much about Brian that she wanted to help other children with disabilities," said Mann. "I am honored also because [the gift] recognizes the work of PACER. I don't know what I would have done without PACER. I can't think of a

better place for Helen's gift.

"It is so typical of her," Mann continued. "She was a gracious, unpretentious woman. It was *never* about her. It was always about every-

one else. I wish I could thank her. I imagine her up there just watching people be excited about the gift and smiling that little smile."

A bequest to PACER provides a legacy

Making a bequest to help children with disabilities through PACER Center is easy, according to Mary Schrock, PACER's director of development.

Information is available by calling PACER's development office at (952) 838-9000 or contacting an attorney who is representing your interests.

A bequest simply means leaving assets to organizations or individuals by naming them in your will or trust. Bequests can be in cash, real estate, securities, or other assets, and they can be deducted from estate taxes. It is important for donors to know that PACER Center, Inc., is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation in Minnesota.

"A bequest to PACER provides a legacy of your concern for children with disabilities and their families," said Schrock. "It will support important PACER programs that truly make a difference in the lives of children."

Bullying prevention Web site receives use, kudos

When www.PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org was launched a year ago, PACER staff had no idea how far the innovative Web site would go toward helping elementary-school children prevent and respond to bullying. Now PACER—and many parents and schools—know.

During National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week in October, a broad interest created unprecedented demand for PACER's bullying prevention information, resources, and support. Among the highlights:

People are Saying...

Thank you for your wonderful Web site. ... Thank you so much for everything you do.
—Parent, New York

"...This is the most comprehensive, outstanding, creative collaboration of resources (bullying or otherwise!) I have ever found on the Internet or via movies. I love the interactive nature of the site. The movies are excellent. The graphics are fabulous. I appreciate the work that your organization is doing to help keep kids safe."
—School Counselor

I just wanted to thank you for your site. We showed the videos to our second through fifth graders in a presentation....[They loved] all of them. The [Webisodes] were also well accepted. ...What a great way for us to promote no bullying. The children were able to respond in discussion afterwards very well.—School Principal, Indiana



Extended school year: What does it mean?

By Marcia Kelly

For some children with disabilities, a long break from special education instruction and related services can result in a significant loss in skills. Summer vacation, for example, can be a time when achievements gained during the school year are lost.

A possible solution to helping your child maintain those skills is extended school year services. Unlike summer school, extended school year services are tailored to the needs of the child and support goals established in the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Designed to help children who are 3 to 21 years old maintain their skill or development levels during long breaks, these services are provided at no cost to the family.

Each year, your IEP team must

discuss whether your child needs extended school year services. The team will look at several factors and compare them to the goals specified in your child's IEP to determine if your child qualifies.

One factor the team will consider is called regression. "It means that when there's a break in services, your child falls back to a significantly earlier skill level," says Judy Swett, PACER Center advocate. "For example, before winter break, your child showed progress on a speech goal, such as using longer sentences. After winter break, he was back to using two-word sentences." Or perhaps the child has a goal in the area of reading and was found to be reading at the fourth-grade level at the end of the school year but in September he was reading at the third-grade level. Such changes should

be documented by the team throughout the year, Swett adds. "This data is essential to determining if your child qualifies for services."

A related consideration is called recoupment. It refers to how long it takes your child to regain the pre-break skill level. "It should not take longer to regain skills than the length of the break," Swett says. Your child's recoupment time should be documented, as well.

IBM EX.I.T.E. project accepts 2007 applications

Applications for the fifth annual free IBM EX.I.T.E. (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) Camp are available from PACER Center. The summer camp is for 30 motivated middle-school girls with disabilities. Camp activities include interactive and hands-on work with computers, meeting professionals with disabilities, working with a mentor, and touring the IBM Rochester facility.

"The camp is a wonderful opportunity for young women to find an interest in technology. In addition to learning about math, science, and engineering, the girls develop friendships among peers who share their interests and experiences," said Kristi Hansen, coordinator of the Simon Technology Center, which organizes the camp. "Camp alumnae have told us that EX.I.T.E. had a major affect in guiding their academic interests and building their confidence."

The 2007 EX.I.T.E. Camp will open July 26, with sessions on July 30, Aug. 1, 3, 7, and 9. Applications will be accepted until May 1, 2007. For more information about the camp, call (952) 838-9000 or visit www.pacer.org/stc/exite.htm.

Multicultural brochures help schools publicize early childhood services

PACER Center has published a first-of-its-kind series of brochures and accompanying handouts to help school districts tell families from diverse cultures about early intervention and early childhood special education services. A grant from the Minnesota Department of Education funded the project.

The materials are in Hmong, Spanish, Somali, and Russian. English versions are directed to American Indian and African American parents.

The easy-to-understand brochure outlines the steps parents can take



to seek services for their children. The one-page handouts provide additional and more detailed information, including information about developmental milestones.

To assist professionals working in diverse communities, English versions accompany each order of translated publications. There is space for school districts to affix a label providing their local contact information. To order the materials, call PACER at (952) 838-9000.

The publications are also available to download as PDF files on PACER's Web site at www.pacer.org/parent/childhood.

Could it be an option for your child?

Other factors will be considered, too. For example, would a break prevent your child from attaining or keeping skills that allow for personal independence? The skills typically are identified in your child's IEP and may include such things as being able to dress him- or herself, communicate wants and needs, do basic reading and writing, and understand time and money concepts.

As the team looks at your child's potential need for extended school year services, they also will evaluate such things as:

- Rate of progress on a goal
- How severely your child's development is affected by his or her disability
- Impact of the break in service on emerging skills
- Significant behaviors that affect learning
- Goals on the child's IEP that need continuous attention

After weighing all the data, the team will determine if your child qualifies for extended school year services. If so, the team will consider

what services and settings would be appropriate. Recommendations can range anywhere from a structured program at a school to community activities and suggestions of things the family can do at home. Some of the options may include support from staff.

If your child does not qualify for services, you have other alternatives. You could, for example, ask your IEP team for suggestion of activities you can do with your child to maintain skills.

Summer is indeed a time for fun and sun. For some children, it can also be an appropriate time to keep skills sharp and give learning a great start in the fall.

STC open house featured technology and literacy

From creating books to technology demonstrations, PACER Center's Simon Technology Center (STC) Nov. 4 open house offered something for children and youth with disabilities from infancy to young adulthood.

The event's literacy focus featured storytelling with children's author Phyllis Root. AbleNet, Inc., Freedom of Speech, Inc., and Technology for Education, Inc., contributed to the open house.

For many families, the STC event is an annual highlight. Typical parent responses included "Great facility and staff!" and "I'm really impressed." One child summed up the feelings of many as she walked out the door: "When can we come back?"



Resources

NEW

Working Together



This parent's guide to parent-professional partnership and communication is a "must have" for families of children with disabilities as they plan a child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Filled with common-sense tips based on research and practice, it offers a blueprint for building positive family-school relationships. There are national and Minnesota versions.

■ \$6 10+ copies, \$5 each PHP-a19

Facilitated IEP Meetings:

An Emerging Practice

The eight-page guide introduces Individualized Education Program (IEP) facilitation to help special education planning teams reach agreements. It is published by PACER's Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers project and the Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE).

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each

ALL-26



NEW

Beyond Sticks and Stones: How to Help Your Child with a Disability Deal with Bullying



More than 160,000 children, many with disabilities, miss school each day to avoid harassment and intimidation by classmates.

This long-awaited book helps you to help your child address the problem of bullying.

■ \$6 10+ copies, \$4 each BP-7

The Road to Work: An Introduction to Vocational Rehabilitation

The third edition of this book for youth and adults with disabilities and their families reflects the current version of the law. It discusses issues related to the Rehabilitation Act, including eligibility criteria for vocational rehabilitation services, transition planning for high school students, and other legislation and self-advocacy skills.

■ \$8 10+ copies, \$6.50 each

VO-1



Assistive Technology Planner



The planner includes information on choosing and implementing assistive technology as part of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The

kit contains individual booklets for teachers, administrators, and families. \$35 ATP-10

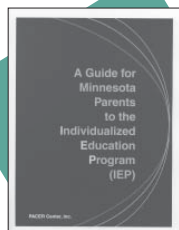
Parents Can Be the Key

The eighth edition of this popular handbook for parents of children and youth with disabilities describes basic special education laws and procedures and parents rights and responsibilities in their children's educations. Published in 2006.

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a1



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



This booklet continues to be a staple for Minnesota parents of children in special education. It explains why parent involvement at IEP meetings is so important, and it guides families through the IEP process, clarifies the Minnesota forms, and explains the information parents need in order to make informed decisions about their child's education.

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a12

NEW

EZ AT Assistive Technology Activities for Children ages 3-8 with Disabilities

This newly published compilation of activities for children with disabilities is the result of submissions by parents and professionals across the nation. Many of the ideas are simple and inexpensive to incorporate at home and school. All represent best practices for children that most effectively use technology to promote learning and inclusion.

\$10 10+ copies, \$8 each STC-16



Resources

No Child Left Behind and Students with Disabilities: A Curriculum for Parent Trainers



The new curriculum includes topics that families need to know about to ensure a quality education for their children with disabilities. School choice, supplemental services, and adequate yearly progress are only a few. The curriculum is in an electronic

PowerPoint™ or printed overheads format. A Spanish version is also available.

\$15 CD-ROM ALL-27 (English)

\$15 CD-ROM ALL-27s (Spanish)

\$295 Overheads in 3-ring binder ALL-28

NEW VIDEO

Universally Designed Technology in Schools

A five-minute video on DVD format, it is part of a PACER online training project funded by the NEC Foundation to help teachers, administrators, and other professionals implement universal design in general classrooms. The video explains universal design and how it benefits students of all abilities. The complete training, with six lessons, is expected to be online in late spring.



\$15 STC-17

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: _____
(Minnesota residents, 6.65%)

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 plans meetings with national speakers

Three nationally recognized speakers will address issues affecting education and children with disabilities at free and public PACER workshops this spring.

Descriptions and dates are listed below. For information or to register for one or all of the events, visit www.pacer.org or call (952) 838-9000.



Alexa Posny
Posny on IDEA

Informed—
experienced—
dynamic: Alexa
Posny knows the
Individuals with

Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and how to explain it. She does so in two separate workshops at PACER Center.

The director of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education, Posny is the nation's foremost speaker on special education. She oversees many programs affecting the education—and lives—of nearly 7 million children with disabilities across the nation.

Posny's understanding of the IDEA comes firsthand. She's been a teacher of students with emotional and learning disabilities—a special education director in Kansas, Wisconsin, and Illinois—and a deputy commissioner of the Kansas State Department of Education. Posny has accrued a wealth of knowledge and shares it willingly and simply.

Two sessions, free to parents, offer information, insight, and encouragement on what the nation's special education law can do.

April 12, 7 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

IDEA: What It Says; What It Means
The Importance of Parental
Involvement and IDEA.

April 13, 9 to 11:30 a.m. (PACER)

IDEA 2004: Questions and
Answers with Alexa Posny

To register for the workshops,
visit www.pacer.org or telephone
(952) 838-9000 (metro area) or (800)
537-2237 (Greater Minnesota).

Matthew Cohen
“The Student
with ADHD at
School”

Nationally known
speaker and Illinois
attorney Matthew

Cohen will help parents and others understand how the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act apply to schools serving children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (ADHD). Cohen's practice represents families of children with disabilities.

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



John Maag
“You Can't
Make Me”

Combine John
Maag's energizing
and entertaining
speaking skills with

expertise on emotional behavioral disorders (EBD), and you have a workshop to remember. A professor at the University of Nebraska, Maag specializes in the education and treatment of children and youth with EBD.

Maag offers techniques for parents and professionals to use with children and adolescents who have EBD.

May 3, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)



PACER named to collaborate in national early literacy project

PACER Center has begun a five-year partnership with the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL), a collaboration that includes highly regarded early childhood organizations across the nation. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education (OSEP), Research to Practice Division.

CELL is a major initiative of the Center for Evidence-Based Practices, one of several Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute centers. PACER's role is in the area of technical assistance, working with the American Institutes for Research and A.J. Papaniokou Center for Excellence in Development Disabilities.

CELL's goal is to encourage early

childhood stakeholders to use evidence-based early literacy teaching practices with children aged birth to 5, who have identified disabilities or developmental delays, or are at risk for poor literacy outcomes. The stakeholders include intervention practitioners, parents, and other caregivers of young children.

CELL focuses on practices needed to enhance early communication, language, and literacy learning. It works to help parents understand the importance of providing opportunities and experiences early in their child's life to encourage future literacy.

For more information, contact PACER Center's Early Childhood Project at (952) 838-9000.

Workshops

PACER Center workshops are free to parents of children and young adults with all disabilities. For information, call PACER at (952) 838-9000 from the metro area or toll free at (800) 537-2237 from Greater Minnesota or visit www.pacer.org

Creation Station

The Creation Station monthly events are for children of all abilities, aged 4-20. Birthday parties can also be scheduled.

Magic Nuudle™ Mania

Create one-of-a-kind, 3-D masterpieces using cornstarch Magic Nuudles™! Ships, hats, Frisbees, and more will come to life with imagination. It's oodles of fun.

March 24, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

Puppet Storybooks

Design and craft colorful puppets from yarn, felt, and much more! Once the puppets are made, create storybooks about them to take home and share with friends and family.

April 28, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

A Touch of Spring

Come see what's blooming in the Creation Station. Children will use colorful tissue paper to decoupage terra cotta pots, then add a touch of spring by making vibrant flowers from tissue paper.

May 19, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

Let's Go Fly a Kite

Prepare for fun. Add a decorative touch to a kite for flying throughout the summer. Participants can also design foam sun visors to wear while flying the kites.

June 30, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

Early Childhood

Challenging Behaviors in Young Children

The workshop addresses how infants and toddlers may express their wants and needs through challenging behaviors. The session will provide parents with strategies to help their children communicate in socially acceptable ways.

March 1, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER Center)

The Second Annual Family Leadership Summit

For Minnesota parents who serve on state, county, and local advisory committees in health, education, and human services, the summit helps participants develop or enhance leadership skills, broaden perspective on family leadership, and learn how to network. It is cosponsored by PACER Center and the Minnesota Departments of Health and Education.

April 20-21 (PACER Center)

Emotional Behavioral

Communication Skills Building for Better Collaboration

This workshop is for parents of children who have disabilities and co-occurring mental health disorders and the professionals who work with them. Basic communication skills,

communication attitude, effective written communication, and productive partnerships will be discussed within the framework of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004).

April 19, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER Center)

Community Voices: Services for Youth with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

This workshop for parents and service providers, sponsored by PACER and the Minnesota Statewide Family Network (MSFN), will provide information on access to county and school services, basic rights, developing positive behavior interventions, and Individualized Education Program (IEP) strategies.

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

Developing Goals and Related Services to Meet Mental Health Needs

This workshop is for parents of children who have disabilities and co-occurring mental health disorders and the professionals who work with them. It explains how to write goals, supports, and objectives into an IEP or Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP) to support mental health needs.

March 1, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Chaska)

March 12, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (St. Cloud)

Successful Strategies

The workshop for parents addresses positive behavioral interventions and supports, children's mental health issues, the Minnesota Comprehensive Children's Mental Health Act,

(Continued on page 18)

Workshop Registration

PACER Center workshops are free to parents of Minnesota children with all disabilities. Persons wishing to attend a workshop are asked to register in advance. In addition to the brief information above, the workshop events are described in more detail on PACER's Web site.

For easy online workshop registration, go to

www.pacer.org/workshops

You may also register by telephone at (952) 838-9000 (Metro area) or (800) 537-2237 toll free (Greater Minnesota)

Workshops

(Continued from page 17)
and communicating with professionals.

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

Transition for Youth with Disabilities and Behavioral Needs: Strategies for Planning

This interactive workshop, sponsored by PACER and the Minnesota Statewide Family Network (MSFN), is for parents of children with disabilities who are 14-21 and are writing a transition IEP. Information on postsecondary options, jobs, community living, home living, and recreation and leisure will be discussed. Transition-aged students (16+) are invited.

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

Parent Training

IDEA: Understanding the IEP

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

April 18, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Mankato)

IDEA: Understanding the Special Education Process

The workshop outlines the basic principles of special education with materials to help parents organize their child's special education records. Topics include free,

appropriate public education, evaluation, resolving disagreements, and the IEP.

March 5, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Grand Rapids)
March 15, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)
April 17, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Marshall)

Intervention: A New First Step?

When a child is having difficulty learning to read, the first step may be to use specially designed interventions often called response to intervention (RTI).

June 21, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER Center)

Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?

This workshop offers intervention strategies for parents of children with disabilities who may be targeted by bullies at school.

March 27, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER Center)
April 5, 6 to 8 p.m. (Albert Lea)

Life Planning for Persons w/ Disabilities

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

A Focus on Special Needs Trust and Life Planning – May 1
7 to 9 p.m. (PACER Center)
A Focus on Guardianship – May 15,
7 to 9 p.m. (PACER Center)

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

The workshop will help parents understand the No Child Left Behind law and its implications for students receiving special education.

March 27, 7 to 9 p.m. (Hibbing)

March 28, 7 to 9 p.m. (Brainerd)
April 21, Morning (Minneapolis)

Skills for Effective Partnership

This interactive workshop will present ideas for parents of special education students to use when communicating with school staff. Options for resolving differences also will be addressed.

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

Special Ed and Nonpublic Schools

This workshop will help parents understand how public special education can serve children with disabilities who attend private schools.

April 26, 7 to 9 p.m. (Edina)

Understanding the Special Education Process for Resolving Disagreements with Schools

Minnesota Department of Education staff will present options and outcomes of dispute resolution processes. Communication strategies and problem-solving tips will be included to increase parents' knowledge about dispute resolution.

Feb. 27, 1 to 4 p.m. (PACER Center)

Understanding Your Child's IEP: Practical Tips

This workshop is the next step for parents who have attended a basic special education process workshop. PACER advocates will lead small discussion groups on IEP development and content.

Feb. 22, 7 to 9 p.m. (Anoka)

Using the Special Education Process for Resolving Disagreements with Schools

Communication strategies and problem solving tips will be included in this workshop, which is designed to increase parents' knowledge about dispute resolution options.

March 19, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Marshall)
April 24, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

What's New in Special Education

This workshop will focus on what parents should know about changes in Minnesota rules and statutes and in the federal regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004).

March 20, 7 to 9 p.m. (Rochester)
June 12, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER Center)

Volunteer!

Join PACER in helping families

PACER serves the community by helping families of children with disabilities. Take a look at the opportunities below and think of how you can help make a difference in the lives of children with disabilities.

Volunteer Opportunities

Be a puppeteer for

- COUNT ME IN
- LET'S PREVENT ABUSE

Do clerical tasks at PACER

Help with PACER Center events

- Annual Phonathon
- Benefit Silent Auction
- Benefit Corporate Sponsor Committee

For information, call PACER at (952) 838-9000 or visit www.pacer.org

Workshops

Simon Technology Center

Assistive technology series

The series of four sessions for parents of children with disabilities and the professionals who work with them will be conducted in both Brainerd and Mankato. Participants who attend three of the four sessions will receive a free library membership to the Simon Technology Center.

Session 1 – What Parents and Professionals Need to Know About Technology for Children with Disabilities

The workshop introduces the concept of assistive technology and related legal requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004). Participants will receive tips on selecting assistive technology devices and an introduction to the Minnesota Assistive Technology Manual.

March 2, 2 to 5 p.m. (Mankato)

This workshop will also be conducted in Duluth and Owatonna, independent of the series in Mankato and Brainerd.

June 21, 6 to 9 p.m. (Duluth)

July 26, 6 to 9 p.m. (Owatonna)

Session 2 – How to Find and Fund Assistive Technology in Minnesota

Participants will learn about state and local resources for trying and acquiring assistive technology. The event is an opportunity to network with local partners in assistive technology and to receive information about grant and loan programs.

March 6, 6 to 9 p.m. (Brainerd)

April 20, 2 to 5 p.m. (Mankato)

Session 3 – Technology to Access the General Curriculum: Universal Design for Learning

Participants will be introduced to the history of universal design for learning (UDL) and key terminology. The workshop offers an opportunity to learn about the technology to support UDL; implementation strategies, including the parent's role in supporting UDL; and classroom planning tips.

April 3, 6 to 9 p.m. (Brainerd)

June 1, 2 to 5 p.m. (Mankato)

Session 4 – Assistive Technology for Reading, Writing, and Math

Participants will receive an overview of assistive technology for reading, writing, and math curriculums. The session includes

demonstrations, hands-on experiences, and information on resources.

May 15, 6 to 9 p.m. (Brainerd)

July 13, 2 to 5 p.m., (Mankato)

Internet for Education and Daily Life

The Internet can offer a way for children and youth to be involved with others their age. This workshop will teach parents and children and young adults with disabilities responsible and creative uses of the Internet. Participants will learn how to use a search engine; how to avoid unwholesome sites; how to create a Web page; and many other Internet skills.

March 24, 9 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

Sept. 22, 9 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

Kurzweil Hands On!

Kurzweil 3000 is a reading, writing, and learning solution for individuals in middle school and older who have learning disabilities. In this beginner's workshop, participants receive hands-on training and a free demo CD to take home. Previous experience is not required. Space is limited.

April 7, 9 a.m. to noon (PACER Center)

Technology for Girls: Women in Technology

For middle-school girls with disabilities, the workshop is led by EX.I.T.E. (EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering) high school interns and women employed in technical fields at IBM. Engaging activities illustrate the importance of math, science, and creative problem solving.

April 10, 6 to 8 p.m. (PACER Center)

Understanding Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning's (UDL) central principle is that a curriculum should include alternatives to make it accessible and

appropriate for individuals with different backgrounds, learning styles, and abilities. The workshop explores UDL and how to use it in the classroom.

May 10, 1 to 3:30 p.m. (PACER Center)

Transition

Packing for Transition

The workshop is for families of youth with disabilities who are in the transition process (age 14 and older). Jayne Spain, Minnesota Department of Education, will talk about opportunities and strategies for youth as they enter and complete high school and move toward postsecondary education, work, and adult services.

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

Social Security for Transition-Age Youth

A Social Security representative will speak about programs for transition-age youth. Among the topics: the difference between Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), what the "Ticket" program involves, and what "PASS" means for young adults.

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

March 26, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Willmar)

Transition to the 13th Year: Unlocking Successful Transition

Find out how first-year postgraduates may benefit from an additional year between high school graduation and college and how this transitional period can be enriching, promote advanced learning concepts, and provide a period of maturation while learning practical skills.

April 24, 6:30 to 8 p.m. (Minneapolis)

Working Together for Our Children

Saturday, April 14 ■ Arlington High School, St. Paul

The conference is conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Parent Center, a PACER Center project. It is for parents, educators, and community members, with an emphasis on Title I schools. Sessions feature accountability programs, No Child Left Behind, and parent involvement.

See "Upcoming Events" at www.pacer.org

Minnesota Parent Center is the Minnesota Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC)

PACER helps families of children with disabilities

Being a parent is challenging, but having a child with a disability may bring extra challenges. That's why there's PACER Center.

A national nonprofit parent center, PACER has served families of children with disabilities and special health needs for nearly 30 years. PACER provides expertise and resources to help families make decisions about education, vocational training, employment, and other services for children and youth with *all* disabilities.

How can PACER help me?

If you have a question or need help for your child with a disability, contact PACER. Most PACER staff are parents or family members of children with disabilities. They share your experience. They understand.

PACER has 30 projects. Some are national or international in scope; many are specific to Minnesota. All focus on ways to help children with disabilities succeed at home, at school, and in the community.

If you live in Minnesota, you can call PACER's parent advocates who will help you understand the laws that affect children with disabilities.

How do I contact PACER?

By telephone, Web sites, e-mail, or fax.

If you call during PACER office hours, a staff member will answer the telephone and take information about your situation and link you to the appropriate PACER project. If you are not

directly connected, a staff member from that project will call you back, usually within 48 hours.

PACER telephone numbers are
(952) 838-9000 (main number)
(800) 537-2237 (Minn. toll-free)
(888) 248-0822 (national toll-free)
(952) 838-0199 (fax)

Send e-mail to pacer@pacer.org.

PACER Center's postal address is 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437.

What are PACER hours?

PACER's switchboard is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday–Friday. There is voice mail at other times. PACER observes federal holidays.

Where can I learn more about PACER?

PACER's Web sites are:

- www.pacer.org (principal site)
- www.taalliance.org (technical assistance for the nation's 100 parent centers)
- www.fape.org (information on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - IDEA)
- www.c3online.org (Connecting Youth to Communities and Careers)
- www.pacerkidsagainstbullying.org (bullying prevention)



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