

PACERSETTER

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

Changes in IDEA involve parents' rights

New regulations of the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) became effective Dec. 31, 2008. IDEA provides a free, appropriate public education for children with disabilities.

Two changes of particular importance to parents of children with disabilities involve:

- a parent's right to revoke consent for special education and related services
- representation of parents and schools by non-attorneys in due process hearings

Since the passage of the first special education laws in 1975, parents have had the right to withdraw consent for special education services. However, school districts also had the right to contest the parent's decision.

The new regulations allow parents to revoke their consent for special education and related services and require the school district to comply with the parent's request for the student's removal from special education. Consequently, schools will not be able to challenge a parent's decision through mediation or due process hearing.

Parents, however, must provide written consent to discontinue special education and related services. Schools must provide the parents with prior written notice detailing the changes in educational placement and services before the services are actually discontinued.

Parents should be aware that once the child is removed from special

(Continued on page 2)



Frankie Valli

PACER's 27th Benefit features Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons

"Oh, What a Night" it will be when Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons bring their soaring harmonies to PACER Center's 27th Annual Benefit on Saturday, May 2, at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

With the smash hit Broadway musical "Jersey Boys," based on the group's rise to fame, the music of Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons is as popular as ever. The 2006 Tony Award-winning musical chronicles the rags-to-riches story of the four New Jersey boys who worked their way to stardom.

A sampling of the group's many hits include "Sherry," "Big Girls Don't Cry," "My Eyes Adore You," and "Who Loves You."

Inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1990, Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons' superb songwriting, doo-wap harmonies, and the three-octave range of lead vocalist Frankie Valli continue to captivate audiences. The group has sold more than 100 million records worldwide.

"People of all ages are excited about seeing Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons," says Paula F. Goldberg, PACER executive director. "This will be a night to remember."

In addition to the group's performance, Benefit tickets also include silent and live auctions. A pre-Benefit gourmet dinner is available by separate ticket. The fun continues at a postconcert patron party for people purchasing Benefit tickets of \$140 or more.

Benefit co-chairs are Patrice Alkire, Jessica Broyles, Danna Mirviss, Colleen McGough Wood, and Judy Schumeister. Silent Auction co-chairs are Michele Heimes, Sarah Meeks, and Julie and Don McNeil.

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

BENEFIT RESERVATIONS

To reserve your tickets for the 2009 PACER Benefit featuring **Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons**, please complete the form below and fax or mail it to PACER Center. Reservations can also be made at PACER's Web site (PACER.org) or by telephoning 952-838-9000.

Benefit Tickets:

Please send me:

- (# of) _____ \$55¹ Friend
- (# of) _____ \$85¹ Supporter
- (# of) _____ \$140² Patron*
- (# of) _____ \$200² Benefactor*
- (# of) _____ \$275³ Sponsor*
- (# of) _____ \$550³ 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 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 April 24.)*

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 \$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

Changes in IDEA involve parents' rights (Continued from page 1)

education services, the school is not required to remove references to special education in a child's records. Parents can still request amendments to anything in the records that might be inaccurate or misleading.

Parents should consider the following additional facts when revoking their consent to their child's special education services:

- When a parent withdraws consent, the student and parent no longer have rights under IDEA. The student becomes a regular education student and will be required to meet all state

requirements for graduation.

- The child will be required to follow the same discipline policies as regular education students.

• Accommodations permitted to a student on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for statewide accountability and graduation-required assessments will no longer be available when a student exits special education.

- If the parent withdraws consent and the child is removed from special education, the parent at any time may request an evaluation, which will then

be an initial evaluation.

The new regulations also clarify that schools and parents may utilize non-attorneys in due process hearings if a state does not already have laws prohibiting it. In Minnesota, this is not addressed in special education law or regulations.

The full text of these regulations can be viewed at PACER.org/legislation/news.asp. Parents who would like to discuss withdrawing consent may call PACER at 952-838-9000 and speak with a parent advocate.

Roberta Mann Benson honored by PACER Center

The PACER Leadership Award was presented to Roberta Mann Benson on Oct. 12, 2008 for her dedication to educate professionals and families about mental health needs and learning disabilities.

Mann Benson developed and continues to sponsor the annual National Ted and Roberta Mann Foundation Symposium, which this year was attended by 900 educators and families.

“Roberta’s vision, exemplary leadership, creativity, commitment and passion have truly made a difference in the world,” says Paula F. Goldberg, PACER’s executive director.

“We applaud her strong, caring advocacy for children and adults with mental health needs and learning disabilities.”

Mann Benson received her Ph.D. in education from St. Mary’s University

on Oct. 12, and the award was presented at a reception honoring her graduation.

Hundreds of parents and professionals alike praised the 2008 Symposium:

“I love the new ideas to help my two children with disabilities. Also, as an educator, I will take these ideas and techniques into the classroom. Profound thanks!”

“One of the best workshops I’ve gone to and I am an experienced teacher of 35 years.”



Paula F. Goldberg (L) and Roberta Mann Benson

Couple’s bequest honors PACER

After receiving assistance from PACER many years ago, Rosemary Fish became a longtime, dedicated PACER volunteer. Now she and her husband, Marvin, are lending additional support by naming PACER in their will.

“Nothing comes close to PACER for getting the job done for a family with a child who has special needs,” Rosemary says. “That’s why we feel so strongly about including PACER in our will.”

Rosemary turned to PACER when her daughter, Leslie, who has special needs, was young. She remembers attending a workshop and later gaining specific help with Leslie’s schooling when she encountered difficulties during kindergarten.

“PACER really walked us through it and had a handle on things, and we were successful. That proved to me that one parent can make a difference, and that PACER was amazing,” Rosemary says. “Not only was PACER there for Leslie and for us, but it’s there for so many children.”

“Rosemary and Marvin are true role models of service and generos-



Leslie, Rosemary, and Marvin Fish.

ity, and their gift will provide for many children with disabilities in the future,” says Mary Schrock, PACER’s chief operating and development officer.

Anyone wishing to include PACER in their will or another planned giving vehicle may contact Schrock at 952-838-9000 or an attorney representing their interests. Gifts made in this way can be in cash, real estate, securities, or other assets, and can be deducted from estate taxes. PACER Center, Inc., is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation in Minnesota.

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PACER Web site: PACER.org

ALLIANCE site: taalliance.org

FAPE site: fape.org

C3 site: c3online.org

BULLYING: www.PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org
(Alternate format is available upon request.)

PACER's global work initiates AT center in India

A young girl in India with cerebral palsy is learning to communicate, thanks to PACER's help with the first comprehensive assistive technology (AT) center in that country.

She's one of many children with disabilities who will have a chance to learn and communicate more fully as they are trained at the new Assistive Technology for Life Skills Training Center in Bangalore, India.

The center opened Sept. 13, 2008, after PACER Center, IBM Corporation, and the Spastics Society of Karnataka (SSK) of India collaborated on the concept and details of funding, equipping, and teacher training. Like PACER, SSK is a non-profit organization serving children and young adults with disabilities.

"This center will be a model for the rest of the country," says Paula F. Goldberg, executive director of PACER Center. "We were excited



Bridget Gilormini (center), Paul Ackerman, Ph.D., and Paula Goldberg (far right) met with SSK staff at the new center's inauguration.

to help in this cooperative effort and know the center will make a difference in the lives of many children."

The SSK-PACER connection began several years ago when Goldberg visited the Non-governmental Organization. With support from IBM, plans for the new center modeled after PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC) were put into motion.

PACER's STC Coordinator Bridget Gilormini traveled to India in the fall of 2007 and again in September of 2008 to train SSK staff in the use of AT. Rabindran Issac of SSK also visited PACER to observe STC operations. "The SSK teachers are giving children a voice, which is really exciting," Gilormini says.

IBM donated the hardware and Accessibility Works software to the center and is also providing consultants and volunteers for support. Kristi Wieser of IBM played an integral role in the collaboration.

Goldberg, Gilormini, and Paul Ackerman, Ph.D., were among the speakers at the center's Sept. 13 inauguration, which was also attended by Mrs. Rukmini Krishnaswamy, executive director of SSK, and more than 350 people. The opening of the new center made headlines in several Indian newspapers.

Folger honored by Philadelphia parent center

PACER's Sue Folger, co-director of the Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers, was honored Oct. 10, 2008 at the 10th anniversary celebration of Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE, Inc.), a parent center serving the Hispanic community in Philadelphia.

Luz Hernandez, executive director of HUNE, Inc., presented Folger with an award for her "advocacy and dedication to families and children with disabilities."

"Sue has always been an excellent advocate on behalf of children with disabilities," Hernandez says. "Whenever I've been in need of help, she's been there for us. She's a great person and is willing to go above and beyond to help children with disabilities."

The Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers supports the 105 U.S. parent centers through standardized



Sue Folger (L) and Luz Hernandez

publications, unified data collection, national conferences and institutes, Webinars, a monthly e-newsletter, management and nonprofit expertise, and other resources.

"Sue is an amazing person and a respected leader who cares deeply about children and youth with disabilities," says Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director.

Folger has more than 23 years of experience at PACER Center, with more than 19 years serving as a technical assistance provider for the parent center network. A project manager for the ALLIANCE National Center and PACER, Folger has also worked

with other national organizations on joint projects and collaborated with the Office of Special Education Programs and other technical assistance agencies.

HUNE, Inc., has provided information, training, and support to more than 2,900 parents of children with disabilities since 1998.

Leadership program trains parents for change

By Julie Holmquist

Lynn Miland discovered a new problem when her daughter, who has an autism spectrum disorder, entered high school in southern Minnesota. There were no programs providing peer involvement for teens with disabilities, and she worried about how to meet her daughter's social and emotional needs.

"I was feeling powerless," she says.

That was before Miland received leadership training through a national project called "Parents as Collaborative Leaders: Improving Outcomes for Children with Disabilities."

Through this project led by the University of Vermont's National Institute on Leadership, Disability and Students Placed at Risk, and PACER, Miland and others discovered the tools they needed to make changes in their communities.

"It launched me into taking action," Miland says. "It gave me a framework. I realized that there were people in the same boat who wanted to make a change, and we started collaborating."

After she created a parent support group, Miland and others not only developed several programs that help high schools students with disabilities maintain social connections, they also planned a town hall meeting on disability issues.

Miland is just one of 36 parents from across the U.S. working for change after participating in the project's training and internship program. But the project doesn't stop there: an online curriculum will allow an unlimited number of parents to receive the leadership training.

"There's a great need for parents to be involved in the local, state, and



*Susan Hasazi, Ed.D.,
University of Vermont*



*Katherine Shepherd, Ed.D.,
University of Vermont*

federal levels and to contribute to policy changes concerning children with disabilities," says Katherine Shepherd of the University of Vermont. "But it's our feeling that there have been many barriers. Often parents don't feel qualified or don't feel welcome at the table."

"Parents haven't had an opportunity to gain the necessary professional skills to become involved with the schools, agencies, and the political or policy process on an equal footing," adds Susan Hasazi of the University of Vermont. This is particularly a problem for parents from low income and diverse cultural backgrounds, or people whose first language is not English. The five-year project presented a diverse group of parents with a Master's-level curriculum in leadership skills — and it made an impact.

"One woman said she was barely able to advocate for her child in an IEP (Individualized Education Program) meeting before the training, but now she's leading groups," Shepherd says. "Others are doing policy work that they never would have imagined doing." Four women in California are working toward

policy changes at the state level. "All of those women say they wouldn't have done it without the training," Shepherd says.

Across the country, parents who participated in the project are now chairing state organizations, creating support groups, working on changing laws,

and participating in advisory committees. One woman wanted to help families of children who have co-occurring disorders of developmental delay and a mental health diagnosis. Using skills gained through the leadership project, she worked with a technical assistance center, a hospital, and her state's mental health division to arrange training for 13 community mental health centers.

"Parents really stepped up to the plate at a policy level," Hasazi says. "They had never been involved in affecting policy, and now they see themselves in that regard."

Parents involved report a new sense of empowerment, Shepherd says. Miland does, too, noting that the project changed her perspective. "I feel like I have a strong voice now," she says.

Web site offers training for all

The curriculum written for this program is now available as 10 PowerPoint modules on the Parents as Collaborative Leaders Web site, uvm.edu/~pcl/modules.php. Parent Centers are encouraged to download the modules for their own training sessions and may find a link to the site on PACER.org

"We want more parents to feel that they can think of themselves as a leader," Shepherd says. "We're all leaders in some way."

TRIO offers support for college students

By Julie Holmquist

As Kristin Koppen helped her son Dylan apply for college, she turned to PACER and the University of Minnesota's disability office for assistance. Her search for postsecondary support for her son, who has ADHD, led her to a federal program called TRIO Student Support Services.

Dylan wrote an essay to apply for the support program and was accepted.

"Freshmen are often overwhelmed by huge lecture classes and the load of work," Kristin says. "I feel Dylan couldn't be more fortunate to have this help, and I'm amazed with the services TRIO provides students to help ensure their success."

The program provides a mentor for Dylan and offers academic support. Students in TRIO receive tutoring, counseling, remedial instruction, career workshops, and other assistance.

Koppen notes that students who would not otherwise be accepted into universities through standard channels due to their academic records may be accepted through TRIO.

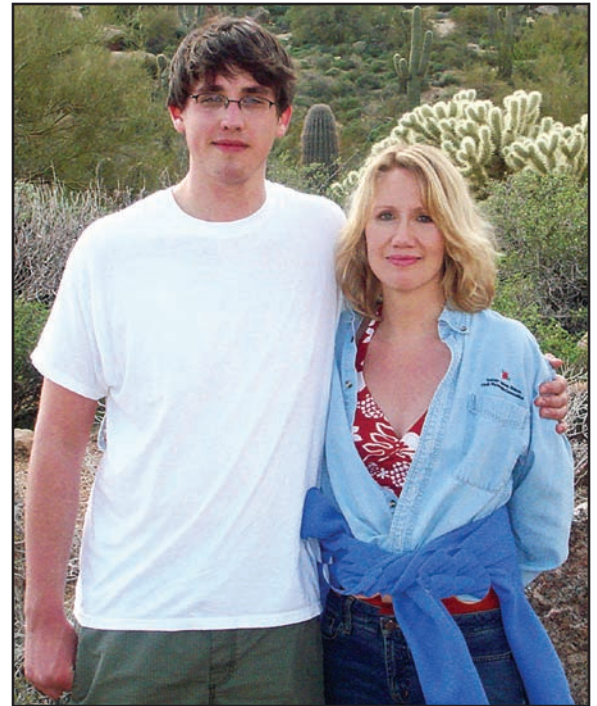
"The extra courses TRIO offers to

support students through the fundamental lecture courses will make all the difference for Dylan," Kristin says.

More than 1,000 U.S. colleges, universities, community colleges, and agencies now offer TRIO programs, including 29 Minnesota colleges.

"TRIO offers a great opportunity for students with disabilities," says Sean Roy, director of transition and workforce partnerships for PACER. "It's a diversity program committed to providing an educational opportunity for all Americans, regardless of race, ethnic background, economic circumstance, or disability."

Students in the TRIO Student Support Services program are more than twice as likely to remain in college than those students from similar backgrounds who do not participate in the program. Deborah Leuchovius, director of PACER's Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA)



Dylan and Kristin Koppen

Project, attributes this success to the holistic approach provided by TRIO programs.

"This approach promotes success for many students who can benefit from more comprehensive or more individualized supports, including students with disabilities," she says. "Most four-year colleges provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities so they can access their programs, but do not go beyond meeting the minimum requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act to foster postsecondary achievement."

To learn more about TRIO and to find a directory of colleges offering TRIO, visit www.coenet.us/ecm/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home or find a listing of Minnesota TRIO programs at mntrio.org. To research other college access programs, visit collegeaccessdirectory.org.

For more information about transition issues, call Sean Roy at 952-838-9000.

Who can apply?

TRIO participants must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents and meet at least one of the following criteria: be low income as determined by federal guidelines; be a first-generation college student (neither parent has a baccalaureate degree); or have a documented disability.

Nationally, more than 2,700 TRIO programs serve nearly 866,000 low-income Americans.

Thirty-seven percent of TRIO students are Caucasian, 35 percent are African-American, 19 percent are Hispanic, 4 percent are Native American, 4 percent are Asian-American, and 1 percent are listed as "other," including multiracial students. Twenty-two thousand students with disabilities are enrolled in the TRIO programs.

National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week gains Internet exposure on Yahoo! Kids, blogs

Yahoo! Kids, a premier national Web site for children, and the blogosphere helped spread the message of PACER's third annual National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week to millions of people during the October 2008 campaign.

Yahoo! Kids featured the prevention campaign on its site and tallied more than 2.5 million page views of PACER's bullying prevention material, as well as 48,810 viewers of PACER's videos. "This was an incredible opportunity to share our message, and we're thankful that Jimmy Pitaro of Yahoo! Kids suggested the idea and was so enthusiastic," says Julie Hertzog, PACER's bullying prevention coordinator. Pitaro is a member of PACER's National Advisory Board.

"With an average of nearly 7,000 daily streams, PACER's videos outperformed some movies we've featured," says Dave Rogers, managing editor of Yahoo! Kids.

There was also plenty of buzz in the blogosphere after Adam Singer and Maria Pierson of Pierson Grant Public Relations shared the news with bloggers, resulting in 220 posted stories about the prevention effort. Along with



articles in two national magazines, news about the week and prevention tips received national coverage by Web sites, newspapers, and radio shows. The week was supported by a Congressional resolution, five governor's proclamations, and five cosponsors: National PTA, National Education Association, American Federation for Teachers, National Coalition for Parent Involvement

in Education, and the School Social Work Association of America. In addition, 102 schools, organizations, parent centers, and individuals partnered with PACER to help prevent bullying in schools and communities.

A total of 86,000 people visited PACER's bullying prevention Web sites during the week, which shared daily classroom activities, lesson plans, handouts and more, and 230,000 Kids Against Bullying bookmarks were distributed to schools nationwide.

PACER's prevention efforts continue: Watch for the launch of a new bullying prevention Web site for teens. Learn more at PACER.org. PACER is the National Center for Bullying Prevention.

Family Center offers family-friendly AT resources

Anyone looking for free, family-friendly information resources on assistive technology (AT) can find them at the Family Center on Technology and Disability Web site (fctd.info).

"This is a great place for professionals and parents to find information," says Bridget Gilormini, coordinator of PACER's Simon Technology Center. "It's an excellent resource that allows for customized searches."

The Family Center is supported by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and a partnership of organizations including PACER, the Alliance for Technology Access,

and InfoUse, Inc. The partnership has been administered by the Academy for Educational Development since 2001.

An overwhelming demand for information about assistive technology fuels the need for the Web site, says Jackie Hess, the Family Center director. "Because new technology developments occur all the time, parents and professionals need current, accurate information," Hess says.

Parents can find that information by using the Family Center's searchable database of hundreds of assistive technology resources, requesting the free CD of those resources, and by reading a monthly newsletter.

Several times a year, the Fam-

ily Center hosts month-long online discussions with nationally recognized experts and an online institute for which participants can receive continuing education credits. The site also offers a database of more than 1,200 disability organizations searchable by state, type of organization, and specific disability.

"People tell us how the information they received from us changed the life of their child or the students with whom they work," Hess says. "This may be the information age, but it's still very much about the people."

For more information, visit the Web site, fctd.info, or call Bridget Gilormini at 952-838-9000.

KidSmart Project encourages inclusion

Preschooler Dorismar Cruz is exploring something new at her Minneapolis Head Start: a kid-friendly, accessible computer recently provided by KidSmart, a Project of IBM and PACER.

“It’s really great because she learns better and is involved in technology,” says Arturo Cruz, Dorismar’s father.

The new computers at the Parents In Community Action (PICA) Head Start in Minneapolis were just a few of the 600 donated nationwide by IBM and PACER to help children with disabilities and their classmates build skills for future academic success. The \$1.6 million IBM donation was made to PACER Center and announced Nov. 18, 2008, at PICA. Teachers at PICA mentioned the benefits after working with the computers for only six weeks.

“The children are more verbal with each other because they get so excited about the computer,” notes teacher Tiffany Neils.

PACER will work with groups nationwide, including the National Head Start Association and federally funded Parent Centers, to bring training to



Children at a PICA Head Start gather around the Young Explorer.

early childhood teachers and the computer learning centers to nearly 20,000 children in the next year.

“With our youngest children increasingly becoming tech savvy, it’s important that all children have equal access to technology in today’s digital age,” says Paula Goldberg, executive director at PACER. “We’ve seen how technology in the classrooms can be used to not only help children learn, but also how it can be used to break down divisions between children with and without disabilities.”

IBM’s KidSmart program, now in its 10th year, includes the Young Explorer, a colorful computer equipped

with award-winning educational software to help children learn and explore concepts in math, science and language. The KidSmart program also includes teacher and parent training material critical for education. The KidSmart Web site, kidsmartearlylearning.org, provides information for teachers and parents on early childhood learning and technology.

“The accessibility of the computer is so exciting,” says Rochelle Cox, Minneapolis Public Schools early childhood/special education administrator. The Minneapolis School District provides teacher support to the PICA Head Start centers, which serve many children with disabilities as well as children without disabilities. “I especially like the auditory and visual prompts that help children succeed. It’s a great experience for kids to share with their peers.”

This year, KidSmart’s global focus is on the special needs of children with disabilities. Several accessible features, including scanning and closed

Apply now for summer IBM, PACER EX.I.T.E. Camp

Middle-school girls with disabilities are invited to apply for the seventh annual 2009 IBM EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering (EX.I.T.E.) camp at PACER Center.

“Girls come to camp thinking that science is about textbooks. When the experiments are accessible, challenging, and structured to help them succeed, we see an enormous increase in campers’ self-confidence,” says Meghan Kunz, coordinator of PACER’s EX.I.T.E. Camp.

The August day camp is designed to help girls investigate the world around them using technology and hands-on activities. At past camps, girls have made ice cream from

liquid nitrogen, created music videos, and used chemistry to create lip gloss.

Campers learn alongside scientists, chemists, engineers and other professionals from local corporations such as IBM, 3M, Accenture, and Medtronic. The 2008 PACER Camp included presentations from the Bakken Museum, Underwater Adventures, NASA, and KARE 11’s chief meteorologist, Belinda Jensen.

Camp applications will be accepted until May 1 and are available online at PACER.org/stc/exite/Camp.asp. For more information, call 952-838-9000.

at preschool level with technology

captioning, are built into the options menu of the software to help make the program especially useful to children with disabilities.

“This program uses technology, but it’s not about technology. It’s about effective early childhood education and learning,” says Stanley S. Litow, vice president of corporate citizenship and corporate affairs, IBM, and a former deputy chancellor of schools in New York City. “IBM will also work with our partner PACER, to lend IBM employee volunteer experts around the country to make sure the teachers and staffs are effectively trained to get the most out of this exciting program.”

PACER’s innovative training program called Project KITE (Kids Included through Technology are Enriched, PACER.org/stc/kite.index.asp) is part of the KidSmart Project. Developed from a U.S. Department of Education early childhood grant, KITE prepares early childhood personnel



(L to R) Mary Schrock, PACER; MaryAnnette Quinnell, PICA; Rochelle Cox, Minneapolis Schools; Bridget Gilormini, PACER; Rico Alexander, PICA; Heidi Kraemer, IBM; Paula Goldberg, PACER; Barry Mason and Kristi Weisner, IBM.

and parents to use technology in the classroom to improve inclusion and educational outcomes of young children with disabilities. KITE has shown that training on assistive technology and early learning, combined with the introduction of technology, improves

outcomes for children with and without disabilities.

For more information on KidSmart, A Project of IBM and PACER, visit PACER.org/stc/kidsmart/index.asp or call Bridget Gilormini, coordinator of the project, at 952-838-9000.

Low-tech is highly popular at STC Open House

More than 120 parents, children, and professionals learned about low-tech and free assistive technology at the Simon Technology Center (STC) annual open house Nov. 1.

While children made helpful tools such as pencil grips and tried out accessible bikes, adults learned about educational software and other resources for children and adults with disabilities.

Among the popular activities were computer lab sessions on Tar Heel Reader, a free, Web-based program that displays a collection of easy-to-read books and lets users make their own age-appropriate books for struggling readers. Vendors from AbleNet, Atomic Learning, BlueSky Designs, Every Kid Mobility, Minnesota Computers for Schools, the Minnesota STAR Program, and Technology for Education also demonstrated assistive technology tools and shared their expertise and resources. The open house included tours of the Simon Technology Center, art activities, and prizes.



For more information about how assistive technology may help your child with a disability, contact the Simon Technology Center at 952-838-9000.

Parents share: “I wish I knew then what

By Marcia Kelly

If you could fast forward into the future, would you want to know *now* some of the insight that you’ll gain over the years as you raise your young child with a disability? Would you like to have the perspective of time and experience today?

There’s no magic time-travel machine that can give you that view, of course. The next best thing, however, might be insights from parents who have been through the early years of raising a child with a disability.

Three PACER parent advocates who now have young adults with disabilities share their views about the challenges they faced when their children were small. Here’s what they wish they’d known then.



Barb Ziemke,
mother of a 20-
year-old son with
a developmental
disability:

I wish I had:

... taken more time to enjoy the satisfying moments of being a parent. As I look back

at photos, I think “he was doing pretty well as a 2-year-old.” Focusing on learning about my son’s disability sometimes didn’t allow me to just enjoy his 2-year-oldness.

... lightened up a little and not taken everything so seriously. Some of the things I thought were so urgent at the time weren’t as urgent as I thought.

... looked at things more holistically and devoted more effort to building informal social supports with the family and community. It’s the people you have relationships with that will provide support for your child in the long run.

... had higher expectations of my son, especially around responsibilities, chores, and contributing to family life. I let him off the hook too much because things were more challenging for him or because I didn’t have the time and energy to supervise him.

... trusted other people more with my son and taken

more risks to assume that others would know what to do with him in a social situation. I felt like I had to be there to take care of him. People would have figured things out. I assumed family wouldn’t want to be “burdened” but I think many of them would have enjoyed it and risen to the occasion. I didn’t give them enough chances to do that.

... done less apologizing for my son’s differences and the extra challenges that they brought to the situation. It’s nothing to be apologetic about because someone is different. I wish I’d seen disability as a natural part of life and expected that others would, too.



Jesús Villaseñor,
father of a 23-year-old
son with a learning dis-
ability:

I wish I had:

... not put so much trust in the teachers who worked with my son in the early years. I assumed they all understood learning disabilities and would provide him with a supportive, positive learning environment,

but sadly, that was not the case. I strongly believe that all teachers need to spend more time learning about different learning styles and in particular, learning disabilities. Too often I was told that my son was “too smart to have a learning disability.”

... sent my son to work with tutors outside of school to help him. He was very resistant to that idea, and I guess I was too overwhelmed to pursue it. I have learned since then that many children with learning disabilities have to deal with a great amount of emotional stress and loss of self-esteem because they are keenly aware they don’t quite measure up to their peers. I found myself making excuses for him instead of addressing issues head on. I didn’t understand what he was going through until much later.

... had the courage to seek out other parents of kids with learning disabilities at school for support. I felt so alone, and though I looked for a support group in the community, at that time there weren’t any.

at I know now”

... not let my desire to be seen positively by the schools affect my ability to see my son clearly. I started to see him through the eyes of educators who stressed his weak points, were overly critical of him, or saw the disability more than the person. Later I knew that my son is an amazing person, that his disability is only a small part of who he is. Although we never stop learning, the school environment does end at some point and then life takes over. Now, my son is a successful art student.



Renelle Nelson,
mother of a 28-year-old son with developmental delays and mental health needs:

I wish I had...

... picked my battles. When you have a child with many needs, you spend a lot of time focusing on that to the detriment of others. It takes on a life of its own. If you can keep it in perspective and figure out how to prioritize what is essential, everyone is better off for it.

... asked my family, “What do you think you can handle? What is most helpful to you, and what can we do to make it happen?” I didn’t do that, but I wish I had planned family meetings and received everyone’s input.

... networked with other parents more. You are so into the situation of your own little world. Networking would have given me a broader perspective, pulled me out of the little hole I was in, given me more opportunity for informal support—which I needed but didn’t realize I needed.

... put as much priority on setting aside time for myself as being the glue in the family.

... worked harder to develop a cadre of caregivers for my son. I was a proud parent and thought I could handle it all. In hindsight, I think my son and I would have benefited more from having a more comprehensive system of care around him, whether it was professionals or a network of babysitters.

Involvement strategies deter high school dropouts

Research shows that students who are engaged at school or in the community tend to stay in school. Yet many parents do not seem to be aware of opportunities for involvement available to their children both at school and in the community, and students don’t often realize the connection between their future dreams and current education.

PACER Center provided that information in 2008 through a dropout prevention program for parents and students at the Richfield School District and the Fond Du Lac Ojibwe Schools. Funded in part by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Education, the program targeted high school students with disabilities and their parents.

To emphasize the importance of staying in school, PACER led students through several activities, including an assignment to envision their lives 10 years into the future.

“We gave them an approximation of what it will cost in 10 years to realize the lifestyle they had chosen,” says Jody Manning, PACER advocate. “This gave them an opportunity to analyze their dreams for the future and what it will take to achieve those dreams.”

Because 80 percent of the students had lifestyle expenses exceeding their earning power, the activity reinforced the importance of graduating from high school. Matching personality traits with a list of potential careers also helped the students envision a concrete way to achieve their dreams and linked some students to jobs they had never heard of before.

PACER staff also taught parents and students about research-based strategies that promote achievement and then provided contacts to local resources so parents and students could put those strategies to use. The strategies are: family involvement, mentoring and tutoring, service learning, after-school opportunities, safe learning environments, and alternative learning opportunities.

Don’t miss PACER’s e-news!

Interested in breaking news affecting children with disabilities or the latest updates on PACER events? Don’t miss the latest news! Send your e-mail address to PACER@PACER.org to receive up-to-the-minute happenings through PACER e-news.

For grandparents: How to help and cope

By Julie Holmquist

Tom and Gwen Besnett sound like any other set of proud grandparents. Ask them about their grandson, Orion, and they'll tell you that he is not only charming and gutsy, he has perfect pitch, loves reading car magazines, speaks Arabic with his neurosurgeon, and chats in Urdu and Hindi with a former personal care attendant.

But when Orion Besnett Slocum was born 20 years ago to their daughter, Lisa, it was a crisis for the couple. They discovered that Orion had Dandy-Walker syndrome and was legally blind.

"Someone in the hospital told me that he wasn't going to live," Gwen recalls.

"It didn't look like he was going to be able to talk," Tom says.

In the years following Orion's birth, Tom and Gwen discovered — by trial and error — how grandparents can best help their child as well as their grandchild with a disability. Here, Tom, Gwen, and Lisa share their advice.

Tom's advice

- Join a group such as PACER's Grandparent-to-Grandparent project. "It provides a wonderful way for grandparents to maintain their bearings and share their sense of loss and grief with other understanding grandparents," Tom says. "It also provides a good place to celebrate the tiny gains in your grandchild's life."

- Find out who your grandchild is and find ways to enjoy him and to celebrate with him.

- Figure out how to adapt and overcome obstacles so your grandchild can be involved in fun activities such as fishing along with you.

- Fill in where needed. (Tom was Orion's personal care assistant each summer for nine years at language camp.)

Gwen's advice

- Be supportive, but be careful not to overstep your bounds. "I have a nursing background, and I kept asking Lisa questions about Orion's care," Gwen says. "Finally,



Tom and Gwen Besnett with Orion. Orion is enrolled in a transition program in Hopkins and speaks seven languages proficiently.

Lisa told me to bug off. She told me that she had to do it herself. It was difficult for me, but I understood."

- Try to understand the parents' new life. They may be dealing with insurance issues, Social Security, Individualized Education Programs, and Medicaid. "It's the parent's struggle, but grandparents must realize what a struggle it is," Gwen says.

- Help with child care. Among other things, Gwen baby-sat, made pancakes out of vegetables because of Orion's food aversions, and held his hand to her mouth while she talked to encourage speech.

- Enjoy what you have, when you have it. That advice was given to Gwen by a doctor when she pressed for information on Orion's development.

It's important to enjoy the moment, she says, without being too focused on when the next milestone will occur.

Lisa's advice

- Realize that as grandparents who did not parent a child with a disability, you are not the fount of wisdom in this situation.

- Remember that your child will parent differently than you did, due in part to personality and generational differences, as well as the fact that he or she has a child with disabilities.

- Realize that what worked for you as a parent may not work for your grandchild. For example, a grandparent's methods of using a bottle or diapering may not apply to a child with certain disabilities.

- Learn to be a good caregiver so you can give the par-

when your grandchild has a disability

ents a break. “I think that was the most valuable thing my mother did,” Lisa says. “She also took Orion to play classes. It was hard for me to do it, but she loved it.” Both sets of grandparents took infant CPR classes because of Orion’s condition, and Lisa attributes Orion’s love for socializing to Gwen’s ability to hold him for hours at a time.

- Provide time for parents’ self care. Sitting with the child for an hour so the parent can take a bath will lessen parental stress. “Orion’s other grandmother would do my laundry or just be another person in the house so I wasn’t alone,” Lisa says. “That gives you the ability to relax.”
- Tell the parents that they are allowed to spend time on themselves, apart from their child with a disability. That makes it okay.
- Different parents will have different needs, depending

on the situation. Maybe their insurance does not cover an appropriate wheelchair for a 3-year-old. Grandparents may be able to provide needed items.

PACER offers grandparent group

PACER’s Grandparent-to-Grandparent project is a group for grandparents of children who have any type of disability. The group offers the chance to meet other grandparents of children with special needs and share joys and concerns. For more information about the group, call 952-838-9000 and ask for the Grandparent-to-Grandparent project.

New online guide for special education councils debuts

PACER is pleased to announce “SEAC Strategies for Success: An Online Guide for Minnesota Local Special Education Advisory Councils.” This innovative, state-of-the-art guide is easily accessed on the new, interactive, one-stop site for Special Education Advisory Committees (SEAC) in Minnesota: mnseacinfo.org. The information and resources will be helpful to parents and schools as they work together on behalf of students receiving special education services.

The 12 self-paced training modules are intended to facilitate action on the part of the local SEAC. Each module includes information, discussion questions, and an action-planning tool. Among the topics covered:

- Recruiting and Retaining Members
- Determining the SEAC’s Mission
- Strategies for Providing Information in the School District
- Operational Guidelines (Bylaws)
- Prioritizing Needs and Setting Goals

What people are saying about SEAC Strategies for Success:

“It is all extremely helpful! Now we have a framework to proceed. We have struggled as a SEAC and this will give us the structure we need to move forward!” — *Local SEAC parent member*

“This is FABULOUS! I can’t wait to share it with our SEAC.” — *Special education director*

PACER developed the Web site and training materials with partial funding from the Minnesota Department of Education.

New federal law ensures equal coverage for mental health care

A new federal law will help end discriminatory and unequal coverage of treatment for mental health care by most health insurance plans. The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 was signed into law Oct. 3, as part of the federal financial rescue package. It requires insurance providers to cover mental health treat-

ment on an equal footing with other medical care.

The law applies to health plans covering more than 50 people. It doesn’t require group plans to cover mental health treatment, but if they do, the coverage must be comparable to other medical coverage. That means that higher co-payments, deductibles, and out-of-pocket expenses for mental

health services cannot be higher than those for treatment of physical illnesses. It’s estimated that this legislation will improve coverage for approximately 113 million Americans.

Paula Goldberg, PACER executive director, commended former U.S. Representative Jim Ramstad of Minnesota for his leadership in ensuring the passage of the bill.

Making schools better: parents have role

When parents take part in the decision-making process at their child's school, they help their child—and the school—succeed. Why is that? Forty

years of research shows that schools improve and children do better in school if their parents are involved in their education. That's why the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that schools provide specific ways for parents to be involved in the education process.

One of the most important ways parents can be involved in education is in decision-making. Anne Henderson, a respected researcher in parent involvement, identifies six opportunities for parents to be involved in decision-making.

Most of these opportunities apply only to Title I schools, which are schools receiving federal funds because they have high numbers of children from low-income families. Parents can ask the principal or teachers if their child's school has a Title I program. Every Title I school must have an annual meeting for parents to inform them about Title I.

This year, consider these six ways to be involved in

MINNESOTA PARENT CENTER Minnesota PIRC

school decision-making and improve your child's school:

- **Review the School-Parent Involvement Policy** - Every Title I school must have a written

parent involvement policy that is updated regularly. Parents should be involved in developing and approving this policy. It should explain how parents will be involved in making decisions about the program and how they will be involved in the school.

- **Develop the School-Parent Compact** - Every Title I school must have a school-parent compact that is developed with and approved by parents. It describes how the school and parents will work together and share the responsibility to improve student achievement.

- **Evaluate District Policy** - Every school district has a Title I parent involvement policy that is developed and evaluated every year by parents. Many school districts do this through a district parent advisory council.

- **View School and District Report Cards** - The school district must distribute a report card which explains how every school and the district are meeting goals for student achievement. They are often available on district and state

New federal higher education law approved

A newly reauthorized federal law will improve college opportunities for students with disabilities. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008, signed into law on Aug. 14, 2008, is the first reauthorization of the nation's primary higher education laws in a decade and was passed by overwhelming margins in the U.S. House and Senate. The new legislation impacts students with disabilities in several ways. The legislation:

- Establishes a national center to provide support services and best

practices for colleges, students with disabilities, and their families.

- Helps colleges recruit, retain, and graduate students with disabilities and improves educational materials and facilities.

- Expands eligibility for Pell Grants and other need-based aid, including work study, to students with intellectual disabilities, and authorizes new model demonstration programs and a coordinating center.

"This is a real step forward," says

Stephanie Lee, senior policy advisor for the National Down Syndrome Society, which was instrumental in the passage of this legislation. "Now there's a greater likelihood that individuals with intellectual disabilities will end up with a job and living independently in the community."

Approximately 130 postsecondary institutions nationwide offer programs for students with intellectual disabilities. Learn more about them at www.thinkcollege.net.

ADA Amendments Act broadens employment protections

The ADA Amendments Act of 2008 took effect Jan. 1, 2009 after being signed into federal law in September. The new law restores the U.S. Congress' original intent to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and broadens protections against employment discrimina-

tion for people with disabilities.

The law overturns U.S. Supreme Court decisions that have reduced protections for certain people with disabilities - including people with mental disabilities - who were originally intended to be covered by the

ADA. The ADA prohibits discrimination against Americans with physical and mental disabilities in such areas as employment, public accommodations, and transportation. Learn more at www.eeoc.gov/ada/amendments/notice.html.

in decision-making

education Web sites.

- **Know Public School Choices** – If a Title I school has not made adequate progress over the past two or more years, parents may have two options: they can ask to transfer their child to a school that is making adequate progress, with transportation provided by the district, or they can receive free tutoring (also called Supplemental Educational Services, or SES). Either way, parents in schools “needing improvement” can participate in planning to improve their child’s school.

- **Report Problems to the State Review** - The state education agency must monitor the school districts’ Title I programs to make sure they carry out the law. If the district is not involving parents, families and community members can report this to the state. If parents wish to, they can include these comments with the district’s Title I plan, and the district must submit them to the state.

By taking part in decision-making and exercising leadership, parents can help many students reach higher academic goals and make school a better place for children. For more information or questions about Title I schools and parent involvement policy, call 952-838-9000 and ask for MN PIRC, Minnesota’s Parent Information and Resource Center, a PACER project.

Family Fun Day is Feb. 8

PACER Center’s 4th Annual Family Fun Day will be from 2 to 4 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 8, at The Lindbergh Center in Minnetonka. Join PACER and friends for this inclusive, fun-filled, and totally accessible family event for children of all abilities. Don’t miss exciting activities such as yarn toss, parachute, Simon Says, wacky bowling, sock throw, art station, and much more.

Every child is a winner and receives a medal, team hankie, and a Dilly Bar, compliments of Dairy Queen.

The cost is \$5 per person. There’s also an opportunity for participants to donate an additional \$25 to sponsor a family who could not otherwise attend. Register online at PACER.org or call 952-838-9000. Registration will close Tuesday, Feb. 3, at 5 p.m.



Captain PACER (Michael Keller) added to the fun at last year’s Family Fun Day.

Creative Kids contest scheduled for Feb. 28

Children with any disability are invited to join guest artist Anthony Whelihan at PACER Center’s Fourth Annual Creative Kids Contest Feb. 28. Completed projects may be entered into a contest, with the winner’s artwork becoming the cover of the official 2009 PACER greeting card. Have more artistic fun at Creation Station workshops on March 14, April 4, and May 9. For more information, or to register, call 952-838-9000 or visit PACER.org.



Volunteers needed for PACER’s puppet program

Make a difference as a PACER puppet volunteer. Volunteers memorize scripts and present puppet shows on disability awareness to area elementary students. Volunteers must be available during the school day and have their own transportation. The next volunteer training is Thursday, Feb. 19, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. For more information, contact Jen Leuma at 952-838-9000 or e-mail puppets@PACER.org.

Teacher-School Appreciation Day is March 5

Is there a teacher or administrator who has made a difference in your child’s life? The annual Teacher-School Appreciation Day on March 5 is a perfect time to say thank you. Begun by PACER Center in 1997, Appreciation Day offers families of children with disabilities a way to honor teachers and other school staff. Free certificates of appreciation are specially designed and can be ordered from PACER or downloaded from PACER.org/help/teacher.htm. Families 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.

Resources

New



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

Parents of youth with disabilities will find that the new (2007) edition of 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, there is a wealth of information.

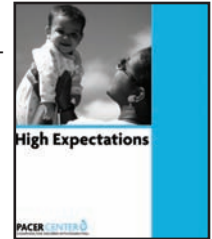
■ \$8 10+ copies, \$6 each PHP-a26

New

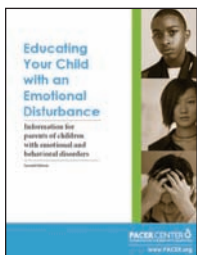
High Expectations

Having and maintaining high expectations for your child with a disability can be difficult, but worthwhile. This eight-page booklet outlines how to have high expectations yourself, challenge your child, and challenge the low-expectations others may have for your child.

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2.50 each PHP-a34



New



Educating Your Child with an Emotional Disturbance

This concise guide will help parents of children with emotional or behavioral disorders participate effectively in planning their children's special education. Easy to read and understand, it covers school discipline policies, placement options, student support needs, and much more.

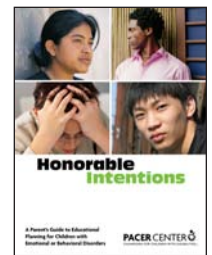
■ \$5 10+ copies \$4 each PHP-a21

New

Honorable Intentions: A Parent's Guide to Educational Planning for Children with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders, 4th 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



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

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



Let's Talk Activity Cards



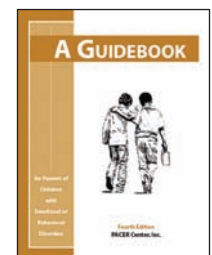
The activity cards, published by Minnesota Parent Center, Minnesota's Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC), are an easy, entertaining way for parents to help their young child build vocabulary and speaking skills—the first steps in learning to read. Simple instructions and comfortable handling make the cards enjoyable and easy to use. For all children, ages 2-6.

■ \$4 10+ copies, \$2.50 each or 100+, \$2 each MPC-9

A Guidebook for Parents of Children with Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

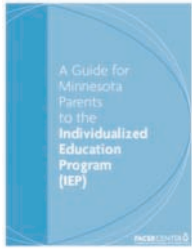
The popular book presents basic information about emotional and behavioral disorders, the type of professionals who provide mental health services to children and adolescents and how to select them, school-based services, recommended reading, and more. The 128 pages of this fourth edition are packed with pertinent suggestions for parents.

■ \$12 10 + copies, \$7.50 each PHP-a8



Resources

New



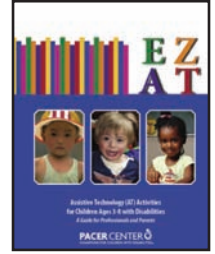
A Guide for Minnesota Parents to the Individualized Education Program (IEP)

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. 2008.

■ \$3 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a12

EZ AT Assistive Technology Activities for Children Ages 3–8 with Disabilities

A 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

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%) 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 updates, call (952) 838-9000 (metro area)

Early Childhood

Understanding the IFSP/IEP

This workshop will help parents understand the essential components of Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individual Education Program (IEP) development, including evaluation, team planning, writing goals and resolving differences. Co-sponsored by PAWN Special Education Coop/Interagency Early Intervention Committee.

March 31, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Park Rapids)

Family Leadership Summit

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

April 25, All day, (PACER Center)

Everything You Need to Learn When Your Child Turns Three

This workshop will help families understand the transition process from Part C services to Part B preschool. Topics include transition requirements, least restrictive environment (LRE), and Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives.

April 2, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

Understanding and Addressing Challenging Behaviors in Young Children

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 get their needs met. (In partnership with Project Compass)

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

Families Are Important

An overview of families' rights, roles, and responsibilities within the early intervention system is featured in this workshop. It also addresses services in the natural environment and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) child and family outcomes.

May 4, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

Communicating Your Child's Strengths and Needs

This workshop will provide strategies to

help parents articulate their child's strengths and needs and then provide that information to the professionals who work with their child.

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

Emotional Behavioral

A Fitting IDEA: Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Children with Disabilities

Parents of children with disabilities and co-occurring mental health needs will learn how to use the Individualized Education Program (IEP) or the Individual Interagency Intervention Plan (IIIP) to help meet their child's needs at school.

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

Scripts for Positive Communication: Meeting the Mental Health and Behavioral Needs of Children with Disabilities

Communication can be challenging, especially when your child with a mental health disorder has behavioral needs. Discover what IDEA says about collaboration, practice communication skills, recognize your communication attitude, and learn effective written communication tools at this workshop.

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

Understanding Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS): What Parents and Professionals Need to Know

Parents and professionals will discover how creating a positive school environment with SW-PBIS can help students do better academically, how parents can be involved, and how effective alternatives to punishment can be used at school, at home, and in the community.

Feb 3, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Marshall)

March 26, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Mahtomedi)

Housing

Housing and Services: Putting the Pieces Together

What housing options are available to your son or daughter? What supports will your young adult need to function as independently as possible? This workshop is designed to help parents think creatively about how to put the pieces together for their young adult.

April 13, 7 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

Minnesota Parent Center MN PIRC

Writing Effective Parent Involvement Plans

School or district teams of parents, teachers, and administrators are invited to learn the basic components of an effective, comprehensive parental involvement program and prepare a customized plan for a year of parental involvement.

Jan. 27, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (PACER)

Open Lab

Minnesota parents are invited to explore online resources and information to support their child's education. MN PIRC staff will be available to help participants access school reports cards, academic resources, enrichment opportunities and more.

Jan. 29, 5 to 7 p.m. (PACER)

Feb. 26, 5 to 7 p.m. (PACER)

March 26, 5 to 7 p.m. (PACER)

April 30, 5 to 7 p.m. (PACER)

Learning at Home

Discover a variety of at-home strategies to successfully help your child with homework and other learning tasks.

Feb. 10, 7 to 8:30 p.m. (Maplewood)

A Parent's Guide to School Testing

Families will find new and online resources to support their child's academic success and prepare for testing. Parents may bring their child's test score reports in order to find customized resources.

Feb. 12, 6 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

March 18, 7 to 9 p.m. (Anoka)

A Parent's Guide to No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

This workshop will show parents how to review school accountability information and use it to make decisions about their children's education.

March 12, 6 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

Parent Training

A Viewing of "Including Samuel"

Watch and discuss the movie "Including Samuel," produced by photojournalist Dan Habib. The one-hour, award-winning film is designed to help schools, families, community

Workshops

groups, and others work toward educational inclusion.

April 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Mankato)

IDEA: Understanding the IEP

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

Feb. 24, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

March 2, 7 to 9 p.m. (Winona)

March 3, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (St. Paul)

April 16, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Elk River)

April 21, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Rochester)

IDEA: Understanding the Special Education Process

This 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 Individualized Education Program (IEP).

March 3, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Brownsdale)

March 26, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Lakeville)

April 20, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Alexandria)

Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?

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

May 5, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Life Planning for Persons with 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.

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

May 19, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

The workshop helps parents understand the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and implications for students receiving special education.

April 2, 7 to 9 p.m. (Mankato)

April 16, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

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

July 21, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Tips for Talking with School Staff

What's the difference between saying "You should" and "How can we"? Find out in this workshop that provides parents of special education students easy-to-use, practical tips for communicating with school staff and resolving differences in effective ways.

March 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Rochester)

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

IDEA: Blueprint for Special Education

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

Planning for Educational Inclusion

This workshop for parents of children with disabilities will increase participants' understanding of educational inclusion. Topics include least restrictive environment (LRE), access to the general curriculum, and participation in state and district-wide assessments.

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

Charter Schools and Special Education

In Minnesota all charter schools are public schools. This workshop will help parents of children with disabilities understand special education in this educational setting.

April 2, 7 to 9 p.m. (St. Paul)

A Two-part Series: Understanding Children's Mental Health Disorders and the Impact on Learning and Functioning

Part One: Introduction to Children's Mental Health Issues: Anxiety and Depression

This session will include a video produced by the presenters, who will share effective strategies for managing anxiety and depression. Questions and discussion are encouraged. Presenters are educator and parent Cindy Shevlin-Woodcock, M.A., and L. Read Sulik, M.D., a child and adolescent psychiatrist and the assistant commissioner for chemical and mental health services at the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

March 16, 7 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

Part Two: Introduction to Children's Mental Health Issues: Attention and Behavior Disorders

Sulik and Shevlin-Woodcock will discuss effective strategies for home and school and share their video on attention and behavior disorders. Hear high school senior Benjamin Woodcock's presentation, "ADHD—Deal With It!" Questions and discussion are encouraged.

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

Freedom From Meltdowns

In this workshop, autism expert Dr. Travis Thompson will help parents and professionals understand meltdowns and offer prevention strategies. Learn how other disorders, health conditions, and mental health problems contribute to meltdowns in children with autism and explore the use of Functional Behavioral Assessment to uncover behavior patterns and develop effective intervention.

April 21, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

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Workshop Registration

PACER Center workshops are free to Minnesota parents. If you wish to attend a workshop, please register in advance. In addition to the brief information above, the workshops are described in more detail at PACER's Web site.

For information and easy online workshop registration, visit

PACER.org/workshops

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

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Workshops

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Don't miss upcoming Webinars

Watch PACER's Web site for announcements on upcoming Webinars: alternative dispute resolution, inclusion, special education at charter schools, and understanding the special education process.

Simon Technology Center

Visual Strategies Open Labs

Part of the Visual Strategies Workshop Series, these open labs allow participants to use tools introduced in previous sessions. Assistive technology specialists will be available to help you create practical solutions for home and school. (Made possible by a grant from Autism Speaks).

Jan. 20, 5 to 7 p.m. (PACER)
March 24, 5 to 7 p.m. (PACER)
May 19, 5 to 7 p.m. (PACER)



Technology for Girls: Forensics: Be a CSI

Middle-school girls will explore the science of forensics by fingerprinting, making teeth impressions, and more as they solve a mock crime.

April 7, 6 to 8 p.m. (PACER)

All About Digital Books

Parents and professionals will learn how to sort through options for accessing digital books for students with print-related disabilities. Even if participants have minimal computer and Internet experience, they will learn how to find and use digital books in formats children can use.

Feb. 5, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Implementing Visual Strategies

Part of the Visual Strategies Workshop Series, this workshop shows participants how to successfully implement visual supports, when and how to implement, how to fade prompts, how to introduce change, and more. (Made possible by a grant from Autism Speaks.)

April 14, 6 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

Transition

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.

March 3, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Brainerd)
March 10, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Anoka)

Social Security for Transition-Age Youth

Hear a Social Security representative discuss programs for transition-age youth, 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.

April 7, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Duluth)