

# PACESETTER

A news magazine of PACER Center, Inc. | Champions for Children | (952) 838-9000 | PACER.org

## PACER's exciting, new mobile-friendly websites

The websites for PACER Center, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, and PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment now use a mobile-friendly technique known as responsive design, which adapts what is being viewed to the size of the screen on which it is displayed. Whether someone is viewing a PACER site on a monitor, tablet, or mobile phone, PACER sites look great!

Special thanks for the mobile-friendly websites go to PACER National Business Advisory Board members Jimmy Pitaro, President of ESPN and Co-Chair, Disney Media Networks at The Walt Disney Company, and Marc Gordon, CIO of American Express.

"This redesign was a massive undertaking, and PACER did not have the resources to make it happen," said PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg. "It took the leadership of Jimmy and Marc, and the hard work of volunteers from The Disney Company and American Express to make this project a success."

The goal of these improvements is to make it easier for more families of children with disabilities or students who are bullied to access PACER programs. According to The Pew Research Center, some individuals and families do not have a computer or laptop but do have cell phones,

*Continued on page 2*

## Hudson's performance: A dream come true

Guests at PACER's 36th Annual Benefit, presented by Starkey Hearing Technologies, were literally dancing in the aisles when the iconic Jennifer Hudson came down from the stage and joined them. Hudson didn't just mingle; she reached out to guests in wheelchairs and other ecstatic fans in an impromptu dance party. It was one of the amazing high points of an extraordinary evening.

One person who will always remember Hudson's performance is Laura Cooper, who has Williams syndrome and adores Hudson. After dancing with the superstar, Laura told PACER Center Executive Director Paula Goldberg, "Thank you for making my dream come true!"

Paula Goldberg remarked, "We knew Jennifer would put on a great show, but it was far beyond our expectations. People are still talking about it! We are so thrilled that Jennifer chose to come to Minneapolis to entertain at our Benefit." PACER guests were lucky to see the Academy and Grammy Award-winning star; according to the Star Tribune's Jon Bream, the PACER Benefit was one of only three concerts Hudson has scheduled this year. Hudson's star is shining bright: she has just been tapped to play the role of a lifetime, as Aretha Franklin in the upcoming biographical film. Franklin herself chose Hudson for the part.



*Mara MacMillan and Jennifer Hudson*

*Continued on page 8*

# Ensuring families will get the help they need: Why Ken Rosenblum gives to PACER's Endowment

Ken Rosenblum remembers when his oldest child was born with Down syndrome. “We didn’t know what to expect; we didn’t know what the future would hold... we just knew it wouldn’t be typical.

“Anything you do for the first time, you never do it well if you have to do it alone. We didn’t have to; from the time David was a baby, PACER was there for us.”

Ken contributes to PACER’s Endowment because he wants every family to receive the help they need, when they need it. “PACER was there when we were dealing with David’s preschool and schooling, when he was diagnosed with leukemia at nine months, to issues with his adult group home — PACER has always been where to call for resources or one-to-one support.

“Government and other funding streams are uncertain, and subject to the political climate, but it is certain that families of children with disabilities will need PACER. I hope others will join me in giving to the Endowment to ensure PACER is always there to meet those needs,” Ken said.



David and Ken Rosenblum

“Right now, times are good for many people. It’s a great time for PACER to be growing its Endowment. I hope others will look at the Endowment as a way of ensuring that PACER’s services are always there.”

In addition to contributing to PACER’s Endowment campaign, Ken served for eight years on the PACER Benefit corporate sponsorship committee, and he has been on PACER’s Board of Directors for more than three years.

When asked about his own involvement with PACER, Ken said, “I wondered, ‘how can I give back to PACER?’

“I hoped to be able to give back more than I received, but PACER has given my family so much that that is probably not possible.”

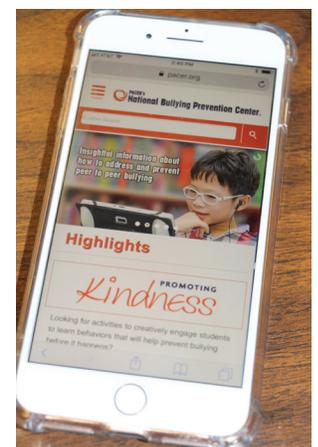
*For more information about PACER’s Endowment, contact Paula Goldberg, PACER’s Executive Director, at (952) 838-9000 or [pgoldberg@PACER.org](mailto:pgoldberg@PACER.org).*

*Mobile-friendly websites, continued from page 1*

and use these smaller screens as their primary way to access the internet. Research shows that a majority of people will not return to a website if they have a hard time viewing it.

“PACER’s website was designed before the existence of smartphones. There is a huge amount of information on our site that required a complex conversion to make the sites mobile-friendly,” said Jordan Bohm, PACER’s website administrator. “In the coming months and years, we look forward to adding more enhancements to improve the usability of our sites on mobile devices.”

## PACER’s Responsive Design Websites



Check out PACER’s newly-redesigned websites: [PACER.org](http://PACER.org), [PACER.org/Bullying](http://PACER.org/Bullying), and [PACER.org/Transition](http://PACER.org/Transition)

# PACER's partnership with State Services for the Blind improves student outcomes

PACER Center has partnered with Minnesota's State Services for the Blind (SSB) in a unique collaboration to help improve outcomes for students who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind. The program serves students in ninth grade through age 21 for transition services.

"This is a groundbreaking project," said SSB Director Carol Pankow. "Minnesota is the first state to partner with a parent training center for pre-employment transition services for students who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind. We have been able to tap into PACER's incredible resources and knowledge. Who knows schools, students, and families better than PACER?"

PACER's transition staff, which includes Barb Ziemke and Gretchen Godfrey, co-directors of PACER's National Parent Center on Transition and Employment, and transition specialist Erika Theiler, work with families and SSB staff to promote and support high expectations for students as they pursue postsecondary education or integrated employment in the community.

As part of the 2014 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), SSB and other Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) must allocate a percentage of their funds to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities in ninth grade through age 21, based on individual need.

These services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training to develop social and independent living skills, counseling about comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs, and instruction in self-advocacy.

"There is a different level of family engagement working with transition-age youth versus working with adults," Barb said. "PACER is helping State Services for the Blind understand how to better serve families of youth ages 14 to

21 who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind. It's an inspiring project."

Through this partnership, PACER staff provides:

- Specialized training to SSB staff and SSB service providers
- Focus groups for families of transition-age students
- Online parent and youth surveys
- A family workshop (co-presented with SSB)
- Resources for families, such as videos and publications, on topics that include independent living, advocacy support, and assistive technology.



Carol Pankow, Minnesota's State Services for the Blind Director

This year, PACER staff has also collaborated on SSB-hosted podcasts, emailed a monthly transition tip sheet to SSB staff, and created a bimonthly newsletter for families. "The training, newsletters, tips, and wealth of resources have been invaluable to SSB," Carol said.

Barb added, "This partnership helps us ramp up our expertise and awareness for students who are blind, visually impaired, or DeafBlind. It helps us meet the needs of families on this journey who may have limited resources in their community, and it's a new way for families to become aware of other resources that are available from PACER. Similarly, it raises the visibility of State Services for the Blind to reach more families in Minnesota."

For information about this partnership project, visit [PACER.org/transition](http://PACER.org/transition)

## And the survey says... Support PACER with SurveyMonkey

Helping PACER is now as easy as taking simple online surveys. PACER supporters can sign up on SurveyMonkey Contribute to receive short surveys from SurveyMonkey customers who need opinions on a variety of topics. For every survey completed, SurveyMonkey makes a donation to PACER, and participants have the opportunity to win \$100 in an instant win game. Participants' identities and information remain confidential. Sign up at [contribute.surveymonkey.com/charity/PACER](http://contribute.surveymonkey.com/charity/PACER).

# Exciting PACER assistive technology program for young children

PACER's five-year-long program, Technology to Improve Kids' Educational Success (TIKES) is an innovative early childhood intervention project with exciting results and a promising future.

TIKES is one of just three demonstration projects funded nationwide by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. TIKES worked with three school districts: Anoka Hennepin, Bloomington, and Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan. The focus was on demonstrating the importance of assistive technology (AT) in the education of children ages birth to five.

As part of the project, TIKES collected data in the three districts about their use of AT. The results were striking. Prior to TIKES, 48 percent of professionals reported using AT with children; after TIKES, the number rose to 95 percent.

## Laying the groundwork

"TIKES began with an analysis of whether AT was included in Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)," explained Bridget Gilormini, director of PACER's Simon Technology Center (STC).

TIKES helped districts understand the importance of AT in helping young children learn. "Because of the TIKES project, I have become more knowledgeable and aware of AT," said one teacher. "I have learned that AT isn't just high-end technology. I've also discovered that AT can be beneficial for many children."

Another teacher said, "I was unaware that certain items even existed, so to have access by being able to borrow items and be shown exactly how to use them was invaluable."

## Early AT use is crucial

"It's crucial that when AT is needed, it be used early," Gilormini said. "If children begin to use AT in elementary school or beyond, they can miss out on the early benefits. If AT is available at earlier ages, it becomes a tool for academic success."



*A child uses an adaptive grip while coloring.*

TIKES provided districts with education and training, and supported districts in discovering helpful AT and documenting AT in IEPs and IFSPs.

"It's so important that we use this knowledge to help young children," said Gilormini. "AT is a tool that helps them feel successful. As a result, they experience more success, instead of struggling for years."

## The future of TIKES

TIKES worked with 60 families and 57 providers (education professionals) during the five year project. Although the demonstration project has been completed, TIKES will continue to impact young children through PACER's use of the tremendous amount of training videos, printed materials, and other resources that have been developed.

PACER will use other financial resources to continue TIKES' success, including nationwide trainings for educators and families on AT for young children. PACER will also work with two additional school districts, beginning this fall. "We will build on the success of TIKES to ensure that more young children can use technology to succeed," Gilormini said.

## Family Fun Day and Tech Expo is Sept. 15

All are welcome to attend PACER's Family Fun Day and Tech Expo. The afternoon of hands-on discovery and exploration will take place on Saturday, September 15, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at PACER Center, and will feature assistive technology (AT) demonstrations, do-it-yourself stations, accessible art activities, refreshments, and more. Register at [PACER.org/workshops](http://PACER.org/workshops) or call (952) 838-9000.

**Saturday, Sept. 15**  
**10 a.m. to 2 p.m.**  
**PACER Center,**  
**8161 Normandale Blvd.**  
**Bloomington**

# Project Launch helps families plan for life after high school

Parents of youth and young adults with disabilities often wonder what will happen after their student leaves the structure of high school or a transition program. What's next for their young person?

PACER's Project Launch provides invaluable help with planning. It provides information and resources for career exploration, employment, benefit planning, and vocational rehabilitation.

"It's about youth moving forward from high school with a good start," said PACER staff Judy Moses, who co-directs Project Launch with Sharman Davis Barrett. "There is life after high school and youth can be successful."

Project Launch is funded by the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and works in partnership with parent centers in Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio that share a similar focus on transition goals.

Project Launch provides individual assistance, workshops, and resources to parents and young adults with disabilities, helping them pursue meaningful careers, live as independently as possible, and enjoy inclusion at work and in the community. Project Launch directs families to appropriate technical training and resources for employment and vocational rehabilitation.

Sharman explained that once a student leaves school or a transition program, "skills that parents and students learn in the education system will be applied to other areas outside of school. Parents will continue to be parents even after their children are out of school."



Project Launch helps families connect to adult services that are available in the community and encourages self-advocacy.

"Young people with disabilities need to be involved in decisions about their future," Judy said. "It's thinking about what that might look like, in areas such as housing, transportation, employment, finances, healthcare, and even recreation."

Judy and Sharman understand that this time can be overwhelming for families and they encourage parents and young adults to ask for help when

they need it. "We want to protect our kids so badly, but it's okay for them to take risks. They need to take risks to mature into adults," Judy said.

For information on Project Launch, visit [PACER.org/transition](http://PACER.org/transition); to talk to a PACER advocate, call (952) 838-9000.

**“Parents will continue to be parents even after their children are out of school.”**

— Sharman Davis Barrett

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(Alternate format is available upon request)

PACER Center enhances the quality of life and expands opportunities for children, youth, and young adults with all disabilities and their families so each person can reach his or her highest potential. PACER operates on the principles of parents helping parents, supporting families, promoting a safe environment for all children, and working in collaboration with others. PACER is also the National Bullying Prevention Center, offering innovative resources for students, parents, educators, and others.

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# Jamie Smith: Using technology to help PACER's families

"I like to help others," said Jamie Smith, a PACER employee for 27 years. Helping PACER staff is at the core of his work; though his job title is computer network administrator, Jamie has taken on many roles at PACER: video editing and production, computer coding and website updates, Livestreaming workshops, and maintaining PACER's computers and printers, to name a few.

He sees his job as enabling others to serve families. "I'm in the background. I want to make PACER staff's jobs easier so they can use technology to help parents. It's important that technology help and not get in the way of serving families."

When Jamie accepted the position of administrative assistant at PACER Center in 1991, he never imagined that 27 years later, he would still be at PACER. After working as a newspaper reporter, Jamie had gone back to school to learn desktop publishing, and the position at PACER appealed to him because that was part of the job description.

"When I came to PACER, we had a couple of modems and only a couple of computer stations could connect to the internet," he recalled. "We used MS DOS for (Microsoft) Word, and 5.25-inch floppy disks." Six years later, all staff had email.

Recalling the evolution of his position at PACER, Jamie said, "I became a computer troubleshooter because I had a willingness to take on and research computer problems." That eagerness to do what PACER needs has characterized Jamie's tenure at PACER. "As I grew and needs grew, my job shifted. I really enjoy the wide variety of work and challenges it brings," he commented.

"Jamie has learned so much and grown in his position," said PACER Center Executive Director Paula Goldberg. "He has brought the world of technology to PACER, and is an amazing staff member: kind, always willing to help, and bright. He is also a Green Bay Packers fan, but I don't hold that against him!"



Jamie Smith

When asked what he likes best about his work, Jamie named two things: "PACER has a wonderful, supportive staff that makes such a difference for families, and I enjoy tackling tech issues: researching when something is going wrong, and fixing it."

Jamie says he is amazed "by the steadiness of PACER's projects. There are only one or two that I can remember that have disappeared, and there are great new projects, too."

**“It's important that technology help and not get in the way of serving families.”**

—Jamie Smith

“Hearing PACER's success stories touches my heart. Even though I'm not involved firsthand, if I can help an advocate navigate technology, I feel like I have played a part in helping families of children with disabilities and students who have been bullied.”

Jamie and his wife, Judy Romanowich Smith, were the parents of a toddler when he joined PACER. Today they are empty nesters with three adult children, Drew, Griffin, and Joseffa. Jamie likes golfing and exercise; he and Judy enjoy attending musicals.

"There's been such a variety in my work that I've never been bored," Jamie said. "I can always find new challenges to take on at PACER."

# PACER leadership training programs help parents advocate for all students

“Taking part in PACER training has helped me feel stronger in my own voice,” said Leesa Avila. “I’m empowered to help other parents.”

Leesa, who participated in PACER’s parent leadership training four years ago, is serving her third year as one of Governor Dayton’s appointees to the Minnesota Department of Education Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC). She also leads parent teaching sessions, and is a point of contact for parents who have questions about their child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Parent leadership training programs are integral to PACER’s principle of parents helping parents. PACER’s staff advocates, the majority of whom have children with disabilities, work with parents to help them understand the special education process and how to communicate the needs of their child to their school.

PACER’s specialized parent leadership trainings empower parents who want to go beyond advocating for their own child. Parents who complete the trainings gain the ability to share their knowledge and experience with others. PACER offers these trainings in special education through the Children’s Mental Health and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders Project, the Early Childhood Project, and the Parent Training and Information Center.

Jody Manning, PACER’s co-director of parent training, estimates PACER has trained hundreds of parent leaders over the years. Parent leaders participate in PACER’s Day at the Capitol, assist with workshops, review new materials and publications, and mentor other parents. PACER encourages them to join Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs or PTAs), serve on Special Education Advisory Councils (SEACs), or take on other leadership roles.

Public policy is one way parents can lead. “We teach parents how to tell their personal story and engage with



*Leesa Avila*

legislators on special education issues,” Jody said. “We help them work at the local or state level.”

Parents who are selected for the trainings come to PACER from all areas of Minnesota to attend day-long workshops led by PACER staff who explain special education evaluations, early intervention services, Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs), Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), report cards, progress reports, and more.

PACER’s Parent Homework Sheet, which helps parents determine if the goals and support listed in their child’s IEP matches the needs listed in their child’s Evaluation Summary Report completed by the school, is just one of the tools available to parent leaders. “It gives parents a much better understanding of these documents and a parent’s role in

special education,” Jody said.

In addition to her other work on behalf of families, Leesa has also worked to advance a culture of inclusion. Working with a group of parents, she helped her church hire someone to work solely on inclusion programs. At her job, she helped to ensure that people with disabilities wore the same T-shirts as the rest of the staff, and were not identified differently.

Leesa first began working with a PACER staff advocate when her son, who has a traumatic brain injury, was in third grade. Today, he’s a college sophomore and on the Dean’s List. Leesa says it’s important for parents of young children with disabilities to learn advocacy and communication skills.

“PACER provides the resources you need to make you feel strong,” she said. “Working with the school can be positive. It’s about what to do so the child can do something. PACER helps parents come at it from an understanding of the laws and processes to figure out what is appropriate for the child.”

# An unforgettable evening ben



Left: (L to R) Sharman Davis Barrett, Vernice Carter, and Lewis Whitlock

Right: (L to R) Kip Holmes, Crosbie Francis, Roya Nock, and Mary Holmes



Tani Austin and PACER's Executive Director Paula Goldberg



John Chasko and Andrea Chasko



David Kaysen and Nancy Kaysen

Continued from page 1

Prior to Hudson's performance, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, a longtime PACER friend and former member of PACER's Advisory Board, was warmly applauded when she addressed the crowd of more than 2,000. The audience was inspired by remarks from Erin Barlow, the ambassador for PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, and Chris Moore, a member of PACER's National Business Advisory Board and producer of *Good Will Hunting* and *Manchester by the Sea*, who traveled from Los Angeles to address the crowd and attend the Benefit. Just before Hudson took the stage, Esera Tuaolo, former NFL athlete and "The Voice" contestant, regaled the audience with a heartfelt rendition of "Rise Up."

Chef and television personality Andrew Zimmern emceed the evening, and WCCO-TV anchor Frank Vascellaro was auctioneer for the amazing live auction. All proceeds from the evening go to support PACER's work, which is free to families of children with disabilities and those who are bullied.

"It's hard to put into words how much PACER appreciates the incredible support of our dedicated friends," said PACER Executive Director Paula Goldberg. "We're just so thankful for the hard work of our Benefit committee and 500 volunteers, and the generous backing of our corporate sponsors and individual donors who made this magical evening possible. The funds the Benefit raises for children is what this special evening is all about. Benefit supporters have changed the lives of children over the last 36 years."

Among the highlights of the evening was Hudson's salute to Prince, "Purple Rain." She closed the evening by saying, "Without this song, I wouldn't be here," before belting out an unforgettable acapella rendition of her signature, "And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going." The story of grit and determination was a fitting end to Hudson's extraordinary performance and to a PACER Benefit guests will never forget.

**Save the date:**

**PACER's 37th Annual Benefit is May 11, 2019!**

# Benefits children with all abilities



*Brad Geer and Kristin Geer*



*Kim Brown and Richard Brown*



*Sandra Richardson, Virginia Richardson, and Jennifer Hudson*



*Cara Kootz, Annie Harris, Diana Devereax, Jim Gardner, and Joan Gardner*



*Don McNeil, Mai Mishan, Jodie Resnick, Michal Mishan, and Chris Moore*



*Marilyn Horowitz and Stuart Nolan*



*Linda Ketover and Scott Ketover*



*Andrew Zimmern, Paula Goldberg, and Frank Vascellaro*

# 'PACERTalks About Bullying'

## National Bullying Prevention Center's weekly video series wraps up first season

From September to April, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center (NBPC) released a new video each week for its series, "PACERTalks About Bullying." The 33 short videos, created by NBPC staff Julie Hertzog and Bailey Lindgren, provide a new and innovative way to share information and resources.

The videos typically run less than five minutes in length and are easily shared on social media. Chris Moore, producer of *Good Will Hunting* and *Manchester By the Sea* and a member of PACER's National Business Advisory Board, was the inspiration behind the video series. Chris has encouraged PACER to spread the word about its programs through video.

The "PACERTalks" videos align with the monthly themes of PACER's All In, a year-long curriculum for educators about bullying prevention. Bailey, who hosts each video, interviewed students, professionals, and PACER staff, answered commonly asked questions about bullying, and provided communities with ideas about becoming involved in bullying prevention activities.

"Our goal with these videos is to keep the content authentic," Bailey said. "Watching a video resonates in a different way than reading something. One of my favorite features is when we ask students what they would do in a specific bullying situation. Not only do they share some great insights, but we are able to see their facial expressions."



Bailey Lindgren, of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, hosts each episode of "PACERTalks About Bullying."

Some of the most popular videos are those that explain the difference between conflict and bullying, and describe what it means for youth and adults to be inclusive.

A well-received video asked NPBC's online community to describe in three words what a world without bullying would look like. PACER staff read a sampling of the responses, such as, "We all belong," "Kindness is contagious," and "Know you matter."

Julie and Bailey plan and create each video, often after consulting with NBPC's youth advisory board members. Several advisory board members have appeared in some of the videos.

"This is a way for our students to feel appreciated and valued for their unscripted opinions," Julie said. "People don't always have the chance to hear directly from students."

The second season of "PACERTalks About Bullying" will begin in September.

## The first season's videos of 'PACERTalks About Bullying' are available online at:

- NBPC's Facebook page ([facebook.com/PACERsNationalBullyingPreventionCenter](https://facebook.com/PACERsNationalBullyingPreventionCenter))
- NBPC website ([PACER.org/bullying](https://PACER.org/bullying))
- PACER Center's YouTube channel ([youtube.com/user/pacercenter](https://youtube.com/user/pacercenter))

# Honoring those who create kindness: PACER's Unity Awards

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, its youth advisory board, the Faces of Change, and its Los Angeles Youth Advisory Board presented the fourth annual Unity Awards on May 30 at PACER Center. Award recipients were chosen by the Faces of Change Board from nominations received across the United States.

"PACER Center is an organization that doesn't just talk about what can be done to make sure all kids are safe and included, they take real action and change lives," said special guest, Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey. "For almost 40 years, they have been a testament to our community on what it means to improve the lives of children with disabilities and those who are bullied. For all the students and educators honored at the Unity Awards, thank you for all you're doing to make a positive change. Know your actions make a difference."

Master of Ceremonies Mike Augustyniak, director of meteorology at WCCO-TV, presented the four National awards:

- **Together Against Bullying: Marshall Elementary School Bullying Prevention Group, Wexford, PA**

This group of fourth graders are changing the culture at their school, including mentoring younger students about how to be a good friend.

- **United for Inclusion: Lisa Lucario, Greensboro, NC**

In her first year at this school, teacher Lisa Lucario has formed a bullying prevention club and created an environment where learning differences are accepted, not judged.

- **United for Acceptance: Nick Green, Wichita, KS**

History teacher Nick Green founded and funds "Nerd Night," a group where kids can enjoy the entertainment of their choice without judgment or bullying.

- **United for Kindness: Nolan Russell, New Waterford, OH**

Nolan, age 10, makes sure no one is left out. He will leave a group of friends to join someone who is alone. Nolan was selected by a classmate with Autism to help him calm down when needed. Nolan has received thank you letters for his kindness from classmates.

Local students, schools, and educators who are doing amazing work were honored with the Faces of Change award:

**Minnesota winners, presented by the Faces of Change, Minnesota Youth Advisory Board:**

- Shakopee High School GLOmies, Shakopee



Julie Hertzog, Director of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center, with Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, who attended PACER's Unity Awards and congratulated the winners.



Members of the Faces of Change, PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center's youth advisory board

- Coon Rapids High School Kindness Campaign, Coon Rapids
- Eagle Heights Spanish Immersion Unified Club, Eden Prairie
- Jefferson Elementary School, Blaine
- Esperanza Lee, Woodbury
- Lindsay Roe, St. Paul

**California winners, presented by PACER's Youth Advisory Board, Los Angeles:**

- The Peer Mentors of Thousand Oaks High School
- The Interfaith Council of Greater Rancho Santa Margarita

# Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports lead to school success

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS, has been hailed as a major advance in school discipline ever since it was written into law in the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Experts say that PBIS is far more than a framework for discipline: it is a positive way to improve academic and behavior outcomes for all students.

According to Renelle Nelson, coordinator of PACER's Children's Mental Health and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders Project, "Research shows that when PBIS is implemented schoolwide, suspensions decrease and test scores and graduation rates increase."

PACER has been involved with PBIS since its beginnings, including working closely with George Sugai, Ph.D., a special education professor at the University of Connecticut, and Rob Horner, Ph.D., a special education professor at the University of Oregon, who developed the concept.

## Routines and expectations

One of the foundations of PBIS is the belief that it's important for students to know what is expected of them, and that routines are in place to support those expectations, Renelle said. "Posting and reviewing routines and expectations help students reduce anxiety and fear because they know what comes next in their school day."

## What is PBIS?

According to the federal government's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, "PBIS is a framework or approach for assisting school personnel in adopting and organizing evidence-based behavioral interventions into an integrated continuum that enhances academic and social behavior outcomes for all students."

OSEP states that PBIS is a "prevention-oriented way for school personnel to:

- Organize evidence-based practices
- Improve their implementation of those practices
- Maximize academic and social behavior outcomes for students."



Helping students learn how to think about a problem and find a solution is key, she added. Students can learn these steps:

- Define the problem
- Decide who "owns" the problem
- Think of as many solutions as possible
- Select a solution
- Try the solution
- Evaluate its success

Renelle suggests that students role play and practice to reinforce the steps. Teachers can help students understand how they respond to stress (tone of voice, physical mannerisms such as clenching fists). Patience is key; it takes time for students to learn the steps and succeed in using them.

## PBIS in action

*Using pre-arranged signals* (hand motion, shake of the head, colored card placed on the child's desk) lets a child know when their behavior is not acceptable. If these cues don't work, a teacher may gently move closer to the child. A planned response method (not paying attention to non-serious behavior) can be useful if the child is interrupting the class to attract attention. Planned response isn't suitable for extremely disruptive or unsafe behavior.

*Using discipline in private* is often effective because a child is more likely to respond if peers are not watching.

*Continued on next page*

# Fun Times program connects teens and young adults for social activities

In 2004, PACER supporter and Breck School student Win Bennett wanted to create a social environment where his friends and peers could socialize with students with disabilities, including his sister Mara MacMillan and her friends. Win created PACER's Fun Times, a social program that connects teens and young adults, age 13 and older, with and without disabilities.

“The purpose of this program is to create fun activities for teens and young adults to hang out and have fun together, just like all teens,” said Danna Mirviss, PACER's Fun Times staff coordinator.

Danna works with Breck School's community service project and its students to plan monthly events during the school year. Past events have included a game night with pizza, a painting night at an art studio in Minneapolis, bowling, and a cooking class. In April, the group enjoyed a concert from the Breck Marimba Band and an ice cream social.

In addition to the participants, PACER and Breck staff attend the activities. “Some participants have been coming for years,” Danna said. “It's about friendship and fun.”



*The Fun Times group enjoys a night of bowling.*

*For information about Fun Times, contact Danna at (952) 838-1325, or email [danna.mirviss@PACER.org](mailto:danna.mirviss@PACER.org).*

*Continued from previous page*

**Finding opportunities for the child to help others** can provide positive, rather than negative, attention.

**Using positive phrasing** (a promise of a reward rather than the threat of a punishment; stating desired behavior rather than reprimanding negatively) lets a child know the positive results for using appropriate behaviors.

**Behavior shaping**, which means rewarding and reinforcing small gains. Not all students are capable of 100 percent improvement, but rewarding positive behavior acknowledges that a child is trying.

**Tangible, token, and activity reinforcers** help encourage and support appropriate behavior. Tangible reinforcements include awards, food treats, or objects. Token

reinforcements are points or tokens that are earned and exchanged for something of value. Activity reinforcements are probably the most effective, Renelle said. “They allow students to participate in fun activities with other students, and build in social reinforcement for positive behavior.”

## **Principles of PBIS**

“PBIS is based on the belief that every child can learn appropriate behavior,” Renelle said. “Other PBIS principles include intervening early to stop behavior issues from escalating; providing individualized behavior support; schools' teaching of behavior should be evidence-based; schools' tracking of students' behavioral progress, and schools' collection of data to use when deciding how to handle behavioral issues.”

# Workshops

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

## EARLY CHILDHOOD

### Becoming an Active Partner in Your Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Parents will learn about early intervention services, the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), how they can be involved in writing child and family outcomes and become active participants in the IFSP process.

- **July 10, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**  
Streaming option also available

## HOUSING

### Incorporating Home Living Skills Into Daily Life for Your Middle School Youth

Come and have fun exploring the necessary skills, tools and technology to work with your son or daughter in the home, and at school, using the Individualized Education Program.

- **Aug. 20, 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. (PACER)**

## PARENT TRAINING

### Planning for Educational Inclusion: A Viewing of "Including Samuel"

A documentary by filmmaker Dan Habib about educational inclusion and his family's efforts to include their son Samuel in all facets of their lives, a journey that transformed them. Q & A with a PACER advocate.

- **Aug. 9, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (Maple Grove)**
- **Sept. 13, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (Mankato)**
- **Sept. 20, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (St Cloud)**

### Back to School Series — The ABCs of the IEP: Making the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Work for Your Child

Parents will learn how to use the IEP to benefit their child, including how each required part of the IEP can be developed to meet the child's needs.

- **Aug. 13, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

### Back to School Series — Hot Tips on the IEP: Is Your Child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) Individualized and Appropriate?

Parents will learn how to use their child's special education evaluation report to determine how the IEP addresses the child's unique needs. Parents should bring a copy of their child's most recent school special education evaluation report and current IEP.

- **Aug. 23, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

## SIMON TECHNOLOGY CENTER

### Too Many Apps for That? How to Find, Choose, and Evaluate Mobile Apps to Meet Your Needs

Participants will learn how to find and choose apps to meet a wide range of needs. Discussion will include evaluating a user's needs, finding appropriate apps to meet those needs, and features to look for. Information will be relevant to a broad range of ages and disabilities.

- **July 19, 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (PACER)**  
Streaming option also available

### Assistive Technology (AT) in the Schools: Consideration, IEPs, and More

Learn how AT can support students, learn the process for including it in the IEP, and about Minnesota Dept. of Education's new AT Manual.

- **Aug. 28, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (PACER)**  
Streaming option also available
- **Aug. 28, 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (PACER)**  
Streaming option also available

## TECH FOR GIRLS CLUB

Roll up your sleeves and get messy while having fun with science, technology, engineering, and math! Middle school girls with disabilities and at all skill levels are welcome.

### Creatures of the Ocean

Get your hands wet while learning about fresh and salt water, ocean zones, and creatures of the ocean. Take a virtual field trip and make an ocean in a bottle.

- **July 21, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (PACER)**

## TECH FOR TEENS CLUB

Teens are invited to join an exciting club to learn about technology! This club is open to teens ages 11 to 19 with disabilities. All skill levels are welcome!

### Building Websites

In this introduction to the basics of coding for the internet, students will create their own unique website and publish it online.

- **June 23, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (PACER)**

### A Star Wars 3D Printed Universe

A guest speaker from a galaxy far, far away presents the basics behind 3D printing. Watch 3D printing in action and experiment with 3D design software.

- **July 14, 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (PACER)**

### Building a Robot

Teens will learn about the entire process of building a robot, from assembly to executing code.

- **Aug. 18, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. (PACER)**

## TRANSITION

### Paths to Employment: Exploring the Options

Explore career path options available for youth with disabilities through the State's Special Education, Career and Technical Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, and WorkForce Center systems. Representatives will share insight into their programs and how they work with one another.

- **June 21, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**  
Streaming option also available

### Off to College: What You Need to Know Before You Go

Families of youth heading off to post-secondary education programs will gain essential information about changing rights, roles, and responsibilities, along with practical tips for student success.

- **July 24, 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. (PACER)**

# Resources

To see the full list of PACER publications and to order, go to [PACER.org/Publications](http://PACER.org/Publications). You may also order by calling (952) 838-9000.

## Special Education Record Keeping Folders

Special education records contain important information for making educational decisions. Parents should keep copies of the records and use them for educational planning with the school. **Parent involvement matters.** Parents have the right to:

- See, review, and use their child's records.
- Review how their child's records are used in their child's educational program.
- Give positive information about their child.
- Attend school regularly.
- Learn higher grades and test scores.
- Continue and monitor their education after high school.

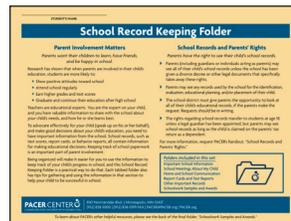
You are the expert on your child, and you have valuable information to share with the school and your child's IEP. Individualized Education Program team about your child's needs and how to do the best.



**\$10 | 11+ copies, \$8 each | PHP-a5**

## School Record Keeping Folders (General Education)

This School Record Keeping Folder is a practical way for all parents to stay organized to keep track of their student's progress in school. Each of the six tabbed folders have tips for gathering and using the information to help your child to be successful in school. Also available in Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. 2014.

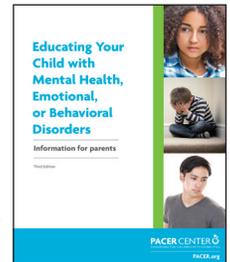


**\$10 | 11+ copies, \$8 each | MPC-6**

## Educating Your Child with Mental Health, Emotional, or Behavioral Disorders: Information for Parents

This guide will help parents of children with mental health, emotional, or behavioral disorders participate effectively in special education planning, including school discipline policies, placement options, and behavioral and emotional support needs. Updated 2018.

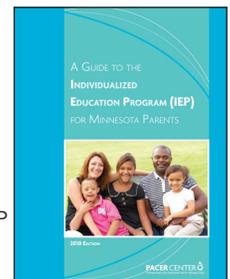
**\$5 | 10+ copies, \$4 each | PHP-a21**



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

Helps parents work with schools to address each child's special needs through understanding the required components of the IEP. Includes examples from an example IEP form. Updated 2018.

**\$3 | 10+ copies, \$2 each | PHP-a12**



# Brett Nelson receives Otto Bremer Leadership Award

Brett Nelson was honored with the third annual Otto Bremer Leadership Award at the 36th Annual PACER Benefit. Master of ceremonies Andrew Zimmern presented Brett with the Award. Part of the presentation included a video highlighting Brett's life.

In the video, Brett's sister, Carleigh Sawyer, discussed the Nelson family's involvement with PACER, which began when Brett was just five years old and the family was new to Minnesota. The Nelsons didn't know where to turn for help with Brett's developmental disabilities and behavioral challenges. A neighbor told them to call PACER. "The call my mom made to PACER changed our lives forever," Carleigh said.

Today, Brett lives semi-independently and is active in the community. He works at a job he loves, as a courtesy clerk at Lunds & Byerlys, where he has been employed for more than 15 years. "There isn't a day that isn't made better for a customer when Brett is working. When you're greeted with a warm smile, and bid farewell, your day is that much brighter because you spent a few moments with Brett," said Tres Lund, Lunds & Byerlys CEO and President.

Brett received the award with his girlfriend, Leslie Fish, by his side. Brett and Leslie met 19 years ago, when he wanted to attend his senior prom; the two were fixed up by their mothers, who met at PACER. Brett and Leslie have been together ever since. Leslie took out a congratulatory ad in the Benefit program that declared that Brett is "the world's best boyfriend."

The award is inscribed, in part, "Thank you for your amazing commitment to helping others. Your kindness, smile, and optimism make the world a better place!"



*Carleigh Sawyer and Brett Nelson*

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**Inside**

<b>PACER Benefit</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Mobile-friendly Websites</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PACER's Endowment</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>State Services for the Blind Partnership</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Early Childhood Technology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Project Launch</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Parent Leadership</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Bullying Prevention</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PBIS and School Success</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>PACER Workshops</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Helpful Resources</b>	<b>15</b>

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## PACER's National Symposium on Mental Health and Learning Disabilities is Aug. 8

Don't miss PACER's National Symposium about Children and Young Adults with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities! The annual event takes place on Wednesday, August 8, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The symposium, which features nationally-known speakers and workshop presenters, fills quickly each year, and attracts more than 1,000 parents and professionals.

The symposium is designed to enhance awareness of, and identify positive strategies for responding to, mental health and learning disabilities in children and young adults from the perspective of teachers and parents. This year's keynote speakers include Steven Schlozman, M.D., Rosemarie Allen, Ed.D., and David Stember, Ph.D. The symposium also features a number of breakout sessions.

The cost to attend the symposium is \$35 and includes lunch. Six hours of continuing education units (CEUs) are available for educators and others. To register, go to [PACER.org/symposium](http://PACER.org/symposium) or call (952) 838-9000.



**Steven Schlozman, M.D.**, is associate director of the Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds at Massachusetts General Hospital, where he practices child and adult psychiatry. He is also an assistant professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. His topic is *Full of Sound and Fury...Understanding Pediatric Depression and Suicidal Behavior: Parent, Clinician, and Community Responses*.



**Rosemarie Allen, Ed.D.**, is president and CEO for the Institute for Racial Equity and Excellence, the lead agency for ensuring equity in educational practices throughout the nation. She is also an assistant professor in the School of Education at Metropolitan State University in Denver. She will speak on *Social Emotional Competence: Bringing out the Best in Every Child*.



**David Stember, Ph.D.**, is a clinical psychologist and maintains faculty appointments at Harvard Medical School and McLean Hospital. He is a recognized expert in cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety, learning, and behavioral disorders. His keynote is *Childhood and Adolescent Anxiety: A Survival Guide for Parents and Educators*.