

An important message from PACER: PACER is supportive of all persons who desire to be free and safe in their own communities. We are aware of the history of racism and social injustice in this country that needs to be changed. The tragic death of Mr. Floyd has highlighted the injustices in Minnesota and our country. We know that Black children and their families experience significant disparities in education, health, housing, and the justice system. We will work to ensure just systems for all families. We can do better.

New bullying prevention resources

PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center's (NBPC) website has always been a dynamic collection of information, resources, videos, and interactive campaigns. With the onset of the global pandemic, NBPC has responded with materials for distance learning, said Julie Hertzog, Director of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center.

The new distance learning site features digital resources that can be used by parents or educators to continue engaging their children or students in social and emotional learning. Exciting new resources range from a virtual book club to a letter writing project to activities that get students thinking about what they would do in bullying situations.

ALL IN curriculum

"The distance learning portal of our site now includes our updated ALL IN curriculum, redesigned as an eight module distance learning series, with a goal of giving students the opportunity to be involved, invested, and included in bullying prevention while at home," Julie said. The ALL IN modules feature education, interaction, and media activities to be incorporated into a distance learning curriculum.

'NBPC resources' continued on page 12

History of PACER 'We thought we'd close in two or three years'

Paula Goldberg and Marge Goldberg were first introduced in 1976 at the meeting of a disability coalition, and soon learned that, along with the same last name, they also shared a common passion: they wanted to improve educational opportunities for children with disabilities and educate parents about the few special education laws.

Paula, who had been a teacher, was the author of two League of Women Voters studies on special education in the Minneapolis Public Schools. "I thought the Legislature needed more information about special education and the needs of children with disabilities," she said.

For Marge, it started out personal. Her younger son had disabilities. "I knew what went on with families who needed help," Marge recalled, "because I saw what it was like to try to get the services my son needed. The laws were vague and didn't include learning disabilities." The desire to help children and families led her to become a special education lobbyist.

Paula wanted to know what was happening at the Legislature, and before long, Marge said, they were talking on the phone for hours each night. They decided that parents needed to know about their children's rights to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), as guaranteed under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act.



The original five PACER employees (back row, from left: Paula Goldberg, Marci Bergdahl, Joan Schoepke; front row, from left: Evy Anderson, Marge Goldberg)

'History of PACER' continued on page 5

'It's just not working:' Distance learning

Every day, PACER's staff of parent advocates hears from parents of children with disabilities about the issues their children are having with distance learning. The common thread is that distance learning is not working well for most families of children with disabilities. Vava Guthrie, a senior parent advocate who is the initial contact for parents, hears stories like these:

- A mother worries because under distance learning, her son is falling behind. She wonders how, if distance learning continues in the fall, he will catch up.
- A father is concerned that, under distance learning, his daughter is not receiving the speech, occupational, and physical therapy that are part of her Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- A mother told PACER, "I am exhausted trying to provide my child with the academic support she needs under distance learning while I am working from home. I would like additional support."

While a small number of students are doing well with distance learning, many who were making progress are regressing. Those who were struggling have fallen further behind.

"This has been incredibly challenging for parents," said advocate Rachel Pearson. "In terms of education, we're living in a new world, one that school districts were given eight days to create. It is so difficult for many students and families, and it's no one's fault: most districts did the best they could."

But often that wasn't enough. Many students were unable to work on their own and could not complete distance learning projects unless a parent sat next to them, encouraging and assisting them. Parents who were working at home struggled to balance work responsibilities and

the needs of other children with their children's schooling. Parents who were essential workers couldn't be there to monitor their child's schooling, and worried that their children's needs were falling through the cracks.

Rachel attended a virtual meeting with a parent who was concerned about her child's speech language services. The school suggested that the student receive services via videoconferencing. "The only device the family had that would work was the mom's cell phone," Rachel said. "The mom is an essential worker. They were able to work out a schedule where the student used the phone for videoconferencing in the morning before the mom goes to work."

Mental health challenges

Renelle Nelson, who coordinates PACER'S Mental Health and Emotional or Behavioral Disorders Project, said that the lack of transition time from classroom to distance learning was especially difficult for students with mental health issues. "When change is unpredictable, their brain often registers fear. It can increase symptoms and behavior issues," she said.

Worrying about distance learning and the coronavirus can also exacerbate symptoms of anxiety. "One student ended up in the hospital after experiencing extreme anxiety," Renelle said. "There was no one cause, but distance learning was a contributing factor."

Renelle and PACER advocate Maleenia Mohabir have recommended that parents and students adjust their expectations. "We work with parents to help their children achieve some measure of success," said Maleenia. "We encouraged parents to talk to the school about how do we define success right now? It looks different than if we were in a school building."



"We don't know the magnitude of the skills that students with disabilities have lost, so it's hard to fully realize the colossal work that families and school districts will face in the future to help students recover those skills."

— Rachel Pearson, PACER advocate

ning and children with disabilities

Renelle said that in one case, a student and their parent decided to drop two classes in order to succeed in another. “The parent told me, ‘We dropped history and math so we could finish English. I had to sit with her and help her, step by step, with her work.’”

Another parent said that the inflexibility of the school’s online platform made it difficult for their son to complete his English class. “You had to complete all of one section before going on to another,” the parent told Renelle. “If you were struggling to complete the vocabulary, you had to finish that section before moving onto the writing section.” The child, already stressed, was on the verge of giving up.

Some already have. “Some kids just stop doing their work,” Renelle said. “If you have a teenager who is overwhelmed and has school avoidance, they just stop completing their assignments.”

Multicultural families

Some students miss school so much it hurts. Jesús Villaseñor, one of PACER’s multicultural advocates, spoke about a parent who was having a virtual meeting with a teacher and an interpreter. “The son heard his teacher’s voice and saw the teacher on the screen and started to tremble and cry,” Jesús said. “He missed the teacher so much! The relationship between teacher and student, the human connection, can’t be expressed when you are teaching with a chart and a camera.”

Jesús said, “The inequitable distribution of educational resources became very apparent, and deeply affected the students’ abilities to engage with their schoolwork. Some schools had Chromebooks for the students to use. Other schools sent home packets to be completed.” While Chromebooks sound like a good idea, for some families it was challenging to work with unfamiliar technology. Packets of homework are not always engaging for special education students.



“The relationship between teacher and student, the human connection, can’t be expressed when you are teaching with a chart and a camera.”

— Jesús Villaseñor, PACER advocate

Multicultural advocate Dao Xiong works with a number of Hmong families. Some of these families face language barriers, and often cultural differences lead them to view the roles of parents and teachers differently. Dao said, “Many of the parents don’t understand their new role as teacher. They often have great respect for the teacher and so they don’t step in. They also assume that if the child is online, they are doing their work.”

In one family, the parents lacked education, didn’t speak English, and weren’t comfortable communicating with their children’s teachers. The children were often on their iPads, and told their parents they were doing schoolwork.

Dao knew that the father was comfortable with Hmong staff at the school, and Dao encouraged him to ask the staff to relay messages

between the parents and teachers. The father learned from the staff member that the children were not completing their work.

Looking ahead

“We don’t know the magnitude of the skills that students with disabilities have lost, so it’s hard to fully realize the colossal work that families and school districts will face in the future to help students with disabilities recover those skills,” Rachel Pearson said.

“The right of every student with a disability to a Free and Appropriate Public Education stands, and the due process rights of every parent of a child with a disability are intact.

“While this is an extraordinarily difficult time, it’s also a time when PACER is here to help individual families work with their school districts and find innovative ways for children to receive the services and supports they need. Call us at (952) 838-9000, or email PACER@PACER.org.

“We care, and we’re here.” ■

‘America needs PACER!’

Paul Ackerman’s 40+ year relationship with PACER

When the funding proposal from a new, parent-centered organization in Minneapolis landed on Paul Ackerman, PhD’s desk, he was intrigued. “We funded projects for special educators; this one from PACER Center did not exactly fit that category, but was very innovative,” he said. “It was a really new idea, parents helping parents. At the time, all the funding was focused on professionals, like teachers.”

It was 1978, and Paul was a program officer at the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), in the U.S. Department of Education. That grant was the beginning of his relationship with PACER that has spanned more than 40 years, two continents, and continues today.

All OSEP proposals go through a peer review process that includes an evaluation by outside experts, who, Paul said, “advised me in the strongest terms that it was a gem, evidently written by two very savvy persons, and had great potential.” Paul enthusiastically advocated for the project, and when it was funded, Paul, whose Ph.D. is in special education and child psychology, was excited to be named the project officer. He would monitor the feedback from the grant, visit PACER at least yearly, and sign off on all renewals.

“I wasn’t sure if we would be able to continue funding after the three-year grant was up, but we did,” Paul said. “They were doing good work and reporting well. PACER held on to that grant and wrote other successful proposals. Paula and Marge were superb grant writers.”

PACER leads nationally

During multiple visits, Paul developed strong relationships with Paula Goldberg and Marge Goldberg. “We thought PACER would be special. We started hearing about them everywhere we went. PACER was becoming a household word in parent and education circles. The natural leadership of Paula and Marge was quite evident. People began to look up to them,” Paul said. “It was not hard to love PACER.”

Paul witnessed PACER’s leadership on the national level. “Paula was in a leadership position of a parents’ advisory group. She played a quiet role, focusing on the quality



L-R: Paula Goldberg, Paul Ackerman, and Marge Goldberg

of PACER’s work and helping the Parent Training and Information Centers. More and more people learned that they had a resource in Paula.”

PACER goes to India

After Paul accepted a transfer to the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research, then part of the Department of Education, his work expanded to India. “My charge was to work with international research on disabilities, reporting best practices and providing assistance.”

“I told Paula that India had great potential for using technology, and she came up with the idea of transferring the Simon Technology Center concept to an Indian agency.” Paul developed a plan to stimulate Indian and American technology companies located in Bangalore, India, to consider developing technology for children with disabilities.

Paul and Paula made four trips to India, meeting with staff of agencies that worked with children with disabilities and heads of large technology companies. “We had interesting but challenging meetings. They had little idea of what we were talking about, but once we showed them examples of American tech, they understood and became excited.

“Indian tech companies don’t openly display their plans, but in later years, we found exciting programs for teaching village children to read, providing teaching aids for children with disabilities, even mechanical prostheses that

Continued on next page

are digital.” The relationship they forged with the Spastic Society of India, the largest Indian organization serving children with cerebral palsy and their parents, resulted in the development of a PACER-like technology center.

With a grant from the Indian government, they developed the first international summit on digital technology for children and adults with disabilities. It drew information technology scientists from the U.S. and India, and representatives who could sustain efforts in both countries. India now has a similar national technology summit each year.

In working with the Spastic Society, Paula started out with technical assistance, discerning their needs and building parent service programs. IBM-India sent a tech representative to assist. The program flourished and has successfully expanded to other agencies.

“Our philosophy was that we may not be able to get everything in every city or town, but if we helped make

productive change, people would adopt it,” Paul said. “If you build it, they will come.”

PACER’s past and future

Summing things up, Paul said, “When I think back on the hopes and expectations that that first group of peer reviewers and I had for PACER, I get a bit overwhelmed. PACER, Paula, Marge, and the superb Board and staff have far surpassed what we hoped for. They have become a major resource for every parent and child advocate in America. They have promoted communication that influences legislation and regulations. They have stimulated the private sector to adapt to the needs of parents and children with disabilities. They have helped to organize networks of parents all over the nation that assist others with local problems. They have embraced technology and made it work for children with special needs.

“If I would pray for anything for PACER, I would pray for the funds for sustaining it. America needs PACER.” ■

‘History of PACER’ continued from page 1

“We received a small grant, \$20,000, from the Minnesota Department of Education,” Paula recalled. “Karen Tangen was the person at MDE who gave us the funding, and it was approved by Wayne Erickson and Bob Wedl.”

They used the money to travel the state, putting on 21 workshops for parents in a six-month period. “We hadn’t formed PACER yet,” Marge said. “Everywhere we went, crowds came to hear us. Newspapers and radio stations spread the news that we were coming to talk to parents, to educate them about the law.”

A grant from the Huested Foundation followed. Paula and Marge rented a tiny office in south Minneapolis for themselves and the volunteers who worked with them at the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER). “We had card tables for desks and folding chairs,” Paula said. “And our mailing list was on index cards in a recipe box!”

The first federal grant followed the Huested grant, and Paula, Marge, and some of the first volunteers became staff. Paula and Marge were co-executive directors. “Along with

Paul Ackerman, one of the people instrumental in PACER getting the first federal grant was Jo Shepherd, a professor at Columbia University who was an expert in learning disabilities,” Paula said. “She was a champion for PACER.”

“Everywhere we went, crowds came to hear us. Newspapers and radio stations spread the news that we were coming to talk to parents, to educate them about the law.”

– Marge Goldberg

Paula and Marge never dreamed back then that PACER would grow as it has. “We thought we could do it, educate parents, and then we’d close in two or three years,” Marge said.

But instead, they heard from more parents. Program after program was added to respond to the needs of parents and families. “Besides parents calling, we heard from social workers, teachers, even a principal or two and a doctor or two,” Marge said.

More than 40 years after the first workshop, PACER has a staff of 70, more than 20 programs, offices in Minnesota and Los Angeles, and is one of the most influential and respected advocacy organizations for families of children with disabilities and all children who are bullied, not just in the United States but worldwide. Marge is retired, and Paula is now the sole executive director.

And the phones have never stopped ringing. ■

'She's my favorite person in the world'



Left: Reilly, Maddie, and Bennett Hawley as young children.

Right: Maddie, Bennett, and Reilly



Reilly Hawley is the baby of her family, but the 18-year-old has taught her older siblings life lessons that have shaped who they are. Reilly has developmental disabilities and is on the autism spectrum. Her older siblings, Maddie, 22, and Bennett, 20, are typical.

"Reilly has helped make me the person I am," said Bennett. "I'm more patient and accepting of others because of her," he said.

"I've learned from Reilly how to be comfortable with myself and with all kinds of people," said Maddie. "She's also made me realize how much of an impact I can make on others because of the impact she's made on me."

"One of the best things about Reilly is that she loves unconditionally," Bennett said. "She may not have a high IQ, but she has a tremendously high EQ [emotional quotient]. She loves to be around people; that makes her thrive."

Ups and downs

"Reilly and I have been really close forever," said Maddie. "When we were growing up, she would spend time with my friends and me all the time. She called them her friends; she called my boyfriend, her boyfriend."

Like most siblings, the Hawley's have had their ups and downs. There were times when Maddie found it challenging to have a sibling with a disability. "In middle school, it was hard for me because Reilly had pretty major behaviors. None of my friends had siblings with disabilities. It was embarrassing in public and when friends came over."

Maddie found it useful to work with a counselor who had experience with siblings of children with disabilities. "Talking through what it was like to have a sibling with a

disability was very helpful. I started figuring out how to talk to people about Reilly. I didn't get embarrassed anymore."

Taking care of Reilly

Both Maddie and Bennett are protective of Reilly. "When she yells or says inappropriate things in public, sometimes people will whisper or point. I use it as an opportunity to go up to them and say, 'She's not the typical 18-year-old. There's no reason to judge her,'" Maddie said.

Bennett once got into a scuffle with a hockey teammate who used the word "retarded." It landed him in trouble with the coach but led to a teachable moment. "I explained to teammates and peers from a number of communities why that word is hurtful. People left thinking a little differently about it." Bennett also used his senior speech, a requirement at his high school, to talk about the importance of word choice. "I talked about why 'retarded' shouldn't be used, how it degrades a community for something out of their control."

Bennett worries about Reilly. "Every year our grandparents would give us a gift towards our college education, and I would think, Reilly's not going to college; what's she going to do when we go off to college?"

Sometimes Reilly struggles with her siblings' comings and goings. "She goes through changes differently," Bennett said. But distance hasn't affected their relationships: Reilly is very adept at FaceTime, a video calling service.

"We FaceTime multiple times a day," Maddie said.

"Reilly is very persistent," said Bennett. "If she can't reach you, she'll call like 50 times until she does!"

'Favorite person' continued on page 15

New website spotlights PACER's puppet program

PACER's puppet program has a wonderful new online presence. "The Puppet Program is one of the most visible parts of PACER to the community at large, so we wanted to make it easier to access information about the program, schedule puppet shows, order puppets, and volunteer," said Katie Kaufmann, who with Lynn Dennis coordinates the program. "Our previous site had some good information, but we're really excited about how appealing our new site, which includes more information, photos, and videos, is." Katie says she's had a positive response from those who have seen the revamped site, which is located at PACER.org/puppets.

An astounding number of children — nearly half a million — have enjoyed the puppet shows since the program was founded more than 40 years ago. There are three separate shows, all performed by trained volunteers: "Count Me In" has two versions, one for preschool and kindergarten age children, and one for children in grades 1 to 4. "Count Me In" focuses on understanding and including children with physical and developmental disabilities. The "Kids Against Bullying" show for children in grades one to three teaches about the types of bullying and how children can prevent it. "Kids Against Bullying" shows are also available in the Los Angeles area. The puppet shows are interactive, with opportunities for children to participate.

Along with information about the program, the new website features biographies of each of the puppets and a brand new library of videos, including "interviews" with several of the puppets. "We'll include more videos in the future," Katie promised.

How you can support the PACER puppet program

Become a volunteer puppeteer

Help children in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area learn about bullying prevention and disability awareness. To volunteer, all you need is reliable transportation, time during the school day, and a desire to support young children.

Volunteering is easy and you will make a difference in the lives of young children. PACER will give you the training you need to succeed, and you'll be rewarded by the response of young children as they learn the important of kindness, acceptance and inclusion. Volunteers work with a fun team, presenting at Twin Cities schools two to three times monthly.

Want to learn more or sign up to volunteer? Call Lynn or



Puppet volunteer Cathy Milota greets students after a show.

Katie at (952) 838-9000, or go to PACER.org/puppets/volunteer.asp.

Bring a puppet show to a school near you

Children learn through play, and they love PACER's puppet shows! You can support children learning about disability inclusion and bullying prevention by sponsoring a show at a school near you. PACER's Count Me In and Kids Against Bullying puppet shows are performed primarily in the Twin Cities metro area, but occasionally travel to greater Minnesota.

- **Count Me In.** For Pre-K and kindergarten children ages 4-6, the show, which is 30-35 minutes in length, can entertain a maximum of 60 students at a time. It's just \$75 to bring this wonderful experience to young children.
For children in grades 1-4, the show is 45-60 minutes in length and can entertain 80-100 students per show, depending on grade level, and costs \$100 per show.
- **Kids Against Bullying.** This show is geared to children in grades 1-3. It's 35 minutes in length and can entertain 60 students or two classrooms per show. The cost is \$100.

To learn more about scheduling a puppet show, go to PACER.org/puppets/schedule.asp or call Katie or Lynn at (952) 838-9000. ■

Matching technology to student needs

PACER's Simon Technology Center has been busy assisting students and families with needs that have surfaced during distance learning, said Simon Technology Center (STC) Director Terri Rosen. STC staff helps families match available technology to their student's needs through assistive technology (AT) consultations.

"Some of these needs previously existed, but in the classroom, the activities were in-person and there was a teacher to support the student," Terri explained. With the challenges of distance learning, "Parents have been looking for tools to help their student focus and stay on task. We can help families learn about technology such as calendars, timers, and visual schedules that can support students."

Other students have found it difficult to navigate online learning or access the tools needed to support digital reading and writing. "Often, something as simple as turning on a device's built-in accessibility tools that can read text aloud or allow a student to use speech-to-text for writing can make a huge difference," Terri said.

The consultation is a four-part process, consisting of:

- **An online application.** The parent completes the application so they can be matched with the appropriate specialist to meet their student's needs. The application is available at PACER.org/stc/consultations/index.asp



Terri Rosen, PACER's Simon Technology Center Director

- **A phone call with an AT specialist.** During the call, the specialist learns about the student's goals and challenges. After the call, the specialist can focus on selecting a range of AT options for the student to consider.
- **The actual AT consultation,** via Zoom. The consultation consists of virtual demonstrations to help students learn about the technology options available. The consultation, which lasts about 90 minutes, helps the student make an informed decision about technology to borrow, purchase, or ask their school to provide.
- **The follow-up email.** This email covers the items addressed in the consultation and any

resulting questions. There is also an opportunity for the family to join the Lending Library.

While some families miss the hands-on component available with a typical in-person consultation, Terri said virtual consultations are working well, especially for those outside the metro area who no longer have to travel to PACER.

"It's a great alternative! We now use Zoom for a video call, do virtual demonstrations, and talk through different options.

"We're so glad to be able to help families learn about AT." ■

PACESETTER

©2020 by PACER Center, Inc. | Published three times yearly
Circulation: 135,824

8161 Normandale Blvd. | Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044
Voice: (952) 838-9000 | Toll-free: (800) 537-2237
FAX: (952) 838-0199 | Email: PACER@PACER.org

PACER Executive Director: Paula F. Goldberg
Editor: Michele St. Martin Designer: Jenna Hanson

PACER website: PACER.org
BULLYING: PACER.org/Bullying
(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.

An Equal Opportunity Employer, PACER is funded by grants from the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and other sources, and from foundations, corporations, and individuals. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Departments or other donors. Contributions to PACER are tax-deductible. For information, call PACER at (952) 838-9000 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.



‘My daughter is learning again!’

Sam Harris* is a dedicated dad who spent years educating himself about Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and learning about autism after his daughter Audrey,* now 13, was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). For six years, he actively participated on the IEP team at Audrey’s school. Sam was satisfied with the results, until things changed. He explained, “The case worker who worked with my daughter retired and a few others on the team shifted some. My daughter’s progress regressed.”

It was time for the three-year evaluation and development of a new IEP. Sam said that though the evaluation was mostly accurate, there were some things missed. “I found it odd that it didn’t note any sensory issues. They are really common with ASD and Audrey has them.”

The new IEP didn’t include several items that were in the review. To complicate things further, distance learning had just been instituted, and wasn’t working for Audrey. That’s when Sam found the PACER website, PACER.org. “I started reading it and printing off materials. It’s great! Some things were new to me and I realized, ‘I need to reach out, I need someone to explain it to me.’”

He emailed PACER, and Bonnie Jean Smith responded. “Holy cow! Whatever issue or concern I had, she was right there. The amount of knowledge she shared! She really helped me to work with the school,” Sam said.

“Part of what I did was help Sam understand the technical language,” Bonnie Jean said. Sam and Bonnie Jean talked about Audrey’s needs, Sam’s due process rights, what was appropriate to expect, and how Sam should handle meetings. Bonnie Jean coached Sam before school meetings and after meetings, they discussed what had happened.

“I also helped teach Sam how to communicate with the school,” Bonnie Jean said. “When he was angry, I told him, ‘you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar.



PACER Advocate Bonnie Jean Smith

They don’t know your child; it’s your job to address them as a professional, because you have a PhD in Audrey. Help them learn about her and put what she needs in the IEP.”

After some hard work between Sam and the district, there was an IEP that satisfied Sam and Bonnie Jean. “Bonnie Jean was my teacher, coach, mentor,” Sam said. “She provided the resources I needed to make the IEP about my daughter, digging deep into the data the school provided in the evaluation. She didn’t try to take over. She provided resources and was a great voice of encouragement.”

One sticking point that was resolved was Audrey’s speech therapy.

“With distance learning, the speech therapist basically wanted to send lesson plans home,” Bonnie Jean said. She was able to use the evaluation to help Sam build a case that Audrey needed face-to-face speech therapy, even if it was virtual. A speech therapist who was willing to work virtually with Audrey joined the team.

As the meetings continued, Sam said, “I could sense there was one person who thought Audrey was getting too many resources and what we wanted was too specific. Bonnie Jean confirmed that what I was asking for was appropriate.”

The IEP that Sam signed off on met Audrey’s needs. Sam credits Bonnie Jean and PACER. “Bonnie Jean is a blessing,” Sam said. “She answered every question I had, guided me to materials PACER had, and asked questions to help me help myself. She kept me engaged and guided me so I didn’t get frustrated.

“Her knowledge was outstanding. I cannot say enough good things about her. All the materials I have read, information online, and people I have spoken to cannot measure up to what Bonnie Jean shared with me and taught me.

“Her work with me and for PACER was awesome.” ■

* Names have been changed for privacy reasons

Plan your gift to PACER: Many different ways to give

People give to PACER for many reasons: to honor a friend or family member, because they have a relationship with PACER, or just because they believe in PACER's mission and programs. One donor told PACER she gives because in these uncertain times, it feels good to know her gift helps children with disabilities and their families, and all children who are bullied.

PACER is a wise steward

When you make a financial contribution to an organization, it's important to know that your gift is put to good use. Just 16 percent of PACER's funds go to management and fundraising, well below industry standards; 84 percent of the money you give goes to PACER's programs.

How to donate

Yearly giving

One easy way to give is to make a yearly donation to PACER. Some yearly givers also add PACER to their estate plan. Some donors give at the end of the year; others have special times that work best for them.

Appreciated stock donation

Donating stock that has grown in value benefits both the giver and PACER. This form of giving is sometimes recommended by investment advisors, who point out that selling the stock would mean owing capital gains tax on the appreciated amount but giving it directly to PACER means the donor receives a benefit on the entire amount. PACER then has the ability to sell the stock with no tax liability. Donors can do this once or as often as they like.

Qualified Charitable Donation from IRA

People who have an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) must take a yearly required minimum distribution (RMD) once they turn 72. The RMD can be taxable. However, giving to a qualified charity, such as PACER, can help a donor meet their RMD while not paying taxes on the amount donated. This is called a Qualified Charitable Donation. In 2020, the RMD has been waived under the federal coronavirus relief bill.

Retirement account beneficiary

Naming PACER as a beneficiary of your retirement account, to be paid on your death, can have long-term tax benefits for your family. If one or more individuals inherit your retirement account, they are required to pay taxes on the money. You may, instead, choose to make PACER your beneficiary and provide for your family in a way that minimizes their tax burden. You can name PACER as

your beneficiary at any time, whether retirement is a long way off or just around the corner.

Bequest in will

If simplicity is your goal, you may want to name PACER in your will. It's a great feeling to know that after you're gone, your gift will be there to help other families. Although naming PACER in your will is easy, it's important to talk to a lawyer or investment advisor to ensure it's done correctly and that certain rules are followed, such as using PACER's full legal name (PACER Center, Inc.) and specifying how you want your donation used. Most donors choose to state that PACER can use their gift for its general purposes.

Life insurance policy

There are several ways to give to PACER through a life insurance policy. One way is to take out a new life insurance policy with PACER as the beneficiary. Another way is to make PACER the beneficiary on an existing policy that is no longer needed for its original purpose.

Many families purchase a life insurance policy to cover their children's educational needs should something happen to a parent. Once the children are done with their education and on their own, some parents choose to end the policy. You might also choose to keep the policy active and name PACER as the beneficiary.

Donating a life insurance policy helps both the donor and PACER. Gifting a life insurance policy can greatly reduce the donor's taxable estate, which can lower the amount of estate taxes. Any premiums paid after the gift is made are tax deductible. PACER will receive the entire face amount of the policy when it pays out.

A word from Paula Goldberg

"No matter how you choose to give to PACER, please know that your gift is greatly appreciated and will be wisely used by PACER," said Paula Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director. "Every gift we receive, no matter how large or small, is so valuable. Our donors are truly Champions for Children. In these times when government funding is uncertain, our individual donors are more important than ever."

Paula added, "Please check with your attorney or investment advisor to help decide the best way to support PACER. Thank you on behalf of families and children."

To discuss your donation, call Paula at (952) 838-9000 or email her at pgoldberg@PACER.org.

Teen technology workshops go online

PACER's Simon Technology Center's Tech for Teens and Tech for Girls workshops are fun and also teach useful **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math** (STEM) skills. Prior to the pandemic, teens gathered at PACER and worked with staff and volunteers. With a little imagination, PACER staff was able to adapt these programs to a virtual format while maintaining the important features that keep teens interested and make them want to come back for more.

Keeping it fun

Tech for Girls now uses the Zoom app. "Kids are so good with technology, and many of them were using Zoom for school, so they knew how to use it," said Tina Hanson, who coordinates the Tech for Girls workshops.

There is a lot of coding (writing computer programs) in the new workshop content. "We thought about what families could access at home for coding, and we were able to adapt our programs to work with Scratch," said Simon Technology Center Director Terri Rosen. Scratch is a free, web-based programming language and website that is easily accessible to anyone with a computer connection.

A considerable amount of time and effort went in to making the visual platform work. "We had to redo our workshop offerings since a lot of the content was geared to working in-person," Tina said. She said it was also important to adjust the pace of the workshops so the girls could follow along easily. "We wanted to keep the interpersonal component and have the workshop be somewhat interactive. Zoom works really well for this," Tina said. "We had a few girls talking with each other before the workshop, which is what we would typically see at an in-person workshop. I liked that they were still able to connect with each other."

The new platform worked seamlessly, Tina said. "We had no tech issues, which allowed the girls to really focus on the content, and more than one girl said coding was fun!"

Tech for Teens workshops

Tech for Teens (any teen ages 11 to 19 with a disability) is broadcast through Livestream to reach a larger audience and uses similar free online tools. "While



this means it's less interactive, Livestream also allows us to keep workshops in our online archives," Terri noted. Livestreamed workshops can be viewed by new participants, and those who previously participated can watch them again for a refresher.

One exciting upcoming Tech for Teens offering is the LEGO Stop Motion Videos workshop, during which participants will learn to create stop-motion style videos with a camera and LEGO toys! It will be Livestreamed on Saturday, August 15 from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

For more information about this and other PACER workshops, go to PACER.org/workshops. ■

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.

At-home family activities

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the summertime pursuits parents and children usually enjoy together are on hold. As we look for new ways to enjoy family time, PACER has put together several fun activities that children and parents can enjoy at home.

Culture box: Putting together a culture box is both a fun activity and a conversation starter; it gives your child the chance to think about what's important to them and who they are as an individual and as a community member. Anything that is important to your child can be included in a culture box: from photos of family or friends to a superhero action figure, religious symbol, or a favorite keepsake. The only rule is for your child to express their unique self. Any box you have at home can be a culture box. They come in all shapes and sizes, and part of the fun is decorating one. Let your child use their imagination for both the box and its contents!

Self-portrait: A self-portrait is a way for your child to express who they are in an artist rendering. Parents can



work with their child to create a list of what they want others to know about them by asking questions and listening to the child's answers. Your child can use any art materials you have at home to express how they see themselves as an individual and what makes them unique and special.

For more information about the “Culture Box” and “Self-Portrait” activities, go to PACER.org/special/covid-19.asp. ■

'NBPC resources' continued from page 1

Julie is also excited about the “Starting the Conversation” curricula: one for elementary students and one for middle and high school students. “There are five components to each of these, so they can be used consecutively for a week, or the educator can draw them out with one a week or use just for a few minutes at a time,” she said. “It’s a very flexible curriculum with downloadable materials, discussion ideas, activities, and games, ideal for addressing all bullying, especially online, and promoting kindness, acceptance, and inclusion through distance learning.”

Illustrating COVID-19 and cyberbullying

The new infographics on COVID-19 and cyberbullying are colorful, engaging, and easily downloadable free resources parents and educators can use to engage students. These infographics illustrate the relationship between COVID-19 and the potential for cyberbullying. There is one version each for elementary students, middle and high school students, and parents. Topic areas for students include distance learning, using technology, and what to do if you or someone you know is bullied. For parents, topics include cyberbullying and COVID-19, important conversations to have with your child or youth, and what to do if your child is bullied.

To learn more about all of the resources in the distance learning hub, go to PACER.org/Bullying/classroom/distance-learning.asp. ■



To download these COVID-19 and Cyberbullying infographics, go to PACER.org/Bullying

The 6th Annual Unity Awards from PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center

The 2020 Unity Awards are presented by the Youth Advisory Boards of PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center (NBPC). These awards celebrate individuals and groups across the country who have made outstanding contributions in addressing and preventing bullying in their communities.

National Awards

Together Against Bullying Award: Rylee Ruegger

- Rylee, of Dallas, Georgia, started The Be Nice Program at her school more than three years ago. Be Nice has a website. Rylee visits schools and community organizations where she shares her personal experience with bullying and teaches other students about bullying prevention and empathy.

United for Kindness Award: Marley Kindness Club

- This new club in Glen Burnie, Maryland, grew from 20 to 95 members who created school-wide initiatives, including a monthly kindness tracker, a student ambassador program, and a Kindness Cup challenge to inspire their peers to reach 1,000 acts of kindness.

United for Acceptance Award: Grace Coleman

- Grace, of Savannah, Georgia, founded the Super Sharks team for athletes with disabilities five years ago. Grace and her coaching team organized cheer camps in the summer. They coach the team's athletes every week and cheer alongside them at multiple competitions each year.

United for Inclusion: Unity, Inc. of Roosevelt High School

- Unity, Inc., of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, founded their school's all-abilities show choir, giving students with disabilities a place to sing, dance, socialize, and compete. Unity, Inc. demonstrates that all students can be singers, dancers, and friends; deserve the same opportunities; and should be celebrated!



Marley Middle School Kindness Club

Local Awards

Faces of Change Award: Awarded to individuals or groups making a difference in Minnesota, where PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center headquarters is located, and in the Los Angeles area, where NBPC maintains an office.

Minnesota

- Principal Ryan Gibbs of Loring Elementary
- The Bandana Project of Mounds View High School
- Katie Kupris
- Erica Ganske
- Bemidji High School Unified
- Jodi Betsinger, Kristine Adams Vankempen, and Samantha Schackman of Children's Minnesota

Los Angeles

- THRIVE Conejo
- Mentors and Protectors at Alliance Burton Tech High School
- Zachery Ramos

Congratulations to all the honorees who are doing incredible work to create kinder, more accepting, and inclusive communities. ■

View this year's virtual celebration at
PACER.org/bullying/getinvolved/unity-awards.asp

Workshops

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

PACER Center is using new, innovative techniques to best serve students, families, and professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, all PACER Center workshops are held virtually as a Livestream, webinar, or Zoom meeting. More information regarding the platform used for each workshop can be found at PACER.org/workshops.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Working with Culturally Diverse Students with Mental Health Needs

This webinar is designed to provide information to educators to increase their effectiveness in working with culturally diverse students with mental health and behavioral needs. Certificates of attendance will be available. Please register by emailing PACERworkshops@PACER.org.

- Aug. 5, 9:00 to 10:30 a.m.

Parent Leadership Summit on Children's Mental Health

This specialty webinar is for parents interested in taking a leadership role in their communities and learning more about systems of care for children and youth with mental health and behavioral challenges. Parents interested in applying for this training can email rnelson@PACER.org.

- Aug. 21 and 22, 9:00 a.m. to noon

Building Family and Physician Partnerships Through Effective Communication

This open forum session will help you discover new approaches to communicating with your care team. Learn how to ask questions for better family-physician relationships and health outcomes.

- July 22, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

SIMON TECHNOLOGY CENTER

Strategies for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Implementation

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools can help individuals communicate with others, but can be challenging to implement. This workshop will explore strategies to implement AAC in an individual's routines and environments.

- Aug. 18, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Assistive Technology to Increase Independence for Young Adults with Disabilities

This workshop will explore tools for independence, including devices and apps for time management, tasks, medications, money, meals, transportation, and communication. Features that support those with vision loss will also be addressed.

- Sept. 30, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

Teens are invited to join an exciting club to learn about technology! This FREE club is open to teens ages 11 to 19 with disabilities. Students of all abilities are encouraged to attend.

LEGO Stop Motion Videos

In this Livestream, participants will learn to create stop-motion style videos with a camera and LEGO toys! Participants will need to have: mobile device with camera, Stop Motion Studio app, and your choice of LEGO figures or other toys with moving parts.

- Aug. 15, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Transition to Employment: Tools to Help You Find a Job

Learn about helpful apps for searching for jobs, creating resumes or letters, and preparing for an interview. This workshop will also feature tools that keep track of communications, read with text-to-speech, and use dictation to write.

- July 30, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Succeed at Work: Tools that Support Executive Function and Focus on the Job

This workshop will showcase technology that supports executive function at work. Topics include managing time, staying organized, completing tasks, and maintaining focus. Demonstrations will include timers, task managers, and smart pens.

- Aug. 11, 2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Tools for Success: Technology to Support Young Adults with Disabilities at College and On the Job

This workshop will feature a range of technology available to support youth with disabilities at college and on the job. Demonstrations will include tools and apps for executive function, computer access, reading, writing, and notetaking.

- Aug. 26, 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.

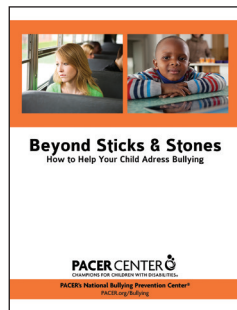
Resources

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

Beyond Sticks & Stones: How to Help Your Child Address Bullying

This book offers bullying prevention strategies for children at home, in school, and online. It is filled with information and practical tools that can help parents and others take action against bullying. A special section of the book provides specific tips for parents of children with disabilities.

\$5 | BP-7



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Resources for Families

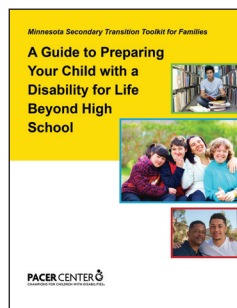
PACER Center has developed informational materials to help families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics include: Distance Learning and Students with Disabilities, Social and Emotional Learning and Supports, Health, At-Home Family Activities, and Student Privacy. Many handouts are available in Hmong, Somali, and Spanish translations.

Free to download | [PACER.org/special/covid-19.asp](https://www.pacer.org/special/covid-19.asp)

Minnesota Secondary Transition Toolkit for Families: A Guide to Preparing Your Child with a Disability for Life Beyond High School

Helps make transition planning easier. Topics include health care, benefits planning, postsecondary education, housing, and more. Updated 2017.

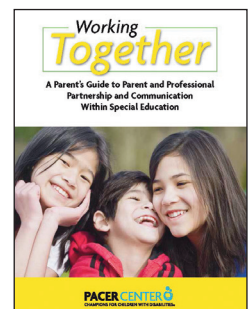
\$9 | ST-41



Working Together: A Parent's Guide to Parent and Professional Partnership and Communication Within Special Education

This book helps parents effectively communicate with special education professionals as they develop their child's educational program.

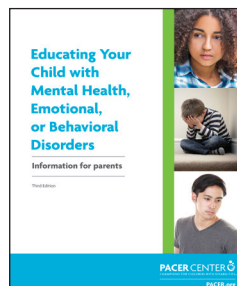
\$6 | 10+ copies, \$5 each | PHP-a19



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

This guide helps 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.

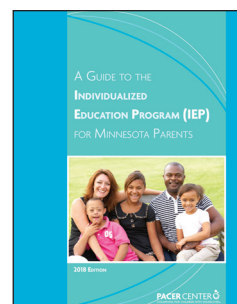
\$5 | 10+ copies, \$4 each | PHP-a21



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

This booklet 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



'Favorite person' continued from page 6

Lasting impact

Being Reilly's sister has also influenced Maddie's career choice. After seeing the impact a teacher had on Reilly, Maddie planned to become a Special Education teacher. She spent summers working at an autism clinic and at an extreme sports camp for children with autism.

After helping a student who had aggressive behaviors make substantial progress, Maddie decided that she wanted to work in a hospital setting with children who are harmful to themselves and others. She starts graduate school this fall to obtain her master's degree in Applied Behavior Analysis, the first step in becoming a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst.

Reflecting, Maddie said, "Reilly has given Bennett and me all of our positive qualities. We found the negative ones on our own!"

"She's my favorite person in the world."

INSIDE

NBPC resources	1
History of PACER	1
Distance learning and children with disabilities	2
Paul Ackerman	4
Siblings	6
Puppet program website	7
Matching tech to student needs	8
Success story	9
Many ways to give	10
Teen tech workshops	11
At-home family activities	12
Unity Awards	13
Workshops	14
PACER resources	15

Change Service Requested

PACER's Benefit is Nov. 14: Motown comes to Minneapolis



Every year PACER holds one of the most acclaimed benefits in the Twin Cities. It includes one of the area's largest and most diverse silent auctions, a live auction with once-in-a-lifetime prizes, and a concert featuring amazing entertainment.

PACER's silent auction offers something for everyone: from jewelry in all price ranges to autographed memorabilia to luncheons with local celebrities. The amazing live auction, emceed by WCCO-TV's Frank Vascellaro, includes incredible vacations, unique luxury experiences, and exclusive sports packages. The timing of this year's Benefit makes it a perfect for purchasing holiday gifts.

One of the highlights of the evening is sure to be when the incomparable Smokey Robinson takes the stage. Smokey led The Miracles, a Motown group he founded while still in high school. Their numerous hits include "Shop Around," "You've Really Got a Hold on Me," and "Tracks of My Tears."

"When I tell people that Smokey Robinson is our entertainer, they are just thrilled and can't wait to buy their tickets," said Paula Goldberg, PACER's Executive Director. "I think this may be one of PACER's best shows ever."

Buy your tickets for the PACER Benefit today! ■

Tickets on sale now!
PACER.org | (952) 838-9000