

# PACESETTER

Winter 2010 • Vol. 33, Issue 1

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

## Teen votes gain Best Buy donation for PACER program

Teens showed their power and desire to end bullying when their votes secured a \$112,000 donation from Best Buy for PACER's TeensAgainstBullying Web site and its National Bullying Prevention Center.

Just how did teen votes transform into bullying prevention dollars? With Best Buy's @15 Change Exchange program, teens earn points and then use them to vote for one of four organizations every three months. Their votes decide where Best Buy will donate up to \$250,000.

Teens came out in full force in October 2009, earning and voting more than 700,000 points for TeensAgainstBullying.org, the most points tallied since the @15 Change Exchange program began in April, 2009. That gave PACER 45 percent of the \$250,000 available donation.

"We're so thankful for all the teens who voted for the bullying prevention program," said Paula Goldberg, executive director of PACER Center. "And we're grateful to Best Buy, not only for its incredible generosity, but also for its unique approach. They are not only enabling us to expand our national bullying prevention efforts, but are also empowering teens to become involved in improving their communities."

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Lyle Lovett and His Large Band headline PACER Benefit

"Irresistible, stirring, full of joy." When four-time Grammy Award winner Lyle Lovett entertains with "His Large Band," reviewers rave. Audiences at PACER's 28th Annual Benefit will have a chance to rave, too, when the charismatic Lovett brings his show to the Minneapolis Convention Center on Saturday, May 8.

Performing an inventive blend of folk, swing, blues, gospel, and jazz, Lovett and His Large Band satisfy audiences with a wide range of songs. "The bottom line is quality," says music critic Curtis Ross. "When Lovett plays live, the show is going to be great. When he puts out an album, it's going to be worth your time and money."

The tall Texan has been called "one of the all-time great American singer/songwriters" for his witty storytelling and distinct musical style that became an immediate hit with his debut album in 1986.

Since then, Lovett has produced 13 albums and won several Grammy Awards, including Best Pop Vocal Collaborator. His newest album, "Natural Forces," was released in November 2009. Prior to that, "Lyle Lovett and His Large Band: It's Not Big, It's Large," scored high on the Billboard Charts.

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

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

## BENEFIT RESERVATIONS

To reserve your tickets for the 2010 PACER Benefit on May 8 featuring **Lyle Lovett**, please complete the form below and fax or mail it to PACER Center. Reservations can also be made at PACER.org or by telephoning 952-838-9000.

**Benefit Tickets:**

Please send me:

- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$55<sup>1</sup> Friend
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$85<sup>1</sup> Supporter
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$140<sup>2</sup> Patron\*
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$200<sup>2</sup> Benefactor\*
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$275<sup>3</sup> Sponsor\*
- (# of) \_\_\_\_\_ \$550<sup>3</sup> Champion\*
- Total amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: (H) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
*If you wish to sit with friends, the reservations must arrive at the same time.*

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

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

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

- My checks, separate for the Benefit and dinner, are made payable to PACER Center and are enclosed. *(Tickets will be mailed May 3.)*

**Other Contribution/  
Volunteer Opportunities**

Please contact me about:

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

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

- I am unable to attend the Benefit. Please accept my gift:  check  charge  
 \$550  \$275  \$200  \$140  \$85  \$55  Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Many companies match gifts. Please ask your employer for a matching gift form and enclose it with your contribution or ticket order.

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

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

\* Includes post-performance patron champagne and dessert party

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

## PACER's gone digital!

Social media is taking the world by storm, and PACER Center is on board! PACER's Facebook page, Twitter page, and YouTube channel let you and PACER stay connected, anytime, anywhere. Parent Centers can find their social media connection with the ALLIANCE at [taalliance.org](http://taalliance.org). So, friend us, follow us, and watch us today with just the click of a button at [PACER.org](http://PACER.org).



## Preview technology at STC's library

The Simon Technology Center Library offers an inexpensive way to preview software and assistive technology (AT) devices for children and young adults with disabilities.

Anyone can visit and view the 2,500 items. Minnesota parents, individuals, and professionals who are members may borrow them.

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

## A note from Paula Goldberg, PACER founder & executive director

It's customary to consider new beginnings in January, but as PACER celebrates its 31 years in 2010, we'd like to take a moment to reflect on the wonderful individuals we've come to know over the years. Forming relationships with so many people is a major focus and joy at PACER.

First, we consider it to be an honor and a privilege to work with families whose strengths and commitment continue to inspire us.

We are also thankful for our relationships with so many remarkable people who have helped PACER carry out its mission. Working individually or through organizations and businesses, PACER supporters and volunteers

help us expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families.

Our relationships with people who offer PACER a helping hand and with those who ask for assistance are often entwined, and we value each and every one.

At PACER, we often share stories about the people we meet such as:

- The child who said "I love you" to her mother for the first time after she received appropriate assistive technology at PACER's Simon Technology Center
- The boy who is doing "phenomenally" in school this year and can attend classes all day instead of two hours, after a PACER advocate provided support and information to his parents.
- The new donor who first found help for her child at



Paula Goldberg

PACER Center.

Whether it's a family writing to thank PACER for its role in their child's success, a volunteer persevering in numerous fundraising tasks, a business providing financial support, or a board member providing advice and

expertise, PACER appreciates everyone who spreads the word about our services and partners with us to meet the needs of families and their children with disabilities.

In these tough economic times, we are especially grateful for your support and encouragement.

We extend a sincere thank you from PACER and from the families and children who will meet PACER this new year.

### PACESSETTER

Published by PACER Center, Inc.  
Three times a year  
Circulation: 115,000  
©2010 by PACER Center  
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Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

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PACER Center expands opportunities and enhances the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families. The mission is based on the concepts of parents helping parents and working in coalition with 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 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

PACER Web site: [PACER.org](http://PACER.org)  
ALLIANCE site: [taalliance.org](http://taalliance.org)  
FAPE site: [fape.org](http://fape.org)  
C3 site: [c3online.org](http://c3online.org)

BULLYING: [PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org](http://PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org)  
[PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org](http://PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org)  
(Alternate format is available upon request.)



Bridget Gilormini (L), coordinator of PACER's Simon Technology Center, met with assistive technology specialists Priya Rao and Rabidran Isaac of the Assistive Technology Center in Bangalore, India when they visited PACER in October 2009. Raja Shanmugam, chief executive officer of MindTree Foundation, also visited PACER. The Foundation is the nonprofit arm of MindTree, a global IT company based in India.



Scott Pearson, associate assistant deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Instruction, toured PACER in November 2009. Executive Director Paula Goldberg led the tour.

# Students “Think Pink,” sign petitions during 2009

Wearing pink to school was definitely more than a fashion statement at Watertown-Mayer Middle School during PACER’s fourth annual National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week. When 85 percent of the students and staff wore pink during that October week, they were showing their commitment to end bullying.

Students in that Minnesota school district decided to have a “Think Pink” day at school after watching an NBC report included in PACER’s bullying prevention materials.

The report told how Nova Scotia



Students and faculty at Watertown-Mayer Middle School in Minnesota supported bullying prevention with “Think Pink Day.”

seniors stood up for a student who was bullied because he wore a pink shirt. Their strategy? Purchasing pink shirts for all of their friends to wear.

Like those seniors, the Watertown-Mayer students made their own statement with “Think Pink” day.

“The students made this decision, and it was supported by the administration,” says Julie Hertzog, PACER’s bullying prevention coordinator. “Student-led initiatives have so much power in influencing attitudes.”

Across the country and the world,

## Special Education Day at the Capitol is Feb. 17

Minnesota youth with disabilities, parents, and advocates are invited to join the Coalition for Children with Disabilities at “Special Education Day at the Capitol—Celebrating Differences, Protecting Rights” on Wednesday, Feb. 17.

“Although special education funding fared well during the 2009 session, Minnesota’s legislators convening on Feb. 4 will face a deficit of more than \$5 billion over the next two and a half years,” says Kim Kang, PACER’s public policy director.

“This means the stakes continue to

be high for students receiving special education services. We must continue to make our voices heard at the state capitol.” Special Education Day at the Capitol begins at the Minnesota History Center at 9 a.m. with a legislative update. Topics covered will include:

- Review of 2009 legislative session
- What to expect in 2010 legislative session
- How you can influence the legislative process
- The power of your personal story as a parent
- Bullying prevention legislation

After learning some valuable skills for sharing their personal story with legislators, participants will visit the State Capitol to speak with their respective legislators about special education issues. The day ends at 1 p.m. Visit PACER.org. to register.

The Coalition for Children with Disabilities is comprised of 10 statewide organizations and is dedicated to protecting the rights and services of Minnesota’s children with disabilities and their families.

## Teen votes gain Best Buy donation for PACER program *(Continued from page 1)*

PACER extends a special thank you to Jeff Peterson, Best Buy’s director of community relations, and Paula Prael, senior vice president, communications, public affairs, and corporate responsi-

bility, Best Buy Co., Inc.

The donation will allow PACER to continue and expand its National Bullying Prevention Center and its new TeensAgainstBullying.org Web site.

Since the site launched last fall, teens have been quick to respond. There were more than 54,000 visits to the site in October 2009.

# National Bullying Prevention Awareness Week

more young people like those at Watertown-Mayer have become aware of National Bullying Prevention Week and PACER's resources, thanks to PACER's partnership with Disney teen star Demi Lovato.

A public service announcement video featuring Lovato was viewed 162,530 times on YouTube by the end of October. (See the video at [PACER.org/bullying/mhs/demi.asp](http://PACER.org/bullying/mhs/demi.asp).) In that same month, there were also more than 130,000 visits to PACER's bullying prevention Web sites.

USA Today, the San Diego Union-Tribune, PR Week, and Lovato's Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter sites were just some of the avenues that increased visibility for PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center in 2009.

In Minnesota, teens also attended PACER's bullying prevention rally at the Mall of America on Oct. 6. Singer Lindsay Rush of Philadelphia, who now tours with musician Pat Benatar, shared her experience of being bullied and performed the live premiere of a song she wrote called "Odd Girl Out."

Students signed an online petition at the event, pledging, "The end of bullying begins with me," and listened to speaker Lynn Miland talk about her daughter's experience with bullying.

"When I was a teenager, I was told that you either fight back or ignore bullying," Miland said, "But we know that doesn't work. It's no longer acceptable to stand back and be quiet."

Adults, children, and teens can learn more about preventing bullying at [PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org](http://PACERTeensAgainstBullying.org) (for middle and high school students), [PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org](http://PACERKidsAgainstBullying.org) (for elementary school children), and at [PACER.org](http://PACER.org).



*Teens, kids, parents, and educators showed support for the movement against bullying at PACER's bullying prevention rally at the Mall of America. Clockwise, from top: a student listens to a speaker, Lindsay Rush performs, and students sign the online petition.*

## What teens are saying about [TeensAgainstBullying.org](http://TeensAgainstBullying.org)

- Thank you so much for making this Web site. It has opened up a new door for me.
- I was never bullied or have been a bully, but witnessed it. I didn't know what to do. Now I do.
- Thank you so much. I thought I was the only one on Earth who was bullied.
- I am now more aware of bullying. I will definitely do my part and try to raise awareness.
- I am one of those people getting bullied right now. I will come back to this Web site almost every day because I want it to stop!
- This Web site is one of the best I have ever seen. I have gone through bullying and left school because of it. I will make sure my friends know about this and get my school involved.

# Moving? Know your special education rights

By Julie Holmquist

Considering a move to a different community or state? Reviewing special education rights and researching available services prior to a move may ease the transition for your family.

## Moving or transferring within Minnesota

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP), the new school district must follow the current IEP from the previous school district or provide comparable services in order to ensure a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

The new IEP team may adopt the IEP from the previous district or, if educators in the new district want to make changes, the team will meet and write a new IEP.

The new school district should clarify how it will provide appropriate education services for your child, and parents or guardians must agree to any proposed change or service.

“Remember that all Minnesota charter schools are classified as public schools,” says PACER advocate Pat Anderson. “They have to follow special education laws, too.”

It’s the responsibility of the new school to gather the records from your child’s previous school within a reasonable amount of time, but Anderson suggests that parents make a written request for a transfer of records or ask the school if they can deliver the records themselves.

## Moving to a different state

Just because a child qualifies in one state for special education services doesn’t mean he or she will qualify for those same services in another state. For example, a child who qualified for services in one state under the category of autism spectrum disorder did not meet the criteria for services when the family moved to Minnesota.

### Don’t miss PACER’s e-news!

Interested in breaking news affecting children with disabilities or the latest updates on PACER events?

Don’t miss the latest news!

Send your e-mail address to [PACER@PACER.org](mailto:PACER@PACER.org) to receive PACER’s monthly e-news.

## Other helpful hints

- A Parent Center can tell you the name of the special education director at your child’s new school district. Let the director know beforehand about the move. (A list of parent centers is at [taalliance.org](http://taalliance.org))
- Learn the state’s eligibility criteria for services before you make a decision.
- Make sure your child’s records are sent to the new school and you have a copy also.
- Parents should also consider what county services, waivers, and general community supports are available for their child as they consider a move. Services and supports can vary widely from one area to another.

Although the federal government determines disability categories in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), each state has specific criteria and will make its own determination.

The state is responsible to provide FAPE, including services comparable to those described in the child’s IEP from the previous school, until the new school conducts an evaluation and makes a determination regarding eligibility. If a student is eligible for services, the new school will write an IEP based on the needs from the assessment.

To learn more about special education services in another state, contact a Parent Training Information Center (PTI) or a Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC). Find a national list of PTIs at [taalliance.org](http://taalliance.org) or by calling an advocate at PACER.

“Contacting a parent center is so important,” Anderson says. “Parent Center advocates can provide information on special education rights and connect parents with resources.”

No matter where you may move, Anderson suggests doing some research before making a decision. “My son has Asperger’s, and at one point we considered moving. But we had worked hard with the district to find an appropriate program for him,” she says. “We decided not to move so he could stay in the program where he was making great progress.”

## Energize your Special Education Advisory Council with these tips

Are you looking for ways to energize your local Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)?

Try these tips to increase your council's effectiveness as it works on behalf of students receiving special education services.

- Reach out: Ask members to reach out to people they know to build SEAC membership.
- Develop a voice: Help members speak out effectively on behalf of children with disabilities in your community.
- Start conversations: Encourage members to share their own stories, needs, and lessons learned.
- Diversify perspectives: Diverse racial and cultural perspectives enrich discussions and decisions. Be intentional about the composition of the group. Actively seek out missing voices.
- Ask questions: You'll receive more valid information

when you ask questions. See PACER Center's handout: *Key Questions for Parent Leaders to Ask*.

- Establish credibility: List your SEAC's accomplishments, include them on promotional brochures, and present them to the school board.
- Meet regularly: Meetings should be regular, but not too frequent. People are busy. Use meeting time effectively.
- Develop a mission: Know where you are going and how you will get there.
- Find a yearly focus: Set annual priorities and specific goals to accomplish.
- Celebrate results: Make a noticeable difference, then celebrate! Recognizing results is energizing and contagious.

For additional support, visit [mnseacinfo.org](http://mnseacinfo.org). Resources include 12 online training modules as well as a direct link to PACER staff with SEAC expertise.

## Fathers and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: New PACER project focuses on their role as partners in prevention

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the most common cause of cognitive disabilities in the U.S. This family of disorders is caused solely by a mother drinking alcohol during her pregnancy, and occurs across all socioeconomic groups. Over the past three decades, despite significant progress in understanding, diagnosing, treating, and preventing FASD, prevalence rates have changed little.

To help reduce the alarming statistics related to FASD, a new PACER Center project will work with a group of fathers to use their influential role to help prevent the disorder. The goal of the PACER FASD Project, a partnership with the Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (MOFAS), is to encourage fathers to help their partners, wives, daughters, and their communities become more educated and aware of FASD.

Education about the disorder is vital because while most women limit or stop alcohol consumption when they

learn they are pregnant, more than half the pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended. Drinking may be common in the first trimester, when many women simply do not realize they are pregnant.

Research suggests that men may be able to influence their partners in a number of ways that could lead to positive changes and a decreased risk of maternal alcohol consumption. For instance, the role of fathers in the degree to which drinking is tolerated or encouraged can have important positive consequences for partners. Specific roles for fathers in reducing alcohol consumption during pregnancies may include:

- Encouraging women not to drink during pregnancy, including supporting other family members not to drink.
- Encouraging alcohol-free pregnancies for daughters through education about responsible consumption. In one study, most young women who



quit or reduced their consumption of alcohol during pregnancy did so because they were encouraged by others to do so.

- Helping women to develop support networks to maintain sobriety during pregnancy.
- Creating interest in the role of fathers in reducing the incidence of FASD.

FASD is a preventable disability. Men can play a unique role in encouraging alcohol-free pregnancies, and PACER's FASD Project is an important step in helping families prevent this lifelong disability.

To learn more about this project, call Virginia or Jody at PACER, 952-838-9000, or MOFAS at 1-866-906-6327.

# Olympic torchbearer for 2010 doesn't

By Julie Holmquist

Ashlee Kephart is the founder and executive director of a successful non-profit with a chapter in Liberia, Africa; she's a winner of a 2008 national award for "Most Caring American"; and she recently was selected as one of 20 U.S. torchbearers for the 2010 Winter Olympics.

Those are impressive accomplishments for any adult. For an 18-year-old from Brooklyn Center, Minn., with the extra challenge of having dyslexia, they're outstanding.

"I was very little when I found out about my disability, and I felt pretty bad," Ashlee says. Then one day in sixth grade she saw a poster at school of one of her favorite historic figures. The man was Albert Einstein, and the poster said, "Even Einstein had trouble in math classes. He had dyslexia. What's your reason?"

"At that moment I knew I wasn't alone and that some very intelligent people



Ashlee Kephart

also had dyslexia," Ashlee says. "From that time on, I was able to accept it and worked hard to compensate for it so it would not become a barrier for the things I wanted to do."

Ashlee's resolve was matched by her mother's commitment to help her succeed. Top grades weren't a problem when Ashlee had accommodations such as more time for tests and writ-

ing assignments. "PACER was very instrumental in helping Ashlee get accommodations through a 504 Plan," says her mom, Sharon Kephart. "I've received so much support through PACER over the years."

Ashlee's determination to reach her goals paid off. When she was 16, she expanded her longtime volunteer activities by founding Kids for a Better World, Inc. ([kidsforabetterworld.com](http://kidsforabetterworld.com)), a nonprofit dedicated to youth volunteerism. Ashlee promotes the empowerment of youth through her organization, which coordinates community initiatives and spreads the volunteer spirit internationally by connecting youth all over the world.

Through her hard work and dedication, she has raised more than \$100,000 for charity, recycled more than 10,000 cans, distributed more than 15,000 Caring Bags of personal-care products to people who are homeless, 65,000 shoes to underprivileged

## Project C3 database connects Minnesota

Youth, families, and professionals will have an easier time finding organizations that provide transition services to youth, including those with disabilities, thanks to a free statewide online database created by Project C3: Connecting Youth to Communities and Careers ([c3online.org](http://c3online.org)).

Throughout the C3 project, PACER has partnered with several Minnesota state agencies, including the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Minnesota Department of Education, and Pathways to Employment.

More than 150 youth with disabilities

from across the state helped build the cutting edge database as they participated in the Project C3 internship program between 2005 and 2009.

The youth not only helped create the "Resource Map" database of more than 1,000 participating organizations, but also improved work skills in public speaking, data management, computer literacy, problem solving, and team work.

Student interns (ages 14 to 21) who participated in C3 activities reported that they were more self-confident following the internship, and 97 percent said the project allowed them to develop critical skills that will help them

obtain employment.

"These students now have a greater knowledge base of themselves, their job skills, and agency supports inside their communities," said one teacher involved in the project.

"The goal of C3 is to help young adults with and without disabilities prepare for employment or to continue their education after high school," says Andrea Moore, C3 youth services coordinator. "With C3's database, students can find valuable resources that can help them meet their goals."

In fact, 100 percent of the leaders from youth agencies that facilitated the C3

# Let dyslexia become barrier to goals

families, 10,000 books to children in hospitals and orphanages, and 4,000 backpacks to victims of disasters. Ashlee also established a chapter of Kids for a Better World in Liberia in 2008, which has helped more than 417 children through its child development center.

In 2008, her volunteer efforts were recognized as she and four other young adults were honored at the Frederick Douglass Museum & Hall of Fame for Caring Americans in Washington, D.C. as a “Most Caring American.”

Her hard work in school was rewarded, too, with top grades and more than 20 college scholarships. Now a freshman at Hamline University, Ashlee plans to earn a degree in clinical psychology



*Children attending the new Kids for A Better World Child Development Center sent a thank you photo to Ashlee. The center began serving 250 children in 2008. It now has three buildings and serves 417 children.*

with a focus in forensics.

In January, she'll don an Olympic running suit and carry the 3.5-pound Olympic torch through Calgary, Canada, as it makes its way to Vancouver for the winter games. She was one of just 10 U.S. teens selected as a

torchbearer because of her “remarkable dedication in encouraging others and making a positive difference in so many lives,” said Celeste Bottorff of Coca-Cola North America, which is a sponsor of the Olympic Torch Relay.

“I learned from my mother and her life examples that it's all in how you look at things,” Ashlee says. “When faced with adversities, I choose to see opportunities instead of obstacles. So many

people have been able to overcome a disability. Having a disability doesn't mean you can't do what others can do. It means you might have to do it a different way or it may take you longer, but there's always a way to do what you want to do.”

## youth to transition resources, services

internships reported that C3's Web site has improved the ability of youth, families, and professionals to access information about services for transition-age youth in their community.

Anyone can search the free database for resources in employment, transportation, housing, education, health, and recreation at [c3online.org](http://c3online.org). Click on “C3 MN” to access the resource map featuring Minnesota youth services throughout the state. After typing in what you are searching for and a town or zip code, a map and resources will appear.

Organizations can still have their program featured on [c3online.org](http://c3online.org).

“Participating is free and makes it easier for youth, families, and professionals to find the service,” Moore says.

To add an organization or service to the Web site, visit [c3online.org](http://c3online.org), click on “C3 MN” to access the resource map, then click on “Add a Resource” and “Join Now.” Organizations can also call PACER at 800-537-2237 or 952-838-9000 and ask for Andrea Moore.



*Youth from The City, Inc, an alternative high school in Minneapolis, manned a C3 booth at a resource fair along with an Americorps volunteer and a staff member from Achieve Minneapolis.*

# How to build a positive parent, professional

**A**s the school year continues, it's important to remember the benefits of working together with mutual respect and shared knowledge.

Research confirms the positive benefits of parent-professional collaboration on the education of children with disabilities. In fact, good parent-professional partnerships benefit everyone involved: Parents and professionals have a more positive view of each other; parents become more involved in their children's education; and children with disabilities have more confidence and perform at higher levels.

Because parents and professionals bring different strengths to the collaboration, there are different ways for each to make the relationship positive and productive.

## What Professionals Can Do

In general, research has shown that what families want most from professionals is respect and acceptance. Professionals can help engage families in collaboration by:

- **Keeping promises and ensuring confidentiality**

Professionals can develop trust by telling the parents what information will be shared with others and what will be kept private, and by always asking permission to talk about their child with others. For new immigrants in particular, confidentiality for their child and themselves may be the most critical element in building a collaborative relationship.

- **Being hopeful and honest about the child's abilities and potential**

Professionals should not withhold information they presume might be painful and should be willing to admit if they do not have answers to a parent's question. Sometimes families will have issues that professionals do not know how to address. It is then appropriate for the professional to connect the family with someone who may be helpful.

- **Helping parents identify their strengths**

Some parents truly do not understand that what they do on a daily basis is as important as formal services. Professionals can regularly point out where family interventions have been effective.

- **Helping parents identify choices**

School personnel can help families to identify the choices

that are available to them, present options and solutions that might work, and encourage and support parents to make their own decisions.

- **Demonstrating and modeling problem-solving skills**

Professionals can demonstrate and model problem-solving skills and support parents to find creative solutions to their own problems.

- **Accepting parents as equal partners**

It is easier for professionals to bring parents into the system rather than the other way around, because professionals have traditionally acted in a leadership role.

- **Being flexible and considerate of the parents' points of view**

Professionals can develop skills to shift their perspective from their specialty area to a broader perspective of the needs of the whole child and family.

- **Considering the family's preferences in aspects of planning**

Professionals should utilize the family's strengths while keeping in mind their challenges and other responsibilities.

- **Supporting parents as their child's best advocate in making decisions.** Some parents may need to be reminded that they are decision-makers for their child, and that their input is valued.

- **Taking care of logistic details**

It is helpful when professionals are flexible in their time and location for meetings and services and when parents are assured that changes are possible.

- **Planning for parent involvement in systems change**

Professionals can encourage parent-professional collaboration by requesting that parents be invited to participate on committees to develop policies and procedures that address education and other relevant areas.

## What Parents Can Do

Parents can also take steps to build and maintain collaborative relationships with professionals by beginning with an assumption that professionals are doing the best they can for the child. Parents can contribute to the success of a collaborative relationship by:

# nal relationship that benefits everyone

- **Overtly recognizing the professional's commitment and expertise**

It is important for parents to acknowledge the skills of their children's teachers and service providers and recognize their commitment to meeting their child's needs.

- **Thanking the professionals that have been helpful to them**

It is not surprising that many times professionals go beyond the requirements of their job to help a family. It is important to recognize this effort and thank them when it occurs.

- **Considering that professionals are often limited by the systems in which they work**

Professionals may wish they could provide more help than they are able offer, but it is not always within their ability to do so.

- **Reinforcing at home what a child is learning in school**

Children are aware of their parents' view of their school, teachers, and other professionals. Parents should try to keep any conflict separate and keep their child's outlook positive.

- **Being flexible and considerate of the professional's point of view**

It is important to remember that no one understands the needs of a child with a disability in the same way parents do. Professionals cannot automatically understand what parents have learned from experience.

- **Being honest**

It is important that parents speak up when they do not understand what a professional or team is saying to them. Parents sometimes fear losing face if they admit that they do not understand, while others fear that disagreement will lead to their child being punished. However, parents must understand the discussion to be effective advocates for their child and to express valid disagreements.

- **Following through with promises**

When a parent commits to an action, it becomes his or her responsibility to follow through. Collaboration is a two-way street, and trust flourishes when both parents and professionals follow through on agreements.



- **Committing to work to find solutions when disagreements arise**

It is inevitable that there will be times when parents and professionals disagree. For instance, does the child need an assessment, new glasses, allergy testing, or shortened homework? Disagreements are honest differences of opinion, not personal attacks. Effective parent collaborators commit to working on solutions.

- **Remembering that life is full of compromises**

Most parents fear what will happen if their child does not receive the right kind of services in the right amount and at the right time. However, each person faces compromises every day, and Individualized Education Program meetings are no exception. For instance, does a child need 40 minutes of direct speech or is indirect speech in the regular classroom more effective? Keeping the focus on outcomes will make compromises easier, systems accountable, and collaboration more effective.

*This article is an excerpt from "Fostering Parent and Professional Collaboration," produced by the Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers. Available for \$2, it can be ordered online at [taalliance.org/publications/books.asp](http://taalliance.org/publications/books.asp) or by calling 952-838-9000.*

# PACER plays national role in providing help for youth transitioning to adulthood

Since 1994, PACER's Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) program has focused on helping families prepare youth with disabilities for employment and independent living.

TATRA serves as a national center. It provides staff development and other kinds of assistance for Parent Centers that train individuals with disabilities and their families about the services and rights available under the federal Rehabilitation Act.

"Thanks to funding for TATRA through the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), PACER has become a leader in family involvement in transition issues nationally," says Deborah Leuchovius, TATRA coordinator.

Over the years, TATRA has worked closely with Parent Centers that have also received funding from the RSA to conduct parent information and

training projects. Currently TATRA works with projects in Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, California, Florida, Maine, Virginia, and Minnesota.

TATRA has been able to leverage its role assisting these projects to help other Parent Centers build expertise on transition issues. It does this through its Web site, presentations and national conferences, weekly informational e-mails, studies documenting the results of transition-focused projects, and by surveying the needs of Parent Centers across the country serving the families of transition-age youth.

In 2009, TATRA surveyed Parent Centers nationwide for the top needs of families with transition-age youth and what the Parent Centers need to support them. Internship and work experience opportunities for students and practices that prepare youth for employment were two of the top needs.

"Building knowledge about transition issues is important because there is so much emphasis on helping children with disabilities be successful in the school settings — we need to be sure we are preparing youth for success in the adult world, too," Leuchovius says. "And families play a critical role in their child's transition to adulthood."

TATRA helps families of youth with disabilities by providing Parent Center projects with the latest research and information on effective transition practices and the adult service system, as well as strategies that prepare youth for successful employment, postsecondary education, and independent living.

For more information on TATRA's 2009 national survey of Parent Centers, visit [PACER.org/tatra](http://PACER.org/tatra), or call 952-838-9000.

## New guides encourage literacy

It's never too early to start building your child's literacy skills—and the Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) can help.

It offers parents and professionals free practice guides that show how you can use everyday activities to encourage infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to listen, talk, and learn the building blocks for early literacy. You can learn more about CELL practice guides at [earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php](http://earlyliteracylearning.org/pgparents.php).

One of the guides you can use with

your infant is the Infant Signing Dictionary. Sign language is one way infants are able to communicate before they learn to talk or if they are never able to talk due to a disability.

**Help Me** (Pat the palms of the hands on the chest several times) and **Down** (Point the finger down two or three times) are just two signs that could prevent your infant from becoming frustrated. Read the entire guide at: [A photograph showing a woman with sunglasses on her head, smiling and looking at a baby. The baby is wearing a green shirt and is looking towards the woman. They appear to be outdoors in a natural setting.](http://earlylit-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

[earlyliteracylearning.org/cellpractice\\_pages/infant\\_signing/index.php](http://earlyliteracylearning.org/cellpractice_pages/infant_signing/index.php).

CELL is a major initiative of the Center for Evidence-Based Practices at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute.

## Apply now for “awesome” IBM EX.I.T.E. day camp

Middle-school girls with disabilities looking for an “awesome” summer day camp are invited to apply for the eighth annual 2010 IBM EXploring Interests in Technology and Engineering (EX.I.T.E.) camp at PACER Center.

Girls attending last year’s camp gave the experience high marks. “I love EX.I.T.E. camp,” said one. “EX.I.T.E. camp was awesome and fun!” said another. “Please make EX.I.T.E. camp longer.”

The August day camp is designed to help girls investigate the world around them using technology and hands-on activities. At past camps, girls have created music videos, made Cinderella shoes to learn about engineering, and used chemistry to create lip gloss.

“These girls are leaving camp excited about science, technology, engineering, and math,” says Meghan Kunz, coordinator of PACER’s EX.I.T.E. camp. “The



*EX.I.T.E. campers had fun with a cryogenics experiment in 2009.*

camp closes the learning gap for girls with disabilities by being accessible, hands-on, and engaging.”

Last year’s campers were given pre- and post-evaluations. Post-evaluations showed a 29 percent increase in girls who strongly agreed to consider a

career in science, engineering, and technology as a result of their camp experience. More than half the girls strongly agreed that women and men have an equal chance of becoming scientists, engineers, or technologists.

During camp, the girls learn alongside scientists, chemists, engineers and other professionals from local corporations such as Accenture, Best Buy, IBM, Medtronic, Target, and 3M.

The 2009 EX.I.T.E. Camp included presentations from KARE 11’s chief meteorologist, Belinda Jensen, Underwater Adventures in the Mall of America, and the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Applications for the August 2010 camp will be accepted until May 1. Visit [PACER.org/stc/exite/camp.asp](http://PACER.org/stc/exite/camp.asp) for more information and to download the application or call the Simon Technology Center at 952-838-9000.

## PACER receives national FAST grant from Administration on Developmental Disabilities

PACER Center has received a new national grant to help families of youth with developmental disabilities become aware of and advocate for family support information and services.

The one-year Family Advocacy and Support Training (FAST) Project grant was awarded in September by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The FAST Project will provide family support leadership training to families of children with disabilities in the United States and territories. Through the development and dissemination

of four training curricula, families of children with disabilities from diverse racial and linguistic groups, families in poverty, those living in rural and urban settings, military families, and other underserved families will increase their ability to advocate for family support services and influence systems change.

The FAST Project’s four new curricula will address topics relating to employment, sexuality and youth development, advocating for one’s family, and strategies for systems change. Parent Centers and other national dissemination networks will assist in providing information to families of children

with disabilities and the professionals who work with them across the nation.

“The FAST grant gives us an incredible opportunity to help families nationwide,” says Shauna McDonald, PACER’s director of community resource development who will coordinate the project. “That’s important because the more we help youth with disabilities reach their full potential and be included in the workplace and community, the more we strengthen families and society.”

# How to choose the best public school option

By Heather Kilgore

Winter is often the time when parents make public education choices for their children. But which public school choice is best for your child?

Learning about the public school options as well as questions to ask when making your decision can help you choose a school that is the right fit for your child.

## Public School Choices

In addition to your neighborhood public school, you may choose other public – and free – educational options for your child, such as magnet, charter, and online schools.

## Magnet Schools

A magnet school is a public school that offers a special focus or theme in its classes, yet the classes are still tied to state standards. The classes and the way they are taught focus on real-world practice and application.

## MINNESOTA PARENT CENTER

### Minnesota PIRC A project of PACER

For example, a magnet school may focus on science, fine arts, or language immersion. Magnet schools accept students living outside district boundaries. They are overseen by a public school district and its school board.

## Magnet Programs

Some schools or districts may have magnet programs. These programs offer a special focus or theme for students living within that school district. Other magnet programs exist through a collaboration of several school districts. These programs allow students from several districts to attend a magnet school or program within or outside of their home district.

## Charter Schools

A charter school is an independent public school that is not part of a traditional school district. Charter schools are managed by a board that is elected by the parents, teachers, and staff of the school. The school operates under contract with a local school district or organization.

Like a traditional public school, a charter school is responsible for making sure students meet state graduation requirements. The class offerings at charter schools are chosen by the school itself, and the school community determines what will best suit its students.

Charter schools employ licensed teachers and offer services to students with special needs. They require students to take state and national tests to assure academic accountability. Students must show academic progress from year to year, or the school will

## Minnesota Parent Center awards four family-friendly schools

Four Minnesota schools were recently awarded as Family-Friendly Schools by the Minnesota Parent Center, Minnesota's PIRC (Parental Information and Resource Center), a project of PACER.

The awards were presented in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education as part of Minnesota Parent Involvement Month in October, which received a Governor's Proclamation. Parents were asked to nominate schools for their efforts to create a family-school partnership.

The winning schools were: Highland Park Elementary, St. Paul; Woodland Elementary School, Brooklyn Park; Zachary Lane Elementary, Plymouth;

Cologne Academy, Cologne.

Parent Involvement Month is sponsored by the Minnesota Parent Center, MN PIRC. It is cosponsored by the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Association of School Administrators, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals, Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association, Minnesota Association of Administrators of State and Federal Education Programs, and Minnesota PTA.

For more ideas and information about parent involvement in education, visit [PACER.org/mpc](http://PACER.org/mpc) or call the Minnesota Parent Center, 952-838-9000; toll free 800-537-2237.



Jeff Longenecker of the Minnesota Parent Center-PIRC presents a Family-Friendly School Award to Principal Linda Perdaems of Woodland Elementary School in Brooklyn Park.

be closed. They do not charge tuition or have admission requirements, and transportation is provided.

## Online Learning

Online learning, also known as distance learning, is another public school option. All classes offered by approved online learning programs are taught by licensed teachers and meet or exceed state academic standards. Credits transfer to other public school districts and apply to high school graduation.

Online learning students who live and are enrolled in a school district are able to participate in that district's extracurricular programs such as sports or band. School districts can help families with financial need obtain the computers and software used in online learning.

## Things to Consider

Now that you know what the options are, ask yourself these questions as you visit or consider a school. Com-

## Options Available to Title I Students: School Choice & Free Tutoring (SES)

Students attending a Title I school that has been identified as "in need of improvement" for two consecutive years have the right to transfer to a different, better-performing school within their district. This is called "school choice."

How is school choice different from open enrollment? With school choice, the school must be located within the same district, and the district must provide transportation.

Some students may also be eligible for free tutoring in math and reading. The tutoring is offered after school or on weekends by state-approved providers. This tutoring is called Supplemental Educational Service (SES).

School districts must offer SES to students if their school is "in need of improvement" for three straight years. Your child's school must send you a letter telling you if your child qualifies for this service. Call the school principal to learn more.

bine what you know about your child and the answers to these questions to make the best school decision for your child and family.

- What kind of environment does your child need?
- How does your child learn best?
- Where does the school need to be located?

- What academic features do you want?
- Does the school feel welcoming when you visit?
- How does the school encourage children to be courteous, happy, and disciplined?
- Are parents encouraged to be involved in their child's education?

## Minnesota changes eligibility requirements for PCA program

Minnesota's Personal Care Assistance Program (PCA) received major cuts during the 2009 legislative session, totaling \$128 million in state and federal dollars.

Because of the budget cuts, fewer people will be eligible for PCA services, and PCA service hours will be reduced an average of two hours per day for more than 6,000 persons with disabilities.

Beginning in January, there will be new requirements to receive PCA services. To receive services, a person

must either be dependent in at least one activity of daily living such as dressing, bathing, or grooming, or have what is called a Level 1 behavior. Level 1 behavior is defined as physical aggression towards self or others or destruction of property that requires the immediate response of another person.

Beginning July 1, 2011, a person must be dependent in two activities of daily living to receive PCA services.

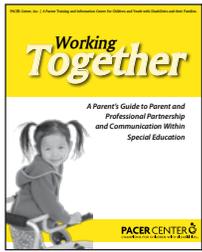
From Jan. 1 until June 30, 2010, all recipients of PCA services will be re-

assessed according to the new criteria, except for those who receive PCA services through a waiver program or the Alternative Care Program.

"You do have the right to appeal any changes to your benefits or eligibility," says Wendy Ringer, director of PACER's Health Information Center.

For more information on the PCA program changes or how to appeal, call Wendy Ringer at 952-838-9000.

New

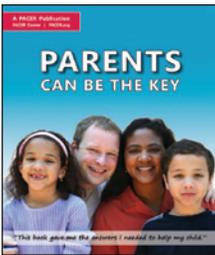


**Working Together**  
**A Parent's Guide to Parent and Professional Partnership and Communication Within Special Education**

Helps parents effectively communicate with special education professionals as they develop their child's educational program. 2009.

■ \$6 | 10+ copies, \$5 each PHP-a19

New



**Parents Can Be the Key**

This updated handbook for 2009 describes basic special education laws and procedures.

■ \$3 | 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a1

New



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

Updated for 2009. This book helps families of children with disabilities or delayed development understand Minnesota's early intervention system and

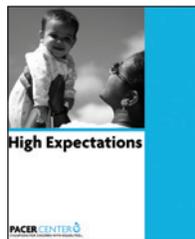
how to access services for their child.

■ \$7 | 10+ copies, \$5 each PHP-a9

**High Expectations**

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

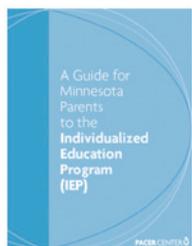
■ \$3 | 10+ copies, \$2.50 each PHP-a34



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

Helps parents work with schools to address each child's special needs through understanding the required components of the IEP. Includes examples from the Minnesota state-recommended form. 2008.

■ \$3 | 10+ copies, \$2 each PHP-a12



New

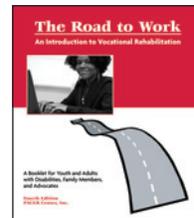
**K is for Kindergarten**

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

■ \$5 | 10+ copies, \$4 each MPC-21



New



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

Discusses the issues related to the Rehabilitation Act, including eligibility criteria for vocational rehabilitation

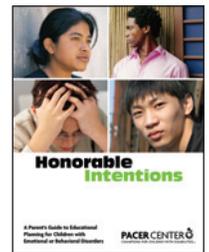
services, transition planning for high school students, the Individual Written Rehabilitation Program, appeals procedures, legislation and self-advocacy skills. Fourth Edition. 2009.

■ \$8 | 10+ copies, \$6.50 each VO-1

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

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

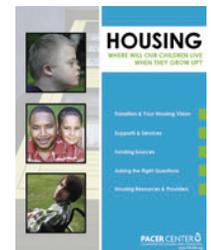
■ \$15 | 10+ copies, \$12 each PHP-a29



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

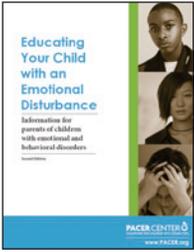
Parents of youth with disabilities will find that this attractive, easy-to-use book answers many questions about future housing choices to make with their child. From housing options to a resource directory, there is a wealth of information.

■ \$8 | 10+ copies, \$6 each PHP-a26



## Resources

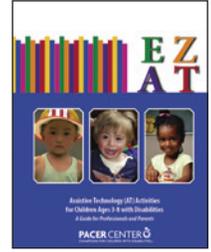
### Educating Your Child with an Emotional Disturbance



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

■ \$5 | 10+ copies \$4 each PHP-a21

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



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

■ \$10 | 10+ copies, \$8 each STC- 16

## To order the listed materials...

1. Specify how many you want of each item and the cost.
2. Total your order, adding appropriate sales tax.
3. Enclose payment with your order.
4. Mail to: PACER Center  
8161 Normandale Blvd.  
Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

Prices include postage and handling. A discount may be available if 10 or more of the same item number are ordered.

■ indicates one item is free to Minnesota parents or guardians of children with disabilities and to Minnesota young adults (age 14 and older) with disabilities.

For foreign orders, please telephone or e-mail PACER (see page 3). Payment must be in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank.

The items listed on these pages are also available through PACER's Catalog of Publications.

Order number	Name of publication/video ordered	Quantity	Per item cost	Total item cost
Total cost of all items ordered →				

**Amount of order:** Sales tax: \_\_\_\_\_ **Total amount enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please complete the following:

Parent       Professional       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (h) \_\_\_\_\_ (w) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

*If a parent:*

Birth date of child with disability: \_\_\_\_\_ Disability: \_\_\_\_\_

## Workshops

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

### Creation Station

#### Marbled Masterpieces

Create beautiful marbled paper for writing, journaling, or giving as an original Valentine's Day gift! (We'll be using food coloring, which will stain clothing, so please dress accordingly.)

Feb. 6, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER)

#### Puppet Theater

Use felt, stuffing, and yarn to create your very own puppets. Add accessories, and all the world's a stage for your creation!

March 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (PACER)

#### All About Beading

Come join the fun and use plastic beads in a variety of colors to create cool jewelry, key chains, and more.

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

#### Sand Art with ArtiSands

What do you get when you mix colorful sand and cool designs on sticky paper? ArtiSands—a creative craft for artists of all abilities. Create a masterpiece...with sand!

May 22, 10 a.m. to noon (PACER)

### Early Childhood

#### Families Are Important

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

Feb. 18, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

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

This workshop will help parents and professionals understand the evaluation process used to determine if early intervention (birth to age 3) or early childhood special education (ages 3-5) services are appropriate. It will also address how AT may benefit young children.

March 23, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (PACER)

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

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

services. Topics include transition requirements, Least Restrictive Environment, Inclusion, and Individualized Education Program goals and objectives.

April 20, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)

#### Family Leadership Summit

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

May 1, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. (PACER)

### Emotional Behavioral

#### Understanding Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

Learn how Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports can help schools achieve a positive school climate that helps all students do better academically, and discover how the Wayzata schools are implementing this exciting change in school discipline.

Feb. 18, 6:30 to 9 p.m. (Wayzata)

#### Practice the Positive: Using Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports at School and at Home to Change Challenging Behaviors

This workshop will give parents information about using positive behavior interventions to change behavior and support new behavior.

Feb. 23, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Anoka)

#### Understanding Schoolwide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS)

A positive school environment helps all students do better academically. This workshop will help parents understand the concept of SW-PBIS and its application for all students, including those with challenging behaviors.

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

#### Practice the Positive: Tips for Supporting Your Child with Behavior Needs

Join this interactive workshop and discover how to use a positive approach to changing your child's behavior. Tips will also be given on how to include positive interventions and supports into a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Program.

May 11, 7 to 9 p.m. (Maple Grove)

### Housing

#### Housing & Services: Putting the Pieces Together

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

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

### Parent Training

#### Six Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy

This workshop will explore six skills parents can use to become more effective advocates for their child with a disability.

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

#### IDEA: Understanding the IEP

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

Feb. 18, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Princeton)

Feb. 25, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (St. Cloud)

April 13, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (Duluth)

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

#### IDEA: Understanding the Special Education Process

This workshop outlines the basic principles of special education with materials to help parents organize their child's special education records. Topics include free appropriate public education, evaluation, resolving disagreements, and the Individualized Education Program.

March 11, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)

March 22, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (New Ulm)

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

#### Manifestation Determination: What Parents Need to Know

Dan Stewart, supervising attorney with the Minnesota Disability Law Center, will present this interactive workshop for parents of children with disabilities. It will include a role play of the manifestation process.

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

## Workshops

### Special Education...What Do I Need to Know?

*This workshop helps parents understand special education, learn how to resolve disagreements, and discover the role of parents in the process.*

**March 18, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (PACER)**

**April 19, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Hutchinson)**

### Exploring Charter Schools

*This interactive workshop will help parents of children with disabilities explore topics they should consider when choosing a charter school.*

**March 25, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

### IDEA: Understanding the IEP

*This workshop is for parents of elementary-aged children with autism. It will be co-presented by PACER Center and the Autism Society of Minnesota.*

**April 8, 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)**

### Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?

*This workshop offers intervention strategies for parents whose children with disabilities may be targets of bullying at school.*

**April 19, 7 to 9 p.m. (Fergus Falls)**

### Special ADHD Series

*Matt Cohen, nationally known special education attorney with a passion for helping children with disabilities, and Norma Echavarría, child psychiatrist and ADHD specialist, will present two workshops:*

**April 29, "Transition Issues for Young**

**Adults with ADHD," 9 to 11 a.m. (PACER)**

**April 29, "Diagnosis of ADHD: Promoting Acceptance by Self and Others," 7 to 9:30 p.m. (PACER)**

### Life Planning for Persons with Disabilities

*These two sessions cover different information, including guardianship-conservatorship laws, power of attorney, trusts, and other issues.*

**May 13, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

**May 27, 7 to 9 p.m. (PACER)**

### Simon Technology Center

#### Tech for Girls: Be a CSI!

*Middle-school girls with disabilities can put on their lab coats and become crime scene investigators (CSI)! They can explore the science of forensics by fingerprinting, analyzing powders, making teeth impressions, and more, and then use their skills to solve a mock crime.*

**April 13, 6 to 8 p.m. (PACER)**

#### Webinar: Intro to Augmentative Alternative Communication and Minnesota Lending Library Resources

*This Webinar will explore the many devices that aid in communication and are available in today's market.*

**May 12, 2 to 3:30 p.m. (Online Training)**

**Register at [www2.gotomeeting.com/register/351403410](http://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/351403410)**

### Transition

#### Focus on Transition

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

**March 25, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. (Northfield)**

### Workshop Registration

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

For information and easy online workshop registration, visit

**[PACER.org/workshops](http://PACER.org/workshops)**

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

### Fifth annual Creative Kids Contest is Feb. 27

Children with any disability are invited to join guest artist Anthony Whelan at PACER Center's Fifth Annual Creative Kids Contest Feb. 27. Completed projects may be entered into a contest, with the winner's artwork becoming the cover of the official 2010 PACER greeting card.

Have more artistic fun at Creation Station workshops on Feb. 6, March 6, April 10, and May 22. For more information, or to register, call 952-838-9000 or visit [PACER.org](http://PACER.org).

### Teacher-School Appreciation Day is March 4

Is there a teacher or administrator who has made a difference in your child's life? The annual Teacher-School Appreciation Day on March 4 is a perfect time to say thank you. Appreciation Day offers families of

children with disabilities a way to honor teachers and other school staff.

Free certificates of appreciation are specially designed and can be or-

dered from PACER or downloaded from [PACER.org/help/teacher.htm](http://PACER.org/help/teacher.htm). Families can then complete the certificates and present them to those they wish to recognize.

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## Change Service Requested

***Do you want to make a difference? Change attitudes?***

**Order PACER's COUNT ME IN® puppets!**

*"What a great way  
to dispel myths and  
raise awareness!"  
Minnesota teacher*

### ***Buy the set:***

**BASIC SET:** Six puppets with scripts for preschool and elementary shows.

**STARTER SET:** Three puppets with scripts on several disabilities for elementary students.

All sets include puppet wheelchair and props, a guidebook on disabilities, and a coordinator's handbook for creating a COUNT ME IN® project with volunteers. Training is also available.

### ***Already own a set?***

Expand your program by purchasing additional individual puppets. Puppets available represent children with autism, Tourette Syndrome, ADHD, muscular dystrophy, and diabetes.



*For more information e-mail [puppets@PACER.org](mailto:puppets@PACER.org) or call PACER at 952-838-9000.*

**Visit these engaging puppets at [PACER.org/puppets](http://PACER.org/puppets)!**