Summer is really over and school “daze” has begun. If you and the school have done your homework, your child should have a signed Individualized Education Program or IEP. The IEP has the special education services, accommodations, modifications and services that make up the game plan for how parents, teachers and other school professionals will work with your child throughout the year. Working with the school to put it into practice will make all the difference in how your child progresses during the year. Your child may have a new set of teachers and specialists who need to get to know him or her all over again.

Success in school can be a difficult challenge for most students with disabilities, but PEATC can help. By following the recommendations below, you can help your child get a head start and improve opportunities for progress throughout the year.

1. **CHECK THE IEP AND YOUR CHILD'S SCHEDULE**

   Review the IEP and calendar all dates. Be sure the major goals and objectives are still those you believe are the most important for your child. Find out as soon as possible how services will be delivered to your child. Make sure you understand your child's schedule and if there's a good fit with the IEP. Be open to teacher suggestions on how to troubleshoot any problems and eliminate confusion.

2. **INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO NEW TEACHERS AND OTHERS WORKING WITH YOUR CHILD**

   If at all possible, stop by before or after school early in the year. Send a note or email to them introducing yourself and your child.

3. **MAKE SURE THAT EVERYONE HELPING YOUR CHILD IS FAMILIAR WITH THE IEP**

   Try to meet with your child's teachers. Check to see if the general education teachers have a copy of your child’s IEP. Let them know you are available to provide additional information and support your child at home. Work with the special education teacher to see if you can supply them with an easy-to-understand summary list of modifications and accommodations and a plan for delivery. Include information about the child's interest and abilities, along with disabilities.

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**PEATC is Virginia's parent education, support, training and information center committed to helping children with disabilities, their families and the professionals who serve them. Our Mission is to build better futures for children with disabilities by working collaboratively with families, schools and professionals to improve their opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life. We offer:**

- Services and support for families and professionals
- Experienced-based program development and training curriculum
- Easy-to-understand, research-based disability education, information, training and support
I'm sick of hearing it. Detractors who blame the weight of students with disabilities for sinking the whole educational ship. They would like to eliminate the requirement in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act that makes schools accountable for adequate yearly progress for students with disabilities, so that schools will be able to meet the NCLB requirements. In other words, they believe it is okay to continue to leave students with disabilities behind. Their position, apparently, is that these students have never counted before, so shouldn't count now.

At the same time, at PEATC, we receive the heartbreaking calls from families every day. "The school wants my child out." "My child's on homebound instruction due to his behavior." "I'm trying to get my daughter in the remedial reading class, but they say that she can't because she's in special education." "My child refuses to go to school because he hasn't passed his SOL's and no one is willing to provide the intensive supports he needs to be successful."

Regardless of how folks feel about NCLB, the US Department of Education Secretary, Rod Paige, has referred to educational practices that do not lead to success for all students as evidence of the "soft bigotry of low expectations." The underlying principal of NCLB is that schools will no longer be able to say that it is okay to deny some students the educational success that they will need to lead productive and successful adult lives.

**So beyond all this rhetoric, what are the facts?**

- Only 57% of students leave high school with a standard diploma.
- The overall dropout rate is 28.9%, with students labeled with an emotional disturbance having a 50.6% dropout rate.
- In the adult population, only 31% of people with disabilities are working. A large number are not earning enough to pull themselves out of poverty.
- Workforce experts indicate that the average worker needs a post-secondary (college or trade) diploma to be self-sufficient.

Sounds pretty dismal. It gets worse when you consider that much of what is known about successfully teaching students with disabilities is not being applied. In taking a look at the evidence, another picture emerges:

- Educational research has pointed to several instructional approaches that work for students with disabilities who are having reading difficulties.

(Cont’d on P.7)
PEARL Calendar of Events

PEATC TRAINING WORKSHOPS

IN SPRINGFIELD

SATURDAY COFFEEES
10:00 A.M. – 12:00 NOON
6320 Augusta Drive, Suite 1200
Springfield, VA 22150

Saturday November 20, 2004
Friendship: "Ties that Bind"
Presenters: Kathleen Nichols & Bellen Joyner

Saturday December 4, 2004
Homework - "Help!"
Presenters: Kathleen Nichols (PEATC) &
Irene Schwartz, MEd

Saturday January 8, 2005
Behaviors? "What to Do!"
Presenters: Kay Klein from T/TAC Region 4 (GMU)

Saturday February 12, 2005
Mediation - "Getting to Consensus"
Presenters: Art Stewart (VA DOE)

Saturday April 23, 2005
Understanding ABUSE - "What is it? Who must report!"
Presenters: Shirley A. Norman-Taylor, Esquire

REGISTER
FOR A WORKSHOP
INTERESTED IN ATTENDING A WORKSHOP?

- Find out about workshops in and around VA by visiting our website at www.peatc.org
- Please register by the Monday before the work shop by calling 703-923-0010 or 800-869-6782 or email partners@peatc.org. Let us know if any special accommodations are needed.
- Share information with others -- post this sheet on bulletin boards and hand it out at meetings.

PEATC AROUND VIRGINIA

Friday & Saturday, October 22-23, 2004
10:00-5:00pm
Sunday, October 24, 2004
11:00-5:00pm
World of Possibilities Disabilities Expo 2004
Location: Dulles Expo & Conference Center
Chantilly, VA
Phone: 410-549-5707, 1-866-227*4644

Saturday November 6, 2004
8:00 - 3:30pm
ABCs of Behavior, Woodbridge (BJ, DR)
Who should Attend: Parents & Professionals
Location: Hylton High School, Woodbridge
Sponsor: Prince William ARC
Contact: Jan Russell, 703-730-3124

Saturday, November 6, 2004
8:00-3:30pm
How to Talk So Schools Will Listen, Woodbridge (CT)
Sponsor: Pr. William ARC
Contact: Jan Russell
Phone: 703-730-3124

Saturday, November 6, 2004
8:30-3:30pm
Circle of Support
A Conference fo Families of Children with Special Needs
and the Professionals who work with them
Location: Hylton High School, Woodbridge
14051 Spriggs Road, Woodbridge, VA
Phone: 703-730-3124

RICHMOND OFFICE
BROWN BAG LUNCHEON MEETINGS
OPEN TO PARENTS & PROFESSIONALS
2405 Jefferson Avenue, Richmond VA 23223

For details call Pierre Ames at: 804-819-1999

Tuesday, December 7
Toys for Children w/ Disabilities
Free demonstration

Wednesday, Dec. 8
SSI

The PEATC Press -- Fall 2004
For the Love of Reading

For parents looking for reading programs to help them understand more about how their child reads, Reading Rockets is a dynamic national reading initiative that looks at how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how to help them. It offers research-based tools and strategies to educators, parents, and anyone who cares about children.

The award-winning website, www.ReadingRockets.org, offers a wealth of information and resources for educators and parents. For parents, there are print and online guides for parents in English, Spanish, Hmong and Somali. An early reading screening tool helps parents of four-year olds understand how their child's reading skills compare to others. Daily news clips provides viewers with current information related to reading.

Reading Rockets is a national educational service of WETA, the flagship public television and radio station in the nation's capital. Reading Rockets is funded by a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, and is guided by an advisory panel made up of leading researchers and experts in the field of reading.

Where To Find Special Education Rights

Forget where you placed the copy of your Special Education Procedural Safeguards that the school gives you whenever you have an evaluation or IEP meeting? The Virginia Department of Education has the safeguards on the special education parent information site at http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/parents.shtml. It is also available at the same location in Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

Virginia Department of Education Parent Guide to Special Education is available at the same site in English and Spanish. The Department also worked with the State Special Education Advisory Committee to develop a Troubleshooting Parents’ Special Education Concerns within a Local School Division guide that will help you think through how to resolve disagreements at the local level along with a list of Parent Resource Centers in Local School Divisions. Parents who would like to order this information or talk to the Virginia Department of Education ombudsman, Sandra Peterson, can call 1-800-422-2083.

For the complete Virginia Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia, go to http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/parents.shtml.

The Virginia Bar Young Lawyers Division, in consultation with the Virginia Department of Education and the Attorney General's Office published a Special Education Handbook: A Summary of Virginia's Special Education Procedural Safeguards that is available on the web at http://www.vba.org/sphbk02.pdf. Copies of the Handbook can also be requested from the Virginia Bar Association, 701 E. Franklin St., Richmond, VA 23219.

Of course, the information specialists at PEATC are happy to offer their support and assistance in negotiating the special education maze. Call 1-800-869 6782.

PEATC JOB OPENINGS

Want to make a difference? Come and join the PEATC Team! The following positions are available:

- Information Specialist
- Training Coordinator
- Latino Outreach Specialist

For more information about these positions, visit www.peatc.org and email us your resume to: partners@peatc.org.

The new website for Parents of Children with Down Syndrome of Northern Virginia (PODS) is www.podsnova.org (703) 569-5547
UNDERSTANDING
ORDER OF SELECTION
From the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services

WHAT IS ORDER OF SELECTION?
When, due to limited resources, all eligible vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers cannot be served, the law requires that DRS provide services to persons in priority categories. This is called an Order of Selection (OOS). Individuals who are determined eligible for services are placed into priority categories. DRS opens and closes categories based on its available resources.

HOW DOES OOS AFFECT DRS SERVICES?
Once you are determined eligible for services, you are placed in a priority category. If the priority category that you're placed in is open, you will be served. If it's closed, you will be placed on a waiting list.

HOW ARE OOS PRIORITY CATEGORIES ESTABLISHED AND WHAT ARE THEY?
Federal law and state regulations require that the individuals with the most significant disabilities be served first. DRS has four priority categories:

Priority Category I: An individual who is most significantly disabled, i.e., has a significant disability that results in serious functional limitations in three or more areas.

Priority Category II: An individual with a significant disability that results in serious functional limitations in two areas.

Priority Category III: An individual with a significant disability that results in a serious functional limitation in one area.

Priority Category IV: All other individuals determined eligible for the vocational rehabilitation program.

WHAT IS A SIGNIFICANT DISABILITY?
It is one that requires multiple vocational rehabilitation services over an extended period of time (six months or more after an Employment Plan has been developed).

WHAT IS A FUNCTIONAL LIMITATION AND WHAT MAKES IT "SERIOUS"?
A functional limitation is defined by DRS as a vocational barrier or impediment due to a disability that affects mobility, self-direction, self-care, interpersonal skills, work skills, communication or work tolerance.

A serious functional limitation means a reduction in the capacity of the individual to the degree that the person requires services or accommodations not typically made for other individuals in order to prepare for, enter, engage in, retain, or advance in employment.

WILL THERE BE A REVIEW OF FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS ON A REGULAR BASIS?
While you are on the waiting list, you may request a review of your assigned priority category by submitting evidence that your disability has become more severe.

DO I AUTOMATICALLY GET SERVED IF I'M ON SSI OR SSDI?
No. Federal law states eligible consumers receiving SSI or SSDI are considered to be persons with at least a significant disability. But this does not mean that you automatically will be served. It will depend on what priority category you are placed in and whether that category is open.

CAN DRS SERVE MORE CATEGORIES IN ONE OFFICE THAN IN ANOTHER?
DRS' VR program is a statewide program. All offices will serve the same open categories.

IF I AM RECEIVING SERVICES FROM ANOTHER PROGRAM, SUCH AS WORKERS' COMPENSATION, OR IF MY FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE LIMITED, WILL I RECEIVE PRIORITY FOR DRS SERVICES?
No. You cannot receive priority based on the referral source (such as being referred from Workers' Compensation) or based on financial status.

HOW LONG WILL I BE ON THE WAITING LIST?
Once you're placed on the waiting list, you'll remain there for one year, unless you request that your case be closed, request to remain on the waiting list or if your priority category opens before that time. It's impossible to predict when, or if, a priority category will open during the period you're on the waiting list.

For more information, contact the DRS office at 1-800-552-5019 (voice and TTY). web site at http://www.vadrs.org; our email address is DRS@DRS.state.va.us.
REFLECTIONS FROM PEATC INTERNS

Lauren McCreary:

Working as a summer intern at PEATC was a wonderful learning experience and I am glad I was given the opportunity to be of service to this organization. My summer internship at PEATC allowed me to build on the skills I had already learned and helped me develop new ones as well. During my time at PEATC many mentored me, including one of the PEATC's very best, Felicia Kessel-Crawley, who is an expert in my desired field, Marketing and coordination of special events. On countless occasions Mrs. Crawley would give me advice about what it takes to be successful in her area of expertise. She told me all about its up's and down's and how to prepare for them. Mrs. Crawley shared a lot of her knowledge with me and even though she didn't sugar coat while she was telling me all that I will endure while trying to be the sharpest in my field, now more than ever I'm eager to be one of the best.

Along with great advice, the tasks she assigned me were some of the basic tools I will need to be successful in my field. I was given a wide variety of tasks ranging from filing, intakes, and set up for board meetings to helping redesign the PEATC website and developing PEATC's Listserv. I also participated in the preparation of the Juvenile Justice Summit, which gave me a taste of what life is like working in Marketing and PR. Some of my assignments were more challenging than others but I am thankful and appreciative of them all because they will benefit me in the future.

During the school year when I was looking for a summer internship, I wanted to work for an organization that had a meaningful cause, a place that would give me a few challenges and experiences that would help me in my future career goal. PEATC warmly embraced me and gave me what I needed. I am eternally greatful for everything PEATC has done for me. Today, I am one step closer in my journey of becoming a polished career woman, successful in the areas of Marketing/PR and Event planning.

Jenny Ammon:

As a graduate student in education (focusing on special education and English as a Second Language-ESL), I have student taught for three semesters in three different counties and each school proved different than the one before it. Although I loved teaching, I wanted to experience another field within education before finishing my Masters so I opted to try something outside of the classroom, something outside of teaching. I chose educational advocacy which brought me to PEATC.

Prior to PEATC, I thought I had a handle on the basics of special education, yet, after only a short time here, I realized how little I really knew. Special education can be and often is a maze (of information). Lucky for me, PEATC provided an atmosphere that welcomed learning, which allowed me to explore my surroundings and soak up special education from both a legal and an educational standpoint. From the start, I felt comfortable at PEATC due to my coworkers' ease in accepting me. Beyond anything, the small staff at PEATC was incredible. They were knowledgeable and levelheaded, yet passionate and caring. These qualities are critical in advocacy where staff must connect effectively with those seeking help and/or information. Although I knew from the start how great the staff was, it was not until the end that I realized how exceptional they truly were.

I worked collaboratively on reconstructing Spanish-language special education workshops and presentations, created a client survey from the ground up, observed in-takes (both in English and in Spanish), edited pieces of the Spanish section in the PEATC Press, and most of all, learned how to maneuver through policies and laws (i.e. IDEA). PEATC reassured me that my competency level would grow with future experiences over time. My time at PEATC proved invaluable, reaffirming my love of education and the personal satisfaction I get in working with others. PEATC provided me with new resources and tools to use in my future classrooms as well as a stronger foundational knowledge of special education. As a result of this internship, I know I will be a better teacher and a stronger advocate for my students. For this I will always be grateful.
Focus on PEATC

Ponies and Partners

The PEATC Board of Directors partnered with the Northern Virginia Therapeutic Riding Program for a spirited joint fundraiser, "Ponies and Partners" which was held at MEA Haven Farm in Aldie, Virginia on July 24, 2004. The combination picnic, BBQ, silent auction and therapeutic riding demonstration raised over $6,000 for PEATC.

Deborah Wells, PEATC Vice President for Development chaired the event committee with active support from PEATC Board members Angela Gannon and Brooksie Koopman. PEATC Board members, Carmen Sanchez and Doris Swain joined PEATC volunteers Carolyn Beckett, Mark Eaton, Timothy Gannon, and Kent Wells working many long hours to ensure that everything ran smoothly and all had an enjoyable time. Many thanks to our PEATC supporters and to NVTRP, MEA Haven Farm and the many others who helped make this special event an historical milestone in PEATC fundraising.

Cherie’s Corner
(Cont’d from P. 2)

- Studies of low income, diverse and high performing schools have demonstrated success for all students, notably students with disabilities.
- Schools that use progress monitoring (weekly assessments that map student progress and instructional effectiveness for struggling students) have demonstrated marked success in student progress and remediating delays in reading and math.
- Schools that utilize school-wide systems of positive behavioral supports have experienced marked reduction in discipline issues and increases in student performance.
- Students with disabilities are increasingly entering and experiencing success in college.

Thank You

Phenomenal PEATC Partners!

- Octavia Caldwell - inkind grants/financial services and support
- Susan Walker - inkind accounting/financial services and support
- Neal Rieger - ongoing inkind IT services and support
- Multizone Media - for inkind graphic design support
- Andrew Marshall - inkind accounting and HR support
- Lauren McCready - PEATC Intern support
- Jennifer Ammon - PEATC Intern support
- Terri Braxton, networking and grant development support
- Barbara Bradford - ongoing inkind behavioral/educational consultation

Special Thanks to Ponies & Partners Supporters:
Carolyn Beckett & Elizabeth Coppleman; Brooksie Koopman & Mark Eaton; Angela & Tim Gannon; Debbie & Kent Wells; Carmen Sanchez
Liz Burke, for help with signage and set-up
Doris Swain, nurse on duty at picnic
NVTRP and MEA Haven Farm

- Inclusive schools that use differentiated instruction in the classroom for students with disabilities have seen increases in academic performance by those students and the students who were labeled "at risk".

Though there is overwhelming evidence that appropriate instructional practices work, too many schools are whining about how difficult it is to teach students with disabilities. They believe that students with disabilities, by definition, should fail. The research supports greater results for students with disabilities when there are high expectations for success. Making students with disabilities the scapegoat for failing schools is a recipe for how low expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies.

Clearly, schools need to have high expectations for students with disabilities and work to find instructional practices that work. What the naysayers would find if they tried this is that striving for success for students with disabilities can lift the whole educational ship.
You Ought to Know

Scientists Discover Biological Basis for Autism

A team of brain scientists at Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh have made a ground-breaking discovery into the biological basis for autism, a mysterious brain disorder that impairs verbal and non-verbal communications and social interactions.

Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) scans, the researchers have found numerous abnormalities in the activity of brains of people with normal IQs who have autism. The new findings indicate a deficiency in the coordination among brain areas. The results converge with previous findings of white matter abnormalities in autism. (White matter consists of the "cables" that connect the various parts of the brain to each other).

"Underconnectivity Theory"

The new findings led the researchers to propose a new theory of the basis of autism, called “underconnectivity theory” which holds that autism is a system-wide brain disorder that limits the coordination and integration among brain areas. This theory helps explain a paradox of autism: Some people with autism have normal or even superior skills in some areas, while many other types of thinking are disordered. The team’s study will be published in the August edition of the British journal Brain and is available online at www.brain.oupjournals.org.

In explaining the theory, Marcel Just, one of the study’s lead authors and director of Carnegie Mellon’s Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging, compared the brain of a normal person to a sports team in which the members cooperate and coordinate their efforts. In an autistic person, though some "players" may be highly skilled, they do not work effectively as a team, thus impairing an autistic's ability to complete broad intellectual tasks.

Because this type of coordination is critical to complex thinking and social interaction, a wide range of behaviors are affected in autism.

Study Produces Two Important New Findings"

The research team believes these are the first findings in autism of differences in the brain activation patterns in a cognitive (non-social) task. The study produced two important new findings that help make sense of previous mysteries: The autistic participants had an opposite distribution of activation (compared to the control group) in the brain’s two main language areas, known as Broca’s and Wernicke’s areas. There was also less synchronization of activation among key brain areas in the autistic participants compared to the control group.

To obtain technically acceptable fMRI data from high-functioning autistic participants, the researchers flew in people with autism from all over the eastern United States. High-functioning participants with autism (with IQ scores in the normal range) are rare, accounting for about 10 percent of all people with autism. Using non-invasive fMRIs, the team looked at the cated their comprehension of English sentences.

In both the healthy brains and in the brains with autism, language functions were carried out by a similar network of brain areas, but in the autism brains the network was less synchronized, and an integrating center in the network was much less synchronized, and an integrating center in the network, Broca’s area, was much less active. However, another center, Wernicke’s area, which does the processing of individual words, was more active in the autism brains. The brain likely adapts to the diminished inter-area communication in autism by developing more independent, free-standing abilities in each brain center.

That is, abnormalities in the brain's white matter communication cables could lead to adaptations in the gray matter computing centers. This sometimes translates into enhanced free-standing abilities or superior ability in a localized skill.

These findings provide a new way for scientists and medical researchers to think about the neurological basis of autism, treating it as a distributed system-wide disorder rather than trying to find a localized region or particular place in the brain where autism lives. The theory suggests new research to determine the causes of the underconnectivity and ways to treat it.

The research team is jointly headed by Just, the D.O. Hebb Professor of Psychology at Carnegie Mellon, and Dr. Nancy Minshew, professor of psychiatry and neurology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and director of its Center for Autism Research. Individuals with High Functioning Autism and Asperger’s Syndrome between 10 and 55 years of age who are interested in participating in similar studies can send email to autismrecruiter@upmc.edu or call Nikole Jones at 412-246-5481. Originally published July 30, 2004.
Inclusion Resources on the Internet

Inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students, with and without disabilities, the benefits of the following:

- Community membership
- Increased opportunities for academic and social achievement
- A learning environment where each and every student feels welcome
- An environment where unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued

There has been considerable work done in best practices related to inclusion. A number of new websites have been developed containing excellent information about inclusion in general, and how to make it work for individual students.

Celebrating Inclusion, the National Institute for Urban School Improvement will celebrate National Inclusive Schools Week from December 6-10, 2004. They are offering an extensive kit for promoting inclusion. Below is a link to their site along with a number of PEATC favorite sites.

**Informative Websites**

National Institute for Urban School Improvement: http://www.edc.org (urban resources and tool kits to support inclusion for teachers, students, families and communities.)

- **Institute for Community Integration:** www.ici.umn.edu Database of information (many of which can be downloaded) on inclusion, including information from the University of Minnesota.
- **Circle of Inclusion:** http://www.circleofinclusion.org/resources and information for early childhood
- **Kids Together:** http://www.kidstogether.org/ designed by parents to promote inclusive school and community life.
- **National Center on Educational Outcomes:** http://education.umn.edu/nceo/ information to support high expectations and accountability for outcomes for students with disabilities. Includes an online accommodations bibliography to connect with research.
- **Inclusive Education Website** http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion/index.html developed by a consortium of universities to provide technical assistance and promote better understanding of inclusion
- **Inclusive Schools Database** http://www.newhorizons.org/spneeds_intr.html
- **Institute for Community Inclusion** http://www.communityinclusion.org/index.html is focused on inclusion in school, community and work life for youth and adults with disabilities.
- **Disability is Natural** http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/ Kathie Snow's website that supports the perspective that disability is a natural condition and people with disabilities are not problems that have to be fixed.
- **National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth:** http://www.ncwd-youth.info/ has information for youth preparing for community integrated employment.
- **Norm Kunc** http://www.normemma.com information, resources, and advocacy for inclusive practices and non-coercive practices
- **TASH** http://www.tash.org/ is an international association of people with disabilities, their family members, other advocates, and professionals fighting for a society in which inclusion of all people in all aspects of society is the norm.
- **Paraeducator Support** http://www.uvm.edu/~sapvt/parasupport/shared.html - Michael Giangreco's work and resources for paraeducators supporting inclusion.
**Frequently Asked Questions in Special Education**

by Daaiyah Rashid

Following are questions we frequently receive about special education. You may send your question to us through email to partners@peatc.org.

**Q:** Is the school obligated to provide services to my preschool aged child when preschool is not offered to non-disabled preschoolers?

**A:** The school is obligated to find/locate all children with disabilities between the ages of 3 to 21. With this identification of a child with disabilities comes the responsibility to refer the child for services. It depends on the services in your locality whether the child will be served in the school or at another location. Starting early to talk with the school administrators will help to eliminate frustration in finding what is available for your child. Always ask what policy covers the answer you are given to your question or concern and if possible get a copy of it.

**Q:** We want ABA (applied behavior analysis) to continue for our child. How do we get the school to provide it?

**A:** This is practically impossible unless the school has a program. The key factor to this question is "continue." You have a baseline and a progression chart. These will be very useful in the IEP meeting to discuss continuity of care and research based practices. Since your child has been receiving ABA and can show significant progress from the strategies used, there is a far greater chance that your child would be considered for a program.

**Q:** My child has not been reading on grade level for several years. What should we do to help my child?

**A:** Call an IEP (individualized education program) meeting and request a reading specialist be present. Actually, there are many questions that need to be answered to begin this process, but starting at the IEP meeting is where the parent and professionals need to begin the talk on how to ameliorate the reading problem. It is not acceptable for a child to be passed through school not reading adequately. This does not mean retention either. It means that a deliberate attempt must be made to find the solution to this child's reading problem and implementation begun immediately to remedy the deficit.

**Q:** My child has a disability and plans to go to college. When should we/he/she disclose he/she has a disability?

**A:** If your child is considering college, it is important that your child become very comfortable discussing his/her disability. This is why it is a good practice to allow your child to attend their IEP meeting and conduct the meeting as soon as they are able to do so. At age of majority (18), your child no longer needs your signature for the IEP. They are considered adults and capable of making decisions for themselves. Going to college may be one of those decisions. At that point, he/she will need to be able to ask for help in whatever ways will help him/her to be successful.

**Q:** My son has turned 18 and told the school he wants to quit. The school says that he doesn't need my permission because he is at the "age of majority." What does this mean?

**A:** The school should have let you know that all of the rights in special education that you have are transferred to your son when he reaches 18. Unless you have legal guardianship or your son has assigned to you a power of attorney, your rights as parents are now your adult son's rights. However, your son's decision is not irrevocable. He remains eligible to receive special education services until he is 22 years of age, unless he has received a regular or advanced Virginia high school diploma.

**Q:** Does my child have the same rights under the law in college as in high school?

**A:** Unfortunately, there are no IEP's in college! IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) ends in high school although some students remain until age 21. The laws that will help you understand your rights as a college student is Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title 11 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. These laws also mean that a person with a disability can not be denied admission to a college solely on the basis of disability.

**Q:** What do we need to do to provide proof of my child's disability (to a college)?

(Cont'd on P.11)
Frequently Asked Questions
(Cont’d from P. 10)

A: You may want to contact the schools (colleges) you are interested in to apply and ask what if any documentation you will need. This is best done the year prior to graduation. Colleges have different requirements and you will need to have time to comply with those requirements.

Q: Can the school send my child to another location without my permission?

A: No, that is considered a change in placement and can only take place in the IEP meeting. You do not have to agree with the suggested placement and it is not a "done deal" once you sign the IEP. There are requirements that LRE (least restrictive environment) be considered before the team can determine a placement.

Q: The teacher won't let my child go to recess because he is misbehaving in class. Can she do this?

A: Keeping a misbehaving child in for recess as a way of punishing him or her rarely works for children who have difficulties attending or managing their behavior. If the behavior is affecting the ability of your child to learn or is disruptive, it may be time to find out why your child is acting the way he is. A functional behavioral assessment may indicate that your child begins to fidget when he goes for too long without a break. It will give specific examples of what misbehaviors your child is exhibiting and what seems to bring on that behavior. It could be reading problems that become behavior problems when your child is embarrassed that he is not able to do as well as his peers. Finding out what is causing the behavior and developing a behavior intervention plan may help support your child's good behavior.

Q: My child doesn't have any friends. What can I do?

A: Talk with your child's counselor to learn about clubs or activities he/she might like participating in. You might also check with the person in charge of after school activities. Extra-curricular activities including sports and clubs are often appropriate to include on the IEP as a needed service. This is especially the case for a child who may need additional help to make friends and pursue interests.

PEATC "TOP 10" Back-2-School Tips
(Cont’d from P. 1)

4. HAVE A REGULAR SCHEDULE TO CHECK PROGRESS AND GET UPDATES FROM TEACHERS, COUNSELORS AND OTHERS

Find out how they prefer to be contacted and give them easy and reliable ways to reach you if they have questions.

5. MAP OUT UPCOMING EVALUATIONS AND ASSESSMENTS

Check the date of the most recent reevaluation for special education. For most students this is every three (3) years. If another evaluation is coming up, think about the areas you believe the school should test. Ask about any school-wide assessments and what, if any, accommodations are available during testing. Find out if there are any supplementary programs that support the tests.

6. GET INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL

Join the PTA so that you will have a voice in school matters. Get to know other parents and professionals who are involved with your school. If possible, volunteer for a classroom, after school, evening or weekend activity or give a presentation for career day.

7. BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION IN YOUR DISTRICT

Find out when the local special education advisory committee (LSEAC) meets. Plan to attend. Find out about LEAC priorities. Check school standards: academic, code of conduct, and how they apply to students with disabilities. Become familiar with how they monitor special education. What types of programs and services do they offer to students who are your child's age and older?

8. HELP PROMOTE YOUR CHILD’S ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Help with homework if you can or make sure you know if your child needs any help. Be certain homework assignments are being completed and turned in. Find fun ways to learn together about some of the things your child is learning now. If you haven't already, dedicate some comfortable and consistent home space for regular study so that your child can concentrate, study for tests and complete homework assignments. Work with your child or your child's teacher to identify someone in the class that can be called if there is a question about the homework.

(Cont’d on P. 14)
Para Nuestra Comunidad

Estimados Padres:

He recibido muchas cartas y quisiera contestar a todas ellas, pero empezaré por las que responden a la misma interrogante. En talleres y llamadas a PEATC, los padres han estado haciendo preguntas sobre como entender las discapacidades de nuestros hijos y basándome en sus preocupaciones responderé a sus preguntas:

¿Que es la discapacidad?

Haciendo una breve referencia al origen del término discapacidad, este término fue aceptado por la Real Academia de la Lengua Española desde 1990. Este término "discapacidad", se refiere a la falta de habilidad en alguna rama específica de la persona. En nuestros países de habla hispana, antes se utilizaban los términos minusválido(a) ó incapacitado(a), términos muy degradantes porque se devaluaba a la persona. Esos términos ahora son inaceptables.

¿Como saber de que discapacidad habla la maestra cuando nos dice que nuestro hijo(a) tiene una discapacidad y nosotros no vemos ninguna?

Respondiendo a ésta pregunta puedo decirles que hay discapacidades que son observables a simple vista y otras no. Las discapacidades que se pueden observar a simple vista las podríamos llamar discapacidades observables. Hay también otras discapacidades que a simple vista no se pueden observar, (pero se pueden medir a través de evaluaciones sicológicas, educativas y otras). A las cuales podríamos llamar discapacidades "escondidas". Partiendo de éstas dos clasificaciones simples de discapacidades, será más fácil entender lo que se llaman categorías de elegibilidad, que no son más que las diferentes clases de discapacidades (escondidas u observables) que han sido categorizadas bajo la ley de IDEA.

A veces, cuando la maestra nos envía una nota diciéndonos que nuestro niño(a) no se organiza en la tarea, no retiene la información o no escribe apropiadamente de acuerdo a su grado académico o su deletreo, está dos o tres grados bajo su grado académico y sugiere que nuestro niño sea evaluado y recomendará una evaluación. Estas observaciones de la maestra nos dejan sorprendidos, preocupados, y pensando que la maestra está confundida y que nuestro niño(a) no tiene nada de eso que la profesora dice.

Sentirse así es natural. Cuando la maestra observa algo que nosotros no observamos, es que ella sospecha de que nuestro niño(a) puede tener una discapacidad escondida (que a simple vista no se puede observar, pero si medir). Podría esta discapacidad escondida ser un problema de aprendizaje, un problema deficiente de la atención ó una discapacidad para comprender los enunciados de un problema de matemáticas, etc. Para realmente identificar la sospechada discapacidad escondida, se hacen necesarias múltiples evaluaciones, que van desde evaluaciones sicológicas, educativas, del habla y lenguaje, vision, historia social del niño(a), etc.

Dentro de las categorías de discapacidades observables encontramos las discapacidades sensoriales (las que afectan los sentidos). Entre éstas está el impedimento de tipo visual, sorda y ceguera). Entre otras discapacidades observables se encuentran las discapacidades físicas y neurológicas, como son los impedimentos ortopédicos, otros problemas de salud, daño cerebral traumático y discapacidades múltiples.

Dentro de las discapacidades escondidas encontramos las discapacidades del desarrollo, como son los problemas de aprendizaje específicos, problemas de habla y lenguaje, problemas de retardo mental moderado ó leve y atrasos en el desarrollo.

¿Como saber si mi niño(a) necesita ayuda porque tiene una discapacidad?

Generalmente cuando un niño tiene una necesidad especial ó discapacidad, ésta tiene que afectar su rendimiento escolar de el o de otros niños para calificar para servicios especiales. Algunas veces la discapacidad es tan leve que no afecta el rendimiento o logro escolar del niño(a), entonces no se hace necesario servicios de educación especial. Hay también necesidades del niño que no necesariamente califican para educación especial. Por ejemplo: Un niño con problemas visuales (necesidad) puede no necesitar ningún servicio de educación especial, sólo usar cada día sus anteojos en clases para leer o ver la pizarra. Sin embargo un niño con adecuada visión, sin necesidad de usar anteojos puede necesitar de servicios de educación especial, porque tiene un desorden de integración visual-motora.

Escríbame o envíe su correo electrónico a: Ask ANA@PEATC.org.
“Ask Ana”

Dear Parents:

Throughout the workshops and as parents call PEATC, I am asked the same question, "How can I understand what's going on with my child better?" "What does "disability" mean?" The following questions and answers should provide a good start to better understanding so you can help your child be successful in school.

WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

The Spanish origin of the term “disability” (discapacidad), stems from the Spain Language Real Academy circa 1990. The term “disability” refers to the lack of ability in some specific area of a person. Previously, in Spanish speaking countries (and in the United States), terms like handicapped were used (in Spanish minusvalido, incapacitado).

However, those terms were very degrading because they diminished the value of those with special needs; Now these terms are unacceptable in the Spanish community.

How can I recognize a disability? What if my child’s teacher and/or school say my child has a disability and I do not see anything?

I can tell you that there are disabilities that can be seen and others that cannot (they can be measured by tests). The disabilities that can be seen are referred to as observable disabilities, and the disabilities you cannot see are called hidden disabilities.

Through these two simple classifications we can more easily understand the different categories of disabilities as classified under the IDEA law.

When a concern arises at school, often times, the teacher sends home a note or calls to tell us that our child is unorganized in schoolwork and homework, is not retaining the learned information; or that he/she does not write appropriately for his/her grade level. For example, the teacher may recommend that your child be evaluated.

Sometimes the teacher's observations surprise us and leave us very worried. We may believe that the teacher is confused and that our child does not have any of the issues that the teacher recalled. Having these kinds of feelings is normal.

When the teacher observes something that we do not see in our child, it could mean that the teacher suspects that our child may have a "hidden disability" (not always observable but could be measurable). If the above-mentioned difficulties occur for your child, it could be a learning disability such as attention deficit disorder (ADD) or dyslexia. In order to identify the suspected disability, it may be necessary to do multiple evaluations. Some of the possible evaluations could be: psychological, educational, speech and language, vision, and/or social-history evaluations.

The term “disability” can refer to more than just learning disabilities, i.e., also physical and emotional disabilities. For example, sensory disabilities (ones that affect the senses like visual impairment, deafness, and blindness). We also find disabilities related to development like problems in learning, problems with speaking and language, mild mental mental retardation or developmental delays.

How do I know if my child needs help due his/her disability?

In general, when a child has a special need or disability, his/her disability needs to affect his/her (or others) school performance or academic achievement in order to qualify them for special services. Sometimes the disability is so mild that it does not affect the child's school performance and special services are not necessary. For example, if a child is nearsighted or farsighted, using corrective glasses or contact lenses could be all the child needs to read or see the blackboard.

(However, a child with perfect vision, but with a visual-motor integration disorder, could be in need of special services in order to integrate his/her visual and motor abilities. These could help him/her copy in a journal what was written by the teacher on the blackboard, etc.)

Please write or email me at: AskAna@peatc.org or visit the PEATC website at www.peatc.org and click on “Bienvenidos” for more information, services, and materials available on special education (in Spanish).
PEATC "TOP 10" (Cont’d from P. 11)

9. **REMEMBER THAT FUN AND FRIENDS ARE IMPORTANT**

Work with your child to find after school activities. Know your child’s friends and what level of supervision is available at activities, events, and parties.

10. **KNOW HOW TO CALL FOR HELP AND ANSWERS**

Keep a list of primary contacts at your child’s school handy. Network with other parents to share information. And if you run out of friends or answers, PEATC is always there to provide help and hope. Call PEATC at (703) 923-0010 or visit our website at www.peatc.org.

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**WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES DISABILITIES EXPO 2004**

**DULLES EXPO & CONFERENCE, CHANTILLY, VA
OCTOBER 22-24, 2004**

PEATC is pleased to announce that Caring Communities Inc. is bringing its exciting “World of Possibilities” disabilities event to Virginia, Friday and Saturday, October 22-23 from 10am to 5pm and Sunday, October 24 from 11am to 5pm. Their premier consumer expositions, which are free to the public, allow an opportunity for an anticipated 6-10,000 attendees to explore a vast array of products and services such as: assistive and adaptive technology, durable medical equipment, computer software, mobility products, living aids and more—all conveniently displayed to see, touch, and compare in a “one-stop shopping” hands-on experience. Free wheelchair repairs will be offered on site.

**WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES** will also offer informative workshops, including PEATC’s special education workshops, demonstrations, and representatives from local and statewide agencies/organizations to assist the disability community in gaining more information about supports, services and resources that they may need now or in the future.

Caring Communities, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that enhances the ability of families of children with disabilities ages birth to 21 in Maryland, DC and VA to access appropriately trained respite care providers. Caring Communities, Inc. offers quality respite care training and maintains a registry of trained respite care providers called the Caring Network. Expo proceeds from **WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES** will go directly to serving families of children with disabilities. Please visit [http://www.caringcommunities.org](http://www.caringcommunities.org) for more information or for free expo passes.

For Further Information, contact:
Mona Freedman, RN/Caring Communities
866-227-4644 or email at:
caringcommunities@adelphia.net

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**PEATC Building Better Futures for Children with Disabilities**

We are pleased to announce that PEATC has been awarded a new five-year grant to remain Virginia's parent education, support, training and information center committed to helping children with disabilities, their families and the professionals who serve them.

PEATC will continue to provide assistance, training and information so that parents can understand and communicate more effectively about their children's needs and be meaningful partners in their children’s education.

To extend our reach throughout Virginia, PEATC is partnering with state, local and community-based organizations, schools, businesses, colleges and universities, advocacy organizations, and churches to provide outreach, information and training to families and professionals who work with families.

PEATC is also excited about our planned initiatives to utilize established and future partnerships with dissemination centers, university programs, nationally recognized experts, and others to connect families and professionals with evidenced-based practices that lead to success for students with disabilities.

As Virginia's Parent Training and Information center for 25 years, PEATC has seen the powerful results when families and professionals work in partnership to build better futures for children with disabilities.

However, realizing the success that is possible based on what we have learned and IDEA’s promise to improve outcomes for all students with disabilities remains an elusive dream for too many families, especially families experiencing barriers related to culture, geography, language, education, and socioeconomic factors.

This new funding will enable us to fulfill our mission which is to build futures for children with disabilities by working collaboratively with families, schools and professionals to improve their opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

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**Virginia Parent Centers**

Parent centers offer information, assistance, referrals and workshops to parents, volunteers and educators.

For information on VA, MD and WVA Centers, visit us at [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org) or call 703-923-0010.

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Help us build better futures for children with disabilities

Your contribution today supports our ongoing efforts to improve teacher training and utilization of research based practices for better schools and brighter possibilities for all children. We are working to develop higher standards for IEP facilitations and overall improved communications between parents and schools.

Become a PEATC champion by cutting out this card and returning it with your tax deductible donations to us today! We can also process credit card donations via faxat: 703-923-0030. “The more you help-the more we can help.”

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