From the Director's Desk - "It's Never Too Early To Start" - by Suzanne Bowers

It is never too early to start your child on the road to a quality education and it’s important to remember that YOU are your child’s first and best teacher! But that does not mean that parents have to do it all alone and there are many wonderful resources available to help, many of which are available on our website. Education should and will look different for every child, depending on their ability level and needs. If you are worried that your child is not developing at an age-appropriate rate, you may want to speak with the following professionals regarding your concerns:

• Your child’s pediatrician
• If your child attends a childcare program or daycare, speak with the director
• Other parents
• Early Intervention program in Virginia

As parents, you can support your child’s development by creating opportunities in their natural environment by exposing them to various learning experiences. Reading books, playing games, and even playing with toys allows your child to develop their skills. Even if your child is not enrolled in a standard education program or you have chosen to keep your child at home, there are plenty of things you can do at home to encourage learning.

Here are a few suggestions:

• Host playdates at your home or attend playdates at other homes. This encourages the very important social skills all children need. It also gives you an opportunity to compare your child’s development to other children. But don’t get discouraged, every child is different.

• Enroll your child in classes, programs or attend free programs at museums and libraries. Getting your children in the habit of listening to other adults and sitting and remaining focused is very important part of early childhood development.

• Use our Parent Engagement calendars to find fun activities daily you can do with your child.

This month’s PEATC Press is dedicated to Early Childhood development and Social Skills for your information and enjoyment. Please remember that PEATC is available to speak with you about your questions or concerns.
Family Engagement Corner by Artina Norris - "Social Skills in Early Childhood"

Families play an integral role in the development of their children. Equipping children early with social skills is imperative. These skills prepare them for life and school, and children benefit the most when adults collaboratively work together. Social skills are the skills we use to communicate and interact with others, both verbally and non-verbally using gestures and body language. Teaching our children social skills early enables them to form friendships and teaches them how to play and share with others. For children with disabilities, social interactions are problematic. They may have difficulty reading the social skills of others therefore forming relationships may be harder.

As our children grow, learning to get along with others can be challenging, whether they are in school, in a home environment and just being with their friends. There are techniques parents can use to aid their children in strengthening their social skills. We can teach the importance of communication. Children learning to communicate nonverbal is essential. This skill helps them to understand tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions and posture. Giving children permission to express themselves is vital. Parents should encourage their children to articulate their feelings, the good and the bad ones.

Teaching children social skills cover an array of topics. A helpful resource is http://www.socialskillscentral.com/free/101_Ways_Teach_Children_Social_Skills.pdf. Adequately preparing them early to master their social skills will have greater benefits as they grow and mature. Witnessing our children evolve and come into themselves rewarding as a parent.

PEATC Trainings and Events - February 2015

**Friday, February 6, 2015** – “Successful Transition Planning & the IEP” workshop, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm at Ft. Lee Army Community Service/Conference Room, 1231 Mahone Avenue, Fort Lee, VA 23281. To register and for more information, please contact Keiandria Dickerson at keiandria.n.dickerson.ctr@mail.mil or (804) 734-7965.


**Monday, February 9, 2015** – “Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?” workshop, 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm, Sandusky MS, 805 Chinook Place, Lynchburg, VA 24502; snow date is Wednesday, February 18, 2015. Please RSVP by February 6, 2015 to Carolyn Martin at 434-515-5180 or martincb@lec.edu.net.

**Saturday, February 28, 2015** - 7th Annual Your Child's Development 2015: A Resource and Information Fair, 9:00am -12:30pm, Walter Reed Community Center, 2909 16th Street South, Arlington, VA 22204; PEATC will be an exhibitor at the resource fair. Registration required: http://www.eventbrite.com/e/your-childs-development-2015-a-resource-and-information-fair-tickets-13257215689.
Early Intervention Corner by Lakeshia Yancey - "PEATC's Early Childhood Resources"

When you place your child in an early childhood setting you are not only giving them an educational edge, but also a social one. The world of early childhood focuses on how children develop naturally and uses tools to help them learn how to navigate in different social situations and how to react to different personalities. This is an important skill for all children to learn. Children with special needs are able to get additional professional supports in this area when they attend early childhood programs, but more importantly they are interacting with typically developing peers. Starting the process of developing positive social skills will help to ensure a smooth transition into mainstream school.

PEATC’s Early Childhood program is here to assist families with transitioning into early childhood. We currently offer workshops and fact sheets that provide families with overviews of Early Intervention and the transition to Special Education. We can assist you with understanding what early childhood will look like for your child with special needs, how to make sure the program knows your child as an individual, and how to build positive relationships with your child’s team members. We can even provide you with information on what to look for when choosing a quality early childhood program. Feel free to contact us or visit our website for additional information.

Parent Fact Sheets

* What does quality look like? Child Care Checklist
* Toddlers Time for Preschool: Early Childhood Special Education Services
* Shhhh! Don’t Wake the Baby Early Intervention Services for Virginia Infants and Toddlers

Early Childhood Workshops

- Who, What, and When of Early Intervention This workshop covers the early intervention process and the family’s role in developing an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Participants will come away from the workshop understanding how the information families have about their children is critical to developing a plan for the baby and the baby’s family. Families in the midst of chaos, grief, fear, and the unknown will learn how to be their child’s and their family’s best and most effective advocate.

- The Big Step: Transitioning Into Preschool This workshop is to give insight on the importance of successful transitions from Early Intervention services to preschool. It touches on the importance of the roles of the parents, service coordinators, and educators. Participants will learn the positive and negative effects of transitions. We will also focus on what to look for in a preschool program.

PEATC On Demand and In the Spotlight by Leslie Edwards - “Friendship Fun”

Research shows that when children have a sense of belonging and the opportunity to make friends, they are motivated to learn and grow. In this month’s On Demand and In the Spotlight feature, we present to you our Webinar titled “Friendship Fun”.

Through this Webinar, Viewers will explore the diversity and nature of their own friendships and build a vision of possibilities for children to develop positive relationships and friendships with each other. The importance of creating a climate of acceptance, belonging, and community in schools will be stressed by infusing opportunities for creating this climate across all areas of the curriculum and throughout the school day.

Lastly, viewers will identify specific strategies that parents, general educators, and special educators can use to facilitate friendships for students. To access this Webinar please paste the following link in your internet browser: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PFGsdp4_D94
Empezando Temprano

A lo largo de la vida de su hijo(a), el/la y usted enfrentaran transiciones. Una de ellas es la transición al pre-kindergarten o kinder. Incluso, tal vez en este momento, usted está considerando si su hijo debe recibir servicios en la escuela ya que pronto cumplirá los dos años, o si es mejor que se quede un tiempo más recibiendo servicios de intervención temprana. Tal vez su hijo(a) ya entro a pre-kindergarten o ya se encuentra en kinder. De todos modos, esta es la hora de informarse sobre educación especial y como participar como miembro del equipo de la escuela para que su hijo se beneficie a la mayor medida posible de su educación.

La Ley Educativa para Personas con Discapacidad (IDEA 2004) cubre dos servicios muy importantes: intervención temprana para niños de 0 a 2 años y educación especial para niños de 3 a 21 años. Una agencia local (Infant-Toddler Connection) provee servicios de intervención temprana y la agencia educativa local (la escuela) provee servicios de educación especial. Las dos agencias junto con los padres desarrollan un plan de servicios para los niños. Para intervención temprana, el plan se llama Plan Individualizado de Servicios para la Familia (“IFSP”). Para educación especial, el plan se llama el Programa Educativo Individualizado (“IEP”). Compartimos enlaces que les informaran más sobre el IEP e IFSP:

Hojas informativas de PEATC
http://www.peatc.org/peatc.cgim?
template=publicaciones

La Diferencia entre un IFSP y un IEP
http://www.mychildwithoutlimits.org/plan/early-intervention/ifsp-iep-comparison/?lang=es


¿Es su hijo demasiado joven para obtener un IEP? https://www.understood.org/es-mx/school-learning/special-services/ieps/getting-an-iep-for-your-very-young-child

Starting Early

Throughout your child’s life, you and he will encounter transitions. One of them is the transition to preschool or kindergarten. Perhaps at this moment, you are considering whether your child should receive services at school now that he will turn 2 years old, or if it is better for him to stay a little bit longer receiving early intervention services. Maybe your child already started preschool or kindergarten. In any case, now is the time to inform yourself of special education and how to get involved as a member of the school’s team so that your child benefits the most of his education.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) covers two important services: early intervention for children 0 to 2 years old and special education for children 3 to 21 years old. A local agency (Infant-Toddler Connection) provides early intervention services and the local educational agency (school) provides special education services. The two agencies along with the parents will develop a services plan for the child. For early intervention, the plan is called the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). For special education, the plan is called the Individualized Education Program (IEP). These are some links that will inform you more about the IEP and IFSP (available both in English and Spanish):

PEATC Factsheets
http://www.peatc.org/peatc.cgim?
template=parent_info_resources

The Difference between an IFSP and an IEP
http://www.mychildwithoutlimits.org/plan/early-intervention/ifsp-iep-comparison/

IFSP: What It Is and How It Works

Getting an IEP for Your Very Young Child