



The

# PEATCpress

Virginia Special Education Regulations Special Issue!

*Building Positive Futures for Virginia's Children*

## Three Virginia Information Centers – One PEATC


Building a positive future for a child can be a daunting challenge. Whether concerned about academic achievement, the ability to make good decisions, or a future lifetime of meaningful contributions, it is hard to figure out where to begin. For parents and professionals to succeed in helping the children they care about, there are a few essentials:

- Access to timely and accurate information about possibilities, opportunities, and solutions to barriers.
- Focused approach to establishing priorities, identifying strengths, and acknowledging your child's challenges.
- Recognition of past successes (and failures); the current circumstances of the school, program, family and child; and hopes, and dreams that can guide the future plans you make for your child.
- Knowledge about regular and special education rights and laws.
- Ability to organize records and clearly communicate.
- Knowing who can help – friends, parents, teachers and others.
- Support as your child becomes increasingly a self-determined and self-actualized adult.

It may be complicated but there is help. Call PEATC. When it comes to children's educational rights, parental involvement in education, family-school-community partnerships, and individual self-advocacy and self-determination, PEATC is a one-stop shop. Funding for our centers comes, in large part, from the US Department of Education.

Each center offers the same general services:

- **Information, Assistance and Support** – call us or email us with your individual concerns or questions. We also have information available 24/7 on our website and have a number of opportunities to keep up with accurate, current and easy-to-understand information.
- **Workshops, Presentations, Training for Trainers** – a variety of workshops in subjects related to education, parent-school communication, transition, special education, behavior, reading, homework, self-advocacy and partnerships.
- **Technical Assistance** – we can also provide additional assistance to parent groups, PTAs, schools, and communities through research-based strategies for improving outcomes for all children.
- **Outreach to Culturally Diverse Families** – a number of our initiatives specifically target culturally, linguistically, geographically, economically, and ability-diverse families. Spanish speaking staff members are available and we have established partnerships with leaders in Asian and Arabic communities.


 **Parent Training and Information Center for Families of Children with Disabilities** – In 1978, PEATC began as one of the first Parent Training and Information (PTI) centers for families of children with disabilities. This center serves families of children with disabilities or suspected disabilities from birth through age 26 and the professionals who work with them. We

help parents understand the workings of early intervention and special education, providing clarity to a complex system. With increased knowledge parents are better able to communicate the individual needs of their children to the professional world. As a result, parents are more likely to avoid disputes and succeed in advocating for needed services and supports that will help their children. We have leadership programs for English-speaking and Spanish-speaking families.

**Parent Information Resource Center** – In 2007 PEATC was designated as Virginia's Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) serving all families of children from birth through high school.



This information center assists parents and teachers who want to help their children succeed in school and throughout life. The Parents as Teachers (PAT) research-based program certifies early childhood educators in providing home visiting for parents of young children from birth through age five. The early childhood program also helps families with reading and school readiness activities. We use the Solid Foundation curriculum, which sustains school-based teams with research-based activities in support of a strategic planning process intended to move a school culture from "random acts of parent involvement" to a deliberate and intentional culture of parents as education partners.

 **NEXT STEPS Transition Program** – Through this information center, parents, students and professionals can learn more about opportunities that await transition age youth with disabilities and to prepare for what comes after high school. Garnering partnerships with professionals and leveraging community resources, youth with disabilities and their families have an opportunity to plan a future of their own design. Our webinars highlighting best practices in transition have almost 1,000 regular viewers and are archived for future review. Though not a part of the Virginia Information Center, we have supported the NEXT STEPS Transition Team initiative in Illinois for 28 years.

PEATC staff, Board and partners are committed to our work with families, students, schools and the community to fulfill our mission to build positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities in order to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

To reach any of our three centers, call us at 1-800-869-6782 or email us at [partners@peatc.org](mailto:partners@peatc.org). Visit us at [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org).

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Articles, announcements and resources are included for information only.  
Call PEATC with any questions or comments.

***Hablamos Español***

## Cherie's Corner

### *Parent Leadership?*

It has been legislatively required in Head Start, Title I (No Child Left Behind) and special education since their inception; yet consistently cited as an issue of noncompliance. It is one of the most powerful indicators of positive student outcomes and backed by almost 40 years of research efficacy; yet something for which first year teachers consistently cite as being ill-prepared for when they start teaching? It is one of the often cited reasons that children do not succeed; and a powerful force in helping to improve attendance, reduce dropout rates, graduate from high school and increase college enrollment and successful employment. It doesn't cost very much, when it is done right; but can be extremely expensive if done with insensitivity.

What is it? If you guessed *parent involvement*, I would consider your answer to be only partially correct. To me, the most powerful and lasting change that is needed in education is a recognition and support for increased *parent leadership*.

During my time at PEATC, I have heard a plethora of reasons why it can't be done. Our experience has been quite the opposite. In August, we trained 13 parents from every corner of Virginia as collaborative leaders. They will be using the Solid Foundation special education courses to walk other parents through the special education process. Parents were amazed and impressed when Wyllys VanDerwerker, President of the Virginia Council of Administrators of Special Education, explained that it is not only imperative that parents are involved in their children's education, it is essential that parents become leaders working with special education to increase support of needed services and programs. One thought that stuck was "If you can't fix the problem, look for the better outcome." Over the three-day-training, parents began to understand that they were capable of teaching and leading others. Their energy and passion became electric as initial doubts about their capabilities as leaders melted away. "You don't have to 'know it all' before you can begin to cause change." One parent summed up her experience, "Being a parent advocate and trainer is yet another empowering path to take in my journey to accomplish my personal dreams and continue to grow into the powerful, effective (and hopefully wise) woman I envision that I am and will become."

Through Solid Foundations, we have trained other parents in a dialogue-based curriculum so that they can facilitate education sessions related to school readiness, behavior, homework, special education, and other topics. Parent facilitators don't need to be content experts. They just need to have a passion for asking other parents to think about how they will apply what they are learning to helping their children learn to read, behave, and thrive at school. The Study Circle model utilized by our partners at **Parent Allies for Student Success (PASS)** is energizing parents and communities to act on initiatives that will improve student success at school. The three initial circles have canvassed their neighborhoods, shared information with other families at church, at soccer games, and other social events. The Spanish-speaking parents in the Bailey's area organized a picnic for 47 families.

For two years, the Latino Leadership Group for families who have children with disabilities has regularly met to discuss and learn about different subjects in several disability-related fields. During these meetings, Spanish speaking families not only learn but also connect with each other, make friends and support their efforts to help their children with disabilities and their families succeed. Two parents, Fanny Lopez and Nelly Flores, have been emboldened through the group and their determination for a better life for their children. They spoke last month to the State Special Education Advisory Committee about their experiences.

So if parents can be such a formidable power, why have parents been so under-utilized? Why do too many schools engage in random-acts of parent involvement activities, when with a little more effort, they can add to the bottom-line success of students with the potential to succeed? It may be complicated, but it is certainly not impossible. If you are a parent or a professional who wants to know more about how you can make a difference, call us.

In 1992, Takemoto began chronicling her struggles for inclusion for her son, Peter, in the PEATC Press series titled “Educating My Peter Too.” She began the series in response to an Academy Award winning HBO special “Educating Peter” showing the trials and tribulations of inclusive education for Peter Gwazdauskas in Montgomery County, Virginia. This is the 10th and final column in this series. The other articles can be found at the PEATC website: [http://www.peatc.org/peatc.cgim?menu\\_sub\\_nav=spec\\_ed&template=empt.index](http://www.peatc.org/peatc.cgim?menu_sub_nav=spec_ed&template=empt.index)

When I began this series, Peter was defined more by what he couldn’t do than what he could do. He couldn’t talk very well. He couldn’t walk very far. He became easily frustrated and cried...loudly! His development was significantly delayed. When I look back to when he was four years old, Pete’s developmental age was probably about two years old. Inclusive education was relatively new and not readily available. There was some doubt about whether he could be educated with other kindergarteners.

Yet, his school took the risk. They included him, even if they didn’t feel ready. He slowly and steadily began to talk more, walk longer, read and even write on the computer. Pete became more charming and engaging.



Pete Scampavia and Cherie Takemoto.

He made friends with and without disabilities. The teachers struggled. We struggled. Peter struggled. I wonder how we ever found the courage and determination – especially Peter – to work so hard to be successful always. A lesson to us all is that success is worth the struggle. In Peter’s case, we wouldn’t have made it any other way.

My son prefers the nickname, Pete. He enjoys an active life, texting his friends via Facebook or cell phone, going to the mall or the movies with friends, or taking the bus to where he wants to go.

He has worked for almost 5 years as a courtesy clerk at Safeway. He is a youth leader for the Capernaum/Young Life program. He is a disability-advocate and ambassador for the Arc of Northern Virginia and a speaker at local, state and national conferences. He hopes to go to college and have a future job in child care, elder care, or as a disability advocate.

Here are some of the things we have learned from Pete’s experiences in school.

**1. It is better to risk failure than live a life of low expectations.** This adage doesn’t just apply to Pete. Teachers and administrators have risen to the challenge of helping Pete succeed. They have had high expectations for Pete, along with high expectations for themselves. It has applied to me as well. It hasn’t been easy sending Pete off into a challenging world on his own. I have had to trust that Pete will eventually “get it” and that he will have a network of friends ready to help.

**2. “Fair” does not mean “same.”** Pete’s special education has been individualized for his needs. It is not the same, and it has given him an equal chance to learn and to succeed. In kindergarten, some of the parents voiced concern that having special education students in the regular classroom would take away from their own children’s learning. By his senior year, parents, teachers and administrators considered Pete a giving, funny, observant, and earnest student and an asset to his school, his teachers and his classmates. They figured out inclusion did not mean that everyone needed to be treated the same. They attained a higher level sense of fairness. When considering Pete’s contributions and individual needs, they strengthened their understanding of equal access.

**3. Inclusion helps more than just the special education students.** One teacher revealed that before Pete, some regular education teachers would not adapt assignments or tests for other “less abled” students. After Pete, they better understood the benefit of adapting their teaching practices. Now many other special and regular education students benefit from individualized instruction. Teachers have also observed that other students try harder when they see how earnestly Pete tries and how he succeeds more often than not.

**4. Inclusion doesn’t mean that a student should never be with other students with disabilities.** In fourth grade, I found out that Pete was going to a self-contained class for reading and math. Before marching into the school to express my indignation, I asked Pete what he thought. Pete liked the class. He felt more relaxed and was able to learn more because the instruction was modified into manageable chunks. Self-contained classrooms are not appropriate as an only option. However, some of his “self-contained” classes boosted his academic and emotional growth.

**5. Real life is about real life – not just academics.** Pete has done quite well academically. In fact he has exceeded even our own high expectations. But academics have not been everything. Pete is a good and considerate friend to others, with and without disabilities. At work and in his internships, people appreciate his conscientiousness and sincere desire to do well. He is a diligent worker who cheers up customers and co-workers alike.



Pete works as a courtesy clerk at Safeway.

Today, we still hear from parents and teachers concerned because their school is reluctant to include students with disabilities. Others doubt the benefits and worry about how teachers can possibly meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. This column speaks to Pete’s story of inclusion. Though he has not always been fully included, I believe inclusion has been instrumental in his life, learning and prospects as a contributing citizen. I also see how his inclusion has changed the minds and hearts of fellow students, teachers, administrators and community members. Has it been worth it? Absolutely. And it hasn’t been just for Pete. While we set out to educate Pete, he ended up educating us as well.

# PEATC Press Transitions to Timely Information Update Methods

## Transitions Are Never Easy!

By Cathy Healy

Transitions are never easy. Just ask any parent of a child with special needs. The one thing that every parent of a child with a disability dreads is change — whether it's a different routine; a new pair of shoes; day light savings time; a new school — change in our children's lives, no matter how insignificant, strikes terror in the hearts of parents. As adults, we experience transitions all the time and most of us know how uncomfortable it is to start something new.

At PEATC we pride ourselves in the knowledge that for over thirty years we have provided a safe and predictable place for parents who are seeking accurate and reliable information about special education. We are motivated to provide outstanding service that parents will find both useful and practical. We have examined the many ways to get current information into the hands of families and professionals. We want to continue to communicate our message of hope and possibilities for positive outcomes for Virginias' children. We have reached a crossroads and are making a difficult transition from a hard-copy PEATC Press mailed to readers periodically. After this final issue, we will put more of our efforts to get information out to you more quickly, and create easier access to information for families and professionals.



When we started in 1978, putting out information was pretty straightforward. People got answers to their questions by talking over the telephone or meeting in person. We kept a large filing cabinet with information that we could send to parents through the mail. Easy enough don't you think? Shortly thereafter we could fax materials and leave voice mail. Before we knew it, we all had our own computers and a treasure trove of electronic information that we could send to callers via email. Now we do all of the above **and** have a plethora of information on our website for those parents who stay awake

at night worrying about where to find information that might help them help their children. Over time, the PEATC Press has blossomed from a few short mimeographed pages sent to a mailing list of about 2,000 to a full blown 16 page, professionally printed publication sent to over 15,000. Though our readers are primarily from Virginia, the PEATC Press is sent to every state in the US. Articles are often requested for republication. In recent years, every PEATC Press has included a "Special Edition" with in-depth information to use again and again. Some topics have included

"After this final issue, we will put more of our efforts to get information out to you more quickly, and create easier access to information for families and professionals."

ed IDEA 2004, No Child Left Behind, the national dissemination centers, response to intervention, the IEP checklist and others. These special editions remain available on the website, but are difficult to reference and change as information changes.

Though we are not a crisis information center, parents often call us from their cell phones, on their way to their children's IEP meetings. They need a citation of the law or advice on how to respectfully ask for services for their children. In a heartbeat, PEATC information specialists are downloading and pasting into an email the specific language the parent has asked for or sending it to their cell phones and hand held devices. By the time the parents sit down at IEP meeting they are armed with information to knowledgeably contribute as team members.

Families increasingly want more flexible ways to get their information. A recent needs assessment of PEATC families revealed that nearly two thirds of respondents prefer to receive special education information via on-line, web-based courses rather than coming to a live workshop. In response to those preferences, that old filing cabinet that housed PEATC resources has transformed in

recent years to information readily available on PEATC's website. Visitors can find specific information by typing key words in the Google search engine that is embedded on our website.

For now the true impacts of sending important information in an instantaneous fashion is apparent to those of us who depend upon PEATC and the remarkable wealth of information that staff possess. We hope our readers will visit our website [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org) and sign on to receive our electronic communications, announcements, updates, and resources. We hope those of you who are technology savvy will follow us on TWITTER and FACEBOOK and we invite you to visit our website often as we will be updating information as quickly as it is forwarded to us by our technical assistance center advisors from across the nation.




Other transitions are in store for PEATC in the coming months. We hope you will read through this final print issue of the PEATC Press newsletter to find out what they are. One thing is for certain, our core purpose remains as bright and as focused as it has always been: to ensure families and professionals find a safe place to ask questions, air concerns, and find answers to vital questions about how to educate, and nurture children with disabilities.


PEATC has a new public service announcement, airing on B101.5 and WGRQ 95.9. in the Fredericksburg/Northern Neck area. Listen to the PSAs from our website at:  
[http://www.peatc.org/newsmanager/news\\_article.cgi?news\\_id=112](http://www.peatc.org/newsmanager/news_article.cgi?news_id=112).



Thanks to the NSWC Federal Credit Union for sponsoring our PSAs!

# Stay Connected to PEATC

 PEATC has joined the digital age of social networking! On the go, at home or in the office, stay connected with PEATC through Facebook and Twitter! To join us, simply visit our website, [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org), scroll to the bottom of our homepage and click on either Facebook or Twitter to access. If you don't already have accounts with these social media outlets, it's simple and free to join.

How is the social networking opportunity provided by Facebook and Twitter different from the PEATC listserv? PEATC strives to maintain the listserv with up to date events and information for our partners. We are committed to keeping current information flowing, without overloading your inbox. Facebook and  allow PEATC the opportunity to post current information without constant e-mails.

Partners access this information when they are able, how they are able. Facebook and Twitter also allow our partners to post responses and information through discussion boards and newsfeeds. This opens a new mode of interaction between PEATC and our partners.

*From a caller having difficulty enrolling her teenager niece in school because she did not have documentation of residency.*

I am so sorry I didn't get to respond to this email earlier, but I have been so busy and overwhelmed with work. I really appreciate your consulting my case and, in fact, what you sent me regarding the McKinney-Vento Act could totally apply to our situation.

I did go to her registration appointment on Friday much more relieved because if needed and thanks to you, I knew we could have asked to enroll her as homeless. There was no need to mention the McKinney-Vento Act-- and I was actually surprised to see the law taking care of situations like mine, in which all of the sudden a relative teenager is placed in my home. She started school today and everything seems to be going well.

Patricia, thanks again for going the extra mile to provide me with information/help I had not even requested. I guess there is so much information out there that we are not aware of!

Don't want to join the Facebook or Twitter crowd? Get information about upcoming events, new resources, announcements, new policies and other options and opportunities related to early intervention, special education, transition, NCLB, parent/school partnerships and more on our web site.

**E-News** – scroll to the bottom of the PEATC website [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org) and give us your email and name.

**Fact Sheets** – selected PEATC and PIRC fact sheets are available on the website.

**News and Headlines** – simply visit the PEATC website to find out the latest news. Many of our E-News postings are also displayed at this site. If you are looking for more articles, you can scroll back to information you are searching for from a previous E-news. Are you looking for information on parent involvement, SOLs or No Child Left Behind? Visit the Parent Information Resource Center site [www.pirc.peatc.org](http://www.pirc.peatc.org) to find the latest information. Looking for information specific to transition? Visit the NEXT STEPS Transition Program site <http://www.nextsteps.peatc.org/>



**RSS Feed** – Don't want to check back to the website? The PEATC sites, including Facebook and Twitter are set up so that you can receive regular RSS feeds. Just click RSS feed button and you will be on your way.

**Google Site Search** – go to any page on the PEATC website and type in key words to find articles or information related to your topic of interest.

*Parents are entering the professional world in increasing numbers. Cathy Creighton Thompson is a both a parent and graduate student at George Mason University. We helped her connect with parents for a survey she was conducting.*

Thank you again for your time and help with the survey. It is also my hope that research from this survey gives parents a voice. PEATC's entrenchment in the special education community facilitates communication necessary for effective advocacy.

Irene, I sincerely appreciate the time you spent with me today. I know you are very busy advocating for families. I have directly benefited from your hard work on behalf of families with special needs. Thank you for everything that you do for me and for my children. I know that you will help many families during their most difficult time.

As a parent of children with disabilities myself, I know that we such parents need a voice. Research like this facilitates our cause. Thank you again to PEATC for providing a communication venue to give us a voice.

*Speaking to and inspiring future teachers*

Dear Rosalia,

Thank you very much for coming and talking to my students. Very clearly you have really inspired my students. I am in the process of reading their final papers. You will be happy to know that many of them have shared information on you and PEATC with parents they have been working with this semester. It is my understanding that one of the parents also attended a workshop held by you. In their journal, reflections many students have described how they were deeply moved by your story. They have said that your presentation really helped them to understand the struggles of immigrant parents. I am very grateful to you for coming and speaking to my class.

Monimalika Day, Ph.D  
George Mason University



## PEATC NEXT STEPS Transition Program Webinars

Bringing together all the elements needed for a successful transition for a youth with a disability can be a monumental effort. The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) in collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University-Rehabilitative Research Training Center is offering a webinar series for parents, students with disabilities, and the professionals who work with them.

All of the webinars are free and are archived. Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and Continuing Rehabilitation Credits (CRCs) are available. For more information contact Cathy Healy at [healy@peatc.org](mailto:healy@peatc.org)

### YEAR ONE (Archived from 2008)

#### Laying the Groundwork for Transition

Cathy Healy, Katherine Wittig

Katherine Wittig the VCU-T/TAC transition specialist presents the steps involved in developing measurable post secondary goals.

PEATC Director of Training, Cathy Healy guides families and professionals in the foundations of transition and the importance of partnership development.

Using a case study, Wittig leads the participants in the development of post secondary goals laying the groundwork for transition planning under the IDEA.

<http://www.worksupport.com/training/freeWebcast.cfm/121>

#### Exploring the Future & Creating a Timeline

Katherine Wittig, Erica Lovelace

The Rehabilitation Act of the Workforce Investment Act is a component of secondary transition planning. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) representatives want and need to be a part of the transition team. When should a teacher invite VR into the process and what is the role of the VR counselor?

Using a case study, a transition specialist and a VR counselor walk through the process of identifying services and the timelines for accessing services. The webinar also covers information about the age of majority for students who are about to turn age 18. <http://www.worksupport.com/training/freeWebcast.cfm/122>

#### Challenging Tradition through Life Long Learning & Economic Empowerment

Michael Morris, Elizabeth Getzel

This webinar discusses some of the tools and strategies that youth with disabilities and families can leverage to make economic security a reality. <http://www.worksupport.com/training/freeWebcast.cfm/123>

### YEAR TWO (Archived 2009)

#### From Segregated to Customized: The Shift to Personalized Employment

Laura Owens

Laura Owens, the executive director of APSE, the Network on Employment discusses innovative and realistic options, policies and the strategies to support students with disabilities and their families prepare for employment. She also highlights examples of how ideals can work in practice. <http://www.worksupport.com/training/freeWebcast.cfm/136>

#### In Support of Supported Decisionmaking

Lisa Morgan

Parents often consider legal guardianship when their children with intellectual, developmental, and emotional disabilities reaches the age of majority. Other families are promoting self-determination and self-advocacy by engaging in an activity known as Supported Decision Making (SDM). <http://www.worksupport.com/training/freeWebcast.cfm/137>

#### Assistive Technology & Transition: Evaluation, Identification, & Acquisition

Joey Wallace

Assistive Technology has become the greatest equalizer for people with disabilities in accessing pathways to community living, employment, post secondary education and more. For students with disabilities and families it may not be clear who has responsibility for selecting, managing, and financing assistive technologies. Once a student leaves the confines of the protections of IDEA mandated services what happens to their AT needs? For some students, the only thing preventing successful transition is Assistive Technology. <http://www.worksupport.com/training/freeWebcast.cfm/138>

#### Opportunities Offered through Career Tech Ed

Domenic Giandomenico

Once known as vocational education, today's Career Technical Education programs are preparing students for 21st Century jobs. Green collar jobs will be an important part of the future workforce. Students with disabilities can find opportunities within Career Tech Ed. <http://www.worksupport.com/training/viewWebcast.cfm/139>

### Transition and the Arts: Tapping into Creative Opportunities

Betty Siegal

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts is a world leader in providing opportunities for young adults with disabilities. In an attempt to challenge industry leaders the Experiential Education Initiative (EEI) program was launched to develop inclusive opportunities in the arts. A young man with a disability discusses his experiences with the director of accessibility at the JFK Center for Performing Arts. <http://www.worksupport.com/training/viewWebcast.cfm/140>

### Student Voice: The Transition to College

Liz Getzel

The transition from high school to college is challenging for all students. Students with disabilities, once protected and supported by IDEA policy, may be unaware of the challenges facing them once they enter higher education. Parents also have a new role to play when students with disabilities enter college. Support for students with disabilities and college campus looks different. The student needs to ask for support, not the parent. College students with disabilities coming into a new level of awareness report the strategies, successes, and the ways that they've learned to navigate higher education. The new website <http://www.going-to-college.org/> will be introduced. <http://www.worksupport.com/training/viewWebcast.cfm/141>



CSI: TRANSITION (Clues for a Self Investigation)

CSI: Transition is intended for middle school students and their parent to begin planning for high school. As a tool to help engage and motivate middle school students, CSI:TRANSITION can help parents begin the conversation about self-determination and transition.

For more information, contact PEATC, [partners@peatc.org](mailto:partners@peatc.org) or 703-923-0010.

# Special Edition Part 7

## PEATC's 10 Things Parents Should Know About the FINAL Virginia Special Education Regulations

*The final Virginia Special Education Regulations were adopted by the Board of Education on May 28, 2009 and became effective July 7, 2009. The regulations include references to the federal regulations, state statute, or state regulations that serve as the source of the requirements.*

**1. Secondary Transition Services** need to begin before high school and no later than the IEP in effect when the child turns 14 (age 13). (pg. 68)

**2. Written, Informed Parental Consent IS REQUIRED** before: an initial evaluation or reevaluation (including a functional behavioral assessment); initial eligibility determination or change in categorical identification; initial provision of special education and related services; any revision to IEP services; any partial or complete termination of special education and related services (except for graduation with a standard or advance studies diploma); the provision of a free and appropriate public education to children who transfer between school divisions; accessing a child's insurance or public benefits; or inviting to an IEP meeting a representative of any participating agency likely to be responsible for providing or paying for secondary transition services. (pg. 89-90)

**3. New Eligibility Definitions** replace less-preferred terms for categories of **Intellectual Disability** (pg. 15) and **Emotional Disability** (pg. 11-12). Schools can decide if they wish to include a category for **Developmental Delay** (DD). A **Severe Disability** is no longer an eligibility category. If selected, this category is limited to children within the age ranges of 2 through 6. A severe discrepancy between intellectual ability and achievement are no longer required in determining whether child has a **Specific Learning Disability** (pg. 54-55).

**4. Evaluation and Eligibility** must be completed within 65 **business** days after the special education director or designee receives a referral (usually from a parent or teacher). The federal begins the 60 calendar day timeline when the parent consents to the evaluation. (pg. 43)

**5. Functional Behavioral Assessment** may include a review of existing data or new testing data or evaluation as determined by the IEP team. If the IEP team determines that the FBA will include obtaining new testing data or evaluation, then the parent is entitled to an independent educational evaluation (IEE) if

the parent disagrees with the evaluation or a component of the evaluation (pg. 83).

**6. A Functional Behavioral Assessment** can be formal (needing parental consent) or a review of existing data (does not require parental consent) (pg. 13 and pg. 83). If a new evaluation is completed as part of the FBA, the parent is entitled to an Independent Education Evaluation (IEE). (pg. 87) If a parent believes a child needs a full evaluation, the parent may request an evaluation of how the child's disability affects educational and functional performance. (pg. 47).

**7. Local Advisory Committee** now includes one teacher. At least 51% of the committee must be parents of children with disabilities OR individuals with disabilities. Additional local school division personnel shall serve only as consultants to the committee. (pg. 120)

**8. Audio Recording Devices** are permissible at meetings to determine a child's eligibility; develop, review, or revise the child's IEP; and review discipline matters. (pg. 94-95)

**9. Educational Records** – the evaluation report must be available at least 2 days before an **Eligibility Meeting** (pg. 47); and a written copy provided. at no cost to the parent, prior to, during or no longer than 10 days following. A copy of the IEP must be provided, no cost to the parent, prior to, during or no longer than 10 days following the meeting. (pg. 65). **Any Email or electronic communication** regarding any matter associated with the child, including IEPs, discipline or service delivery, must be maintained in the child's educational record. (pg. 91).

**10. Short-term Objectives** need to be considered by every student's IEP team (pg.66-67). The Federal regulations limit the requirement to students taking alternate assessments for state or local standards (in Virginia students assessed through the VAAP).

### *From a Parent Liaison*

Thank you for attending the meeting for the Arabic parents. Twenty parents showed up for the meeting and they were very pleased with the information they received about Special Education program and the SOLs, they expressed their appreciation to the information that Mrs. Altobelli and Ms. Fajardo presented to them about the Special Education program and on how parents can communicate better with their kid's school. I also talked to parents about the SOLs and provided them the dates of the tests in addition to printed material in Arabic explaining the SOLs.

On behalf of all parents and me thank you all for your continuous support.

*PEATC provides current and accurate information to families and professionals.*

Thank you for sending me this information. After our talk I had a sense of relief. I was really worried that the process was getting ridiculous. I didn't realize that this information was fairly new. This explains why the teacher did not want to talk to me about what happens next. Since the boys are just beginning their educational careers I know that there will be questions. It gives us peace of mind knowing that there are organizations, such as yours, that assist parents in staying informed and confident in making decisions for their children. Thank you.

#

I just wanted to update you. We had the eligibility meeting and after going through the results, they were trying to find him ineligible due [to] no grades below a "C." Thankfully his teacher from last year plus my husband and I convinced the committee to give him some help. So he will finally be getting an IEP and hopefully have a much better year than last. Thank you for your help!

Tammy Ritenour  
Mother of a child with special needs

*Letter related to Least Restrictive Environment for a 4 year old*

"Thank you for all the help you have provided; with you we were able to resolve the issue."



# Special Edition Part 7

## Reminders about IDEA

Now that the Virginia Regulations have been finalized, we would like to share new or interesting reminders that many people do not realize about IDEA. You can download a copy of the new regulations by visiting the PEATC website [http://www.peatc.org/news\\_uploads/113/VA%20procedural%20safeguards.pdf](http://www.peatc.org/news_uploads/113/VA%20procedural%20safeguards.pdf) or going directly to the Virginia Department of Education's website [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Sped/proc\\_safe.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/Instruction/Sped/proc_safe.pdf) and be sure to type or copy and paste the entire link to see the PDF.

The PEATC Top 10 is in this special edition on page 1 (Spanish version on page 4). Here are some additional tidbits.

**Prior written notice** shall be given to the parent(s) of a child with a disability within a reasonable time before the local educational agency proposes to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement (including graduation with a standard or advanced studies diploma) of the child OR if the LEA refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education for the child. (pg. 88)

**IEP meetings** – Should be scheduled at a mutually-agreed time and place that parents can attend. If neither parent can attend the IEP meeting in person, the LEA can use other ways to ensure parent participation, including individual or conference telephone calls and audio conferences at no cost to the parent. (pg. 65)

**Referral Teams** – (previously child study committees). The parent is only a required team member if he or she made the referral. One member of the team must be knowledgeable about alternative interventions and procedures required to access programs and services that are available to assist with children's educational needs. The team must meet within 10 business days following the referral. (pg. 41)

**Limited English Proficiency** – Materials and procedures used to assess a child with limited English proficiency need to be selected and administered to ensure that they measure the extent to which the child has a disability and needs special education, rather than measuring the child's English language skills. (pg. 46)

**Evaluations and reevaluations** – the parent may agree in writing to extend

the 65-day timeline to obtain additional data that cannot be obtained within the 65 business day timeline. (pg. 48)

**Eligibility Categories** – (Pg. 52 -56) Refer to these pages for specific guidelines for eligibility categories including autism, deafness, developmental delay, emotional disability, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, deaf-blind, orthopedic impairment, and visual impairment.

**Nonacademic and extracurricular services** and activities must be considered during the IEP meeting. If the IEP team decides that supplementary aids and services are required, they must be provided to the student. (pg. 60). The child must have the supplementary aids and services appropriate and necessary for the child to participate in nonacademic settings (pg. 71).

**IEPs** must be accessible to regular education teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, and other service providers who are responsible for the implementation of the IEP. Teachers and service providers must be informed of their responsibilities for implementing the student's IEP. (pg. 62)

**Interpreters** – The schools must make sure that the parents understand the actions at the IEP meeting, including arranging for an interpreter for parents with deafness or whose native language is other than English. (pg. 65)

**Non-participation in regular education** – The IEP must contain an explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with children without disabilities in the regular class. (pg. 67)

**No more "Wait to Fail"** – The Virginia Department of Education must ensure that all children with disabilities, aged 2-21, inclusive, are receiving special education and related services, even though they have not failed or been retained in a course or grade, and are advancing from grade to grade. (pg. 26)

**Reporting crimes** – In reporting a crime by a child with a disability, the school must ensure that copies of the special education and disciplinary records of the child are transmitted for consideration by the appropriate authorities to whom

school personnel report the crime. (pg. 85)

**Age of Majority** – The school must include a statement on the IEP (beginning at least one year before the student reaches the age of majority) that the student and parent(s) have been informed of the rights that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of 18. (pg. 95)

**State complaint** – If a parent files a state complaint with the Virginia Department of Education, the complaint must be provided to the school division at the same time as it is provided to VDOE. (pg. 99-100). VDOE has issued guidelines and a model complaint form that can be found on their website <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/>

**Protection from Harassment** – each local education agency shall have policies that prohibit harassment to children with disabilities (pg. 61).

**Transferring between Schools** – If a student who is being evaluated transfers within a school year, the new school must complete the evaluation as expeditiously as possible (pg. 47). With parental consent and consultation, to ensure a free and appropriate public education, the child in special education must receive services comparable to the child's previous IEP until there is a new IEP or an interim IEP (pg. 70). (NOTE: Previously this requirement was only in place for students transferring within a state.) If the child was placed in a private residential school under the Comprehensive Services Act, the education agency must adopt or revise the IEP within 30 calendar days of notification of the transfer. Services for the first 30 days shall be funded through the Comprehensive Services Act (pg. 71).

**Immigration Status** – students do not need to be citizens or produce proof of legal residency to receive services (pg. 33).

**Public awareness requirement** – LEAs must conduct an annual public awareness campaign regarding FAPE, generate referrals, and early intervention (pg. 40)

**Private School Placement, Funding, Rights, etc.** Every child is entitled to a Free and Appropriate Public Education. However, the regulations for privately



# Special Edition Part 7

placed students arena can be very complicated. We suggest that you refer to the index (pg. 155) and read the specific sections in the regulations to more fully understand the provisions related to private schools in the regulations.

**Extended School Year (ESY) Services** – are determined by the IEP team on an individual basis, if the benefits a child gains over the regular school year with be significantly jeopardized without them. ESY cannot be limited to particular disability categories; unilaterally limited by the type, duration, or amount; or limited to summer months. (pg. 61).

**Summary of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance** is required when a student graduates with a standard or advanced studies diploma or reaches the age of 22. If the student drops out or receives a GED certificate or alternative diploma, the school can provide this summary before the student turns 22. If the student returns to school after receiving the summary, but before age 22, the LEA must complete an updated summary when the student leaves. (pg. 57).

**Assistive Technology** can be provided as a part of the child's special educa-

tion, related services, or supplementary aids and services. The assistive technology devices can be used in the child's home or other settings if the IEP team determines this is necessary for FAPE. Schools are not required to provide personal devices, including eyeglasses or hearing aids unless the IEP team determines it is necessary for the child to receive FAPE (pg. 59).

**Transportation** – each child in special education (including students placed in private education day or residential settings), are entitled to transportation at no cost, if it is needed to ensure FAPE. Children with and without disabilities shall share the same transportation unless a child's IEP requires specialized transportation. The commute time should be comparable to students without disabilities unless the IEP team determines a longer or shorter commute is necessary (pg. 59).

**Homeless Students** include children sharing the housing of other persons; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or campgrounds, substandard houses or places not designed for regular living; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; awaiting foster care placement; migratory

children; or “unaccompanied youth” not in the physical custody of a guardian or parent. (pg. 14). Schools are required to provide FAPE to these students (pg 33).

**Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE)** – a parent can request and IEE at public expense if there is disagreement about an evaluation component. The parent is entitled to only one IEE at public expense each time the public education agency conducts an evaluation component with which the parent disagrees. (pg. 87)

**Consent is not Required** – before review of existing data, administration of a test or other assessments administered to all children unless consent is required for all children; a teacher or service provider's observations or ongoing classroom evaluations; conducting an initial evaluation of a child who is a ward of the state and who is not residing with the parents if rights have been terminated or a judge has appointed by a judge to represent the child (pg. 90).

**Least Restrictive Environment** – requirements also apply to children receiving special education preschool services, and in public or private facilities. (71)

## Three other changes to the Virginia Special Education regulations

**1. Definition of a Parent:** Effective July 1, 2009 there was a change in the definition of a parent in the Code of Virginia. This change will enable a foster parent to act as the parent with regard to the child's special education and related services, until the biological/adoptive parent “attempts to act as the parent.”

The school division must send written notice to the last known address of the biological/adoptive parent to inform them that the school division will deal with, and rely on the decisions of, the foster parent with regard to the child's special education and related services. This new written notice requirement is intended to prevent a delay in the provision of a free appropriate public education for a child in foster care and is a Virginia specific provision.

**For more information on this change:**  
Code of Virginia 22.1-213.1 where a completely new section was added at <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?091+ful+CHAP0119>

Virginia Department of Education guidance document is also available at [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/parent\\_definition\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/parent_definition_guidance.pdf)

**2. Time to appeal a due process decision to the state court:** Effective July 1, 2009, any party who disagrees by the findings and decision made at a due process hearing may, within 180 days of such findings and decision, bring a civil action in the circuit court where the school division is located. When this happens, the court must receive the records of the administrative proceedings, shall hear additional evidence at the request of a party, and basing its decision on the preponderance of the evidence, shall allow the extension as the court determines appropriate.

**For more information on this change:**

Code of Virginia 22.1-214 D at <http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?091+ful+CHAP0468>

**3. Parent's right to revoke consent for their child to receive special education:** Effective December 31, 2008, a parent has the right to revoke consent for continuing special education and related services for his/her child. The school is not determining that the child is no longer a child with a disability, instead, the school is discontinuing the provision of special education and related services due to the decision of the parent and there is no obligation for the school to evaluate the child.

When a parent(s) revokes consent in writing for his/her child to receive special education and related services, the school will stop delivering services in accordance with the IEP and provide Prior Written Notice to the parents. By revoking consent, the student will no longer receive special education and related services of any kind, including accommodations and modifications. The student will no longer be protected by the disciplinary procedures included in the federal and state special education requirements in the event of a violation of the code of conduct.

**For more information on this change:**

Federal Register: <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/fin-rule/2008-4/120108a.pdf>

Virginia Department of Education guidance document: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/revise\\_federal\\_regulations.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/revise_federal_regulations.pdf)

A model prior written notice for use when a parent revokes consent: [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/model\\_pwn.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/model_pwn.pdf)

# Special Edition Part 7

## PEATC: Diez Puntos que los Padres Deberían Saber acerca de las Regulaciones FINALES de Educación Especial en Virginia

*Las Regulaciones finales de Educación Especial de Virginia fueron adoptadas por la Junta de Educación el 28 de mayo del 2009 y se hicieron efectivas el 7 de Julio del 2009. Las regulaciones incluyen referencias a las regulaciones federales, estatutos estatales o regulaciones estatales, mismas que constituyen la base de los requisitos.*

**1. Los servicios de transición secundarios** han de empezar antes que el estudiante empiece la escuela secundaria y han de ser incluidos en el IEP que esté en efecto para cuando el niño cumpla 14 años (han de ser discutidos cuando el niño aún tenga 13 años). (pg. 68)

**2. Consentimiento Informado por Escrito** del los Padres **ES REQUERIDO** antes: de una evaluación (incluida la prueba de comportamiento funcional); determinación inicial de elegibilidad o cambio de identificación categórica; provisión inicial de educación especial y servicios relacionados; cualquier revisión de los servicios IEP; cualquier parcial o completa terminación de educación especial y servicios relacionados (excepto por graduación con un standard o diploma de estudios avanzados); la provisión de una apropiada educación pública gratis para niños que se transfieren entre divisiones escolares; dando acceso a seguro y beneficios públicos a los niños; o invitando a una reunión IEP a un representante o cualquier agencia representante que sea responsable pro proveer o pagar los servicios de segunda transición.

**3. Las Nuevas Definiciones de Elegibilidad** reemplazan las categorías menos preferidas de Discapacidad Intelectual (pg. 15) y Discapacidad Emocional (pg. 11-12). Las escuelas pueden decidir si quieren incluir la categoría de **Retraso de Desarrollo**. De ser seleccionada, esta categoría es limitada para niños(as) entre los 2 a 6 años de edad. Una discrepancia o diferencia entre la habilidad intelectual y aprovechamiento ya no es requerida para determinar si un niño(a) tiene **Discapacidad de Aprendizaje Específica**.

**4. La Evaluación y las decisiones acerca de la Elegibilidad** deben ser completadas en 65 días laborables a partir de la fecha en la cual el director de educación especial o su reemplazo hayan recibido un referido (usualmente de un padre o profesor(a)). El periodo de 60 días calendario establecidos bajo la ley federal empieza cuando el padre da el consentimiento para la evaluación. (pg. 43)

**5. Evaluación Funcional** del Compor-

tamiento (FBA, siglas en Ingles), puede incluir una revisión de datos existentes o una nueva prueba de datos o evaluación así como lo determine el equipo del IEP. Si el equipo de IEP determina que el FBA incluirá nuevas pruebas de datos o evaluaciones, entonces el padre estará sujeto a un evaluación educacional independiente (IEE) si El padre no esta de acuerdo con la evaluación o un componente de la misma (pag. 83).

**6. Una Evaluación Funcional** del Comportamiento (FBA, siglas en inglés) puede ser un proceso formal (que requiere consentimiento de los padres) o puede constituir una revisión de datos existentes (lo cual no requiere el consentimiento de los padres) (pg. 13 y pg. 83). Si es que una nueva evaluación es llevada a cabo como parte del FBA, el padre tiene derecho a una Evaluación Educativa Independiente (IEE, siglas en inglés). (pg. 87) Si un padre cree que un niño(a) necesita una evaluación completa, el padre puede requerir una evaluación completa de como la discapacidad del niño(a) afecta su aprovechamiento y comportamiento y/o habilidad funcional.

**7. El Comité Consultivo Local** ahora incluye también a un(a) profesor(a). Por lo menos el 51% del Comité debe estar constituido por padres de niños(as) que tienen discapacidades o por individuos que tienen discapacidades. Además, los miembros del personal de la división escolar local han de tener la función solamente de consultores para dicho Comité. (pg. 120)

**8. Se permite el uso de grabadoras** durante las reuniones de IEP que tengan como objeto tratar el tema de elegibilidad, desarrollo, revisión del IEP del niño(a); así como en reuniones que traten temas de disciplina. (pg. 94-95)

**9. Records Educativos** – el reporte de evaluación debe estar disponible por lo menos dos días antes de la **Reunión de Elegibilidad** (pg. 47) y una copia escrita (impresa) debe de ser proveida a los padres, sin costo alguno, antes de, durante o no mas tarde de 10 días luego de la reunion. (pg. 65) Cualquier **correo electrónico (e-mail) o comunicación electrónica** concierne al niño(a), incluyendo IEP, disciplina o servicios, deberá ser mantenida en el record educacional del niño(a). (pg. 91).

**10. Objetivos a corto plazo** tienen que ser considerados por el equipo de IEP de cada estudiante (pg. 66, 67). Las regulaciones federales limitan este requisito solamente para estudiantes que estén tomando evalu-

aciones alternativas ya sea bajo estándares locales como estatales. En Virginia los estudiantes que optan por evaluaciones alternativas, son evaluados a través del Programa de Evaluaciones Alternativas de Virginia (VAAP, siglas en inglés).

*Nos asociamos con las escuelas para reforzar sus esfuerzos para entablar a los padres en el éxito de sus alumnos*

Que tal ya me llegaron los documentos, muchas gracias, y quiero que sepas que ya fui al School Board y me fué de lo mas bien, les hable de lo aprendido con ustedes, (Assist. Tech. y las otras cosas que vi de la internet de lo que me mandastes) y me van a ayudar si Dios quiere. Dios es super bueno me las puso a uds. en el camino y se que ahora este nuevo periodo escolar será mejor para mi hija. La que me atendio, me dijo que en Tabblas las cosas van a funcionar mejor para mi hija. Pues van a tomar todas las medidas necesarias para ayudarla, viste que bendición? Tan pronto suceda algo más te estare informando, gracias una vez mas, saludos a la sra. que me pusistes en el teléfono, dile que muchas gracias por su ayuda, y a uds. también gracias. las quiero mucho y Dios quiera nos podamos ver pronto.

*PEATC reaches out to Parents and Students in the Hispanic Community*

Thank you so much for the excellent support and tremendous difference that your organization (Rosalia and yourself) have made hear in the Fairfax High School community. The success of the Hispanic outreach program is due to your selfless dedication and because of the kindness that you and Rosalia provided to the families. Your effort is very much appreciated and your work shall always be remembered

Ana Bauserman  
Hispanic Outreach Coordinator  
Fairfax High School

#

In the name of the Hispanic Community, I want to appreciate your participation in our workshop "Family Involvement" last night. Your knowledge and advice were very impressive. Latino Parents are eager to have more workshops like this. I will let you know when we could carry out another meeting in our school. Thank you, thank you and thank you.

# PIRC Information

There are a lot of reasons parents may not be involved in their schools – whatever the reason, the Virginia PIRC may be able to help.

The Virginia PIRC (Parent Information and Resource Center) helps implement successful and effective parental involvement strategies and activities that lead to improvements in student academic achievement. Developing and strengthening partnerships among parents, teachers, administrators and all other school personnel in an effort to meet the educational needs of children is a primary focus of our program.

What that means in the way of help is a menu of offerings by the Virginia PIRC. Services offered include: training or technical assistance for assessing and scoring the parent involvement policy, development of home-school compacts, communication strategies, homework policy and so on. We offer facts sheets with parent friendly language to explain school report cards, school choice and supplemental education services.

The Virginia PIRC is using Solid Foundation as a powerful tool to work with schools. This approach provides the school team with the means to assess the community's strengths and areas that need improvement, develop a two-year plan and implement the plan. There is the option of a web-based process that guides the school team and a more thorough process with two years of technical assistance and training. We, also, offer a variety of workshops, some for parents on leadership and communicating effectively with your school, parenting skills, school readiness; some for teachers on the positive role they can play

in encouraging positive practices at home and supporting parents in becoming effective leaders; and, of course, special education workshops.

Our VPIRC Team has a keen understanding of the issues involved in families partnering with schools. We strive to actively help parents to understand the accountability system for schools and opportunities for public school choice and supplemental services if their school is identified for improvement, corrective action or restructuring under Title I.

In addition to supporting families with school-age children, the VPIRC endeavors to increase parent education during the early years, birth to five years old. Through a partnership with CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) and Healthy Families' professionals, PIRC trains families using the nationally recognized Parents as Teachers (PAT) program.



On the other side of the coin there are a lot of reasons why schools may not be involving parents as partners – the Virginia PIRC may be able to help there!

How well does your school support parents as advocates? Do you feel welcome in your child's school? Is your school actively engaging you to increase your child's academic progress? Through school compacts, parents and schools can work together to develop policies and procedures for the success of all children. The VPIRC team collaborates at the school level to help schools draw on their resources and use practical ways to involve and



PIRC also offers the **Parent Allies for Student Success (PASS)** – this partnership with the Arlington NAACP and George Mason University will recruit, train and support parent allies who will help families learn about options and access opportunities that will enhance their children's possibilities for success.

empower parents in a meaningful partnership with their school districts. The Solid Foundation program is our signature tool that provides resources for families and schools to strengthen school communities!

Parent leaders are trained to become actively engaged in their child's school environment. Bridging the gap between families and schools by teaching parents about educational services and helping schools understand the need for parent involvement and what that may look like is essential to increasing students' academic performance.

The PIRC project generally includes a focus serving parents of low income, minority and LEP (limited English proficient) children enrolled in elementary and secondary schools. However, all areas within the Commonwealth of Virginia, rural, urban and suburban, can benefit from this partnership. That is what Title I is designed for, helping students achieve proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards. That means parents partnering and becoming equal members of their school community. Please visit our website at [PEATC.org](http://PEATC.org) and call our offices in Northern Virginia at 703-923-0010 or Richmond at 804-819-1999. The Virginia PIRC is here to help!!

## Parent Training Information (for families of children with disabilities)

### **Understanding Special Education**

This workshop will help you identify your child's learning strengths and challenges as well as organize your important information about your child so it will be helpful in educational planning. Come and learn the seven phases of the special education process and identify the specific actions you may take during the special education process. You will become familiar with due process rights and learn ways to work as partners with teacher and other school personnel. This workshop is offered in both English and Spanish

### **The ABC's of Behavior**

As a result of this workshop participants will be able to look at how behavior influences our lives and understanding how it is addressed in IDEA 2004. You will become familiar with the ABC's (Antecedent, Behavior & Consequence) of all behavior supports and behavior management. Functional Behavioral Assessments will be covered and you will have an opportunity to practice using a FBA tool to assess behavior. This workshop is offered in both English and Spanish

### **How to Talk So Schools Will Listen (and Listen So Schools Will Talk)**

Why are partnerships so difficult? What can be done to improve understanding between parents and professionals as they seek to find mutual agreement on IEP's and other issues related to education for students with disabilities? This workshop will help participants discover communication techniques, learn how to recognize and prevent barriers to communication and build agreements around difficult problems.

### **Friendship Building Strategies**

Participants 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, attendees will identify specific strategies that parents, general educators, and special educators can use to facilitate friendships for students.

### **CSI: Transition (Clues for a Self Investigation for Middle School Students with Disabilities)**

Employers, and university personnel point to the lack of self advocacy skills of college students and job seekers with disabilities in not adequately accessing accommodations that will help them be successful. Students with disabilities who need help and practice

articulating their disabilities and needed accommodations. The IEP process is the perfect setting for students to practice talking about their disabilities, their strengths, and the help they need. Self advocacy is a difficult subject for parent to bring up with their adolescent children with disabilities. CSI: Transition (Clues for Self-Investigation) is the conversation starter that parents (and teachers) can use to help break the ice and prepare middle schoolers for developing the tools they need to become self advocates. Using the new PEATC developed CSI transition Workbook and facilitators guide, parents and educators will learn useful strategies to help prepare middle school students to assume a meaningful role in the IEP process. This interactive session will walk participants through the workbook and help parents and teachers better understand how they can foster self advocacy skills in their children. This workshop is offered in both English and Spanish

### **Positive Behavioral Interventions**

Parents have often been the strongest advocates for a more informed approach to helping their children learn behavioral skills. While not all parents have the skills to deal effectively with unacceptable behaviors, many have expressed frustration and anger over the use of repeated punishment that has not resulted in behavior change. Their experience has been that punishment does not address the problems their child is having, but instead addresses the symptoms. The challenges for parents and educators is together to find new ways of understanding the interactions between a child and his or her environment so that useful interventions can be developed that lead to lasting behavior change.

### **Early Intervention- Families are Important**

This workshop covers the early intervention process and the family's role in developing an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) This workshop is offered in both English and Spanish

### **Early Intervention- The Home Information Specialist**

Participants will learn the fundamentals of: becoming a home information specialist and the value of Parent - Professional partnerships. 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.

### **Measurable IEP Goals**

This workshop brings families and educators together using a common language to build measurable goals to all students. What is a measurable goal? How do you understand and

write a measurable goal? These questions and much more will be answered in this workshop.

### **Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?**

This free workshop offers intervention strategies for parents of children with disabilities who may be the target of bullying at school. Participants will learn how to: identify types of bullying, develop strategies to prevent bullying, identify responses to bullying, talk to their child about bullying, obtain help from professionals and find out about disability harassment laws.

### **CHAMPIONS TOGETHER Parent Courses\***

*These courses are research based and developed to help to assist families' schools and communities with the academic and personal development of children. These courses are given in 3 weekly sessions of 90 minutes each and will commence with a graduation ceremony. The courses are very practical, take-it-home-and-use-it-type of courses. The courses are:*

**My Child at Home-** This course is designed to help parents of children with disabilities deal with the diagnosis, handle health and medical needs and gives best parenting practices.

**My Child at School-** This course is designed to help parents of children with disabilities learn the special education rules and regulations learn how to be active partners at the IEP conference and gain skills to become or continue to be great advocates for their children.

### **CHAMPIONS TOGETHER Parent Mentor Training \***

In this training parent leaders are trained to be effective mentors for parents of children with disabilities. After a parent mentor completes this course they will feel comfortable enough to present the Champions Together: My Child at Home and My Child at School Parent Courses.

### **NEXT STEPS: The Transition Series- Planning for the Future Workshops**

*Partner team participants are first introduced to the Rehabilitation Act and the importance of self-advocacy in the transition process through a talk show format. Training activities include discussions and activities that illustrate the nature and importance of effective partnerships. This is an 8 course series:*

#### **#1-Transition: Making it in the real World**

For all young people, the transition from student life in school to adult life in the community is complicated. For students with disabilities and their families, this change can be particularly challenging, overwhelming and exciting. For young people to experience transitions to satisfying adult lives there must be teamwork among students, parents, educators and others. During this workshop, participants review the four critical goals of transition, consider practical opportunities which promote their achievement,

become familiar with pertinent federal legislation and understand the important roles of family members in the transition process.

### **#2 Transition Plans: Roadmaps to the Future**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires transition planning for all students with disabilities. Is a transition plan a written document? If so, who writes and signs it? Is transition planning a meeting? If so, who attends? This workshop is designed to give parents, students, educators and adult service provider's answers to these questions and more. Participants learn how transition planning can be incorporated into students' ongoing special education plans. They discuss the influence of competency testing, graduation requirements, diplomas, integration and curriculum emphasis on transition plans. Sample transition forms are reviewed and participants develop transition goals.

### **#3 Self-Advocacy and Supports: Keys to Independence**

Young people with disabilities are learning to make choices about their lives. In school, community and family discussions, they are finding the words or behaviors to communicate their opinions and concerns. They are taking leadership in determining their own futures. Children and young adults who learn self-advocacy skills are best prepared to live satisfying adult lives in the community. This workshop is designed to help family members identify strategies for respecting a young person's choices while offering continued love and guidance. A variety of skills and supports that assist a young person in adult life will be reviewed.

### **#4 Moving On: Life in the Community**

Do satisfying work opportunities for young adults with disabilities really exist in the community? Once young people leave school can they find friends, recreation activities and community events that match their skills and interests? Too often in the past, young people left school and found their worlds getting smaller, their daily lives emptier. This scenario is changing as self-advocates, parents and others are creating community supports that enable people to enjoy full lives. During this workshop, a panel of adult community service representatives provides information and answers questions regarding local employment, education and independent living opportunities.

### **#5 Getting Ready: Preparing for Work while in School**

What should be happening in school to ensure that students with disabilities find satisfying work in the community? This workshop is designed to assist families in understanding the role of vocational education in special education plans. Participants learn about the entry criteria, assessment and placement procedures for vocational education. Guest speakers will discuss specific examples of community based vocational educa-

tion opportunities. Participants learn how reasonable accommodations, job coaches and supports in the workplace assist a student in learning, enjoying and keeping a job.

### **#6 Planning Ahead: Future Finances and Supports**

During this workshop, parents step away from daily activities of family life to learn information and strategies useful for shaping secure futures for their children. Through a case study, participants review the range of on-going family supports related to adult life in the community for a young person with disabilities. Guest speakers share their expertise regarding resources for financial and estate planning. During the session, parents will begin to write a "letter of intent" that provides future care givers with guidance in understanding the needs and desires of the person with disabilities and his family.

**Workshop Series number 7 and 8** Focuses on the rehabilitation process and adult services. These workshops were developed to help individuals with disabilities, their parents, family members, advocates, and other authorized representatives work in equal partnerships and participate effectively in the rehabilitation process. These two workshops differ from NEXT STEPS 1-6 in that:

1. The training team is expanded to include an individual with disabilities (self-advocate) as a meaningful trainer along with the parent/professional team.
2. The audience is made up of self-advocates each accompanied by a team of parent, educator, transition specialist, rehabilitation counselor and other partners that will support the self-advocate in successfully accessing adult services.



### **No Child Left Behind: What's in it for parents?**

This workshop explains the purpose of No Child Left Behind and its four pillars: accountability, flexibility, parental choices and research-based reforms. Participants will also learn how to read their school and district report cards.

### **How to Talk So Schools will Listen (and Listen So Schools Will Talk)**

Why are partnerships so difficult? What can be done to improve understanding between parents and professionals as they seek to find a mutual agreement on issues related to education for students? This workshop will help participants discover communication techniques to recognize and prevent barriers to communication and build agreements around difficult problems. This workshop also highlights good e-mail etiquette as well as helpful hints to help parents prepare for parent-teacher conferences.

### **Parents and Learning- A Workshop for Teachers \***

This research-based workshop for teachers discusses the most significant variables that affect learning and focuses on one of them- the home environment. This workshop covers the "curriculum of the home," the parent-child interactions and patterns of family life that influence children's school learning. This workshop highlights the role of the teacher in encouraging these positive home practices that contribute to school success.

### **Teaming Up for Student Success- A Workshop for Parents and Teachers \***

With parents and teachers blended as participants, this workshop serves to strengthen the working relationship between parents and teachers to build student achievement. This workshop focuses on the learning process, the development of study habits and learning skills, and how the role of parents and teachers relate to the process. The workshop activities demonstrate and reinforce these concepts.

### **SOLID FOUNDATION- Parent Courses \***

*These courses are research based and developed by the Academic Development Institute to help to assist families' schools and communities with the academic and personal development of children. These courses are given in 3 weekly sessions of 90 minutes each and will commence with a graduation ceremony. The courses are peer lead and very practical, take-it-home-and-use-it type of courses. These courses are offered in both English and in Spanish. The courses are:*

**Ready, Here I come!** - This course is for parents of pre-school children (age 3-5). This course teaches family activities that help prepare children for school.

**Reading at Home**- This course helps parents build their children's reading habits and instills a lifelong love of reading. The course is best suited for parents of children in grades K-3.

**Studying at Home**- This course is designed to help parents build their children's study habits in the home. The course is best suited for parents of children in grades 4-8.

**Raising Good Kids**- This course is for all parents. It explores the way children develop their sense of respect and responsibility within the context of the family.

Periodically PEATC hosts a Parent Leadership course that helps lead parents develop the skills needed to facilitate these parent courses. Please contact PEATC if you would like to be notified when this class is offered in your area.

\* **CHAMPIONS TOGETHER** and **SOLID FOUNDATION** are Research based programs developed by the Academic Development Institute. The Academic Development Institute (ADI) works with families, schools, and communities so that all children may become self-directed learners, avid readers, and responsible citizens, respecting themselves and those around them.

Nelly came to PEATC about two years ago concerned about how to help her son, Zamir, academically. Nelly told us that she was unsure of Zamir's reading level because he does not have very much verbal communication. After finding out that Zamir is entitled to assistive technology, if needed, for educational or communication purposes, Nelly successfully advocated for a device. Nelly joined PEATC's Latino leadership group and became an active member, inviting members of that group to her home for a planning breakfast. She found out about the Medicaid mental retardation waiver through that group and applied on behalf of Zamir. She also found out about Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and her right to a functional behavior analysis and positive behavioral intervention plan. She successfully advocated for those. Nelly also discovered extended school year services and was successful in receiving special education services for Zamir over the summer. When PEATC was visited by a delegation from Panama, through the Organization of American State's initiative on disability rights, Nelly attended the meeting to brief them on special education services and the importance of parent advocacy.

Last summer, Nelly attended PEATC's training for trainers to offer PEATC's basic special education course in Spanish, and has already offered a couple of workshops, with PEATC's support. In January 2009, we invited her to attend the national conference for parent training and information centers like PEATC. She attended a workshop offered by Karen Erikson, a nationally-recognized literacy specialist for children with significant disabilities. During lunch, Nelly was animated as she shared her excitement about how she would be able to bring some of the low cost ideas home to try with Zamir.



Nelly Flores and her son, Zamir.

Today, Nelly is a recognized parent leader. Other parents come to her for advice and support as she encourages others not to give up. "When a mother is afraid or unsure, I tell her that her child depends on her to be strong. I am an example, so if I can do it, with all the problems Zamir has had, they can do it." Nelly is an example of resilience and determination in a single mother, with limited English proficiency and a son with severe autism and behavioral issues.

Nelly vino a PEATC dos años atrás, preocupada por saber como ayudar académicamente a su hijo Zamir nacido en Marzo 16 de 1993. Nelly nos dijo que no estaba segura acerca del nivel de lectura de Zamir porque el no tenia mucha comunicación verbal. Después de saber que Zamir necesitaba tecnología de asistencia con propósitos de educación y comunicación, Nelly satisfactoriamente obtuvo un dispositivo. Nelly se unió al grupo latino de liderazgo de PEATC y se convirtió en un miembro activo, invitando a miembros del grupo a su casa para compartir desayunos trabajo. Ella pudo saber acerca de el programa de subsidio del Medicaid para jóvenes con retardo mental conocido por sus siglas en Ingles como el mental retardation waiver, a través de el grupo y lo aplicó a favor de Zamir.

Nelly pudo saber acerca el Análisis de Comportamiento Aplicado (ABA por sus siglas en Ingles), su derecho al análisis funcional de comportamiento y al plan de intervención positiva de comportamiento y satisfactoriamente los obtuvo. Ella también conoció acerca los servicios de año escolar extendidos a los cuales accedió como parte de los servicios de educación especial para Zamir. En el pasado verano, cuando PEATC fué visitada por una delegación de Panamá, a través de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) con la iniciativa en los derechos para personas con discapacidades, Nelly asistió a la reunión para explicar a ellos acerca los servicios de educación especial y la importancia de los derechos legales de los padres.

Actualmente, Nelly se ha convertido en una líder efectiva lo que representa a PEATC y aboga por otras familias. El pasado verano ella asistió a entrenamiento para entrenadores que ofrece el curso especial de educación básica de PEATC en Español y ha sido presentadora de talleres patrocinados or PEATC. En enero de 2009, la invitamos a asistir a la conferencia nacional para los centros de entrenamiento e información como PEATC. Ella asistió al taller que ofreció Karen Erikson una especialista en lectura para niños con discapacidades, reconocida nacionalmente. Durante el almuerzo, Nelly compartió su emoción acerca como ella pudo llevar a casa algo de las ideas de bajo costo para ayudar a Zamir.

Hoy, Nelly es reconocida como una Madre líder y efectiva que representa a PEATC. Otros padres recurren a ella por consejo y apoyo, y Nelly los ayuda a no darse por vencidos. "Cuando una madre esta asustada o insegura, yo le digo que su niño depende en su fortaleza. Yo soy un ejemplo y si yo lo puedo hacer, con todos los problemas que Zamir ha tenido, ellos también pueden hacerlo". Nelly es un ejemplo de constancia y determinación en una madre soltera, con Ingles limitado y un hijo con autismo severo y problemas de comportamiento.

.....  
: *We'd love to hear from you! Send a picture and your story to [partners@peatc.org](mailto:partners@peatc.org) if you would like your story to* :  
: *appear on our website!* :  
.....

*Erin Thompson is a confident young self advocate and PEATC volunteer. Last year, PEATC recognized Erin, along with Jill Egle, the Co-Executive Director of the Arc, as a Virginia Icon Advocate in 2008. Erin currently volunteers at PEATC.*



I am Erin Thompson and my dream is to graduate from college, walking with all the other students, and eventually running my own magazine company. I attend George Mason's Life program on the campus of George Mason University. College is very important to me, the college experience—as well as learning. I want the same experiences my younger brother has at his college in West Virginia. At first, my college experience did not feel like or look like the experience my brother was having...The Life program had separate classes, we did everything together and we did not get to have the "dorm life experience." I advocated having the opportunity to experience college life, like the students who do not have disabilities—and in my sophomore year I took my first "regular" college course in speech. This year the college is supporting my dream, by giving me the opportunity to intern at the George Mason University Newspaper.

I am also living on campus with my friends in the dorms! I really enjoy having a chance to live away from home, with people my age. I have more responsibility like making sure I get to class, get to bed on time and all that...but it isn't any different from any other college student!

How did I prepare for this experience throughout my educational career? I always worked, regardless of where I received my education, in segregated or mainstream classes-- thinking that I was going to go to college—and my parents supported that belief. I am the oldest of three children and I like the fact that my brothers can look up to me as a role model...even if we don't always get along!

I am writing to thank you for the positive difference the services and support of PEATC have meant to my daughter and family. My daughter Erin is now 22 years old and a remarkable young lady thanks to the support of PEATC for over 20 years.

Erin was born with Down syndrome. Before she was of school age I enrolled in a series of PEATC seminars that presented the intricacies of the special education maze, disability rights and the rights of parents of children with disabilities. Those seminars became an emotionally and educationally empowering event in my parenthood. I was inspired to become an even more confident and educated advocate for my daughter. I am proud to say that Erin received a stimulating and meaningful education because her parents advocated for keeping the bar high.

Erin was one of the first students with intellectual disabilities in Northern Virginia to be included in the regular education classroom. With supports and positive peer modeling she excelled in her academic and social growth. Inclusion was not accepted at the time and expectations of academic and social outcomes were low for children like Erin. As her parents we knew otherwise - if expectations were kept high and challenges provided, Erin's future would be bright. At the time her education was groundbreaking. Today Erin is a passionate self-advocate and was one of two self-advocates responsible for spearheading the successful initiative to get the Virginia General Assembly to eliminate the R word "retarded" and replace it with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In addition to her many accomplishments she is an active board member of the Down Syndrome Association of Northern Virginia, an Ambassador for Best Buddies Virginia and has been honored for her own advocacy.

I am convinced that had I not been inspired by that initial seminar, Erin's education and outcome may have had a much less satisfactory path. That spark and other advocacy supports provided by PEATC over the years propelled Erin forward. There were countless times over the years that I made phone calls, used the website and visited the PEATC offices to retrieve information and support. The staff was invaluable in the knowledge and support they gave to me. Erin is now a junior at the George Mason LIFE Program. She is an articulate, skilled and self-confident young woman. It is rewarding to know that my years of advocacy have paid off and Erin is now on her way to making a difference for more students with disabilities and her community.

Thank you for the tireless work and support that PEATC imparts to families of children with special needs. Your organization is an invaluable community resource. Personally, my family will always be very grateful for the knowledge and support you have given to us over the years to bolster the great success that Erin has accomplished.

Sincerely,

Katherine B. Thompson



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**This will be the last printed PEATC Press.**

Thanks to everyone who helped us with the PEATC Press over the years!

*Please support PEATC because .....*

- *Families are children's first and best teachers.*
- *Information and training enrich and empower families and professionals to build strong partnerships.*
- *All children deserve opportunities to live, learn and participate fully in their communities.*
- *Children with disabilities can achieve independence and make valuable contributions to society.*