

PACESETTER

Expanded news and information about PACER Center

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Goo Goo Dolls

to headline PACER's Benefit **April 27**
Minneapolis Convention Center

PACER.ORG/BENEFIT

PACER CENTER 
CHAMPIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES®

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L to R: Lincoln, Renee, Cora, Addie, and Josh Pinkney

Navigating a diagnosis: *What's next?*

PACER helped lead the Pinkney family through a world of unknowns.

When Renee and Josh Pinkney's daughter Adelaide ("Addie") was born six weeks prematurely, they faced a road of unknowns ahead. After several weeks in the NICU, Addie was an overall healthy baby. However, Renee and Josh noticed delays in her development after a few months. They were referred to Gillette Children's Hospital, where they met with doctors and therapists to run tests and determine what was causing their daughter's delays.

After several years of searching for answers, they were able to determine through genetic testing that Addie had a rare genetic condition that included two mutations of a gene. She was one of only 10 reported cases throughout the world. Due to a lack of data and knowledge of her condition, Addie received a generic diagnosis of global developmental delay, leaving her family without a clear vision of what her future would look like. "It felt like we were completely in the dark, we had no idea what to expect," said Renee.

Finding PACER

The Pinkney family was unsure of what steps to take next after Addie's diagnosis. "How do we get Addie the help she needs to grow, mature, and thrive? What resources are available to her?" questioned Renee, when a member of their care team recommended that they contact PACER. The Pinkney's PACER advocate helped them to navigate the overwhelming and challenging paperwork that often comes with accessing resources, such as state waivers and supports like Community Access for Disability Inclusion (CADi) and Consumer Directed Community Supports (CDCS). "Our advocate helped us walk through it, she held our hand through the process," said Renee. With the help of PACER, the Pinkneys were able to prepare Addie for kindergarten and a successful future beyond.

Renee expressed her gratitude for PACER's help and support. Now, she and her husband are able

"Without PACER's help, my family would still be struggling to create the best life possible for our neurodiverse daughter. Now, we have resources that allow us to focus our time on Addie and our family."

-Renee Pinkney

to concentrate their attention on raising Addie and her siblings Lincoln, age 9, and Cora, 9 months, instead of sifting through medical recertifications and tedious paperwork. She added that "without PACER's help, my family would still be struggling to create the best life possible for our neurodiverse daughter. Now, we have resources that allow us to focus our time on Addie and our family."

Bullying creates other needs

As Addie has grown and started school, the Pinkneys have continued to use the helpful resources made available to them by PACER. "PACER keeps entering our lives in different ways," said Renee. Addie is sweet, sensitive, and spirited. However, her differences from her classmates have begun to make her a target of bullying. While she may not yet understand the negative behaviors or comments that are directed at her, Addie's older brother and parents do. "It hurts when your child isn't accepted, and it will hurt even more when the day comes and she realizes she is different and that is why she is being bullied," said Renee.

The Pinkneys have utilized resources from PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center — Renee was proud to add that Addie and Lincoln's elementary school even participated in Unity Day this past fall. "I'm extremely grateful for the resources they provide to not only families like mine, but all children and parents for those that are targets of bullying as well as the individuals exhibiting the bullying behavior," she said.

The Pinkneys know that PACER will be a part of Addie's life in one form or another for many years to come. From navigating paperwork to special education, bullying resources, and more, PACER has been a guiding supporter of Addie and her family. "PACER was there for us in the beginning, and we know it will be a relationship we will have throughout Addie's life," said Renee. ■

To connect with an advocate, email:

MNparent@PACER.org

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8161 Normandale Blvd.
Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044

(952) 838-9000
PACER@PACER.org
PACER.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
Tonia Teasley

WRITER/EDITOR:
Julia Zerull

DESIGNER:
Sophie Gray

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTOR:
Elizabeth Ross

PACER Center improves educational opportunities and enhances the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families.

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SHARE YOUR STORY

Has your child or family benefited from PACER's services? If so, consider sharing your story with us to help others feel less alone and inspire them to reach out for assistance. Email PACER's Marketing & Communications team at:

Communications@PACER.org

SUPPORT PACER

Do you feel inspired by PACER's work, are looking for ways to support our mission, or would like to get involved? Email PACER's Development team at:

Development@PACER.org

or visit:

PACER.org/donate

PACER's 2024 Benefit

Featuring a performance by

Goo Goo Dolls

Saturday, April 27

Minneapolis Convention Center

Goo Goo Dolls will be headlining PACER's 41st annual Benefit at the Minneapolis Convention Center in April 2024. Formed by Rzeznik and Takac in Buffalo, NY during 1986, Goo Goo Dolls have quietly broken records, contributed a string of staples to the American songbook, connected to millions of fans, and indelibly impacted popular music for three-plus decades. Beyond selling 15 million records worldwide, the group has garnered four GRAMMY® Award nominations, nearly a dozen platinum and gold

singles combined, and seized a page in the history books by achieving 16 number one and Top 10 hits. As a result, they hold the all-time radio record for "Most Top 10 Singles."

Their music continues to reach new audiences around the world and rack up platinum and gold statuses – including the recently platinum-certified "Slide," "Black Balloon," and "Better Days" – and has been covered by everyone from Taylor Swift to Phoebe Bridgers and Maggie Rogers. Among a string of hits, "Iris" clutched #1 on the Hot 100 for 18 straight weeks and was named "#1 Top 40 Song of the Last 20 Years." On the heels of going viral on TikTok, the track recently achieved seven-times platinum status and re-entered the Billboard charts, yet again proving the timelessness of Goo Goo Dolls' illustrious catalog.

"We can't wait for this unforgettable evening! We invite you to join us for this special night where you can become a Champion for Children with Disabilities and help us to unlock doors of opportunity for the families and children we support," said PACER's Executive Director Tonia Teasley.

The Benefit celebrates the work PACER does on behalf of families of children and young adults with disabilities. PACER helps parents find success for their families through parent training and advocacy, assistive technology, and social inclusion programs. Proceeds from the Benefit support PACER's programs. ■



Tickets at PACER.org/Benefit

Online bidding for PACER's silent auction begins April 24 at PACER.org/Benefit

PACER's auction features a wonderful array of items including unique, one-of-a-kind experiences, exclusive fine dining, wine and liquor collections, weekend getaways, and more. The following are just a few of what PACER's auction has in store for you. Can't make it? PACER's auction will be available online, with bidding beginning on April 24 at PACER.org/Benefit.



Paella dinner for 12 with PACER's Executive Director, Tonia Teasley

You and your guests will live like you're in Spain! Enjoy an evening filled with Spanish guitar music, tapas, and sangria while your hosts, Tonia Teasley and her husband, Paul Stutler, cook an authentic Spanish paella over an open fire in the backyard of their home. Dinner will be accompanied by ensalada mixta (otherwise known as "salad") and finished off with traditional crema catalana for dessert. Event to be scheduled on a mutually agreeable date between May 15, 2024 and October 15, 2025.



An exclusive collection for a bourbon connoisseur

Take a sip and explore the best of what this bourbon and whiskey basket has to offer! Blanton's Black Label Single Barrel Bourbon stands out as an exclusive Japanese export. Colonel E.H. Taylor's Small Batch Bourbon follows with caramel corn sweetness and Weller Special Reserve's Bourbon has softer notes that are a great for cocktails. Woodford Reserve Distillery's Wheat Whiskey possesses fruit and floral flavors, while their limited release Toasted Oak Four Grain Whiskey offers a one-of-a-kind blend of their Bourbon Whiskies, Rye Whiskey, and Wheat Whiskey. Also included are two of Blanton's Glencairn Bourbon Glasses to complete your tasting experience.



Spend a weekend away at the Millennium Hotel

Enjoy two nights in a Superior Guest Room at the upscale Millennium Hotel in downtown Minneapolis. Situated along the tree-lined streets of Nicollet Mall, the guest rooms feature stunning views and contemporary elegance. Hotel amenities include an indoor heated pool, fitness center, and on-site dining. Must be 21 or older with a valid credit card.

Interested in adding to the mix?

PACER is still accepting auction donations such as theater and event tickets, vacation home and cabin getaways, restaurant gift cards, and more. All auction donations must be submitted by April 1, 2024. For questions or additional information, please email Raleigh.Johnson@PACER.org.



Apply for PACER's 2024 EX.I.T.E. Camp

After celebrating 20 years in 2023, EX.I.T.E. Camp is ready for another summer of fun.

PACER's EX.I.T.E. Camp empowers middle school girls and gender-expansive youth with disabilities in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Over the course of two weeks of fun, hands-on learning, youth can meet new friends and create lifelong memories in a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment. "I came to learn more about STEM and make one good friend, and I did that and more!" said one camper.

EX.I.T.E. showcases to campers a wide variety of careers and activities they can pursue in STEM. "An important part of the camp is the campers seeing themselves represented in the field," said Kayla Devorak, PACER's 2023 EX.I.T.E. Camp coordinator.

Last year, local industry professionals partnered with PACER to create a one-of-a-kind experience for the campers. Medtronic; 3M; IBM; Best Buy; Greenberg Traurig, LLP; and Wold Architects and Engineers generously donated their talents, resources, and insights. Campers were able to learn more about

coding, project management, product design, material sciences, chemical science, engineering, architecture, and more.

Each camp day also featured guest speakers who shared their own expertise in a variety of fields including bridge engineering, animal sciences, and stop motion. Parents of campers expressed their gratitude for the camp, describing it as a place for their children to "make friends, find success, and finally fit in."

PACER's 2024 EX.I.T.E. Camp hopes to bring similar experiences and opportunities for campers to grow. This summer, the camp has moved from August to July dates. It will be held in person at PACER's office in Bloomington, Minn. Registration is now open! Submit your camper application before May 1, 2024. Priority is given to 20 new qualifying campers on a first-come, first-serve basis. Previous campers will be placed on a wait list for any remaining spaces, if available. ■



The 2024 EX.I.T.E. Camp schedule is available online at PACER.org/Exite.

Contact Paul Sanft at (952) 838-1352 or Paul.Sanft@PACER.org for more information or with questions.



Board spotlight: Jeff Betchwars

As a supporter and member of PACER's Board of Directors for over 20 years, Jeff has been a part of PACER's past, present, and is looking forward to the future.

Before PACER

Several months after his son Riley was born in 1989, Jeff Betchwars and his family began to notice some delays in his development. After consulting with their pediatrician and a pediatric neurologist at Mayo Clinic, they discovered that Riley's brain was not growing in the way that it was supposed to. As Riley approached one year, his delays became more prominent. "We didn't have a clue as to where to go for services," Jeff said.

Their pediatrician recommended PACER, which in turn helped Jeff and his family to learn more about resources that could help Riley. Jeff also joined a parent support group with current fellow board member John Guthmann. By the mid-1990s, he began working with John on some of PACER's advisory committees. Several years later, he joined the board and eventually served a term as president of PACER's Board of Directors.

Joining the board

In his early days as a board member, Jeff utilized his professional background to help PACER build a more robust investment portfolio. He was also involved in PACER's search for a larger space. At the time, PACER was operating out of their location on Chicago Avenue in Minneapolis — a smaller space that they were quickly outgrowing. "Being a banker, I helped them in terms of putting together a finance package," said Jeff.

Jeff remains heavily involved with PACER's finances as a board member. He currently is the chair of PACER's Audit Committee and sits on the Investment Committee, where he continues to help monitor PACER's investment portfolios.

Looking to the future

As a longstanding member of PACER's Board of Directors (in line with PACER's policy of rotating board terms), Jeff is proud of PACER's past and is excited for what the future holds. "Paula [Goldberg, PACER's co-founder and long-term executive director] was with the organization since its inception and she did a terrific job, there's no doubt about that," he said, adding that "Tonia [Teasley, PACER's current executive director who started in March 2023] is bringing new ideas to the forefront — we still have our roots in the past but we're branching out into the future." Specifically, he's looking forward to strengthening the infrastructure of the organization while continuing to move forward with more innovation.

Jeff and his wife Martha are enjoying life as empty nesters in Sherwood, Minn., as their other four children are grown and out of the house. Jeff's son Riley has since passed away; however, he's committed to maintaining a presence with PACER. "I've gotten more from PACER than they've gotten from me," he said, adding that "sometimes, when you're involved with a disabled child, you feel very limited in what you can do and what you can contribute. PACER has given me that kind of opportunity." ■

***"I've gotten more from PACER
than they've gotten from me."***

- Jeff Betchwars

SCHOOLS, PARENTS, AND PACER

How working together sets your child up for success.



Michelle Stevenson

PACER supports parents to understand their rights in the special education process so they can participate as full partners in developing their child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Although there are sometimes disagreements between families and school staff during the IEP process, it's key to keep in mind the common goal of helping students to receive the resources they need. Working together is important, and open, positive communication leads to more effective problem solving and a better provision of services to children with disabilities.

Working together for a better outcome

Michelle (Missie) Stevenson, an early childhood special education teacher, has seen the benefits of parents and school staff working together throughout her career. Her history with PACER began with a college internship where she was able to see how PACER helps from the inside. Missie was truly impacted by her time at PACER; she even changed her career trajectory because of it. "After my first summer at PACER, I switched my major to early childhood special education because I liked what PACER was doing helping kids," she said.

Missie carried her early experience at PACER with her as an educator. The knowledge she gained cemented the importance of parents, educators, and advocates working together. Everybody has a role to play — parents have in-depth care and awareness of their child and how their disability impacts their life, educators have expertise in school curriculum and specialized instruction, and PACER advocates hold knowledge about the special education process. When all three work together, they can improve outcomes for the student.

How PACER helps

PACER helps families to navigate special education and the IEP process so their children can receive the support they need. "I have always appreciated it when families work with an advocate," Missie said. "When the family gains greater understanding, it sets the entire IEP team up for success."

Recently, PACER advocate Robbi Weil supported a family with a young child in Missie's school district. They were new to special education and overwhelmed with where to begin. Robbi informed them of the options that were available and what they could do to achieve the most appropriate placement for their child. PACER worked with the family and ensured that they were on the same page as the rest of the team, which enabled them to find a resolution. Missie appreciated PACER's support and added that she believes when families work with organizations like PACER, they learn information and skills that help them partner with IEP teams to have a positive impact on their child's education.

For families, Robbi encourages them to contact PACER early in the process. She was able to help the parents provide perspective to Missie about their child's needs, which helped the team make decisions about appropriate services at school. Parents who are empowered to advocate for their child and work with their educators can help ensure the student receives the resources and support they truly need. "I often tell parents that I see our role as 'grease' to help the gears work together more smoothly," Robbi said.

How to get in touch with a PACER advocate

PACER has parent advocates available to help with questions including topics such as navigating the special education process, transition beyond high school, special health care needs, and more.

To get in touch with an advocate, email: MNparent@PACER.org

We will respond to your message as soon as we can. Thank you for contacting us! ■

HELPFUL TIPS

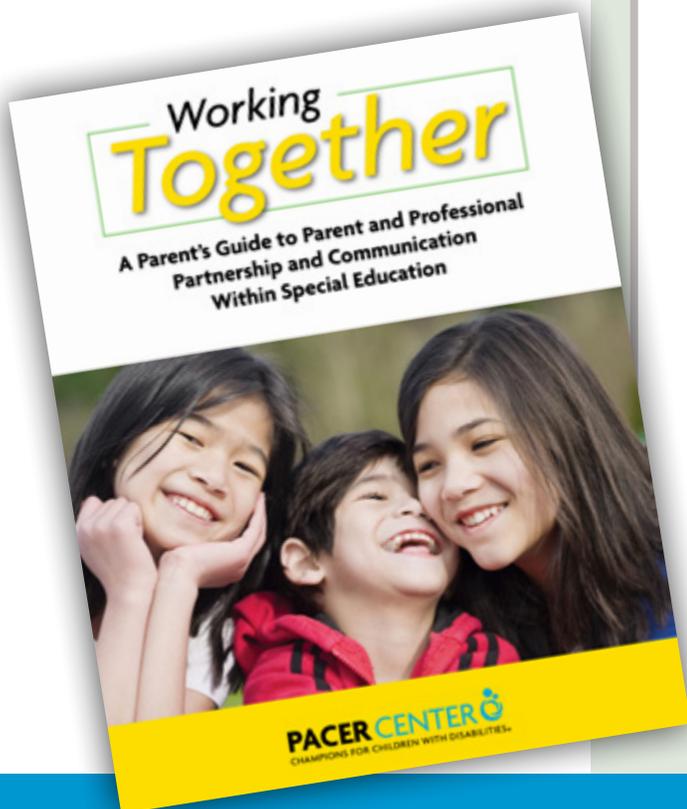
PACER's book *Working Together: A parent's guide to parent and professional partnership and communication within special education* provides tips for parents to effectively communicate with special education professionals as they develop their child's educational program.

Parents are a child's best and longest-lasting advocates. Good communication skills can help them become more successful advocates for their children. Here are some ways you can communicate more productively during your child's IEP meetings.

- **BE SELF-AWARE:** Acknowledge preconceived ideas, recognize that each party has a different perspective, assume honorable intentions, and ask clarifying questions instead of making assumptions.
- **LISTEN:** Other people have valuable information and insights that you need to hear. Take notes on what you hear and allow the speaker to finish.
- **ASK QUESTIONS:** Asking who, when, where, and how questions can be helpful. Phrases you can use include:
 - o "What will the school propose to do about . . .?"
 - o "How is the progress you mentioned measured?"
 - o "I think I heard you say . . . Is that correct?"
- **WHEN YOU ARE THE SPEAKER:** Be honest about what you know and don't know, focus on a solution, and give positive feedback and praise as often as possible.
- **HELP THE SCHOOL UNDERSTAND:** Communicate circumstances at home that may affect your child's behavior in the classroom, take time to explain your culture and values, and give examples of your goals.

You and your child's educators can make a difference. When parents and school staff work together, your child's educational outcomes can be enhanced.

To order your copy of "Working Together," contact: PACER@PACER.org or (952) 838-9000.





DEBORAH LEUCHOVIOUS: *Reflecting on over 30 years at PACER*

PACER Center is celebrating Deborah Leuchovius's retirement after decades of work with youth with disabilities and their families on the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), transition to adulthood, civil rights laws, employment, and more.

Deborah has been an advocate for accessibility for over 30 years. After a long and dedicated career at PACER, she announced her retirement in December 2023.

As a mother of a child with disabilities, accessibility and disability advocacy has always been a cause close to her heart. Deborah's son Freddy was born in 1984 with spina bifida and several other secondary diagnoses. He used a wheelchair and had limited use

of his vocal cords, which tuned Deborah in to how she could make the world a more accessible place for her son. "Back when he was little, I started learning sign language so that I could teach him a way to express himself," she said. It was then that she encountered the deaf community, which raised her awareness about disability culture and issues. "The Americans with Disabilities Act was being passed around the time I was learning sign language. It was a very rich and vibrant atmosphere," she said.

ADA beginnings

Deborah held a master's degree in art history and had previously worked for the Minnesota Humanities Commission. After the ADA passed in July 1990, inspired by Freddy, she began working as an accessibility consultant at local arts and cultural organizations where she helped ensure that their events were accessible to individuals with disabilities.

In 1992, Deborah added volunteering to her schedule, where she was a part of an effort to create an accessible playground in her neighborhood. That's where she met another PACER staff member, who informed her of an opening as a trainer on the ADA. "I met with Marge and Paula [PACER's co-executive directors at the time], and it was a good fit," Deborah said.

Deborah started at PACER as a part-time employee while she continued her work in accessibility consulting. During her early years at PACER, she wrote a number of articles about the ADA (which have been updated and remain as available PACER resources today). Deborah became PACER's in-house ADA expert, possessing valuable knowledge that helped PACER support children with disabilities to be fully included at school and in their communities.

Moving to transition

As her time at PACER continued, Deborah became more involved in work related to the transition to adulthood for young adults with disabilities. "PACER was in a leadership position in the area of transition, both at the state and national level," she said. Previously, parent centers had been more focused on the areas of early childhood and education for children with disabilities, so the need for transition expertise was apparent. As a result, Deborah joined project coordinator Sharman Davis Barrett in working on PACER's Technical Assistance on Transition and the Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) project.

"PACER was in a leadership position in the area of transition, both at the state and national level." - Deborah Leuchovius

While working on the TATRA project, her team conducted annual conferences in Washington D.C. for parent centers on transition, featuring leaders from the disability community and government. "It really exposed parent centers and PACER to best practices in a broad range of transition areas," she said.

Deborah continued her work on two broader national transition technical assistance projects. She wrote publications that translated research into practice, presented to parents at national conferences, and trained professionals about the importance of family involvement in the transition process. "I had learned enough about best practices from the work I did that I was able to write grants with the State of Minnesota's Office of Youth Development at the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) to make youth workforce programs more inclusive for Minnesota youth with disabilities," she said.

Deborah's latest work involved PACER's Project Launch, which provides information on career exploration, employment, and vocational rehabilitation for youth and young adults with disabilities. For Project Launch, she provided support for parent centers in seven other states on their transition projects.

30 years later

Upon reflecting over her time at PACER, one of Deborah's favorite activities has always been "Transition Trek," a non-competitive board game inspired by Trivial Pursuit (see page 15). Players test their knowledge and answer questions on various areas of transition including post-secondary education, community, employment, living, and more. "I did a lot of writing in my day, but that project was probably the most fun to create," she said.

Through it all, her inspiration has always been her son, Freddy. Although he passed away in 2017, she carries with her many fond memories of his impact.



Deborah at the original PACER office building on Chicago Avenue during her first year in 1992

"When Fred was 11 or 12, he ran away from home on a city bus that had just gotten a new lift on it," Deborah said. Laughing, she added that it was eye-opening for everyone, of just how far a young person could go after the ADA had made the world a more accessible place for people like him.

In her retirement, Deborah's excited to enjoy more time for herself. Among household projects like painting her bathroom and sprucing up her garden, she plans to edit and share her mother's memoirs with family. "I'm looking forward to getting back into making house and home the center of my life," she said. Deborah's impact at PACER and the disability community is profound and will be felt for many years to come. ■

PACER'S 2023 SYMPOSIUM WAS A RESOUNDING SUCCESS!

PACER's Symposium on Students with Mental Health and Learning Disabilities welcomed over 400 attendees at the Minneapolis Convention Center in August 2023. Parents and family members, teachers, and other school professionals filled the Center for a day of informative and engaging sessions on current best practices related to children's mental health and learning disabilities.

The Symposium began in 2006 in partnership with the Ted & Roberta Mann Foundation to erase the stigma surrounding mental health and learning disabilities. While Roberta passed away in 2010, PACER is proud to continue this important work.

Comedian Sheletta Brundidge, who is a mother of three children with autism, opened the event with her keynote, "The Power of Having a Positive Perspective." Charlene Myklebust's lunchtime keynote covered "Newly Identified Adverse Childhood Experiences: Exposure to Racism and Surviving the Pandemic." Attendees visited exhibitors from 11 community organizations plus several PACER projects to learn about resources and information.

Symposium breakout sessions were held by industry leading professionals, PACER staff, and more. They covered a variety of topics, including legislative highlights, digital wellbeing for children and adolescents, and structured literacy. Participants also learned about working effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse families and how to change the way we think about behavior and student discipline.

Debbie Andrews, PACER's development manager and Symposium coordinator, described the energy and excitement as people prepared for a day of learning. "It's always interesting to see the mix of first-time attendees and those who come back year after year," she said. She was excited to see so many participants stop by the exhibitor tables and learn about the many resources available. "All of our presenters were great as well. Sheletta had the ballroom laughing and I was happy more people were able to see Charlene present after she spoke at our smaller, virtual Symposium during the COVID-19 pandemic," she said. ■



Sheletta Brundidge,
Symposium keynote speaker



Charlene Myklebust, Psy.D
Symposium keynote speaker



2023 Symposium attendees

"I wouldn't change anything - it was my first time and I loved everything about it."

- 2023 PACER Symposium attendee

NATIONAL BULLYING PREVENTION MONTH

2023 HIGHLIGHTS



PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center (NBPC) celebrated another successful National Bullying Prevention Month (NBPM) in October 2023. With many students and educators returning to school, this year included more in-person participation than recent years. At the end of the month, NBPC staff hosted a webinar where they recapped the great work done throughout the month and looked ahead to how to keep the momentum going. Presenter Judy French provided participants with ideas to engage parents, students, and educators to work together on bullying prevention year-round and create connected and healthier communities.

NBPM by the numbers:

- **200 webinar attendees**
- **10,000 Unity Day t-shirts purchased**
- **13,000 Unity Day posters ordered**
- **Over 4,000 social media posts shared**

“National Bullying Prevention Month is an important time to engage the community by calling attention to the issue, encouraging local action, offering information and education, and providing a platform to host school and community events,” said Julie Hertzog, PACER's Director of Social Inclusion Programs.

Students across the country participated in Unity Day on October 18 by wearing and sharing orange, sending a visible message that no child should ever experience bullying. Participants worked together on creative projects to build community through kindness, acceptance, and inclusion. Activities included baking orange cupcakes, holding unity walks, designing posters, selling orange items to raise money, and much more. Several educators even shared that their entire schools and districts participated with community support! ■

“National Bullying Prevention Month is an important time to engage the community by calling attention to the issue, encouraging local action, offering information and education, and providing a platform to host school and community events.”

- Julie Hertzog

You can make a difference and work towards a world without bullying every day. Ways you can help build community throughout the year include:

- [Share your ideas](#) for Students with Solutions 2024 and develop your own bullying prevention resources.
- [Take the pledge](#) to create a world without bullying.
- [Order the new Build Community Kit](#), which includes interactive resources designed to engage participants to respond to the question, “how can you help build community?”
- [Order bullying prevention bookmarks](#), with designs for kids and teens. Sold in packages of 100 each.
- [Sign up for the NBPC's e-newsletter](#) to stay up to date on their efforts to prevent bullying.

For more information on these and other bullying prevention ideas, visit [PACER.org/Bullying](https://www.pacer.org/Bullying).

PACER Workshops & Resources

Visit PACER.org/workshops to register and view the most up-to-date listings.
If you have questions, contact Workshops@PACER.org or call (952) 838-9000 or (800) 537-2237.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Effective research techniques and navigating digital libraries

Wed., April 24, 2024
1 – 2 p.m. (Zoom)

Join this workshop to learn effective research techniques and how to navigate digital libraries. This workshop will cover how to search academic sources, evaluate information, and cite properly using citation management software.

Reading and dyslexia: Helpful tools

Thurs., May 2, 2024
10:30 – 11:30 a.m. (Zoom)

Letters and words do not look the same to everyone. Learn about tools that can change the visual appearance of text, or how reading with the ears can be helpful.

Tools to support meal planning and cooking

Wed., May 8, 2024
1 – 2 p.m. (Zoom)

In this workshop we will demonstrate apps and devices for meal planning, cooking instructions, and cooking tools to help adults with disabilities to live more independently.

Writing and dyslexia: Helpful tools

Thurs., May 9, 2024
10:30 – 11:30 a.m. (Zoom)

A person with dyslexia may find writing and spelling to be challenging. This workshop will demonstrate a variety of writing tools such as word prediction, dictation, spell checkers, and more.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) app series

Session 1: Symbol-based AAC apps for iPad

Wed., May 15, 2024
1 – 2:15 p.m. (Zoom)

This workshop will provide a brief introduction to a sampling of available robust symbol-based AAC iPad apps. Join us to learn about some of their helpful communication features.

Session 2: Text-based AAC apps

Wed., May 29, 2024
1 – 2:15 p.m. (Zoom)

This workshop will explore a sampling of text-based AAC apps for Apple and Android devices to help individuals with communication needs and strong literacy skills communicate more efficiently.

HOUSING

PACER's 2024 housing workshop series: Starting the journey

Registration recommended for all three workshops in this series.

Step 1: How do we start?

Mon., April 1, 2024
6:30 – 9 p.m. (Zoom)

Parents who attend this workshop will gain information to help their young adults develop their vision for community living, housing, and services. An overview of housing and service options will be provided.

Step 2: How is it paid for?

Mon., April 15, 2024
6:30 – 9 p.m. (Zoom)

Participants will gain a big picture view of how housing is funded through federal, state, and county

resources, including how their young adults can become eligible for and access funding. Topics include income supplements and budgets.

Step 3: What are the options?

Mon., April 29, 2024
6:30 – 9 p.m. (Zoom)

Participants will hear a more detailed explanation of individualized housing and service options from a panel of parents, young adults, and housing providers as they share their journeys through the process.

MENTAL HEALTH

Getting help for children and youth with mental health needs

Wed., April 24, 2024
Noon – 1 p.m. (Zoom)

Navigating home, school, and community support and services for children and youth with mental health needs can be a challenge. Join us to learn more about the support and services available, where to begin, and what to do while you wait to access care.

Creating a crisis plan for youth with mental health needs

Wed., May 22, 2024
Noon – 1 p.m. (Zoom)

This workshop will provide an opportunity to work through an example crisis plan and provide suggestions on how a plan can be used for positive support at home or in school, and with 504 plans and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Effective communication: How is the year going?

Wed., March 20, 2024
6:30 – 7:30 p.m. (Zoom)

Spring is always a good time to be sure that your child's IEP team, with you as an equal member, is working well together. We will discuss how to approach the team with concerns, as well as nine more top tips to ensure a collaborative process.

Effective communication with the IEP team

Wed., April 3, 2024
4:30 – 6 p.m. (Zoom)

This webinar focuses on 10 communication strategies that will help you advocate effectively for your child at IEP team meetings. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A segment.

Resolving disputes through the special education process

Wed., April 10, 2024
4:30 – 6 p.m. (Zoom)

This webinar is a detailed review of options Minnesota parents have in the special education process to resolve disagreements with the school district. The presentation will be followed by a Q&A segment.

Wrapping up the year

Wed., April 24, 2024
6:30 – 7:30 p.m. (Zoom)

As the end of the year approaches, questions can arise. Learn about Extended School Year (ESY) eligibility, IEP students in summer school, support in camp programs, and how to set your child up for success in the fall.

TECH FOR TEENS

Tech for Teens: Ocean spill scenario

Sat., April 13, 2024
10 – 11 a.m. (PACER Center)

Ocean oil spills can have lasting impacts. In this workshop, learn about oil spills and the variety of ways to clean a spill, then test cleaning methods in an oil spill scenario.

Tech for Teens: 3D printed lightsaber

Sat., May 4, 2024
10 – 11 a.m. (PACER Center)

May the 4th be with you! Learn how to use a 3D printer and software to design and print a lightsaber. Then, create a circuit to make the lightsaber light up.

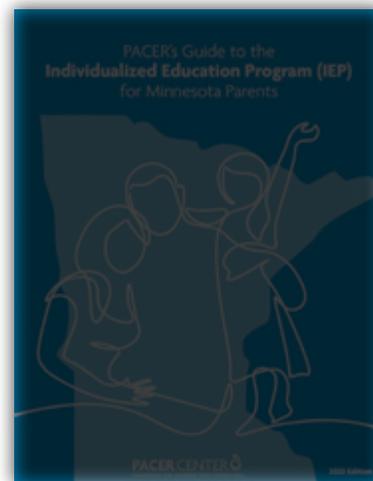
PACER resource highlights

PACER's Guide to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) for MN Parents

This robust resource contains information for parents about how they can work with schools to address their child's unique special education needs through understanding the required components of the IEP. One free copy to MN parents. Free download at PACER.org.

Ordering information:

\$3/book | Order code: PHP-a12

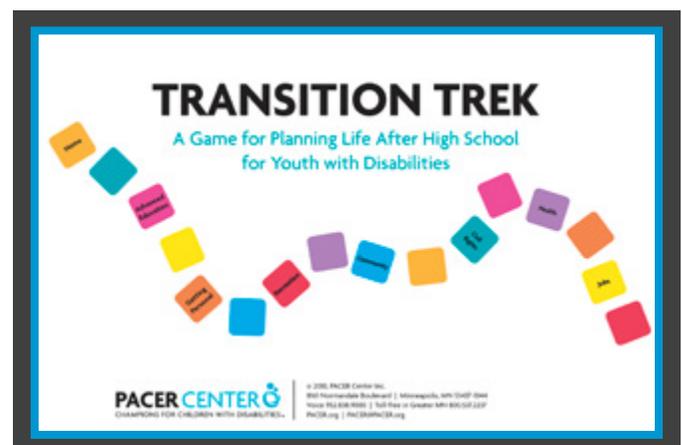


Transition Trek Board Game

As mentioned on page 11, this unique and engaging board game helps youth and young adults plan for life after high school. Players draw cards with questions related to careers, independent living, and self determination. Six game pieces included.

Ordering information:

\$15/game | Order code: ST-23



Improving educational opportunities and enhancing the quality of life for children and young adults with disabilities and their families since 1977.



PACER services include:

PARENT TRAINING & SUPPORT

PACER staff are parents helping parents to become effective advocates for their children as they navigate special education and other systems.

SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAMS

PACER provides bullying prevention resources, social and educational activities for teens with disabilities, and puppet shows for all young children promoting kindness, acceptance, and inclusion.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

PACER's Simon Technology Center provides assistive technology solutions to help individuals with disabilities reach their education and independent living goals.

PACER values:

Parents helping parents • Inclusion • Collaboration • Access • Innovation



Connect with PACER

8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437
952.838.9000 | PACER@PACER.org | PACER.org

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