



PEAL News

Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center

Serving Western and Central Pennsylvania

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Mission Statement

The mission of the PEAL Center is to ensure that children, youth, and adults with disabilities lead rich, active lives and participate as full members of their schools and communities by providing training, information, and technical assistance based on best practices to individuals, families and all people who support them.



Each person in the world is a unique human being, and each has unique human potential. *Fred Rogers*

OSEP Releases New Federal Regulations for IDEA '04

The long awaited new federal special education regulations were released by the US Office of Special Education Programs on August 14, 2006. The regulations interpret the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004, and establish rules for how states must implement changes made by the 2004 amendments. Some of the changes of interest to families are the addition of "functional performance" as well as academic achievement as areas that the IEP must address if needs are identified; changes to IEP team requirements that allow a school district to excuse any IEP team member with written parent agreement; and new procedures to identify students with learning disabilities. Federal fact sheets on the changes in the new regulations are available at <http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home>, and then click on the topic under Browse Major Topics at the top left.

Now the PA Department of Education's Special Education Bureau must revise the PA regulations, known as Chapter 14, to align with the new amendments to the federal law and federal regulations. The PA Regulations dictate to school districts and intermediate units their obligations to identify and serve students in PA with disabilities who are eligible for special education services. Advocates across PA have begun a process of establishing priorities for the development of new regulations in PA. Trainings will be offered around the state to inform families about the new federal regulations and to enable families to participate in the process of shaping PA's priorities and protections for students. You can check dates and locations on the *IDEA 2004* Web page <http://www.ed.gov/IDEA>.

The quality of the PA regulations will depend on families' involvement. It was PA families that organized to get the right to education for all children with disabilities in PA 3 years before the federal law was passed. Remember, as Margaret Mead put it, "*Never doubt the ability of a small, dedicated group to bring about significant change in the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.*"

A free CD of the IDEA 2004 Regulations is available from the U.S. Dept of Education at <http://www.edpubs.org/webstore/EdSearch/Details.asp?ItemID=ED002468C&EdSearchPage=0>

TRANSITION CONFERENCE BOASTS POSSIBILITIES

EXPANDING CAPACITY: REALIZING OUTCOMES was the title but the two words that seemed to drive the PA Community on Transition Conference held at Penn State in July were "POSSIBILITY" and "ABILITY;" words that are underrated and under-used when describing people with disabilities.



Thus, the Conference boasted of Possibilities and Abilities. There was much talk about empowerment, self advocacy, and independence. We were told that we need to "raise the bar" on expectations for our young adults. And, that it's going to take commitment, information sharing, support, person centered planning, marketing and partnerships to help our young adults be successful in the real world.

The event featured many dynamic speakers, however, it was most impressive to have the participation of the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network. These young people sponsored and led a number of sessions including the Opening Plenary where several remarkable young adults were powerful examples of possibilities and abilities. Sessions included topics on acquiring and learning about support services, disability pride and culture, and post-secondary transition.

There was talk about how Transition services must be addressed in the IEP of the student in the year in which the student turns 16; however families do not have to wait until the student's approaching 16th year. Throughout the conference, young people and families were encouraged to start the process early and in the words of Jonathan Mooney (jonathanmooney.com), to use the IEP as a "teachable moment around self-advocacy." Students are encouraged to participate in their IEP meetings as early as possible and to be part of the decision making. Students should be involved in the

career exploration process so that post-secondary choices can be shaped around the interest of the individual student.

We learned that a new acronym has been added to our never-ending list – SOP, that is, a Summary of Performance. Schools are now required when the child graduates to provide a summary of academic achievement, functional performance and recommendations to assist the student in meeting postsecondary goals. This holds the schools accountable since their main responsibility to students with disabilities is preparing them for life after school. Schools need to evaluate what the child is good at and what they like to do, so to better prepare a good IEP that includes appropriate measurable goals and appropriate curriculum content to guide students to reachable outcomes. And, that the Person Centered Plan is an effective tool used to identify students' strengths and preferences.

Denise Bissonnette, job developer and a keynote speaker, (www.diversityworld.com) said that "every person has genius" but we need to ask "what's the context in which he/she shines?" And, in the words of Michelangelo "The great danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."

Mark your calendars for next July. This has become an annual conference that is a "don't miss" event. The Department of Education Office of Special Education did an outstanding job in collaborating to help us understand "Expanding Capacity" and "Realizing Outcomes" as they reminded us that

**"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress,
and working together is success."
*Henry Ford***

A Day with Jonathan Mooney; Concrete Strategies for Teaching and Parenting Outside the Lines

A review By Deb Efke

There was much valuable information available at the Secondary Transition Conference but none so powerful for my sons and me as the personal journey shared by Jonathan Mooney. Jonathan is a young man in his late 20s who walks the walk because he has dyslexia and ADHD and he survived public school education. In fact, he went on to graduate with a degree in English literature from Brown University, began a mentoring program and is a popular lecturer with parents, educators and students.

Jonathan's message is simple. Everyone learns differently and schools need to acknowledge that and make the classroom a place where students don't feel "stupid, crazy and lazy." This is actually Principle #1 which Jonathan shared with wonderful humor that also touches a nerve.

Our family was so happy to relive Jonathan's talk and even more in the two DVD set entitled A Day with Jonathan Mooney, Concrete Strategies for Teaching & Parenting Outside the Lines. Mr. Mooney has four principles including Balancing Remediation and Empowerment; Academic Accommodations and Modifications, and my sons' favorite, Normal People Suck.

Jonathan's stories and insights are right on target. Parents and teachers will be inspired by recommendations, such as start self-advocacy early with parents being role models in their parent/school partnerships. Our remediation needs to be balanced with empowerment because our sons and daughters are not "broken" and in need of being fixed. You can learn about the principles of diminishing return and so much more by viewing all or part of this DVD set. It will support parents and schools and validate students who will, maybe for the first time, realize they are not alone and there is no normal.

The PEAL Center has the DVD set to loan to interested persons. Please contact us at 412-281-4404, toll free 1-866-9501040 or email info@pealcenter.org.



Some Upcoming Events in PA

Let us know what's going on in your area so we can keep our newsletter and website current.

Getting From Here to There: Creating a Vision -Wednesday, September 27, 2006 - 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., Levy Hall at the Rodef Shalom, Fifth Ave. in Shadyside - FREE PARKING!

Sponsored by UCP and UCP Kids Registration deadline September 22. Understanding how person-centered planning can help families and individuals achieve their goals. *Speakers: Elaine Plunkett, Individual, Family and Community Liaison Unit, Allegheny County Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and Lisa Meyer, Office of Mental Retardation Consulting System* For more information about session and fees, call Becky Karns 412-697-7434 x113 or email bkarns@ucppittsburgh.org

Buddy Walk—Saturday, September 30, 2006, North Park, Pittsburgh, PA. Sponsored by Down Syndrome Group of Western PA. North Park, Beveridge Pavilion North Park, 11:00 a.m. registration, 1:00 p.m. walk. For information contact Suzanne Martin (412) 860-1933 smartin0104@yahoo.com.

Buddy Walk—Down Syndrome Group of Erie County—October 1, 2006 at Liberty Park, Erie, PA. 10:00 registration, 11:00 a.m. walk. For more information call Donna 814-838-6839 or Keith 814-873-1363

Wrightslaw:Special Education Law and Advocacy—Peter Wright, Esq. and Pamela Darr Wright, October 19, 2006, The Avalon Hotel and Conference Center, Erie, PA. For more info contact **Voices for Independence** 800-838-9890 or email Jhrinda-patten@voicesforindependence.org

C2P2 – Competence and Confidence, Partners in Policymaking Six two-day sessions to be held in Harrisburg. **beginning Oct. 13-14.** A free training program for young people with disabilities ages 14 to 21 and their family members. Friday sessions are 4-11 pm. Saturday sessions are 10 am to 5 pm presented by the **Institute on Disabilities @ Temple University.** For more information contact Kathy Miller at millerk@temple.edu or 215-204-9395 (voice) 215-204-1356 (TTY) Deadline Sept 29

Hiram G. Andrews Center: 3rd Annual Career and Transition Fair - Oct. 19 & Oct. 20, 2006 Commonwealth Technical Institute at the Hiram G. Andrews Center (CTI@HGAC) is holding its 3rd Annual Career and Transition Fair. The fair will be held Thursday, October 19 from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM and Friday,

October 20, from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM in the Hiram G. Andrews Center Gymnasium in Johnstown, PA. CTI@HGAC welcomes hundreds of high school students, educators, rehabilitation counselors and parents from across the state. General questions can be directed to Barbara Petersen, Industry Education Coordinator at (814) 255-8222 or (800) 762-4211 ext. 8222 or email bpetersen@state.pa.us. Visit the web at www.hgac.org.

World Congress and Expo on Disabilities—November 17-19, 2006, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, PA "the world's leading disability event is dedicated to improving the lives of people with disabilities, their families and professionals who work with them." For more information and to register visit www.wcdexpo.com

National Inclusive Schools Week – December 4 – 8, 2006 — for more information on how to plan an event in your area, visit www.inclusiveschools.org/

Learning Disabilities Association of America: International Conference February 14-17, 2007, David L. Lawrence Convention Center, Pittsburgh, PA. For more information and/or to request conference program, call LDAA at 1-888-300-6710, email info@LDAAmerica.org, or log on to LDAAmerica.org.

March 22-23, 2007—"Education for All — Making it Happen" an inclusive education conference sponsored by the PEAL Center in Cranberry, PA. Details will be available at a later date.

IEPs and Educating Your Child with Disabilities; Parent Participation Makes a Difference sponsored by Allegheny County Office of MR/Developmental Disabilities and PEAL Center and Community College of Allegheny County
Thursday, Oct. 9, 2006 —8:30 a.m. – 12 Noon —
Baldwin Community Methodist Church
Wednesday, Oct. 25, 2006 – 6:30 - 9:00 p.m. –
Allegheny Intermediate Unit, at the Waterfront, Homestead
Tuesday, Nov.14, 2006--- 9:30 a.m. to 12 Noon. –
CCAC North Campus
Monday, Nov. 20, 2006—11:00 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. –
Union Presbyterian Church at Robinson Twp., McKees Rocks
 For more information, please contact Susan Kennedy at 412-237-6587 or skennedy@ccac.edu



PEAL Library



Check out a few of the titles available to borrow from our growing PEAL library.

Dealing with Siblings: Ideas for Parents of Children with Special Needs by University of Pittsburgh

Disability Evaluation Under Social Security by Social Security Administration

Opening Doors: Connecting Students to Curriculum, Classmates and Learning by Barbara E. Buswell, Alison B. Seyler and C. Beth Schaffner

Believe in My Child with Special Needs: Helping Children Achieve Their Potential with School by May Falvey

A Day with Jonathan Mooney, Concrete Strategies for Teaching & Parenting Outside the Lines—DVD—see review on Page 2 of this newsletter.



A FEW SITES TO SURF AND NUMBERS THAT MAY HELP



In each issue of our newsletter, we will try to list a few of the different resources that are available. If you would like to have your agency listed, please write or email the PEAL Center with a brief description to be included.

CHADD Provides support and educational advocacy for children with ADD and ADHD. 412-833-6324 chadd.org
National Resource Center on AD/HD -800-233-4050

CONNECT INFORMATION SERVICE

Operates a referral hotline, which provides information about services for children with disabilities birth to 21. Provides list of free literature. 800-692-7288 or (717) 657-5899

DISABILITY LAW PROJECT

Provides free telephone consultation, technical assistance and limited representation. (412) 391-5225 dip-pa.org

DOWN SYNDROME GROUP OF WESTERN PA

Appointments are available for medical evaluations, behavioral evaluations and developmental assessments.

412-692-7963. www.achieva.info/familysupports/dscwpc

EPILEPSY FOUNDATION Western/Central PA (EFWCP) is a private, non-profit service organization providing public education and supportive services to individuals and families affected by epilepsy/seizure disorders. Pgh-412-261-5880 (800) 361-5885 Erie- (814) 451-1135 Johnstown- (814) 262-7494
www.efwp.org

The Family Advocacy Network (FAN) provides information, resources and referrals to individuals with disabilities. FAN gives families the opportunity to network and exchange ideas on how to become effective advocates. FAN also assists families, caregivers and professionals to make effective decisions regarding technology, medical intervention, education, community inclusion and other related issues pertaining to children and families. For further information or to sign up for the Family Advocacy Network email, contact Connie Campbell at 412-683-7100 ext. 303 or Mary Ann McGuirk at 412-697-7434 ext. 111.

LOCAL TASK FORCE ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION. A group of parents, school administrators and agencies working to improve special education services in the public schools.

To find your Local Task Force, call the State Task Force Office at 1-800-692-7275, 717-234-7132

Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) of Pennsylvania is a parent-driven organization offering advocacy and support to children and adults with learning disabilities and other related neurological disorders. 610.458.8193 www.Ldapa.org

MENTAL HEALTH ASSOC. (MHA) of Allegheny County works on behalf of mental health through advocacy, education and public policy. 412-391-3820, Toll-Free: 877-391-3820 mha@mhaac.net
 For information about other Mental Health Assoc. locations in PA, visit <http://www.mhapa.org> or email info@mhapa.org.

PA Families, Inc. (PFI) Pennsylvania Families Inc (PFI) is a Statewide Family Network is funded by the Substance Abuse/Mental Health Services Administration. The goal is to network support groups, advocates, parent mentors and organizations that assist families who are raising children with emotional or behavioral disorders. We identify issues that are common to families and raise awareness about supports and unmet need. We provide lists of supports for parents and providers available in county/region/state. For further information, please call 1-800-947-4941 or email pafamilies@alltel.net

PA. TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NETWORK (PATTAN)—an initiative of the PA Department of Education that supports efforts of the Bureau of Special Education re: LEA's providing appropriate services to students receiving special education services. www.pattan.k12.pa.us/

UPKIDS of Lawrence County (724) 658-4250
 Community organization in New Castle, Pennsylvania that provides support and education to families who have a member with down syndrome.

Yellow Pages for Kids with Disabilities is a Wright's Law website with lots of information. Find educational consultants, psychologists, educational diagnosticians, health care providers, academic therapists, tutors, speech language therapists, occupational therapists, coaches, advocates, and attorneys for children with disabilities on the Yellow Pages for Kids for your state. You will also find special education schools, learning centers, treatment programs, parent groups, respite care, community centers, grassroots organizations, and government programs for children with disabilities. www.yellowpagesforkids.com

Knowledge is Power...

The Pennsylvania Training Partnership for People with Disabilities and Families—The Partnership—believes knowledge is power. Knowledge of the systems that serve people with disabilities allows people to move through systems more easily, to use systems more fully, and to change systems more effectively. For the first time, The Partnership makes available training and technical assistance, developed and provided by people with disabilities and families. The training will be coordinated statewide yet regionally-responsive; person-centered and culturally competent; attentive to capacity-building and supportive of leadership development.

Now, with The Partnership, Pennsylvania breaks ground for people with disabilities and families, offering knowledge, power, and assistance to citizens who are eager to belong and contribute to their communities. For a listing of available free trainings please go to

www.thetrainingpartnership.org or Call 1-866-865-6170 or TTY: 1-215-204-1356

Each FREE training module is two hours in length. Resource materials are provided to each family free of charge, and all participants receive handouts and a certificate of completion for each presentation. They offer Act 48 credits and some reimbursement, such as mileage and child care to families upon request. All Partnership curricula are available in alternate formats upon request. Request for alternate formats should be made two weeks before the scheduled training.

Jeanine Schulz. The Partnership

GOOD NEWS ON PROPOSED PENNSYLVANIA PRE-SCHOOL REGULATIONS



The Education Law Center informs us that all of your efforts to urge the State Board to adopt pre-K regulations that support inclusion have paid off. The State Board of Education's Committee on Early Childhood unanimously voted to forward to the full State Board regulations that will establish new standards for PA preschool programs ...to ensure that students with disabilities can attend these programs successfully. The proposed regulations require each school district that operates a preschool program to explain in the strategic plan how it will coordinate with agencies that serve preschool age children with disabilities; how it will ensure that children with disabilities have the supports and accommodations needed to ensure physical and programmatic access; and more. *ELC staff urges us to keep up the good work and continue to express support to the State Board, Department staff, the Legislative Committees, and the IRRC during the final review process.*

(Excerpted in part from an ELC notice)

NEW WEBSITE HELPS CHILDREN IDENTIFY AND DEAL WITH BULLYING

A Web site to help children prevent bullying has been launched by PACER Center, a national parent center in Minnesota. Geared for elementary school youngsters, including those with disabilities, the site is at www.pacerkidsagainstabullying.org. It is a project of PACER's National Center for Bullying Prevention. Childhood bullying is a significant problem nationwide. It can cause school absenteeism, mental and physical stress, poor school performance, poor self-esteem, and, in some cases, school violence.

Statistics show that:

- 160,000 children in the United States miss school each day as a result of being bullied
- 7 to 15 percent of children experience bullying
- 50 percent of children who are bullied have disabilities

The site features celebrity videos, Webisodes, interactive games, animation, contests, and other activities to teach second through sixth graders about bullying and how to prevent it.

"The site is for *all* children," said Paula F. Goldberg, executive director of PACER. "No one deserves to be bullied. This site will help children know how to respond positively and effectively."

A grant from Robins, Kaplan, Miller and Ciresi LLP Foundation for Education, Public Health and Social Justice, a supporting organization of the Minneapolis Foundation, is instrumental in funding the Web site. Additional support comes from Target Corporation; Kansas City Chiefs star Tony Gonzalez; Hollywood producer Chris Moore (*Good Will Hunting*); and many others.

PACER Center typically serves families of children and youth with disabilities and special health needs. It provides resources such as publications, workshops, and individualized assistance and helps families make decisions about education, vocational training, employment, and other services for their child.

PACER is located at 8161 Normandale Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044. Telephone numbers are 952-838-9000 (voice); 952-838-0190 (TTY) or 888-248-0822 (toll-free). PACER's principal Web site is www.pacer.org, and its e-mail address is pacer@pacer.org.



Information excerpted from PACER Center Press Release August 15, 2006

YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAMS' AUTISM INITIATIVE

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc (YAP) is a private, non-profit human services agency focused exclusively on non-residential community based programming. The program began serving Pennsylvania children with Autism Spectrum Disorders in 1997. As a growing initiative within a well-established agency, the program provides a variety of Advocates, Aides, Behavioral Health Specialists, Mobile Therapists and Therapeutic Staff Support Staff who tailor one-on-one services in the client's home, school and community.

Youth Advocate Program's Autism workers engage in participatory training conducted by experienced staff members, Temple University professionals and effective self-advocates. The curriculum emphasizes a positive relationship-based approach which focuses on the strengths and talents exhibited by individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder and their families.

For children and adults, Youth Advocate Program's Autism Initiative provides building blocks towards the following long-term goals: Enhanced communication and social skills, self-initiated peer interactions, increased ability to self-regulate behavior, enhanced comprehension of and use of everyday environment/community resources and improved functional independence. The Youth Advocate Program believes that reaching these goals requires the cultivation of partnerships with parents and family members, teachers and all community members who interact with the child or adult. The success of the mission depends on transferring support strategies to the community at large which will ensure continuity and flexibility in a lifetime of inclusion.

For more information about Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. please contact Jessica Carlton-Humenik @ 412-445-1661 or visit our website at www.yapinc.org and click on the Autism link.

PEAL wants you to know...

- PEAL is planning to convene a meeting of parent and disability related agencies and groups. Our goal is to develop a perspective on issues facing families and individuals and to develop shared priorities for our work. We will host this gathering annually, with the first meeting after the first of the year. Anyone who is interested in participating in this gathering, please contact Linda Rose at lrose@pealcenter.org or (412)281-4404 ext. 11.
- The PEAL Center is now scheduling trainings on a variety of topics including "Your Rights and Special Education and How it Works." For more information about having us present in your area, call the PEAL Center at (412) 281-4404 or 866-950-1040.
- At the time of this printing, PEAL is still welcoming photo submissions for our Inclusive Calendar. Please contact Linda Rose at 412-281-4404 ext. 11 or email lrose@pealcenter.org.
- The PEAL website is still under construction and we are having technical difficulties bringing it up to date. Please note that the link for the LDA of PA is incorrect on our website. See page 4 of this newsletter for the correct information. We apologize for any inconvenience.
- **This newsletter available in alternate formats by request.**
- Photos on cover (Left to Right) - Emily Hyland, Elley and James Dreher, George Casselberry, Blake and Devin B

Let us know what you think about this issue. Tell us what kind of information you would like to see included in our newsletter. Reply to Linda Rose, Editor at lrose@pealcenter.org or 412-281-4404 ext. 11



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