Why is Parent Involvement So Important?

Parents play a vital role in their children’s education. Studies show a strong correlation between family involvement and student outcomes, including academic achievement. This relationship holds true for families of all economic, racial/ethnic, and educational backgrounds and for students of all ages, with or without disabilities. Student benefits include:

- Attaining higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests.
- Enrolling in more challenging academic programs.
- Passing more classes and earning more credits.
- Having better attendance.
- Showing improved behavior at home and at school.
- Demonstrating better social skills and adaptation to school.


Schools and the educators who staff them are one of the first places parents and families turn to in looking for information. In this tool kit you will find online resources that you can share with parents and family members to encourage and support their involvement in the education of their children.

This booklet’s resources can be found at www.centerforfamilyinvolvement.org.
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Academic Resources

Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTACs), funded by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), work to improve educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities (birth through 22 years).

Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers:

- George Mason University: http://ttac.gmu.edu
- James Madison University: http://www.jmu.edu/ttac
- Old Dominion University: http://ttac.odu.edu
- Radford University: http://radford.edu/~ttac
- The College of William and Mary: http://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac
- Virginia Commonwealth University: http://www.vcu.edu/ttac
- Virginia Tech: http://www.ttac.vt.edu

Also visit T/TAC Online at http://www.ttaconline.org. Click on any region; then click on the “Resources” tab at the top; then click on “Parents/Family” on the left-hand side.
Assistive Technology Resources

Virginia Department of Education’s Assistive Technology Priority Project:
http://www.ttac.vt.edu/vaatpp/consideration_Assessment.html

Select “Online Trainings” tab

AIM-VA Overview: This overview introduces “AIM-VA: Accessible Instructional Materials-VA,” a unique and alternative system of providing accessible educational media under the standards set by the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS).

National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards: An overview of NIMAS, NIMAC, and Virginia’s response to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) standards.
Person-Centered Resources

Person-centered practices focus on the needs and preferences of the individual; empower and support the individual in defining the direction for his/her life; and promote self-determination, community involvement, contributing to society and emotional, physical and spiritual health.

Here are some web sites that can be used to learn more about person-centered planning, thinking and practices.

- http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/cdservices/pcre.html
- http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/ped/tsal/pcp/
- http://www.dimagine.com/page27.html
- http://www.learningcommunity.us
- http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk
- http://www.disabilityisnatural.com
- http://www.circlesnetwork.org.uk
- http://www.communityworks.info
- http://www.participantdirection.org
Collaborative Resources

Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University:

- **Collaborative Standards-Based IEPs Online Training**: A series of five training modules that address collaborative skills, person-centered practices, and basing goals on statewide age-appropriate standards.
  
  [http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/ieps/index.html](http://www.vcu.edu/partnership/ieps/index.html)

- **It’s About Me**: A workbook for students and IEP team members to be used in preparing for and developing the IEP (in English and in Spanish). The workbook focuses on active student participation, collaboration among all team members, and developing goals based on the gaps that exist between Standards and students’ actual performance.
  

- **Creating Collaborative IEPs**: A Handbook second edition (in English and in Spanish): This handbook focuses on collaborative skills and practices that support full team involvement in the IEP process, including that of the student.
  

T/TAC Online Collaborative/Teaming Web Shop Training Resources

[www.ttaonline.org](http://www.ttaonline.org)

- Select any region
- Select “Online Training” tab
- Select “Display All” box
- Search for the following training titles

**The Team Meeting Process**: When schools work to effect change, the work often falls on the shoulders of the team. Team members need to make sure that their limited meeting time is used effectively and that there is a process for making certain that tasks are completed. A structured team meeting process offers a way to make meetings more productive.

**What’s Your Team Type?**: The web shop provides an introduction to the characteristics of the different team member types. An activity and description of the different team member types are included.

**Collaboration and Communication**: This workshop provides information on collaboration and communication in the schools.
Self-Determination Resources
I’m Determined and IEP Resources
www.imdetermined.org

For Students: All students need to be a part of their IEP meetings after being provided with direct instruction, accommodations, and opportunities to practice or role-play their participation. This section includes lesson plans, brochures, and PowerPoint presentations. These items are designed to help students understand the IEP and the role he/she plays on the IEP team.
http://www.imdetermined.org/youth

For Family Members: Families are instrumental team players in the development of the self-determined student. Family members can help model important self-determination components such as making good choices and setting and achieving goals. This section includes information for families.
http://www.imdetermined.org/parents

For Educators: Teachers, paraprofessionals, and case managers can find information in this section to assist students. Included here are lesson plans that have been classroom-tested:
http://www.imdetermined.org/educators
Individual Education Program Resources

Parent Education Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)
PEATC’s vision is to be a nationally recognized leader in the development, communication and dissemination of state-of-the-art education, training, outreach and support services for children, particularly children with disabilities, their families and the professionals who serve them. http://www.peatc.org

PEATC helps families to:
- Negotiate the education and service system maze.
- Effectively communicate their child’s needs (from birth to age 22).
- Develop self-advocacy and self-determination in children and youth.
- Organize information so that overwhelming problems become manageable.
- Manage their emotions to benefit their child and talk so others will listen.
- Learn the difference between effective advocacy and being adversarial.
- Experience and enjoy the power of partnerships and successful collaboration.

From the PEATC home page:
- Select “Special Education” tab for special education tour, definitions, and fact sheets.
- Select “Next Steps Transition Program” for program resources including informational webinars.

PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights)
PACER’s mission is to expand opportunities and enhance the quality of life of children and young adults with disabilities and their families, based on the concept of parents helping parents. http://www.PACER.org

From the PACER home page:
- Select “Programs and Resources” and then “Newsletters.” From the left menu, select “Parent Pages” for informative discussions and current topics. Also find archived webinars with information about IEPs.

The Itinerant Connection
The Itinerant Connection provides a question and answer format with information for parents on the IEP process. http://www.theitinerantconnection.com/iep_information_for_parents.htm

Wrights Law
Transition Resources

- **Going to College**: contains information about living college life with a disability. It’s designed for high-school students and provides video clips, activities and additional resources that can help students get a head start in planning for college. [www.going-to-college.org](http://www.going-to-college.org)

- **HEATH Resource Center** (Online Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education for Individuals with Disabilities): information for students with disabilities on financial assistance, scholarships and materials that help students with disabilities transition into college, university, career-technical schools, or other postsecondary programs. The “Modules” tab includes links to a “Parents’ Guide to Transition.” [www.heath.gwu.edu](http://www.heath.gwu.edu)

- **National Center on Secondary Education and Transition (NCSET)**: A national resource for secondary transition including resources and effective practices. Under “Hot Topics,” the “IEP and Transition Planning” links to a number of helpful resources, including a thorough and very readable explanation of the IDEA transition requirements under “Frequently Asked Questions.” [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org)

- **National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC)**: A national Technical Assistance and Dissemination center funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Under the “Students and Families” tab are links to many resources related to transition, including a helpful postsecondary goals activity, and the “Transition Assessment Guide.” [www.nsttac.org](http://www.nsttac.org)

- **Succeeding in College and at Work**: Students with Disabilities Tell Their Stories: In videos on this site, students with a variety of disabilities share strategies to successfully stay in school, graduate, and get jobs. [http://www.adaptiveenvironments.org/neada/site/student_videos](http://www.adaptiveenvironments.org/neada/site/student_videos)

- **A Life 4 Me**: A middle-school transition web site designed to introduce students with challenging disabilities to opportunities in their communities. [http://www.alife4me.com/](http://www.alife4me.com/)
Transition Resources (cont’d)

- **PACER Center (Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights):** A parent training and information center for families of children and youth with all disabilities from birth through 21 years. Under the “Programs & Resources” tab is a link to “Publications,” and the topic “Transition” includes a lengthy list of (free) handouts on a broad array of topics. “Parent Tips for Transition Planning” is a helpful starting place. [www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

- **Virginia Easy Access and Virginia Navigator:** A web site developed for seniors, adults with disabilities, their caregivers, and the providers that support them. Virginia Easy Access has helpful information about services and supports available across the Commonwealth and is the gateway to the Virginia Navigator provider database. [www.easyaccess.virginia.gov](http://www.easyaccess.virginia.gov)

- **Community Services Boards (CSBs):** Virginia’s Community Services Boards (sometimes called Behavioral Healthcare Authorities) are local government agencies created by the Code of Virginia. CSBs exist in every locality and provide community-based mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability services. From the home page, click on the “CSB/BHA Directory” tab for local CSB contact information. [www.vacsb.org](http://www.vacsb.org)

- **Department of Rehabilitative Services:** The state’s vocational rehabilitation agency provides a variety of service options. Employment services help people with disabilities get ready for, find, and keep a job. Several community-based services support people with significant disabilities to maximize their independence, employment, and full community inclusion. The department also provides Assistive Technology and Disability Determination services. The “Find an Office” tab on the home page links to a list of contact information for field offices. [www.drs.virginia.gov](http://www.drs.virginia.gov)
The Center for Family Involvement at the Partnership for People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University provides training and resources for families and the people who work with them.

www.centerforfamilyinvolvement.org
1-877-567-1122

The Partnership for People with Disabilities is a university center for excellence in developmental disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University. VCU is an equal opportunity/affirmative action university providing access to education and employment without regard to age, race, color, natural origin, gender, religion, sexual orientation, veteran’s status, political affiliation or disability. If alternative formats of this documentation are needed, please contact the Partnership for People with Disabilities at 804-828-3876 or 800-828-1120 (TTY Relay).