

# Dialogue

VIRGINIA BEACH CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

P A R E N T N E W S L E T T E R

FALL/WINTER 2008  
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## From the Director *Robert Mitchell, Director, Office of Programs for Exceptional Children*

During the 2007-2008 school year the School Board focused on several goals. The third goal was *Improve the Special Education Program*. To support that goal an external auditing firm, MGT, was contracted to provide comprehensive information about the current identification of, and delivery of services to, students with disabilities. Their report was finalized and a School Board presentation was delivered in July 2008.

The audit firm's commendations included what they described as best practices related to the following:

- The identification of students
  - Process
  - Early identification
  - Child Find
- Services to students
  - Continuum
  - Exemplary instructional leadership in the schools
  - Highly trained staff
- Written guidelines for the management of special education
- Provision of training opportunities and information to parents
- Active and effective local Special Education Advisory Committee
- Provision of necessary resources for special education
  - Bus scheduling system
  - Operations within the general fund budget

The audit firm's recommendations included suggestions related to the following:

- Some reorganization of administrative staff and reassignment of shared responsibilities to other departments (e.g., *homebound services, Section 504*)
- Systematic data collection on inclusionary practices
- Improved communication

regarding transition among the elementary, middle, and high schools

- Explicit functional curriculum
- Continued use of differentiated instruction within all classrooms
- Implementation of a division-wide positive behavior support program
- Continued Student Support Team training on research-based interventions and obtain data on effective interventions for over-represented groups in special education
- Expanded account codes and re-assignment of certain bookkeeping to the Office of Business Services
- Suggestions to the Virginia Department of Education regarding supplemental schedules

The report in its entirety is available to read in the Parent Resource Center. As *Dialogue* goes to press the information from the audit continues to be under consideration by the School Board as they develop priorities and a plan to continue commended practices and address the recommendations.

In August all parents of students with disabilities received a survey from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). These survey results assist the VDOE in assessing the effectiveness of parental involvement in special education, access to information, and the viewpoint of parents in the delivery of special education services. It is important for all parents to complete these surveys that are issued annually as part of the State Performance Plan. If you have questions regarding this survey, please do not hesitate to contact the VDOE, 1-800-422-2083, or our local Parent Resource Center, (757) 263-2066.

The process of revising the state regulations to implement the federal regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA,

2004) has been in progress for almost 2 years (since October 2006). The public hearings for the proposed draft took place in late spring. The final comment period ended with approximately 2,240 persons filing over 35,000 comments. The Virginia Board of Education anticipates reviewing a revision of the draft regulations at its September 25th meeting. Updates to this process are available on the Virginia Department of Education website, [www.pen.k12.va.us](http://www.pen.k12.va.us).

As we begin a new school year, there are many ways that the school division is demonstrating accountability for our provision of education to students. For students with disabilities, the critical accountability comes through the development and implementation of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is tailored to meet the unique and individual needs of the student. Your participation in this very important process is vital. Resources to enable parents to be informed participants in the IEP process are available upon request through the school where your child is enrolled and through the Parent Resource Center, (757) 263-2066.

As director of Special Education, it is my goal to work with parents as we seek to compliment the efforts of one another in the education of students with disabilities, building on student strengths and providing appropriate supports for areas of need. To that end, I wish for your child a very productive 2008-2009 school year.

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## IEP Writing for Parents

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the written document that specifies the special education services and supports designed to meet the individual needs of the student with a disability. Parents are keys to the planning process for the development of the IEP.

So that parents can be fully informed participating members of the planning team, support and training is offered through a one and a half hour session at the Parent Resource Center. The two sessions scheduled for this fall are listed below.

Thursday, November 13, 2008  
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
Parent Resource Center  
1413 Laskin Road  
Reservation: Call 263-2066

Thursday, November 20, 2008  
9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.  
Parent Resource Center  
1413 Laskin Road  
Reservation: Call 263-2066

If these scheduled sessions do not meet your needs in regard to day and/or time, you are encouraged to call the Parent Resource Center to arrange a session that will meet your schedule. One parent, or up to five parents, may participate in a session. If there are several questions and concerns related to a specific IEP, an individual session may be most appropriate.

To schedule a session, call 263-2066 or email [ruth.page@vbschools.com](mailto:ruth.page@vbschools.com). Please give your name, a phone number, and a couple of dates and times you are able to attend. There is no charge for participation.

In addition to information about the IEP writing process, other available training/information sessions are available individually or in small group sessions.

- Special education eligibility
- Handling homework
- Auditory processing
- Pragmatic language skills
- Transition from high school
- Building effective communication skills
- Sensory integration
- Memory
- Executive function
- Topics as suggested by parent(s)

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dialogue is available through an electronic subscription on [www.vbschools.com](http://www.vbschools.com).

We are anticipating a reduction in the production of paper copies of the *Dialogue* with the intent that no parents miss any future publications. In that regard, if you would like to receive a paper copy when future issues go to the web site, submit your name and full mailing address to the Parent Resource Center.

The Parent Resource Center  
Dialogue Subscribe  
1413 Laskin Road  
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

If it is more convenient, you may leave the request with your full mailing address on the voice mail at (757) 263-2066, the Parent Resource Center.

From time to time the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) sends announcement flyers home with the students through the school the students attend. If you would like to electronically receive these announcements as well as announcements of upcoming workshops offered by the Parent Resource Center, please send your email address to [ruth.page@vbschools.com](mailto:ruth.page@vbschools.com) with "announcement request" in the subject line.

# So Happy You Asked...

## What is the National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)?

The NICHCY is a center that provides information to the nation on disabilities in children and youth; programs and service for infants, children, and youth with disabilities; IDEA, the nation's special education law; and research-based information on effective practices for children with disabilities. The services of NICHCY are made possible through funding from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education. The NICHCY Project Officer from OSEP is Dr. Judy L. Shanley.

NICHCY offers publications in English and in Spanish. These can be downloaded or provided in print. There are fact sheets on specific disabilities, state resource sheets, parent guides, resource lists, and much more. All publications on the [www.nichcy.org](http://www.nichcy.org) website are free. Some print copies of publications have a minimal cost recovery fee, but most are free of charge. Print copies can be ordered by calling 800-695-0284 v/tty or by email [nichcy@aed.org](mailto:nichcy@aed.org).

## Special Education Advisory Committee

The Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is a committee of parents, community agency representatives, and educators who are concerned with the development of quality education for students with disabilities. All meetings of the committee are open to the public. At the beginning of each monthly meeting, there is a designated time for public comment. This is an opportunity for patrons to share successful educational experiences and/or express concerns regarding educational issues for students with disabilities.

The committee membership includes Sandra Hermann (*Chairperson*), Kara Russell (*Vice Chairperson*), Marianne Stinson (*Secretary*), JoAnna Bryant, Ping Camano, Deirdre Fisher, Judith Green, Ronica Henry, Suzie Kumpf, Honey Low, Kathy Major, Jennifer McElwee, Robert Mitchell, Ruth Page, Lisa Parker, Beth Callahan, Jan Solock, Carolyn Stark, Cheryl Ward, and Norm Brown.

Below is a schedule of meeting dates for the remainder of this school year. Except for the evening meetings held at Landstown High School and the Central Library, the monthly meetings are held at the Laskin Road Annex located at 1413 Laskin Road, Room 25. For further information and/or clarification regarding the meetings, please call the Parent Resource Center, 263-2066.

Monday, November 17, 2008	Landstown HS <i>Resource Fair</i>	6:30 p.m.
Monday, December 8, 2008	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Monday, January 12, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Monday, February 9, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Monday, March 9, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Monday, April 20, 2009	Landstown HS Schola	6:30 p.m.
Monday, May 11, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Monday, June 8, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.

**An Exciting Opportunity for Parents...**planned and sponsored by the SEAC in collaboration with the Office of Programs for Exceptional Children

### **SEAC Resource Fair**

November 17, 2008

6:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Landstown High School

Cafeteria

This is an opportunity to visit vendors from our community who provide services to families of students with disabilities. Over 60 participating agencies are expected to have displays and representatives on hand to provide disability related information. You are welcome to come and go during the hours of 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. At the end of the display period, there will be a short business meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee. Since this is the November meeting date; there will be an opportunity for public comment prior to the business session.