

Dialogue

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

FROM THE DIRECTOR Robert Mitchell, Director, Office of Programs for Exceptional Children

The Parent Resource Center is now the Parent Support and Information Center (PSIC). It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you Dr. Brenda D. Reid. Dr. Reid succeeds Ruth Paige who retired after 12 years as Parent Resource Center Coordinator. Dr. Reid has served as a teacher for students with special needs, as well as an elementary school assistant principal.

As the Parent Support and Information Center Coordinator, she will assist parents and educators to better understand the special education process and regulations, serve as a neutral facilitator between parents and schools to help solve problems related to special education, clarify the roles of parents, as well as educators, related to special education services. Dr Reid will be a neutral and confidential sounding board to explore options for resolving special education related disagreements. She will advise callers concerning communication strategies that help support a team approach to a child's educational program and advocate for a fair process, while serving as a resource for disability related information and referrals.

Dr. Reid plans to take the Parent Support and Information Center to the community. Workshops and trainings will be provided for parents, teachers, and students with disabilities throughout the city at various locations. The PSIC offers a lending library, newsletter, phone/walk-in consultations and other services to parents, students and educators.

Parent Support & Information Center Goal

- To ensure effective communication between parents and school personnel for the benefit of students with disabilities

Objectives

- Clarify the role of parents, as well as educators related to special education services.
- Serve as a resource for disability related referrals.
- Provide services that will strengthen the bond between home, school, and the community.
- Foster a rapport between the families of students with disabilities and their schools.

The Parent Support and Information Center hours of operation are: Monday -Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Friday 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. For your convenience, please call the Parent Support and Information Center before visiting; occasionally the center is closed for training and workshops.

July 7, 2009 A Significant Date

The Virginia Department of Education finalized the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* effective July 7, 2009. The following are highlights of changes:

Changes to Definitions	All disability categorical definitions have been refined.
Clarification of FAPE Eligibility as it refers to age of majority students	Only those students receiving a standard or advanced diploma become ineligible for services through age 21. Those students with GEDs do NOT count!
Terminology	New terminology for Mental Retardation (MR) is now Intellectual Disability (ID) Emotional Disturbance (ED) is now Emotional Disability (ED) Severe Disabilities (SD) is no longer a recognized disability in VA.
Specific Changes for Developmental Delays (DD)	Developmental Delays (DD) allowable disability category through age 6 rather than age 8
Changes to Eligibility Observations	All suspected disability categories – including Speech and Language Impaired – require an observation to be completed
Age of Transition	Age 14 instead of 16 – is used as consideration of transition services; this will especially impact IEP transition goal writing in the middle schools.
Virginia Procedural Safeguards Notice	The Virginia Procedural Safeguards Notice has been revised as of August 2009. (Be sure you have the latest revision.)

Parents may locate the Virginia Regulations Governing Special Education on the Virginia Department of Education Website, www.pen.k12.va.us or you may call (804) 225-3252.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Regarding Destruction of Educational Records

Notice is hereby given that Virginia Beach City Public Schools intends to destroy state assessment records, including collections of evidence for the Virginia Alternate Assessment Program and Virginia Grade Level Alternative assessments that were administered prior to 2008. In accordance with federal and state laws, collections of evidence are maintained for one year after the administration date. A permanent record of the student's assessment results is maintained in perpetuity.

Any student meeting this criterion may review and/or receive these records by contacting the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment at (757) 263-1030 to schedule an appointment by November 2, 2009. Destruction of these records will begin December 2009. For a complete list of the types of special education records being destroyed, visit vbschools.com and select student records found under the "quick links" section or call (757) 263-2700.

Update of the Special Education Audit

The Special Education Audit Progress Report was presented to the School Board on June 30, 2009. Seventy-two percent (72%) of the audit action item recommendations were reported completed with twenty-eight (28%) of the items in progress. The completed audit recommendations are the following:

- Improved communications regarding transition among the elementary, middle and high schools;
- Updated OPEC job descriptions for special education coordinators and specialists;
- Reassigned the Early Discoveries pre-kindergarten program to the Office of Elementary Instructional Services;
- Developed an integrated therapy model to support inclusive education and team teaching;
- Revised and implemented the Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) lesson plan policy;
- Developed common time for special and general education teachers to allow appropriate consultation and collaborative planning for their students, including those with learning disabilities; and
- Continued to integrate disability related learning strategies and differentiated instruction into the general education curriculum and provided ongoing professional development to teachers and staff.

The audit recommendations in progress are the following:

- Some reorganization of administrative staff and reassignment of shared responsibilities to other departments (e.g., *homebound services, Section 504, etc.*);
- Systemic data collection on inclusionary practices;
- Development of an explicit functional curriculum;
- Implementation of a division-wide positive behavioral support program; and
- Continued Student Support Team (SST) training on research-based interventions and data collection on effective interventions for over-represented groups in special education.

Work will continue toward completing the audit recommendations. As the new school year gets under way, parents are encouraged to be proactive in their child's education. Please plan to attend all parent-teacher conferences, request information about your child's progress, and be an active member in the development of your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Remember you are your child's best advocate!

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 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 issues for students with disabilities.

The committee membership includes: Sandra Hermann (Chairperson), Kara Russell (Vice Chairperson), JoAnna Bryant (Secretary), Norman Brown, Beth Callahan, Ping Camano, Patricia Davis, Judith Green (Consultant), Doral Jackson, Suzie Kumpf (Consultant), Sharon LaVier, Bonita Lyman, Kathy Major, Robert Mitchell (Consultant), Lisa Parker, Brenda Reid (Consultant), Jan Solock, Carolyn Stark, Marianne Stinson, and Cheryl Ward.

Below is a schedule of meeting dates for the remainder of the 2009-10 school year. Except for two evening meetings held at Landstown High School, the monthly meeting will be held at the Laskin Road Annex (LRA) located at 1413 Laskin Road, room 25. For further information and clarification regarding the meetings, please call the Parent Support and Information Center, 263-2066.

Mon, September 14, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.	Mon, February 8, 2010	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Mon, October 5, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.	Mon, March 8, 2010	Landstown High	6:30 p.m.
Mon, November 9, 2009*	Landstown High	6:30 p.m.	Mon, April 12, 2010	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Mon, December 14, 2009	LRA	9:00 a.m.	Mon, May 10, 2010	LRA	9:00 a.m.
Mon, January 11, 2010	LRA	9:00 a.m.	Mon, June 14, 2010	LRA	9:00 a.m.

*SEAC Resource Fair
November 9, 2009
6:30 - 9:00 p.m.
Landstown High School Cafeteria

The Resource Fair 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 browse 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. There will be an opportunity for public comment prior to the business section of the meeting.

What Does the Law Say?

FAPE

Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia defines “Free appropriate public education” or FAPE meaning special education and related services that:

1. Are provided at public expense, under public supervision and direction, and without charge;
2. Meet the standards of the Virginia Board of Education;
3. Include an appropriate preschool, elementary school, middle school or secondary school education in Virginia; and
4. Are provided in conformity with an individualized education program that meets the requirements of this chapter.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA of 2004) defines FAPE requirements by clarifying that a free appropriate public education must be available to any individual child with a disability who needs special education and related services, even though the child has not failed or been retained in a course, and is advancing from grade to grade. IDEA’s view on the Least Restrictive Environment states (1) children with disabilities, to the maximum extent appropriate, be included in public or private institutions or other care facilities are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (2) special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Mark Your Calendar!

Parent Happy Hour

October 28, Nov. 24, Dec. 16, 2009
 January 27, February 24, March 31, April 28, May 26, 2010
 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. and 5:30 - 6:30 p.m.
 Parent Support & Information Center
 Laskin Road Annex

Parent Happy Hour sessions are a time to share thoughts/concerns for the programs available in the school division. The sessions are informal and a variety of topics will be presented. Parents will be given an opportunity to request a topic for discussion. Take-home materials concerning the discussion topics will be available.

IEP Workshop for Parents	IEP Workshop for Parents
November 4, 2009	November 5, 2009
9:30a.m. - 11:00 a.m.	3:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Parent Support & Information Center (PSIC) 1413 Laskin Road Reservation: call 263-2066	

The individualized education program (IEP) is a written document that specifies the special education services and supports designed to meet the unique needs of individual students with disabilities. Parents have an important role in the planning and development of the IEP.

If these scheduled sessions do not meet your needs in regard to the day and time, you are encouraged to contact the PSIC to arrange a session that will meet your needs. 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 brenda.reid@vbschools.com. Please give your name, a phone number, and a couple of dates and times you are available to attend. There is no charge for participation.

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

- Data Collection & Record Keeping
- Understanding Special Education Part1&2
- Parenting Training Skills
- Transition Pre-school to Kindergarten, Elementary to Middle, and Middle to High School
- College Funding Workshop
- The Twice Exceptional Student
- Topics suggested by parents

So Happy You Asked....

Can I withdraw my child from receiving special education services?

Yes, parents can revoke consent for the continued provision of special education and related services. Once you revoke consent, the school system may no longer provide special education and related services to your child, and they may not use mediation or due process procedures to try to over ride your revocation of consent. Once you revoke consent, your child will no longer receive the services and supports that were included in his or her IEP. Additionally, there are a number of other consequences that may arise, such as how your child may be disciplined. It is important for you to ask questions about how your child’s education will be affected before revoking consent.

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The Parent Support & Information Center

Laskin Road Annex, 1413 Laskin Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23451, (757) 263-2066, brenda.reid@vbschools.com

The Parent Support & Information Center is a part of the Office of Programs for Exceptional Children, Virginia Beach City Public Schools. The purpose of the center is to provide parents of students with disabilities information and training to be participants with educators in the processes that enable students with disabilities to acquire knowledge and skills necessary to meet the challenges of the future. The Parent Support & Information Center offers a lending library, a newsletter, a variety of workshops, phone/walk-in consultation, and other services to parents and educators.

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Dialogue is a publication of the Office of Programs for Exceptional Children, Parent Support & Information Center, Virginia Beach City Public Schools, 2512 George Mason Drive, P.O. Box 6038, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456-0038. James G. Merrill, Ed.D., *Superintendent*; Sheila S. Magula, Ed.D., *Deputy Superintendent*; Robert L. Mitchell, *Director*, Office of Programs for Exceptional Children; Brenda D. Reid, *Coordinator*, Parent Support & Information Center.

The Virginia Beach City Public Schools, in partnership with the entire community, will empower every student to become a life-long learner who is a responsible, productive and engaged citizen within the global community.

The Virginia Beach City Public Schools prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, pregnancy and childbirth, or marital status. School Board policies and supporting regulation (Policies 2-33, 4-4, 5-7, and 6-7 and Regulation 5-44.1) provide equal access to courses, programs, counseling services, physical education and athletics, vocational education, instructional materials, and extracurricular activities. Violations of these policies should be reported to the Director of Student Leadership at 263-2020 or the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources at 263-1133.

Alternative formats of this publication which may include taped, braille, or large print materials, are available upon request for individuals with disabilities. Call or write the Parent Resource Center, 1413 Laskin Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23451, 263-2066 *Voice*, 263-2067 *fax*, or email brenda.reid@vbschools.com.