

Oklahoma Parents Center

Spring 2010



Mission Statement

Oklahoma Parents Center is dedicated to the inclusion and **equality of children** and adults with disabilities. Our mission is to train, inform, educate, and **support parents**, families, professionals and consumers in **building partnerships** that **meet the needs** of children and youth with the full range of disabilities ages birth through twenty-six.

Now Introducing: IEP Checklist Application for iPhone

The Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) of Virginia officially launched its **FIRST iPhone App** specifically designed to help families and teachers plan for education services for students with disabilities on January 28th, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency in Crystal City. PEATC's **IEP Checklist iPhone app** was developed in response to the rising need for families with children with disabilities to have on-the-spot intelligent assistance working with schools to develop Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). This new IEP app helps parents of students with special needs become better-informed advocates by making IEP information easier to access. The IEP Checklist has garnered much praise since its release in mid-January. The app can be downloaded from the PEATC website—**www.peatc.org**— or by entering “IEP Checklist” into the iTunes store search bar. The app is **free** and is compatible with the iPhone and the iPod Touch.

Parent centers and parents from all over the country are singing the praises of this IEP Checklist app.

Extended School Year

What are extended school year services?

Extended school year (ESY) services are defined as special education and related services which are available to children with disabilities beyond the regular instructional year as a necessary part of a FAPE (free appropriate public education) required by the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Each LEA (Local education agency) is responsible for establishing an ESY (Extended school year) policy and to provide ESY special education and related services to children with disabilities whose IEP team has determined ESY is necessary for the child. Related services can include, but are not limited to: counseling, physical or occupational therapy, speech or language therapy, or orientation and mobility services.

Special education and related services must be provided through an ESY program when it is determined by the IEP team that a child has regressed, or is predicted to regress. The regression must indicate such a severe degree of regression in a critical skill area that recovery of such skill loss following the break is unlikely or would require an unusually long period of time to recoup skills. In other words, the team must determine that the child will lose skills that were gained throughout the school year or take an unusually long time to regain those skills when school begins.

Other factors to be considered in determining the need for ESY services include, but are not limited to:

- the degree of the child's disability,
- the parents' ability to provide education in the home,
- the child's rate of progress,
- the child's needs for interaction with nondisabled peers,
- vocational training,
- and whether the requested services are an integral part of a program for children with similar disabilities.

Determination of need for ESY services must be made on an individual basis and addressed appropriately on the IEP.

An LEA may not limit ESY services to particular categories of disability or unilaterally limit the type, amount, or duration of those services. What this means, for example, is that a school can not have a policy that ESY is only for severe physical disabilities, or only happens during the month of June.

ESY for special education and related services summer programs is not to be confused with "optional extended school year" programs offered by school districts under Oklahoma State law (70 O.S. § 1-109.1). Teams may utilize the ESY technical assistance document provided by the OSDE-SES, which is located on the Website. Each IEP must include a copy of the ESY Checklist (OSDE Form 16) and other relevant documentation. Local and State policies and procedures for ESY must be followed.

ESY services, which are ***beyond the school day***, may be provided during, but are not limited to, the following times:

- in the evening after school, on weekends, during holiday breaks, and during the summer.

ESY services for ***preschool aged children*** are to be determined by the child's IEP team. If a child will be transitioning from services under Part C, EI, the child's third birthday occurs in the spring or summer, and the child has been determined to be eligible for the IDEA Part B services, the IEP team will determine whether ESY services are necessary based on all pertinent data, including background information, current evaluations, and information provided by SoonerStart.

If you believe that your child may need Extended School Year Services, contact your child's teacher as soon as possible. Do not wait until the last day of school. Gather your documentation. School papers that show a regression when your child is out of school, for example during spring break, are relevant data. If your child has missed out on related services during the school year due to absences of the provider, you may be entitled to receive compensatory services in the summer. Example: Your child's IEP states that she will receive two hours of speech therapy per week, but the school did not have a therapist until December because their speech therapist was on maternity leave. Those hours of services need to be made up.

A Parents Guide to Response to Intervention (RTI)

When IDEA was reauthorized in 2004 some new words emerged. One term is **Response to Intervention (RTI)**. Although response to intervention is not actually new, it is very new to IDEA, parents and to many school districts.

RTI in IDEA “scientifically research based instruction” in IDEA and NCLB emphasize the quality of instruction ALL children receive. NCLB and IDEA raise the bar in education by attempting to ensure that all children receive high quality education. The purpose of RTI is to catch struggling children early, provide appropriate instruction, and prevent the need to refer the child to special education. In an attempt by the US Department of Education to eliminate the wall that separates regular and special education, school districts may use 15% of IDEA funding for early intervention services in regular education.

RTI and Hope for Better Instruction

RTI offers hope that all children will receive better and more adequate instruction in math and reading. RTI provides a new and different way to identify students with specific learning disabilities.

What is RTI?

RTI is a tiered process of instruction that allows schools to identify struggling students early and provide appropriate instructional intervention that means more chances for success and less needs for special education services. RTI would also address the needs of children who previously did not qualify for special education.

Tiers in RTI

RTI is delivered to students in tiers or levels. There is much discussion about how many tiers should be in RTI models. The three tiered model is the most typical is Oklahoma. This means that there are different levels of intervention, based on the needs of the student. The level of intervention increases in intensity if a child does not respond to instruction.



RTI is NOT:

- Special seating in classroom
- Parent teacher conferences
- Suspension or retention

What does RTI mean for our kids?

States must put into place criteria for determining whether or not a child has a Specific Learning Disability (SLD). All children should receive appropriate and adequate instruction in the regular education classroom **before** being referred to special education.

The RTI process does not replace the need for a comprehensive evaluation.

Questions parents should ask about RTI

- How many tiers are included in the RTI model?
- How long will my child remain in a tier before moving to the next tier?
- How often will the school monitor my child's progress?

The Bottom Line

RTI, if used as intended, will be a significant advance in special education.

Written by Susan Bruce
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PRO-Parents of South Carolina, Inc.

The full text of this article can be viewed at: www.wrightlaw.com

For further information for RTI in Oklahoma visit: www.OklahomaParentsCenter.org

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Parent Tips for Transition Planning

Adapted from Technical Assistance ALLIANCE for Parent Centers

Successful and meaningful transition services are the result of careful planning. This planning is driven by a young person's dreams, desires, and abilities. It builds a youth's participation in school, home and community living. Transition planning helps to prepare young people for their futures. It helps them to develop skills they need to go on to other education programs after high school. It builds skills to live, work, and play in the community. It helps to build independence. Youth learn important adult decision making roles when they participate in this school-based planning.

Must transition planning be part of the Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

Transition planning is required in the IEP for students by age 16. Many students will begin this planning at age 14 or earlier so that they have the time to build skills they will need as adults. Parents should feel comfortable asking for transition planning to start earlier than age 16 if they believe it is needed. Transition planning, goals, and services will be different for each student.

Transition services include instruction, community experiences and building employment skills. They include post-school adult living objectives and, if needed, daily living skills training and functional vocational evaluations. All of these services must be provided in a manner that is sensitive to a student's cultural background and native language. Transition services are based on a student's strengths as well as needs. They consider a young person's preferences and interests. Activities that are part of transition services must be results-oriented. This means that they are focused on building specific skills.



Must students be involved in transition planning?

Schools are required to invite students to participate in their IEP meetings whenever transition goals or services are considered. Transition services are a required component of IEPs for students age 16 and older, and should be routinely discussed at IEP meetings. These services may become part of discussion and planning as early as the IEP team finds is needed for an individual student. (Some states require transition planning beginning at age 14.)

What if my child does not attend his or her IEP meeting?

If a youth is unable to participate in his or her IEP meeting or chooses not to attend, school personnel must take steps to ensure that the youth's preferences and interests are considered in developing the IEP. The best transition plans are those that help youth achieve their dreams and aspirations. Youth should be included in all aspects of planning and goal setting, and encouraged to participate at IEP meetings. This participation helps keep team members focused on the young person's individual needs and desires. It also helps the youth to develop the skills for making decisions and becoming a self-advocate. Preparing a young person for his or her role in transition planning helps them to become knowledgeable members of the IEP team.

How can I be sure that the IEP meets my child's transition needs?

Transition services begin with age-appropriate transition assessments. They include student and parent interviews, interest and skill inventories and other tools. In order for an IEP to meet a student's transition needs, both parents and school personnel participate in the assessment. The school does this through assessments and observations. Parents do it through day-to-day knowledge and talks with their child about their goals and dreams.

Answering the following questions may help guide how parents and students prepare for and participate in an effective IEP meeting that is focused on transition planning:

- **What does the young person want to do with his or her life?** What are his or her dreams, aspirations, or goals? The youth's answers should be incorporated into all aspects of transition planning. If a young person is nonverbal or has difficulty communicating, parents can still use their knowledge of their child to be sure that transition planning and services reflect the youth's preferences and choices.

Parent Tips for Transition Planning (cont.)

- *What are the young person's needs, abilities, and skills?* Parents should be familiar with how much assistance their child needs or does not need to accomplish tasks.
- *What are the outcomes that the youth and parents want?* Parents and their child should bring suggestions to the transition planning meeting. Suggestions might include the kind of services, actions, or planning they believe is needed to achieve desired goals in the transition section of the IEP.
- *Will the young person attend the transition IEP conference?* Parents can help by encouraging their son or daughter to attend. He or she will be invited. Together, parents and youth can prepare for the meeting. If the youth does not attend, parents may represent their desires and wishes.
- *How do young people develop self-advocacy skills?* Parents and school staff should encourage self-advocacy in young people. Staff should direct questions to the youth, even when it is the parents who may provide answers. It is important to encourage young people to have and state (by any means available to them) their own opinions. It is important for students to understand their disability and to ask for the accommodations they may need.
- *What are the programs, services, accommodations, or modifications the young person wants or needs?* Parents and their youth need to think about and be clear on what they want or need. IEP team discussions address these topics, but often parents and young people have had conversations at home that will be useful in planning.
- *What kinds of accommodations will students need when they go on to higher education or employment?* Parents and youth need to think what accommodations will be needed after high school and how the youth will obtain them.
- *Who will be responsible for what part of the transition plan in the IEP?* It is wise for parents and youth to know who is responsible for each transition goal. Each task should have a specific timeline that is included in the IEP.
- *Should the educational and transition programs emphasize practical or academic goals?* Does the young person need a combination of both? This will depend on the goals of each individual student.
- *What are the community-based training opportunities the school provides?* Parents and their child should decide how much to participate in those activities.
- *If a student plans on going to college, is he or she taking the courses needed to meet college entrance requirements?*
- *When will the young person graduate?* What kind of diploma option is the best choice?
- *Are work experience classes appropriate to reach employment goals?* Research suggests that youth have more successful employment outcomes after high school if they have had hands-on, work-based learning experiences as students.
- *How could the educational and transition program be more integrated into the regular program?*
- *Who will attend the IEP meeting?* Parents and the youth should become familiar with the roles and functions of team members. They should also know what community agencies might be present (vocational rehabilitation, etc.). Parents may request that a specific community agency be invited to the IEP meeting if the youth is or may be using services from that agency. Becoming familiar with adult service systems or agencies now can be helpful in making future decisions. At times parents may want a family member, friend, or advocate to go to planning meetings with them for support or to take notes.

Parents and youth will want to have a copy of the daily school schedule each quarter or semester. It is important to have information on all classes available so that their child can participate in selecting classes and the scheduling process.

A final tip: Parents will need to start thinking about their child's legal status before he or she turns 18. If a youth is not able to make informed decisions about major issues (medical treatment, living accommodations, financial arrangements, etc.), the family may need to learn more about guardianship or conservatorship.

IDEA 2004 requires that students be notified at least one year in advance of the rights that will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of majority (becoming a legal adult in that state). These rights include being the responsible person for planning and agreeing or disagreeing with services in the IEP. It is important that parents understand what this means for them and their role in planning. The age of majority is 18 in most states. By learning as much as possible about the options available for transition planning, a parent can ensure that their young person's rights are protected while they are earning the skills needed to develop independence.



Family/School Relationships: Relationships that Matter

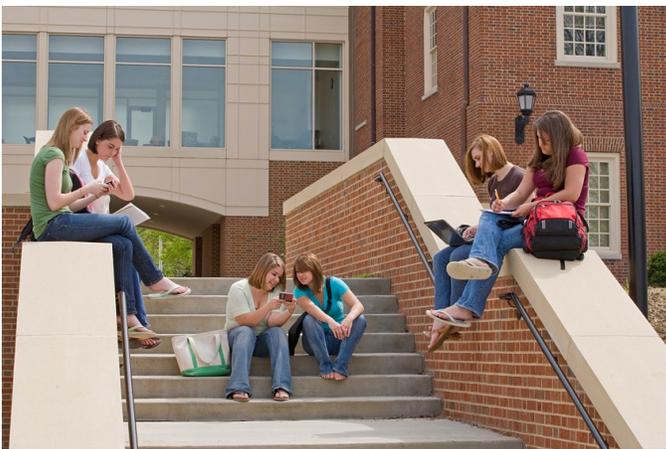
We often hear how important the three R's are in dropout prevention: *Rigor, Relevance, and Relationships*. Looking at the third R, Relationships, we naturally think first about the connections teachers and other school personnel are making with students—engaging them at a personal level; knowing each of them, their interests, their special problems, and their aspirations; caring about them as individuals; and thus not letting them fall through the cracks. And this is extraordinarily important. However, the notion of relationships with parents and families is every bit as significant in order to solve the dropout crisis. Positive personal and school relationships with parents and families translate into strong family engagement, one of the most powerful indicators of student success.

Focusing on Family Engagement, one of the National Dropout Prevention Center's Fifteen Effective Strategies. The evidence is solid on this strategy. What exactly is Family Engagement? Is it just getting parents to come to school functions? Sign report cards? Monitor homework? It is all these things, yet it is so much more. And when it is "*so much more*," the potential for improvement in students' attitudes, performance, and attendance is great. In Strategies to help solve our school dropout problem, authors Franklin Schargel and Jay Smink list ways that school can support family involvement:

- (1) Overcome barriers so schools are welcoming and inviting to all families;
- (2) Respect educational backgrounds of family members and understand the parents feel alienated from school due to their bad experiences;
- (3) Encourage active participation with extended hours, involving parents in decision making by extending school hours to weekends and evening;
- (4) Visit families in their homes, showing parents their importance to school;
- (5) Increase and broaden communication through the use of technology, finding ways to bridge the digital divide: and
- (6) Develop a strong school-home-community base, knowing that partnerships are crucial to authentic parent/family engagement.

The authors also recommend *ways that families can promote their own involvement*, and that includes:

- (1) Show an interest in school policies and help their children understand them;
- (2) Participate in school functions for fun and educational purposes;
- (3) Provide a home where education is important, thus providing those high expectations needed by students, especially those at risk; and
- (4) Volunteer in the school as often as possible. These are good starting points.



Engaging families is challenging but establishing *these authentic relationships with parents and families is necessary* if we are to reach our goals of higher graduation rates and brighter futures for our children. We hope this article brings this important topic to your front burner, and that some of the ideas and resources here will help you, no matter what your position, in school, community, or family.

Adapted from the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network Newsletter

Ask the Advocate

Q:

My son is in a life skills classroom at our middle school. The class had been planning a **field trip** for several weeks. The morning of the trip the teacher called me to say that because he was not toilet trained she was worried about her ability to change him while away from school. This issue had been discussed before and I suggested an aide support him on this trip as we had previously agreed. The teacher again refused and left him behind. He was upset and hurt because he was not included. What can I do to prevent this from happening again?

A:

There is not much comfort for this lost opportunity. The school district is responsible for ensuring a child's right to equal participation in school activities. Your son's IEP team needs to address this issue and find a solution. His IEP contains a section about extracurricular and other non-academic activities. Invite the district's Special Education Director to the IEP meeting. Not being toilet trained is no reason to deny him the same access to field trips as all the other students have. The team needs to be more creative about the best way to provide for his needs. Feel free to call the Oklahoma Parents Center for tips and strategies to help you work with your school.

A Note from the Oklahoma State Department of Education:

Parent Survey encourages greater Parental Involvement

Do schools facilitate parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities? This is the question Oklahoma must answer. To obtain this answer the state must survey parents of children with disabilities in our public schools. We cannot accurately answer this question if parents do not respond to the parent survey provided to them by their child's school district each year.

It is of vital importance to each district and to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE), Special Education Services (SES) that parents are encouraged to complete and return the parent survey to the OSDE-SES. The percentage of parents of students with disabilities, who report that schools facilitated parent involvement, to improve services and results, is reported to the local school districts and the public each year as a component of the schools district's data profile.



Sibshops Oklahoma



Brothers and sisters will have the longest-lasting relationship with a sibling who has a disability - **one that can easily exceed 65 years**. During their lives, they will experience most of the unique concerns and joys their parents do. But few siblings of children with special needs ever have a chance to talk about their issues with others who "get it" - until now.

Brothers and sisters of children with special needs now have a program that's just for them called **Sibshops**. At Sibshops, they'll have a chance to meet other siblings whose brothers and sisters have special needs and talk about the good and not-so-good parts of having a sibling with a disability. Most important, **they'll have fun!** In addition to receiving peer support, Sibshop participants will play lively "new games", learn about their siblings' disabilities and the services they receive, participate in cooking and craft activities, and make new friends. Sibshops are a spirited celebration of the many contributions made by brothers and sisters.

Currently, there are Sibshops in the [Oklahoma City](#) and [Tulsa](#) area, with plans to extend the program to five new communities within the year.

The Statewide Sibshop Program is a collaborative initiative funded by the Oklahoma Developmental Disabilities Council. Other partners include the Oklahoma Family Network, the Oklahoma Family Leadership Council at the Center for Learning and Leadership and the Child Study Center at OUHSC's Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics Section. The Statewide Sibshop Initiative will provide support and technical assistance to families, organizations or agencies who are interested in establishing Sibshops in their communities. There is also some first-year funding available through this initiative. If you are interested in learning more about Oklahoma's Statewide Sibshop Initiative or how to start a Sibshop in your community, please contact **Lori Wathen**, State Sibshop Coordinator 405-271-5700 extension 45180, toll free 877-441-0434 or lori-wathen@ouhsc.edu.

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March 18th
March 23rd
March 25th

"Basic Rights"*CNHS***Hugo***6:30 p.m.
Oasis "On the Road"***Idabel***8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Southeast Oklahoma Special Education Institute
Kiamichi Tech Center*McAlester*8 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Early Intervention Transition*CNHS***McAlester***6p.m.
Booth @ Edmond Resource Fair***Edmond H.S.***3-6p.m.
April 6th "What You Need To Know"*CNHS***Idabel***5-5:30
April 7th "People with Disabilities Awareness Day"***State Capitol***8:30-12:30
April 8th Booth @ Owasso Transition Fair***Owasso H.S.***5-8p.m.
April 9th Joining Forces Conf.***OKC***Metrotech Springlake Campus
April 28th-30th Children's Behavior Conference*Embassy Suites***Norman**
May 4th "Building Relationships to Create Successful Change"
OPC's State-Wide Conf.*Embassy Suites*Norman*8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS