

# Family Engagement Newsletter



## Working Together

By Wendy Overturf

As stated in this [document](#) from the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE), "all parents can and should participate meaningfully in their children's education, including those whose children receive special education services. The value of parent participation has been recognized under law since 1975, most recently as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (Coots, 2007). Many scholars and professionals in the field of special education have explored various approaches to collaboration since then, and research has demonstrated the benefits for all parties involved: from children and their families, to teachers and principals, to district administrators and the communities they serve."

CADRE's major emphasis is encouraging the use of mediation, facilitation, and other collaborative processes as strategies for resolving disagreements between parents and schools about children's special education programs and their support services. CADRE supports parents, educators, administrators, attorneys and advocates so they may understand and benefit from the full continuum of dispute resolution options that can prevent and resolve conflict. Ultimately, this leads to informed partnerships that focus on results for children and youth.

With this emphasis in mind, CADRE has developed [The Working Together Series](#). This series includes five interactive self-directed on-line courses. This series is for family members and educators and includes the following courses:

**Course 1: Introduction to the Working Together Series**

**Course 2: IEP Meetings and Beyond**

**Course 3: Listening and Responding Skills**

**Course 4: Managing and Responding to Emotions**

**Course 5: Focusing on Interests to Reach Agreement**

These courses provide families and educators with numerous strategies for working together and resolving conflicts. Anyone supporting children may benefit from this series. However, the setting in which collaborative problem solving and conflict resolution takes place within this series is typically the IEP meeting. A facilitator guide and other materials and resources go along with each course to offer additional learning opportunities. Spanish versions of the courses are expected to be released soon.

Parent-school communication is the foundation for successful collaboration and this resource provides an excellent tool for creating an educational environment that supports the abilities of all children.

## Statewide Events

### Youth in Partnership with Parents for Empowerment (YIPPE)

YIPPE is an opportunity for youth with disabilities (ages 14-21) and their parents to learn about the transition process in a unique way. [Learn more](#) about YIPPE and the dates and locations of free 2018-2019 trainings.

**Location:** Kalahari, WI Dells

### [Presentations for ALL: How to Design and Deliver Content for Diverse Audiences](#)

A FREE Webinar on accessible presentations! Presenter Luis Pérez is a technical assistance specialist for the National Center on Accessible Educational Materials. He has published three books on accessibility and is the current President of the Inclusive Learning Network of the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), which named him its 2016 Outstanding Inclusive Educator. The webinar will be held from 10:00 am – 11:00 am with 15 minutes of Q&A with Luis afterwards.

**Date:** December 7, 2018

See  
everything  
as an  
opportunity  
to learn  
something  
new.

## Statewide Events

### [2018 Special Education Collaborative Supports Conference](#)

This conference is for any person who teaches or supports students with IEPs with a focus on those that mentor, coach, and provide professional learning to educators at a school, district, CESA, institution of higher education, family support, or affiliated organization. The conference features a variety of sectional strands featuring current practices in the field of education including: College and Career Ready IEPs; Supporting Social, Emotional and Mental Health as a Foundation for Learning; Literacy Supports for Students with IEPs; Student, Teacher, and Peer Relationships; Family and Community Engagement; Inclusive Strategies; and Coaching, Facilitating, and Adult Professional Learning.

**Date:** December 13-14, 2018

**Location:** Wilderness Resort, WI Dells, WI

### [Reaching High Expectations: Success for ALL-Technology Rich Solutions for Supporting Inclusive Practices](#)

This conference with a UDL (Universal Design for Learning) lens is a great way to connect with colleagues engaging in meeting the full range of learner variability. From the context of the learning environment, to lesson design, and the foundation mindset needed to connect every student to learning, this conference will meet a wide range of professional learning needs.

**Date:** February 7-8, 2019

**Location:** Glacier Canyon Lodge at the Wilderness, Wisconsin Dells, WI

### [Transition Conference 2019: Continuing the Pathways to Brighter Futures!](#)

Join hundreds of teachers, administrators, parents, students, support staff, community agencies and other stakeholders across the state and region for the Wisconsin Transition Conference for youth and young adults with disabilities. The conference, Continuing the Pathways to Brighter Futures, invites participants to imagine, learn and connect with others, share their learned experiences, evidence-based practices, advocacy, and/or resources for transition age youth receiving services.

**Date:** February 21-22, 2019

**Location:** Kalahari Resort & Convention Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI



## At Home Learning Strategies

### Letter Writing

At this time of year, many children sit down to write an important letter addressed to the North Pole. Other children may be writing thank you notes and party invitations this month. [An Introduction to Letter Writing](#) covers activities for many common types of letter writing, including formal and informal letters, thank you notes, letters of complaint, and more. For kids who prefer to work online, or need a more step-by-step approach, try Read, Write, Think's [Letter Generator](#). It's set up to help kids write either a friendly letter or a business letter.



For character-related fun, the PBS Kids website has a [Letter Writer Helper](#) that features "Arthur" and shows kids the various parts of a "good old-fashioned" letter, an email, a greeting card, and a postcard.

### Discover December Holidays Around the World

Middle school-aged children can learn about many of the December holidays that occur around the world at [Celebrating December](#). This website offers a brief view of these holidays and includes audio clips.



### Holiday Baking

Baking with your child can promote great synergy and create lasting memories. In addition, following a recipe can reinforce basic reading and measuring skills. The Parents website has "[kid-friendly](#)" [cookie recipes](#) that would be fun to make with your child.

### Holiday Travels

Many families travel during the holidays. Incorporate learning activities into the adventure! [PBS Parents](#) has some ideas that will help make the trip more fun and promote learning



### Holiday Reading

The cold weather and time-off from school for winter break is a perfect time to encourage reading. Take time to read with your child daily. Check out these [holiday-themed book suggestions](#).

### Managing Anxious Kids During the Holidays

The holiday season can be a happy and enjoyable time for families, but it can also be an extremely busy one, commonly adding holiday stress and anxiety to children during school vacations. During this time of year, there are lots of fun and meaningful activities going on, both at home and at school. While that can be a positive thing for kids, enriching their lives with much-loved traditions and rituals, the reality is that sometimes in all of the hustle and bustle, their schedules and routines are disrupted, bedtimes are pushed back, and social skills are put to the test.

In this blog post, you will find some [seasonal tips](#) for helping children (and parents) survive this season enjoy this time of year.



## Online Resources: Communication

### [Center for Parent Information and Resources \(CPIR\)](#)

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA) strongly supports parents' right to be involved in the special education their child receives. As IDEA states: Almost 30 years of research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by... strengthening the role and responsibility of parents and ensuring that families ... have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children at school and at home. This website provides many resources for parents so that they can be an active participant in the IEP process

### [Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative \(WSPEI\)](#)

WSPEI is all about partnerships. Its goal is to help families and school districts find or create the resources that will help them build positive working relationships that lead to shared decision making and better outcomes for the student. It supports increased sharing of information among families, schools, projects, organizations and agencies through networking meetings, conferences, person-to-person contact, and media.

### [It Takes a Village to Teach a Child](#)

This website has links to additional resources related to home-school communication and conflict resolution strategies.

### [Family School Partnerships 2.0](#)

This is a link to a booklet developed by the National Education Association. *Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0* outlines ten strategies that are the foundation for creating effective partnerships, like building one-to-one relationships between families and teachers that are linked to learning

### [Count on Families! Engaging Families in Math](#)

Ideas and resources for families to grow children's mathematical learning and for educators to guide families in the process.

### [Tips for Parents: Parent –Teacher Conferences](#)

Information on effective parent-teacher conferences. Information is available in both Spanish and English.

### [Bridging Home-School Communications: Helping Parents Begin Conversations with Teachers](#)

Resource with a variety of suggestions to assist parents in developing more effective ways to communicate with teachers.

### [KidSource Online](#)

This website has questions and answers that can help parents get the most out of talking to their child's teacher or with other school staff members.

### [Building Parent-Teacher Relationships](#)

This website provides strategies that have been effective in improving parent-teacher communications.

### [National PTA Standards for Family-School Partnerships](#)

This website outlines the standards developed by the National PTA for effective family-school partnerships. The website also has links to other resources related to building these partnerships.



## How Smooth is Your Ride? The Importance of Self Care Webinar 12/19/18

In this webinar, participants will be guided through a tool for self-assessment to determine how in balance their lives are currently in eight different areas:

- personal development
- career or life work
- money and finances
- health and well-being
- relationships and romance
- friends and family
- recreation and fun
- physical environment.

The subject of self-care will be examined, its importance and strategies shared to assist participants in making improvements in this area.

Presenter: Jodi Anderson is the Family Engagement Coordinator for the Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project (WDBTAP). She is mom to two special needs boys and also works full time in addition to her position at WDBTAP. She understands firsthand the importance of incorporating a self-care routine into busy and often challenging lives.

[Register](#) for this webinar!

## WI FACETS

Webinars  
Trainings  
Workshops

### Event title links to information & registration for WI FACETS FREE workshops & webinars:

By phone, Sandra: 877-374-0511

All webinars 12:00—1:00 PM  
(unless otherwise noted)

#### [Dispute Resolution Options](#)

Date: December 3, 2018

Presenters: Nissan Bar-Lev, CESA 7  
and Courtney Salzer, WI FACETS

#### [Speech and Language Assessments and Updates](#)

Date: December 4, 2018

Presenter: Andrea Bertone, WI DPI

#### [Independent Education Evaluations \(IEE\)](#)

Date: December 5, 2018

Presenter: Sarah Okonkwo, WI  
DPI

#### [El camino a la adultez, lo que todo padre debe de saber](#)

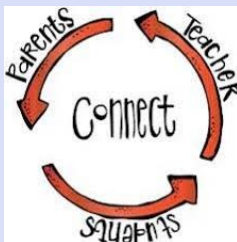
Date: December 13, 2018

Presenter: Nelsinia Ramos,  
WI FACETS

#### [How Smooth is Your Ride - the Importance of Self Care](#)

Date: December 19, 2018

Presenter: Jodi Anderson, Family  
Engagement Coordinator for the  
Wisconsin Deaf-Blind Technical  
Assistance Project (WDBTAP)



## Communication Options for Families

Families and schools have a “built-in” partnership with the child as the focus. This partnership will grow when parents and school staff work together. Disagreements may happen but being able to work together improves a child’s education. The Wisconsin Statewide Parent Educator Initiative (WSPEI) has developed a resource for parents that may assist them with communication and collaboration with their child’s school.

[Communication Options for Families](#) briefly outlines:

**What can you do if questions or concerns arise?**

**What can you do in the IEP meeting?**

**What if concerns are not fully resolved in the IEP meeting?**

**Next Steps: What can be done if these attempts at solving problems don’t work?**

(This document is also available in [Spanish](#) and [Hmong](#))

Given the nature and number of people who might be at the child’s IEP meeting, parents may not know who to contact if they have questions or concerns after the meeting.

With that in mind, another included resource is a chart which parents can complete with school and district level contact information. Also included is WI DPI contact information. Many districts complete this form for the parents and give it to them at the IEP meeting as many concerns can best be addressed at the local level.

In addition to the contact information noted on the chart, WI FACETS also provides support to families. [WI FACETS](#) has “Help Desk” staff that are available to assist parents with questions about programs, services and resources. The staff can also provide parents with information and referrals to other programs/agencies. Although WI FACETS does not provide legal advice or legal representation the staff can help parents brainstorm options and solutions. WI FACETS Help Desk can be reached at 414-374-4645 or toll-free at 877-374-0511.

## Research to Read

### Communicating with Families across Cultures: An Investigation of Teacher Perceptions and Practices

Eberly, Jody L.; Joshi, Arti; Konzal, Jean *School Community Journal*, v17 n2 p7-26 Fall-Win 2007

[Article Link](#)

**ABSTRACT:** Increasing diversity in the student population intensifies the need for and the difficulties of establishing culturally sensitive and meaningful communication between teachers and parents. This study examined the practices of early childhood and elementary teachers concerning culturally sensitive home-school communication. As a second phase of a multi-phase research design, focus group discussions were conducted with 21 participants. Discussions centered on the teachers’ understanding of familial influences on learning and their actual communication patterns with parents. Seven themes were identified related to such issues as: defining culture; exploring the relationship between culture, class, and child-rearing; recognizing one’s own biases; and reaching out to parents in a culturally sensitive manner. Implications for educators working with families from diverse cultures are discussed.

This monthly update is provided by the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training & Support (WI FACETS) to share statewide information regarding parent leadership and family involvement. *If you would like to receive this monthly update or if you would like to have your name removed from the distribution list, please [click here](#) or contact: Wendy Overturf at [woverturf@wifacets.org](mailto:woverturf@wifacets.org).*



## **Contributions to the Newsletter**

**Upcoming newsletter topic: January: Transition  
February: Intellectual Disabilities  
March: Early Childhood**

*To submit contributions, you may use either the attached word document for contributing articles, events, or resources. Send submissions to [woverturf@wifacets.org](mailto:woverturf@wifacets.org). If unable to access form, send you may send information in an email.*

*Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to sources of family involvement/parent leadership resources, advertisements for statewide trainings for parents, youth or parent/educator audiences, information about statewide parent agencies, recent research pertaining to family engagement, and family engagement success articles.*



This document was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs Grant No. H323A070022-11. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be:

State Personnel Development Grant (2015). Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Madison, WI, Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training, and Support, Inc.