



**YOUR VOICE MATTERS**  
**IT'S “*KEY*” TO THE PROCESS OF**  
**EMPOWERING PARENTS TO ENGAGE**

# WHAT IS PEATC?

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PEATC is a statewide nonprofit whose passion is to empower families in Virginia. While our central focus is on families with children who have disabilities, our other outreach areas include; Hispanic, Latino, Military, Family Engagement, and Early Childhood. We are considered the "Go To" place in Virginia for resources on many topics including anti-bullying, court-involved youth, transition planning, and many more! Check us out [www.peatc.org](http://www.peatc.org).

# PEATC PROVIDES....

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- **Individual phone consultations**
- **Workshops throughout Virginia**
- **Webinars/On Demand Training**
- **Factsheets**
- **Blog**
- **Resources**

**To assist parents in securing educational plans for their children leading toward adult lives that include**

- **Meaningful employment**
- **Friendships**
- **Community participation**

# HISTORY OF THE PARENT CENTERS

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**1975**

Education of ALL Handicapped Children Act became Federal Law

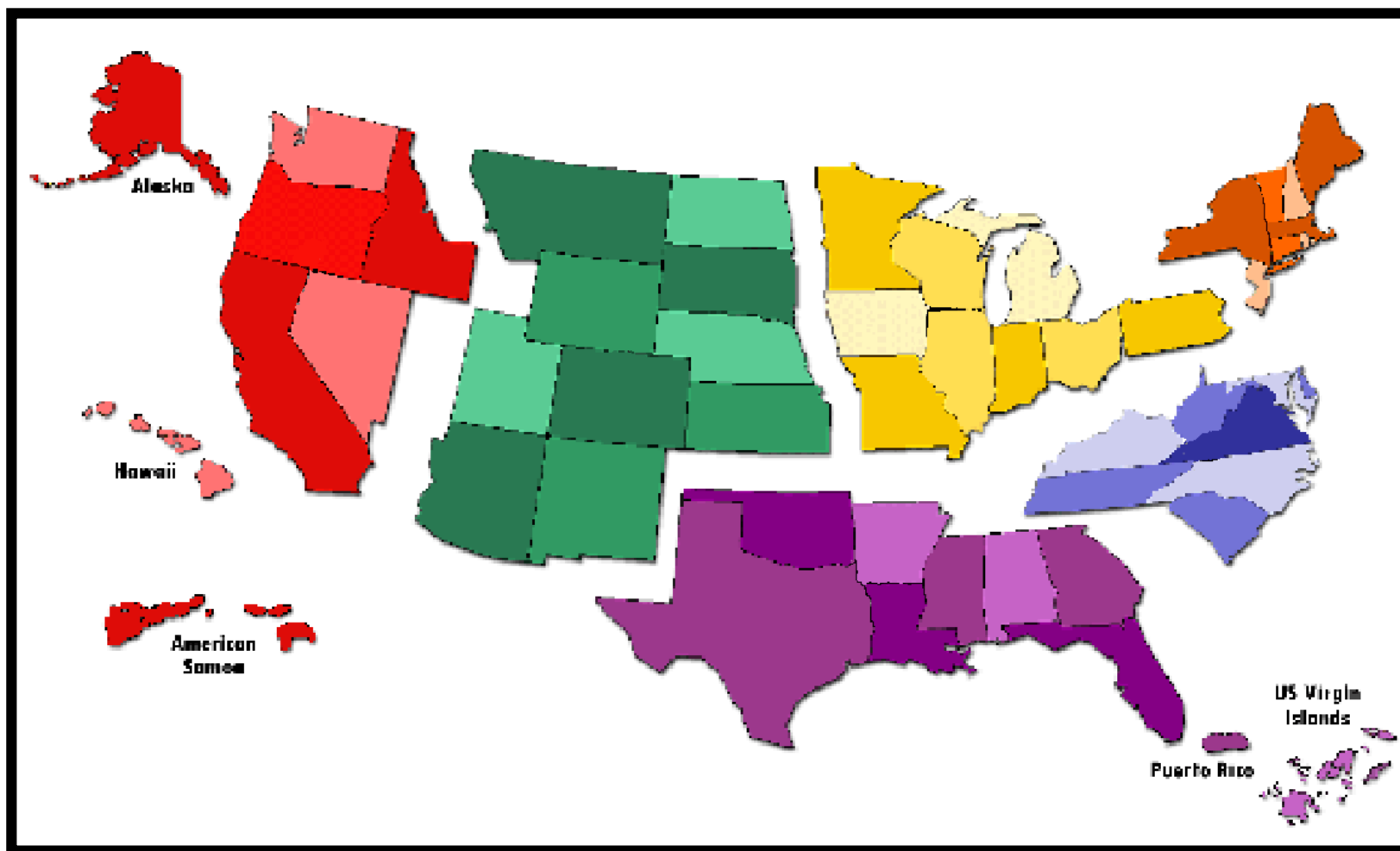
**1978**

Five Parent Training and Information Centers (PTI) were funded and PEATC was one of the first!

**1991**

Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRC)

Parent Centers are also supported by a Technical Assistance Project  
*Funded by the USDOE, OSEP*



# WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

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As a result of this workshop participants will:

- Explore your personal definition of parent engagement
- Empower parents to see the value of their contribution in the success of their child's education
- Explore the definition of an Advocate
- To provide constructive and practical tips and techniques to building strong collaborative relationships with your child's school

In my over 30 years of working with students as a teacher and administrator, I have run across all kinds of families – those that are completely uninvolved, those that are too involved, and everything in between. I have worked with students who come from rich families, poor families, immigrant families, families who are homeless, broken families, foster families, incarcerated parents, various races and ethnicities of families, and families that face crises the likes of which I could never have imagined. In all those years, with all those families, *I never ever met one that didn't care about their children.*

*Quote by Steven M. Constantino*

# WHAT DOES PARENT ENGAGEMENT MEAN TO YOU?

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# OVERALL GOAL FOR PARENT ENGAGEMENT

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The overall goal for supporting families, with all of their complexity and diversity, is to maximize the capacity, strengths and unique abilities so they can best support, nurture, love and facilitate opportunities for the achievement of self-determination, interdependence, productivity, integration and inclusion in all facets of community life for their family members.

# YOUR VOICE MATTERS

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Children's first and most important teachers are their parents.

Engaged parents are empowered to advocate for their children's and family needs.

# PARENTS



Wordle™

# QUALITIES OF AN ENGAGED PARENT

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- COMMUNICATE
- LISTEN
- SUPPORT
- CONCERNED
- INVOLVED
- PROBLEM SOLVERS
- LEADERSHIP ABILITIES
- RESOURCEFUL
- CONNECT
- ASSETS TO YOUR CHILD'S EDUCATION

See the *value* of your  
contribution!



# WHAT IS AN ADVOCATE?

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An Advocate is someone who fights  
for the rights of others.

An Advocate speaks, writes or  
stands up for something or  
someone.

# BUILDING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

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Engaging families in the school lives of their children is important to making sure that all children learn to their fullest potential.

# CELEBRATE THE “GIFTS”

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The “**gifts**” are the experiences, talents and wisdom that are transferred between individuals within the collaborative relationship. Celebrating the “**gifts**” creates a more authentic two-way dialogue between the parties.



# IS YOUR VOICE BEING HEARD?

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**SPEAK UP**  
EVEN IF  
YOUR VOICE  
**SHAKES**

# HOW TO EMPOWER THE DISENGAGED PARENT?

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# A POINT TO PONDER

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Disengaged people,  
regardless of who they are,  
are disengaged for a reason.  
They are not born disengaged  
but rather become disengaged.

# “WHO IS THE HARD-TO-REACH PARENT?”

Parents that don't seem to conform to  
the school's perceptions  
of standard communication protocols.

# PARENTS

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Are you making yourselves available to support in the success of your child's education?

# WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE

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School's Request/Barriers	Engaged Parent's Rely
Can't attend scheduled meeting	Suggest an alternate date & time, send an email or request the meeting be held via conference call
School calls	Return the call
Language barrier	Ask if a translator can accompany you
Classroom volunteers	What support can you offer <i>(remember your "gifts")</i>

# ENGAGING FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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Between individualized education program (IEP) meetings, required accommodations to student learning plans, the requirement to inform families of their due process rights, and so forth, there is a significant amount of engagement already inherent in the relationship.

*Or is it?*

# RESEARCH SHOWS

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With all of these opportunities for interaction, families of students with special needs report less interaction with schools, because of the perceived barriers in engagement  
(Rodriguez, Blatz, & Elbaum, 2014).



# THE REALITY IS...

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Even though there is often more established contact between families of students with special needs and schools, levels of family engagement when compared to general education remained about the same.  
(Derubetis & Yanok, 1989)

# RESEARCH SHOWS

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Families of students with special needs believe that it is important for them to be persistent with regard to the services their children need. Families of children with special needs will take initiative and action regardless or in spite of a school's failure to engage them. These families desire the school to facilitate their engagement in the education of their children.  
(Rodriguez, Blatz, and Elbaum, 2014)

# POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION

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- 1) Communications that occurs regularly
- 2) Communication that is focused on the child
- 3) Communication that allows a variety of methods of interaction



# AGREE OR DISAGREE

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- 1) Every family, regardless of their current situation, can make a contribution toward their children's education.
- 2) Parents should have a voice in the education of their children.
- 3) Respecting parent points of view is essential to successfully educating their children.
- 4) It is important to build a relationship with every family.
- 5) Helping parents guide their children's learning is as important as teaching the children.
- 6) Every family has value.

Employing strategies that extend relationship-building opportunities beyond the school walls so that every family can substantially contribute to the education of their child is critical to long-term success in engaging every family.

# PARENTS COMMITMENT

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I, \_\_\_\_\_ commit to becoming more engaged in my child's education by making time to volunteer when my schedule allows. I will contact one of my child's teachers and let them know that I want to be more involved in my child's education. I will share my "*gifts*" with my child's school because I now realize the value of my contribution.

# THANK YOU!

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

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