



## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

February 2025  
Volume 13 | Issue 2



### Think College for Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

By Wendy Overturf

[Think College](#) was formed in 2007 as a project of the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Its mission is to expand inclusive higher education options for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities across the United States. The initiative was developed to address the growing demand for postsecondary education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities and to provide resources, training, and research to support colleges and universities in creating inclusive programs. Think College also advocates for policy changes and increased funding to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the same educational opportunities as their peers.

Here is a closer look at Wisconsin's college programs for students with intellectual disabilities. The programs highlighted below are Comprehensive Transition Programs (CTPs) and therefore can provide federal financial aid. Go to the [Think College website](#) for more information on CTP.

#### [UW-Whitewater LIFE Program](#)

The LIFE (Learning is for Everyone) Program at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater offers a comprehensive college experience for young adults with intellectual disabilities. The program has two main components:

**Basic Program (2 years):** Focuses on foundational skills for personal growth, independence, and employment.

**Advanced Program (2 years):** Expands on these skills with further career training and support for students who have completed the Basic Program. LIFE students live in on-campus housing, participate in campus activities, and receive specialized instruction. The program integrates life and vocational skills training, such as budgeting, meal preparation, and job readiness, while providing support for both academic and social development. The program's goal is to prepare students for competitive employment and independent living, while fostering a balanced, healthy lifestyle through exercise and leisure activities.

#### [Edgewood College Cutting Edge Program](#)

Edgewood College's Cutting Edge Program in Madison is fully inclusive, meaning students with intellectual disabilities attend classes alongside their peers without disabilities. Students receive customized support based on their needs, including academic coaching, career readiness training, and social integration through extracurriculars. Cutting Edge emphasizes job training through internships and work placements in collaboration with local businesses. This program promotes independence while encouraging social engagement and skills that help students navigate real-world environments.

Both programs open doors for students with intellectual disabilities to experience college, develop independence, and prepare for employment. By providing life skills training, vocational support, and social integration, these programs empower students to thrive in their personal and professional lives while fostering a sense of community.

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## UPCOMING WI FACETS EVENTS

### [A Brief Introduction to DIRFloortime](#)

**Date:** February 5, 2025

**Presenter:** Helen Growth, Special Education Educator

### [IEP 2: Proceso de remisión en educación especial](#)

**Date:** February 6, 2025

**Presenter:** Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

### [IEP Checklist](#)

**Date:** February 11, 2025

**Presenter:** Ann Zielke, WI FACETS

### [Get Ready: Introduction to the Children's Long-Term Support Program](#)

**Date:** February 12, 2025

**Presenter:** Danielle Tolzmann, Family Voices of WI

### [Sirviendo en grupos 3: Procesos utilizados por los grupos](#)

**Date:** February 13, 2025

**Presenter:** Alejandra Loeza, WI FACETS

### [The Rights of Students in Adapted Physical Education: What Parents/Caregivers Should Know](#)

**Date:** February 19, 2025

**Presenter:** Brock McMullen, UW-LaCrosse

### [IEP 3: Evaluación y Elegibilidad en el Proceso del IEP](#)

**Date:** February 20, 2025

**Presenter:** Nathaly Silva, WI FACETS

### [A Future that Includes Employment: Setting a Vision for Job Success](#)

**Date:** February 24, 2025

**Presenter:** Sean Roy, Chief Innovation and Training Officer for TransCen Inc.

### [Top 5 Most Important Concerns During Adolescence](#)

(This webinar will not be recorded.) \*\*Spanish translation available

**Date:** February 25, 2025

### Creating Environments for Optimal Sensory Regulation

Date: February 26, 2025

Presenter: Cassie Wilcox, Occupational Therapist

### Sirviendo en grupos 4 & 5: Herramientas & Consejos y estrategias grupales

Date: February 27, 2025

Presenter: Alejandra Loeza, WI FACETS

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## HOME LEARNING



Promoting literacy through everyday activities and play is an effective way to build reading, writing, and language skills in a natural and engaging manner. These informal opportunities help children develop a love for reading and learning without the pressure of formal instruction. Here are some creative ways to incorporate literacy into daily life and play.

### **Cooking and Baking-Using Recipes**

- Have your child read the recipe steps or ingredients aloud. This encourages reading comprehension, vocabulary, and sequencing skills.
- Discuss the steps and let your child explain what comes next. This helps with understanding order and procedural text.
- Write labels for ingredients or use pre-made labels and encourage your child to match them to the items.

### **Grocery Shopping**

- Involve your child in making the shopping list. For younger children, use pictures or simple words, while older kids can write items themselves.
- Point out signs, labels, and prices in the store. Ask your child to find specific items by reading signs or labels.
- Use grocery flyers or apps to find and read coupons, practicing reading and math skills.

### **Household Chores**

- Turn sorting laundry into a literacy game by reading clothing labels or organizing items by color and type (i.e. socks, shirts, etc.)
- Let your child create simple chore lists. This encourages writing, planning, and the satisfaction of checking off completed tasks.
- Use sticky notes or labels around the house for common items (e.g., door, lamp, chair) to build vocabulary and word recognition.

### **Errands and Outings**

- During car rides, point out and read street signs, billboards, or store names. Discuss what they mean and their importance.
- If visiting a museum, zoo, or other attraction, let your child read maps, brochures, or tickets, practicing functional literacy skills.

### **Reading Nooks and Forts**

- Create a cozy reading space using blankets and pillows. Let your child bring their favorite books and spend time reading together.

· Encourage your child to read to their stuffed animals or dolls, building confidence in reading aloud. Celebrate the process rather than just the outcome. Encouraging any attempt at reading, writing, or storytelling builds confidence.

### February 14, 2025-Valentine's Day Literacy and Math Activities

- Have your kids write short stories, poems, or letters around the theme of love and friendship. Provide prompts like "Write about your favorite thing to do with a friend" or "Describe a kind act you have seen or done."
- Give your child a handful of candy hearts. Have them sort the hearts by color and create a bar graph to represent the number of each color. You can extend the activity by asking questions like "Which color has the most? How many more red hearts than blue hearts?"
- Using valentine-themed objects like paper hearts, candy hearts, or heart stickers have your child practice addition and subtraction by grouping hearts together or taking some away. For example, "You have 10 hearts, and you give 3 to a friend. How many are left?"
- Use small heart candies or paper hearts to practice skip counting by 2s, 5s, and 10s. Have your child group the hearts into piles of 2, 5, or 10 and use skip counting to find the total.



Take one thing everyone loves — pizza — and put a Valentine's Day twist on it. Either make it a family affair by having the kids help out with crafting heart-shaped pizzas of their own or cut down on cleanup by ordering out. Many pizzerias offer [heart-shaped pizzas](#) on Valentine's Day!



If there's one thing no Valentine's Day is complete without, it's treats. And lots of them. Instead of simply handing out chocolate hearts, up the ante with an impressive [Valentine's Day treat board](#), like this one from [Happy Hostess Collective](#). Almost — *almost* — too pretty to eat.

**ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES CONFERENCE**  
**BRIDGING SUCCESS: EMPOWERING DIVERSE LEARNERS**  
**Tuesday, August 5th**  
8:00 am to 3:30 pm  
Waukesha Area Technical College

[Save the date!](#)

Interested in presenting at the conference?  
Please submit proposals by **Thursday, February 20th.**

Mark your Calendars for the 2025 Endless Possibilities conference!

[Endless Possibilities Conference Wisconsin | WI FACETS](#)

Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Keynote: Mike Hipple ([WI AAC Network](#))

**Bridging Success: Empowering Diverse Learners**

Through accommodations, technology and innovation, educators and families can help students thrive in school and prepare for success after school. We will learn about Augmentative and Assistive Communication, how to support engaged readers, and learn what others are doing to support positive outcomes for students with disabilities to achieve their goals.

Interested in presenting at the conference? <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZM9M2YM>

- Please submit your proposal by Thursday, February 20, 2025

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## UPCOMING STATE EVENTS

### Training for Home Language Interpreters: Supporting Families through the Special Education Process

For those seeking training for home language interpreters for families at IEP meetings, DPI has partnered with WI FACETS, LEAs, and other organizations to develop a one-day training for home language interpreters who interpret for families at IEP meetings. Language interpretation training is a requirement to meet the provisions outlined in DPI's [Providing Language Assistance to Parents guidance document](#). The training provides increased awareness of state and federal regulations related to the educational rights of students who receive special education through an IEP and who may also be English Language Learners. The training also provides increased knowledge and resources related to legal responsibilities and ethical considerations for translation and interpretation of special education terms and concepts.

Each training date covers the same content areas detailed in the description above, it is not necessary to register for more than one date.

To register, please choose an option for one of the training dates below:

[February 7, 2025 – 8:00am-2:00pm](#) – VIRTUAL - There is still time to [register!](#)

[February 10, 2025 – 8:30am-3:00pm](#) – IN-PERSON – Reedsburg – [Informational Flyer](#) –

**Hurry! Registration closes on February 3<sup>rd</sup>**

[March 7, 2025 – 8:30am-2:30pm](#) – IN-PERSON – Theresa – [Informational Flyer](#) –

**Registration will close on February 28<sup>th</sup>**

To find out how to partner with WI FACETS to bring this training to your area contact Lori Karcher, [lkarcher@wifacets.org](mailto:lkarcher@wifacets.org)

### [23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Wisconsin Transition Conference](#)

Join hundreds of your colleagues at the 23rd Annual Transition Conference. In addition to the keynote speakers, the conference will have over 20 breakout sessions. There also will be opportunities to network with peers.

**Dates:** February 13-14, 2025

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

### 9th Annual Celebrating Abilities Special Education Family Forum

Celebrating Abilities is a Special Education Family Forum for Milwaukee Public Schools families and the surrounding community, offering workshops, expert presentations, networking to help families navigate disability services and celebrate their children's strengths. You will also have access to numerous community agencies in one location! This year's workshops include • Transition Planning and Self-Directed IRIS Program • Health Equity for Individuals on the Autism spectrum • IEP Bootcamp • SSI and Disability Benefits.

**Snacks, lunch, and childcare provided.**

**Please register:** <https://mpsmke.com/mpsca2025>

**Questions? Call (414) 475-8199.**

March 8, 2025 • 8:30 am - 1:30 pm.

Marshall High School- 4141 N 64th St. Milwaukee WI 53216

### [36th Annual Autism Conference](#)

The statewide conference brings the autism community together to learn, connect, and belong. It's a place where autistic adults, parents and family members, and professionals come to share experiences and learn together.

**Dates:** April 3-5, 2025

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

### [Circles of Life Conference](#)

**Dates:** May 8-9, 2025

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

Circles of Life is Wisconsin's annual conference for families who have children with disabilities and the

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## FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### **Resource from the Waisman Center**

The Waisman Center has a new resource for families and caregivers of children with developmental concerns or already diagnosed disabilities who are just starting their journey. [Finding Your Way: Videos for Families](#) is a series of 5-minute videos that give viewers a short overview of what they need to know, where to learn more, and how to connect. Some topics include Birth to 3, Early Childhood Special Education, Katie Beckett Medicaid, and outpatient therapies. Visit the [Finding Your Way](#) webpage to view these videos along with links to important resources.

### **[Open Enrollment](#)-Wisconsin**

This program allows parents to apply for their children to attend a public school outside of their resident district. The regular open enrollment application period for the 2025-26 school year **begins on February 3, 2025, and ends at 4:00 pm on April 30, 2025**. The best way to apply is online. See the website for more information and the application.

### **[Wisconsin Youth Health Transition Initiative](#)**

Healthcare Transition is the change from pediatric to adult healthcare services. This transition can be very complex for youth with disabilities or special healthcare needs. This transition typically takes place between the ages of 12 and 26 years. The Wisconsin Youth Health Transition Initiative aims to make healthcare transition easier for youth with special healthcare needs in Wisconsin. They do this by developing and sharing healthcare transition resources with families and healthcare providers. They also work with healthcare providers to support best practice transition care for patients with disabilities and special healthcare needs.

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## ONLINE RESOURCES: Intellectual Disabilities



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

This website has fact sheets on intellectual disabilities and includes links to resources related to infants, toddlers, and school-age children. The website also has links to other organizations that support individuals with intellectual disabilities.

### **[Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](#)**

The Wisconsin DPI website has information related to eligibility criteria, programming and services, and assessment for students with intellectual disabilities. The disability category criteria eligibility forms assist IEP teams with determining if a child has a disability. However, using these forms alone is not sufficient for completing an evaluation and developing a student's IEP. To ensure compliance with implementing a full, individual, and comprehensive evaluation, go to the Wisconsin DPI [Comprehensive Special Education Evaluation web page](#). On the page you will also find information on how to use the [Six Areas of Academic and Functional Skill](#) in the IEP development process.

### **[College Career and Community Readiness for students with IEPs](#)**

This website has resources to support students at all ages and developmental levels to be independent and college, career, and community ready.

### **[Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities \(BPDD\)](#)**

The mission of the BPDD is to unite all of Wisconsin in supporting its residents with developmental disabilities

to lead their most independent lives. They have numerous [toolkits](#) and [videos](#) that may be helpful for individuals with disabilities and their families to help prepare for adult life.

### [American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(AAIDD\)](#)

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) mission is to promote progressive policies, sound research, effective practices, and universal human rights for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

### [Exceptional Parent](#)

Exceptional Parent provides practical advice, emotional support, and the most up-to-date educational information for families of children and adults with disabilities. It also provides information on special healthcare needs to physicians, allied health care professionals, and educational professionals who are involved with families who have children with disabilities.

### [National Down Syndrome Society \(NDSS\)](#)

The mission of the NDSS is to be the national advocate for the value, acceptance, and inclusion of people with Down syndrome. The vision of NDSS is a world in which all people with Down syndrome have the opportunity to enhance their quality of life, realize their life aspirations, and become valued members of welcoming communities. Their website gives facts about Down syndrome, has a section that dispels common misperceptions, and has numerous links related to advocacy.

### [The Down Syndrome Association of Wisconsin \(DSAW\)](#)

The DSAW's mission is to provide support to Wisconsin families and individuals with Down syndrome and related disabilities through awareness, education, information, programs, services, and the exchange of ideas and experiences.

### [Disability Scoop](#)

While the website provides news related to many disabilities, this link is specifically related to Intellectual Disabilities. You may also register to receive frequent email updates.

### [The Arc](#)

The mission of the Arc is to promote and protect the human rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and actively support their full inclusion and participation in the community. Local chapters provide individual advocacy, programs, services, and supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Information on local, state, and national programs is available on the website. Click [here](#) for local chapters in Wisconsin.

### [Special Olympics Wisconsin](#)

Special Olympics Wisconsin (SOWI) provides year-round sports opportunities for thousands of athletes across the state, regardless of age or skill level. Competing in 18 Olympic-style sports, these athletes strive to beat personal records and defy expectations. From swimming to snowboarding, they showcase the talents and triumphs of people with intellectual disabilities at local, national, and even global events like the World Games.

### [I'm Determined](#)

This website has resources for students related to self-determination and self-directed IEPs.

### [Transition Programming Beyond 18](#)

The Beyond Age 18 website is designed to help teams create meaningful, individualized special education services for students with IEPs who stay in high school after their peers graduate.

### [Opening Doors to Transition Series](#)

The Opening Doors series provides a process of planning for life after high school that includes making decisions, planning, and taking actions. Specifically, it is a tool for students with IEPs to use as they begin to plan for a successful future. There are four Opening Door guides to assist with transition planning.

### [Supported Decision-Making: Because Choice Matters](#)

This resource provides information about Supported Decision-Making. Supported Decision-Making is a process of supporting and accommodating an adult with a functional impairment to enable the adult to make life decisions without impeding the self-determination of the adult.

### [Wisconsin Transition App](#)

The Postsecondary Transition Plan (PTP) is the part of the IEP that focuses on transition. Using this app will provide valuable information to share and talk about with the student's IEP Team, such as education or training, employment, and independent living goals for after high school. It will also provide information on

the student's preferences, interests, needs, and strengths.

### [Resources for Health and Safety for Students with Disabilities](#)

The resources listed on this website may assist administrators, general and special education teachers, parents and family members, and others that support the education of students with disabilities to foster self-determination and understanding of safety, well-being, and rights individuals have to report and communicate crimes including violent victimization such as physical or sexual abuse.

### [Think College Search](#)

The only directory of its kind, Think College Search features 353 colleges and universities that offer postsecondary education programs for students with intellectual disabilities. Users of this searchable online database can filter by state, length of program, type of school, options for living on campus, and more.

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## Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports ([PBIS](#)) is a strategy schools use to teach children expected behavior. Check this [article](#) for more detailed information on PBIS.

One of the principles of PBIS is to use positive rather than negative wording. See examples below on how this might be used at home.

### Negative Wording

### Positive Wording

Don't run in the store. ----- -You must walk in the store.

Stop yelling. ----- Use your inside voice.

No throwing the ball in the house. -- You can only throw the ball outside.

Don't be rude. ----- Show respect to everyone.

No hitting. ----- Keep your hands to yourself.

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## RESEARCH

### **"I Learned I Love to Read:" Perspectives from Undergraduates with Intellectual Disability**

King, E. K., Sullens, H. B., Roam, K. J., & Jones, E. W. (2023). "I Learned I Love to Read:" Perspectives from Undergraduates with Intellectual Disability. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 36(2), 117-133.

### [Read Full Article](#)

Students' discussions of their experiences in postsecondary programs for undergraduates with intellectual disability is a largely untapped yet fundamental resource in the examination of inclusive university programs. Through interviews of undergraduates enrolled in a program for students with intellectual disability, the authors explored student descriptions of their experiences in their first semester living on a college campus. Additionally, they assessed the perceptions of others involved in the program, including students' peer mentors, their parents, and their faculty. Students' experiences mirrored those of many college students throughout their first semester, yet there were successes and challenges specific to these students with respect to relationships, belonging, sense of self, and understanding others. Parents reported gains in students' sense of self, confidence, and interpersonal skills, but reported that students may need more focus on developing career-related skills. Peer-mentors and faculty noted both positive effects of the program on the students as well as on themselves. The authors also offered recommendations for research and practice focused on creating truly inclusive environments for undergraduate students with intellectual disability.

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## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Newsletter Topics:

**March: Early Childhood**



## April: Autism Spectrum Disorders

## May: Mental Health

To submit contributions of articles, events, or resources you may use the [Word document](#). Send submissions to [Wendy Overturf](#). If you are unable to access the form, you may send the information in an email.

Material appropriate for the monthly newsletter include web links to 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 monthly update is provided by 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 email [WI FACETS](#).

The WI FACETS Family Engagement E-Newsletter can be found online: [www.servingongroups.org/newsletter](http://www.servingongroups.org/newsletter)



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