



#147-21

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #147-21**

DATE: June 4, 2021
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Department of Special Education and Student Services (SESS) Upcoming Family Engagement Initiatives**

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) is committed to building capacity with school divisions and families throughout the Commonwealth in order to cultivate effective and sustainable family engagement. For our families of students with disabilities, the Department of Special Education and Student Services (SESS), in collaboration with several of our partners, provides these new resources in order to assist the families we serve.

Applied Studies Diploma Resource for Families

In response to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission's (JLARC's) Report on K-12 Special Education's Recommendation #10, the VDOE has developed a parent-friendly resource, [Understanding the Applied Studies Diploma](#), which assists families with understanding this diploma option. An [accessible Word document version](#) is also available.

This recommendation stated:

The General Assembly may wish to consider including language in the *Appropriation Act* directing the Virginia Department of Education to develop clear and simplified guidance, in multiple languages, for families conveying: (i) the limitations of the applied studies diploma; (ii) key curriculum and testing

decisions that reduce the likelihood their student will be able to obtain a standard diploma; and (iii) pursuit of an applied studies diploma may preclude a student's ability to pursue a standard diploma.

We are optimistic that this new resource will benefit families in understanding this diploma option.

Critical Decision Points for Families of Children with Disabilities Relaunch - CDP 2.0

Critical Decision Points for Families of Children with Disabilities, the VDOE's widely utilized curriculum which assists families of students with disabilities with accessing the knowledge necessary to be full partners through the IEP process, is being relaunched through the *CDP 2.0* project. This relaunch will consist of four components:

1. Five *Critical Decision Points for Children with Disabilities* training videos, which can be accessed on [VDOE's YouTube channel](#).
 -  [Critical Decision Points Session 1](#)
 -  [Critical Decision Points Session 2](#)
 -  [Critical Decision Points Session 3](#)
 -  [Critical Decision Points Session 4](#)
 -  [Critical Decision Points Session 5](#)
2. A live, virtual *Critical Decision Points for Families of Children with Disabilities* training event being held this summer (more information forthcoming).
3. A *Critical Decision Points* One-Pager Library to be housed on the [VDOE's Information for Families page](#) this fall.
4. Professional Development training for special education/general education staff on the *Critical Decision Points* curriculum. This will provide LEA staff members with valuable information on such topics as Parental Rights, Self-Determination, Least Restrictive Environment, Family Engagement, Assessment/Diploma Options, and more. This training will also provide divisions with all they need to tailor the training to include resources in their own communities, so that they can effectively train their division's own families. If you have questions, please contact Tracy Lee, Coordinator of Family

Engagement, via email, at Tracy.Lee@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone, at (804) 225-3492 to schedule.

Transition Services

The Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) will be busy providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) this summer to youth across Virginia. The Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) collaborates with high-school students with disabilities, their families, schools and community service providers to support transition beginning with Pre-Employment Transition Services including:

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences
- Counseling on postsecondary training and education
- Workplace readiness
- Instruction in self-advocacy

Contact your school or the division's special education department for a Pre-ETS application.

The Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center's (WWRC) Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program is also planning to provide an array of services to youth, both in-person and virtually. These services will also require a completed application. For more information, contact WWRC's PERT Program by visiting [Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center website](#). You can learn more about WWRC's PERT Program by watching the [PERT Virtual Field Trip video](#).

The [I'm Determined website](#) has been updated and has a brand new look. The *I'm Determined* project is a state-directed project which is funded by the VDOE and focuses on providing direct instruction, models, and opportunities to practice skills associated with self-determined behavior. This project facilitates youth, especially those with disabilities, to undertake a measure of control in their lives, helping to set and steer the course rather than remaining silent passengers.

The I'm Determined Team is structured into regions, serving out of Virginia's Training and Technical Assistance Centers (TTACs). TTAC offices are located at universities spread across

the state. Resources are continually updated, so check back often for new templates, videos, event details and other valuable tools that will help all students to be self-determined.

Providing families of students with disabilities with concrete, easy-to-understand information is one way to ensure that families can be equal partners in all decision-making related to their children's educational paths. The Office of Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE) in the Department of Special Education and Student Services (SESS) at the VDOE is committed to continuing to provide these valuable resources and training programs for families and schools.

For more information

If you have questions, please contact Tracy Lee, Coordinator of Family Engagement, via email, at Tracy.Lee@doe.virginia.gov or by telephone, at (804) 225-3492.

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