



PA PIRC is pleased to provide you with the Winter newsletter. This newsletter is intended to provide useful information to parents, educators and administrators. Each issue will contain information about early childhood education, No Child Left Behind, family-school-community partnerships, and dates of up-coming events.

PA PIRC serves parents, schools and communities across Pennsylvania. Our goal is to help parents take a leading role in their children's learning by providing information about school readiness and student achievement and by helping schools welcome families and community members as active and effective partners in student achievement.

I am excited to tell you about the PA PIRC Regional Workshops that will be held in four areas across the state between January and April, 2008. These workshops are designed for teams and individuals of parents, teachers, curriculum directors, federal program coordinators, and principals. Please read the article below to learn more about the PA PIRC Regional Workshops and how to register to attend one near you.

You are encouraged to copy and share this newsletter with others and visit our website at www.center-school.org/pa-pirc for up-to-date information and resources.

Linda Dolan
PA PIRC Director

PA PIRC Regional Workshops – *Family-School-Community Partnerships in Action!*

Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center (PA PIRC) presents “Family-School-Community Partnerships in Action.” This two-day workshop provides parents, teachers, principals, assistant superintendents, family involvement coordinators, and community-based professionals with the information and tools to help them work together to increase student achievement through more effective family-school-community engagement.

These workshops are offered in four locations across the state. On the first day participants will learn how PA PIRC is working in partnership with Title I and the Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association; research that supports family-school-community partnerships; processes for developing family-school-community partnerships; and best practices that have been implemented in school districts across Pennsylvania. The second day is appropriate for teams but individuals are welcome. Topics will include peer sharing, process for partnerships: Successful Team Building Strategies, action plans and network building.

The workshops will begin with check-in at 9:00 a.m. The sessions will begin at 9:30 a.m. and end by 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be provided. Act 48 professional development credits are available for these sessions. There is no registration fee to attend, but you must pre-register and seating is limited. To register, please visit the PA PIRC website: www.center-school.org/pa-pirc.

PA PIRC Regional Workshops – *Family-School-Community Partnerships in Action!*

January 16-17	Central PA (Camp Hill)
February 28-29, 2008	Southeastern PA (King of Prussia)
March 12-13, 2008	Northeastern PA (Wilkes-Barre)
April 16-17, 2008	Northwestern PA (Cranberry)

When is a child too sick for school?

Cold and flu season is here. School attendance is important and sometimes it is hard when children are not feeling well, but are still well enough to go to school. When your child complains that he doesn't feel well, how do you decide when he is too sick to go to school? Dr. Steven Parker, Director of Behavioral and Developmental Pediatrics at Boston Medical Center, suggests the following guidelines to help you decide whether your child should stay home or go to school.

- Fever of 100.4 degrees or higher
- A bad cough
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- A severe sore throat with white spots

Dr. Parker also advises that parents should call their child's doctor when they are not sure.



A Welcome Partnership: Pennsylvania Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and the Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center (PA PIRC)

Caroline Allen, President, Pennsylvania PTA

Advocating for parents and students is an activity Pennsylvania PTA leaders do continuously. For well over 100 years, the Pennsylvania PTA has been “at the table” with those institutions that make decisions concerning the health, well-being and education of all children. So, it is with great pleasure that the Pennsylvania PTA and the Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center (PA PIRC) partner together to continue to educate and advocate.

At our October 2007 PTA board meeting, Karen Shanoski of PA PIRC presented a train-the-trainers workshop with our board members. *Working Together for Student Success: The Importance of NCLB to Families* provides our PTA leaders the opportunity to professionally inform parents and community members across the state about the parent involvement provisions that are a part of the No Child Left Behind Act. Although it may be hard to believe, many parents and even school personnel do not know or understand the regulations regarding the importance of having a parent involvement policy or a parent compact at their school. They do not realize that it is embedded in the law.

This workshop will inform parents, families and the community about standards based learning, parent, state, and local reports, and supplemental education services (SES). All of these are a part of the No Child Left Behind Act. And there is great emphasis placed on effective family and community involvement best practices.

This partnership between the Pennsylvania PTA and the Pennsylvania PIRC works so well for both organizations. The PTA is a grassroots organization that is out in the field educating individuals and schools. The PA PIRC, a federally-funded grantee, has the capacity to research and design educational programs for parents. One creates and one disseminates! And neither could do the job alone.

And just as the PA PTA and the PA PIRC have partnered together, the National PTA and the federal PIRC have partnered together. Parents are a student's first teacher and after many years of research, the data is in: if parents are involved in a child's life, that child will achieve more. Therefore it is critical that parent's become informed and empowered. It is to everyone's benefit. It is vital for the future of our great state and nation.

What's All the Talk About?

Becky Blue, Early Childhood and Family Development Program Manager, PA PIRC

When I saw my 23 month old niece in early August, she was imitating many words and sounds, pointing to what she wanted, saying a few words, and listening to books for very brief periods of time. She clearly understood more words than she could say and became frustrated by her inability to effectively communicate with others.

Seeing her again in early November, I observed that she talks almost non-stop and her vocabulary is growing exponentially. She sings songs, including the alphabet song and chatters about pictures of flowers and people as she draws. She speaks in short sentences and is beginning to use language to express her feelings. She incorporates new words into her vocabulary daily even using words or phrases that she's overheard without direct instruction.



These differences, though very noticeable to me, are typical of children's language progression and development around age 2.

The authors of From Neurons to Neighborhoods state that "The transition from a newborn who can barely keep his eyes focused on a book to a preschooler who laughs and cries when his parent reads or tells a story, moves his fingers along a page and pretends to read, and, in some cases, can read himself is ... impressive." (p.126) They go on to say that barring extreme "environmental or organic" factors (p.130) such as language deprivation, auditory processing deviations, or developmental delays "almost all children learn to talk without explicit instruction..." (p.126) and in fact, the trajectory of language acquisition and development is "remarkably similar across cultures." (p.127)

Researchers, including authors Dickinson and Tabor tell us that there is a strong correlation between children's early exposure to language rich environments and their later literacy success. In other words, the more children have opportunity to learn and use lots of words before entering school, the more likely they are to be successful in learning to read.

Playing word games; reading to your children daily; singing with your children; talking to them about their surrounding, every day events and new experiences; encouraging them to talk to you and ask questions; and helping them follow simple verbal directions are all ways that you can promote your children's language development.

A great resource for parents of children birth through to school entrance is a booklet entitled "A Child Becomes a Reader" which is available from The National Institute for Literacy. If you have access to the internet, check out the parent information published by the Child Development Institute <http://childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/index.htm> for additional helpful suggestions.

¹ National Research Council, Institute of Medicine. From Neurons to Neighborhoods, Washington D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000.

² Dickinson, David K. Ed.D., ed. and Patton O. Tabors Ed.D., ed. Beginning Literacy with Language, Baltimore, MD: Paul H.

Tips for Helping Children Prepare for the PSSA Tests

Before long it will be time for students to take Pennsylvania State System of School Assessment (PSSA) tests. These tests show how your child and all the students in their school are doing toward becoming proficient. Parents play an important role in getting students ready for tests. Here are some suggestions for how you can help your child prepare for these tests.



- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep the night before the test.
- Make sure that your child eats a healthy breakfast the day of the test.
- Make sure your child wears comfortable clothes.
- Let your child know that he should take the test seriously and do his best.
- Talk to your child about what to do while taking the test, including:
 - Paying attention to directions
 - Asking questions about the directions if they are not clear
 - Reading each question carefully
 - Eliminating wrong answer questions right away, then concentrating on the remaining choices
 - Checking answers

Please mark your calendars so that you know when your children will take these tests.

2007-2008 PSSA and PASA Testing Calendar	
Writing	
February 11 – 22, 2008	PSSA 5 th , 8 th , & 11 th Grades
Math and Reading	
March 31 – April 11, 2008	PSSA 3 rd , 4 th , 5 th , 6 th , 7 th , 8 th , & 11 th Grades
February 18 – March 28, 2008	PASA (Alternate) Assessment
Science	
April 28 - May 9, 2008	PSSA 4 th , 8 th , & 11 th Grades
May 1 - May 31, 2008	PASA (Alternate) Assessment



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PA PIRC Offers Solid Foundation – Helping Families, Schools and Communities Work Together

The Solid Foundation Strategies, offered through the Pennsylvania Parent Information and Resource Center (PA PIRC), reinforces PA PIRC’s efforts to support schools in welcoming parents/family members and community representatives as active and effective partners in promoting student academic achievement by:

- Taking a leading role in children’s learning at home.
- Supporting children’s learning at school.
- Making decisions about children’s educational options.

The Solid Foundation program was developed by Academic Development Institute (ADI). The program is grounded in effective, research-based, proven strategies. A study of 129 schools implementing Solid Foundation program for building a school community, published by the Harvard Family Research Project (November, 2004), found that the gain on state assessment tests demonstrated by these schools over a two year period was nearly double that of a control group of schools with identical beginning scores.

The three year process of service and support, provided free to schools in Pennsylvania through the PA PIRC, is tailored to the resources and needs of each school with services delivered through Solid Foundation Strategies educational specialists. The partnership model requires a school team composed of parents and school staff (and welcomes community representatives) and offers this typical sequence of services:

- **Assessing the Schools Needs**
Policy and program analysis to provide rubrics-based recommendations for refinement of district and parent involvement programs. School community index as a needs assessment and data rich planning tool.
- **Planning for Improvement**
On-site consultation with school team to guide a school in implementing the specific initiatives it chooses as part of the data-based action plan. Materials to guide a school in implementing the specific initiatives it chooses as part of the data-based action plan.
- **Training for School Teams**
Solid Foundations Academies are offered on-site to help school-based teams implement parent engagement strategies included in their action plans. Some training may be delivered in train the trainer format.

To apply to participate, please contact Karen Shanoski, PA PIRC at 717-763-1661 ext. 139.

Schools Currently Enrolled

A.J. McMullen School, Uniontown Area School District	Diehl Elementary School	George Washington Elementary School, Bristol Township	Lafayette Middle School, Uniontown Area School District	Reynolds Middle School, School District of Lancaster
Abraham Lincoln Elementary, Bristol Township	Dimmer Beeber Middle School, Philadelphia School District	Glenwood Elementary School, Erie School District	Lamberton Elementary School, Philadelphia School District	Rowland Elementary School, Harrisburg School District
Ben Franklin School, Uniontown Area School District	Downey Elementary School, Harrisburg School District	Gotwals Elementary School, Norristown Area School District	Marclay Elementary School, Uniontown Area School District	Shaw Middle School, Philadelphia School District
Buchanan Elementary School, School District of Lancaster	East Side Elementary School, Greater Johnstown School District	Greater Johnstown High School, Greater Johnstown School District	McKinley Elementary School, Erie School District	Shenandoah Elementary School, Penn Hills School District
Burrowes Elementary School, School District of Lancaster	Fairless Intermediate School, Woodland Hills School District	Greater Johnstown Middle School, Greater Johnstown School District	Menallen Elementary School, Uniontown Area School District	Smedley Middle School, Chester Upland District
Carroll High School, Philadelphia School District	Feltonville School for Arts & Sciences, Philadelphia School District	Hamilton Elementary School, Harrisburg School District	Middle Years Alternative School for the Humanities, Philadelphia School District	Washington Elementary School, Penn Hills School District
Clairton Elementary School, Clairton City School District	First Philadelphia Charter School	Joseph C. Furguson School, Philadelphia School District	Overbrook Elementary School, Philadelphia School District	West Side Elementary School, Greater Johnstown School District
Cook-Wissahickon School, Philadelphia School District	Forbes Elementary School, Penn Hills School District	Jules Mastbaum AVTS, Philadelphia School District	Parkway North West High School, Philadelphia School District	Wetherill Middle School, Chester Upland District
Dible Elementary School, Penn Hills School District	Franklin Elementary School, Uniontown Area School District	Kennedy Crossan Elementary, Philadelphia School District	Paul Lawrence Dunbar School, Philadelphia School District	Wharton Elementary School, Uniontown Area School District
Dickson Intermediate School, Woodland Hills School District	General David B. Birney Elementary Philadelphia School District	Lafayette Elementary School, Uniontown Area School District	Rankin Intermediate School, Woodland Hills School District	William Penn Elementary School, Penn Hills School District