

Fall 2011 Newsletter

Director’s Letter 2

Transitions 3

Free PIRC Printed Resources are Just an Email or Phone Call Away 3

Title I State Parent Advisory (SPAC) Conference 2011 4

“Working Together for Student Success” Online Workshops 4

Getting Ready for Kindergarten: What Families Can Do 5

Strengthening Families Update in the Primary Grades 6

The Many Benefits of Cooking 7

Engaging Families in Children’s Learning Has a Positive Impact on Student Achievement 8

Congressional Staff Meets with PA PIRC Team 9

Building Successful Partnerships to Improve Student Achievement 9

Look Who’s Listening to You 10

Back to School Safety 11

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Fourth Annual Parent Involvement Capitol Rotunda Observance Scheduled for October 5th

As the school year gets underway, the PA PIRC team is busy planning the fourth annual observance of Parent Involvement Month in Pennsylvania. This year’s capitol rotunda observance will occur on Wednesday, October 5th at 10:30 a.m. The program will feature representatives of state government, education and organizations embracing family engagement who will share their thoughts about the importance of families to be engaged in their children’s education. Student musicians from Norristown School District will delight attendees by performing a medley of musical selections. A sizable amount of literature will be available on resource tables regarding many components of parenting and parent involvement that attendees can take with them.



The annual observance, along with the Governor’s Annual Proclamation and the House and Senate Resolutions supporting the Proclamation, contributes significantly to solidifying the message that parents are their children’s first, and perhaps best, teachers; and that children whose families are involved in their education at school and at home earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level programs, attend school regularly, have better social skills, show improved behavior, adapt well to school and ultimately graduate and go on to postsecondary education. For more information, visit the PA PIRC website www.center-school.org/pa-pirc.

Register now for the 37th Family Involvement Conference 2011: *Together We Will Succeed*

A Conference for School Administrators, Teachers and Parents Promoting School/Family Partnerships

When: October 16-19, 2011

Where: Lancaster Host Resort and Conference Center, Lancaster PA

This multi-state conference is based on the premise that active family involvement in the educational process is the key to effective schools and student achievement. Its goal is to bring together, in a common forum, school administrators, teachers, community members and parents to interact and address issues that are vital to academic success and the well being of our children. For further information about the conference, go to www.familyinvolvementconference.com.

Director's Letter

Dear Parents, Educators and Colleagues:

The PIRCs, all 62 of them across the United States and its territories, have long been a crucial force in promoting family engagement in children's education. Each PIRC developed its programs and resources pursuant to the specific characteristics and needs of its state's parents, schools and communities. Few can argue that over the years PIRCs have been in existence, a significant number of successful family engagement programs, strategies and resources benefited thousands of families and, subsequently, children, nationwide. Each state PIRC website supplies a wealth of information regarding the programs and services that have been available over the years at no cost to schools and organizations.

Moreover, the partnerships that were forged between each PIRC and other organizations with a family involvement focus in its respective state extended the collective reach of these organizations and enabled more parents to access the resources and support necessary for them to take a stronger role in their children's education.

Both President Obama and Secretary Duncan have regularly emphasized the importance of the involvement of families in their children's education. Ironically, funding of the PIRC program, the only one funded by the U.S. Department of Education devoted solely to family engagement, has been eliminated in the 2011 Federal Education Budget. If and how the federal government will ultimately support future family engagement work is, at present, unclear. Congressional reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will ultimately provide clarity. A key aspect of reauthorization might be that the "set-aside" for parent involvement activity pursuant to Title I, Part A, Section 1118 will be increased from one-percent to two-percent of the total Title I allocation, resulting in hundreds of millions of additional dollars nationally for parent involvement activity in schools with a Title I allocation of at least \$500,000. In addition, many stipulations outlined in the Family Engagement in Education Act, cosponsored by Representatives Todd Platts (R-PA) and Carolyn McCarthy (D-NY), could become law upon ESEA reauthorization. These would include, among others, the establishment of state-level Family Engagement Coordinating Councils, comprised of family members and other stakeholders, to coordinate and integrate systemic family engagement initiatives that support children from cradle to career, as well funding for restructured PIRCs that would be able to reach more families across the state with high quality services. These are promising future circumstances that might occur in conjunction with ESEA reauthorization.

...but for now, federal funding of PIRCs will end September 30, 2011.

Over the years, PA PIRC has built a solid program supported by a sound infrastructure enabling it to provide quality family engagement services for families, schools and communities across Pennsylvania. Our goal now is to secure the resources necessary to continue to conduct this very important work. Our national leaders have extolled the fact that family engagement is a crucial a component of students' educational success. What does or does not occur on the federal level regarding education in the months to come will be very revealing in terms of their sincerity in this regard. Nevertheless, it is unfathomable to envision a scenario where the organizations created to build, support and strengthen family engagement, such as the PIRCs, would not continue to exist.



Mark S. Lewis, Ed. D.
Director



You can easily access every PIRC website by visiting the National PIRC Coordination website: www.nationalpirc.org.

Transitions

By Caroline Allen, Education Partnership Coordinator

As the new school year approaches, parents become anxious about what may lie ahead for their child. For many students, the new school year brings a transition. What may be an exciting prospect for one child may be overwhelming for another. When you think about it, there are many significant transitions that children experience:

- Preschool to Kindergarten
- Kindergarten to First Grade
- Elementary School to Middle School
- Middle School to High School
- High School to College/Other Education /Workforce
- College to Adulthood

How can parents prepare their children for these transitions? There are certain standard actions that can be taken for any of these transitions:

Communicate with your child:

Frequent and open discussions will help to alleviate anxieties and fears. Talks with your child might bring a sense of adventure and excitement based on your attitude.

Be proactive in contacting the school: Find out as much as you can. Talk with the building principal and if possible, your child's teacher. Visit the school; find out

where the classroom(s), lavatories and cafeteria are located. Check out the school's website. Find out if the school is using social media to communicate with parents.

Attend Open House: At Open House, your child will be able to interact with other students. Try to find other students in your child's classes. This will be helpful on the first day of school. If there are lockers, ask for the combination so that your child can practice opening and closing one. Talk with other parents about their concerns. Look for parents who have already had students enrolled in the school; they are a source of knowledge and advice. If there is a school tour, take it together with them.

Join the PTA/PTO: Get involved in a manner that works for you. Your child will get the message that you are interested in the school and what occurs there. Research shows that networking with other parents can lead to greater student achievement. Working side-by-side with administrators, teachers, parents and community members makes a better school.

Practice good home skills: Make sure that your child gets plenty of exercise. Prepare nutritious meals and have healthy snacks on hand. Ensure that your child understands why he/she needs a great night's sleep. Read to your child or together with your child in the same room. Visit libraries, museums and parks. Prepare an area for homework.

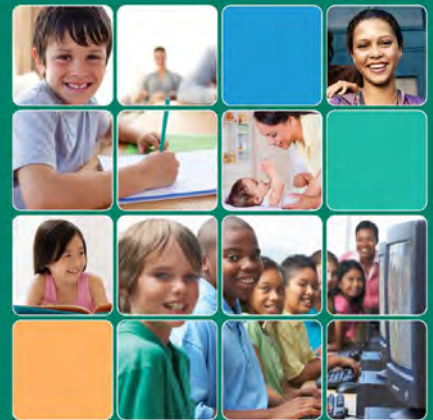
Come to an agreed-upon list of expectations: You want your child to succeed. Talk about the importance of attending school every day, completing homework, asking for help if there is a subject that is challenging, limiting computer gaming time, finding extracurricular activities to try, communicating with teachers and doing their best.

Transitions equal change and for many individuals, that does not come easily. If you take a proactive position and are open, honest and loving, your child will do well. As the school year continues, he/she will greatly appreciate your efforts.

Free PIRC Printed Resources are Just an Email or Phone Call Away



Parents' Guide to Child Development and School Success



Could your school or educational organization benefit by having free printed resources available for parents? The Pennsylvania PIRC will ship them to you at no cost. Some examples of the printed resources are:

Parents' Guide to Child Development and School Success (English and Spanish)

Toolkit for Hispanic Families

Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read

A Parent's Handbook: How to Be Involved in Your Child's Education (English and Spanish)

Helping Your Child With Homework

For a full list, go to www.center-school.org/pa-pirc/resource-list.pdf.

CONTACT

To place an order, call (717) 763-1661 ext. 116 or email wdeardorff@csc.csiu.org. First come, first served.



Title I State Parent Advisory (SPAC) Conference 2011

By Anne Clark
Statewide Parent Advisory
Committee (SPAC) member

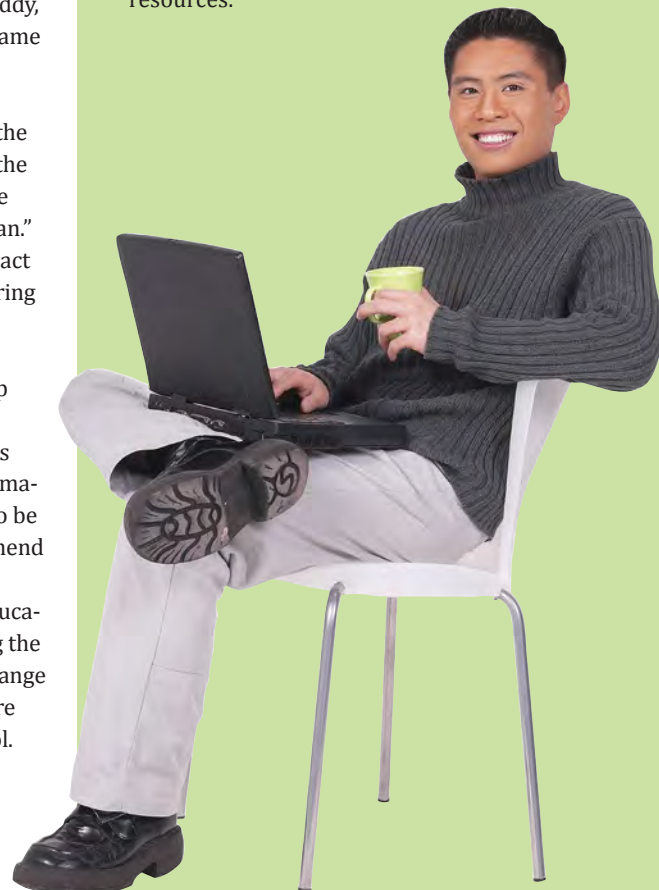


Coming Soon: "Working Together for Student Success" Online Workshops

Pennsylvania PIRC will soon be offering web-based educational workshops for parents, educators and community members. These short sessions are designed to foster greater understanding of federal and state educational policies and educational topics for parents to help their child with school. Individuals will be able to view these sessions at their own convenience. The following workshops will be included:

- ESEA/PSSA Reports
- The Importance of ESEA to Families
- Family-School-Community Partnerships
- Extra Learning Opportunities

More workshops will follow. Just go to the Pennsylvania PIRC website www.center-school.org/pa-pirc/ to access these very informative resources.



Food, friends, family and focus for making a change in education: this is how I would describe the 2011 SPAC Conference held at Seven

Springs Resort. This was the 16th Annual Conference that allows Title I parents, educators, administrators and community leaders to come together to learn new ways to engage students and change education. The Seven Springs Resort continues to be the choice location for this conference because of its guest accommodations and award winning children's camp. In the words of one of my students, Tyquan, "this place is awesome, Ms. Anne. Can we come back next year?" This educator and Title I Parent Advisory member agreed with Tyquan. The experience was awesome!

The event began with the registration in the lobby where guests were greeted by SPAC members, Intermediate Unit IV staff, and hotel staff. Welcome bags were provided for the adults, books for the children, and family photographs placed in memorable frames. Participants and their families were treated to a barbecue later that evening. The MC asked how many families were first time attendees and a sea of hands were raised. With

500+ in attendance, including parents, educators, and community leaders, you could see the commitment to education.



Pictured left to right: (Top) Conference attendees Nancy Winder, her husband and granddaughters (Bottom) Yanin Rosario, Sandy Rosario and Yariissa Rosario

The following day Title I Participants started bright and early with author and administrator, Salome Thomas El. He shared the message of commitment to the youth, and for parents to be the change agent. The conference continued with the entire day offering rich engaging information for increasing reading comprehension, the use of authentic literacy, and "Be a buddy, not a Bully," just to name a few.

Later in the evening the participants viewed the award winning movie "Waiting for Superman." You could see its impact the following day during the panel discussion where the question continued to come up regarding what to do next. The participants left armed with information regarding how to be a change agent. I would highly recommend this conference to any individual who wants to make a positive impact on education. I am looking forward to attending the SPAC conference next July. The only change this educator will make is to bring more families and colleagues from my school.

Getting Ready for Kindergarten: What Families Can Do *

A child's transition from home or preschool into the formal education system is an important milestone in the life of the child and the family. Kindergarten is the first year of formal school for most children in the United States. In kindergarten, hands-on learning activities help prepare youngsters for the challenges that lie ahead. This article suggests ways parents can prepare themselves and their children for a smooth and positive transition to kindergarten.

How can I help my child prepare? Preparing for the transition to kindergarten and formal education may be as important as the transition itself.

Babies are born ready to learn. Parents and families can help children make the most of these important early learning years. Up to age 5, children's brains are growing at a dazzling pace! Contributions made to learning in those years will last a lifetime. The most important things families can do are to be warm, responsive, communicative and encouraging. Parents should spend time talking with and reading to their children from the day they are born. When reading or talking to your child, ask questions and explain things. Conversations and books can teach more than just how to recognize words. They can build important critical thinking skills and understanding of socially and emotionally appropriate behavior. When children begin school with social and emotional skills, the ability to communicate effectively, and problem solving skills they are better prepared to face the challenges of school.

Establish routines. At least a month before school starts, begin to set firm mealtime and bedtime schedules. Schedule daytime activities as well, like watching TV, playing and doing chores. Get your child used to being on time and things happening on schedule. A good night's sleep (10 - 12 hours) and a nutritious breakfast will help keep your child focused and learning. Place is also important. Set up a place where your child reads, paints,



colors and makes things. Put the backpack and school supplies in the same place to have them ready to go in the morning.

Talk about kindergarten. Weeks before school starts, talk about kindergarten with your child. Listen to how he or she is feeling. Be reassuring and upbeat. Your enthusiasm and excitement about learning will set a powerful and positive tone.

Encourage independence and responsibility. Create opportunities for your child to make choices. Let him or her choose what to wear, where to play, or what friends or relatives to call. Encourage your child to take a bigger role in dressing him or herself. Support good health habits, such as washing hands, and covering nose and mouth to sneeze or cough.

Make school familiar. Take a field trip to the school, visit a classroom, and introduce your child to the teachers. Walk by the school during recess and watch the children play. Take your child to play on the playground when school is not in session.

How can I prepare? Families want their children to succeed in school; but sometimes the transition from home or preschool to kindergarten can be more upsetting for parents

than for children. The transition may mean changes in the family routine and may require extra planning to insure that children are safe and cared for throughout the day.

Get an early start. Before your child turns 4, you should contact your local school to learn how and when to register, and what documents are required. A year may seem like a long time, but it will go by fast, and there will be a lot to learn and do. You will want to have plenty of time to learn about all the options and make the choice that's best for your child.

Choose a kindergarten. Usually children go to kindergarten at a school in their home school district. If you live in a large district, there may be options. Some communities have private schools and charter schools as well as free public schools. To find a kindergarten in your area, call your school district administration office or speak with your preschool provider.

Plan your schedule. Kindergarten can be half-day or full-day. Half-day kindergarten usually has both morning and afternoon sessions. Some districts only offer a half-day

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

of kindergarten while others offer a full-day of kindergarten.

Gather the necessary documents. The list below shows some commonly required documents. Different districts have different requirements, so be sure to contact your local district to learn exactly which documents you must bring to registration. If your family lacks these documents because of homelessness or recent immigration, the school is legally required to enroll your child without them.

- Proof of your child's age. Most districts require a child's birth certificate or a passport showing that he or she will be turning 5 before the school district's cutoff date.
- Proof of guardianship if the responsible adult is not the child's parent.
- Proof of residency (where you actually live). Some possible examples are a copy of a deed or lease, a utility bill in your name, a valid photo ID card, recent W-2 form, payroll stub, and/or a bank or credit card statement.
- Your child's immunization record. Contact your child's doctor for a copy of this record.

- Proof of physical examination.

Entry into school signals the beginning of major new influences on a child's development outside the familiar family environment. This change can be a challenge for both children and their families. Preparation is key to a smooth transition.

*Adapted and reprinted with permission. Parents Place Bulletin, Vol. 3, No. 12. Massachusetts Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC). www.masspirc.org.

Strengthening Families Update in the Primary Grades

By Karen Shanoski
Family-School-Community Partnerships Project Manager

The Center for Schools and Communities, Office of Child Development and Early Learning and PA PIRC staff, with the support from the Center for the Study of Social Policy, worked together to publish "Strategies for Strengthening Families in the Primary Grades" as a part of a series of resources developed by the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds. The information obtained from two focus groups and feedback from workshops conducted in late winter, 2010 contributed to the publication, the refinement of an introductory workshop on the topic, and the development of a website about Strengthening Families.

Strengthening Families is an approach to working with families that has been found to be effective in preventing child abuse and neglect. Research demonstrates that this approach, building upon strengths rather than focusing on deficits, can support families' engagement with their children's learning in the K-12 setting. It is not another curriculum or a new program; instead, it offers a framework of five research-based protective factors that give parents what they need to parent effectively, even under stress.



The Protective Factors are:

For children:

- Healthy social and emotional development

For adults:

- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Social connections for families
- Concrete supports in time of need
- Parental resilience (ability to meet challenges and stresses)

Rather than imposing "one more responsibility" on educators, the Strengthening Families message is that reframing what teachers and schools already do, using a strengths-based, protective and

promotive factors approach, will open the door to innovative, "small but significant" changes in practice that recognize and support parents as decision makers and leaders. The approach also empowers parents to be strong advocates and partners in their children's academic careers.

To see the resources developed, please visit the Alliance website at www.ctfalliance.org/collaborativeprojects or contact the Alliance at info@ctfalliance.org. All resources are free.

Please visit the PIRC website in September to view the resources assembled for Strengthening Families in the K-12 system.

The Many Benefits of Cooking

By Karen Shanoski
Family-School-Community Partnerships
Project Manager

I can remember my grandmother telling me, very seriously, that while the recipe says use five- to-seven tablespoons of water, don't use more than five tablespoons and a splash of ice water when making pie crusts. She showed me how she would prepare a few ice cubes and pour water over them before she gathered her other supplies so the water would be the right temperature. It is a fond memory – and my pie crusts are usually tasty!

One of the best ways I can think of to keep academic skills sharp over the summer or even during the school year is through cooking together. It is possible to touch on communication skills (reading, speaking and writing), science (including environmental sciences), social studies and mathematics. Cooking together can occur at all age levels, from pre-school through adulthood. You adjust your expectations for the child, based on his or her age.

Beginning with selecting a recipe, you may use social studies skills by talking about the origin of the foods and/or spices that go into it. Find those places on a map. Consider the climate in that area, and ask children questions and find answers about the places and people in that part of the world. Why might certain ingredients be used? What makes a certain recipe associated with certain areas?

Math is involved with cooking in many ways. Will you have to purchase any items prior to making the food? Is your child able to make the list? As you put together the ingredients, can you determine how much it costs to make and compare with other foods or meals? Comparing costs and food nutrition values are especially important as you are sending your child off to college or into their



first apartment. When you begin preparing the recipe, encourage your child to perform the measurements. As they get older and you prepare favorite recipes, teach them to consider what a handful of flour amounts to, or a pinch of a given spice. Can they visualize, then pour, a tablespoonful of oil into a pan?

Cooking on the stove top, in a microwave, in an oven or a grill all offer an opportunity to talk about the science of food preparation. What happens as food is heated? Why are certain foods dangerous if raw, but healthy when cooked? What changes in the flavor do they notice in vegetables from raw to cooked? How do foods get canned? What foods can be frozen? What created the energy that creates the heat? How can we use energy wisely? In what ways can we conserve energy? How can we employ the concepts of reuse and recycle in our homes, schools and communities?

In addition to academic skills we can use the time to build social skills. Often our children have friends over for a casual time – pizza and

hanging out. Let's say you plan a special event together. You might issue invitations for a meal. What are the ways you might approach this: written and hand delivered or postal mailed, by telephone or email? What wording makes clear the intent of the activity and what the person should do or bring? What tasks must be completed to make guests feel welcome (aside from the cooking)? Will you decorate? Might you put some flowers in a jar, or make signs or blow up balloons? Will you set the table with place mats and napkins? How will you greet your company? Hosting these kinds of events at home can help your child to feel comfortable when they attend such events at other's homes or at restaurants.

While the preceding might sound like a very clinical approach, it is my experience that spending time in the kitchen with your children, making a single recipe, entire meals, or planning special events for company can all be fun! They are bonding activities that serve up memories for many years.

Engaging Families in Children's Learning Has a Positive Impact on Student Achievement

By Karen Shanoski
Family-School-Community Partnerships
Project Manager

Whether your child is new to school this year or getting ready to graduate, participating in your child's education is one of the most important things you can do to ensure his or her academic success. This article is designed to give you research-based tips that can help you work more effectively with your child's school.

What is Family Engagement?

Through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (known as No Child Left Behind) the Federal Department of Education defines parent involvement as the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities. Schools with a strong commitment to involving families ensure that:¹

- Parents play an integral role in assisting their child's learning.
- Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school.
- Parents are full partners in their child's education and are included in decision making.
- Parents are represented on school advisory committees.

In the article "Beyond Random Acts" family engagement is described as "a shared responsibility of families, schools, and communities for student learning and achievement; it is continuous from birth to young adulthood; and it occurs across multiple settings where children learn."² The article stresses the importance of systemic planning and implementation of family and community engage-

¹ Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement* (Austin, TX: SEDL, 2002)

² Heather B. Weiss, M. Elena Lopez, and Heidi Rosenberg, *Beyond Random Acts Family, School, and Community Engagement as an Integral Part of Education Reform* (National PIRC Coordination Center Harvard Family Research Project and SEDL, 2010), p.3.



ment efforts with academic efforts as the best means of preparing children for college and/or careers.

Below are some simple, research-based activities to develop strong engagement with your child's learning.

Communicate

- Find out the best way to contact your child's teacher(s), and let them know how to contact you.
- Let your child's teacher(s) know right away when you have questions or concerns.
- Ask for an interpreter and translated materials if you need them.

Ask Questions

- Talk to other parents in your neighborhood.
- Prepare for meetings with teachers by bringing a list of questions.
- Ask about your child's achievements. Find out about his or her test scores as well as behaviors and interests.
- Find out about extra support to catch up or to strengthen skills that might be available.
- Ask your child about his or her day.

Show Your Child Education is Important

- Know what your child is learning at school.
- Make homework a priority, and provide a comfortable space for your child to complete it.
- Limit television viewing during the week to one hour a day or less.
- Learn about the education standards and grade expectations.
- Help your middle and high school student with course selection.
- Talk to your child about his or her future and your expectations for his or her school success.
- Enjoy a family meal at least three times a week.

Get Involved at the School or with Community Organizations

- Attend school events, parent workshops and informational meetings.
- Offer to serve on school advisory boards.
- Attend school board meetings (Some communities air them on cable TV).
- Volunteer at the school regularly or for special events.
- Join parent groups at the school, such as the PTA.

Congressional Staff Meets with PA PIRC Team

On Thursday, August 11, staff members from the office of Congressman Todd Platts, who represents Adams, York and part of Cumberland County, met with the PA PIRC team at the Center for Schools and Communities office in Camp Hill. The goal of the meeting was for the staff to gain greater insight into the many facets of PA PIRC's family engagement work in the Commonwealth. In attendance from the Congressman's office were Scott Miller, chief-of-staff, and Mollie Van Lieu, senior legislative assistant.

The meeting focused on the programs, events, workshops and other activities PA PIRC has developed and implemented in



Pictured left to right: Caroline Allen, Wenda Deardorff, Karen Shanoski, Scott Miller, Mollie Van Lieu, Lynn Cromley, Mark Lewis

three areas: early childhood parent education, family-school-community partnerships, and statewide intermediary. Time was also spent examining how PA PIRC will continue its family engagement work going forward, given the fact that funding for all PIRCs nationwide is not included in the 2011-12 Federal Department of Education Budget. Congressman Platts is co-sponsor of HR

5211: The Family Engagement in Education Act that, if enacted, will ensure that funding for critical components of family engagement are included in future federal budgets. Both Mr. Miller and Ms. Van Lieu indicated that the information exchanged during the two-hour session will serve to inform family engagement policy at the federal level in the years to come.

Building Successful Partnerships to Improve Student Achievement

By Julie Lesitsky
PA PTA President

All families want their children to succeed in school. All parent groups want to do great things for the children in their school. Communities want responsible young citizens. Family-School Partnerships are the key to all three; each can help the other accomplish their goal by building successful partnerships.

Raise awareness! Not everyone knows that research shows that when families are involved in their children's learning both at home and at school, their children do better in school. Parent groups need to provide that information. They also need to provide possible roles and opportunities for parents to become involved that could help improve the school, raise student achievement, and benefit themselves and the rest of the community. This step of raising awareness should include a discussion about utilizing the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships as a tool to increasing involvement.



Next, Take Action! Once all stakeholders understand what it takes for students to succeed, the parent group can facilitate the process of taking actions that will increase the involvement of everyone through programs, practices and policies. Everyone needs to be part of the overall plan to create a holistic approach to student learning that builds trust and ownership among all stakeholders. It may be necessary to do a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) of current involvement policies, programs and practices. Everyone must work

together to develop a unified vision of student success. Action plans can then be developed, implemented and evaluated. National Standards Assessment Guide and Implementation Guides could be useful during this action step.

Finally, Celebrate Success! Let everyone know about all the successes. No success is too small to celebrate. Spread the word through newspapers, letters or websites. Don't forget the impact of photos. By highlighting successes, others will hear about what the group has done and begin to understand the importance of these partnerships. This will raise more awareness and hopefully more interest in others to join the efforts to improve the schools and raise student achievement.

For more information about Building Successful Partnerships and the National Standards for School-Family Partnerships, visit www.pta.org. To check out some specific programs or parent resources in Pennsylvania, visit www.papta.org.

Look Who's Listening to You



Sometimes as parents we wonder if our children ever listen to us. How much can a baby really hear and understand? How can a toddler be listening when she is so engrossed in play? Does a preschooler listen even if he talks a mile a minute? Rest assured your child, no matter what her age, is listening intently to what you say and to what is going on around her. Furthermore, listening is a first step on the path to learning to read.

Babies listen from birth

Hearing develops in pregnancy about the fifth month. After birth, the brain is able to perceive and process all the sounds of speech, even those not contained in the child's native language. The brain begins to map the sounds of speech as the baby hears adults talking to him. These are the sounds that the child will need to know in order to learn to read.

Parents help their baby listen when they speak in parentese, using a voice that is higher in pitch, slower and more drawn out, and has greater contrasts in inflection. This way of speaking presents speech sounds in exactly the way babies need to be able to listen and process them. It's not baby talk. Your baby shows she is listening to you by turning to the sound of your voice, smiling and laughing, and moving her arms and legs in excitement.

Toddlers listen on the go

By the end of the first year of life, babies have had lots of experience hearing sounds in their daily lives, and they are beginning to understand that certain sounds represent particular things. This is receptive language. The fact that toddlers are curious and into everything exposes them to many different words and sounds. Toddlers listen; they just do it standing up! As they grow closer to speaking words themselves, they seek lots of language stimulation. Your little one may be glued to your side, as he wants to look in your face, watch your mouth, and hear your words. Listening is very important to language and literacy development in the toddler years, even though it occurs on the move.

Preschoolers are all ears

Most preschoolers are in love with talking. Children this age listen more for meaning and less for the sounds of speech. If your child doesn't say some sounds clearly, repeat the word using the correct pronunciation rather than pointing out the mistake. Also, help your child learn to slow down and listen by getting her attention and giving her yours when she is trying to tell you something.

Preschoolers are learning to listen to a story and to retell a story or answer questions about it, important skills that prepare the child for learning to read in the next few years.

Helping your child to pay attention to key parts of a story can enhance listening skills. You might provide a clue before reading, such as "Let's see what the boy will buy at the store." Another strategy is to ask your child to make a prediction, such as "Who do you think Baby Bear will find in his bed?"

Listen up!

Here are some things you can do to help your child listen:

- Be sure you have your child's attention
- Make eye-contact down on her level.
- Look out for ear infections and treat them promptly.
- Pronounce words the way adults do so your child will know what is correct.
- Speak a little slower.
- Use funny voices when reading a story to interest your child.
- Ask your child to make a prediction about a story.
- Be a good listener to model for your child.

Source: *Parent Page, Parents as Teachers News*, 2004.



Back to School Safety*

With summer ending and the start of school just around the corner, drivers need to do their part to keep kids safe as they walk and bike to school. Whether you are taking your kids to school or just driving through a school zone, prepare to leave a few minutes early to accommodate slower commutes than usual as buses hit the streets. Follow the tips below to keep all kids safe.

According to PennDOT, school bus safety is a high priority in Pennsylvania. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, transpor-

tation personnel and the motoring public all play important roles in keeping our children safe while on or around the school bus.

Pennsylvania's School Bus Stopping Law

Motorists must stop at least 10 feet away from school buses that have their red lights flashing and stop arm extended. Motorists must stop when they are behind the bus, meeting the bus or approaching an intersection where a bus is stopped. Motorists following or traveling alongside a school bus must also stop until the red lights have

stopped flashing, the stop arm is withdrawn, and all children have reached safety. If physical barriers such as grassy medians, guide rails or concrete median barriers separate oncoming traffic from the bus, motorists in the opposing lanes may proceed without stopping. Do not proceed until all the children have reached a place of safety. The penalties if convicted of violating Pennsylvania's School Bus Stopping Law include:

- \$250 fine
- Five points on your driving record
- 60-day license suspension

For more information, visit www.drivesafepa.org.

Important Tips to Remember*



Bicycle Safety Tips

- Wear light-colored, reflective clothing so you can be seen.
- Consider wearing an approved helmet and other protective gear.
- Children under 12 years of age must wear an approved safety helmet.
- Ride on the right side of the road.
- Signal your intentions in advance.
- Consider attending training to obtain skills necessary to ride safely on the road.

Pedestrian Safety Tips

- Wear light-colored, reflective clothing so you can be seen.
- Walk against traffic.
- Make eye contact with motorists before crossing the street.
- Be aware of your surroundings.

How to Properly Fit a Helmet

- Fit the helmet low and level on the forehead.
- Tighten the chinstrap, with the V of the side straps meeting just below the ear.
- Adjust the pads inside or turn-dial system so it feels snug, secure and comfortable.

*Reprint from CSC Safety Point, August 2011