

Upcoming Events

Partnership Summit
Featuring: Karen Mapp - Harvard Family Research Project
Little America, Cheyenne WY
March 24, 2009
Call PEN toll-free at 1-877-900-9736

WY Council for Exceptional Children Conference
April 13 & 14, 2009
Call Dr Bob Bayuk at 307-347-



**Parent
Information
Center**

Information & Referral for
Parents of Children
with Disabilities
5 N. Lobban Ave Buffalo, WY 82834
1-800-660-9742 or (307) 684-2277

A Project of Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc.

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Parent Information Center & Parent Education Network Wyoming State PIRC
Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc.

Jan/Feb 2009



Governor Signs Proclamation for Family & School Involvement Month

On September 30, 2008 Governor Freudenthal proclaimed October 2008 as Family and School Involvement Month. Joining him for the official signing ceremony was the staff of the Parent Education Network. In recognizing the importance of family and school partnership, the proclamation states:

WHEREAS, in order for schools to create strong and effective partnerships with families, we believe all families have dreams for their children and want the best for them; and

WHEREAS, all families have the capacity to support their children's learning; and
WHEREAS, families should be partners with school staff during the education of their children; and family engagement should be linked to learning; and

WHEREAS, the responsibility for building partnerships between school and home rest in part with school staff, families and school leaders; and

WHEREAS, the Parent Education Network, Wyoming State PIRC is available to assist schools with their communication with families and foster more active engagement in their children's education and learning; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that we recognize the outstanding contributions made by families in fostering a love of learning and schools which acknowledge the importance of family engagement and take action to make it an intricate part of the school community.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DAVE FREUDENTHAL, Governor of the State of Wyoming, do hereby proclaim October as

Family and School Involvement Month

in Wyoming, and I do hereby encourage all citizens to take this month to raise the level of their involvement in their child's learning and setting high expectations for their students.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Executive Seal of the Governor of Wyoming to be affixed this 30th day of September, 2008.

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SECRETARY OF EDUCATION MARGARET SPELLINGS ANNOUNCES FINAL REGULATIONS TO STRENGTHEN *NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND*
Encourages Use of New Tools to Build Upon the Successes of NCLB

On Oct 28, 2008, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings announced final regulations to strengthen and clarify *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), focusing on improved accountability and transparency, uniform and disaggregated graduation rates and improved parental notification for Supplemental Education Services and public school choice.

“NCLB has shined a spotlight on schools,” said Secretary Spellings. “It is compelling grown ups to do the right thing by kids. And it’s working. According to the Nation’s Report Card, since 2000, more kids are learning reading and math. Since this law was passed, nearly one million more students have learned basic math skills. Children once left behind are making some of the greatest gains, but more work needs to be done.

The Secretary noted that these new regulations reflect lessons learned over the past six years since NCLB was enacted and builds on work that states have made with their assessment and accountability systems.

The new regulations for NCLB are in three areas:

1. Graduation rates will be standard for all States. In the past, individual States were allowed to set their own formula for determining this rate. As an example, let’s say a freshman high school class starts out with 105 students. During the high school experience 5 students drop out during the sophomore and juniors years, leaving 100 students to graduate. This school saw 100 students as seniors and since they all graduated, their graduation rate was 100%.

The new regulations will give all states the same formula to calculate how many students graduate from high school on time and how many drop out. The final regulations will define the “four year adjusted cohort graduation rate” as the number of students who graduate in four years with a regular high school diploma divided by the number of students who entered high school four years earlier, adjusted for transfers, students who emigrate and deceased students.

2. Schools that fail to meet the Annual Yearly Progress will be required to notify parents in a “clear and timely” manner about their options for public school choice and supplemental education service options. As an example, parents of an elementary school that is determined to be “in need” would have the option of having their child attend another elementary school in the district..

The regulations seek to ensure that states make more information available to the public about what tutoring providers are available, how these providers are approved and monitored, and most importantly, how effective they are in helping students improve.

Finally, this portion of the regulation also requires States/schools to provide parents with more information available to the public about additional educational services such as what tutoring providers are available, how these providers are approved and monitored, and how effective they are in helping students improve. “These services can’t make a difference if parents don’t know they’re available,” said Secretary Spellings.

3. Several of the regulations seek to clarify elements of the law that require school districts to be accountable for results and more transparent in their reporting to the public and parents. States and schools will now be required to publish mathematics and reading results from the Nations Report Card with school’s testing data for students and include participation rates (the numbers of students in a grade compared to the number of students who actually took the test) for students with disabilities and those who are limited English proficient.

Additional components include:

Measures of student academic achievement may include multiple question formats and multiple assessments within a subject area.

In order to ensure the inclusion of all subgroups of students, states will be required to explain how minimum group size, or “N” number and other components of its AYP definition, interact to provide statistically reliable information and at the same time ensure the maximum inclusion of all students and subgroups.

Criteria is outlined that States must meet in order to incorporate individual student progress into the State’s definition of AYP.

For more information about the final regulations and to view the Secretary’s full remarks, fact sheets and a webcast of the announcement, visit <http://www.ed.gov/news/releases/2008/10/10282008.html>.

**“Unless someone like you cares
a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better....
it’s NOT!”**

Dr Seuss

Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc. (PHP), because of rising mailing, production costs, and our increased distribution number to more than 5,350 parents and professionals, must charge a \$20/year subscription fee to professionals and other interested individuals.

The newsletter remains free to parents, however any donation is appreciated.

Please complete and return the form below so that we may update our mailing list:

I am a parent of a child with a disability and a Wyoming resident. Please keep me on/add me to the list.

If your child has a disability, please list disability: _____ Child’s age _____

I am a parent leader in my child’s school _____ (name of school).

I am a professional, teacher or other interested person. Enclosed is \$20 for a one year subscription.

My organization/school name is _____ My role/ position is _____

I am the parent of a child with disabilities, but do not live in Wyoming. Enclosed is \$20 for a one year subscription.

Name: _____ Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Address: _____ Street _____ City _____ State _____ Zip: _____

This is my: Home address Work address (Please check one) E-mail address: _____

Additional Donation amount _____ . Thank you!

Please Send PHP A Change of Address If You Move. The Post Office Does Not Forward or Return Bulk Mail.

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5 N Lobban Ave
Buffalo, WY 82834

For more information
Contact PIC at 1-800-660-9742
(307) 684-2277

About us:



Information & Referral for Parents of Children with Disabilities

Parent Information Center, PIC:

Outreach Parent Liaisons (OPL) provide local information and support to families of children with disabilities, on their rights under special education law, IDEA. PIC also provides workshops and trainings on IDEA, IEPs, and specific disabilities such as attention disorders, autism and down syndrome. If you are interested in a workshop in your community or making contact with an OPL, call PIC at 1-800-660-9742 or (307) 684-2277, or call:

Betty Carmon, Powell, 754-3430, bcarmon@wpic.org
Serves Cody, Powell, Greybull, Worland, Lovell & Thermopolis area

Janet Kinstetter, Moorcroft, 756-9605, jkinstetter@wpic.org
Serves Moorcroft, Gillette, Sundance & Newcastle area

Anita Schwartz, aschwartz@wpic.org or **Jan Jones** jjones@wpic.org
Cheyenne, 635-3536 Serves Cheyenne, Laramie, Wheatland & Torrington area

Michele Pena, mpena@wpic.org or **Marcy Elton-Meeks**, melton@wpen.net, 247-0075 or 265-6884 or tollfree 1-877-265-6884
Serves Casper, Douglas, Glenrock & Lusk area



Parent Education Network, PEN:

As the Wyoming State PIRC, PEN provides technical assistance to schools about family friendly practices in education. PEN works with schools to help families understand the provisions of No Child Left Behind, and how to be more actively engaged in their children's learning and education.

For more information call **Krista Sweckard**, Outreach Coordinator at (307) 684-7441 or e-mail ksweckard@wpic.org or contact the Outreach Parent Liaison closest to you:

Brenda Hatanelas, Cheyenne, 635-3536, bhatanelas@wpen.net
Serves Cheyenne, Laramie, Wheatland and Torrington

Marcy Elton-Meeks, Casper, 265-6884, melton@wpen.net
Kelly Rogers, krogers@wpen.net
Serves Casper, Douglas, Glenrock and Lusk

Lisa Heimer, Cody, 899-1443, lheimer@wpen.net
Serves Cody, Powell, Lovell, Greybull and Basin

Crissy Lucas, Lander and/or Riverton, 857-1337, clucas@wpen.net
Serves Lander, Riverton, Dubois and Wind River Reservation

PEN also provides home-based services for children, prenatal through age five, and their families with the *Parents as Teachers (PAT)* program. Certified PAT parent educators are:

For more information about *PAT*, call **Dara Johnston**, *PAT* Coordinator at 1-877-900-9736 or (307) 684-7441 or e-mail PATinfo@wpen.net.

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Together We Make a Difference!

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Letter Clarifies Report Rules for Disabilities

School districts are allowed to refer to a student's disability or special education status on report cards, but they should generally refrain from such notations on student transcripts, according to new guidance released by the U.S. Department of Education.

The Oct. 17, 2008 guidance letter, from the department's office for civil rights, or OCR, is intended to clear up a source of confusion for some educators, who have worried that referring to a student's disability in any way on report cards or transcripts could be a violation of that student's privacy rights.

"Under federal disability-discrimination laws, the general principle is that report cards may contain information about a student's disability, including whether that student received special education or related services," wrote Stephanie J. Monroe, the department's assistant secretary for civil rights.

Those report cards should also contain information about the child's progress in academic coursework, consistent with standard report cards, she wrote.

Transcripts, however, are generally provided to people other than parents, Ms. Monroe noted in her letter. Because of that, schools must be more circumspect on what information they include on them.

"Information about a student's disability, including whether that student received special education or related services due to having a disability, is not information about a student's academic credentials and achievements. Therefore, transcripts may not provide information on a student's disability," Ms. Monroe wrote.

Patti Ralabate, an in-house adviser to the National Education Association on special education, said the guidance from the department "provides some really good clarity" on what had been a confusing issue for some educators.

A 'Misinformation' Problem

"There has been, for a very long time, some miscommunication and misinformation that was shared with teachers about what they could put on a report card," Ms. Ralabate said. For example, teachers wondered if they could include a notation on a report card that indicated a student was using a modified curriculum, she said.

In a question-and-answer document that accompanies the guidance letter, the department indicates that such notations are generally permissible on a report card. Because districts often already note whether a student is taking an Advanced Placement course or an honors course, noting that a course is for special education students is not treating those students any differently from their peers, the document says.

Report cards could also include notations that a student may have received certain accommodations in a general education class.

However, transcripts should have less specific information on them, the Education Department indicated. For example, it is acceptable to have a notation on a transcript that a particular class had a modified or alternate curriculum. But a transcript should not indicate whether a student received special education services, or accommodations in a general education class. To do so would reveal that the student had a disability, the department says.

Similar concerns about privacy were raised by disability-rights advocates, who successfully pushed for the New York City-based College Board and Iowa City, Iowa-based ACT Inc. to stop flagging the scores of students who need extra time to complete the SAT and ACT college-entrance exams. Both organizations dropped such notations on the tests in the 2003-04 school year.

The most complex piece of information for schools to handle appears to be how to refer to a "certificate of completion" or similar document. A transcript may make reference to such a document in some cases, as long as it does not indicate that a student received special education or has a disability, the guidance letter says. *By Christina A. Samuels Education Week published online Oct 24, 2008*

IEP development: 4 Core Issues

Individual Education Programs (IEP's) are to help a child:

- Advance toward annual goals
- Be involved in and progress in the general curriculum
- Participate in extracurricular & nonacademic activities
- Be educated with and participate with both nondisabled students and students with disabilities

IDEA states the IEP team must consider these 4 core issues when developing an IEP:

1. Strengths of a child
2. Concerns of the parents
3. Results of the initial or most recent evaluation
4. Academic, developmental and functional needs of the child

For information, or to have PIC help you understand more about your child's IEP, call us 1-800-660-9742



Wyoming Early Intervention Council

"WORKING TOGETHER TO EXTEND THEIR REACH"

The Early Intervention Council's mission is to provide statewide direction and support to insure exemplary coordination of community based early intervention services for children with developmental needs and their families.

Council Looking for New Parent Members

The Developmental Disabilities' Early Intervention and Education Program, a division of the Wyoming Department of Health, is currently recruiting parents who have a child with a developmental disability to sit on the program's Early Intervention Council (EIC).

The Council is appointed for a three year term by the Governor who ensures that the Council membership reasonably represents the population of the state. 20% of the Council consists of parents. The remaining council members consist of members of different agencies or providers of services to children, birth through five, with developmental disabilities.

The main qualifications to become a parent council member are:

- Have a child or children with developmental disabilities age 12 or younger;
- Have knowledge of or experience with programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities;
- Have a strong desire to guide decisions for children with disabilities in Wyoming;

Minority parents are encouraged to apply.

The purpose of the EIC is to assist and advise state agencies in implementing a statewide service delivery system for children aged birth through five who are identified as having developmental disabilities and their families.

The EIC's mission is to provide direction and support to insure exemplary coordinated community based early intervention services for children with developmental needs and their families.

Meetings are usually held quarterly in different locations throughout the State. Special meetings can be called when necessary. Parents are paid a small stipend for their services to the Council and are reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses, as per approved State of Wyoming reimbursement policy, for attending Council meetings and performing Council duties (including childcare for parent representatives).

If you have a child with a developmental disability 12 years old or under and have a strong desire to have your voice heard in decisions that are made concerning early intervention services for children in Wyoming, contact the Early Intervention and Education Program as the first step in receiving an appointment by the Governor to the Developmental Disabilities' Early Intervention Council. For more information contact:

*Belinda McCluskey, Department of Health,
Developmental Disabilities Division,
6101 Yellowstone Road, Suite 186E,
Cheyenne, WY 82002. 307-777-8770.*

If you would like to talk with a current EIC parent member, please call Melissa Deming at 307-351-8177. We look forward to hearing from you!

Just the Facts cd Available!

The Parent Education Network has produced a cd of all our early childhood fact sheets as PDFs. They include our "Thoughts for Tots" series from A-Z, and the school aged series of "PEN Notes # 1-28" all in English and Spanish.

Available at not cost, these cd's are for families, educators, child care centers and other providers. Call 1-877-8900-9736 today!

Call us for your copy!



Congratulations to Blue Ribbon Schools

Two Wyoming schools have been chosen for national recognition this year. Alta Elementary School in Alta and Elk Mountain Elementary School in Elk Mountain have been chosen as 2008 Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education.

William Hunt is the principal at Alta Elementary, which is in Teton County School District 1 where Pam Shea is the district superintendent. Dale Kari is the principal at Elk Mountain Elementary, which is in Carbon County School District 2 where Robert Gates is the district superintendent.



The No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools Award is one of the most prestigious education awards in the country. It distinguishes and honors schools for helping students achieve at very high levels and for closing the achievement gap.

The program requires schools to meet one of two assessment criteria. It rewards schools that score in the top 10 percent on state assessments; and it also recognizes schools that have at least 40 percent of their students from disadvantaged backgrounds and that dramatically improved their students' performance.

Alta and Elk Mountain Elementary were nominated because they met the criteria of scoring in the top 10 percent on PAWS.

Both schools made AYP for 2007 and scored exceptionally well on the Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students (PAWS), with most of their students achieving proficient or above in almost every grade and subject.

"These schools are being recognized for their exceptional student achievement," Dr. McBride said. "These remarkable levels of achievement are the result of great academic leaders and a staff dedicated to their students and focused on standards, as well as the hard work of their students."

"We are happy to be able to celebrate such success for these schools," he said. "Schools like Alta and Elk Mountain are great examples of the excellent schools and communities we have in the state of Wyoming."

Wyoming was one of 45 states to have a public school chosen as a Blue Ribbon School. There were a total of 270 Blue Ribbon Schools chosen out of a list of 363 nominations. Last year, Glenn Livingston Elementary School in Cody and Rawhide Elementary School in Gillette were chosen as 2007 Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. Wyoming has the distinction of having 21 schools chosen for the Blue Ribbon honor since 1982.

The 2008 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon Schools were honored at an awards ceremony with Secretary Spellings in Washington, D.C. in December.

More information on the program and a list of current winners can be accessed at <http://www.ed.gov/programs/nclbbrs/index.html>.

Source: Tim Lockwood, WY Department of Education

More Teaching Awards for Wyoming Educators

Tracy Petsch, Title 1 Teacher at Albin Elementary and TAP mentor for Laramie County School District # 1, has been named the 2008 Wyoming winner of the Milken National Educator Awards. Staff, students, parents, and community members gathered in Oct 2008 to "celebrate learning," and were thrilled and wonderfully surprised by the announcement of this award. Tracy will receive a \$25,000 cash award and a trip to the Milken/TAP Conference in Los Angeles next spring to be honored with all other 2008 winners.

Pat Powell has been named the K-3 Teacher of the Year by the Wyoming Early Childhood Association (WECA). Pat has taught in the Shoshoni schools (Fremont County School District No. 24) for 34 years. The award requires that an individual show an outstanding application of understanding of children in classroom activities and is a strong advocate for best practices of young children in the classroom setting.

The Role of Parents in Dropout Prevention: Strategies that Promote Graduation and School Achievement

From: Big Horn CO School District # 1 Parent Newsletter

Students who drop out of school face a difficult future. They are more likely to be unemployed, incarcerated, and / or impoverished. For students with disabilities, the risks are intensified. Their drop out rate is about 40%-more than twice that of their peers without disabilities. However, families can play an important role in making sure their students with or without disabilities graduates. Staying involved in your teens life during middle school and high school is critical.

Although risk factors are not precise predictors, parents should be aware of them. Students with disabilities are at greater risk of dropping out if:

- they have been held back a grade
- they are older than the other students in their grade
- they have limited English proficiency
- they have family or economic problems

Among students with disabilities, students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders and students with learning disabilities are at greatest risk of dropping out.

Students who actively participate in and identify with their school are more motivated to stay in school and more likely to graduate than those who are not involved with their school. Poor attendance, academic failure, emotional withdrawal, or other inappropriate conduct all can indicate that a student has disengaged from school. Afterschool and extra-curricular activities can be an effective way of engaging students who find academics frustrating.

Learning styles, learning disabilities, and life experiences may all contribute to low academic achievement or problem behavior. Many students with disabilities have trouble passing standard assessment tests. One means of promoting student engagement is to identify and accommodate disabilities so a students academic knowledge can be accurately assessed. Tailoring instruction to meet the needs of individual students also support student engagement. Many at-risk youth are not well served by mainstream education. The traditional approach is well-suited to students with strong language and math abilities.

Spotlight on: Jodi's Heart, Inc

"Committed to enriching the lives of people with special needs"



Jodi's Heart Inc. is a newly established Wyoming Corporation which cares for the special needs population. Participants are a very busy group. They experience a range of activities daily at our new 5700 square foot Day-Habilitation Center at 54 Seymour in Sheridan. Mornings begin with 30 minutes of exercise followed by activities like scrap-booking, archery, bowling, tole painting, woodworking, holiday cooking and games such as Bunko & Karaoke. Learning-activities include 911 procedures taught by the 911 officers; computer lab, and food preparation of the 'dish of the week' or Holiday Cooking Class. Participants enjoyed a fun-filled 4 day trip to the Black Hills last year and attended "Our Camp" for a week last summer.

The two new supported living homes are in a lovely neighborhood where each person has his or her very own bedroom. This has had the desired effect of enhancing

residents' self-worth. A totally accessible house was added to the list of homes in December. Participants arrive home from their daily activities about 4:30 pm and are served a home-cooked meal following which they help clean up and ready themselves for evening activities before preparing for a wonderful restful night.

CEO, Jodi Smith says, "Enhancing our participants' self-esteem is our #1 goal. We want each person to have fun, learn something new and serve our community each day. The certified staff is to be congratulated for daily one-on-one caring for our participants. " Hats off to them!"

Anyone wanting to learn more about the homes, activities or the center in Sheridan, please call 307-673-0540.

Editors note: The Parent Information Center will be featuring a different provider each edition of the newsletter. Information or articles must be ready for print and submitted to tdawson@wpic.org. PIC has the right to select and/or edit articles. Publication tin the newsletter is meant to provide choices for families, and not as an endorsement of any articular program.

Early Childhood Mental Health System Progresses

Over the past year, substantial progress was made in creating a statewide system of mental health services for infants, preschoolers and their families in Wyoming. Building upon the successes of a two-year pilot program, all 14 of the state's Developmental Preschools hired mental health clinicians or preschool specialists to provide early childhood social-emotional development services in their areas of the state.

Now, any child care worker, preschool teacher or other early childhood service provider can receive training in her community on social-emotional development and basic classroom approaches in handling behavioral problems. The Developmental Preschools offer this training free of charge, as well as follow up technical assistance and one-on-one consultation on particular cases. Call the local child developmental center for a training schedule.

The clinicians and early childhood specialists working for the Developmental Preschools are receiving some of the best training in the nation in pediatric mental health. The Youth Consultation Services Institute (YCS) in New Jersey continues to provide intensive seminars and workshops to prepare these professionals to offer first-rate training to early childhood service providers, as well as higher quality social-emotional services.

In an effort to develop the state's ability to provide instruction in this important discipline, CDS and YCS are working with Professors Michelle Buchanan and Michael Morgan at the University of Wyoming's College of education to create post-graduate certificate programs in pediatric mental health and early childhood social-emotional development. These programs will be available in 2009. A national survey of states was conducted last year to determine progress in developing pediatric mental health systems. Wyoming scored the best in the nation.

Source: Child Development Services of WY annual newsletter

Wyoming is # 1 Where it Counts

Wyoming has one of the most effective developmental preschool systems in the united States. Here is why.

Extensive studies demonstrate conclusively that quality early childhood development services convey a lifetime of early childhood benefits to the child, family and their communities. The key to accessing quality interventions is locating the infants and preschoolers who need them.

Beginning with the creation of the Child Development Services of WY (the association of the 14 regional developmental preschools in Wyoming) in 2001, Wyoming's Developmental Preschools committed to locating as many young children with developmental delays as possible. Through the statewide " 1 before 2" campaign and extensive local efforts, the number of developmental screenings has increased by 85% over the past several years.

This work has paid substantial dividends. Using criteria spelled out in federal and state regulations, Developmental Preschools have identified approximately 1500 additional infants and preschoolers who require early intervention services. As a result, Wyoming has moved from the middle of the pack of states in locating children in need of early intervention services to the top of the list.

Research indicates that 10.5% of the nation's birth to five population has developmental delays that require intervention. Based on 2006, Wyoming is serving 8.9% of this age group.

While early intervention consists of many types of services, recent studies have identified social emotional interventions as having the most beneficial and long term impacts. Based upon self assessments taken in the fall of 2007, Wyoming is one of 5 states to have the most fully developed pediatric mental health systems. (see article above) Combined with the decision to incorporate Division of Early Childhood professional standards into all their centers, these results demonstrate that Wyoming's Developmental Preschools are some of the best in the nation. In fact, the federal government rates Wyoming as one of only four states in full compliance with national special education standards for the birth to five population.



Source: Child Development Services of WY annual newsletter

PEN's Family-School Partnership Connections...



Good Apple Spotlight Award

Spring Creek Elementary, Laramie, WY

In November, in order to celebrate American Education Week, Spring Creek Elementary's PTO came up with a week's worth of activities to celebrate education! As part of the fun, PTO members created science experiments for children to partake in, including Goo!, Volcanoes, Static

Electricity and Hovercrafts (see photos below). They also presented on mountain lions, hosted an essay contest for the kids to state what they would do as principal and reinforced content standards. *Way to go, Spring Creek Elementary!*



Tips for a Great Family Night Activity:

Set a goal for your activity. Whether the goal is to focus on how to read aloud to your kids or to take a look at the technology of the classroom, making a goal helps all the pieces fall in line, giving your activity a purpose. As you are planning, always check back to the goal. Is what you are doing helping to achieve that goal?

Design a team with roles. Assign tasks for each team member, that way you break up the responsibilities and all members feel valued. As you are assigning, ask participants what their talents are, or how they would like to help, thereby using their strengths instead of adding more stress to their load.

Advertising, marketing and communicating. Advertise your activity to families, community members and staff by marketing an idea. Choose how you will communicate the fun and importance of attending the activity! Talk about the activity and invite your family and parents of your children's friends to the activity. Don't forget extended family and grandparents!

Have FUN! During your activity—remember to have fun, don't sweat the small stuff, sometimes things don't run smoothly, but the important thing is that everyone gets something out of it—even if it is FUN!

Follow up on activity. How do you know if your activity is successful, or if you met your goal? Well, you need to ask the participants! Survey families to see if it was what you had hoped for and to find out what ideas they have for next time!

Reflection. Take time after your activity and reflect on survey responses, discuss what worked and what didn't, and learn from your activity.

A Reminder: PEN provides contracts to Title 1 schools for parent-teacher groups (PTOs/PTAs) to have family night activities to increase parent engagement and link to learning at home. Call 1-877-900-9736 for more info, or download all of our forms on our website at www.wpen.net.

WY Special Education Director Wins National Award

Peg Brown-Clark, Wyoming's Special Education Director and unit director for the Wyoming Department of Education, was recently recognized with a prestigious national award.

Clark was presented the Glenn I. Latham Award by the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center at the recent National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) National Conference in South Carolina.

The award is presented annually to an outstanding state education agency staff member that has provided exceptional leadership in the area of special education to improve services and programs for children with disabilities. This is the highest award in the region and is presented annually on behalf of the regional states of Arizona, Bureau of Indian Education, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming and Utah.

Director of the Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center, John Copenhaver said Clark has done an

outstanding job since her appointment as Wyoming State Director of Special Education. In addition to her excellent work in Wyoming, she has shared her experience and expertise with other State Directors throughout the region and country, he said.

He said that as a member of the NASDSE Board of Directors, she also has an opportunity to influence special education policy and procedures at the national level.

"Peg Brown-Clark is appreciated and respected," Copenhaver said. "We want to express our appreciation to the department of education and Wyoming for providing the opportunities for sharing Peg with our region."

"We are pleased that Peg Brown-Clark has been recognized on the national stage for excellence in her professional circles," Dr. McBride said. "She is a respected and outstanding member of our staff, and she is considered an invaluable professional by her peers."

Source : Tim Lockwood, WY Department of Education

PIC's Betty Carmon Wins Advocacy Award



Betty Carmon's passion in supporting families of children with disabilities has resulted in her being awarded UPLIFTS 2008 Making a Difference Advocacy Award at their annual banquet in Cheyenne recently.

As an Outreach Parent Liaison for the Parent Information Center for over 11 years, Ms Carmon, has worked with hundreds of families across Wyoming, supporting and empowering them to understand their children's disability, and their rights under the special education law—the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. She provides workshops on the IDEA, and how to be a stronger advocate for your child, as well as on specific disabilities. As a parent of an adult son with autism, Betty started advocating on personal level for her son over 18 years ago in Powell. She continues to support

"Betty is passionate about empowering and educating parents and helping them find their voice."

*Samantha Janney
on nominating Betty*

families on a one-on-one basis, on the phone and in person, and attends IEP meetings with families at their request for individual support for PIC, and is never too busy to answer a call from a family.

Samantha Janney, with the Governors Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, stated in her nomination, "Betty has impressed me time and time again with her

endless dedication to advocating for youth with disabilities, especially students with mental illness and intellectual disabilities. " The award recognizes an individual who has made a positive impact on children's mental health services. Those who have worked with Betty over the years know how passionate

she is about autism and advocacy. Says Janney, "She is passionate about empowering and educating parents and helping them find their voice in advocating for their children. Betty is a wonderful resource to all parents, approachable and tireless in her efforts to support families across Wyoming."

Web Accessibility 101: Redesigning www.wpen.net



The Parent Education Network has recently completed a facelift of our website <http://www.wpen.net>, redesigning the site to meet Section 508 federal web accessibility compliance standards. In simplified terms, we've redone the website in an attempt to make it more user-friendly and accessible for everyone.

Web use is more and more becoming a part of daily life for a majority of Americans, from government and education to business and banking. Accessible websites are designed simply to ensure that all people, regardless of their ability, have the freedom to navigate, interact, and explore the internet without needless delays or issues.

Designing web sites that are accessible, once planned out, are really no more complicated than standard web development. Nonetheless, accessible design does take forethought and creative thinking in implementing a functional website that meets such requirements as providing enough color contrast and dynamic font-sizes for those with visual impairments and providing content that is viewable on low-bandwidth connections.

In refraining from getting into the technical aspects of designing accessible websites, here are a few highlights from the <http://www.wpen.net> website components that make it that much more user friendly:

- Alternative text accompanying all images
- Clear and consistent design and content
- Breadcrumbs on each page, allowing users to know where they are in relation to the site
- PEN content in Spanish
- CSS style sheets

Additional resources that may be helpful for web users or webmasters include a number of web accessibility toolbars which can be found and downloaded online and used in conjunction with your internet browser. Google has an accessible search engine, <http://labs.google.com/accessible/> which searches for content solely from accessible websites. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), <http://www.w3.org/WAI/> is an enormous resourceful site with tips and guidelines for designing and implementing accessible sites.

To meet needs of visitors, our website, <http://wpen.net>, will be constantly changing, updating, and improving in every attempt to become an efficient and effective information source for Wyoming parents. Future site enhancements to improve accessibility will include, reformatting PDF documents to allow for greater usability with screen readers as well as updates based on Section 508 and WAI standards. For more on the technical aspects of accessible web design, to suggest changes that will make the site more user friendly, or for questions about the PEN website, please contact the Parent Education Network at 307-684-7441.

PHP of WY, Inc expands office in Cheyenne

Parents Helping Parents of Wyoming, Inc, the non-profit parent organization of the projects' the Parent Information Center and the Parent Education Network, has opened a new office in Cheyenne. Located at 307 E. 17th St (just behind Arby's on Lincolnway), the office is opened from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, so that families, teachers and providers have easier access to our resources and materials. Some of those resources, available at no cost, are our fact sheets on early childhood issues, brochures on specific disabilities and related topics, fact sheets on education topics such as Title 1, PAWS assessments and

Section 504, as well as on topics such as parent involvement, helping your child with homework and internet safety. Staff at the Cheyenne office include: Darla Albright- office manager; Erin Swilling- PEN Parent Educator for Parents as Teachers; PEN Outreach Parent Liaison- Brenda Hatanelas; and PIC Outreach Parent Liaisons -Anita Schwartz and Jan Jones. They can be reached at 307-635-3536.



Everyone is encouraged to stop by and meet the staff and see our new space.

Wyoming Kids First

Wyoming Kids First is a new early childhood initiative that focuses on developing an early childhood and their families that includes:

- quality based early care and education
- integrated family support services and
- accessible and affordable health care

General Focus of Wyoming Kids First

- Develop a public/private partnership that will take a bottom up/top down approach to building a comprehensive and collaborative early childhood system within Wyoming.
- Drive the needs of the communities up through the work of regional partnerships and task forces.
- Work with state agencies to reduce duplication and enhance collaboration and efficiencies.
- Maintain the work of this initiative within a non-profit that can solicit private funding and not be restricted through government regulations.

Organizational Structure of Wyoming Kids First

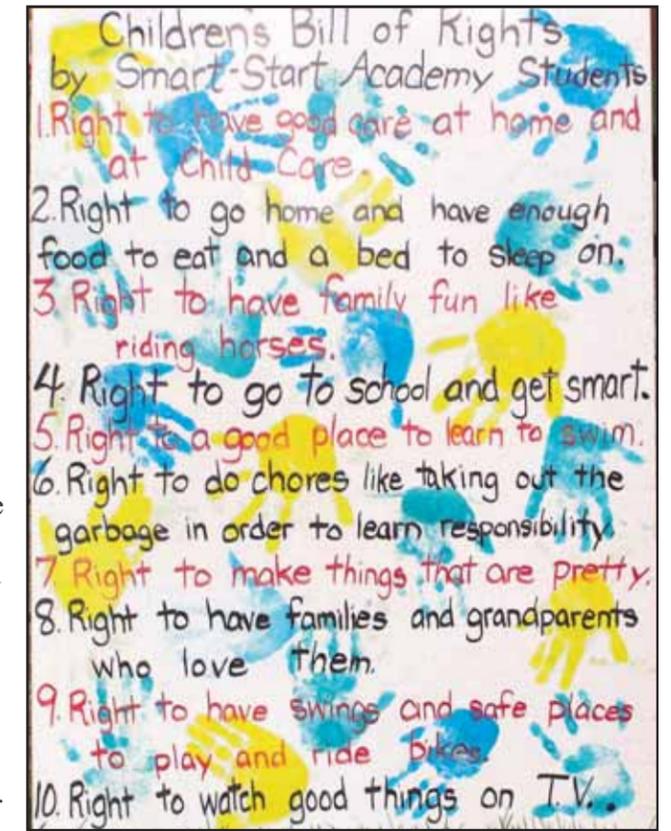
Regional Partnerships will be created across the state. The partnerships will be responsible for setting up a community office, and hiring a staff person. Staff responsibilities include forming a board of directors, conducting a needs assessment, identifying gaps in early childhood services, and working to close those gaps. Some funding will be provided by Wyoming Kids First.

Task Forces are currently working on systemic changes within early care and education, physical, emotional and socio health as well as dental health, and strengthening families. These task forces will also help facilitate solutions within local communities.

The **WY Early Childhood Partnership** non-profit will oversee the day-to-day operations of the initiative, including fund-raising and ensuring accountability for the funds dispensed.

The **Wyoming Early Childhood Partnership Advisory Board** will provide advice to the work of the non-profit and the task forces, help draft legislation when needed, work with state agencies to ensure collaboration and serve as an evaluation are for the work of the initiative.

Contact: Pam Walker, Executive Director
159 N. Wolcott Suite 150, Casper WY 82601
(307) 472-2152 or pam@wyokidsfirst.org



Resources for to Strengthen High School Transitions and Success

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) recently released three new resources that focus on policies to ensure academic success in high school.

One, a 9th-grade transitions policy brief, reviews research emphasizing the freshman year as a predictor for high school success. This brief identifies solid approaches to develop and support models, whether they are aimed at funding summer "catch-up" programs, growing positive peer networks or developing individual graduation plans.

While research shows high school transitions are heavily dependent on parental support and guidance, it also suggests parents are unsure of how best to support their children. The second policy brief addresses this issue.

The third brief examines components to strengthen teacher professional development. These briefs can be founds at www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/

What's Happening in Wyoming

Save the Dates:

WY Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EDHI) Spring Conference

February 5, 6 & 7, 2009

in Laramie at the Hilton Garden Inn

Featuring Dr Ken Moses, Karen Anderson, Susan Fischer and Nancy Pajak

Topics: learning to listen in a noisy world, audiology for educators and parents.

Sat Feb 7, 2009 will be

Parents Day with Dr Ken Moses

For more info call: Nancy Pajak (307) 721-6212

Registration call: Denise Marquiss (307) 766-3362

UW Conferences and Institutes or online at

www.wyomingedhi.org

Parent Education Network presents:

2009 Partnership Summit on Family & Community Engagement

featuring

Karen Mapp, Ed.D;
Harvard University



March 24, 2009

Cheyenne
Little America

Karen Mapp, one of the nations leading research experts on family engagement, will lead this full day summit. We aim to bring together teams of school leaders of parents, Title 1 staff, principals and educators, to discuss and develop action plans to take back to their district and schools to increase family engagement in linking to learning for increased student achievement.

For more info call PEN 1-877-900-9736
or register online at www.wpen.net

Wyoming School Psychologist Association (WSPA) Conference

April 23-24, 2009

Casper - Best Western Ramkota.

Featuring Robert Greenleaf

For more info contact:

Deb_Black@ncsd.k12.wy.us

WY Council for Exceptional Children

April 13-14, 2009

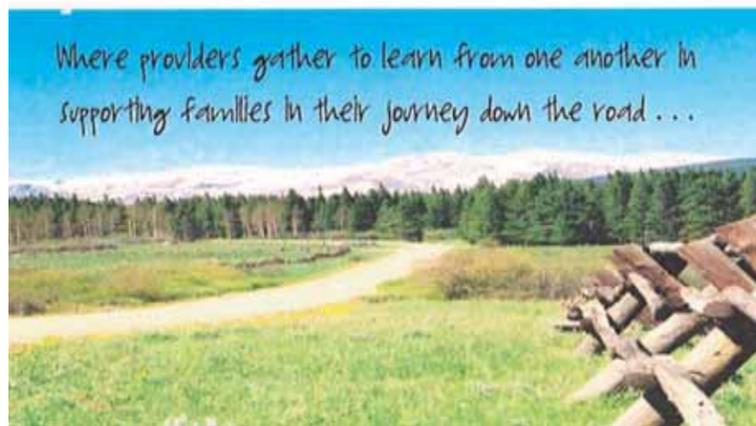
Casper—Hilton Garden Inn

Featuring Dr Steve Edwards

Topic: Teaching skills students need in the 21st century work place

For info call: **Dr Bob Bayuk**

347-2435 or bbayuk@tribespc.com



Where providers gather to learn from one another in supporting families in their journey down the road...

Western States Regional Early Intervention Conference

for providers working with children birth-21 years old who are Blind, Visually Impaired, Deaf-Blind or Hard of Hearing

April 23-25, 2009 Colorado Springs

For more information: mbrady@csdb.org (719) 578-2260
Sponsored by Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind

Study Finds School Improvement Plans Lacking in Parent Involvement

A new report by researchers at REL Northwest, operated by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, shows that the majority of school improvement plans in the region lack parent involvement components mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act.

The study, which examined 308 plans from five Northwest states, found that more than half did not include provisions to:

- Notify parents of the school's improvement status
- Collaborate and communicate with parents (i.e., provide opportunities for parents to be involved in developing and approving the school improvement plan)

- Include "effective" parent involvement activities

NCLB requires Title I schools labeled as in need of improvement to submit a school improvement plan to their state education agency that contains specific strategies for increasing student achievement. The act asserts that parent involvement is key to increasing student proficiency and bringing schools out of improvement status.

However, researchers Timothy Speth, Steffen Saifer, and Greg Forehand found that school improvement plans that include parent involvement rely on a limited number of involvement activities, including nonacademic communication. They also found that while 75 percent of the schools in improvement serve English language learner students, only 33 percent of the school improvement plans included activities for communicating with parents in a language they could understand. Schools that did meet NCLB parent involvement requirements were primarily in states or districts that provided a template for completing school improvement plans.

"The report is intended to, at a minimum, help schools meet NCLB requirements but more importantly it suggests ways schools can plan and implement meaningful and comprehensive parent involvement activities," says Speth, the lead author of the study. "Schools can include more 'effective' parent involvement activities in their school improvement

plans—such as parent-led cultural events and student-led conferences—rather than simply including traditional activities like parent-teacher conferences or back to school nights."

The report, Parent Involvement Activities in School Improvement Plans in the Northwest Region, is part of the Institute of Education Sciences' *Issues & Answers* series designed to connect scientifically based research to practice on topics of regional concern.

The full report, and others in the series, can be found at the REL website at www.wpen.net.

Directors note: The Parent Education Network can provide technical assistance to schools in helping to increase parent involvement in developing school improvement plans. Call us at 1-877-900-9736 for more information!



They're here!

The Parent Education Network, WY State PIRC will be mailing every school in Wyoming a **Just the Facts** cd of PDFs of all our "PEN Notes" & "Education Extra's" for easier access and dissemination!

Families, educators and providers can call and request additional copies of the cd's at 1-877-900-9736, or e-mail us at

tdawson@wpic.org. All fact sheets in English and Spanish are also available on our website at

www.wpen.net.