INCREASING PARENT INVOLVEMENT: 
WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey is a prominent researcher in the arena of parent involvement. Over the course of her research, Hoover-Dempsey has identified 5 levels of parent involvement, along with questions schools and teachers can ask themselves to assess their proficiency at each level. This can serve as a helpful model as schools seek to increase parent involvement, which research has shown can lead to significantly improved outcomes for students.

**Level 1:**
Helping motivate parents to be involved; helping parents feel invited to participate, and understanding and honoring factors that affect parent participation.

- How does your school/classroom help reinforce parents’ confidence that they as parents can effectively help their children?
- How do you and your students make invitations, general and specific, to encourage parent participation?
- How are you asking parents about cultural factors in your school community/classroom that would affect parent participation and student learning? What have you learned?

**Level 1.5:**
Where parents can influence their children’s learning behaviors and beliefs.

- How does your school/classroom help parents understand what they can do at home that supports what is being taught in the classroom?
- How does your school help maintain effective 2-way communication between parents and the school/teacher?

*Level 1 Tip* Get your students in on the fun! Having kids draw invitations for their families is a great way to encourage parent participation— not only does it reinforce writing skills, but interests children and in turn will interest their parents!

Hoover-Dempsey has identified 5 levels of parent involvement— each level building on the previous, ultimately working to increase student achievement and learning!
Level 2:
What parents can do to influence their child’s learning behaviors and beliefs.

- How does your school/classroom help parents to understand how to positively encourage their children to succeed academically?
- How does your school/classroom help parents to understand how to provide instruction that supports their children’s learning?

Level 3:
Checking to see what children are learning from their parents.

- How does your school/classroom help parents determine what messages related to positive modeling, encouragement, reinforcement, and instruction parents provided resonate with their children?

Level 4:
The learning attributes students need to possess that have a direct connection to increased learning and achievement.

- How does your school/classroom help parents understand if students feel confident about their ability to succeed academically?
- How does your school/classroom help parents understand if students are able to regulate their own learning?

Level 5:
Increased student achievement and learning. In addition to these levels for schools and teachers to consider, Hoover-Dempsey’s research has identified three of the most effective lessons that parents can teach their children in order to ensure school success. Those lessons are:

- You need to try hard
- Homework is very important
- School is very important.

These are lessons that parents, regardless of their background, have the power to instill in their children.

For more about increasing and improving parent involvement in your classroom or school, contact the Parent Education Network central office at 1-800-660-9742, or contact the parent outreach liaison in your area.

Level 2 Tip
Link to learning! Every time you invite families in—make sure what you are telling them gives specific tips on how they can reinforce what you are teaching at home! A little bit of instruction and explanation on how or why you are teaching the subject goes a long way!

Level 3 Tip
Don’t be afraid to ask! Students need to be learning at home. That doesn’t mean to break out the chalkboard—it simply means that parents need skills to encourage, reinforce and provide some instruction. Since they often don’t know what you are teaching—ask them what they struggle with—ask their children how homework can be more meaningful!

Level 4 Tip
We don’t enter the world equipped to study or to regulate our own learning. We need to provide opportunities for families to learn how to support their child’s learning at home. Having a quiet place to study, or setting the expectation that we read each night for 20 minutes is just as important as how to ask for help.

Level 5 Tip
As a learning community, the expectations at school and at home need to be focused on student achievement. Making that known has to be a two-way, systematic communication goal. Talk with families about how they can reinforce this at home, as well as sharing how you focus on it at school—by working together, you can overcome obstacles!
PHP Presents the “MORRIS JACOBSON CHAMPION FOR KIDS” Ability Award

“Teacher Karen-Teacher Karen”.....! These words were usually followed by some child throwing him/herself into the arms of this lovely lady, accompanied by a big, BOLD, and warm laugh. Teacher Karen always came with a huge smile, warm laugh and hugs for every child. There is no-one better in my mind to receive PIC’s very first Champion for Kid’s Ability Award. Karen Martin Kocurek, also known as Teacher Karen, epitomized the word Champion in every sense of the word.

Starting her teaching career in North Dakota at the Grafton State School for the Deaf and Blind, Karen came to Buffalo, WY where she taught for 21 years. In 2000, she became Education Diagnostician for Johnson County School District # 1 in Buffalo, where she worked until her retirement in January 2010. During her years of teaching, Teacher Karen worked with kids of all sizes and abilities and always did so with a smile. She was a strong advocate for all kids and families, making sure they were comfortable with services and supports and understood their rights and responsibilities under special education law. In fact, she was the first teacher/provider my husband and I had contact with 24 years ago when our son was diagnosed with Down Syndrome at 5 weeks old.

I still remember her starting this difficult conversation with.... “There’s this law--called 94-142 (now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or IDEA)--- and it is going to make a huge difference in Ted’s life!” She did not know then how much I took her words to heart, and how a few years later I would put them to action to help start the Parent Information Center. Teacher Karen taught our children and families in Johnson County to trust in their own ability and strength and to expect the best from all of our children. She never gave up, and she never allowed us to give up.

She did so with a smile, a laugh and a big hug. Karen Martin Kocurek died on January 10, 2010 in Buffalo after a long fought battle with pancreatic cancer.

Karen Martin Kocurek–our CHAMPION FOR KIDS!

PARENTING TIPS: BUILDING LANGUAGE EVERY DAY!

- Talk to your child–starting at birth.
- Describe what you are doing and ask questions. Use short sentences and lots of different words.
- Don’t expect perfect speech from your toddler or even your 7-year-old. Learning how to make sounds correctly takes time.
- If you think she might be trying to say a real word, say it for her, and see if she agrees that you’ve got the right one.
- Be a good example. If your child mispronounces a word (like “wabbit”), don’t criticize her. Instead say it correctly: “Yes, that’s a rabbit.”
- Sing, tell stories and read to your child.
- If you’re concerned that your child has difficulty with speech, talk to your doctor or pediatrician.

Taken from Parenting Counts of Talaris Research Institute.
The economic returns on early investments are high, says Professor James Heckman, Nobel Laureate and economist from the University of Chicago.

But it’s not just cognitive abilities we should be focusing on, he said. While intelligence is an important determinant of socioeconomic success, it’s social-emotional “soft skills” like perseverance, attention, motivation and self confidence that really move children toward life success.

Sure, remedial programs for teens and young adults can be effective, but they’re much more costly in producing the same results (e.g., skill development).

He laid out a strong case for public support for early intervention...specifically, early childhood interventions for disadvantaged children.

What constitutes ‘disadvantaged’? According to Heckman, it’s the quality of parenting. “Stressed brains don’t learn the same way as non-stressed brains,” he says. Children who grow up in households under constant stress—whether from bickering parents, economic constraints, and alcoholism/drug addiction—do not learn as well as others.

Organizations that use the Parents as Teachers curriculum and provide home visits can affect the lives of parents, creating permanent change in the home environment. And that’s a powerful return on anyone’s investment.

Call Dara Johnston at (307) 684-7441 for more information on the PAT program nearest you!
CYBERBULLYING: BULLYING’S UGLY COUSIN

The internet provides many opportunities for children and teens to exchange information. As technology has become more advanced, so have the ways that children and teens encounter bullying. Cyberbullying is a repeated attempt from a child or teen to scare, threaten, embarrass, or otherwise victimize another child or teen through technologies. Because cyberbullying often occurs “behind the scenes,” parents may not even be aware that it is happening. Unfortunately, this new form of bullying is becoming very prevalent. Statistics indicate that 90% of middle school students have considered themselves victims of cyberbullying at some point (statistics from www.isafe.org).

New Technologies

Although cyberbullying can be difficult to catch, there are things parents can do to build awareness in themselves and their children. First of all, parents need to understand the types of technologies their children might access.

Blogs are like personal web pages, where users can display pictures and express ideas or opinions. A blog can be viewed by anyone on the internet unless the user opts to make it “private,” meaning that it can be viewed by invitation only.

Social networking websites, such as “MySpace,” “Facebook,” and “Twitter,” have become very popular avenues for children to connect with peers. Like blogs, social networking websites provide spaces for users to post pictures and ideas, but enable individual pages to be linked to the pages of other users to create large networks. Some of these websites allow the content to be viewed by anyone, while others require that viewers obtain the permission of the author in order to view his or her “page.”

Instant messaging, or “IM,” enables users to see when their friends are online and allows them to send typed messages back and forth to one another instantaneously.

Text messages allow users to send typed messages to a person or groups of people using cell phones. Cell phones can also send photos, videos, and voice messages to large audiences.

Protecting Your Child from Cyberbullying

Discuss cyberbullying with your child. Some children may be afraid to discuss instances of cyberbullying with their parents because they are afraid that they will lose access to their cell phones and/or internet. Parents can assure their children through calm discussion that they want their child to be able to maintain their freedom with these technologies but in a safe way.

Set cyber safety rules. Just as you teach your children safe ways to navigate the physical world, it is important to teach them safe ways to navigate the cyber world. Some points to emphasize with your child include:

Because you cannot see or hear them, you can never really be sure who is on the other end of cyber communication—it could be a predator or a bully.

Never give out personal information on the internet, including phone numbers, addresses, passwords, photos, or physical descriptions of yourself.

Be cautious when sharing personal details on the internet. These could be used by bullies to embarrass or ridicule you.

Never share your IM (instant messaging) or email account with anyone, including close friends. If other people have access to your password, then private messages may become public. Additionally, with your password, others can pretend to be you and cause damage to your reputation.

Keep your cool. Responding to cyber bullies with angry messages may only get you in trouble.
A NEW LOOK FOR THE PEN FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP CONTRACT

This year the folks at PEN decided to tweak the contracts that we know and love so well. Below are the new components that have proven beneficial for the schools currently utilizing our contracts! Although the idea stays the same, the purpose has changed to include the alignment of school goals and the Wyoming State Content and Performance Standards with the focus of the Family-School Partnership Activity.

PEN’s Family-School Partnership Contract Purpose:
To encourage collaboration between families and schools to support student learning by aligning Family-School Partnership Activities with the school goals and Wyoming State Content and Performance Standards.

The first paid contract activity is a 2-hour Family-School Partnership Planning. The reasoning behind this official set aside time for the first planning session was two-fold:

1. Planning session gives the Partnership Team time to discuss and plan three partnership activities.
2. Provides a great opportunity to work together!

The best part about change has come from input we have received from contract participants—see for yourself!

What is the best thing about the workshop?
- Helping to improve relationships and communication between parents and teachers.
- Listening to different ways to help our school with parent involvement.
- Brainstorming ideas, getting excited about ideas that we already had.
- Working with parents to design something useful! Heard parents’ concerns.
- Getting parents involved with school activities and working with school personnel.
- The excitement of building relationships with parents and families to create stronger schools and communities.

CYBERBULLYING CONTINUED...
(Continued from page 5)

Use safety measures. If your child maintains a blog, encourage them to make it “private” so it can be viewed only by people they invite. Invite them to use social networking websites that require viewers to obtain the author’s approval before viewing their page. Help them to choose passwords that are difficult to “crack” and have them change their passwords regularly.

Block out bullies. If someone is bullying your child, block their email address, screen name, or phone number.

Know what your child is doing online. While privacy is important, safety is more important. Parents should keep the computer somewhere in view, such as the family room or kitchen. If your child participates in blogs or social networking sites, find out how to access them so that you can monitor his or her communications. Document any evidence of cyberbullying by printing inappropriate emails or web posts and contact your child’s school or the police.

Some information from www.pacer.org and www.stopcyberbullying.org

NEW FACT SHEETS AT THE PARENT EDUCATION NETWORK

The Parent Education Network has developed two new PEN notes fact sheets for families in Wyoming: Cyberbullying and MAP Testing.

The PEN Note # 29 provides information on the MAP testing that the majority of Wyoming schools use for assessing what students have learned in math, reading, writing and science. The MAP test stands for Measures of Academic Progress, and is given by computer at least twice a year, and adapts to the level of the test-taker, and can be scored immediately.

Another of PEN’s new fact sheets is PEN Note # 30 on Cyberbullying. It gives definitions from the new Wyoming requirements for schools on bullying and offers tips for families on how to keep your child from being bullied online or through texting. (see article above).

Download them as pdf’s from our website at www.wpen.net under publications.
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

What is assistive technology (AT)? When used with students with learning disabilities, assistive technology is “any device, piece of equipment or system that helps bypass, work around or compensate for an individual’s specific learning deficits.”

What types of assistive technology tools are available for students with learning disabilities?

**Writing:**
- Abbreviation Expanders: These are software programs that allow the user to establish abbreviations for commonly misspelled words. The computer will then fill in the rest of the word when the user types in the designated abbreviation.
- Alternative Keyboards: These overlays can be used with a standard keyboard. By color-coding keys, covering unneeded keys, or using graphic reminders, alternative keyboards can make computers more user-friendly according to the student’s needs.
- Graphic Organizers and Outlining Programs: These help students give structure to their ideas by helping him or her organize information into categories before beginning a writing project.
- Portable Word Processors: These lightweight devices allow students with writing difficulties to type rather than handwrite notes and assignments and to edit them more efficiently.
- Proofreading Programs: These programs will scan the student’s writing assignment and identify any potential errors in grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling.
- Speech Recognition Software Programs: The student dictates his thoughts into a microphone that is connected to a word processor. The program will transcribe the student’s words into text.
- Talking Spell Checkers/Electronic Dictionaries: These devices read the student’s text aloud as they display the words, enabling the student to hear and see the word and identify any errors in spelling or word choice.
- Word Prediction Programs: These word processing programs will “predict” what word the student is attempting to type based on spelling, syntax, and prior word choice.

**Reading:**
- Audio Books and Publications: Available in many different formats, these allow students to listen to text.
- Optical Character Recognition: These programs allow text to be scanned into a computer or hand-held device and then read aloud to the student.
- Speech Synthesizers/Screen Readers: These programs will read aloud text typed by the student, text from the internet, or text scanned in from another source. May also help with writing.

**Math:**
- Electronic Math Worksheets: These are software programs that assist the user in working through math problems on a computer screen. The program will assist the user in lining up the problem and can even read the numbers aloud to the student.
- Talking Calculators: These devices have speech synthesizers that will say aloud the number, symbol, or operation key as the student presses it, as well as the answer to the problem.

**Organization and Memory:**
- Free-form database: This allows the student to “jot down” notes electronically. The database will then find the notes when the user enters any part of the original note.
- Information/Data Managers: Allows the student to keep calendars, “to do” lists, contacts, and other information electronically.

**Listening/Attention:**
- Personal FM Listening Systems: A wireless transmitter worn by the teacher or speaker transmits the sound directly to a wireless earpiece worn by the student.
- Variable Speed Tape Recorders: These devices allow the student to record spoken material and then play it back at their desired speed.

How do I know what type of technology is right for my child?

If you have a child with learning disabilities, you may consider these questions:
- What are his or her specific needs and challenges? In what academic skill area(s) does he or she struggle?
- What are his or her strengths? How can AT be used to compensate for his or her disability?
- What is his or her interest, skill, and experience in using technology? In what settings and situations will he or she use the AT tool?

If you think that your child could benefit from one of these tools, speak with his or her teacher, principal, or service provider. For additional support, contact WIND Assistive Technology Resources (WATR), University of Wyoming at 1-307-766-6187.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a problem-solving model for preventing inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing (rewarding) appropriate behavior. PBIS is based on the belief that all children can exhibit appropriate behavior if provided with the proper environment and supports. The PBIS model identifies early intervening, assessment, data collection, data-based decision making, and use of research-based interventions as key components of successful behavior management. PBIS is based on a “tiered,” or leveled, system of prevention:

**Primary Prevention** is a school-wide approach for developing clearly defined behavioral expectations and teaching and modeling appropriate behavior.

**Secondary Prevention** involves strategies for students or groups of students who are more “at-risk” for problem behavior and includes class-wide management systems.

**Tertiary Prevention** targets the needs individual students who demonstrate a pattern of problem behavior.

**How can PBIS be Applied to Help my Child?** The following are key components of the problem-solving model outlined by PBIS. These methods can be used both at school and at home to address problem behavior.

**Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA).** Human behavior is almost always purposeful; people do things for a reason. We eat because it takes away the unpleasant feeling of hunger. We go to work because we are rewarded with a paycheck. We snap at a loved one because we didn't get enough sleep the night before. Likewise, children often have a reason for the behaviors they exhibit. Understanding the reasons behind their behavior is the first step in successful behavioral intervention. A Functional Behavioral Assessment, or FUBA, is a process of gathering data in order to determine the reason(s) for a child’s behavior. This is done by identifying the “ABC’s:”

- **“A”** stands for Antecedent—what happens before or while the behavior is evident. When does the behavior happen? Where does it happen? Who is present when it occurs?

- **“B”** stands for Behavior—the specific, observable, and measurable behavior that must be addressed. Describing a behavior as “name-calling during class” rather than “being disruptive” is far more helpful when collecting data and considering interventions.

- **“C”** stands for Consequence—what happens to the child as a result of his or her behavior. Why is the behavior working for this child? What does he or she “get out of it?” This is also called the function of the behavior.

Most behavior can be classified into these major functions:

- To obtain: Attention (peer or adult), a tangible (i.e., candy, toy), stimulation/sensory needs, control, or communication
- To avoid: Attention, an undesirable task or situation, or unpleasant sensory experiences

Data collection is a key part of developing a hypothesis about the function of a child’s behavior. Teachers and parents may keep a record of the events surrounding a child’s behavior (time, place, individuals present, etc.) and what happens as a result. Trained behavior specialists, such as school psychologists, may also observe the child in different settings in order to gather data. Not only is data collection important when conducting a FBA, it is also vital for monitoring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of behavioral interventions.

**Example:**

David was constantly getting in trouble for name-calling during class. His teacher kept track of when the behavior happened and the outcome of the behavior over a 2 week period. After reviewing the data, the teacher noticed that the behavior was most likely to occur during math class (antecedent). The teacher also noticed that the most likely consequence of the student’s behavior was being sent to the principal’s office. After speaking with David and his parents, the teacher developed the following hypothesis: David was very confused and overwhelmed by the math curriculum, and his behavior enabled him to avoid an undesirable task.
Once a hypothesis on the behavior’s function has been developed, the next step is to devise a way for the child to achieve that function in a more appropriate way, or, in other words, to provide him or her with a replacement behavior. It is not enough to teach children what not to do; they must also be taught EXPLICITLY what to do through direct instruction. If formulated appropriately, a clearly defined antecedent, function, and replacement behavior can be inserted into a summary statement similar to the one below:

When (David finds a math assignment difficult), he (calls other students names from across the room) in order to (avoid class work by getting sent to the principal’s office). Instead of (calling other students names from across the room) in order to (avoid class work by getting sent to the principal’s office), I want David to (use a signal when he needs a break).

The replacement behavior serves the same function as the problem behavior—by having a break, David can leave the overwhelming situation in an appropriate way rather than being sent to the principal’s office.

Behavior Intervention Plan. Once the Functional Behavioral Assessment and summary statement are complete, the next step is to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). In the schools, formal BIP’s are typically developed by the school team and should include parents—behavioral strategies are far more effective when consistently implemented at both home and school. BIPs list the strategies that the team will use to encourage the replacement behavior (i.e., signaling for a break) and to discourage the problem behavior (i.e., calling other students names). In order to reinforce, or increase, the appropriate replacement behavior, BIPs should clearly dictate what types of reinforcement, or rewards, the child will receive for using it. Reinforcing appropriate behavior is the most powerful tool for behavioral change. Strategies for discouraging the problem behavior should not be focused on “putting a child in his place.” Rather, they should be designed to change the consequences of the behavior so they no longer “work” for the student. In the example, David’s behavior “worked” for him because he was able to avoid difficult assignments. Thus, sending him to the principal’s office was not an effective consequence. Negative consequences must be designed carefully and should not unnecessarily restrict a child’s freedoms. Activities that require “hands on,” such as forced time-outs, seclusion, and restraints, are NOT consequences; rather, they are procedures to be used only when children pose a serious threat to themselves or others.

PBIS and the Law The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that school teams shall, “in the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child’s learning or that of others, consider the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports, and other strategies to address that behavior.” In other words, if a child’s behavior is interfering with his or her learning or the learning of others, the school must consider effective, research-based strategies for addressing the behavior, including PBIS. For children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), behavioral concerns must be addressed through IEP goals or through a BIP. Progress must be regularly assessed, and modifications must be made if no progress is evident. Ongoing data collection is key to assessing progress and identifying when changes to the current IEP or BIP are needed.

PBIS and Response to Intervention (RtI) The PBIS model is often associated with the Response to Intervention (RtI) model. RtI is a new method under IDEA for determining when a student is in need of more intensive interventions, including special education services. Similar to PBIS, RtI focuses on using sound, research-based strategies to facilitate academic success. Through assessment and data collection, students who lack progress are identified for more intensive interventions according to their needs.

Where can I learn more about PBIS? www.pbis.org contains more information on PBIS and how it can be utilized by schools and families. www.interventioncentral.org provides numerous resources for collecting and organizing data on student behaviors.

You may also contact the Parent Information Center for more information or for free brochures on PBIS, or to learn about possible workshops in your area.
TIPS FOR TEACHING CONVERSATION SKILLS

Conversational skills build a foundation for developing friendships, cooperating with other people, and communicating effectively with people in every aspect of life. Although the art of conversation is difficult to address, below are some strategies for teaching basic conversational skills.

1. **Model Skills**  
   Children learn from watching other people and then practicing skills. Role play is a fun and extremely effective way to teach skills because it lets children learn from examples. During role play, model an appropriate greeting or conversation. Let children see how questions are asked and answered and how people remain on topic. Keep the 'skits' short and simple at first to establish the basic skills then expand on them later.

2. **Practice Small Steps**  
   Just like any other skill, social skills need to be broken into smaller steps and practiced repeatedly. Role play greetings by teaching the child to say, “Hello” and then expand to, “Hello, how are you?”

3. **Multiple Phrases, Settings, and People**  
   Conversational skills should be developed with a variety of people, phrases, and novel settings. To promote generalization of skills, introduce different questions and wording when role playing such as: “Good morning,” “Hello,” and “Hi there!” By doing this, children earn there are various greetings and responses. Since conversations occur throughout the day with different people, recruit people in the school or community to help the child practice. Ask the crossing guard or librarian to engage the child in a conversation that incorporates the skills being practiced.

4. **Remember Body Language**  
   When practicing conversational skills, be sure to include key skills such as personal space (approximately an arm’s length is considered appropriate in the United States), body language, and facial cues. These unspoken aspects of conversation are often extremely difficult for children to grasp and should be included in role play and instruction.

5. **Ways to Reduce Repetition**  
   Children frequently learn saying hello or asking someone their name is part of a conversation, so they may repeatedly incorporate these phrases in the same conversation. One way to practice saying something only once is to hold up a finger as a visual cue during role play. For example, if there is a question or phrase that should only be used once, hold up a finger during conversational practice time. After the child asks the question put your finger down. This is a cue that the child already has asked the question. After the child has used this cue successfully a number of times, practice without the visual cue and then praise them for remembering to ask the question only once.

   Another strategy is to have the child keep a hand (preferably the left hand if you are teaching them to shake hands) in their pocket with one finger pointed. After they ask their favorite question, have them stop pointing or stop pointing and remove their hand from their pocket. This allows the child to remind themselves they used this phrase or question and other people are not able to see this personal cue.

6. **Praise and Review**  
   Praise children for greeting people, using a phrase once, or ending a conversation appropriately. Often it is best to praise children during role play or after the child is away from other people to avoid embarrassing them. To reinforce the skill, be sure to review what they did correctly. For example, “I like the way you asked Mr. James if he was having a nice day only once.” If a novel situation occurs naturally, role play it later and use it as a learning experience.

From [www.sandbox-learning.com](http://www.sandbox-learning.com)
WHAT’S Happening in Wyoming

Impact of Early Brain Development the Sensory System and Autism

An outstanding educational opportunity will be presented on April 22, 2010 in Lander at the new Holiday Inn Express. This will be an intriguing exploration of brain development from conception to adolescence. Discussion will include ways the evolution of this system so dramatically impacts the development of the vision and hearing sensory systems and some exploration of issues related to autism and brain development. Participants will be asked to come prepared to examine the case history of a child/student with whom they work to see how a brain insult or injury could impact function and what the practitioner might do to help minimize those issues. This workshop will include information on brain development, experience on the growth and brain development and how this affects the child/student’s ability to learn.

This information will be presented by Darla Fowers, R.N., M. Ed.; former director of the Utah Deafblind Project, and Deafblind Services for the state of Utah, and former Part C Coordinator and director of Utah’s early intervention system. This conference is presented by the Wyoming Deafblind Project, Wyoming Department of Education.

For more information contact:

Joanne Whitson,
Wyoming Department of Education Services for the Visually Impaired,
Director of the Wyoming Deaf-Blind Project,
307-324-5333

Citizen Lobbyist Training in Cheyenne, Feb 10

The Equality State Policy Center is offering their Citizen Lobbyist Training in Cheyenne on February 10, 2010. This workshop provides training and mentoring for Wyoming citizens who seek to influence state lawmakers. For more information, call (307) 472-5939 or visit www.equalitystate.org.

Governor’s Roundtable on Children’s Mental Health & Starfish Awards Ceremony 2010

February 8-9, 2010
Little America
Cheyenne, WY

Call 1-888-875-4383
To register

Good Apple Spotlight

Pioneer Park Elementary School in Cheyenne, recently hosted a Family Math Night. After dinner, families participated in interactive Everyday Math activities in the students’ classroom. A whopping total of 314 parents, students, family members and teachers attended the event! The math activities directly supported the school goal of all students improving in math problem solving. “The activity was designed to engage the parents and students at Pioneer Park in a fun setting that centered on the students’ developing math skills,” said parent Mary Chambers. Congratulations to Pioneer Park for helping unite families, students and teachers in a fun and educational evening!!

Linking Family Engagement to learning can be FUN!
STUDY SHOWS LEARNING CAN CHANGE THE BRAIN

Experts used to believe that brain development was complete by birth. However, over the last 20 years, research has suggested that the brain continues to adapt and change as we continue to learn.

A recent study compared the brain development of struggling readers in a general education classroom to struggling readers who participated in an intensive remedial reading program. The students who received intensive instruction showed increases in new ‘white matter’ connections in their brains.

‘White matter’ gets its white color from the myelin sheath, a fatty substance that coats the nerves connecting different thinking centers of the brain. After completing the remedial reading program, the connections of the struggling readers were just as strong in certain pathways as students in the class’s top reading group. Struggling readers who received no additional instruction did not show any increase in their white matter connections.

Research shows that these white matter connections are important in learning and that they are lacking or less organized in students with learning problems.

Dr. Just, one of the researchers, stated that this study is important because “it shows that we are not at the mercy of our biology.”


NEW RESEARCH ABOUT LEARNING STYLES OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

A new study published in Nature Neuroscience suggests that, unlike most children, children with Autism rely more on their own internal sense of body position rather than visual information from the environment. The researchers, who observed how children with Autism move when they are exposed to a new tool, have found children who learn in this manner have greater deficits in social and motor skills.

According to researcher Stewart H. Mostofsky, understanding how such children learn “could help to improve development of motor, social and communicative skills in children with autism. Further, it could also improve their ability to understand social cues because the brain systems critical to forming internal models of behavior that guide our actions are also critical to developing an understanding of the meaning of those actions.”

The Autism Society of America reminds us that “early diagnosis and intervention can lead to significantly improved outcomes. With the right services and supports, people with autism can live full, healthy, and meaningful lives.”


BOOKS AVAILABLE AT THE PHP LENDING LIBRARY:

Teaching Outside the Box—How to Grab Your Students By Their Brains by LouAnne Johnson — author of the bestselling book that inspired the movie Dangerous Minds


Timely, practical & sound information about how to support students with Asperger Syndrome and other autism spectrum disorders.

Call 1-800-660-9742 or e-mail jbybee@wpen.net to check out these books and/or many others!
NEW LEGISLATION ON SECLUSION AND RESTRAINTS

Our last newsletter shared an article about some disturbing data on improper use of seclusion and restraints in schools and some recommendations that were made to congress on the issue.


The act has four main goals:

Prevent and reduce inappropriate restraint and seclusion by establishing minimum safety standards in schools, similar to protections already in place in hospitals and non-medical community-based facilities

- Allow physical restraint or locked seclusion only when there is imminent danger of injury, and only when imposed by trained staff;
- Prohibit the use of any mechanical restraint, such as strapping children to chairs, misusing therapeutic equipment to punish students, or duct-taping parts of their bodies;
- Prohibit chemical restraint, meaning medications used to control behavior that are not administered consistent with a physician’s prescription;
- Prohibit any restraint that restricts breathing;
- Prohibit aversive behavioral interventions that compromise health and safety, such as denying students water, food, or clothing, denying access to toilet facilities, or using noxious stimuli such as pepper spray in order to control behavior;
- Prohibit schools from including restraint or seclusion as planned interventions in student’s education plans, including Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); and
- Require schools to notify parents after incidents when restraint or seclusion was used.

Require states to do their part to keep children and staff safe in school

- Within two years of the establishment of federal standards, each state must have its own policies, procedures, monitoring and enforcement systems in place to meet the minimum standards.

Ask states to provide support and training to better protect students and staff and prevent the need for emergency behavioral interventions

- Improve the culture and climate of the schools by providing grants to states to help provide professional development, training and positive behavior support programs;
- Encourage schools to have procedures established in school safety plans to keep both students and personnel safe when student behavior poses an imminent danger; and
- Ask states to ensure that enough school staff are trained to keep students and staff safe, but gives states and local districts the flexibility to determine the training needs at each school.

Increase transparency, oversight and enforcement to prevent future abuse

- Require states to collect and report data annually to the Secretary of Education;
- Make data about restraint and seclusion publicly available, including data on the number of incidents, injuries, cases of death, and cases involving untrained staff; and
- Provide the Secretary of Education the authority to withhold federal funds from states who do not establish policies and procedures consistent with the minimum standards.

Now that the federal statute has been released, states have two years to adopt their own guidelines that meet the minimum standards set forth by the federal legislation. Those interested in giving feedback or recommendations are encouraged to contact the Wyoming Department of Education, Special Programs Unit in Riverton at (307) 777-2552.

ABOUT US:

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

Stephanie Harris, sharris@wpic.org or Jan Jones jjones@wpic.org
Cheyenne, 635-3536, Serves Cheyenne, Laramie, Wheatland & Torrington area

Michele Pena, mpena@wpic.org 247-0075 or 265-6884 or toll free 1-877-265-6884, Serves Casper, Douglas, Glenrock & Lusk area

Jennifer Petri, ipetri@wpic.org or Tammy Wilson, twilson@wpic.org
Serves Green River, Rock Springs Kemmerer and Evanston 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@wpen.net or contact the Outreach Parent Liaison closest to you:

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

Terri Nations, Rock Springs, 389-1718, tnations@wpen.net
Serves Rock Springs, Green River, and Evanston

Megan Mitchell, Riverton, 857-1337, mmitchell@wpen.net
Serves Lander, Riverton, Dubois, Shoshoni and Wind River Reservation

Kellie Johnson, Cheyenne, 635-3536, kjohnson@wpen.net
Serves Cheyenne, Laramie, Wheatland and Torrington

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:

Erin Swilling, Cheyenne, (307) 635-3536, eswilling@wpen.net
Samantha Crawford, Laramie, (307) 742-6528, scrawford@wpen.net
Blanca Moye, Jackson, (307) 690-8149, bmoye@wpen.net
LiEnisa Martinez, Powell, (307) 754-3430, lmartinez@wpen.net
Tammy Dexter, Riverton, (307) 857-1337, tdxeter@wpen.net

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.

Materials from this newsletter may be reprinted. We ask only that Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc. and PICS –N– PIECES be credited.
"Tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand."

--Chinese Proverb

**Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc. (PHP),** because of rising mailing and production costs, and our increased distribution number to more than 5,200 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: __________________________________________ Zip: ____________

Street City State

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

- I would like to subscribe to PHP’s new electronic newsletter to be distributed 4-6 times/year.

**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.**

Mail to: Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc.
500 W. Lott St, Suite A
Buffalo, WY 82834

For more information
Contact PIC at 1-800-660-9742
(307) 684-2277
tdawson@wpic.org
UPCOMING EVENTS

2010 Conference on Inclusive Education: Igniting the Promise of Education
February 11-13th, 2010
Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center, Denver, CO
For more information, email conference@peakparent.org or call 1-800 284-0251.

Spring 2010 School Improvement Conference
March 1-2nd, 2010
Platte River Resort (formerly Parkway Plaza Hotel), Casper, WY
For more information, visit www.k12.wy.us