Leaving the Parent-Teacher Conference or Individualized Education Program (IEP) with a feeling of utter bewilderment is not uncommon for families. We hear from families regularly who report they have no idea what their children’s teachers are talking about sometimes because they use so many acronyms. Families tell us they feel either too intimidated or too silly to ask for clarification in fear of making themselves look like they are totally uninformed. We know that it is easy to lapse into what we call “Educationalese”—the language of acronyms, when we are familiar with the terms and new programs in education. Yet families are not in the system day in and day out and are not familiar with these acronyms. Some of the most used culprits are: MAP, RtI, PAWS, AYP, DIBELS, and PBIS. The following are some brief definitions of some of the acronyms we receive questions about:

MAP stands for Measures of Academic Progress and is a test that many districts in Wyoming use a couple of times a year to measure what students have learned in math, reading, writing and science.

RtI is a tiered system of interventions used to catch students before they fail to learn to read and write. The first level is whole group work in the classroom, which moves up to the second level or tier of small group interventions if regular monitoring finds a student needs more instruction. The third level or tier provides more intense and customized interventions to support a student’s learning. All of these are used before sending a child to the next step, which is an evaluation for special education services and supports.

DIBELS stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills and is a data system that assesses the 5 Big Ideas in learning to read and write as identified by the National Reading Panel. Those 5 areas are: Phonemic Awareness, Alphabetic Principle, Accuracy and Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension. As teachers are instructing children how to read, they are monitoring students at each level to see if they are learning. If the student struggles at any point, the teacher can stop and re-teach a skill the student is not getting.

PAWS, the Proficiency Assessment for Wyoming Students, is the statewide assessment (test) given to all Wyoming students in grades three through eight and grade eleven. The results of this assessment inform the school, the district and the state about the progress and improvement efforts needed for individual students, schools and districts as a whole.
AYP is the progress, or improvement, made by students in learning the academic standards as measured by the PAWS assessment. Called Adequate Yearly Progress, there is a minimum level that each school must achieve each year—measuring this year's 5th graders and comparing them with last year's 4th graders to see if they have made progress—and that it is an adequate amount. The amount is set each year and is part of the movement toward better accountability for schools. If the scores do not show an increase, then it is said the schools have not made AYP. After a couple of years of not making progress, there are certain steps schools have to go through to increase students academic progress.

PBIS, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, is sometimes called PBS or positive interventions and is a problem-solving model for preventing inappropriate behavior through teaching and reinforcing positive behavior. Like Response to Intervention, it is a tiered approach with the first level used school wide, defining expectations and modeling appropriate behavior. The second tier, or level involves is strategies for groups of students who might be at risk for problem behavior. The third tier or level targets specific needs of individual students who might have a pattern of inappropriate behavior.

While there are many more acronyms and phrases which we hear and do not always understand—we have tried to hit on a few that we hear most often. The main point, though, is to encourage families to ASK what teachers are talking about, even if it might feel embarrassing to stop a teacher in the middle of their report. Families will be rewarded with a greater understanding of how their child measures up against what is being taught, the different types of assessments used, and overall how they are doing in school. We would also encourage teachers, school staff and administrators to stop and think for a moment about the language used in conferences and daily conversations. We would venture to guess everyone will come away with a greater understanding of what each other is saying, which in turn will help build stronger relationships and partnerships between schools and families. After all, we are working towards the same goal, to increase student success!

TOGETHER We Make a Difference!

BLUE RIBBON SCHOOLS ANNOUNCED

Elementary schools in Albin, Lagrange and Walnut Elem in Rocks Springs have been chosen for national recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as 2010 Blue Ribbon Schools. The award distinguishes and honors schools for helping students achieve at very high levels and for closing the achievement gap. Wyoming was one of 46 states to have a public school chosen. There were a total of 304 Blue Ribbon schools chosen nationally. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools that are either high performing from disadvantaged backgrounds that improve student performance to high levels as measured by the school's performance on state assessments or nationally-normed tests. The program is part of a larger Department of Education effort to identify and disseminate knowledge about best school leadership and teaching practices. Each year since 1982, the U.S. Department of Education has sought out schools where students attain and maintain high academic goals, including those that beat the odds.

Congratulations to:

Albin Elementary in Albin
LaGrange Elementary in LaGrange &
Walnut Elementary in Rock Springs!
Earlier this fall, Safe Kids Wyoming, in partnership with the Wyoming Seat Belt Coalition, held seventeen different car seat check up events throughout Wyoming. These check up events were part of the 2nd annual Boost ‘til 9 Campaign. Every site stressed the importance of using the appropriate seat for the child’s height, weight and age as well as the correct fit for the child and the vehicle. Trained and certified child passenger safety technicians were at each location to help with compatibility issues and to answer questions. Booster seats were available at each site with technicians assisting families to choose a booster seat that was appropriate for the child and the vehicle. When do you use a booster seat? Children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats. Seat belts may be used when a child can ride comfortably with their back and buttocks against the vehicle seat back with the shoulder belt on the shoulder resting snugly over the chest and lap belt low across the hip or upper thigh. Knees should be completely bent over at the edge of the vehicle seat with feet flat on the floor, and able to stay comfortably seated this way for the entire trip.

One of the main focuses of the car seat safety campaign was to spread awareness of the Wyoming Child Passenger Safety Law. The law states that children under the age of nine must be secured in an appropriate child restraint in the back seat of the vehicle. Children in rear-facing infant seats must not be in front of an active airbag. It is a PRIMARY offense to not have children safely and properly secured. Law enforcement can and will stop drivers for not restraining children correctly, and those not complying can be fined.

During the week of check up events, 318 child safety seats were checked, 136 of which were boosters. With the help of the Wyoming Seat Belt Coalition, 120 seats were distributed to those in need, 96 of which were boosters. In an amazing turnout, almost 600 people were reached through the efforts of almost 120 volunteers, 58 of which were Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians.

For more information call 1-800-994-GROW (4769) or visit safekidswyoming.org
Maximizing Memory

As exam time approaches students with (and without!) learning disabilities often find themselves overwhelmed with the amount of information they need to remember. Teachers wisely tell their students to review in each subject as they go along through the semester.

Research tells us that if we review information within 24 hours of learning it, we are much more likely to remember it in the long run. Well thought out homework is designed with this kind of review in mind. Each student should choose strategies for memorization that fit his or her own learning styles.

- **Sort information.** Help your retrieval system by putting new information into categories. You can group by dates, people, formulas, etc. It may help to make a chart as you study.

- **Frequent review.** Studying new information the same day you heard or read it will improve memory significantly. A small review each day is essential if you have memory problems.

- **Use humor or exaggeration.** Information stays in memory longer if it is related to something novel and interesting. Make up something funny or exaggerated that ties in to what needs to be memorized.

- **Explore the senses.** Try learning the information visually, verbally, and kinesthetically (with movement) and find which sense works best for you. Some people need to combine two or more senses.

- **Color code.** By using colored pens, highlighters, post-it notes and flags, index cards, etc. you can make an impression on your memory. This is a way of sorting information for storage as you assign colors.

- **Make visual aids.** Draw pictures or cartoon characters, graphs, tables, charts, time lines, etc. to aid memory. Even simple stick figures and drawings are useful if you are a visual learner. Pay attention to pictures, charts, etc. in textbooks.

- **Rehearse aloud.** Verbal rehearsal is an effective memory tool. Study with someone or use a tape recorder to say aloud what needs to be memorized.

- **Make it physical.** Adding a physical activity such as pacing, jumping, throwing a ball, or writing enhances the memory for many people. Typing or rewriting notes is a very effective memory device for people who need to learn kinesthetically.

- **Turn memory practice into a game.** Make cards to match words and definitions, math facts to answers, etc. and play a memory game by turning over two cards at a time. Time yourself to see how long it takes to match all the cards. The act of making the game also helps memory.

*Taken from LD OnLine, available at [http://www.ldonline.org/article/Memory_Tips_for_Students](http://www.ldonline.org/article/Memory_Tips_for_Students)*
PREVENTING CHILDHOOD OBESITY: TIPS FOR PARENTS

With childhood obesity rates at all time highs, it is more important than ever for parents to teach their children healthy habits that will last a lifetime. Here are some tips from New Jersey’s Statewide Parent Advocacy Network that can help your family adopt a healthy and happy lifestyle.

INVOLVE THE FAMILY

- Focus on good health, not a certain weight goal
- Teach and model healthy and positive attitudes toward food and physical activity without emphasizing body weight
- Focus on the whole family—do not set overweight children apart.
- Involve the whole family and work to gradually change the family’s physical activity and eating habits.

FAMILY MEALS

- Establish daily meal and snack times, and eat together as frequently as possible.
- Determine what food is offered and when, and let the child decide whether and how much to eat.
- Plan sensible portions. Use the Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children as a guide.
- Don’t make changes to a child’s diet based solely on perceptions of overweight.

HEALTHY SHOPPING

- Involve children in planning, shopping, and preparing meals.
- Use these activities to understand children’s food preferences, teach children about nutrition, and encourage them to try a wide variety of foods.
- Buy fewer high-calorie, low nutrient foods.
- Help children understand that sweets and high-fat treats are not everyday foods.
- Don’t deprive children of occasional treats. This can make them more likely to overeat.

SNACKING

- Make the most of snacks. Continuous snacking may lead to overeating.
- Plan healthy snacks at specific times.
- Include two food groups; for example, apple wedges and whole grain crackers.
- Focus on maximum nutrition—fruits, vegetables, grains, low-sugar cereals, low-fat dairy products, and lean meats and meat alternatives.
- Avoid excessive amounts of fruit juices, which contain calories but fewer nutrients than the fruits they come from.

SCREEN TIME

- Limit the amount of time children watch television, play video games, and work on the computer to 1-2 hours per day.
- Keep TVs out of the bedroom.
- Reducing sedentary activities helps increase physical activity.

EATING & TV WATCHING

- Discourage eating meals or snacks while watching TV.
- Eating in front of the TV may make it difficult to pay attention to feelings of fullness and may lead to overeating.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

- Encourage physical activity.
- Participate in family physical activity time on a regular basis, such as walks, bike rides, hikes, and active games.
- Support your children’s organized physical activities.
- Provide a safe, accessible place outside for play.
Truancy is often thought of as a junior high or high school problem. However, statistics are showing that absenteeism rates of students in kindergarten and first grade can be as serious as those of secondary students. Studies show that, on average, 1 out of 10 students younger than third grade is considered chronically absent, missing 10% or more of school.

That number increases to more than 20% for students below the poverty line, compared to 8% of students above the poverty line. As the graph below shows, as family income decreases, absenteeism increases.

Absenteeism is already linked to decreased academic performance, behavior problems, and disengagement from school. These problems are amplified when combined with the risk factors that often accompany poverty, such as poverty-related mobility or an unstable home environment.

Although attendance in kindergarten has been shown to be a significant problem, it gets far less attention from educators and policy makers than secondary school truancy. Hedy N. Chang, the director of Attendance Counts and an early-absenteeism researcher, states that this is due in part to the fact that kindergarten attendance is not mandatory in many states. Additionally, Ms. Chang reports that parents and community members may underestimate the crucial learning that takes place during the kindergarten years: “Kindergarten as an academic resource is a relatively new experience. Parents may think of their own experience, but kindergarteners today are learning to read.”

Missing school as those critical basic skills are being taught can have far reaching consequences for children, contributing to attendance and academic problems throughout their school careers. One study showed that students who missed 10% or more of school in kindergarten scored significantly lower on reading, math, and general knowledge tests at the end of first grade than did students who missed 3% or less.

Chronic absenteeism in kindergarten may set the stage for chronic absenteeism throughout a child’s schooling. Another study showed that students who drop out of high school display steadily increasing patterns of absenteeism for years before they actually leave school.
Tackling the problem of absenteeism in kindergarten requires a different approach than the kind used in secondary school because, as Ms. Chang states, “Most 5-, 6-, 7– year olds, they’re not home playing hooky.”

Some schools have taken creative approaches to address the absenteeism problems of their younger students. One Rhode Island elementary school found that parents’ overnight work schedules were contributing heavily to the problem. To remedy this, they created an early morning child care program at their school, where parents can drop off their children as early as 7:00 AM.

Another New York school developed child care and health partnerships where staff interview the families of chronically absent children. In exchange for bringing their children to school on time each day, an outreach coordinator arranges and escorts children to doctors’ appointments at a nearby clinic or provides them with in–and after-school care. The school is also working to provide mental health and social service screenings for students anxious about attending school.

Such programs seem to pay off: In areas with a high incidence of asthma, schools with these on-campus health centers have higher attendance than those without.

Katherine Eckstein, the public policy director for New York’s Children’s Aid Society states, “Children and families have relationships with the schools, obviously, but they also may have relationships with the Boys and Girls Club across the street or the health clinic, and you need to leverage all of those relationships.” M. Jane Sundius, the director of education and youth development at the Open Society Institute in Baltimore, adds: “Even parents who don’t feel they can add much to their child’s education, if they are lauded for getting their kids to school each day...there’s so much possibility there.”


Missing school as those critical basic skills are being taught can have far reaching consequences for children, contributing to attendance and academic problems throughout their school careers.

A U.S. Education Department letter to educators warned that some bullying may fall under federal antidiscrimination laws and that school officials may be overlooking this aspect when they limit their response to a reported incident.

The Department warned, “School districts may violate these civil rights statutes and the Department’s implementing regulations when peer harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, or disability is sufficiently serious that it creates a hostile environment and such harassment is encouraged, tolerated, not adequately addressed, or ignored by school employees.”

The letter urges districts to adopt stringent anti-bullying policies that if such incidents involve potential include investigation beyond the alleged perpetrators civil rights violations.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights letter (10/26/10), taken from WSBA School Board Memo (11/1/10)
NEW ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY GRANT

College of Engineering and Applied Science Awarded Assistive Technology Grant
By Sara DiRienzo/WIND

The National Science Foundation recently awarded the College of Engineering and Applied Science a grant of $124,855 to fund the project entitled, “Undergraduate Design Projects to Aid Persons with Disabilities.”

In collaboration with the Wyoming Institute for Disabilities (WIND), the College of Engineering and Applied Science will work with engineering students interested in assistive technology from all disciplines enrolled in senior design classes. Interested students will create assistive technology devices to help individuals in with disabilities in Wyoming, as well as the surrounding region. The projects will directly contribute to the quality of life for people with disabilities, with special emphasis on independent living technologies.

The grant is a five year refunding of the current initiative which had recently expired, is under the authority of Steven F. Barrett, Ph.D., P.E., associate professor of electrical and computer engineering, bioengineering option.

“Accessible Wyoming” is the project name, which encourages students to focus on devices which will help individuals with disabilities explore Wyoming, and other frontier states. However, the projects are not limited to that theme.

While Barrett maintains a list of potential projects, he is accepting need-based project ideas from anyone in Wyoming or surrounding states. If a project is accepted, a senior design student will work on the prototype for a year, and the individual will receive the assistive technology device for free, once approved by instructors.

“We encourage our students to make and maintain contact with the individual or family while they are working on the project,” said Barrett. “There is no need to worry if a project is too big or too small. And it is completely free of charge.”

Students will be working on assistive technology to aide with all types of disabilities and needs.

Currently, three students have already started on assistive technology projects. Senior students Jennifer Catchpole, computer engineering, and Jim Follum, electrical engineering, are working on an alarm clock which could help individuals with hearing impairments.

“The clock will look like a normal alarm clock with two plugs in the back. A lamp will plug into the back and turn on an hour before the alarm will go off. The lamp starts dimly and grows brighter to mimic the sun,” explained Follum. The clock will also include a vibrating wristband component.

Additionally, senior electrical engineering student, Anthony Michaelis is working on a color detection system to help individuals with color blindness. Michaelis, who is colorblind himself, explained, “You shine the green, blue, and red lights onto an object, and the device measures how much light is reflected back.” From there, a computer reads the results and identifies the color of the object.

If you have an idea or need for an assistive technology project, contact Dr. Steven F. Barrett at (307) 766-6181 or Sandy Root-Elledge (WIND) at (307) 766-2764.
Congratulations to this year’s District Teacher of the Year Winners and to Laurie Graves of Sheridan County School District 1, the 2011 Teacher of the Year for Wyoming. Thanks for all you do for Wyoming’s kids!

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Tammy Aumiller</td>
<td>Albany Co School # 1</td>
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<td>Larry Roetzel</td>
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<td>Kasi White</td>
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<td>Upton Elementary</td>
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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 on IDEA, IEPs, and specific disabilities such as attention disorders, autism and down syndrome. If interested in a workshop in your community or making contact with an OPL, call PIC at 1-800-660-9742 or (307) 684-2277:

- **Julie Heil**, Buffalo, 684-2277, iheil@wpic.org Serves Buffalo & Sheridan
- **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
- **Jennifer Petri**, jpetri@wpic.org Green River, (307) 875-1929 or **Tammy Wilson**, twilson@wpic.org Green River, (307) 217-2244 Serves Green River, Rock Springs Kemmerer and Evanston area

Wyoming Family to Family

Health Information Center:

Wyoming Family To Family Health Information Center (WY F2F HIC) provides support and information for families of children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN) on services and resources in Wyoming.

- **Michele Pena**, mpena@wpic.org 247-0075 or 265-6884 in Casper or the central office in Buffalo at 1-800-660-9742

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 be more actively engaged in their children’s learning and education. For more information, contact:

- **Terri Dawson**, Director (307) 684-7441, tdawson@wpic.org
- **Natalie Pique**, Family-School Partnership Liaison, Casper (307) 265-6884 npique@wpen.net

Parents as Teachers, PAT:

PEN also provides home-based services for children, prenatal through age five, and their families with the Parents as Teachers (PAT) program. For more information about PAT, call Dara Johnston, PAT Coordinator at (307) 684-7441 or e-mail PATinfo@wpen.net. Certified PAT parent educators are:

- **Erin Swilling**, Cheyenne, (307) 635-3536, eswilling@wpen.net
- **Ethelyn Sharpe**, Cheyenne, (307) 635-3536, esharpe@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, tdexter@wpen.net

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Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.

—Robert Collier

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

“LIFE IS A SWITCH”—a workshop for parents for building assistive switches
Nov 30, 2010 1 to 4 p.m.
UW Outreach Center, Rm105,
951 N. Poplar St, Casper WY.
For info: Alyssa Newcomb at WATR Project 766-5003 or anewcom2@uwyo.edu