THE LOW-DOWN ON LECTURING

Does it lead to learning?

For years now, there has been a heated debate in education. What is the best way to teach our kids? Should teachers act as a “sage on the stage,” using lecture and other traditional approaches? Or, should instructors serve as the “guide on the side,” guiding children along as they make their own discoveries?

The “sage on the stage” method is known as direct instruction. In this approach, the teacher, as the name suggests, gives explicit instruction. Lessons are planned around small learning increments and clearly defined tasks. Its proponents argue that this approach prevents misinterpretations and improves learning.

However, critics of direct instruction call it a “memorize-then-forget” approach, arguing that students absorb information more effectively when learning is more personal and meaningful. This has lead to a shift towards discovery-based learning (also called inquiry-based learning or problem-based learning), where children are encouraged to use their own knowledge, experience, and curiosities to identify solutions to problems. Critics of this approach claim that it leaves room for misinterpretation and is especially problematic when children have little existing knowledge or experience to draw upon.

So, which approach really works best?

To answer this question, Guido Schwerdt and Amelie Wuppermann of the University of Munich found a way to test the relative value of the two teaching styles scientifically. They used data from the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Survey (TIMSS), which not only tested a nationally representative sample of U.S. 8th graders in math and science, but also asked their teachers what percentage of class time was taken up by students “listening to lecture-style presentations” rather than either “working on problems with the teacher’s guidance” or “working on problems without guidance.” Teachers reported that they spent twice as much time on problem-solving activities as on direct instruction.

To see whether this tilt toward the problem-solving approach helps middle schoolers learn, Schwerdt and Wuppermann identified those 8th graders who had the same classmates in both math and science, but different teachers. Then they estimated the impact on student learning of class time allocated to direct instruction versus problem solving. Under which circumstance did U.S. middle-school students learn more? Direct instruction. Students learned 3.6 percent of a standard deviation more if the teacher spent 10 percent more time on direct instruction.

There’s no doubt that discovery-based learning has its merits, but this study suggests that we may want to think twice before we lose the lecture! ★

To learn more about these 2 approaches, see page 2.

Direct Instruction: Teaching in direct instruction is purposeful and task-oriented, with specific objectives. Teachers analyze the task they want to teach and decide what prerequisite skills a child needs to perform it. For example, a child must know his numbers before he can read a clock, so the teacher must first determine if the child knows this skill. If not, then she must teach it before proceeding. The teacher then shows the students how to do the task, giving clear and concise explanations. Next, she does the task with them, giving them a chance to practice, and then lets the students try the task by themselves, giving specific feedback when they finish. Students are retested frequently to help them retain the skill.

Discovery Learning: In this approach, teachers become facilitators as students interact with the world by exploring and manipulating objects, wrestling with questions and controversies, or performing experiments. Lessons focus on using problem-solving skills. A teacher using a discovery-based approach might help students develop research questions, answer those questions using experiments or other resources, and then interpret and report the findings. An example of a lesson on gravity using a discovery-based approach might involve dropping objects of different weights and recording observations. To learn more about these approaches, contact PIC.

2012 TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

Congratulations to this year’s District Teacher of the Year Winners and to Herbert Daly of Campbell County School District 1, the 2012 Teacher of the Year for Wyoming. Thanks for all you do for Wyoming’s kids!
WY F2F Health Information Center is partnering with the Wyoming Department of Health’s Division of Behavioral Health- Developmental Disabilities Program and the WY Department of Family Services (DFS) Adult Protective Services to provide training to families about the Children’s and Adult’s Developmental Disabilities Home –based Community Waiver (DD waiver).

Through curriculum developed by the WHD- DD, some of the topics discussed in these trainings will be an overview of the system and the process of getting an evaluation for the DD waiver, and what that might mean for a child or adult in terms of quality of life and appropriate supports (see article below on the online tutorial for waiver staff). The F2F training for families will cover best practices for working as partners on the team with service providers, case managers, direct care staff and others who might need to be invited as members of the team. The training will include documentation requirements of the Medicaid waiver and the menu of services and supports that can be provided as designed by the Individual Plan of Care, as well as self-direction and advocacy. Working with the Parent Information Center, the training will also discuss specially designed instruction and the role of the DD waiver in a child’s individualized education program (IEP) for special education in schools, and how positive interventions should be part of the both the IEP and the Individual Plan of Care (IPC) under the waiver.

The training will be lead by families of children with disabilities and/or special health care needs who have personal experience with the waiver, and have learned the ropes in understanding how to best define what their children might need. Measurable goals and objectives will be broken down and defined so participants will have a greater understanding on how to write a meaningful goal for their child. The circle of support and how to develop a system of support and network will also be discussed.

For these trainings, DFS will work with F2F and PIC to help families understand what abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation of vulnerable adults looks like, and how to make a report of such to adult protective services.

For more information, or to schedule a training in your community, call WY F2F at 307-684-2277, or for the Big Horn Basin call 307-272-1153.

Online training modules have arrived! The WY Department of Health, Behavioral Health Division-Developmental Disabilities Programs is excited to share their NEW online training modules that are now available for Medicaid Waiver Case Managers and Providers. This project was a new vision and direction for the DD Programs - to offer online trainings that cover a multitude of topics providing not only the “what to do” but the “how to do” components of our vast federal and state rules and regulations. Objectives are clearly stated so people know what to expect.

Trainings are in bite sizes so they are easier to absorb. Information flows in a conversational style to give it more meaning. Sight and hearing sensations are combined to help anchor interest and retention.

To check out the trainings, please visit their training website: https://ddtrainings.health.wyo.gov or stop off at the DD Programs homepage and click the link in the left navigation pane “NEW Online Training.” Many new trainings are slated for release by the end of the year, so keep checking back!
INITIAL EVALUATIONS: What Parents Need to Know

Questions Often Asked by Parents

Why isn’t my child learning as fast as the other students? Why is the school so concerned? How do schools evaluate how much my child is learning? What measurements or tests do they use, and what exactly are they looking for? Why are they asking me all of those personal questions? How do I request that the school test my child for a disability?

All of these questions are valid and deserve answers. Many of these answers can be found in the data, or results, of what is called an initial evaluation for special education services. According to both Wyoming and Federal rules, a parent, school district, or public agency may initiate a request for a full and individual evaluation. Parents can request an evaluation by submitting a written request to the school. If a teacher or other school employee requests the evaluation, parental consent is still required before the school can move forward. Once the school receives signed permission, a prior written notice will be mailed to parents to make them aware of the next steps.

As previously stated, parents have the right to request evaluations. If the school refuses to evaluate a child, they must still send the parents written notice as to why they made that decision. Parents have the right to contest the school’s decision through various dispute resolution procedures (contact the Parent Information Center for more information).

What Does an Evaluation Look Like?

This differs for every child and depends on the areas of concern, but the law is clear in that an evaluation must utilize a “variety of assessment tools.” Since parents generally know their children better than anyone, it is important that they communicate any concerns they might have so that those can be included in the evaluation. For example, if you are aware that your child is easily overstimulated, you may want to request that a sensory assessment be included in the evaluation. Some other areas that might be assessed as part of a comprehensive evaluation include:

- Vision/Hearing
- Fine and gross motor skills
- Sensory issues
- Cognitive abilities
- Academic skills
- Social skills/ behavior
- Classroom observations
- Parent and student interviews
- Medical doctors
- Speech articulation or language development

Many of these areas involve assessments that compare your child to other children your child’s age. However, schools are required to look at the whole child and not at scores alone. Although many assessments are focusing on areas of what your child might need, it is important to talk about the different ways your child learns, what his or her strengths and interests are, and any strategies that you have found to be helpful.

The Parent Interview

Parent input is extremely valuable, and schools are required to seek feedback from parents during evaluations. However, some parents may feel that the parent interview is invasive or that the school is “digging” for information. Parents do not have to give any information that they do not wish to share, but information from parents can provide important insight about a child. One reason for the interview is to identify factors that might be contributing to a child’s difficulties. For example, a child’s medical and developmental history might help paint a clearer picture of what is happening with the child. Another reason for the parent interview is to find out what concerns you have in regards to your child’s education. This information can help guide the school’s evaluation as well as your child’s educational program.

The Timeline

In Wyoming, once a school receives signed parental consent for an evaluation, they have 60 days to complete the evaluation and hold a meeting with parent(s) to review the results. If a child is found to be eligible for Special Education, the school has 30 days to implement and develop an Individualized Education Program, or IEP.

The Determination

During the meeting, all the gathered data will help the team (including the parents) determine whether the student has an educational disability.
INITIAL EVALUATIONS: What Parents Need to Know

In Wyoming, there are 13 different disability categories, and each of them has their own set of criteria.

If the team agrees that a (1) a child has a disability that (2) impacts his or her educational performance and (3) requires special education supports and services, then an IEP will be developed.

If a student does not appear to meet criteria for special education, then the reasons why will be discussed during the meeting. The discussion can include other options for meeting the child’s needs, including classroom interventions, specific school programs, or Section 504 accommodations (contact the Parent Information Center for more information).

What if Parents Disagree?
If parents disagree with the school’s evaluation, they have the right to request an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE). This must be done in writing prior to making an appointment with an outside evaluator. Educational evaluations can be conducted by qualified examiners, such as licensed clinicians and psychologists. The school can provide parents with names of qualified examiners and is responsible for the cost. After the results of the independent evaluation are received, the school district must consider them in determining whether a child meets criteria for special education.

Continuing the Evaluation Process
While your child is receiving special education, the school district must conduct a comprehensive evaluation at least every three years to determine continued eligibility.

Sometimes the school might propose that they have enough information to determine a child will continue to be eligible for special education supports and services without conducting additional assessments (tests). Parents may agree with this determination, or they may choose to ask for a full re-evaluation to get current information about their child’s needs and the progress their child had made.

Things to Remember about Evaluations for Special Education:
1. Parents may request an evaluation.
2. After receiving signed consent for testing, the school has 60 days to complete the evaluation.
3. The evaluation should be at no cost to the parents.
4. Interviewing the parent and the child are part of the evaluation process.
5. The evaluation must be comprehensive, using more than one measuring tool.
6. If parents disagree with the results, they may request another evaluation by someone not employed by the school district.
7. The results of the evaluation should directly correlate to the services on the IEP.
8. Parents have a voice in this process and are encouraged to share strengths, interests, and positive things about their child.
9. Carefully weigh the pros and cons of completing a full three-year re-evaluation before making a decision.
10. If you don’t understand the language being used, ask for clarification and examples.

This information is available in a Disability Brochure. For more information, or to obtain copies, contact the Parent Information Center or download them at www.wpic.org under publications.

Finally, a website dedicated to adults with autism! www.autismafter16.com offers information and analysis on a variety of adult autism issues, including employment, housing, finances, health, community, and the arts. The website also includes a Life Skills section, columns by adults with autism and their families, input from readers, new ideas from service providers, and more! Check it out today!
New Nutrition Guidelines

Goodbye, food pyramid! In June of this year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) established new guidelines for nutrition to help you and your family stay healthy. One of the major changes is that the new guidelines recommend filling half your plate with fruits and vegetables. Here are some other highlights from the new recommendations:

Make at least half your grains whole.

- To eat more whole grains, substitute, don’t add, a whole-grain product for a refined product, such as eating whole-wheat bread instead of white bread or brown rice instead of white rice.
- Choose foods that name one of the following whole-grain ingredients first on the label’s ingredient list: brown rice, buckwheat, bulgur, millet, oatmeal, quinoa, rolled oats, whole-grain barley, whole-grain corn, whole-grain sorghum, whole-grain triticale, whole oats, whole rye, whole wheat, or wild rice.
- Foods labeled with the words “multi-grain,” “stone-ground,” “100% wheat,” “cracked wheat,” “seven-grain,” or “bran” are usually not whole-grain products.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label and choose whole grain products with a higher % Daily Value for fiber.
- Teach older children to read the ingredient list on cereals or snack food packages and choose those with whole grains at the top of the list.

Focus on Fruits.

- Keep a bowl of whole fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or 100% juice, not syrup) as well as fresh so that you always have a supply on hand.
- Vary your fruit choices. Fruits differ in nutritional content.

Vary your Veggies.

- Keep a bowl of cut-up vegetables in a see-through container in the refrigerator. Carrot and celery sticks are traditional, but consider red or green pepper strips, broccoli florets, or cucumber slices.
- Plan some meals around a vegetable main dish, such as a vegetable stir-fry or soup. Then add other foods to complement it.
- Buy canned vegetables labeled “reduced sodium,” “low sodium,” or “no salt added.” If you want to add a little salt, it will likely be less than the amount in the regular canned product.
- Stock up on frozen vegetables for quick and easy cooking in the microwave.
- Buy fresh vegetables in season. They cost less and are likely to be at their peak flavor.
- Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up pre-washed bags of salad greens and add baby carrots or grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes. Buy packages of veggies, such as baby carrots or celery sticks, for quick snacks.
1 in 4 Parents Concerned About Child’s Mental Health

In a national survey of 1,000 parents with children 2-24 years old, commissioned by the Child Mind Institute found that almost a quarter (22%) said they have had a child with mental health or behavioral issues. By detailing the symptoms and behaviors that concerned them, the parents provide a snapshot of children who are displaying signs of psychiatric and learning difficulties, how their behavior differs from other children in the sample, and what parents are doing to get them help.

The reasons that parents most often “sought professional help” for their children included the following:
- 22% impulsive or hyperactive
- 20% moody or sad
- 18% trouble academically
- 16% trouble paying attention
- 12% problems with friends or interacting socially
- 12% more disobedient than other children
- 11% breaking rules or getting in trouble
- 10% repetitive, rigid or strange behaviors

Of those parents who expressed concern about a child, 70% said the symptoms and behaviors affected the child’s “quality of life.”

The most common ways in which the child’s quality of life was impaired:
- 49% had difficulty making friends and socializing
- 25% became withdrawn or depressed
- 21% suffered academically
- 18% had trouble going about daily life
- 14% became very anxious
By Wendy Hewitt & Kim Reimann

When your child is diagnosed with a hearing loss, it can come as a surprise. Finding out that hearing aids are not covered under most insurance plans can also be shocking. As we learned more about hearing loss and had the opportunity to visit with other parents, we learned that many families had struggles similar to ours when it came to getting hearing aids and cochlear implants for their children.

Wendy’s Story. In 2002 when our son, Ruger, was diagnosed with hearing loss, we had no idea that babies could wear hearing aids. We also had no idea how much aids cost and that our health insurance wouldn’t pay for them. We soon learned that there were not many insurance companies that do pay for hearing aids. We went through the appeal process, only to be denied. Ruger didn’t qualify for Medicaid. How were we going to come up with $3,500 for two hearing aids? Luckily, we were able to receive funding assistance from Primary Children’s Medical Center, and Ruger was able to have access to sound. At 20 months of age, he had his first cochlear implant surgery and no longer used the hearing aids. We went through the appeal process, only to be denied. Ruger didn’t qualify for Medicaid. How were we going to come up with $3,500 for two hearing aids? Luckily, we were able to receive funding assistance from Primary Children’s Medical Center, and Ruger was able to have access to sound. At 20 months of age, he had his first cochlear implant surgery and no longer used the hearing aids.

Kim’s Story. When Gabrielle was born, we took her home and loved her and were in awe with her - just like any other parent. It wasn’t until she was a little older that we became concerned about her hearing. Gabrielle was 7 ½ months old when she was diagnosed with a hearing loss. We were shocked to find out that our insurance did not cover the cost of hearing aids, and we didn’t readily have $1800 to pay for the hearing aids. Fortunately for us, our audiologist allowed us to make payments. As Gabi grew older and needed new hearing aids, we applied for and received a scholarship from Job’s Daughters. Gabrielle is now 12 and wears an implant in one ear and a hearing aid in the other ear. I feel we were very fortunate, but this is not always the case—some children go for months or years without access to sound because of the costs of hearing aids and/or cochlear implants.

The Need for Legislation. Currently, hearing aids cost $1,000 to $4,000 each. Over the last several years, states have been working to pass legislation mandating health insurance companies to pay for hearing aids for children with hearing loss. Most insurance companies cover the costs of a cochlear implant, but some still don’t. There are now 17 states that have passed legislation requiring insurance companies to pay for hearing aids and implants for children.

This year, Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices is working with local legislators to help pass this same legislation, which will mandate companies that issue insurance in the state of Wyoming to help cover the cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants. We have created a survey asking families about their experience acquiring hearing aids or cochlear implants for their children. The information received from the results of this survey will help us as we proceed with legislation. The survey has been sent out to many parents of children with hearing loss, Child Development Centers, Teachers of the Deaf, and Speech and Language Pathologists. The survey can also be taken on our website, www.WyHandsAndVoices.org. The link can be found on our home page and reads Please click here to take our Wyoming Hearing Aid/ Cochlear Implant Parent Survey. It only takes a few minutes.

Senator John Hastert and the Legislative Service Office (LSO) are in the process of creating the bill. We need other Wyoming Legislators from both the Senate and the House of Representatives to co-sponsor the bill. Writing a letter to your local legislator can make a huge impact in this process. The voice of a parent is very powerful!! You can find contact information for your local legislators at http://legisweb.state.wy.us/lsoweb/.
**WHAT FAMILIES CAN DO TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN SUCCEED ACADEMICALLY**

### 4 Key Attributes to Target from the Research

Research shows that students who believe in and have the following qualities and/or characteristics do better at school. Teachers can help families understand that family engagement can be as simple as teaching their children these 4 important attributes or qualities. If students can answer “yes” to each set of statements under each attribute—then their chance of success is greater.

1. **To believe that they can succeed academically**
   - I can do even the hardest homework if I try
   - I can learn the things taught in school
   - I can figure out difficult schoolwork

2. **Internal motivation to learn**
   - I want to understand how to solve problems
   - I like to look for more information about school subjects
   - I want to learn new things

3. **To manage their own learning**
   - I ask myself questions as I go along to make sure my homework makes sense to me
   - I try to figure out the hard parts of my schoolwork on my own
   - I go back over things I don’t understand
   - I try to find a place that makes it easier to do my homework.

4. **To know how to ask for help—especially from teachers**
   - I can get along with most of my teachers
   - I can go and talk with most of my teachers
   - I can get my teachers to help me if I have problems with other students
   - I can explain what I think to most of my teachers
   - I ask the teacher to tell me how well I’m doing in class

*from Katherine Hoover-Dempsey, Howard Sandler, et al Model of Parent Involvement, student survey data from Nebraska PIRC & Iowa PIRC (I-SPIN)*.

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**HEARING AID LEGISLATION CONT...**

If you need talking points to assist you in writing to your legislator, you can find these on [http://infanthearing.org/legislation/hearingaid.html](http://infanthearing.org/legislation/hearingaid.html). This website has advocacy points, a sample parent letter, ways to effectively communicate with your legislator, etc. It also has copies of other states’ hearing aid bills.

If you have any questions, need ideas for talking points, or are interested in helping with Hearing Aid/Cochlear Implant Legislation, please contact Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices – Executive Director, Wendy Hewitt at 307-782-3276 or wendy@wyhandsandvoices.org

**Assistant Director, Kim Reimann at 307-265-2074 or kimr@wyhandsandvoices.org**.

Wyoming Families for Hands & Voices is a parent-driven, non-profit organization that provides unbiased support to families of deaf and hard of hearing children to assist them in reaching their fullest potential.

If your child or a child of someone you know needs hearing aids until they are able to receive funding or a cochlear implant, or if you know someone who has hearing aids they would like to donate to the hearing aid loaner bank, please contact the EHDI office at 307-721-6212.

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**GRANT AWARDED**

In October 2011, the U.S. Department of Education has awarded the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) a distance education grant via the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for Project SASI (Students with Autism and Sensory Impairments: Addressing the Personnel Shortages of Rural, Remote, and High Need Areas).

This is the second time the WDE Deaf-Blind Project has been awarded a grant to assist in training teachers to teach those with sensory disabilities.

To find out more, call Joanne Whitson WDE at 307-334-5333 or e-mail Joanne.Whitson@wyo.gov
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:

- **Terri Dawson**, Director, tdawson@wpic.org
- **Betty Carmon**, Powell, 272-1153, bcarmon@wpic.org
- **Serves Cody, Powell, Greybull, Worland, Lovell & Thermopolis area**
- **Janet Kinstetter**, Moorcroft, 756-9665, jkinstetter@wpic.org
- **Serves Moorcroft, Gillette, Sundance & Newcastle area**
- **Jennifer Petri**, jpetri@wpic.org Green River, (307) 875-1929 or
- **Serves Green River, Rock Springs Kemmerer and Evanston area**

**F2F 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 WY. Call 1-800-660-9742 or 307-635-3536 or now in the Big Horn Basin call 307-272-1153 or e-mail: wyf2f@wpic.org.

**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:

- **Terri Dawson**, Director (307) 684-7441, tdawson@wpic.org
- **Natalie Pique**, Family-School Partnership Liaison, Casper (307) 247-0075 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, call Dara Johnston, PAT Coordinator at (307) 684-7441 or e-mail PATinfo@wpen.net. Certified PAT parent educators are:

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

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20 years of opening doors, please help us in opening more....

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*Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc.*

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**Materials from this newsletter may be reprinted. We ask only that Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc. and **PICS –N– PIECES** be credited.*
We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an action but a habit.

—Aristotle

Parents Helping Parents of WY, Inc. (PHP), because of rising production costs, we 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 1 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 news brief to be distributed 4-6 times/year (Please note; this e-news does not have the same content as the PIC’s n Pieces newsletter).

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 PHP at 1-800-660-9742
(307) 684-2277 or tdawson@wpic.org
WE’RE CELEBRATING OUR 20TH ANNIVERSARY

2011 MARKS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF PARENTS HELPING PARENTS OF WYOMING. JOIN US IN THE CELEBRATION BY DONATING TODAY AT WWW.WPIC.ORG