

The Parent Information Center of Delaware (PIC) is a (501)(c)(3) nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of Delaware.

PIC administers Delaware's only Parent Training and Information (PTI) project as mandated under section 1474 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and funded by the US Department of Education-Office of Special Education Programs CFDA 84.328M-H328M0900-09 .

PIC also administers the Parental Information Resource Center for the State of Delaware as mandated under section 5563 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and Funded by the US. Department of Education-Office of Parental Options and Innovations CFDA 84.310-U310A070006-09.

The programs and services that the PIC provides are statewide and focus on reaching families and children from birth to age 26 who are from racial, ethnic, or cultural minority backgrounds, economically disadvantaged, geographically or otherwise underserved.

Our Mission is: *To improve outcomes for all children, especially for children with disabilities, and their families by providing information, education and support.*

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Thinking Out Loud, Continued.

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Based on research and evidence, several organizations such as the PTA and the Appleseed Network have made recommendations to guide states, districts and schools in their plans to engage parents.

Here are five recommendations proposed by both organizations

- Develop a shared vision for family engagement that moves beyond the traditional notion of peripherally involving parents at school functions or fundraising events by pursuing multiple, pro-active strategies for engaging parents, in particular low-income parents or parents whose first language is not English.
- Create purposeful connections to learning where parents are included in school's and district's strategic and improvement plans that focus on student learning and provide parents with understandable, consequential and timely information regarding key school and student performance data.
- Dedicate funding specific to building the capacity of principals, teachers and parents to help engage in successful parent involvement efforts designed to provide at-home or in-school support for under-achieving students and leadership opportunities for parents (i.e. PIC's Family Leadership Academy and the Learning Link's Delaware Parent Leadership Institute)
- Evaluate parent engagement practices to measure results and to foster progress by using data about family engagement as the lever for change.

- Look to community support to supplement a school district's limited resources by engaging community organizations (i.e. After-School Programs, Communities in Schools and Parent Information Resource Centers).

How can parents and schools ensure these recommendations take hold?

- Encourage the development of policies at both national and state levels that require schools and districts to adopt parent engagement initiatives based on the previous five recommendations.
- Participate in the present ESEA reauthorization process by offering input and feedback.
- Support parent and community organizations that assist parents and schools in their family engagement work by ensuring that Parent Information Resources are among the programs included and funded under the ESEA.

If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself. -Henry Ford

This article was compiled with information from the following: It Takes A Parent : Transforming Education in the Wake of No Child Left Behind Recommendations Regarding the Vital Role of Parents and Guardians in achieving Student and School Success <http://www.appleseeds.net/>

Harvard Family Research Project Seeing is Believing: Promising Practices for How School Districts Promote Family Engagement

PTA Research Brief July 2009 www.PTA.org

Joining the PTA

Join the network of parents in your child's school through the PTA.

Many schools in Delaware have parent organizations, such as the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), which exist as an avenue for parents to become involved with their child's education and school.

Each PTA works as its own functioning unit to engage the parent population of their school. But all PTAs share the same mission: to be a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for the education and well-being of every child. Parents in the PTA typically attend meetings to share information, voice their concerns, and ask questions. They are offered opportunities to volunteer in their child's



Parents and staff from Brown Elementary and Howard High School accept a Parent Involvement award from Lt. Gov. Matt Denn.

school and plan and execute fundraising activities. They also support legislation to improve the laws and policies that affect children and their education. Joining your local PTA can be a great way to connect with other parents, learn more about your child's teachers and school, and have your voice heard.

The Americans with Disabilities Act and Summer Camps

Can Camps Refuse to Accept Children With Special Needs?

The ADA is designed to ensure that decisions affecting persons with disabilities are based on the reality of each individual's situation. This is frequently not the case in childcare or camp settings. (The ADA Title III covers both childcare and camps under childcare providers).

Some childcare providers wrongly assume that a child's disabilities are too severe for the child to be integrated successfully into the center's program. Federal regulations require a childcare provider to make an individualized assessment about whether it can appropriately meet the particular needs of a

child within its program.

Childcare providers that meet the definition of public accommodation – essentially those childcare providers that provide services open to the public, but not including childcare operated by religious organizations or entities controlled by religious organizations – regardless of size or number of employees, must comply with Title III of the ADA and cannot turn away children on the basis of their disability and the manifestations of their disability (behavior, intellectual ability, medical needs) unless their presence would pose a significant risk to the health or safety of others, would require a fundamental alteration of the program, or would result in an undue burden to the center.

Get Involved with PIC!

The Family Leadership Academy

Join PIC for a 2 day workshop event that strengthens parents' leadership and advocacy skills. This is an interactive training that culminates in tangible opportunities for leadership roles. Visit our website to register!

Delaware State Parent Advisory Council Membership in the Delaware State Parent Advisory Council (DSPAC) is increasing quickly as parents from across the state join this critical advisory group. The DSPAC is focused on working with parents, local school districts and the Department of Education to enhance educational opportunities for all children in Delaware. To join this select group, contact Jill Simonds at jsimonds@picofdel.org or call 888-547-4412.

The PIC Board of Directors PIC is always looking for qualified individuals who would like to give back to their community by sharing their time and talent as a PIC Board Member. To find out how you can join, please call Marie-Anne at 302-999-7394.



Although these two terms sound very similar, they have totally different meanings.

Prior Notice of Meeting or Invitation to Meeting is the invitation the school sends to parents giving them 10 days notice before holding an IEP meeting. Sometimes if parents can meet sooner they may waive the required 10 day notice.

It is not to be confused with Prior Written Notice (PWN) which is what your school district must give you, by law, before making changes in your child's special education program. IDEA requires that you receive PWN -- in your native language -- before your child is evaluated; before your child is moved from a special-education to a regular-education classroom or vice versa; before changes are made in services like speech, physical or occupational therapy; and generally before anything specified in the IEP is altered. The PWN should explain in detail why the changes are being made -- and, if you are the one requesting a change, why the change will not be made. This gives you an opportunity to respond before your child is affected by the proposed changes.

What should the PWN contain?

Delaware schools use a form devel-

oped by the Delaware Department of Education that should summarize the following:

- Explanation of why an action was proposed or refused
 - Description of other options the IEP team (including the parent) considered and the reasons those options were rejected
 - Description of each evaluation procedure, assessment, record, or report used as a basis for the proposed or refused action
 - Description of other relevant factors
 - Statement that parents are protected by the procedural safeguards of the IDEA and DOE regulations
 - Sources for parents to contact for help in understanding IDEA and DOE regulations
 - A full explanation of the procedural safeguards available to parents
- "A school district must give parents PWN no less than 10 business days before the school district proposes to or refuses to initiate or change

Prior Written Notice

What is Prior Notice of Meeting and Prior Written Notice?

- the identification, evaluation, educational placement of a child with a disability, or the provision of FAPE to a child with a disability" [4 DE Admin Code § 926.3.1.; 34 C.F.R. § 503(a)]

What will happen to my child's special education services during the

10 days ?

Parents have the option to waive the 10 days notice, but shouldn't feel pressured to do so. Until the parent responds to the PWN, the child continues to receive services



Maria Mendoza, PIC Parent Consultant, poses with families attending one of our many workshops in Sussex County.

under the current IEP. Once the parent responds, the new IEP or other proposed/refused actions go into effect. If the parent does not respond within the 10 day timeline, the new IEP, or other proposed/refused actions go into effect 10 days from when the PWN was issued.

In cases involving a change of placement for a disciplinary removal, the PWN must be provided no less than 3 business days before the school district proposes to change the child's placement.

Are you ready for your child to start kindergarten next fall?

Did you know that if your child is going to be attending kindergarten in the fall you can schedule a guided tour with the school's guidance counselor? Call the school to make an appointment and learn about other pertinent information for kids starting school.

Summer Learning Loss is a real problem for students.

Children need continual practice over the summer to keep up the academic skills they develop during the school year. The importance of reading and engaging children during the summer is summarized in the "Primer on Summer Learning Loss". Visit: <http://www.rif.org/educators/articles/primeronSummer-LearningLoss.msp> to learn more about Summer Learning Loss.

Parent Involvement initiatives are gaining ground.

House Bill 350, recently passed by the House Education Committee, requires schools to ask that parents sign an education compact at the beginning of each academic year, and will also expand Delaware Public Education Profiles in order to inform the public about how schools that receive federal Title I funds are using those

funds to enhance parental involvement. Read about the bill here: <http://legis.delaware.gov/LIS/LIS145.NSF/vwLegislation/11692F68E24C2063852576EA0056F652?OpenDocument>

Some of the Race to the Top funds will go towards free SAT testing.

Part of the \$100 million in Race to the Top funding that Dela-

ware will receive will be used to provide FREE SAT tests for all 11th graders so that every student in Delaware, regardless of income, has access to college admissions tests. Get more information here:

http://www.rodelfoundationde.org/uploads/RTTT-Benefits_Audience-FINAL.pdf

Are you ready for the new DCAS testing?

There is a website where you can find up to date information and resources regarding the new Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), which is replacing the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP). Visit <http://de.portal.airast.org> to find FAQs and information on the DCAS in both English and Spanish.

Summer camps exist for kids with special needs and their siblings.

Many camps offer services to children with special needs as well as those with no special needs. This enhances the experience for everyone who attends. One such camp is Camp Manito run by United Cerebral Palsy of Delaware. Camp Manito is located adjacent to River Road County Park. In addition to Camp Manito, UCP's Camp Lenape, located in Felton, Del., serves children and young adults in Kent and Sussex counties. For more information call (302) 764-2400. Easter Seals also hosts Camp Fairlee Manor for kids and teens with autism. Two sessions are offered. Call (410) 778-0566 for details or to register.



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Howard High School, a PIC partner school, receives a Superstar In Education Award for their parent involvement programming.

Support PIC.

Please print.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Email _____

Payment Check Enclosed Visa Mastercard Amount \$_____

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For information on how to make a tax deductible gift or to become a PIC member, log onto www.picofdel.org and select DONATE.

If you wish to volunteer with PIC, please contact us by phone at (888) 547-4412 or by email at picofdel@picofdel.org.

Donation Levels

- \$1000 Benefactor
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All donations to the Parent Information Center of Delaware are tax deductible under Section (501) (c) (3) of the IRS tax code.

PIC is a United Way of DE write in: #725 State Employee Charitable Campaign #70088

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The Parent Information Center of Delaware Newsletter



Thinking Out Loud!

By Marie-Anne Aghazadian, Executive Director

Over the past years there has been ample evidence that parents who are engaged in their children's school and education have a positive effect not only on the educational and emotional outcomes of their children, but also on their children's academic achievement.

While parent engagement seems like a no brainer to many of us, it is not always easy for a parent to participate in their child's school experience. There are numerous obstacles that prevent parents from becoming active and informed partners with their children's educators. These include: school climate and how the school perceives parents' role; language, if families are English language learners; economic stressors and financial issues that may prevent parents who hold down several jobs to find the time to support their children and to participate in parent- school activities; and experiences in education where parents were not successful themselves and resolutely they do not value education.

For parents to capably support their children's learning, they should be given easily

The Link

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understood information about schools' performance, education laws, when schools must provide tutoring services and allow school choice, or when a child may need special education and related services. Parents should also become familiar with performance indicators, standards and test scores to gauge if their children are making measurable progress. Furthermore, parents should know what and how their children learn, how to help with homework and how to access community resources. Additionally, parents must acquire skills to feel empowered to communicate with educators and school administrators.

At a time when our country is taking a hard look at the state of our education system and the current administration has made an unwavering commitment to turning around low-performing schools and to ensure that all students, rich, poor, diverse, or with disabilities receive an education that will allow them to compete in the world, we must make sure that parent engagement is an integral part of the process, if we want to reach our collective dream. Continued on next page.....



Parents at a workshop with PIC Family School Partner Lilia Estrada Meredith.