

NCPPIE Update

March 2002

A Publication of the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education

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Parent Potential Unleashed

The Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence in Kentucky Has Developed a Parent Leadership Institute That Nurtures and Trains Parents to Become Effective Partners with Schools

Bob Sexton, Executive Director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and Beverly Raimondo, Director of the Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership (CIPL), were guest speakers at the February NCPPIE meeting. CIPL is a program of the Prichard Committee and as Executive Director, Bob shared with the group the history of the Prichard Committee, a Kentucky citizen's organization, which was formed in 1983. Beverly then provided specific details about the CIPL program and how the Prichard Committee has helped Kentucky parents become more involved in improving public schools to enhance academic achievement for all students.

The two shared with the group that in 1990, the Kentucky legislature passed the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), the most far-reaching standards based reform law in the country. For the previous six-years, the Prichard Committee had been holding community forums and other dialogues to press for serious change in the state's educational system. Once the law passed, the committee realized the need to monitor and support its implementation and organized citizen volunteers to set up local committees to track the changes in their schools. Continuing to focus on engaging parents to help schools raise student achievement, the committee launched CIPL in 1997.

CIPL operates on three basic principles:

1. Parents want their children to have a good experience in school, and they want to play a constructive role in making that happen.
2. Parents can make a difference. When they're involved in education, children do better in school and schools get better
3. If parents are given information about student achievement, they will hold schools accountable and press them to change for the better.

Almost 700 parents have graduated from CIPL. They form a small army of activists who are informed about how a standards-based system works and how to make such a system work for their children. Each parent graduate has attended three two-day sessions, which are offered in regions around the state, about six weeks apart. Each participant has agreed to a two-year commitment to the program and within that two-year period they design, complete, and implement a project aimed at improving student achievement. Many graduates have become officers of parent-teacher organizations, been elected to school councils, and run for the school board.

How it All Works

To support CIPL, the Prichard Committee has raised funds from businesses and foundations, including the Kellogg Foundation, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Wallace-Readers Digest Fund, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. There is no cost to participants except their travel. The training is offered in nice, but not fancy, places, such as state parks, colleges, and settlement houses.

Several key features build participant's skills and confidence. Community support coordinators who are fulltime Prichard Committee staff members recruit participants in their region, provide training, and coach them through their projects. Throughout the sessions, participants engage in group activities, allowing them to develop bonds and networks. Homework assignments give participants a chance to try out what they've learned. Each participant who creates an approved project receives up to \$500 seed money to assist them in implementing the project at their local school.

Participants design their projects using a scoring guide and must address three questions: 1. Is the project focused on improving student achievement? 2. Will the project increase parent involvement? 3. Will the project have a lasting impact?

The Launch of a Consulting Unit

In an effort to expand the use of its successful parent leadership program beyond Kentucky's borders, the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence recently created a new consulting unit called Parent Leadership Associates, or PLA.

PLA has the support of three national foundations-The Ford Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts-which are awarding the Prichard Committee a total of \$2 million over the next three years.

PLA is described as a "mission-based" consulting unit that will focus on improving student achievement by increasing the meaningful involvement of parents in public schools. The framework for PLA is based on CIPL and will provide a mechanism for the Prichard Committee to market the institute's program to education agencies, advocates and organizations in other states. Its products and services will include consulting, workshops, seminars, training programs and curriculum.

The Prichard Committee decided to create PLA in response to the numerous requests it receives both for information about the institute and for assistance in creating such a program elsewhere.

For more information about the Prichard Committee, the Commonwealth Institute, and PLA visit them on-line at www.prichardcommittee.org, www.cipl.org, and www.plassociates.org.

***NCPIE Update* Introduces Guest Column Feature This Month: The Massachusetts Parent Improvement Project**

In this section of each issue of *The Update* we'll feature your stories about successful parent involvement programs. If you are interested in contributing an article about what's going on in your state or organization e-mail it to Jocelyn at jocelyn@ncea.com. All articles should be 500 words or less and if possible include a copy of your organization's logo.

The **Massachusetts Parent Involvement Project's** (MassPIP) mission is to increase involvement of families and communities in their children's mathematics, science and technology/engineering (MST/E) education by creating partnerships among schools, parents, students, and local organizations and businesses. MassPIP makes particular efforts to support and engage under-served parents who are not involved in their children's schools due to a number of barriers.

The project's basic design is building local community coalitions and researching their impact of reaching and engaging families to help strengthen their roles in their children's education.

On any given day or evening throughout Massachusetts, MassPIP is sponsoring activities conceived and executed by the local community coalitions. Parents, along with their children are seen visiting the fire station and learning about the science of fire fighting, engaging in math and science exhibits at the local

supermarket where vendors display how math and science bring their product to market, balancing check books and learning about financial planning, creating community gardens, identifying planets and stars through telescopes. In other locales, parents and children are exploring marshes and estuaries, whale watching and still others are constructing kites predicting and measuring volume, velocity and properties of gas and air pressure. We are witnessing an enthusiasm for science where the “spirit of learning is caught and not just taught”. With 60 coalitions operating throughout Massachusetts and supported by 5 regional parent liaisons, we have reached over 46,000 parents in 4 years.

Finding and retaining parents as regional liaisons is difficult. By contracting with math and science organizations in our focus regions we are able to locate parent leaders who connect with staff and organization resources for support. Critically important to this project is bringing on individuals who are familiar with the issues, people and groups at the local level.

Reaching parents who do not go into their children’s schools continues to challenge us. Initially, the coalition members were uncomfortable moving out of the school setting. MassPIP staff continues to work with community organizations and school members to facilitate activities in community settings where these parents are most often found.

To better ensure the project’s survival, MassPIP joined the Alliance for Education, a nonprofit with a history of developing partners in education. Assuming funding, the goal of Phase II of the project is to strengthen and further develop a comprehensive, replicable family support network and service delivery model.

For more information on the program contact: Joel Nitzberg, Massachusetts Parent Involvement Project. A project of the Alliance for Education, 99 Albion Street - Suite #5, Somerville, MA 02144, (617) 627-9015, jnitzberg@masspip.org, Website: <http://www.allford.org>

Authors: **Joel Nitzberg**, the Director of the Massachusetts Parent Involvement Project and **Judith M. Sparrow**, MassPIP Educational Consultant.

SEDL Announces two New and FREE Research Products on Family and Community Connections

The Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's (SEDL) National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools announces the release of two FREE products to connect you with the latest research on family and community connections with schools.

The first product, ***Emerging Issues in School, Family, & Community Connections***, is a synthesis report that identifies key issues related to school, family and community connections that must be addressed for practitioners to make effective connections. You can download this report at <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources> or call SEDL at 800-476-6861 to request a print copy.

The second product "**The Connection Collection: School-Family-Community Publications Database**" is a searchable database that contains short summaries of over 140 publications. This collection can be accessed at <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources>.

The IDEA Partnerships

Families and Advocates Partnership for Education (**FAPE**) at the PACER Center is one of four national projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services to deliver a common message about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Partners have been working together for the past few years to inform families, professionals, and the public about IDEA and to improve educational results for children with disabilities. **These four linked projects work with a network of more than 106 organizations and provide a wealth of resources that you should all be aware of.** Below is just a sampling.

Web sites and hands-on assistance: Each Partnership Project offers you a web site containing new developments, resources and guidance and a toll free number for your specific questions.

PACER Center's FAPE: www.fape.org / 888-248-0822 ... for family members and advocates

Council for Exceptional Children's ASPIRE and ILIAD: www.ideapractices.org 877-232-4332... for administrators, educators, related service providers and paraprofessionals

National Association of State Directors of Special Education's PMP: www.ideapolicy.org / 877-433- 2463 ... for policymakers

Training Materials: Training and professional development resources are available.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Transparencies and Curriculum on IDEA. Available from the FAPE Partnership.

Discover IDEA CD 2000 (CD ROM) containing IDEA-related information in a searchable, easy-to-use format. Available from the Council for Exceptional Children.

Making Assessment Accommodations: A Toolkit for Educators (video-based staff development package). Available from the Council for Exceptional Children.

Discover IDEA: Supporting Achievement for Children with Disabilities (video-based overview of IDEA/English and Spanish subtitles) Available from the Council for Exceptional Children.

Books and Guides: The Partners offer specific materials to help you identify effective strategies and practices.

Research Briefs/Facts on Hand/Promising Practices. Available from the FAPE web site (www.fape.org — click on promising practices).

IDEA Requirements for Preschoolers with Disabilities: IDEA Early Childhood Policy and Practice Guide. Available from the Council for Exceptional Children.

Directory of Bilingual School Psychologists. Available from the Council for Exceptional Children or National Association for School Psychologists (publications@naspweb.org).

Implementing IDEA: A Guide for Principals. Available from the Council for Exceptional Children or National Association of Elementary School Principals (www.naesp.org).

Please take time to review these resources as well as the many others you will find on the web sites listed here.

Upcoming NCPIE Meetings and Presentations

March 27, 2002 9:00 a.m. – Noon NEA Building Conference Rm.-B
DC VOICE and the Tellin' Stories Project

Erika Landberg of DC VOICE and Barbara D'Emilio of the Tellin' Stories Project will be our presenters and will share their experience in forming a new broad-based education reform collaborative, and how they work in partnership to increase family and community involvement in several Washington, D.C. schools.

Maryland Adopts Family Friendly Policy

The Maryland State Board of Education adopted a statewide Family Involvement Policy in October 2001. The new policy will be used as a vehicle to create collaborative family-friendly schools, where everyone-teachers, parents, and community members-has the tools to promote student success.

The policy is one of the most inclusive in the country and demonstrates Maryland's commitment to the value of faith based organizations, the business

community and community groups as a whole in promoting family involvement. Portions of the policy read as follows:

"Schools also need the support of other members of the community, including parent organizations, public libraries, businesses and faith-based organizations to promote effective education."

In accordance with the policy "special efforts will be made to reach those who did not have a positive school experience or for whom English is not their native tongue."

In support of the policy State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy S. Grasmick, has stated that "making parents and families a true part of the education process is a far more powerful education reform strategy than any other."

For a copy of Maryland's Family Involvement Policy pamphlet contact the Maryland State Department of Education at its Public Information Line at 410-767-0600 or call toll-free at 1-888-246-0016.

Included in the pamphlet are tips for families on how to help children succeed in school. A sampling of these tips include:

1. Participate on educational task forces and advisory councils
2. Talk to your child about homework and school activities
3. Take your child to the library
4. Ask questions about school policies
5. Sponsor an outstanding teacher awards program

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BETTER EDUCATION THROUGH PARENT INVOLVEMENT