



PEAL News

Parent Education & Advocacy Leadership Center

Serving Western and Central Pennsylvania

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Message from our Executive Director



Welcome Readers,

“May you live in interesting times” is a blessing claimed by many cultures. We sure do! There are critical changes afoot for young children and students at all ages.

Early Intervention: The creation of the State Office of Child Development creates the possibility to develop a unified inclusive early intervention system with increased continuity for young children and families from birth to kindergarten.

School Age: The Gaskins Settlement creates the opportunity to realize the promise of inclusive education and with access to challenging curriculum and high expectation for all.

Transition to Adult Life: Increasing opportunities for post-secondary education; access to health insurance through MA for Workers with Disabilities, often a stumbling block to employment; and increasing opportunity for control of supports for people who use supports in the community.

All of these opportunities cry out for families and people with disabilities to help to shape the direction of these emerging changes.

This is an incredible time to be building the PEAL Center to assist:

- individual families who are advocating for their own children;
- families who will provide leadership in their communities and state;
- educators, policy makers, and advocacy organizations to leverage change at the policymaking level to benefit children and youth with disabilities.

The PEAL Center looks forward to responding to your needs for information in innovative ways. As Margaret Meade said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” We look forward to working together, and hope to hear from you soon.

Liz Healey

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Mission Statement

The mission of the PEAL Center is to ensure that children, youth, and adults with disabilities lead rich, active lives and participate as full members of their schools and communities by providing training, information, and technical assistance based on best practices to individuals, families and all people who support them.

PEAL WEBSITE READY FOR VISITORS

The PEAL Center website is up and running. Please visit us on the web at pealcenter.org. As we continue to expand our site we would like to know what you think and what things you would like to see on the web. Your feedback is important to us. We will work to keep a current calendar of workshops and conferences for the entire region. You can help by passing on information about any events you would like to see listed. Let us hear from you. Email Linda Rose at lrose@pealcenter.org or call 412-422-1040 ext. 11.

The Education Law Center (ELC) Comments on Proposed Changes to Pre-Kindergarten Programs

According to ELC, the proposed changes to standards that will apply in PA pre-kindergarten programs include many significant provisions to ensure high quality pre-school programs that include and serve children with disabilities. **The public has until July 17th** to let the State Board know how important these regulations are to young children, and particularly to young children with disabilities. This public comment period is the opportunity to let State officials know how you feel about high quality, inclusive, pre-kindergarten programs. Public comments can make a critical difference in final regulations. You can call, email or send a letter with your comments or suggestions to:

James Buckheit, Executive Director, State Board of Education, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-3787. — jbuckheit@state.pa.us.

Persons with disabilities who need an alternative means of providing public comment call Jim Buckheit at (717) 787 3787 or TDD (717) 787 7367.

Send a short letter (a long letter is fine too) telling the Board whether you support the regulations and why. If you want to include more detailed comments or



suggestions, here are some of the provisions that directly affect children with disabilities.

The proposed regs:

- Explicitly state that pre-kindergarten educational programs cannot exclude children with disabilities or be limited exclusively to children with disabilities
- Require that a district's strategic plan includes provisions that ensure parent and community participation, coordination with community operated infant and toddler early intervention programs, and further ensure a smooth transition for children with disabilities to district pre-K programs
- Permit school districts to make individual exceptions for the enrollment of children under 3 or over age 5 to pre-school programs
- Require a minimum of 180 school days and at least 2 and 1/2 hours of instruction per day
- Require pre-K programs to have a student teacher ratio of no more than 20 students for one teacher and one teacher's aide in a classroom and set forth specific qualifications for a teacher's aide .

You can view the bulletin at pabulletin.com.

(The above information was excerpted from an ELC Alert.)

Transition Conference July 19-21, 2006

PEAL is co-sponsoring PA Department of Education's 2006 Transition Conference in State College, PA July 19-21. The PEAL Center will present Patti Hackett Co-Director, Healthy and Ready To Work National Center in Washington, D.C. She will address "Relationship and Sexuality Issues." Families will have opportunities to learn about leadership, disability rights and responsibilities, sexuality, capacity building to improve transition outcomes, job development, healthy lifestyles, youth leadership and career assessment. Register online by visiting www.pattan.net, or call Pam Ranieri at 800-446-5607 ext. 6847 for more information. At the time of this printing, there are still family scholarships available for travel and lodging expenses.



Library and Book Reviews



The PEAL library is under construction. We are building our resources and will have a listing on our website of all the titles available to be borrowed. If there is a publication you would like to read let us know. We can purchase it for the library for you to borrow.



PA Assistive Technology Lending Library (PIAT)

PIAT is a free service available to Pennsylvanians of all ages and all disabilities, enabling them to try out assistive technology devices and equipment prior to purchase. This great service is open to children, so if the school team is interested in trying a new idea the equipment can be quickly borrowed for a trial period without having to go through the lengthy process of getting approvals, and the trial period can then be used as documentation of successful use. It also allows a person to try several types of similar equipment to figure out what works the best for them.

Visit: <http://disabilities.temple.edu/programs/assistive/atlend/> to find out more about this free service and to locate an AT Lending Library near you. You can also contact Bob Robinson at roberrobin@state.pa.us or call 877-722-8536 or 814-255-8200 ext.8506.

Inclusive Schooling—Consider the Possibilities~~Paula Kluth in Erie



“Clearly, inclusion is more than a set of strategies or practices, it is an educational orientation that embraces differences and values the uniqueness that each learner brings to the classroom.” —

Dr. Paula Kluth, Inclusion Workshop, Erie, May 8- 9.

Dr Kluth engaged parents, educators and related professionals in an energetic and entertaining exploration of inclusive education. Paula insisted that students with

disabilities deserve opportunities to learn from their peers and that families should be given meaningful opportunities to partner with their child’s school. She shared strategies and adaptations, and that content must be appropriately challenging. Workshop participants came away with a deep understanding of how “segregation does not prepare for inclusive life” and that all students should be valued and viewed for their unique and worthwhile contributions to the school community. The workshop was supported by the PA Department of Education’s Bureau of Special Education Inclusive Practices Project, Northwestern PA Autism Society, Down Syndrome Group of Erie County, Dr. Gertrude A Barber National Institute, Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania and Special Kids Network. For more information about Dr. Kluth and inclusive strategies, visit her website: paulakluth.com.



Jackie Lupo—Parent to Parent of PA
Paula Kluth—Presenter
Liz Healey, Executive Director, PEAL

New Law Allows PA Students with Disabilities to Participate in Graduation Ceremony



For many advocates and families of students with disabilities, the 2006 commencement ceremony was a victory celebration. Years of hard work changed the law that now enables students with IEPs to participate in commencement ceremonies with their graduating class even if they will be continuing to receive school services until age 21. Prior to May of this year, the school districts were required to educate children with their peers in the least restrictive environment in regular education classrooms until age 21. However, it was up to the individual school district to decide whether the students could “walk through”

graduation with their peers after completing the traditional four years of high school. Now students can participate in the graduation ceremony and receive a certificate of attendance rather than a diploma and then continue education services until age 21 in accordance with their IEP.



Brandon Carter and Liz Healey

Your voice was heard!
Remember how powerful we can be when we work together for change.



A FEW SITES TO SURF AND NUMBERS THAT MAY HELP



ACHIEVA Offers family supports and services to children and adults with disabilities and their families. Services include family supports, respite services, futures planning, residential, vocational and recreation programs. www.achieva.info (412) 995-5000

Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, Inc.- Point of contact for entry into the early intervention system in Allegheny County. Service coordinators for families whose children are eligible for early intervention services from age birth to 3 at no cost to families. www.afit.org (412) 885-6000

CHIP Web site designed to help parents quickly learn whether their children qualify for free, or low-cost, medical insurance coverage under the state’s groundbreaking Children’s Health Insurance Program, or CHIP. www.chipcoverspakids.com. Helpline: 1-800-986-KIDS

EDUCATION LAW CENTER Provides free telephone consultation, technical assistance and limited representation. www.elc-pa.org (412) 391-5225

NICHY Nat’l Dissemination Ctr for Children w/ Disabilities. Provide information on specific disabilities, early intervention, special education and other issues. www.nichcy.org 800-695-0285

PA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Bureau of Special Educaion Investigates parent complaints about implementation of student special ed. programs. 800-222-3353 www.pde.state.pa.us/

Consult Line Answer questions about special ed. laws and policies. 800-879-2301

Special Education Mediation Services Provides mediation services to families and school districts that need assistance in reaching agreement on provision of services. 800-992-4334



Some Upcoming Events in PA

Let us know what's going on in your area so we can keep our newsletter and website current with upcoming events.

5th Annual PA Community on Transition Conference July 19 - 21, 2006 (See article on page 2)

Penn State Conference Center and Hotel, **State College, PA**. For more information visit <http://www.pattan.net>

2006 National Autism Conference: Progress Through Partnership July 31, 2006 – August 4, 2006

Penn State Conference Center Hotel, **State College, PA**

For more information visit www.pattan.net

The Learning Disabilities Association of Pennsylvania is co-sponsoring a **Wilson 2-Day Overview Workshop** at the **Holiday Inn Harrisburg – East** (4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111) on **August 2 & 3, 2006**. Learn how to use multisensory structured language principles and techniques to teach students who struggle with reading and spelling. Pre-registration is required (there is a registration fee). For more information or to register, call: Wilson Language Training 1-800-899-8454 (www.WilsonLanguage.com/workshop).

No Blind Child Left Behind - A Tri-State Conference for Blind and Visually Impaired Children, their Caretakers and Educators. **August 19 & 20, 2006**, at the Ridge Center, 1 Peninsula Drive, **Erie, PA 16506**. Registration \$20 before June 30, \$30 after July 1st. Call Gloria Cota-Robles 814-825-2728 or email cota-robles@casemgt.org

Wrightslaw:Special Education Law and Advocacy—Peter Wight, Esq. and Pamela Darr Wright, **October 19, 2006**, The Avalon Hotel and Conference Center, **Erie, PA**.

The Homeless Children's Education Fund has issued a directory of camps for Children with special health care needs and/or chronic health conditions. Call 412-562-0154 or email info@homelessfund.org.



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