

*Setting the north star for
our children to live and learn*

CETAC

U.S. Department of Education
Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center

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Parent Issue

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Parent Involvement in Character Education

Welcome to the third issue of our CETAC Newsletter. This issue focuses on *parent involvement in character education*.

The Partnerships in Character Education Program (PCEP), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is currently providing support to projects that demonstrate parent involvement in character education activities in many forms across the states. Grantees implementing character education programs stress the importance of including parents in school-based efforts.

As an example of such inclusion, parents are serving on character education councils and district-level advisory boards; participating in forums to address issues on character education and other areas of the community; serving as trainers and peer mentors in parenting programs; assisting in the designs and implementation of character education programs; and volunteering alongside their children in service-learning activities. Other exciting efforts in character education developed by and with parents will be featured in this newsletter.



Nancy Ney/Digital Vision/Getty Images

It is important to note that, as part of the provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, Congress included parent involvement as one of the requirements for those entities seeking funding under the PCEP program. In addressing the spirit of the legislation, we asked a group of parents to participate in the development of this newsletter by sharing varied examples of their involvement in character education programs.

We hope that each of the articles featured in this newsletter will motivate readers to consider how best to involve parents in meaningful ways in character education to ensure our students' academic success and positive behavioral outcomes.

Deborah A. Price

Assistant Deputy Secretary
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
U.S. Department of Education

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In the articles below, parents reflect on the impact of their involvement with character education projects in New Haven, Conn., and New York, N.Y.

Incredible Years Parent Program in New Haven

By Jill Marks, parent of six children in New Haven, Conn. public schools

The Incredible Years Parent Program supports parents as they learn strategies to increase the social competence and character development of their children. I am very happy to have been a part of the Incredible Years Parent Program. It inspired me to challenge myself to increase my attention to family values. It helped me gain more strength, courage and love to care for my kids.

I am a 41-year-old mother with six children in K–8 schools. Three are my biological children and three are adopted. I have two children at King/Robinson Magnet School, three at Wexler/Grant Community School and one at Lincoln-Bassett School, all part of the New Haven, Conn., public schools.

Of course, it is a lot of work to parent six children, but I have no regrets. In fact, I find it very rewarding. The Incredible Years Parent Program has helped me in the areas of giving praise and reinforcing the positive character of my children. I have learned that I must give my husband praise as well. He is a very hardworking man, and a lot of times, his job requires him to travel, so he is away from home. However, he uses the same parenting tools I learned from the program and working together, it benefits all of us.

Teachers and others often praise me for how well my children behave and look, and how they go to school with a positive attitude. When my children grow up, I hope they can say, “Mom, you’ve done a great job raising us all,” and they will repeat what I’ve done with their own children.

For more information on the New Haven Partnerships in Character Education Program grant and its Incredible Years Parent Program, call **Carolyn Jackson**, parent coordinator, Social Development Department, New Haven Public Schools, (203) 946-7444 or e-mail carolyn.jackson@new-haven.k12.ct.us. You may also contact **Dee Speese-Linehan**, character education project director, (203) 946-7443, or e-mail dee.speese-linehan@new-haven.k12.ct.us.



Parents Get Involved in New York City Outward Bound Center

By Irma Rodriguez, parent of eighth-grade student Cindy Hernandez, Intermediate School 381, Region 6, Community School District 22, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Intermediate School 381 in Brooklyn invited me to attend a parent meeting one evening to explain that my daughter, Cindy, would be part of an extended-school-



Jose Luis Pelaez, Inc./Blend Images/Getty Images

day program that included trips to New York City communities to learn about different cultures. The program they described was the New York City Outward Bound Center (NYCOB) character education program. The NYCOB works through the schools to support academic success and character development. It is based on the idea that youths and adults learn when challenging themselves through new experiences.

At the meeting, the staff of NYCOB explained that students would be doing community service volunteer work in a local senior citizens’ home to help these students learn respect and responsibility for others. In addition, as part of the activities, they said my daughter would participate in a character development activity, thereby developing her perseverance, courage and self-esteem. At the end of the meeting, we were asked to fill out parent surveys so our ideas could help the staff improve the project.

Since the initial meeting, I have participated in other activities that NYCOB sponsored such as the “Poetry Slam” held at the school. Fifty students wrote poems on the topics of love, kindness, respect and caring that they read to the audience of 350 parents and other family members. Cindy wrote a poem called “Tsunami” that addressed all of these topics. The audience greatly appreciated the students’ poems because they were very heartfelt and real, and they cheered as each poem was read. Parents had a chance to write poems of love and gratitude to their children that they also read on stage. It was an emotionally-moving evening that I’ll never forget. (Continued on p. 3.)

Family Involvement in Boston Voices: A Literature-based Character Education Program

By Ann Deveney, Character Education Project Director, Boston Public Schools, Boston, Mass.

As a component of its Partnerships in Character Education Program (PCEP) grant, “Boston Voices: A Literature-based Character Education Program,” the Boston Public School District established an innovative family literacy program that will parallel the content of the district’s school-based character education curriculum.

The main purpose of the Boston Voices program is to tie together school and family in caring relationships facilitated by reading and writing about great books. The program promotes social and literacy skills through parental involvement at home. This home-school component provides K–12 students with a book bag of engaging multicultural literature that they will use at home to jump-start conversations, reading activities and writing activities related to the themes of the books emphasized during class time at school.

The core values of Boston Voices curricular activities include: trust, compassion, love, responsibility, courage, hope, freedom, honesty, integrity and perseverance. There is a high participation rate in the program because the literature deals with topics that students find relevant to their lives. The Boston Voices program has found that its family reading component is far more effective in engaging parents in the academic lives of their children than any other form of family outreach used locally.

For example, students in **Jennifer Henderson's** fifth-grade class at Orchard Gardens Pilot School read “Coming Home: From the Life of Langston Hughes,” which is based on the life of the famous African-American poet and author, as part of the identity awareness theme. Drawing from a curriculum resource developed by the program, students participate in a family activity called “Family and Community Heroes.” In the story, Langston’s grandmother told him stories of family and community heroes to give him a sense of racial pride and identity. In this activity, students interview family members and discover heroes within their own families and communities.

Parents Get Involved in New York City Outward Bound Center

(Continued from p.2.)

This program has been a tremendous benefit to my daughter who is no longer as shy and withdrawn. Cindy has developed so much confidence because of the many adventures and learning experiences she has had in the NYCOB project. Our family has gained so much from this experience.

My daughter adds, “My family loved the New York City Outward Bound Character Education Program so much that we can’t wait to sign up again next year. The program gets the family to work together and is really educational and fun.”

For more information on the New York City Outward Bound Character Education Program, contact **Paul Sebolsky**, character education project director, NYC Community District 22, NYC Outward Bound Center, Long Island City, N.Y., (917) 842-7758, sebolpaul@aol.com.



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For more information about the Boston Voices Family Reading Program, please contact **Ann Deveney**, character education project director, Boston Public Schools, (617) 635-9659, or email adeveney@boston.k12.ma.us.

Parents Attend Guys' and Girls' Night Out in Portland

By Gail Maron, Character Education Project Director, Portland, Ore.

During the second year of our Portland Public Schools Partnerships in Character Education Program grant, emphasis was placed on developing and implementing service learning projects and offering activities to encourage parent involvement. Families were afforded opportunities to plan, participate in and evaluate parenting classes, service learning projects and schoolwide events that highlighted various life-skills activities upon which the grant is based. Our events reinforced character development life-skills such as cooperation, patience and problem-solving.

One of the most successful events this year was a Guys' Night Out offered at Chief Joseph Elementary School in Portland, Ore. This first-time activity attracted over 80 percent of the student population in grades 3 through 5. The character education specialist announced the event in each classroom, distributed flyers, contacted families and hung posters in the hallways of the school. Fathers or significant male family members or friends were invited to attend the event with the boys. A volunteer sheet was sent home with all male students so that boys without a significant male in their lives could be matched with a male volunteer.

The agenda for Guys' Night Out included pizza dinner in the cafeteria, a scavenger hunt, creating art sculptures, gym games, a science experiment and dessert in the cafeteria. These activities required the students to practice their problem-solving and teamwork skills. Principal **Kathy Jaffe** said she was pleased this activity was such a hit and hopes for an even larger turnout next fall. Evaluation forms were given to participants to complete. Fathers and male volunteers shared comments such as: "*It was a very special bonding experience,*" and "*You should continue this for years to come.*"

A Girls' Night Out was held in the spring and featured a similar format and some of the same activities to reinforce problem-solving and teamwork skills. One special activity that the girls and their moms enjoyed was making friendship bracelets. On the evaluation form, one of the girls wrote, "*I really had a good time and most of all, I was with my best friend, my mom.*" Based on rave reviews, the school plans to carry out both a Girls' Night Out and Boys' Night Out again next year.

For more information on the Portland Public Schools Partnerships in Character Education Program grant, contact **Gail Maron**, project director, Multnomah School District No. 1, Portland Public Schools, (503) 246-0228, or e-mail gailmaron@msn.com. You also may contact **Kathy Jaffe**, principal, Chief Joseph Elementary School, (503) 916-6255, or e-mail kjaffe@pps.k12.or.us.



“Throughout history, character education has been the shared responsibility of parents, teachers and members of the community, who come together to support positive character development.”



“Character education teaches the habits of thought and deed that help people live and work together as families, friends, neighbors, communities and nations.”

from *Character Education ... Our Shared Responsibility*,
a publication of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

Parents Are Partners at Alaska's MidValley High School

By Becky Huggins, Character Education Project Director, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, Palmer, Alaska. Written with input from Vern and Shawn Powell, parents of Vern Powell, Jr., a student at MidValley High School.

Our Partnerships in Character Education Program (PCEP) grant in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, based in Palmer, Alaska, is filled with many opportunities for parents to partner with students and community members through participation in three of our character development ongoing activities conducted at MidValley High School in Wasilla, Alaska; Rose Urban Rural Exchange, the MidValley Trail of Remembrance and Project Visions.

The MidValley High School's Rose Urban Rural Exchange is an activity in which a "road system" school interacts throughout the year with a "bush system" school, culminating with an exchange of students. A "road system" school is located in an area accessible by a dirt or paved road and a "bush" school is in a remote area accessible only by plane, dog sled or boat. During the last school year, five of our students spent one week in Point Hope, Alaska, to live in and learn appreciation for another culture in the Arctic Ocean environment. Then, the following week, five students from Point Hope were welcomed by our

families and students to MidValley High School in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. Before leaving, the students learned about the culture of Point Hope to prepare for the visit. Once the students returned home, the families met to hear about the travel experiences of the exchange students.

Respect for another's culture is not a character trait that can be dictated or prescribed. Respect must be learned. While coordinating and beginning the first steps of our school exchange, many of our students did not have great respect for our Alaskan Native



Sarah Dimmick, posing at MidValley High School, is dressed in the Point Hope cultural attire as she prepares for her visit.

community and their culture as evidenced by some students' attitudes. Through an extended process, supported by our parents and filled with research, e-mails, video conferencing and finally, face-to-face meetings, our students opened their minds and hearts. The student exchange helped to develop an appreciation of the varied attributes and differences of another culture nearby in their very own state.

In the Trail of Remembrance activity, families participate in a 5K run, walk or bike ride through a trail lined with red, white and blue signs with names listed of honored veterans of all wars. While saluting and celebrating our veterans, we are building strong bonds within our family units. Through these activities, students and their parents and grandparents are developing mutual respect and gaining an understanding of each other and a sense of family pride. It is a lovely thing to watch the melting of the generational lines. Guest speakers and those who conducted research on the veterans for the event are from the families of our students.

Project Visions is our multigenerational program that is coordinated with our Mid-Valley Senior Center in Houston, Alaska and is intended to provide role models for our students. It also facilitates connections to the youths of today with the older generation. Project Visions promotes the character traits of patience, caring and responsibility. Many of our youths who don't have much patience with our elderly are learning the finer points of caring for someone else and not expecting something in return. Parents support this process by helping to plan activities and by making the generational circle complete.

We are successful in getting our parents involved in our character education activities and parent involvement is the key to MidValley High's success.

For more information, contact **Becky Huggins**, character education project director, MidValley High School, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, Palmer, Alaska, (907) 892-4100, or email becky.huggins@matsuk12.us.



Parent Shawn Powell models a coat made for her son by a Point Hope, Alaska, village woman.

Resources for Parents

Contact the U.S. Department of Education Information Resource Center for information on programs, resources and events at (800) USA-LEARN. Specific activities and resources include:

- ★ “Education News Parents Can Use” is a television series about ways to ensure children’s success in education. Aired on the third Tuesday of each month during the school year, this series provides parents with the tools and information they need to be effectively involved in their children’s learning. For information on how to register, visit www.ed.gov/news/av/video/edtv/index.html and go to FAQs.
- ★ *The Achiever* is a monthly newsletter that provides information, events and announcements regarding initiatives of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. For other newsletters and journals from the Department, visit www.ed.gov/news/newsletters/index.html.
- ★ National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, funded through the Southwest Regional Education Laboratory (SEDL) by the Department’s Institute of Educational Sciences, bridges research and practice to remove barriers to student achievement. For more information, visit www.sedl.org/connections/about.html.
- ★ ED Pubs, the Department’s publication center, has a multitude of free materials and resources that can assist state education agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), schools, parents, communities and organizations in encouraging and maximizing parental involvement. ED Pubs can be reached directly by calling (877) 4ED-PUBS or (877) 433-7827. If 877 is not yet available in your area, call (800) 872-5329 or (800) USA-LEARN. You may order documents online at www.edpubs.org or fax your request to (301) 470-1244. The following resources may be ordered from ED Pubs:
 - *Character Education ... Our Shared Responsibility* is a recently updated brochure developed to inform parents, educators and the community about the Department’s support, resources and involvement in character education. It is available in English and Spanish. You may request up to 1,000 copies of this pocket-sized brochure to share with parents and others at your school and community events.
 - *Student Involvement in Character Education*, Volume 1, Issue 2 of CETAC’s newsletter provides ideas on supporting your child’s involvement in character education projects. Printed copies of this newsletter are available.
 - *Helping Your Child* publication series provides parents with the tools and information necessary to help their children succeed. Current titles focus on reading, early learning, homework, adolescent development, character development and citizenship, math, science and student success. These booklets feature practical lessons and activities to help school-aged and preschool children master reading, understand the value of homework, and develop skills and values that reinforce good citizenship and strong character.



OSDFS Announces New Grantees for FY 2005

The purpose of the Partnerships in Character Education Program is to provide grants to eligible entities to assist them in designing and implementing character education programs that teach students elements of character. These include caring, civic virtues and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, or any other elements deemed appropriate by the eligible entity, having taken into consideration the views of parents and students.

The character education programs supported must be those that can be integrated into classroom instruction; are consistent with state academic content standards; can be carried out in conjunction with other education reform efforts; and provide activities that include parents, students, students with disabilities (including those with mental or physical disabilities) and other members of the community in the design and implementation.

Since 2002, the Department has awarded over 100 grants to states and local school districts. In 2005, the Department of Education awarded PCEP grants to two SEAs and two LEAs. The new grant awards were made to the following:



OSDFS Conference: Tying It All Together for Schools

By *Betty Straub, CETAC Director*

Nearly 2,500 people attended the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools 2005 National Conference, held in Washington, D.C., August 15–17, 2005. The theme—Tying It All Together: Comprehensive Strategies for Safe and Drug-Free Schools—resounded in messages throughout the event from conference hosts Assistant Deputy Secretary **Deborah A. Price** and Associate Assistant Deputy Secretary **William Modzeleski**.

The conference's institutes provided an organized structure for the workshops, enabling attendees to obtain in-depth information about their chosen topics. Topics included: effective prevention strategies;

Montana Office of Public Instruction

Contact: **Peggy P. Azure**, project director, Montana Office of Public Instruction, P.O. Box 202501, Helena, MT 5920-2501, phone: (406) 444-0466, fax: (406) 444-1373, e-mail: pazure@state.mt.us

Santa Cruz County Regional School District

Contact: **Lynn Gillman**, project director, Santa Cruz County, Regional School District, 2150 N. Congress Drive, #107, Nogales, AZ 85621, phone: (520) 375-7940, fax: (520) 761-7855, e-mail: lgillman@mchsi.com

West Virginia Department of Education

Contact: **Lisa Burton-Sites**, project director, West Virginia Department of Education, 1900 Kanawha Blvd., East, Building 6, Room 309, Charleston, WV 25305-0330, phone: (304) 558-8830, fax: (304) 558-3787, e-mail: lburton@access.k12.wv.us

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Contact: **Alberto M. Carvalho**, project director, School Board of Miami-Dade County, 1500 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 239, Miami, FL 33132, phone: (305) 995-2532, fax: (305) 995-1514, e-mail: acarvalho@dadeschool.net



A large, stylized red swoosh or arc graphic that starts from the bottom left, goes up and to the right, then curves back down towards the bottom right, ending near the bottom left corner of the page.

emerging issues; emerging school health and environmental health issues; engaging our youths in creating safe and drug-free environments; future of youth wellness; and the crisis planning process.

Featured speakers, who presented inspiring introductions to each day's agenda, included: National Center for Missing & Exploited Children President and CEO **Ernie Allen**; Jefferson County (Ky.) Family Court Judge **Joan Byer**; National Institute on Drug Abuse Special Assistant to the Director **Donald Vereen**; and the Department's Institute of Education Sciences Director **Grover Whitehurst**. Plenary speeches also addressed underserved populations and were presented by Tribal Chairman at Red Lake (Minn.) **Floyd Jourdain**; First Baptist Church of Salinas (Calif.) pastor Rev. **Ken Feske**; and Fresno School District (Calif.) Cultural Consultant **Boun Xiong**.

Civic Mission Draws 400 to the Capitol

By Betty Straub, CETAC Director

The Third Annual Congressional Conference on Civic Education engaged 400 policymakers in Washington, D.C. Sept. 24–26, 2005. The gathering focused on developing strategies to restore the civic mission in schools, and included education leaders from national organizations, the U.S. Department of Education, 60 legislators and other elected officials.

This year, East Brunswick High School (N.J.) graduates, winners of the national 2005 *We the People* high school competition, presented their award-winning reenactment of “The Citizen and the Constitution.”



Partnerships in Character Education Program Annual Grantee Meeting Is Held in Atlanta

By Karen Brazell, CETAC Coordinator

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) sponsored its annual meeting for project directors and evaluators of the Partnership in Character Education Program (PCEP) grants on Oct. 19–20, 2005, at the Westin Atlanta Airport Hotel in Atlanta, Ga. Project directors and evaluators of active Partnerships in Character Education Program (PCEP) grants funded in FY 2000–05 attended the meeting. Presenters offered valuable information on the topics of evaluating PCEP projects, grant administration, CETAC services and the What Works Clearinghouse (see www.cetac.org).

Entertainment was provided by the Gainesville Middle School Step Team, an activity sponsored as part of the Character Through The Arts (CTTA) grant. Featured speakers included: Fordham University Department of

Featured speakers included: National Education Association President **Reg Weaver**; Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court **Stephen Breyer**; former U.S. Senate Majority Leader **Howard Baker**; former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives **Thomas Foley**; former U.S. Senator **Lee Hamilton** (and current director of the Center on Congress at Indiana University); and U.S. Department of Education Assistant Deputy Secretary **Deborah Price**.

U.S. Senator **Michael Enzi** of Wyoming hosted a reception for conference delegates at the Dirksen Senate Building, culminating their afternoon of visits to senators and representatives. The event culminated with Archivist of the United States **Allen Weinstein** delivering a keynote speech and providing an evening visit to the National Archives.

Psychology Graduate Studies Associate Chair **Ann Higgins-D’Alessandro**; National Center for Education Evaluation Commissioner **Phoebe Cottingham**; Education Program Evaluation Specialist **Susan Sanchez**; Center for Evaluation Research and Methodology Director **Mark Lipsey**; Coalition for Excellence in Government Executive Director **Jon Baron**; Character Education Partnership Program Director **Janice Stoodley**; and staff of OSDFS and CETAC.

Grantee-sharing sessions included brainstorming emerging issues and training needs, as well as overviews of project successes. Project directors and evaluators met in small groups to identify the top three challenges in implementing an evaluation design. Grantees shared the following feedback as part of their conference evaluation:

“The meeting was excellent! Thanks for all your efforts in making it time well spent.”

“I’d like to take this opportunity to let you know how much I enjoyed the opportunity to hear about the wonderful things that are going on around the country in the area of character education.”

PowerPoint presentations and other details from the meeting are available on www.cetac.org under Resource Center—Publications.



Upcoming Events

For more information about the following event, just click on the name of the event.

- ★ **The 4th International Conference on Civic Education entitled “Research and Practice”** will be held in Orlando, Fla., **Jan. 19–21, 2006.**



Contact Us

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools

If you would like more information about the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) you may visit the office's Web site at www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osdfs/index.html and for more information about character education and civic engagement from the OSDFS staff, please contact:

Linda McKay, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Deputy Secretary
linda.mckay@ed.gov, (202) 260-2517

Sharon Burton, Program Officer, Partnerships in Character Education Program
sharon.burton@ed.gov, (202) 205-8122

Rita Foy Moss, Program Officer, Civic Education Program
rita.foy.moss@ed.gov, (202) 205-8061

Robert Alexander, Director, Character, Civic, and Correctional Education Programs
robert.alexander@ed.gov, (202) 401-3354

Contributors to This Issue:

The Alaska photos on p. 5 comes from personal archives and other photos on pp. 1, 2, and 3 are from the copyrighted Getty Images collection.

Parents: Jill Marks, Shawn Powell, Vern Powell, Irma Rodriguez.

Others: Karen Brazell, Sharon Burton, Ann Deveney, Becky Huggins, Gail Maron, Rita Foy Moss, Linda McKay, Deborah A. Price, Paul Sebolsky, Betty Straub.

Layout and Design: Joey Dacanay, Michael Garza.

CETAC

CETAC would like to hear from you! Please tell our team about resources, events, lessons learned and news items that are important to you. Our team will review submissions for possible inclusion in future newsletters and on the CETAC Web site. You may submit items via e-mail (cetac@cetac.org) or to:

CETAC
Attention: Betty Straub, PIRE
1300 South Fourth St., Suite 300
Louisville, KY 40208
bstraub@pire.org

A special word for Partnership in Character Education grantees: Don't forget that the Grantee Work Zone on the CETAC Web site has an online discussion board where you can chat with other grantees and exchange ideas. If you need information on how to log on, please contact cetac@cetac.org and we'll be happy to help!

About CETAC

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