

ROOM 561 FORUM BUILDING
605 SOUTH DRIVE
HARRISBURG, PA 17120



PADDC

Outlooks

SUMMER 2013 ISSUE

Leadership Development — IN SCHOOLS —

The Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council awarded its Leadership Development in Schools Grant to the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL). The two-year grant period began on July 1, 2013. The primary purpose of the grant according to Council's objective statement is "to facilitate opportunities for children in Pennsylvania to strengthen leadership skills and educate those working within the systems to enhance the potential of all children to be leaders."

This grant project embraces the Council's value and commitment to full inclusion and integration. Council prefers activities to be alongside and integrated with people without disabilities in regular settings in communities. This project also emphasizes the Council's vision that through the work of projects, "...we will bring about benefits to individuals with disabilities other than developmental disabilities and, indeed, to all people." All children, with and without disabilities, have the potential to leaders. All children can learn leadership skills. All children can have their existing leadership skills and strengths enhanced.

All children, with and without disabilities, have the potential to be leaders.

Educators play a major role in shaping our children's values, beliefs, and lives. There is a need for all teachers and administrators to know that all children can be leaders, and to give them the necessary skills.

They need to teach the history of all people. And children, with and without disabilities, need to learn and know that they and each of their peers can be leaders.

At its core, the project seeks to integrate leadership education for all students into the Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards used to determine what students should know and what they should be able to do and when. Currently, LVCIL is working with the Pennsylvania Youth Driven Network (PYLN), Pennsylvania Training Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), and several Intermediate Units to examine the curriculum of leadership programs that are already in existence and determine what has been done successfully. From there, the next step will be to design a curriculum that is current and applies the best practices of the programs studied.

LVCIL intends to also create a website where teachers and school administrators can find programs and ideas for the classroom to begin to teach students leadership concepts and promote leadership direction for all students in ways that are aligned with the current PA Standards in education.

Everett Deibler, Community Building Coordinator at LVCIL is thrilled to be able to promote leadership to all students, and noted, "Learning leadership skills is a possibility for everyone."



PADDC

Education, Disability Rights, and Advocacy Grants

In April 2009, the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council (PADDC) awarded its two-year Education, Disability Rights, and Advocacy Grant to the Disability Rights Network of PA (DRN), and to two sub-grantees: Education Law Center (ELC) and the Juvenile Law Center (JLC). Because of the success of their work, the original grant received funding extensions that will come to an end in September.

Over the course of the grant, the organizations have provided Pennsylvanians with a variety of publications. The Disability Rights Network has produced "Consent, Capacity & Substitute Decision-Making Guide." The guide is designed to help people with disabilities, their family members, service providers, and others to be better informed about the important issues related to decision-making. It is available in both English and Spanish. Production of several DVDs and videos is underway to supplement the guide.

DRN is also finishing up work on the second phase of their project, designed to provide legal rights education and advocacy regarding the rights of people who are deaf or have hearing disabilities. They have published a packet of brochures which discuss the legal rights of these people to certain settings, such as courts and lawyers; doctors, hospitals, and medical settings; involvement with police and jails; employment; receiving intellectual disabilities services; and entertainment venues.

Under the auspices of the grant, the Juvenile Law Center has produced two toolkits regarding "Meeting the Educational Needs of Students in the Child Welfare System." One toolkit is for educating teachers and the other is for counselors and schools administrators.

JLC is finishing up work on the second phase of their project. They will publish a trilogy of educational and advocacy material regarding students who are transitioning from the child welfare system to the adult disability system.

Through the grant, the Education Law Center has produced "A Family Guide to Inclusive Early Learning in Pennsylvania." The guide is designed to be an easy reference to early childhood learning programs in the state to provide information on programs, eligibility guidelines, and application procedures. The guide also offers tips on problem solving, links to resources, and information for parents regarding their legal rights. The guide is also available in Spanish.

As part of the Education, Disability Rights, and Advocacy grant, the ELC has also begun to examine charter schools (both brick-and-mortar and cyber) and the responsibilities they have in the education of children with disabilities. Charter schools are primary or secondary schools that receive public funds, but are independent from school districts and have fewer regulations than traditional public schools. Cyber schools teach children almost entirely through the use of computers.

Both cyber schools and charter schools in Pennsylvania are considered to be public schools and bear the same obligations as regular public schools have to children with special needs.

Any student in Pennsylvania, including those with a disability, is eligible to enroll in a charter school. Once enrolled, the charter school becomes fully responsible for providing that child with special education services.

The concern begins with cyber charter students being disconnected from adults who might recognize the challenges a student may be facing and the difficulty in accessing supports and services once any issues are determined.

If a child enters a charter school with an Individualized Education Plan, the school is obligated to continue to provide all the services and supports deemed necessary by the already written IEP or a new IEP. Under Pennsylvania's charter school law, only 75% of regular teachers must hold a teaching certificate. All special education teachers in charter schools, however, must be certified to teach special education.

There are 16 cyber charter schools in Pennsylvania serving over 30,000 students. A great number of those students are children with disabilities. After sifting through the literature, the ELC has come to this conclusion: "There exists no high quality research evidence that full-time virtual schooling at the K-12 level is an adequate replacement for traditional face-to-face teaching and learning. Researchers have also raised additional questions about intergroup relations and whether cyber schools can serve students with special needs." (ELC Presentation to PADDC, April 2013)

Disciplinary practices is another area under examination. The ELC has determined that out of all children attending charter schools who are disciplined, there are disproportionately large numbers of students with IEPs. Although charter schools retain the right to suspend or expel a student with a disability, each charter school must provide the student with the federally mandated additional protections that are in place for students with disabilities.

The number of students leaving the cyber schools after a short period to return to brick-and-mortar schools is also disproportionately high for students with disabilities. Additionally, graduation rates from the cyber charter schools are also extremely low for students with disabilities.

Rhonda Brownstein, Executive Director of the Education Law Center, commented that the PADDC Education, Disability Rights, and Advocacy Grant has been invaluable in giving the ELC the ability to look closely at charter/cyber school issues and create materials for parents to help navigate the unfamiliar world of cyber/charter schools. Ms. Brownstein unequivocally stated that charter schools are public schools. Also, students with disabilities who choose to attend these schools are afforded all of the rights and procedural protections of federal disability laws that protect them in more traditional schools.

"There exists **no high-quality research evidence** that full-time virtual schooling at the K-12 level is an adequate replacement for traditional face-to-face teaching and learning. Researchers have also raised additional questions about intergroup relations and whether cyber schools can serve students with special needs."

— ELC Presentation to PADDC, April 2013



PENNSYLVANIA'S EDUCATION FOR ALL COALITION

Changes Cultural Context in Schools

In recent years, PADDCC has been working with families and schools through a series of grants and projects in order to inform and support parents as they work towards positive changes in school districts. The current project awarded to Pennsylvania's Education for All Coalition (PEAC) that began in July 2012 seeks to develop a model to change cultural contexts in schools with regards to inclusive education. The project has been named the Inclusive Education Empowerment Project (IEEP).

Cultural context refers to the idea that culture is all aspects of life that are learned by being an individual within a group of people and how culture can affect society and individual behavior. In this regard, PEAC will continue much of the same work that has been done under PEAC's original Educational Rights Grant from Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council. Partnerships with families, school districts, and universities will continue to grow under the new grant.

Highlights of the new project include:

- Develop Inclusion Committees with students, families, and people with disabilities, school administrators, building principals, teachers, and university personnel in each district.
- Continue to grow our network of Parent Consultants, focusing on the Latino community, who have children with disabilities and will share their experiences with various educational systems as guest lecturers at local universities. Parent Consultants will also answer questions and guide families to a better understanding of best practices with regard to inclusion in schools. They will also facilitate parents in teaching their own children how to be self-advocates and speak knowledgeably regarding their own disabilities.
- Develop a network of student self-advocates that will be identified by community leaders. Through personal presentations, student advocates will receive training and support to share their educational experiences and beliefs regarding inclusive education and disability.
- Develop a Council of Cultural Brokers: PEAC will identify leaders within the targeted regions/neighborhoods that are willing to act as cultural brokers who can extend their influence and trust to resident families of children with disabilities. These may be religious leaders, neighborhood business leaders, neighborhood elders, and others.
- Conduct IEP clinics that will serve as both trainings and opportunities to provide one-on-one technical assistance to families and educators with follow-up debriefings after IEP meetings.

According to Diane Perry, President of the Pennsylvania's Education for All Coalition, some of the most important work the PEAC does is provide opportunities in a variety of ways for people to network and collaborate with each other in ways that are critical to the success of children with disabilities. The Council grant "Changing Cultural Context Within Schools" allows PEAC to continue their important work.



THE PARENT LEADERSHIP
IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION GRANT

Makes Strides

The Parent Leadership in Inclusive Education Grant was awarded to two organizations in July, 2012; the PEAL Center and the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, Pennsylvania's University Center on Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Research, Education and Service. The long-term goal of the grant is to develop leadership skills for parents whose children with disabilities are not part of the traditional public school system, but they are being educated in home schools, charter schools, cyber schools, private or parochial schools.

Parents who have chosen private and parochial schools may not be aware that students with disabilities who attend these private alternatives to public education are not afforded the procedural safeguards under IDEA. Additionally, parents may not have the information necessary to be effective advocates for best practices in special education for their children.

In the first year of the Parent Leadership in Inclusive Education Grant, the PEAL's Center "Your Child, Your Choice" project surveyed parents to determine what questions they have about their children's education in nontraditional schools. The survey also asked the parents how they would like to receive information: through workshops, webinars, or fact sheets. The PEAL Center sent informational packets to the parents who had responded to the survey. Beginning this fall, "Your Child, Your Choice" parents will be invited to attend training opportunities based on the needs identified by parents through surveys.

Additionally, the PEAL Center and the Institute on Disabilities are collaborating on a number of aspects of their projects and in particular are working together, along with the Education Law Center, to develop the charts and trainings of the side-by-side comparison of parental rights under IDEA.

The PEAL Center is currently in the process of completing charts to be used in mailers and trainings that offer a side-by-side comparison of parental rights under IDEA with rights in those other educational settings, as well as continued availability of online trainings. PEAL Center will continue outreach to parents of children with special needs in non-public school settings with the formation of individual parent groups from several alternative schools. It is hoped that this collaboration between parents and professionals will eventually lead to high-level policy changes in the system which will support all children with disabilities who attend non-traditional schools.

Through the Parent Leadership in Inclusive Education Grant, The Institute on Disabilities' project Competence and Confidence Partners in Policymaking for Family Leadership in Inclusive Education for Non-Traditional Schools (C2P2/FL) also seeks to create a network of

family members who will work with educators and administrators to advocate for best practices for children with disabilities who are being educated in non-traditional settings.

C2P2/FL is fostering relationships and mutual support between the families that have made the choice to educate their children in the public school system, but outside the traditional brick-and-mortar buildings. In order to ensure that children with disabilities who are being educated in non-traditional settings receive a high standard of education in the least restrictive environment, parents need to be aware of the best practices in inclusive education. Training modules have been developed and will be delivered to families beginning in September 2013. They will be available through online trainings using webinars, video conferencing, Skype, and at least one face-to-face training each year.

Families can access a previous webinar "*Creating a Vision for Your Child's Future*" at <http://tinyurl.com/pu525fm>. The next training will take place on October 16, 2013—*Inclusion: Supporting ALL Abilities of Students Learning Together*. Registration and further information can be found at www.disabilities.temple.edu/maillist/c2p2family.asp.

HOW TO CONTACT THE PADDCC:

Harrisburg Office

Room 561 Forum Building
605 South Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17120
Phone: 717-787-6057 | Toll Free: 1-877-685-4452
Fax: 717-772-0738
E-mail: info@paddc.org

Pittsburgh Office

8500 Brooktree Road, Suite 100
Wexford, PA 15090
Phone: 724-933-1655
Fax: 724-933-1658

www.paddc.org

SUMMER/FALL 2013

Calendar of Events

Living Well With A DisabilitySM 2013 Conference & Expo

August 23-26, 2013 • FREE Expo: August 24-25, 2013
Lancaster Marriott at Penn Square in Lancaster, PA

Contact: Sarah Galbraith Laucks, Conference Manager
Phone: 717-244-3623

E-mail: info@livingwellwithadisabilityconference.org
E-mail: info@livingwellwithadisabilityexpo.org
www.livingwellwithadisabilityexpo.org

Support for a Mother with Disabilities to Parent (webcast)

August 26, 2013 from 3:00-4:30PM
<http://tinyurl.com/lpocfng>

2013 Aging/Intellectual Disability Cross-Systems Conference

Building Bridges, September 17-18, 2013
Radisson Hotel Harrisburg in Camp Hill, PA
Phone: 717-541-4214 • E-mail: info@ltltrainingpa.org
www.ltltrainingpa.org

12th Annual Northeastern U.S. Conference on Disability

October 2, 2013 at The University of Scranton in Scranton, PA

Contact: Dr. Rebecca Spirito Dalgin
E-mail: rebecca.dalgin@scranton.edu • Phone: 570-941-7819

Contact: Dr. Lori A. Bruch
E-mail: lori.bruch@scranton.edu • Phone: 570-941-4308
<http://tinyurl.com/m8gdqe5>

Disabilities Studies Conference

October 31 - November 1, 2013
University of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, PA

Contact: Jonathan Duvall
E-mail: sorc+disability@pitt.edu
<http://tinyurl.com/kft2kg2>

