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March 17, 1997

Ms. Elizabeth Drye
Domestic Policy Council
OEOP, Room #213
The White House
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Elizabeth:

It was a pleasure to speak with you this morning concerning early childhood PTAs. I have enclosed some information and resources, including the *Education Week* article I mentioned to you. I trust these materials will be helpful.

Currently our database shows 370 early childhood PTA units across the country. These units represent various formations of PTAs—some only preschool programs, some in elementary schools; some representing early childhood centers that have come together to form a unified PTA unit, etc.

Thank you again for contacting the National PTA. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Cordially,


Dreama Plybon Love
Education Program Manager

enclosures

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 11, 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Melanne Verveer
Elena Kagan

SUBJECT: White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning

As you know, on Thursday, April 17, you and the First Lady will host the *White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children*. This memorandum provides an overview of the Conference, as well as summarizing recommended policy announcements.

Conference Overview

The Conference will spotlight new scientific findings about how children develop, and explore how we can make the most of this information to give children what they need to thrive. The Conference will provide an opportunity to showcase what your Administration already has accomplished in this area, such as increasing investments in scientific research and creating or improving programs like Early Head Start and WIC.

The Conference will consist of two roundtable discussions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with a luncheon in the State Dining Room (optional for you) in between the two.

Morning session: You and the First Lady will make remarks to open the Conference. Yours will discuss the importance of the issue to be addressed, note past Administration accomplishments in the area, and discuss new initiatives, principally for improving child care and children's health (detailed below).

A panel of experts will then present an overview of the emerging knowledge, gained from neuroscience and behavioral science, on early childhood development. Dr. David Hamburg, President of the Carnegie Corporation, will moderate brief presentations by:

- Dr. Donald Cohen, Director of the Yale Child Study Center, who will discuss what the behavior of children shows about their cognitive, emotional, and social development;
- Dr. Carla Shatz, a neuroscientist at the University of California, Berkeley, who will explain how children's brains develop in the earliest years of life; and

- Dr. Patricia Kuhl, Chair of the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at the University of Washington, who will discuss how children learn language.

Following these presentations, three more experts will join the panel to discuss what the scientific research suggests about protecting children's health and providing good child care:

- Dr. Ezra Davidson, Drew University of Medicine, who can address the importance of prenatal and perinatal services;
- Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Harvard University, who can discuss the pediatrician's role in early childhood development; and
- Dr. Deborah Phillips, Institute of Medicine, who can address how child care can affect early development.

These experts also will respond to a series of questions posed by the First Lady and Mrs. Gore. Some of these questions will come from a poll conducted by Hart Research for Zero to Three (an early development advocacy group) that tried to discover what parents most want to know about early childhood development. Other questions will tackle the tough issues raised by the new research -- for example, "does this research mean that women should not work outside the home?" or "does this research suggest that adopting an older child is a bad idea?"

Afternoon Session: The purpose of the afternoon session is to highlight model efforts that communities are undertaking to support parents and enhance early childhood development. This panel will be action-oriented and will give you an opportunity to highlight Administration accomplishments and initiatives. Participants in the discussion will include:

- Dr. Gloria Rodriguez, Avance Family Support Program, San Antonio, TX.
Avance is a widely acclaimed family support and education program serving predominantly Hispanic communities.
- Harriet Meyer, Ounce of Prevention, Chicago, IL.
Ounce of Prevention is a statewide program in Illinois that develops innovative early childhood programs and runs model Early Head Start and child care programs.
- Melvin Wearing, Chief of Police, New Haven, CT.
Wearing will discuss a pioneering initiative that trains community police officers to use child development principles in their work.
- Arnold Langbo, The Kellogg Company CEO, Battle Creek, MI.
Kellogg launched a community-wide effort last fall to provide practical early brain development information to every Battle Creek parent and caregiver.

- **Rob Reiner, CastleRock Entertainment, Los Angeles, CA.**
Reiner will discuss the "I Am Your Child" campaign launched this month and the media's role in making early childhood development information available.
- **Governor Bob Miller, Nevada, Co-chair of the NGA Children's Task Force.**
Miller will discuss what States are doing to enhance early childhood development.

Satellite Sites: The morning session of the Conference will be transmitted to at least 53 satellite sites -- mostly universities and hospitals -- in about 30 states and all 10 federal regions. (Fifty-three is the current number; there will probably be more.) In almost all of these sites, local organizers will put on programs of their own to follow the morning session and will report back to you on their proceedings and recommendations. Cabinet Affairs is encouraging subcabinet officials to attend and speak at these satellite conferences. In addition, regional administrators from HHS, USDA, EPA, Education, and GSA are taking an active role in the satellite sessions.

Report of Proceedings: We are currently making arrangements for an official conference report, to be issued in early June. The report, in addition to providing a summary of the conference proceedings, will serve as a resource guide and learning tool for parents and child care providers. We expect to print 250,000 copies and distribute them through departmental programs, such as Head Start and Even Start, and to individuals who request information about the Conference.

Pre-Conference Policy Initiatives

We would like to make three announcements prior to the Conference, in order to lay the groundwork for the Conference's discussion of ways to enhance early childhood development.

FMLA Expansion for Federal Employees: In your April 12 radio address, you will introduce the themes of the Conference and then direct heads of executive departments and agencies to expand family and medical leave for federal employees in the ways proposed in your legislation. This action would allow federal employees 24 hours of unpaid leave each year to participate in activities relating to school and child care, children's health care, and (unrelated to the Conference) elderly relatives' health needs. You will stress in your radio address how such family-friendly policies can support parents with young children.

Prescription for Reading: On April 16, the First Lady (and perhaps you, depending on the status of budget negotiations) will announce an initiative to encourage pediatricians to "prescribe" that parents read to their children. As part of this initiative, the American Academy of Pediatrics will announce that prescribing reading to infants and toddlers should be part of standard pediatric care. In addition, several book companies have committed to donating hundreds of thousands of books for distribution to children through community health centers and other medical offices across the nation. This initiative reinforces the Parents as First Teachers portion of the America Reads program.

Executive Order on Environmental Health and Safety Risks: You currently have under consideration a proposed Executive Order that would require agencies to consider and explain the effects of certain major rules on children. This order, if you decide to approve it, would serve as an excellent lead-in to the Conference, and we recommend issuing it on April 16. The order gives meaning and effect to your Administration's commitment to protect children in making regulatory decisions.

Conference Policy Announcements

The biggest news from the Conference should be the Conference itself -- that you and the First Lady hosted a day-long meeting on this subject and that scientists, community leaders, parents, and other experts communicated ideas and information on this issue to each other and the American public. The Conference also should provide a vehicle to remind everyone of your Administration's accomplishments in this area, such as increasing funding for research related to children, expanding and improving Head Start and creating the Early Head Start Program, raising childhood immunization rates to an all-time high, and launching a major new effort to eliminate childhood lead poisoning.

In addition, the Conference -- especially your opening remarks -- will give you an opportunity to discuss new and pending policy initiatives that show a continuing commitment to this set of issues. We recommend that your comments focus principally, but not exclusively, on child care and children's health and that you make the announcements discussed below.

Child Care: Child care experts believe the Defense Department's child care system is now the best in the country and possibly the world (in large part because of legislation enacted in the late 1980s). DoD child care is characterized by: high standards, including a high percentage of accredited centers; a strong enforcement system with four unannounced annual inspections and a 1-800 hot line for parents to report concerns; a wage structure that is tied to training and an "up or out" personnel policy requiring completion of training requirements; relatively generous wages and benefits, which reduce staff turnover; a system of linking up individual home care providers to give them needed support; and sufficient funding to make quality child care affordable (though there still are waiting lists).

We recommend you hold up the DoD child care system as a model for the nation and issue an executive memorandum directing the Secretary of Defense to use the Department's resources and expertise to improve child care across the nation. In particular, you would direct that (1) military bases partner with state and county governments to provide on-the-job training in child care to welfare recipients; (2) each military child development center partner with a civilian child care center and work with it to improve quality; (3) DoD establish regional "Child Care Masters Programs" that civilian child care managers could attend for two weeks to learn best practices; (4) DoD publicize its model designs for child care facilities and playgrounds; and (5) DoD issue benchmarks in the areas of standards, enforcement, compensation, and cost against which civilian child care programs could evaluate themselves. Most civilian child care systems

will come up short against DoD's benchmarks, particularly in terms of compensation and affordability, but such a comparison might help build public support for greater investment in child care. DoD fully supports the idea of issuing such a directive.

You also might want to float some trial balloons on more ambitious -- and costly -- proposals. For example, some have suggested making the Child and Dependent Tax Care Credit refundable (at a cost of \$2-4 billion), so that families with little or no income can benefit from it. The Blue Dog budget makes the credit refundable, but pays for it by eliminating the tax benefit for families with incomes over \$100,000. Another legislative proposal would provide a tax credit to private companies and institutions to encourage them to build quality child-care centers on-site. Given our budget, you cannot endorse any of these proposals, but you might want to use this opportunity to suggest your openness to further discussion of such legislation.

Children's Health Initiative: We also recommend that you discuss in your opening remarks the importance of insurance coverage for children's health and development, highlighting the Children's Health Initiative in your 1998 budget proposal. Your proposal will extend coverage to up to 5 million uninsured children by the year 2000. You can announce at the Conference that the deans of academic medical centers -- important legitimators within the medical community -- have endorsed your proposal.

We are also planning a follow-up children's health event, where you will release a study showing the links between insurance coverage, health status and development and learning for children from 0 to 18 years old and talk in more detail about your health proposal. Either at the follow-up event or at the Conference itself, you can announce a project by Kaiser Permanente to spend \$100 million over the next 5 years to provide health insurance to uninsured children.

Child Victims of Violence Initiative. You can announce that the Department of Justice will establish, with FY 97 discretionary funding, a Child Victims of Violence Initiative through the Yale, New Haven Child Development-Community Policing Program. This program, which Chief Wearing will speak about, trains police officers in child development, so that they can better respond to situations arising in the field. The new initiative will extend the program to other sites and also broaden it to include people other than police officers -- such as prosecutors, probation and parole officers, and mental health professionals -- whose work would benefit from knowing about early child development.

Head Start Funding: You can announce the launch of a new competition for Early Head Start grants, which will highlight this Administration's creation of the program.

America Reads Early Childhood Kits: You can announce the release of the America Reads Early Childhood Kits for Families and Caregivers. The kits include a developmental growth chart and suggestions about developmentally appropriate activities for children ages 0 to 5. Everyone who looks at these kits loves them. The kits will be distributed to early childhood programs across the nation and to individuals who call the Department of Education's 1-800 line.

To: Milan Verveer

From: Mark Penn

I looked over some of the materials and have attached a summary of some points related to describing the conference that I hope can be useful to those writing the talking points.

The most significant new element is simply the idea of talking in terms of tying the conference to achieving the full potential of all every child – of giving every child the opportunity to develop to their fullest emotional and intellectual potential – and of relating this to achieving our national potential. I think that the conference is less about the intersection of science and policy, and more about achieving the potential of all of our kids.

Early Brain Conference

Goals:

This conference is about doing the best for our children – giving every child the opportunity to develop to the fullest of their God-given potential. For a long time now we have known how children need proper nutrition and access to healthcare to develop. And now we are finding out that very early on -- in the first three years -- every child needs the stimulation of learning, reading, playing, singing and love to really reach their highest emotional and intellectual potential. Children can lose out long before they reach even our pre-schools, and we cannot afford to lose even a drop of the potential of our nation's children. That's what this is all about.

The First Lady is leading this effort as an extension of her lifelong work in the area of child and family development, highlighted in "It Takes a Village." She has brought together the country's leading experts, pediatricians, social workers, day care workers, business media, and the government. This is not a problem any one of these can solve, but one that they must all cooperate together on -- and that's why she has made this a truly national conference with sites throughout the country.

This conference highlights:

How we must turn this latest research into action by telling parents what they need to do to nurture their children -- that the time a parent spends reading, singing and playing with their children means so much to those kids not just now, but in later life. (ie. The prescription).

We need to extend the frontiers of research in this area, 90% of which is federally funded, so that we have all of the expert knowledge we need to raise our children and how this affects not just parenting, but all of our health, nutrition, child care and educational programs.

How we need to continue to expend the programs that protect our young children -- The President has secured the guarantee of healthcare for 10 million children, now we must cover 5 million more. The President has increased participation in Head Start, but now we must expand it, along with early head start, to serve 1 million children by 2002. The President has increased funding for childcare, and now we must organize nearly \$3 billion in new quality childcare so that welfare mothers can re-enter the workforce without compromising on the development of their children. And we must continue to vaccinate all young children and guard them from debilitating lead paint.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING: WHAT NEW RESEARCH ON THE BRAIN TELLS US ABOUT OUR YOUNGEST CHILDREN

"Learning begins in the first days of life. Scientists are now discovering how young children develop emotionally and intellectually from their very first days, and how important it is for parents to begin immediately talking, singing, even reading to their infants....We already know we should start teaching children before they start school."

--President Bill Clinton, State of the Union Address, February 4, 1997

On April 17, the President and First Lady will host *The White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning: What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children*. The day-long conference will highlight new scientific findings on brain development in very young children and point to the importance of children's earliest experiences in helping them get off to a strong and healthy start.

Applying New Findings on Brain Development in the Earliest Years. New scientific research shows that experiences after birth -- particularly in the first three years of life -- have a dramatic impact on brain development. That means that nurturing, talking to, singing to and reading to our youngest children will improve their ability to learn and develop throughout their lives. The White House Conference will focus on the practical applications of the latest scientific research on the brain, particularly for parents and caregivers. The conference will also be a call to action to all members of society -- including the health, business, media and faith communities, child care providers and government -- to use this information to strengthen America's families.

Clinton Administration Commitment to Young Children. This conference builds on the Clinton Administration's investment in children and families. The Administration has invested heavily in research to help us better understand the importance of the first few years of life to child development and learning.

Between 1993 and 1997, funding for NIH children's research increased 25%, from \$1.3 billion to \$1.6 billion.

President Clinton has also strengthened efforts to support families with young children. To take just a few examples, the Administration raised funding for Head Start -- providing low-income children and their families with comprehensive education, health services, and nutrition -- by 43% over the last four years and created the Early Head Start program to support families with children ages zero to three. The President's FY 1998 Budget further increases participation to reach 122,000 more children in FY 1998 than when he took office. The Administration also dramatically increased participation in the WIC Supplemental Nutrition Program, providing 7.4 million pregnant women, infants, and children with nutrition packages and information and health referrals -- 1.7 million more than when President Clinton took office. And his FY 1998 Budget would achieve his goal of full participation in the WIC program by the end of FY 1998.

Conference Program and Participants. During the morning session of the conference, leading researchers and child development experts will discuss the new research and what it means for parents and caregivers. The panelists for this session are: Dr. David Hamburg, Carnegie Corporation of New York (moderator); Dr. Carla Shatz, University of California, Berkeley; Dr. Donald Cohen, Yale Child Study Center; Dr. Patricia Kuhl, University of Washington; Dr. Ezra Davidson, Drew University of Medicine, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Harvard University; and Dr. Deborah Phillips, National Research Council. The afternoon session will highlight model community efforts to support parents and enhance early childhood development. The panelists include: Avance Family Support and Education Program, San Antonio, TX; the CEO and Chairman of the Board, The Kellogg Company, Battle Creek Michigan; and Ounce of Prevention, Chicago, IL.

Widespread Participation Across the Country. The morning session of the conference will be broadcast by satellite to over 50 locations across the country. The satellite conferences will be co-hosted by regional federal agencies, local officials, and children's and other organizations.

4/12/97 DRAFT

**White House Conference on Early Childhood Development and Learning:
What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children
April 17, 1997**

OPENING REMARKS

The East Room

10:50-11:15 am *President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton frame the day, highlight the investments and commitment of the Clinton Administration in early childhood development, underscore the unique contributions of the United States Government in supporting research on early childhood and brain development, and highlight the national opportunity and responsibility the new finding present.*

SESSION ONE:

**Exploration of Current Scientific Research on Brain
Development and Its Applications for Parents and Caregivers
The East Room**

Moderator: Dr. David Hamburg, MD,
President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

11:20-1:00 pm *Overview of emerging knowledge of early childhood development in neuroscience and behavioral science*

Dr. Donald Cohen, Yale University, will discuss how children's behavior helps us understand their cognitive, emotional and social development.

Dr. Carla Shatz, University of California, Berkeley, will explain how children's brains grow and develop in the earliest years of life.

Dr. Patricia Kuhl, University of Washington, will discuss how children learn language.

11:40-12:15 pm *Presenters from the opening session address, joined by the experts below, will address concerns of parents, particularly discussing what this emerging knowledge means for health care, child care and early education and parenting. Questions are generated from a poll conducted by Zero To Three with parents across the country, and are posed by the President and the First Lady*

Dr. Ezra Davidson, Drew University of Medicine, will discuss the importance of prenatal and perinatal services.

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, Harvard University, will talk about the pediatrician's role in early childhood development.

Dr. Deborah Phillips, Institute of Medicine, will discuss how child care can affect early development.

CLOSING REMARKS

The President

WORKING LUNCHEON

State Dining Room

1:20-2:30pm *Conference guests here have a chance to visit informally with one another
(Tables are hosted by a White House or Administration official)*

Informal Format

SESSION TWO: Applying the Knowledge Exploration of Model Efforts Communities Are Undertaking To Support Parents and Enhance Early Childhood Development The East Room

3:00-4:30pm *Various Sectors of society discuss how they are using new scientific
findings to support families and enhance early childhood development and
learning*

Dr. Gloria Rodriguez, Avance Family Support Program
San Antonio, TX

Avance is a widely acclaimed family support and education program serving predominantly Hispanic communities.

Harriet Meyer, Ounce of Prevention
Chicago, IL

Ounce of Prevention is a statewide program that develops and tests innovative early childhood development programs for replication, and runs model Early Head Start and childcare programs.

Melvin Wearing, Chief of Police
New Haven, CT

Will talk about a pioneering initiative that trains community police officers to use child development principles in their work.

Arnold Langbo, The Kellogg Company CEO

Battle Creek, MI

Kellogg launched a community-wide effort last fall to provide practical early brain development information to every Battle Creek parent and caregiver.

Rob Reiner, CastleRock Entertainment

Los Angeles, CA

Will talk about the "I Am Your Child" campaign launched this month, and the media's role in making early childhood development information available.

Bob Miller, Governor of Nevada

Co-Chair of the National Governor's Association and co-chair of the National Governors' Association Children's Task Force

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The First Lady

The President

RECEPTION

South Lawn

Tented South Lawn reception draws together a broad range of local advocates and association leaders.

Remarks by the President and the First Lady

① Wendy Scott

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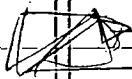
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Preschool PTA founder/partner

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EDUCATION WEEK

American Education's Newspaper of Record

Volume XVI, Number 12 • November 20, 1996

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Charles Scates reads to his daughter, Caille Dickens, 4, at a "Drop Everything and Read" night at Chase Lake Elementary School in Edmonds, Wash. The 20,000-student

district has made a point of inviting parents and local residents to visit schools and soliciting their opinions in decisionmaking in an effort to cultivate public support.

A Lesson in Winning Back an Estranged Public

By Ann Bradley
Lynnwood, Wash.

When Sylvia Soholt came to work for the Edmonds 15 school district here four years ago, she noticed a small detail that bothered her. The office cars in the administration building were arranged with their back walls toward the used by the public.

Ms. Soholt, the community relations manager, wasted no time in turning them around. Now, visitors can see straight through to her desk.



The message is subtle but clear: We're here to serve you. This customer-oriented focus has become the hallmark of the suburban district of 20,000 students just north of Seattle.

And it appears to be paying off: At a time when many Americans have be-

come estranged from public education, residents work hand-in-hand with the Edmonds schools.

Rebuilding public support is of pressing concern in education circles, yet there are few good examples of how to do so. This district's broad, multilayered efforts to reach out to parents and community members offer important lessons.

At the policy level, residents here have helped set standards for students, design new school buildings, and hire principals and other administrators. In the schools,

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Project 2061 Puts Big Mark On Curriculum

Major Impact Seen
On Science Standards

By Millicent Lawton

A decade-long national science-reform project crafted by a federation of scientists has had a big impact on both national standards for science education and state curriculum frameworks, an independent study has found.

Project 2061, launched in 1985 by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, produced both "Science for All Americans" in 1989 and "Benchmarks for Science Literacy" in 1993. The influence of those documents on the movement for voluntary national standards in science "is one of the project's most significant contributions," concludes the year-long evaluation conducted by SRI International of Menlo Park, Calif., and released last week.

"Project 2061's broad influence demonstrates its positive contribution to the national climate for science education reform," the report says. Taking concepts in different stages of development from different groups, it says, "Project 2061 wove these concepts together into one coherent, comprehensive, compelling vision of science literacy and disseminated the unified vision to

Continued on Page 22

PTA Preschool Chapters Draw In New Parents

By Linda Jacobson

As a newcomer to Cumming, Ga., a fast-growing community north of Atlanta, Nancy Carlson had a home in one of the town's pristine new subdivisions—a perfect place to raise her two preschool-age boys.

What she didn't have was a way to meet other parents with children the same age.

"It was very distressing," Ms. Carlson recalled recently. "There were no playgrounds. There was nothing."

So through a local church newsletter, Ms. Carlson began searching for parents interested in starting a preschool PTA, something she was involved in when she lived in Plano, Texas. Marie Clewis, the mother of a 1-year-old and a newborn, recently had relocated from Orlando, Fla., and responded to the ad.

"I was desperate," said Ms. Clewis, who frequented the local McDonald's restaurant just to talk to other parents. "It was difficult

Continued on Page 23

Increasing Pressure Comes To Bear On State School-Fund 'Nest Eggs'

By Robert C. Johnston

Texas lawmakers could scarcely have imagined the rich harvests they would reap from the \$2 million they set aside in 1854 to support public schools.

Nurtured over the years by the proceeds from 46.5 million acres of land—much of it covering oil—the fund grew wildly. Mineral royalties, leases, and investments have boosted the value of the 142-year-old fund to \$13 billion, and last year it generated \$1.4 billion for textbooks and state school aid.

But Texas and some two dozen other states with "permanent school funds"—money or land set aside to generate interest for public schools—are experiencing growing pains. Under pressure to maximize revenues, policymakers are weighing the risks of more aggressive investments. And people are even asking who should manage the billion-dollar nest eggs—in-house staff members or private brokers.

"The founding fathers had the vision to put aside public land for education," Adrian

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INSIDE

A Growth Curve

State spending in fiscal 1997 is predicted to rise by about 4 percent.
State Capitals, Page 12

Budget as Blueprint

The President's budget will include three new education proposals.
Washington, Page 16

Counter Evolutionary

A Colorado student carries on 70-year-old fight against Darwinism.
On Assignment, Page 28

PTA Preschool Affiliates Extend Reach to New Parents

Continued from Page 1

to make lasting friendships."

The two women soon founded the Forsyth County Early Childhood PTA and had 75 members in just a few months. Now 3 years old, the 150-member group organizes an assortment of activities, such as field trips, play groups, informational meetings. The parents also maintain a lending

Groups often round up parents from several early-childhood programs.

library, publish a newsletter, and run a baby-sitting co-op.

A Growing Trend

Preschool affiliates, such as the one in Cumming, are a growing segment of the nationwide PTA membership.

There are now 359 preschool chapters of the Chicago-based National PTA, including elementary school PTAs that have a preschool component. Several state affiliates and local PTA pres-

say they regularly receive inquiries from parents or groups that want to organize preschool chapters. There are more than 26,000 PTAs nationwide.

"In general, people are becoming aware of how important those preschool years are," said Davis, the chairwoman of the Illinois PTA's early-childhood-development committee. Unlike the typical parent-teacher associations based at individual schools, preschool groups often round up parents from several neighborhoods and various early-childhood programs. They also open their meetings to child-care providers, grandparents, and

who are involved in caring for young children.

Most of these parent groups welcome members with infants and toddlers as well.

"When new parents leave the hospital, there are a lot of decisions and choices they have to make," said Vivian Williams, a parent-involvement coordinator for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system in North Carolina. "They're looking for information, and they just need someone to offer it to them."

Janice Cox, the president the state PTA in Georgia, said there has been considerable interest in starting new preschool groups there because of the state's lottery-funded program for 4-year-olds, which now serves about 60,000 children statewide. More than 25 such groups now exist in Georgia, and the state office gets calls weekly from people interested in organizing local preschool affiliates.

Ms. Cox said that while she was serving on a statewide school-violence task force—before the prekindergarten program began in 1993—she recognized that the PTA was overlooking young children.

"If we are going to combat violence in our neighborhoods, we need to begin prevention from birth on," she said. "I realized that the zero-to-five age group had been an area where we had really not been inclusive with our programs."

Reaching New Parents

Outreach to new parents—and to parents who are new to the growing Charlotte, N.C., area—is the main focus of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg preschool PTA. The group delivers "educational gift packages" to Charlotte's hospitals for all new mothers and runs workshops for teenage parents during the school day.

One mission of early-childhood PTAs should be to prepare young children and their parents for the transition into elementary school, said Caroline Butler, the principal of Maple Wood Elementary School in Somersworth, N.H., and the head of the National PTA's early-childhood team.

A report released this fall from the Carnegie Corporation of New York said that transition activities, such as visiting the new school, should be a key part of every early-care and education program.

But according to "Years of Promise," which focused on children 3 to 10, "only 10 percent of elementary schools report systematic contact between previous caregivers or teachers or hold joint training with the staff of preschool programs located in their communities." (See *Education Week*, September 18, 1996.)

Smooth transitions are the main objective of a two-year project, co-sponsored by the National PTA and the Alexandria, Va.-based National Head Start Association. Parent involvement always has been an ingredient of Head Start, the federally funded preschool program for low-income children. But organizers of "Continuity for Success," the NEHA-PTA project, want that level of participation to continue when the Head Start parents encounter an often intimidating, and sometimes unwelcoming, public school system.

The three pilot sites involved in the project are Rochester, N.Y., Charlotte, N.C., and El Paso, Texas. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory in Oak Brook, Ill., is developing an evaluation model that the project leaders can use to gauge the success of the program.

In Rochester, for example, some of the Head Start parents have attended a kindergarten orientation, while others are enrolled in the school district's "parent academy" program, which introduces parents to the system's policies and procedures, shows them how to get involved, and presents tips on how they can help their chil-



Keith Brown drops off his son, Austin, 5, and daughter, Mathryn, 3, at right, last week at a child-care area set up for parents attending a preschool meeting at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg, N.C., schools.

dren be more successful in school.

Mary Conyer, one of the parents in the Rochester program, has seven children. Her oldest is in 10th grade, but she said that hasn't made her an expert on the public schools.

With a 4-year-old daughter now in Head Start, she said the Continuity for Success program is teaching her how to be a more active and confident parent.

"I probably will volunteer more than I would have, knowing that my involvement will reflect on her and motivate her a little more," Ms. Conyer said.

One of the program's objectives is to address the obstacles that keep parents from being involved and attending group meetings, said Jan Naujokas, the New York PTA liaison to the program. Since

many low-income parents cannot afford a baby sitter, child care is always offered so that parents can participate.

Each site has received about \$10,000 to pay for child-care costs, send parents to training seminars, and cover other small expenses.

Results of the evaluation will be released at the end of next year and will be made available to other communities interested in establishing similar partnerships.

No Extended Family

PTA organizers say the demand for such programs is symptomatic of the isolation many mobile young parents of preschool-age children feel. Many of them don't have extended families to call on for help or advice.

Aside from the regular outings provided by Georgia's Forsyth County Early Childhood PTA, Ms. Clewis said, parents are just glad to find a sympathetic shoulder to lean on and to have playmates for their children.

With a growing emphasis on "school readiness," preschool PTAs also are an important help for parents who are trying to decide on appropriate educational programs for their children.

"We're saying it's never too early to get involved in your public schools," Ms. Butler said.

On the Web

For past articles and Web sites related to PTA and early childhood programs, click on *This Week's Links* at <http://www.edweek.org>.

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An Early Childhood PTA Builds a Foundation for Learning

Educators, researchers, even the federal government are aware that rich early-learning experiences contribute greatly to a child's success in school. In light of that understanding the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Council of PTAs organized a community-wide early childhood PTA five years ago in Charlotte, North Carolina. Today, Charlotte's Early Childhood PTA (ECPTA), **Region 3 winner of the 1995-96 National PTA Advocates for Children Award**, serves all of Mecklenburg County, which includes the city of Charlotte and its surrounding suburbs. ECPTA provides its more than 200 members, most of whom are parents of children aged 5 and under, with support in their parenting efforts and preparation for parent involvement in the formal school setting, according to Jennifer Goodwin, ECPTA's current president.

Among its activities, ECPTA conducts four general meetings a year, which are information-based and often focus on a topic suggested by the membership. This year, for example, ECPTA introduced the new superintendent of schools at its first meeting in the fall, where he spoke about his plan for a systemwide preschool program for 4-year-olds. Topics for the spring programs include dealing with sibling rivalry and choosing a day-care provider. In addition to its quarterly meetings, ECPTA keeps in touch with members via its newsletter, *Pitter Patter*.

Because of its high profile in the community, and its kinship with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, ECPTA was chosen as a pilot for the PTA's Continuity for Success Project. Continuity for Success is a partnering effort of the National PTA and the National Head Start Association to help Head Start parents and students make an easy transition to elementary school. "This year," Goodwin proudly states, "the Early Childhood PTA is hosting Transitional Saturdays, in which Head Start parents and their children will come to school for half a day for a hands-on experience of kindergarten."

In addition to these programs, the Early Childhood PTA will continue its outreach efforts to students at the Teenage Pregnancy Services (TAPS) school. This program, which began last year, is designed to help these young women prepare for parenthood while offering them a source of support. With the financial support of the Junior Women's Club of Charlotte, ECPTA provides free memberships to these young women.

ECPTA has been recognized for its programming efforts by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which cited its Education Gift Package program as outstanding. Via this program, the PTA packages and distributes 13,000 gift packets annually to parents of newborns at area hospitals, according to Goodwin. The packet includes a letter from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg superintendent, a certificate welcoming the newborn baby, and a series of booklets filled with ideas for providing rich early learning experiences for the developing child. **OC**

For more information on this PTA and how to organize a similar group, contact Jennifer Goodwin at 7307 Falkirk Place, Charlotte, NC 28270 or Vivian Williams, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School's liaison to ECPTA at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, P.O. Box 30035, Charlotte, NC 28230.

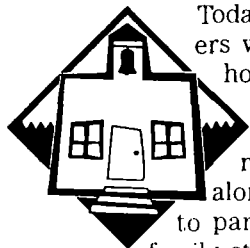


Above: Kids, moms, and dads enjoy a snack as they await story time at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library, an event sponsored by the Early Childhood PTA.

At Left: Children sit in on the executive committee meetings of the Early Childhood PTA in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Inside Your PTA

A head start on parenting



Today, as more mothers work outside the home and extended families are no longer nearby, many parents feel alone as they begin to parent. Changes in family structure over the last 20 years have found many parents, particularly new mothers, lacking the support mechanisms that their parents had when raising them.

Aware of this situation, Barbara Madigan planted the seed 10 years ago that has blossomed into the GLV Early Childhood PTA in Lombard, Illinois. Madigan was president of the Lombard PTA Council at the time, and was familiar with the good work and growing membership of the Wheaton-Warrenville Preschool PTA, a member unit of her district. Because Lombard had many young families, and because two early childhood directors in the area concurred that a preschool PTA would benefit these young families, Madigan organized the Lombard Community Preschool PTA in November of 1985. A year later the name was changed to include neighboring Glen Ellyn and Villa Park—hence the GLV Early Childhood PTA, which serves parents of children from birth through age 6. Twenty-eight people signed on to become members at that first meeting. Today the GLV Early Childhood PTA has 80 active members and a board of 20.

"I joined the GLV Early Childhood PTA when my first daughter was 2," says Marilyn Jensby, the PTA's current president. "The PTA helped me become a more confident parent. As a first-time parent every stage is new, so it helps to have some guidance from more experienced parents, and to know I wasn't going through it [parenting] alone; others were having the same or similar experiences."

Member services

As one of its first activities, the GLV PTA decided to host monthly meetings on early childhood issues such as nutrition, toilet training, discipline, play, sibling rivalry, and other issues. Most of these meetings used outside speakers from local hospitals, community agencies, and early childhood agencies. Programming ideas were solicited from members, which the PTA continues to do, either by publishing a mail-back form in one of its spring newsletters or publishing the telephone number of the programming chair.

In addition to the monthly meetings focusing on parenting issues, the GLV PTA also sponsors monthly field trips to local places of interest to young children and their families. "This allows us to fulfill another one of our objectives, which is to provide enriching experiences that families can do together," says Jensby. Although many of these events are held on weekdays, occasionally the PTA arranges an evening or weekend event so working parents can attend. These may become more frequent, since Jensby noted that about half of the PTA's current membership work outside the home. "Some of our

field trips are quite unique," says Jensby. "This past year we went to a local pizza parlor, and each child got the opportunity to make his or her own pizza, following a tour of the restaurant. Now, my husband and I wouldn't have been able to provide that experience on our own."

Another service the GLV PTA provides its members is a 10-page newsletter published monthly September through May. According to Jensby, the newsletter is very popular and allows people to stay connected to the PTA between meetings and field trips. It contains parenting tips, health and safety information, a calendar of local events for parents of young children, recipe and craft ideas, as well as reminders of upcoming field trips or special GLV events. To help subsidize printing and duplicating costs, this



GLV Early Childhood PTA members and their families try out the hay wagon at Green Meadows Farm in Elmhurst, Illinois, one of the PTA's many sponsored field trips.

Inside Your PTA

year the PTA began taking advertising from local businesses that service the membership.

The current annual dues of \$10 principally covers the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter. The remainder of the dues goes toward honorariums for speakers, the subsidizing of field trips, and holiday parties.

From time to time, the GLV Early Childhood PTA has also linked up with community agencies. In recent years, the PTA has cosponsored an annual event called Take Time for Tots with the Lombard Park District. The half-day event features community presenters such as the police and fire departments demonstrating child safety measures, as well as other groups providing entertainment and hands-on fun activities for the children. In the spring of each year,

the PTA hosts an annual kindergarten readiness panel featuring educators from the several school districts that serve its membership. Panelists discuss how to know if your child is ready for formal schooling, the kindergarten curricula, what constitutes an average day, and how parents can support their children's learning.

In addition to providing parents with counsel and support as they move with their children along their developmental path, an early childhood PTA also gives its members the opportunity to learn about the schools before their kids get there, says Jensby. "Our people move on and become very involved in their child's school and PTA. They learned the ropes, so to speak, having served or been a member of our PTA." ■

National PTA promotes early efforts

Research shows that when parents become involved early on, they tend to stay involved. The National PTA is working hard to promote parent involvement efforts in local early childhood PTAs, in part by reaching out to other early-childhood organizations.

The National PTA and the National Head Start Association (NHSA) have begun collaborating to share information, present workshops, and develop local projects. Three local early childhood PTA units and Head Start associations have been selected to participate in a pilot parent involvement project to determine barriers to parent involvement and discover effective strategies for removing them. These projects may then be replicated nationally at other sites. In support of the PTA/NHSA project, Pat Woodward, cochair of the National PTA Early Childhood Subcommittee, attended the NHSA Parent Involvement

Conference in December 1994, supplying PTA information and materials.

Woodward and fellow subcommittee cochair Gwen Tucker also attended both the 1993 and 1994 annual conferences of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). At the 1994 conference, they presented a workshop focusing on the early childhood PTA as a strong beginning to parent involvement.

Currently under development, the *Early Childhood PTA Resource Guide* will provide states with materials to help develop local early childhood PTAs. It will include information on child development, age-appropriate activities, PTA and other national resources, and organizational information. Much of the material was supplied by flourishing early childhood PTAs. The guide is expected to be available to state PTAs in the spring of 1995.

Steps to organizing an Early Childhood PTA

You've established that there's interest in your community for organizing an early childhood PTA. Now, what do you do? Marilyn Jensby, president of the GLV Early Childhood PTA, based in Lombard, Illinois, suggests the following:

- Call your state PTA office for information on how to organize.
- Call your local school district office, and ask for the name of the PTA council president. Your council will be extremely helpful in providing support as you organize. Some might even provide start-up funds.
- Contact your state PTA's early childhood coordinator for additional help.
- Locate a site for the meeting. Often a school district will offer a room at one of its schools rent-free. Some early childhood PTAs meet in churches, synagogues, or town halls, since they usually offer meeting spaces for little rent.
- Create a flier stating the organization's objectives and the time, date, and place of your first meeting. Distribute these to all the early childhood centers, preschools, pediatrician offices, libraries, and park district offices in the area you wish to serve. You might ask the centers and preschools to send home a flier with each of the children in their care.
- Contact your local newspapers and cable stations with the announcement of the meeting.

PTA Involves the Early Years

Gwen Tucker

Parents' roles in their children's education are receiving more attention nationally. The PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) often provides for parents their first opportunity to become involved with their children's school.

In PTA, parent involvement has always meant more than just paying dues or attending meetings. The National PTA has identified three types of parent involvement as being critical to a young person's development: (1) parents as first educators in the home; (2) parents as active partners with the schools; and (3) parents as advocates for all children and youth in society.

Since its founding in 1897, the National PTA programs have included early childhood issues. Parenting education before and after a baby's birth, nutrition for young children, safe playgrounds, immunizations, and high-quality child care are all concerns for PTA.

Through early childhood PTAs, parents have an opportunity to become involved early in their child's education. Early childhood PTAs are for all those interested in the education and development of children from birth to age five. Although PTAs are traditionally associated with schools, early childhood PTAs may be organized in preschools, child care centers, places of employment, kindergartens, or other community settings. The group may be affiliated with an existing PTA, or be organized as a separate unit. The State Parent-Teacher Associations can provide more information on starting an early childhood PTA. In addition,

the National PTA has informational brochures which include, *Building Blocks for Early Childhood PTAs* and *The Busy Parents' Guide to Parent Involvement*.

The role of families and communities is crucial to providing opportunities for young children to build skills and attitudes that will help them learn and relate well to others. An early childhood PTA furnishes the framework and resources to provide nurturing experiences for young children. The programs, resources, and activities of each early childhood PTA are determined by the interests and needs of each PTA group. This flexibility addresses the needs of a diverse membership that includes working parents, varied cultural groups, as well as urban and rural families, etc.

The National PTA has new activities to increase collaborative efforts in local early childhood PTA units. Through working with the National Head Start Association, pilot projects to determine barriers to parent involvement and effective strategies in removing them have begun in three states; these projects may be replicated nationally. Also, the PTA's relationship with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is being strengthened through an exchange of workshops and other cooperative efforts.

Gwen Tucker is a former co-chair of the Early Childhood Subcommittee, and currently serves as a Regional Director for the National PTA. For more information, contact the National PTA at: (312) 670-6782.

Fatherhood Project

James A. Levine

The Fatherhood Project began in 1981 at the Bank Street College of Education and later moved to the Families and Work Institute. Through a range of activities including research, training, and information dissemination, the project develops ways to support men's involvement in child rearing.

Try this quick quiz. Ask several people in your office or program the following three questions:

- Are you in favor of parent involvement in child care?
- Are you in favor of involvement by fathers and other men in child care?
- What would a child care program that is successful at involving men look like?

Most people readily answer "yes" to the first two questions, but the last question often stumps them. The Fatherhood Project helps to answer that last question through a three-step process.

Step 1: Look at Successful Programs. It is hard to set goals without having a sense of what is possible. *Getting Men Involved: Strategies for Early Childhood Programs*, profiles 14 programs that have been successful at involving fathers. None of the programs achieved success overnight, but over time, they changed from having very little male involvement to having fathers be a regular and natural part of their program.

Step 2: Learn from Successful Programs. Once you know what is possible, it helps to learn how to get there. The Fatherhood Project has a national training program on male involvement. Representatives from successful community-based programs explain how they brought about desired changes in their programs.

Step 3: Start Examining Your Program. All change begins with self-examination. Many programs say they want fathers involved, but adopt a passive, rather than an active stance. For example, do you actively and continuously encourage the father of a child, or another significant male, to participate in scheduled parent-teacher meetings? The Fatherhood Project has a Male Involvement Profile which includes 30 questions to help in assessing how proactive the program is.

James A. Levine, Ed.D., is Director of The Fatherhood Project at the Families and Work Institute in New York City. For more information, or to order the book, *Getting Men Involved: Strategies for Early Childhood Programs*, contact the Fatherhood Project at (212) 465-2044.

Innovations

New Head Start Experiment Links Parents to Schools

Head Start programs in three cities are spearheading a new partnership sponsors hope will improve transition of Head Start families into the public schools.

The Continuity for Success program differs from other preschool-to-school transition programs because it operates without government support. The National Head Start Association and the National PTA jointly lead the effort, with assistance from the Prudential and W.K. Kellogg foundations.

"Head Start does a wonderful job in involving parents, but when their children go to school, the parents feel left behind," said Dreama P. Love, the National PTA's manager of education programs. The pilot programs in Rochester, N.Y., Charlotte, N.C., and El Paso, Tex., bring together early childhood staff with school teachers and parents to ensure parents will have a role in their child's education even after the youngster reaches elementary school.

Activities in the transition program include:

- workshops on parenting issues, covering topics such as self-esteem, literacy and discipline;
- school visits for Head Start parents and Head Start visits for elementary school staff;
- joint parent conferences and social events;
- shared resources such as transportation, child care and facilities; and
- programs to educate Head Start parents about PTAs and PTA leaders about Head Start.

Using Project Team

Each site has a project team, including a coordinator from Head Start and another from the local PTAs. "We want people to learn how schools and parents interact," Love said of the program, which sponsors hope to expand to three other sites during the next year.

The federal government has funded transition programs to help some Head Start programs create links with public schools. However, preschool leaders continue to express concern that

parents empowered by their Head Start experience often get lost in the public schools. Many schools also are not as active as Head Start in helping parents and organizing educational and family activities.

"This program is locally driven," Love said, with each community conducting needs assessments of families, she said. Another goal is to create formal and informal networks so teachers know which of their children attended Head Start.

The challenge is difficult in some communities, since Head Start children may attend a variety of elementary schools, according to Love. Local PTAs try to track former Head Start children as they move through elementary school to help judge the success of the transition program.

Each site faces special challenges with logistical and scheduling issues, she said. For example, Head Start staff often prefer daytime meetings on the program during regular work hours, while PTA coordinators usually are volunteers who hold other jobs during the day.

All three programs have received site reviews as part of an independent evaluation of program success, she said.

Creating a Program

Local leaders can launch their own partnership programs, the PTA said, if they:

- create a local advisory team, with input from parents, principals, teachers, Head Start staff and PTA members;
- conduct focus groups to identify community goals and challenges;
- develop an action plan to share with Head Start and school officials; and
- collect data and evaluate the action plan.

For more information about Continuity for Success, contact Love or Heidi Mitchell of the National PTA at (312) 670-6782. The NHSA national coordinator is Maggie Holmes, who can be reached at (703) 739-0875.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! *Report on Preschool Programs* welcomes input from readers. Send correspondence to: Chuck Dervarics, Editor, 719 Timber Branch Pkwy., Alexandria, VA 22302.

November 11, 1996

Economic Opportunity Report

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Transition to Early Head Start Poses Some Difficulties for CAA Grantees

Head Start grantees that offered infant/toddler services long before Congress endorsed the Early Head Start program could find themselves with fewer resources to serve disadvantaged youngsters.

Agencies operating Head Start Parent/Child Centers through this year are at risk of seeing a cutback in their services. Congress in 1994 replaced the centers program with Early Head Start, a much larger, more comprehensive initiative. Early Head Start will receive 3 percent of total Head Start allocations, or about \$120 million in FY'97, compared to about \$30 million previously set aside for the parent/child centers program.

So far, the federal Head Start Bureau has awarded 142 Early Head Start grants, including at least 19 to agencies that previously operated parent/child centers. These 19 grantees will have to provide longer, more intensive services under Early Head Start with the same amount of funds they received under the parent/child centers program.

"It's a double-edged sword," said Steve Russell, director of child care for Western Maine Community Action, one of the affected agencies. Despite the excitement about the new program for toddlers ages 0-3, "We will have to make some tough decisions," Russell said, such as whether or not to serve one-third fewer families under the new program. Russell's parent/child center served 43 families with infants and toddlers. Early Head Start will provide enough money for only 27 families.

The Department of Health and Human Services requires Early Head Start programs to operate year-round, while Russell's old program was open 10 months per year. Early Head Start agencies also must provide more intensive services to families, including job-readiness skills and training to promote self-sufficiency. At the same time, his CAA's budget will not change, Russell said.

The transition to Early Head Start also poses an "extreme hardship" for Comprehensive Community Action in Cranston, R.I., said Mary Legacy, the project director. Legacy's parent/child center operated only half a day, while the new Early Head Start program must remain open all day throughout the year.

"It's a real problem for us," said Legacy, who expects to end services for five to 10 children. "We can't serve as many families as in the past."

But most directors of the parent/child centers knew the risks when they applied for the new program's funds, Russell said. HHS officials also have been "very supportive where they can [be]," providing technical assistance and reducing paperwork burdens. "They're willing to allow some flexibility, and that helps," he said.

The transition presents additional challenges for Russell's agency, which used home visits to provide many of its parent/child center services. Services such as job-readiness training, however, usually are provided through on-site, center-based programs, he said.

The Maine agency also is grappling with the effects of the new federal welfare reform law. It operates a standard Head Start program for preschoolers, with some services provided through home visits, which are in jeopardy.

New work requirements for parents may make it difficult to conduct these visits, which offer flexibility for the agency in its three-county

service area. "Our services could look very different soon," Russell said.

New Head Start Experiment Attempts To Ease Transition to Primary School

Head Start Programs in three cities are spearheading a new partnership that its sponsors hope will improve the transition of Head Start students into the public schools.

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(Continued)



Head Start (Cont.)

The pilot programs in Rochester, N.Y., Charlotte, N.C., and El Paso, Texas, unite early childhood staff with school teachers and parents to secure parents' a role in their children's education, even after the students reach elementary school.

Activities in the transition program include:

- Workshops on parenting issues, including self-esteem, literacy and discipline;
- School visits for Head Start parents, and Head Start visits for elementary school staff;
- Joint parent conferences and social events;
- Shared resources such as transportation, child care and other facilities; and
- Programs to educate Head Start parents about PTAs and, likewise, PTA leaders about Head Start.

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"Head Start does a wonderful job in involving parents, but when their children go to school, the parents feel left behind."
 — Dreama P. Love

All three programs have received site reviews as part of an independent evaluation of program success, Love said. Local leaders can launch their own partnership programs, the PTA said, if they:

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For more information about Continuity for Success, contact: Dreama Love or Heidi Mitchell of the National PTA in Chicago. (312) 670-6782. The NHSA coordinator is Maggie Holmes, who can be reached at (703) 739-0875.

New Report on Head Start — The National Center for the Early Childhood Workforce has released a new report, *Head Start, Valuable Work and Mentoring Programs: A Survey*. It is available for \$15 from the center at 733 15th St., NW, Suite 1037, Washington, DC 20005-2112.

Resource Directory — The National Head Start Association (NHSA) lists more than 100 national organizations serving children and families in *The Child and Family National Resource Directory* (\$7 for members, \$9 for non-members). Contact: NHSA, (703) 739-0875



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Early Childhood PTA

Steps to Organizing an Early Childhood PTA

The National PTA recognizes the importance of providing support, opportunities, and resources for parents, educators, and caregivers of your children. Practical steps are given to help you organize an Early Childhood PTA

Making the Transition: From Early Childhood Programs into Elementary Schools

Information on the transition from preschool to elementary school. Includes tips for parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Continuity for Success

An overview on the Continuity for Success partnership between the National PTA and the National Head Start Association to improve the transition of Head Start children and their families into elementary schools.

An Early Childhood PTA Builds a Foundation for Learning

Article from *Our Children* magazine focuses on the Charlotte, North Carolina Early Childhood PTA (ECPTA), Region 3 winner of the 1995–96 National PTA Advocates for Children Award.

Early Childhood Education/Development for At-Risk Children

National PTA Position Statement on Early Childhood Education/Development for At-Risk Children.

Early Childhood Position Statement

National PTA Position Statement on Early Childhood.

PreSchool/Early Childhood Education

National PTA Resolution on PreSchool/Early Childhood Education.

Home-School Connection

Connecting Parents & Families to Schools

Definition of parent/family involvement. How parents and families can build partnerships with teachers and support their children's education in the home.

The National PTA recognizes the importance of providing support, opportunities, and resources for parents, educators, and caregivers of your children. Early childhood PTAs are encouraged as a unique expression of PTA's commitment to parents and the growth and healthy development of children.

Practical steps are given to help you organize an Early Childhood PTA (291 wc)

Steps to organizing an Early Childhood PTA

Marilyn Jensby
PTA Today
March/April 1995

You've established that there's interest in your community for organizing an early childhood PTA. Now, what do you do? Marilyn Jensby, president of the GLV Early Childhood PTA, based in Lombard, Illinois, suggests the following:

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For a free copy of the brochure, *Building Blocks for Early Childhood PTAs*, contact your state PTA office.

An Early Childhood PTA Builds a Foundation for Learning

***Our Children*, November/December 1996**

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Because of its high profile in the community, and its kinship with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, ECPTA was chosen as a pilot for the PTA's Continuity for Success Project. Continuity for Success is a partnering effort of the National PTA and the National Head Start Association to help Head Start parents and students make an easy transition to elementary school. "This year," Goodwin proudly states, "the Early Childhood PTA is hosting Transitional Saturdays, in which Head Start parents and their children will come to school for half a day for a hands-on experience of kindergarten."

In addition to these programs, the Early Childhood PTA will continue its outreach efforts to students at the Teenage Pregnancy Services (TAPS) school. This program, which began last year, is designed to help these young women prepare for parenthood while offering them a source of support. With the financial support of the Junior Women's Club of Charlotte, ECPTA provides free memberships to these young women.

ECPTA has been recognized for its programming efforts by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, which cited its Education Gift Package program as outstanding. Via this program, the PTA packages and distributes 13,000 gift packets annually to parents of newborns at area hospitals, according to Goodwin. The packet includes a letter from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg superintendent, a certificate welcoming the newborn baby, and a series of booklets filled with ideas for providing rich early learning experiences for the developing child.

For more information on this PTA and how to organize a similar group, contact Jennifer Goodwin at 7307 Falkirk Place, Charlotte, NC 28270 or Vivian Williams, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School's liaison to ECPTA at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, P.O. Box 30035, Charlotte, NC 28230.

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National PTA Position Statement

Early Childhood Education/Development for At-Risk Children

PTA is committed to removing the barriers faced by at-risk children and supports programs that eliminate poverty for all children. Children who are educationally disadvantaged benefit from quality early intervention programs. Research documents that quality early childhood development programs enhanced success in school and reduce problems such as retention, special education placements, dropouts, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, and delinquency.

The first years from birth to age 5 are important determinants for a child's success in school. All children must receive certain essentials to be ready to learn including good health care, adequate nutrition, self-esteem, socialization and intellectual readiness skills, and enriching experiences.

PTA strongly supports Head Start. Head Start, a successful educational and federally funded program initiated in 1965, provides low-income preschool children with educational, social, medical, nutritional, and mental health services. The program emphasizes parental involvement in the development and education of children. In addition, other federal programs follow the Head Start model and many states provide preschool programs similar to Head Start. Effective programs ensure developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching practices and offer coordinated comprehensive services of young children and their families.

PTA supports programs that bridge the transition from Head Start and similar programs to public schools. These are essentially to continue to the success of children in classrooms and promote parent involvement in the schools.

Maintaining collaboration between effective programs and community agencies is important. These programs include but are not limited to Head Start, Even Start, Chapter I, Bilingual, and Toddler and Preschool Programs for Children with Disabilities.

PTA values parents as primary influences and essential partners in the education of children. programs that provide education for parents prior to and immediately following the birth of the child provide foundations for future success. These programs include educational, social, medical, nutritional, and mental health components.

PTA supports programs that assist preschool children to prepare for social, emotional, academic, and vocational development. The success of these programs depends on adequate funding for all children, strong parental involvement, and cooperation between school systems and community based agencies.

Adopted: by the 1991 Board of Directors
Reviewed: by the 1993 Convention Resolutions Committee

National PTA Position Statement

Early Childhood Position Statement

The National PTA recognizes that the early experiences of children significantly shape their subsequent academic success, intellectual growth, and self esteem. Infants and toddlers benefit from programs that provide both, especially with the changing work and home patterns.

An increasing demand for quality early childhood programs exists among families. Children living below the poverty level require multiple services, including health care and family support. Quality and comprehensive early childhood programs have a positive impact on children and long-range cost-benefits for society.

The National PTA supports federal and state incentives for quality child care and preschool programs that include the following standards:

AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

These programs should be affordable, available and accessible with federal assistance for parents with inadequate income. However, the National PTA opposes direct payments to parents for early childhood programs in the form of tax credits, vouchers, or certificates. Vouchers do not ensure parental choice and create constitutional entanglements between church and state.

COORDINATION

Quality programs require coordination and communication between federal, state and local governments. Policies should permit flexible services that reflect local needs.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Programs should recognize parents as the child's first teacher and augment their skills through training both in the home and in group settings. Parental involvement is essential in the planning, implementation and evaluation of programs.

QUALITY

The government should establish quality standards for care giver/ teacher training and for maintaining health and safety. States should regularly review and enforce licensing standards. Developmentally appropriate programs are central to success. Early childhood education should both promote and reflect current research.

Adopted: by the 1991 Board of Directors
Reviewed: by the 1993 Convention Resolutions Committee

National PTA Resolution

PreSchool/Early Childhood Education

- Whereas, Parents are the first and among the most important teachers a child will have; and
- Whereas, During the preschool years, a child's education in the family has great influence on his intellectual and academic development in school and throughout life; and
- Whereas, Parent/early childhood education programs aid parents in better understanding their young children, coping with parental responsibilities, and participating in the educational process; therefore be it
- Resolved, That the National PTA promote a nationwide campaign to organize preschool PTAs and preschool sections of PTAs, and to create a public awareness of the importance of parent/early childhood education programs; and
- Resolved, That the National PTA assume an active leadership role in the development of programs and dissemination of resource materials for the education of parents of young children; and be it further
- Resolved, That the National PTA encourage its state PTAs/PTSAs, districts, councils, and local units to urge school boards to study and adopt parent/early childhood education programs.
- Adopted: by the 1991 Board of Directors
Reviewed: by the 1993 Convention Resolutions Committee

Making the Transition: From Early Childhood Programs into Elementary Schools

Children and families moving from preschools and other early childhood programs into elementary schools do not usually have the support they need to make successful transitions according to a study by the U. S. Department of Education.

Although the importance of sharing information about preschool children may seem obvious, results of the National Transition Survey report the following:

- Only 10 percent of schools report regular communication between kindergarten teachers and their pupils' previous early childhood teachers.
- Only 12 percent of schools have kindergarten programs designed to build on preschool programs.
- Only 47 percent have a formal program for encouraging parents to visit schools. (Love and Logue, *Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools: Final Report of the National Transition Study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1992.)

Research also suggests that fostering a smooth transition between preschools and elementary schools can extend the benefits of preschool programs to beyond the early elementary grades.

Young children coming into elementary schools are usually moving from child-focused activities to education-focused programs. A transition process is necessary to insure children, families, and school personnel understand one another. It is important to work together to help children successfully adjust to elementary school in order to fully benefit from new school experiences.

Transition Tips For Parents, Teachers, and School Administrators

The National PTA has a strong history of working together in partnership with parents, teachers, and school administrators and offers the following tips for making the transition into the elementary grades successful for children, families, and schools.

For Parents

- Become involved in an Early Childhood PTA for parenting support and child advocacy training.
- Develop a loving and supportive relationship with your children.
- Practice a firm and fair parenting style that respects the uniqueness of your children.
- Help children become aware of their own abilities to build self-esteem and confidence.
- Provide opportunities for young children to interact with other children and adults in community settings, such as the local library and pool, parks, playgrounds, and museums.

- Expect children to do well in school — provide support, encouragement, and praise for completing tasks
- Talk with your child about the similarities and differences between preschool and kindergarten programs.
- Take field trips and visits to kindergarten classrooms with your child and other parents and their preschoolers.
- Recognize that teachers and schools in general want to work in partnership with you to help your children succeed in school.

For Teachers

- Provide classroom activities to talk, sing songs, and play games with children about growing up and making changes.
- Develop unique transition classroom activities and games based on your preschool-to-elementary school situation and the individual children involved.
- Provide many opportunities for children and their parents to become familiar with the kindergarten setting.
- Give parents accurate information about the skills needed for a child to transition to kindergarten.
- Demonstrate your interest and support to each child's family through phone calls and other personal contacts.
- Structure developmentally appropriate classroom practices.
- Provide opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom.
- Provide learning activities for parents to do with their children at home.
- Invite elementary teachers to visit preschool classrooms, and preschool teachers to visit elementary school classrooms.
- Coordinate activities between preschools and kindergarten—programs, workshops, visits to school playgrounds, etc.
- Develop curriculum that builds on children's preschool experiences and knowledge about the world — strive for curriculum and developmental continuity.
- Talk to parents about their children's developmental progress. Provide regular feedback with examples of children's work, such as portfolios or collections of their artwork, dictated stories, and other types of work, to show their progress in kindergarten.
- Invite prekindergarten groups to attend certain school activities like celebrations, parades, or other special events.

For Principals and School Administrators

- Organize parent meetings where preschool and elementary school staff are available to answer the questions and concerns of parents and families with children entering kindergarten.
- Provide a forum for parents to discuss their perceptions and expectations for kindergarten and elementary schools.
- Coordinate meetings between parents and teachers to address the individual educational and emotional needs of each child.
- Provide information about the PTA in your community that can serve as a link between the parents and the school.
- Inform parents and families about their rights and responsibilities in the school.
- Provide parent education workshops.
- Organize joint in-service training for preschool and kindergarten teachers.
- Provide additional opportunities for preschool teachers to communicate with kindergarten teachers about individual children's cognitive competencies, social skills, and learning styles.
- Provide a family resource center in your school or a community setting.
- Link families and children with health and social services in the community.
- Send school newsletters and calendars to preschool parents and families.
- Develop simple registration procedures and means for transferring knowledge about the child, including—with parental consent—written records, from the early childhood program to become part of the school record of the child.
- Structure schools to respond to individual differences in children's academic and social skills.
- Celebrate the cultural heritage and diversity of children and their families.
- Encourage preschool program staff to participate in transition activities such as attending joint workshops, sharing information, assisting children with adjustment problems, and preparing individual children and parents for the transition.
- Promote a positive school climate that supports positive attitudes toward children.
- Assign responsibility for transition activities to school staff (an assignment from a district or school administrator has greater influence over school-wide transition activities than individual teachers trying to accomplish the same thing).
- Encourage parents to participate directly in setting school goals, establishing long-range school plans, and developing parent involvement policies.

Characteristics of Successful Transitions

When children and families receive the support they need in the preschool-to-school transition, the following characteristics are noted:

- Children like school and look forward to attending regularly.
- Children's academic skills grow steadily.
- Parents become actively involved in their children's education — at home, in school, and in the community.
- Classrooms are emotionally positive for both teachers and children.
- Teachers and families value each other.
- Schools celebrate the cultural diversity in their communities and in the nation as a whole.
- In the classrooms, children engage in activities and behave in a manner that is appropriate for their level of development.
- The community shows consistent investment in the education of children and strives to increase the learning opportunities available.

Ramey and Ramey, *The National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Study: An Overview*, Birmingham, AL, 1992.

Successful Transitions in Action

In working toward making successful transitions from early childhood programs into the elementary grades, the National PTA is partners with the National Head Start Association. The two organizations have formed a pilot project called *Continuity for Success* being conducted in three sites—New York, North Carolina, and Texas.

The focus of the project is to team up Head Start programs with elementary PTAs in order to support and maintain the practice of strong parent involvement and enable children to build on their early successes as they move into elementary schools.

For more information about the project, contact either the National Head Start Association at (703) 739-0875 or the National PTA at (312) 670-6782.

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Continuity for Success

A Partnership Between the National PTA and the National Head Start Association

The National PTA and the National Head Start Association have formed the *Continuity for Success* partnership project to improve the transition of Head Start children and their families into elementary schools. The project builds on the involvement of Head Start parents and provides an opportunity to continue their involvement through their local PTAs.

National Partners

Together, the National PTA and National Head Start Association have more than 130 years of combined experience supporting children and families. Both associations are dedicated to improving the quality of life for children and families and believe that parent involvement is key to children's success.

Both associations:

- Encourage parent involvement in children's education and growth.
- Assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise their children and become self-sufficient.
- Promote environments where parents are valued as primary influences and essential partners in their children's development.
- Advocate for issues that support the development of children and families.
- Support shared responsibility in educational decision making.

Partnership Project Goals

- Encourage the continued, strong involvement of Head Start parents and families in public schools.
- Develop interventions and strategies that lessen the barriers to parent and family involvement.
- Create strong local partnerships between Head Start programs, PTAs and elementary schools.

Project Pilot Sites & Activities

Three pilot sites are participating in the *Continuity for Success* project. They are Rochester, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; and El Paso, Texas. Funding for the sites and their activities is provided by the Prudential and W. K. Kellogg Foundations.

The pilot sites are planning and implementing the following activities to encourage continued parent involvement:

- Educate Head Start parents about the PTA and elementary school and PTA parents about Head Start.
- Provide resources for parenting centers (brochures, videos, etc.).
- Share resources such as transportation, child care and facilities.
- Share children's education and health records.

- Conduct joint planning and training sessions for Head Start, PTA, and public school staff.
- Hold workshops on parenting issues such as self-esteem, literacy, and discipline.
- Organize school visits for Head Start parents and Head Start visits for elementary school staff.
- Conduct joint parent conferences.
- Plan joint social events for Head Start and PTA parents.

An ongoing evaluation component will enable the partnership to provide additional support as the project expands to new partnerships nationwide.

How to Create a Partnership in Your Community

Identify members from your local Head Start programs and elementary PTAs who support the partnership. Once you have identified potential team members, it is important to mutually agree to start a *Continuity for Success* project.

Create a local advisory team.

A strong team will include the elementary school principal, teachers, parents, PTA volunteers, Head Start staff, representatives from the school board, local businesses and government officials.

Conduct focus groups to identify strengths and challenges.

The site team should hold a series of focus groups with parents, teachers and students to identify transition activities already in place and barriers to successful transition.

Develop an action plan.

The action plan should include goals and objectives, the strengths to build upon, and the barriers to overcome. It should be shared with the larger Head Start program, local PTA, and school community to ensure its widespread support.

Implement the action plan.

Begin the site activities described in the action plan.

Collect data and evaluate the action plan.

The site team should develop a system to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the project. This will help determine how the overall project is impacting children and families.

For Additional Information

Contact the state offices of each association for support. If you have questions about beginning such a project or would like to be included on the *Continuity for Success* mailing list, please call or fax your name, address, phone and fax numbers to either of the following:

Education Department
National PTA
Phone: (312)-670-6782
Fax: (312) 670-6783

Partnership Project
National Head Start Association
Phone: (703) 739-0875
Fax: (703) 739-0878

Continuity for Success is supported by the Prudential and W.K. Kellogg foundations.

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Contact: Patricia Yoxall
Melissa Krylowicz
(312) 670-6782

NATIONAL PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION (NATIONAL PTA®) BACKGROUND FACT SHEET 1997

MEMBERSHIP

Nearly 6.5 million members, over 26,000 local units in 50 states, District of Columbia, Pacific Congress and European Congress (serving Department of Defense schools overseas). Members include parents, teachers, students and other child advocates.

MISSION

The mission of the National PTA is three-fold:

- to support and speak on behalf of children and youth in the schools, in the community and before governmental bodies and other organizations that make decisions affecting children;
- to assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise and protect their children; and
- to encourage parent and public involvement in the public schools of this nation.

PRESIDENT

Joan Dykstra
Ellicott City, Maryland

Administration theme:
Working Together For Children

HISTORY

Founded on February 17, 1897 by Alice McLellan Birney and Phoebe Apperson Hearst (mother of William Randolph Hearst). Adopted name of National Congress of Parents and Teachers in 1924. More commonly known as the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

Merged with the National Congress of Colored Parents and Teachers in 1970. This group was founded by Selena Sloan Butler in 1926 with the help of the PTA to serve parents in states with legally mandated segregation. The two organizations worked closely together throughout their history.

Over the years, the PTA has been instrumental in:

- securing child labor laws
- supporting compulsory public education
- creating a national public health service
- promoting education for children with special needs
- establishing a juvenile justice system as well as other child advocacy activities
- making parent involvement a national goal in Goals 2000: Educate America Act

CONVENTIONS/CONFERENCES

National PTA Legislative Conference -- PTA leaders from throughout the country and in the European and Pacific Congresses, along with other child advocates, legislators and policy makers, will meet **March 10-13, 1997** in Washington, D.C., to discuss key legislative issues.

National PTA Annual Convention – June 18-21, 1997 – Nearly 3,500 PTA members from across the nation and in the European and Pacific Congresses will come together in Kansas City, Missouri, to share information and address issues affecting the health, safety, and education of the nation's children.

NATIONAL PTA OBSERVANCES

Earth Week (Begun 1990) -- Established to focus attention on environmental issues and our common responsibility to the planet. **April 20-26, 1997.**

Teacher Appreciation Week (Begun 1984) -- During the first full week in May, PTAs conduct special events supporting teachers and the teaching profession. **May 4-10, 1997.**

America Goes Back to School Week (Begun 1994) -- In **August** of each year, PTAs join other education organizations in encouraging parents, teachers and community members to rally around their local schools and make a commitment to support education throughout the year.

American Education Week (Begun 1938) -- Each year in **November**, the National PTA and other education organizations, set aside one week to examine education in our public school systems and celebrate with special programs, ceremonies and activities.

World AIDS Day -- **December 1** of each year, PTAs join with other organizations to meet the challenge of AIDS.

ON-LINE SERVICES

National PTA Web Site: <http://www.pta.org> -- A comprehensive source of relevant and expert information on parent involvement and child advocacy. The site offers immediately accessible resources to help parents and communities become more involved in children's lives. Included is program planning information to help PTAs establish activities on a variety of subjects such as HIV/AIDS education, self-esteem, violence prevention, scholastic art programs, parent involvement, and early childhood development.

PUBLICATIONS

Our Children -- An award-winning magazine that focuses on topics of concern to parents, educators and others interested in the well-being of children. The magazine includes in-depth stories on the important issues affecting children today and new interactive regular departments designed to stimulate readers' involvement with the magazine. Published five times a year.

What's Happening In Washington -- A newsletter that addresses federal legislative issues that impact children and youth. Published ten times a year.

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

National PTA Office of Governmental Relations (Opened 1977) -- This PTA office, located in Washington, D.C., coordinates PTA efforts in influencing laws and policies affecting the health, education, and safety of children. It assists national, state, and local PTAs by providing information; leadership development; analyzing federal legislation and judicial and regulatory issues; and informs policy makers of PTA positions on a host of youth and family concerns.

HEALTH AND WELFARE PROGRAMS

The National PTA works closely with other national health agencies and organizations to provide comprehensive health and safety projects and materials for local and state PTAs.

Be Cool. Follow The Rules (Begun 1990) -- A school bus safety program designed by the National PTA and Navistar International to help communities improve their bus safety records. Information available to all elementary school PTAs includes a series of TV public service announcements, a guide for bus drivers, safety tip cards for parents and children, and a new award winning video on school bus safety.

Environmental Action and Awareness Project (Begun 1995) -- A cooperative partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to educate membership and encourage participation in environmental projects.

HEALTH AND WELFARE PROGRAMS, CONT.

The Family and Community Critical Viewing Project (Begun 1994) -- A partnership project with Cable in the Classroom and the National Cable Television Association addressing the problem of violence on television. This nationwide project trains PTA and cable leaders to give workshops for parents and teachers on how to control the effects of television violence and commercialism on young people and provides practical ways for them to analyze and evaluate what they watch at home or in the classroom.

HIV/AIDS Education (Begun 1994) -- A prevention and awareness project funded by the American School Health Association. The program's components are designed to assist parents and PTA leaders in advancing HIV/AIDS prevention education.

Mirrors: A Film About Self-Esteem (Begun 1988) -- National PTA and Keebler Company show parents how they directly influence their children's self image in positive and negative ways. Written materials supplement this award-winning video.

Safeguarding Your Children (Begun 1995) -- A violence prevention initiative by the National PTA and The Allstate Foundation that includes a booklet for parents with tips and resources on safeguarding children in the home, school, and community. The initiative also includes a public service television announcement narrated by Linda Ellerbee.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The National PTA provides information on a variety of education issues and works with other national education organizations to develop programs and projects encouraging parents to participate in their children's education.

Ebony/National PTA Guide to Student Excellence (Begun 1994) -- A video and guidebook program produced in partnership with Johnson Publishing, Inc., is designed as a vital educational/motivational tool to help young people develop greater academic readiness, self-esteem and ethnic pride.

Family Information and Resource Centers (Begun 1995) -- In order to help families meet today's challenges, the National PTA is identifying, adapting, and supporting family information and resource centers across the country which focus on and address all children's needs.

The Family Nest, Spanish Video on Parent Involvement (Begun 1994) -- A video and parent's tip sheet developed in collaboration with ASPIRA Association and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) to encourage parent involvement in the Hispanic community.

Parent and Family Involvement Program Standards (Begun 1995) -- The National PTA is developing program standards designed to be used as guidelines for successful parent involvement programs to promote parent and family participation in the education of America's children.

Teacher Education in Parent/Family Involvement Training (Begun 1995) -- A partnership project with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) to provide preservice and in-service teacher training on parent and family involvement. Pilot teacher education programs are under development with AACTE representatives at colleges and universities in nine states.

Transition Partnership Project: *Continuity for Success* (Begun 1994) -- A joint pilot project with the National Head Start Association involving Head Start centers working in partnership with local PTAs to encourage continued strong parent involvement as Head Start children and their families make the transition into public schools.

ARTS IN EDUCATION

The National PTA supports arts in education as an integral part of learning and offers support programs and resources.

Reflections (Begun 1969) -- An arts recognition and achievement program for students in preschool to grade 12 in literature, musical composition, photography and visual arts. More than 600,000 students participate each year. Reflections scholarships for high school seniors participating in the program are also offered.

FIELD SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP

The National PTA provides field service to state PTAs in a variety of ways. Led by elected leaders, services include leadership development for state boards and training in various project areas. Assistance is also given in the development of leadership materials for states to share with local leaders.

NATIONAL PTA AWARDS

Advocates For Children Award (Begun 1984) -- Eight winning PTA units across the country are selected. The awards are based on their efforts to involve parents and community members in their schools, and to increase membership. Sponsored by World Book Educational Products.

Hearst Outstanding Educator Award (Begun 1984) -- Given to an educator whose commitment inspires student excellence and espouses the ideals of PTA co-founder Phoebe Apperson Hearst. Established by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. Three honorable mentions are also awarded.

Student Involvement Award (Begun 1993) -- Awarded to a local PTA for encouraging comprehensive student involvement in PTA activities.

T.E.A.M. Awards (Together Everyone Achieves Membership)(Begun 1996) – Awarded to state and local units for their successful programs and activities created to develop membership and improve community outreach. The awards look beyond membership numbers to determine what elements of a project attracted or retained members.

SERVICE MARK, PROPER USE OF PTA NAME

PTA and PTSA (Parent-Teacher-Student Association) are registered service marks of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. National Parent Teacher Association is also a registered name, as is National PTA. Only organizations chartered by PTA may use its name.

OFFICES

National PTA Headquarters
Chicago, IL

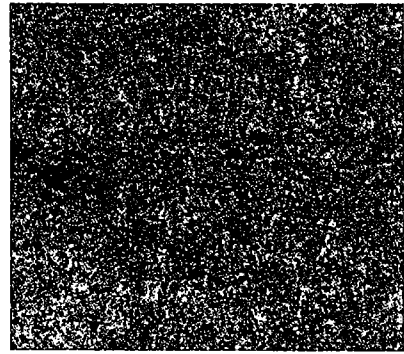
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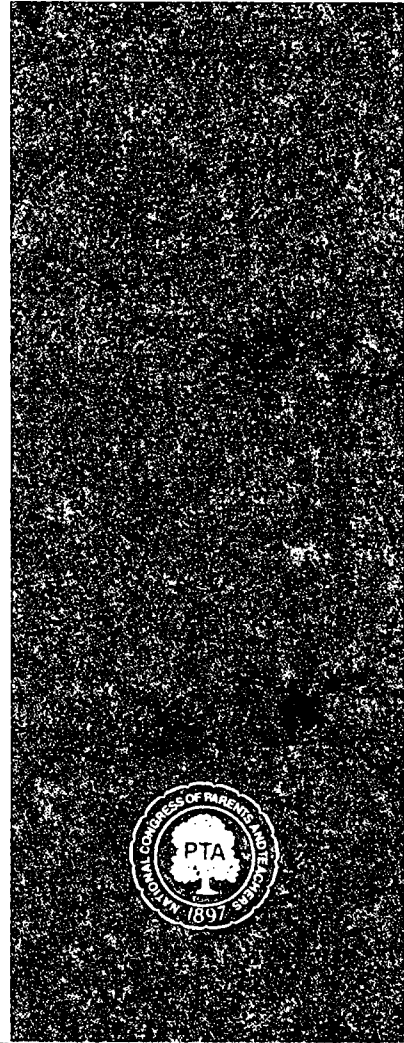
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NATIONAL

PTA[®]



What Are the Benefits?

Opportunities for Children:

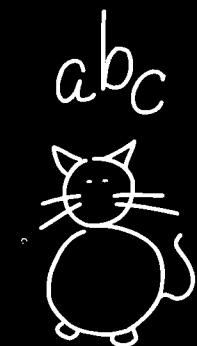
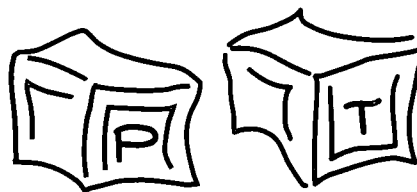
- support of early learning
- interaction with other children
- development of social skills necessary for relating to others
- additional benefits that come from child's awareness of parent's involvement and interest

Opportunities for Families:

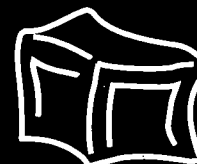
- detection of special needs of children
- gain and use of parenting skills that support and guide child's growth
- involvement with other parents and educators early in child's development
- participation in programs and events designed for families with young children
- growth among members in becoming advocates for young children

Opportunities for Communities:

- unified efforts in securing needed services for young children
- support systems for families with young children
- strong linkages between early childhood educators, public schools, and families



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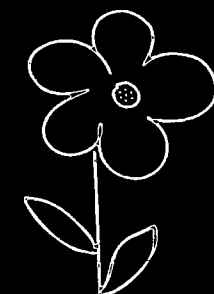
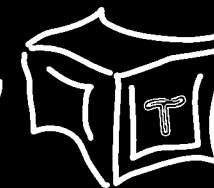
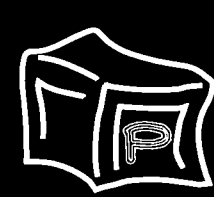


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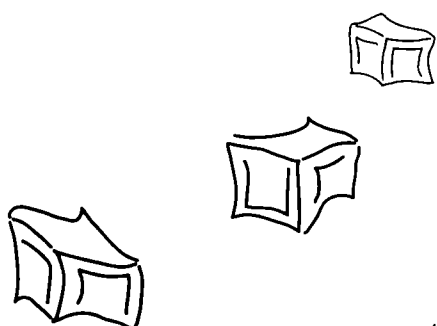
BUILDING BLOCKS



For Early Childhood PTAs

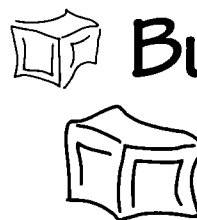
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The National PTA®



The National PTA®

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Building Blocks:

Early Childhood PTAs

Young children are active learners, always building on their experiences and relationships. Parents and caregivers of young children also learn by doing and by sharing their experiences with each other.

The National PTA recognizes the importance of providing support, opportunities, and resources for parents, educators, and caregivers of young children. Early childhood PTAs are encouraged as a unique expression of PTA's commitment to parents and the growth and healthy development of children.

What Is an Early Childhood PTA?

An early childhood PTA is for all individuals interested in the education and development of children from birth to age 5. Through its programs, members address common concerns and participate in activities that benefit and enrich the lives of young children and their families. An early childhood PTA offers a foundation for affirming young children as they grow and for building parental support of children as they enter the formal school years.

Although PTAs are traditionally associated with schools, an early childhood PTA may be organized in preschool or nursery school facilities, day-care centers, places of employment, kindergartens, or other community settings such as libraries or recreational facilities. The group can be affiliated with an existing PTA or be organized as a separate PTA unit.

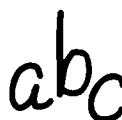


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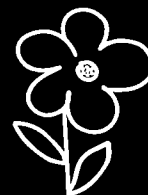
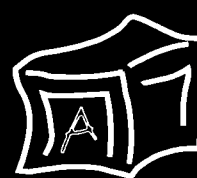
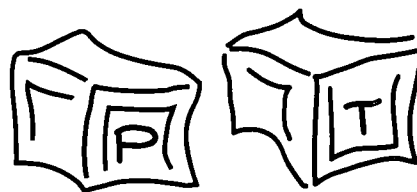
- support of early learning
- interaction with other children
- development of social skills necessary for relating to others
- additional benefits that come from child's awareness of parent's involvement and interest

Opportunities for Families:

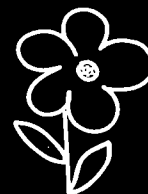
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Opportunities for Communities:

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- support systems for families with young children
- strong linkages between early childhood educators, public schools, and families



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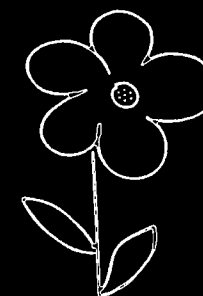
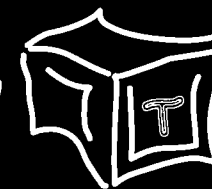


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BUILDING BLOCKS



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Young children are active learners, always building on their experiences and relationships. Parents and caregivers of young children also learn by doing and by sharing their experiences with each other.

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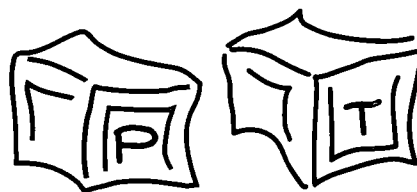
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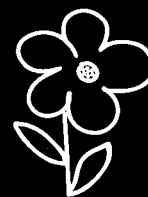
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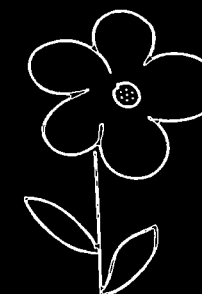
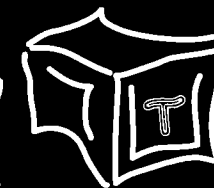


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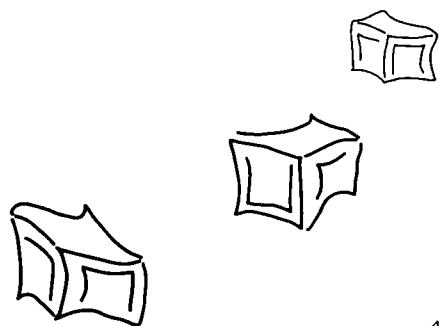
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Tips for Principals and School Administrators, cont.

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Successful Transitions in Action

In working toward making successful transitions from early childhood programs into the elementary grades, the National PTA is partners with the National Head Start Association. The two organizations have formed a pilot project called "Continuity for Success" being conducted in three sites—New York, North Carolina, and Texas.



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Resources

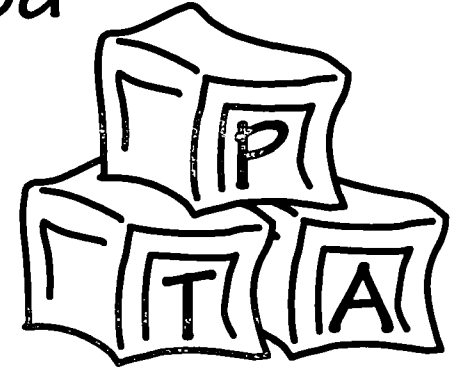
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Making the Transition:

From Early Childhood Programs Into Elementary Schools



Introduction

Children and families moving from preschools and other early childhood programs into elementary schools do not usually have the support they need to make successful transitions according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education.

Although the importance of sharing information about preschool children may seem obvious, results of the National Transition Survey* report the following:

- Only 10 percent of schools report regular communication between kindergarten teachers and their pupils' previous early childhood teachers.
- Only 12 percent of schools have kindergarten programs designed to build on preschool programs.

- Only 47 percent have a formal program for encouraging parents to visit schools.

Research also suggests that fostering a smooth transition between preschools and elementary schools can extend the benefits of preschool programs to beyond the early elementary grades.

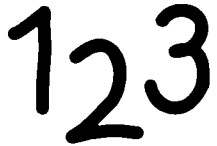
Young children coming into elementary schools are usually moving from child-focused activities to education-focused programs. A transition process is necessary to ensure children, families, and school personnel understand one another. It is important for home and school to work together to help children successfully adjust to elementary school in order to fully benefit from new school experiences.

* Love and Logue. *Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools: Final Report of the National Transition Study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1992.

Transition Tips for Parents, Teachers, and School Administrators

The National PTA has a strong history of working together in partnership with parents, teachers, and school administrators and offers the following tips for making the transition into the elementary grades successful for children, families, and schools.

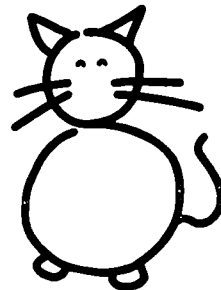
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 - Practice a firm and fair parenting style that respects the uniqueness of your children.
 - Help children become aware of their own abilities, to build self-esteem and confidence.
 - Provide opportunities for young children to interact with other children and adults in community settings, such as the local library and pool, parks, playgrounds, and museums.
 - Expect children to do well in school—provide support, encouragement, and praise for completing tasks.
 - Talk with your child about the similarities and differences between preschool and kindergarten programs.
 - Take field trips and make visits to kindergarten classrooms with your child and other parents and their preschoolers.
 - Recognize that teachers and schools in general want to work in partnership with you to help your children succeed in school.

Characteristics of Successful Transitions

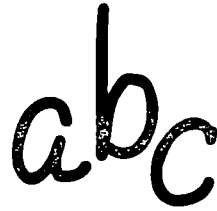
When children and families receive the support they need in the preschool-to-school transition, the following characteristics are noted*:

- Children like school and look forward to attending regularly.
- Children's academic skills grow steadily.
- Parents become actively involved in their children's education—at home, in school, and in the community.
- Classrooms are emotionally positive for both teachers and children.
- Teachers and families value each other.
- Schools celebrate the cultural diversity in their communities and in the nation as a whole.
- In the classrooms, children engage in activities and behave in a manner that is appropriate for their level of development.
- The community shows consistent investment in the education of children and strives to increase the learning opportunities available.

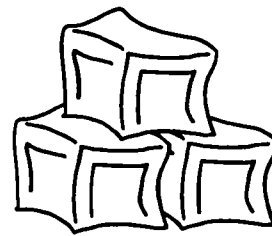


* Ramey and Ramey, *The National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Study: An Overview*, Birmingham, AL, 1992.

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- Provide classroom activities to talk, sing songs, and play games with children about growing up and making changes.
 - Develop unique transition classroom activities and games based on your preschool-to-elementary school situation and the individual children involved.
 - Provide many opportunities for children and their parents to become familiar with the kindergarten setting.
 - Give parents accurate information about the skills needed for a child to transition to kindergarten.
 - Demonstrate your interest and support to each child's family through phone calls and other personal contacts.
 - Structure developmentally appropriate classroom practices.
 - Provide opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom.

For Principals and School Administrators

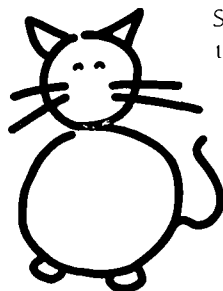
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- Organize parent meetings where preschool and elementary school staff are available to answer the questions and concerns of parents and families with children entering kindergarten.
 - Provide a forum for parents to discuss their perceptions and expectations for kindergarten and elementary school.
 - Coordinate meetings between parents and teachers to address the individual educational and emotional needs of each child.
 - Provide information about the PTA in your community that can serve as a link between the parents and the school.
 - Inform parents and families about their rights and responsibilities in the school.
 - Provide learning activities for parents to do with their children at home.
 - Invite elementary teachers to visit preschool classrooms, and preschool teachers to visit elementary school classrooms.
 - Coordinate activities between preschools and kindergarten—programs, workshops, visits to school playgrounds, etc.
 - Develop curriculum that builds on children's preschool experiences and knowledge about the world—strive for curriculum and developmental continuity.
 - Talk to parents about their children's developmental progress. Provide regular feedback with examples of children's work, such as portfolios or collections of their artwork, dictated stories, and other types of work, to show their progress in kindergarten.
 - Invite prekindergarten groups to attend certain school activities like celebrations, parades, or other special events.
 - Provide parent education workshops.
 - Organize joint in-service training for preschool and kindergarten teachers.
 - Provide additional opportunities for preschool teachers to communicate with kindergarten teachers about individual children's cognitive competencies, social skills, and learning styles.
 - Provide a family resource center in your school or a community setting.
 - Link families and children with health and social services in the community.
 - Send school newsletters and calendars to preschool parents and families.
 - Develop simple registration procedures and means for transferring knowledge about the child, including—with parental consent—written records, from the early childhood program to become part of the school record of the child.

Tips for Principals and School Administrators, cont.

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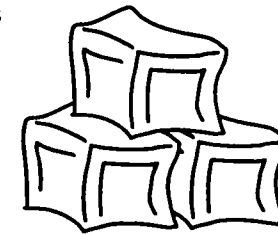
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- Coordinate meetings between parents and teachers to address the individual educational and emotional needs of each child.
- Provide information about the PTA in your community that can serve as a link between the parents and the school.
- Inform parents and families about their rights and responsibilities in the school.



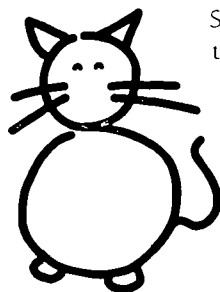
- Provide parent education workshops.
- Organize joint in-service training for preschool and kindergarten teachers.
- Provide additional opportunities for preschool teachers to communicate with kindergarten teachers about individual children's cognitive competencies, social skills, and learning styles.
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- Send school newsletters and calendars to preschool parents and families.
- Develop simple registration procedures and means for transferring knowledge about the child, including—with parental consent—written records, from the early childhood program to become part of the school record of the child.

Tips for Principals and School Administrators, cont.

- Structure schools to respond to individual differences in children's academic and social skills.
- Celebrate the cultural heritage and diversity of children and their families.
- Encourage preschool program staff to participate in transition activities, such as attending joint workshops, sharing information, assisting children with adjustment problems, and preparing individual children and parents for the transition.
- Promote a school climate that supports positive attitudes toward children.
- Assign responsibility for transition activities to school staff (an assignment from a district or school administrator has greater influence over schoolwide transition activities than do individual teachers trying to accomplish the same thing).
- Encourage parents to participate directly in setting school goals, establishing long-range school plans, and developing parent involvement policies.

Successful Transitions in Action

In working toward making successful transitions from early childhood programs into the elementary grades, the National PTA is partners with the National Head Start Association. The two organizations have formed a pilot project called "Continuity for Success" being conducted in three sites—New York, North Carolina, and Texas.



The focus of the project is to team up Head Start programs with elementary PTAs in order to support and maintain the practice of strong parent involvement and enable children to build on their early successes as they move into elementary schools.

For more information about the project, contact either the National Head Start Association at (703) 739-0875 or the National PTA at (312) 670-6782.

Resources

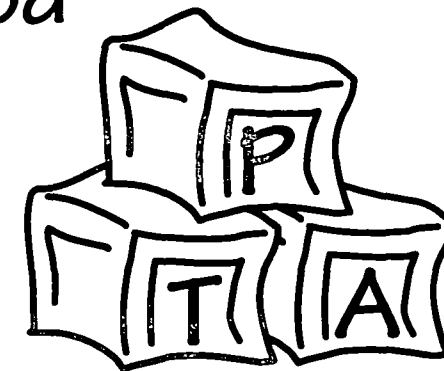
The National PTA has many brochures and kits that support parent involvement activities. For a catalog of resources contact:

National PTA Orders
135 S. LaSalle St., Dept. 1860
Chicago, IL 60674-1860
(312) 549-3253

National PTA®
330 N. Wabash Ave., Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611-3690
(312) 670-6782
Fax: (312) 670-6783
e-mail: info@pta.org
<http://www.pta.org>

Making the Transition:

From Early Childhood Programs Into Elementary Schools



Introduction

Children and families moving from preschools and other early childhood programs into elementary schools do not usually have the support they need to make successful transitions according to a study by the U.S. Department of Education.

Although the importance of sharing information about preschool children may seem obvious, results of the National Transition Survey* report the following:

- Only 10 percent of schools report regular communication between kindergarten teachers and their pupils' previous early childhood teachers.
- Only 12 percent of schools have kindergarten programs designed to build on preschool programs.

- Only 47 percent have a formal program for encouraging parents to visit schools.

Research also suggests that fostering a smooth transition between preschools and elementary schools can extend the benefits of preschool programs to beyond the early elementary grades.

Young children coming into elementary schools are usually moving from child-focused activities to education-focused programs. A transition process is necessary to ensure children, families, and school personnel understand one another. It is important for home and school to work together to help children successfully adjust to elementary school in order to fully benefit from new school experiences.

* Love and Logue. *Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools: Final Report of the National Transition Study*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1992.

Transition Tips for Parents, Teachers, and School Administrators

The National PTA has a strong history of working together in partnership with parents, teachers, and school administrators and offers the following tips for making the transition into the elementary grades successful for children, families, and schools.

For Parents

- Become involved in an Early Childhood PTA for parenting support and child advocacy training.
- Develop a loving and supportive relationship with your children.
- Practice a firm and fair parenting style that respects the uniqueness of your children.
- Help children become aware of their own abilities, to build self-esteem and confidence.
- Provide opportunities for young children to interact with other children and adults in community settings, such as the local library and pool, parks, playgrounds, and museums.

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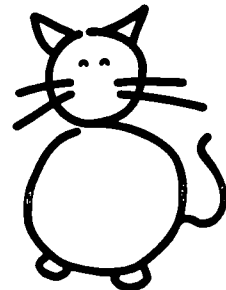
- Expect children to do well in school—provide support, encouragement, and praise for completing tasks.
- Talk with your child about the similarities and differences between preschool and kindergarten programs.
- Take field trips and make visits to kindergarten classrooms with your child and other parents and their preschoolers.
- Recognize that teachers and schools in general want to work in partnership with you to help your children succeed in school.

Characteristics of Successful Transitions

When children and families receive the support they need in the preschool-to-school transition, the following characteristics are noted*:

- Children like school and look forward to attending regularly.
- Children's academic skills grow steadily.
- Parents become actively involved in their children's education—at home, in school, and in the community.
- Classrooms are emotionally positive for both teachers and children.
- Teachers and families value each other.

- Schools celebrate the cultural diversity in their communities and in the nation as a whole.
- In the classrooms, children engage in activities and behave in a manner that is appropriate for their level of development.
- The community shows consistent investment in the education of children and strives to increase the learning opportunities available.



* Ramey and Ramey, *The National Head Start/Public School Early Childhood Transition Study: An Overview*, Birmingham, AL, 1992.

For Teachers

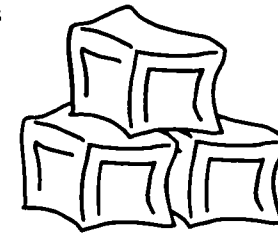
- Provide classroom activities to talk, sing songs, and play games with children about growing up and making changes.
- Develop unique transition classroom activities and games based on your preschool-to-elementary school situation and the individual children involved.
- Provide many opportunities for children and their parents to become familiar with the kindergarten setting.
- Give parents accurate information about the skills needed for a child to transition to kindergarten.
- Demonstrate your interest and support to each child's family through phone calls and other personal contacts.
- Structure developmentally appropriate classroom practices.
- Provide opportunities for parents to volunteer in the classroom.

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- Provide learning activities for parents to do with their children at home.
- Invite elementary teachers to visit preschool classrooms, and preschool teachers to visit elementary school classrooms.
- Coordinate activities between preschools and kindergarten—programs, workshops, visits to school playgrounds, etc.
- Develop curriculum that builds on children's preschool experiences and knowledge about the world—strive for curriculum and developmental continuity.
- Talk to parents about their children's developmental progress. Provide regular feedback with examples of children's work, such as portfolios or collections of their artwork, dictated stories, and other types of work, to show their progress in kindergarten.
- Invite prekindergarten groups to attend certain school activities like celebrations, parades, or other special events.

For Principals and School Administrators

- Organize parent meetings where preschool and elementary school staff are available to answer the questions and concerns of parents and families with children entering kindergarten.
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- Develop simple registration procedures and means for transferring knowledge about the child, including—with parental consent—written records, from the early childhood program to become part of the school record of the child.

How to Create a Partnership in Your Community

Identify members from your local Head Start programs and elementary PTAs who support the partnership.

Once you have identified potential team members, it is important to mutually agree to start a *Continuity for Success* project.

Create a local advisory team.

A strong team will include the elementary school principal, teachers, parents, PTA volunteers, Head Start staff, representatives from the school board, local businesses, and government officials.

Conduct focus groups to identify strengths and challenges.

The site team should hold a series of focus groups with parents, teachers, and students to identify transition activities already in place and barriers to successful transition.

Develop an action plan.

The action plan should include goals and objectives, the strengths to build upon, and the barriers to overcome. It should be shared with the larger Head Start program, local PTA, and school community to ensure its widespread support.

Implement the action plan.

Begin the site activities described in the action plan.

Collect data and evaluate the action plan.

The site team should develop a system to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the project. This will help determine how the overall project is impacting children and families.

For Additional Information

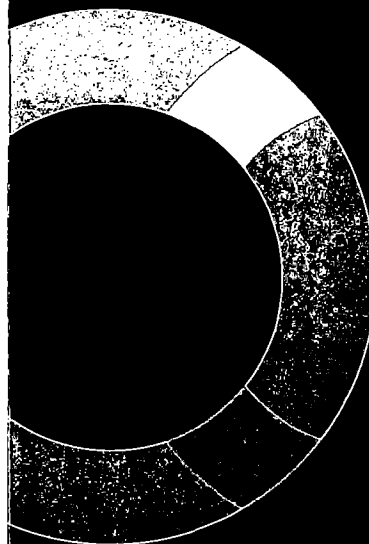
Contact the state offices of each association for support. If you have questions about beginning such a project or would like to be included on the *Continuity for Success* mailing list, please call or fax your name, address, phone and fax numbers to either of the following:

Partnership Project
National Head Start Association
Ph: (703) 739-0875
Fax: (703) 739-0878

Education Department
National PTA
Ph: (312) 670-6782
Fax: (312) 670-6783

Continuity for Success is supported by the Prudential and W.K. Kellogg foundations.

Continuity for Success



A Partnership Between the National PTA and the National Head Start Association



The National PTA and the National Head Start Association have formed the *Continuity for Success* partnership project to improve the transition of Head Start children and their families into elementary schools. The project builds on the involvement of Head Start parents and provides an opportunity to continue their involvement through their local PTAs.

National Partners

Together, the National PTA and National Head Start Association have more than 130 years of combined experience supporting children and families. Both associations are dedicated to improving the quality of life for children and families and believe that parent involvement is the key to children's success.



Both associations:

- Encourage parent involvement in children's education and growth.
- Assist parents in developing the skills they need to raise their children and become self-sufficient.
- Promote environments where parents are valued as primary influences and essential partners in their children's development.
- Advocate for issues that support the development of children and families.
- Support shared responsibility in educational decision-making.



Partnership Goals

- Encourage the continued, strong involvement of Head Start parents and families into public schools.
- Develop interventions and strategies that lessen the barriers to parent and family involvement.
- Create strong local partnerships between Head Start programs, PTAs and elementary schools.



National PTA



Project Pilot Sites & Activities

Three pilot sites are participating in the *Continuity for Success* project. They are Rochester, New York; Charlotte, North Carolina; and El Paso, Texas. Funding for the sites and their activities is provided by the Prudential and W. K. Kellogg foundations.

The pilot sites are planning and implementing the following activities to encourage continued parent involvement:

- Educate Head Start parents about the PTA and elementary school and PTA parents about Head Start.
- Provide resources for parenting centers (brochures, videos, etc.).
- Share resources such as transportation, child care, and facilities.
- Share children's education and health records.
- Conduct joint planning and training sessions for Head Start, PTA, and public school staff.
- Hold workshops on parenting issues such as self-esteem, literacy, and discipline.
- Organize school visits for Head Start parents and Head Start visits for elementary school staff.
- Conduct joint parent conferences.
- Plan joint social events for Head Start and PTA parents.



An ongoing evaluation component will enable the partnership to provide additional support as the project expands to new partnerships nationwide.



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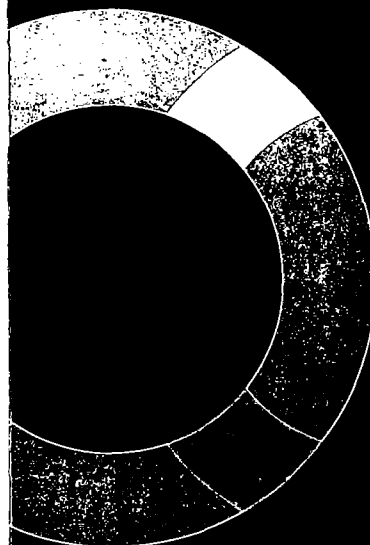
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