



Childwat



Strengthening the Voice of the Region's Children

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Alternatives to Zero Tolerance

What We Can Do To Better Support Troubled Children

On February 27, PCCY held a Forum on Zero Tolerance and issued our second report on what schools can do to better handle troubled students ["What We CAN Do: A Report on Our Schools, Our Students and Difficult Behavior"]. Annette Fuentes, a journalist and adjunct professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism who has written extensively on school discipline, joined the Philadelphia School District's Executive Director of Alternative Education Gwen Morris and PCCY's Dennis Barnebey for a panel discussion on the issue.

Ms. Fuentes explained that the phrase "zero tolerance" had originated with President Reagan, whose primary focus was the war on drugs. Later, President Clinton connected the term to schools, with the creation of drug-free school zones. In the early 1990s, as rates of crime were rising, Fuentes said the media embraced the notion of zero tolerance as a reflection of things being out of control. More than a decade later, Fuentes pointed out, even with teen crime at an all time low, zero tolerance policies are riding high in under-resourced public schools in low income, high minority districts.

The result, said Fuentes, is that kids are being suspended in record numbers, often being sent to alternative schools which too frequently become pipelines to jail and prison. She said American schools have had about 100,000 expulsions and three million suspensions annually in recent years.

"Our attitudes toward kids and public schools have been colored by the changing racial and ethnic make up of the student body," said Fuentes. "Attitudes of intolerance and criminalization have taken root."

Ms. Fuentes reminded us that our children and their teachers often need much more than they get in services, but that the zero tolerance mindset has created an atmosphere that demonizes children, and inspired a "guilty until proven innocent" response to kids with behavioral problems. "A school can no longer be a learning environment, if it is a criminal justice environment," she said.

PCCY Education Specialist Dennis Barnebey researched and wrote our report on behavioral issues in Philadelphia public schools. He presented his findings, which were based on visits last year to various schools, including the disciplinary schools.



PCCY Board Member Debra Weiner makes a comment at the PCCY Zero Tolerance Forum.

Among his conclusions: we need to provide more and better services for students earlier – counselors, mental health interventions, etc. – in order to prevent the problems that result in the need for alternative school placements. Barnebey applauded the fact that there were accommodation rooms now in most schools, but also urged that they be staffed by professionals, qualified to respond to student problems. He also recommended that more school personnel connect kids and families with services.



PCCY's Dennis Barnebey and guest speaker Annette Fuentes at the PCCY Zero Tolerance Forum.

Barnebey also urged better tracking of what happens to kids who left alternative schools or programs, in order to determine what works and what doesn't. His research found that some of our neediest children are being sent to alternative schools with no extra mental health supports, no extra programming or other resources to help them.

He ended with a story of a student who had attended Columbine High School during and after the deadly shootings there, whom he met when she visited Philadelphia schools years later. The young woman was shocked at the metal detectors and disciplinary atmosphere in high schools here.

She said that after the shootings at Columbine, the school never got any metal detectors. Instead, lots of counselors were assigned to talk with and work with the students. "We need to find ways to support our kids," said Barnebey, "instead of building fences against them." The PCCY report, "What We CAN Do: A Report on Our Schools, Our Students and Difficult Behavior" is available on our website, or you can call us for a copy at 215-563-5848 ext. 11.

Gwen Morris, head of Alternative Education for the School District of Philadelphia, spoke next, describing the complexity of her work. Each morning, she reviews incident reports from all the schools – about 50 to 75 reports each day. "It's far more than arrests and weapons," she said, and includes threatened suicides and suicide attempts, among many other issues. "My work is complex, because I have to make complicated, delicate decisions," said Morris. "I have difficult conversations with parents of victims – and with parents of troubled children, parents who are simply overwhelmed." Morris provided current statistics, including total transfers to alternative programs this year (1,254) and the total number of violent incidents during 2003-2004, which was 3,488. Violent incidents include assault, drug and alcohol offenses, incendiary fires, morals offenses, robberies and weapons offenses. Morris talked about efforts to improve choices and outcomes for troubled children, such as keeping them at school later for activities and academic support; providing summer enrichment and remediation opportunities; creating new education experiences, in smaller, more user-friendly school environments.

Morris reminded the audience that when schools can accomplish their basic mission – teaching and learning – many troubled kids become productive and satisfied students. "Many children are angry because they cannot read," she said. She said the School District is also working to improve the coordination and expansion of supports for children with behavioral problems, and also providing more support to teen parents.



Gwen Morris, Executive Director of Alternative Education, School District of Philadelphia.

Highlights of the discussion that followed were a call to place more counselors in our schools, a request for more information about the results of strategies that emphasized counseling and deemphasized metal detectors and armed guards; a plea to create the structure that assures improved collaboration between public schools and other city agencies and services; better staff development; and a strong desire to “stop turning our schools into jails.”

One audience member warned that schools and education are neither the problem nor the solution to the deeper issues that affect children in our schools. “Blaming schools – or expecting schools to solve every problem is like riding a stationary bicycle,” said Dan Weinles. You can pedal fast or pedal slow, but you’ll still end up in the same place.”

Guest speaker Annette Fuentes wrapped up the discussion with a closing thought. “We have a choice – of carrots or sticks, of books or bars,” she said. “Sticks and bars are not the future our children deserve – or that we should leave them as a legacy.”

Ironically, in published reports on the day that the Zero Tolerance Forum was being held, School CEO Paul Vallas called for armed police to be stationed in every high school and for the installation of metal detectors in all our schools – including elementary schools.

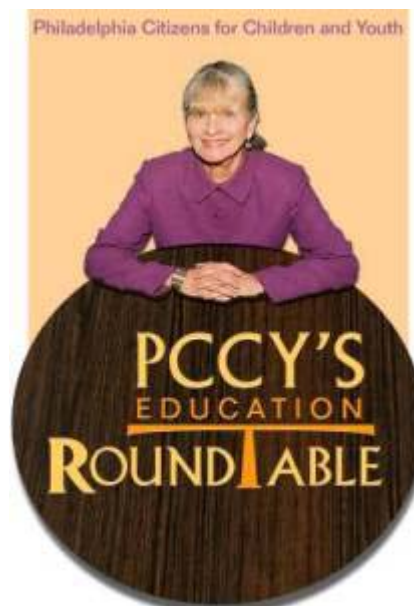
While many positive steps have been taken in recent months to improve handling of behavior and discipline problems in the schools, PCCY strongly opposes the plan to add armed police officers and more metal detectors to city schools.

Our schools need more adults to provide services to children: they should not be made into armed camps. Just as we cannot have armed police and metal detectors on every block, in every store, we must not turn our schools into fortresses.

After all — who among us with choice would choose to send their children to schools with metal detectors and armed guards? As our report concludes, our schools should be launching pads – not holding pens.

PCCY Education Roundtable Program Debuts on Channel 52

Yanoff Hosts Monthly Discussion on Public School Television – PSTV



The School District of Philadelphia has unveiled a new line-up of programming on PSTV, the district’s cable station, seen on Channel 52 in the city under an agreement with Comcast. Included in the line-up of regular programs launched last month is the PCCY Education Roundtable, hosted by PCCY’s Shelly Yanoff. The monthly, half-hour show features unscripted discussion of education issues with journalists and other informed observers.

The regular panelists are: **Mensah Dean** of the Philadelphia Daily News; **Susan Snyder** of the Philadelphia Inquirer; **Paul Socolar**, Editor of the Philadelphia Public School Notebook and **Loraine Ballard-Morrill**, News and Community Affairs Director for Clear Channel Radio.

The current program, focusing on the issue of violence in public schools, debuts on March 11 at 5:30; it will be repeated on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday at 5:00pm, as well as at 4:30pm on Saturday and Sunday afternoons, over the next several weeks. PCCY has full editorial control of the Education Roundtable – and makes all decisions about topics and content. Opinions and viewpoints expressed on the program are those of the guest panelists, and do not represent the policies of PCCY or the School District of Philadelphia.

Blizzard of Support for Increased Child Care Funding



PCCY Leads “Snowflake” Campaign



Snowflake display at Green/Byrne Child Care Center

Across Pennsylvania – toddlers, pre-school children, child care providers, parents, grandparents, and supporters cut, glued, glittered, sprinkled, dyed, twisted and painted “snowflakes” made of paper, sticks, wires, Q-tips, and coffee filters – over 7,200 from Erie to Delaware county and in 31 counties in between. These handmade snowflakes addressed to Pennsylvania Senators Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum, urged the senators to support the Snowe Amendment, proposed by Senator Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) to substantially increase child care funding.

The bill now pending before the U.S. Senate, H.R.4, would reauthorize the child care development block grant (CCDBG) and increase child care funding by just \$1 billion over the next five years. That would

cause 430,000 children to lose child care assistance by 2008, according to estimates by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. The Snowe Amendment proposes to boost new federal child care funding by \$6 billion. If passed, it would bring about \$272 million over five years to Pennsylvania– enough to provide child care assistance to an additional 7,500 to 10,000 working families. The snowflakes are part of a campaign initiated by PCCY and the Pennsylvania QUEST Coalition – Quality Early Education through Salaries and Training— to raise awareness about the need for additional federal money for child care. Federal money is crucial to the survival of Pennsylvania’s child care programs as 74% of the state’s child care spending is from federal dollars.

The “snowflakes” bear compelling and poignant messages. Karen Korzeniowski of Quakertown, a military wife and mother of two, wrote: “My husband has been deployed for over a year now, causing me to put my children in day care while I work to make ends meet. If it were not for the help of the Upper Bucks YMCA I could not afford to work, causing major hardships for my family. I know I am not alone.”

“Currently, **90%** of my paycheck goes toward child care of my two children,” wrote Tina Gross of Mt. Wolf, PA. “Please don’t take it all!”

PCCY, working with advocates Rhea Starr, Wendy Etheridge-Smith, Susan Williams, Mary Lou Seidler and Jolie Cover, organized teams of supporters to personally deliver the “snowflakes” and meet with staff at district offices of Senators Specter and Santorum in Pittsburgh, Erie, Scranton, Altoona, Allentown and Philadelphia.



Preschoolers and advocates deliver snowflakes to Senator Arlen Specter’s Philadelphia Office.

The contact made with Justin Poremba, Staff Assistant at Senator Specter's Allentown office, was extremely effective. According to Susan Williams, Executive Director of Lehigh Valley Child Care Inc. "We brought to the forefront the need for increased support for children and families in Lehigh Valley, and he indicated an increased knowledge about the issue as a result," said Williams. "We left feeling optimistic that child care funding is important to the Senator and that it will be addressed."



Preschoolers and advocates deliver snowflakes to Senator Rick Santorum's Philadelphia Office.

In Philadelphia, a group of preschoolers from the Parent Infant Center joined local advocates to deliver a sampling of "snowflakes" to Senator Santorum's office meeting with his State Director for Southeastern Pennsylvania, Jeff Haberkern.



The campaign culminated in a media event on February 17, 2004 at the Green/Byrne Child Care Center in the Federal Building in Philadelphia. Sharon Ward from PCCY, Sharon Easterling from Delaware Valley Association for the Education of Young Children and Mary Graham from Pennsylvania Child Care Association gathered around the avalanche of "snowflakes" to brief the media and make the case for more federal child care funding.

Pre-school children from Green/Byrne Child Care Center then joined child care advocates delivering a blizzard of concern to Senator Arlen Specter. Staff assistant Kenneth J. Altman accepted the "snowe-storm," and promised to deliver it to Senator Specter.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Women's Law Center, who picked up on the "snowflake" idea, generated participation in other states and issued a National Call-In Day on February 4, 2004.

State Representative Pat Browne introduced House Resolution No. 560 which urges the U.S. Senate to adopt the Snowe Amendment, and specifically asks Senator Santorum and Senator Specter to support the legislation. The Pennsylvania House of Representatives unanimously passed the resolution. A vote on the Snowe amendment is expected before the end of March.

You can help!

Call or email Senator Arlen Specter:

202-224-4254;

arlen_spector@specter.senate.gov

and

Senator Rick Santorum:

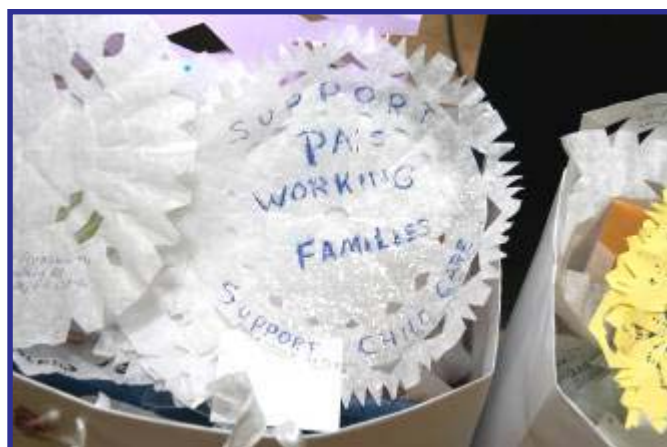
202-224-6324;

<http://santorum.senate.gov>

*(Click on Constituent Services and
click on e-mail the Senator)*

Photo Opposite: Children from Tuny Haven International Early Learning Center, in Philadelphia, pose proudly in front of their "Let it Snowe" window display.

“Snowflake” Campaign Pictures



Child Health Watch

Helping to Keep Children and Families Healthy

Children's Oral Health



Penn dental students teach local elementary school students about dental care.

Imagine having dental insurance but not being able to get your children's teeth cleaned or cavities filled. This, tragically, is the experience of tens of thousands of children in Philadelphia who have Medicaid coverage. Medicaid covers dental services, but 75% of children on Medicaid do not see a dentist each year. On February 6, 2004, PCCY participated in "Give Kids A Smile Day" – a one-day initiative that provided free dental services to nearly 700 children, from low-income families who experience difficulty accessing oral health care.

On behalf of the dental providers in PCCY's oral health task force who were participating in the day, PCCY obtained a Mayoral Proclamation recognizing their dedication and concern for our city's youth. PCCY staff also provided child health insurance information to parents who brought their children to the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine.

Other participants included Temple University, Community College of Philadelphia, Kids Smiles, the Philadelphia County Dental Society, and St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. PCCY is continuing to actively work on increasing children's access to dental care on the state and local level.

New Staff Member

We are pleased to announce that Deborah Zubow has recently joined PCCY's health staff as the new coordinator of our Child Health Watch Helpline where parents, caregivers, school nurses and counselors call to receive assistance completing a child health insurance application or call with questions about accessing health care. Deborah has much experience with advocacy, organizing, and training that is enriching the health related work in which we are engaged.

Laurel Barnes, who held the position for the last two and a half years, left for sunny California in January. Laurel did a fantastic job helping to expand the Helpline and we wish her all the best.

Childhood Lead Poisoning

The good news is that over the last several years, the number of children who are poisoned by lead in Philadelphia has continued to decline. The bad news is that too many children are still being poisoned by lead in the city. As part of PCCY's multi-pronged approach, we are participating in both a state and city work group to devise plans to eliminate lead poisoning in Pennsylvania, with a special focus on the strategies for Philadelphia.

In other lead news, Congressman Chaka Fattah made good on his commitment to help make the city and state lead-safe for children. The Congressman has helped to secure \$447,100 from the Environmental Protection Agency for the City of Philadelphia, in consultation with PCCY, for lead screening, testing, outreach, and education throughout the city!

Thank you, Congressman Fattah, for your continuing leadership to help protect the health and improve the lives of children!



PCCY's Forging the Future Forum Series

Can Working Families Ever Win?

Work-Family Balance is a Challenge for All Americans, Harvard Researcher Tells PCCY Forum

"What I really hope is that we can, as a country, get back to talking about 'We the People' – and our children – collectively, and not just about one's individual children. I think as soon as we do that, the need for action will become obvious and compelling."

- Dr. Jody Heymann, speaking at the PCCY Forging the Future Forum on January 22, 2004 at the National Constitution Center.

On January 22nd, PCCY held its second Forging the Future Forum, featuring Dr. Jody Heymann of Harvard University's School of Public Health and Medical School. She was trained as a medical doctor – a pediatrician – and holds a PhD in public policy. She's the founding chair of the Initiative on Work, Family and Democracy and is also Director of Policy for the Harvard Center for Society and Health.

The topic for the evening was "The Widening Gap: Can Working Families Ever Win?" – drawn from the titles of two books written by Dr. Heymann, on the topic of how work demands and care giving responsibilities are, increasingly, in conflict for many American families. Heymann's opened her remarks with a review of data gathered in her extensive research on work/family issues and a little history.

She described how work and family life were intertwined historically, because Americans worked on farms and ranches, with their children – as well as older family members – nearby. Then came the Industrial Revolution, men went to work away from the homestead – in factories and offices. That was followed by the entry of women into the workforce: early on, women would "go home" when they had children, but today children have both parents – or their single parent – in the labor force, full time.

Heymann's research surveyed 15,000 Americans, to determine how they handle the challenge of working and keeping up family responsibilities. Some people even kept diaries, tracking when work was disrupted by family needs. The major finding: just about all Americans are caught in the work/family crunch.



Dr. Jody Heymann speaking at PCCY's Forging the Future Forum.

“If you look at who’s working and caregiving, and you include caring for children, caring for parents, parents-in-law, what you find is that it’s majority of everybody,” Heymann explained, noting that the impact cut across education levels, income levels, race and ethnicity. Heymann said that in general, about 30 percent of working people have to take off from work in a given week, in order to take care of family matters – most often a health problem, or to address a school or child care issue.

Hit hardest are the working poor, who have the least flexibility on the job – and are more likely to have problems at home, such as a child with a chronic illness. “The poor are more likely to lack sick leave, vacation leave or any benefits – and they also face more problematic working conditions, such as night or evening shift work,” said Heymann, which can mean leaving children to fend for themselves in the afternoon and evening hours. “If parents work nights, children were 172% more likely to have gotten into trouble and be suspended from school,” Heymann noted.

Though the work/family “balancing act” is a challenge for most Americans – we haven’t developed policies to support working families. Heymann says the problem requires a public policy response – that individuals and progressive corporations alone, can’t “fix” what is a societal problem.

She said a starting point might be paid leave policies for all working Americans – to allow at least the equivalent of two to three days per year, for employees to attend teacher conferences, doctor appointments and other necessary family business. A proposal for paid leave is being considered by the governor of New Jersey, Heymann added. Another possibility is changing the way our systems work: so that the school day doesn’t end at 3:00pm in the afternoon, and teacher conferences are scheduled before or after the regular work day.

Another prong of Heymann’s work looks at how countries around the world approach the work/family balance. Overall – the United States doesn’t measure up. “One hundred and fifty-nine countries around the world have paid maternity leave,” Dr. Heymann said, but not the United States. “Among industrialized countries, only one other country doesn’t have paid maternity leave; that’s Australia.” Heymann said that a broad range of countries have some paid leave programs, to allow parents to deal with a child’s health needs.

Among them: Norway, Tajikistan, Germany, South Africa, El Salvador Spain— but not the United States. Responding to Dr. Heymann’s presentation was Richard Smoot, described by PCCY Executive Director Shelly Yanoff as a genuine “public citizen,” in her introduction. Smoot, retired president of PNC Bank, current board chairman for the Philadelphia Orchestra and Settlement Music School.



PCCY Board Member Fasaha Traylor with Dr. Heymann, Shelly Yanoff and Richard Smoot.

Mr. Smoot was also active in school reform, as a leader of Greater Philadelphia First, in the 1990s. He pointed out the difficulty in addressing the problem of paid leave and flexibility to help workers deal with family issues – because of the cost involved for employers, particularly where low wage workers are concerned, and particularly in light of the conservative “takeover” or direction of public policy in the United States. He favored a response that would include “negative income taxes or earned income tax credits, so that people work and if they don’t have sufficient income they are in fact—through the tax system – provided additional income.”

In addition, Smoot suggested spreading the word about the need for real public policy on the issue of work/family time issues – building consensus for change at the grassroots level, and through community organizations, churches and synagogues – as well as with business and industry. “It’s certainly in our best interest to have healthy, well educated, well care for, and socially adjusted children to move into the work force to carry on,” Smoot concluded.

Many audience members expressed surprise and frustration that the work/family crunch hasn’t been addressed, because it seemingly affects a majority of Americans.



PCCY Board President Allener (Sissy) Rogers

Dr. Heymann responded that one problem is that the issue has been divided by class and by age group, making it a competition between the needs of say a young mother with twin toddlers – and a middle-aged worker, caring for elderly parents. In fact, they both need the same thing: the time and flexibility to carry out their care taking duties. Afterwards audience members also filled in response forms, giving their reaction to the discussion. Here's a sampling of their comments:

"I think we should start a campaign to make sure every working adult can get some paid leave to deal with essential family issues."

"This is just a continuation or expansion of the lack of investment in poor children. I'm shocked at how few countries are like us. I knew that we were behind on the early childhood front – but didn't realize it also applied to paid leave policies too. We need to think about market solutions, and while cost is a concern...what if we didn't spend so much on the military?"

"I think today's generation of young parents have not seen strong activism for change. They are unaware that they have the power to face the status quo and change it, through organization and advocacy."

"I agree that this is a huge problem that must be addressed through policy change. The lack of access and support we offer to families as a country is unconscionable!"

PCCY Throws Another Lively and Enjoyable Super Party

On February 19th, PCCY hosted its annual fundraiser, The Super Party at the Please Touch Museum. While many people contributed to the success of the event, we would like to recognize a few outstanding supporters including Judy Borie and Sara Nerken, Super Party co-chairs; Nancy Kolb, Executive Director of the Please Touch Museum; and the fine restaurants that contributed to our raffle including; Abbraccio Restaurant, Ernesto's 1521 Cafe, Peacock on the Parkway and The White Dog Cafe. We hope you will support them as they have supported us.



Special thanks to our guest Eleanor Hubbard (above), who was on hand to autograph copies of her illustrated children's book, "The Fisherman and His Wife."



PCCY Board Member and party co-chair Judy Borie and Kay Finney (above)

We'll see you there next year!

PCCY Releases Juvenile Courtwatch Report

PCCY unveiled its latest Courtwatch Report on juvenile justice in Philadelphia at a news briefing on March 10th, held at the United Way Building, Seven Ben Franklin Parkway. PCCY staff members were joined by volunteers who helped research the report. The document is based on the experiences of more than a dozen volunteers who observed over 750 delinquency hearing in 2003, taking notes on proceedings. PCCY then tabulated the results, and interviewed a range of people working in and effected by the juvenile justice system: including judges, district attorneys, children and families. At the briefing, PCCY called on City Council to hold hearings on the overrepresentation of African American youth in the juvenile justice system. Although the Courtwatchers found many improvements at the Courts, the recommend that:

- Every child who comes to delinquency court have the same judge, same probation officer and the same attorney throughout the case.
- The Court establish a family advocacy and information center at 1801 Vine Street
- A formalized ongoing process be developed to familiarize judges, court staff, defenders, prosecutors and probation officers about the kinds of programs that are available to adjudicated children.

The study was funded in part by a grant from the Thomas Skelton Harrison Foundation.

Coalition Pushes for Teacher Equity in Public Schools

A coalition of 23 community organizations including PCCY is calling for dramatic policy changes, to correct the unequal distribution of qualified and experienced teachers in the Philadelphia public school system. The group offered both a written statement and oral testimony, at a hearing before the School Reform Commission on February 17th at School District headquarters.

The Coalition presented recommendations to the School District and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, calling on both parties to negotiate a new teacher pact that will:

- Provide extra incentives and supports for hard-to-staff schools, such as reduced class sizes and work loads, and financial incentives to create a more stable teaching force.
- Improve the District's teacher hiring and transfer policies, to distribute certified and experienced teachers more fairly among schools.
- Strengthen the capacity for principals to be effective leaders.
- Expand opportunities for schools to participate in site- or school-based selection of teachers
- Adopt a policy that would include students and parents in district-wide teacher training and professional development activities.
- Implement a "grow your own" program, to give aides and paraprofessionals at hard-to-staff schools the opportunity to become certified teachers.

For further information about Coalition activities and meetings in the months ahead, contact PCCY Education Specialist, Aldustus Jordan, 215-563-5848 x 12.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten: Gormley Describes the Oklahoma Experience

On February 10, 2004, PCCY held a forum to discuss successful state approaches in implementing pre-kindergarten programs. Panelists at the forum were William Gormley, Jr. from Georgetown University's Public Policy Institute, who discussed the findings from his study of pre-kindergarten in Oklahoma and Anne Mitchell, President of Early Childhood Policy Research, who reviewed state efforts to foster collaboration between school districts, child care and Head Start programs in the delivery of pre-k services. Harriett Dichter, of the Department of Education, gave a brief overview of the early education initiatives in the Pennsylvania's proposed budget.

Representatives from state and local government and regional school districts, child care providers, and child care policy advocates attended the event. Of note were findings that Oklahoma's pre-k program, taught by certified teachers, produced significant results, particularly for poor children and Latino children. Not surprisingly, well-educated and well-compensated staff were chief among the indicators of a successful pre-k program.



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Coming Events At PCCY

Joan Blades, Co-founder of MoveOn.org, the online political action website, will be the featured guest at our third Forging the Future Forum. March 25th. 6:00-8:30pm, at the National Constitution Center, 525 Arch Street. Register online at www.pccy.org or call 215-563-5848, x 11.

Don't miss PCCY's Education Roundtable, a regular monthly program airing on PSTV/ Channel 52 - The School District of Philadelphia's cable station. Airtimes are: Tuesdays, Thursday and Fridays, 5:00pm; Saturday and Sunday, 4:30pm. The topic for March is "School Violence."

New Reports from PCCY

We've just released two reports: "What We CAN Do" A Report on Our Schools, Our Students and Difficult Behavior" and "Courtwatch, 2003-2004" a report on juvenile justice in Philadelphia. These and other reports are available by calling PCCY at 215-563-5848 x 11 or you can download from our website at www.pccy.org and clicking on "Publications."

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