

PURE PreSchool Update

January 2003



CTU Early Childhood Subcommittee: A New Ally

PURE is delighted to have a powerful ally in our fight for quality preschool: the Chicago Teachers Union! The CTU is reactivating the Early Childhood Subcommittee, as a result of calls from teachers and from PURE. Sandy Smith, State PreK teacher at the Stockton School, will be committee chair. Sandy says the committee will be a forum where teachers' opinions matter! She encourages all teachers who are concerned about preschool programs to join the committee, and she reminds us all that the CTU contract is going to be renegotiated this spring.

If you're interested in joining the committee, ask for an application from your union delegate, or mail in the application you'll find in your January union newsletter. A strong showing on this committee can mean a big difference in CPS preschool programs next year. PURE is looking forward to working with all of you.

PreK Programs and the State Budget Deficit

No one knows exactly what to expect in early childhood education funding for next year. The state's \$1 billion plus (groan) budget deficit is, of course, bad news. The good news, however, is that Governor Blagojevich is committed to early childhood education and requested an additional \$90 M during the campaign.

PURE knows for sure that grassroots support will be critical to getting keeping funding at current levels. We'll be contacting you when we need to convince lawmakers that funding for early childhood education is essential. Your phone calls and letters made a tremendous difference last year – because of your advocacy the dismantling of the block grant was defeated, and funding was kept at the previous year's levels. We know you'll come through again.

Chicago Metro AEYC Workshop

PURE will be presenting a workshop at the Chicago Metro AEYC conference later in the month. There will be two sessions of "Advocating for Quality Preschool Programs" – on Thursday, January 30, from 10:45 to 12:15 and on Friday, January 31, from 9:00 to 10:30. We'll do a quick overview of our past work – did you know we've been at this since 1992? – and then concentrate on current challenges. Workshop attendees will have an opportunity to air concerns and to learn about what the CTU and some informal teacher groups are doing already – and we'll all plan for our work through the rest of the school year. Several teacher leaders will be joining PURE staff for these workshops.

Early Childhood Protocol

Huh? It was news to us. In December two teachers requested a meeting with Board President Michael Scott to discuss concerns about losing screening week. When the Early Childhood Education Officer heard about this letter, he requested a meeting with the school principal, the Area Instruction Officer and the Cluster Facilitator. They were told that teachers must follow this “protocol”: Teachers with concerns must speak to their principals, who will relay the information to Velma Thomas, who will in turn tell Ron Whitmore.

PURE testified at the Board meeting on December 18th:

We believe that administrators should listen to the people in the field. Teachers and Cluster staff should be able to raise their concerns and make recommendations. After all, they work with children every day. Can they really prepare children to be successful in school in an atmosphere of intimidation? Can they really welcome parents as co-teachers of their children when they know there might be retaliation if they speak out?

Some suggestions about advocacy in this climate: Let your principal know what you’re doing – whether it’s sending letters or joining the CTU early childhood subcommittee. And be sure to use your classroom phone only for school-related business.

PURE Parent Workshops – free of charge for all

Thanks to a new grant from the McCormick Tribune Foundation, PURE is now offering our parents workshops to both schools and childcare programs at no cost. Your parents will enjoy and profit from our lively and inspiring workshops:

- How to Help Your Child Succeed in Pre-School,
- How to Read with Your Child,
- How to Be Active in Your Child's School,
- How to Help Your Child Make the Transition to Kindergarten
- Father to Father, and
- Testing: What Every Parent Needs to Know.

We provide individual workshops or a series, and we give certificates to parents who attend an entire series. Call us at 312/461-1994 to get your parents on the road to being active in their children’s education. Ask for Wanda for workshops in English and for Ismael for workshops in Spanish.

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