

## Family Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 1  
Fall 2006

## Greetings!

**Dear WINS parent:**

We have restarted the WINS newsletter! There are so many exciting adventures coming up and past events that we want to share with you.

Whether by turning on our televisions or looking outside our doors, we can feel inundated by all the negative things affecting our youth and it is easy to focus on those things. Therefore, these newsletters are an attempt to focus on the positives and try to develop assets that help young people survive. These assets are building blocks that young people can use to help make wise decisions and to chose positive lifestyles. *Please note: all the information contained in the main articles consists of general, simple, helpful ideas for navigating the teen years—not meant at all to be specific instructions for parenting your child. Please accept them as “gentle reminders” of issues that you have probably already considered.* This issue's theme: **Commitment to Learning.** (See page 3)

In addition, we will be sharing other general information and announcements. If you have things that you want to share, or ideas about the topic, please drop it in the mail or give us a call..

Working with you for your child's success -

**Assets:**

**Assets are key building blocks that help kids succeed.**

**What are assets?**

**Each month will feature a different asset.**

The more your child is committed to learning, the more likely she will grow up healthy.

My the time has flown! We are already moving into our Fall/Winter schedule. WINS I and II went to the Amazing Maize Maze, which is a maze cut into a corn field. Wouldn't you know it? All the girls finished before Meagan and Najwa. Yet, this is only the beginning...

Keep these dates in mind -

**WINS 1**

- Classes - every Wednesday
- Oct. 14 - Bronx Zoo
- Nov. 4 - Lakota Wolf Preserve
- Dec. 16 - Amer. Museum of Nat. History

**WINS II\***

- Sept. 29 - Nov. SAT registration
- Oct. 7 - final SAT prep (Jr. & Sr.)
- Nov. 1 - Dec. SAT registration
- Nov. 13 - USDA trip (Wash., D.C.)

\* Keep in mind that if you have two or more unexcused absences from WINS II Fall trips/ workshops, you will not be invited to attend the College Tour (tentatively scheduled for February). Those of you who missed the Maize Maze without calling to let us know, are already halfway there...

## The Importance of a Commitment to Learning

**We're turning the corner. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education said that our nation's schools were in trouble.** "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our future as a Nation and a people," the committee reported. But in 1995, a follow-up study found promising changes, including:

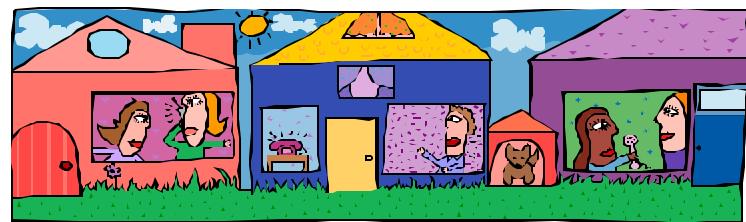
- More students are taking high-level courses.
- More young people are taking advanced placement tests.
- Fewer high school students are dropping out.
- Scores in math and science have improved steadily since the 1980s.
- A higher percentage of young people want to go to college after graduation.

And after a few rough years, here in Philadelphia, our school district is making a renewed commitment to our students. Our job as role models is to encourage our children to value learning and make a personal commitment to it. How do we do that, especially when many kids say school is boring or no fun?

Show your child your enthusiasm about learning new skills and information. Remember that learning new things doesn't only happen in school. Encourage and support children to find things that get them excited about learning - and provide opportunities (in school and elsewhere) to help them develop those interests further.

By doing so, you'll get your child excited about learning and committed to education.

## Learning Through the Years: Ways to Encourage a Commitment to Learning



- Encourage your child to collect things she gets excited about. Contribute to the collection.
- Help your child learn how to study with a friend.
- Find creative ways to help your child link her interests with school subjects.
- Place more emphasis on lifetime learning and not only on graduation.
- Encourage your teenager to take an interesting community education class.
- Help your teenager make good choices about classes, extracurricular activities, and future educational plans.
- Help your teenager think about future goals, and the discipline and boundaries required to teach them.

## Sensational Summer Fun!

Well, we have had a great start to another amazing year!

WINS I got off to a wonderful start. Although the class this year is **very** small, the girls have begun forming lasting friendships, while gaining life-long knowledge. We have learned about various ecological concepts and concerns, as well as going on corresponding field trips. The summer session culminated in the PEEC (Pocono Environmental Education Center) trip (see below).

As for WINS II, they have been guiding and informing museum visitors all summer. The girls enhanced the visitors' experiences by their enthusiasm on the carts and the exhibits.

All in all, it was a productive and fun-filled summer.



### PEEC trip

This August we took our annual trip to the Poconos. This year was different though. As the WINS I class is smaller, we were able to invite WINS II to join us!

When we first arrived, WINS I went on their introductory hike while WINS II went canoeing. After dinner we played New Games and then went to check out accommodations - brand new lodges replacing the old cabins - *you could still smell the freshly cut pine.* (For those girls who had been on previous PEEC trips, we knew the lodge was necessary.)

The next day consisted of a Pond Study, Beaver study, Confidence Course and Bat Study for WINS I. Meanwhile, WINS II went horseback riding with Meagan.

The following day everyone made bags and then went on the Tumbling Waters hike. That night Bob the Astronomer told us about the skies! We looked through enormous telescopes at galaxies and many other celestial bodies. Bob even came away with his own theme song. *Bob the Astronomer; Can you see it?...* The next day, WINS I conquered the Wildlife Study and Outdoor Living skills, and made good attempts at

Orienteering. During that time, WINS II was visiting the Lakota Wolf Preserve and then tubing down the Delaware River. We wrapped up the day with a campfire.

Unfortunately, Friday morning came, and we sadly said goodbye to PEEC until next year (and hello to good food).

The articles focusing on the Commitment to Learning are taken, with permission, from:

Search Institute  
700 South Third Street, Suite 210  
Minneapolis, MN  
55415  
1-800-888-7828

## Academy of Natural Sciences

1900 Ben Franklin Parkway

Phone: 215-299-1064

Cell: 215-219-3905

Fax: 215-405-1551

E-mail:

nsmith@acnatsci.org

hopkinsdoerr@acnatsci.org



## Ways You Can Make a Difference!

Find at least one small way to become involved in your child's school. In the process, you will

1. Detect small problems before they become big.
2. Make a teacher's day. (The #2 teacher frustration - behind salary - is perceived parental indifference)
3. Show your child you care about her.

## 5 Key Areas of a Commitment to Learning

Search Institute researchers have identified five assets in the area of a commitment to learning that are crucial for helping young people grow up healthy. Check your child's areas of strength:

- Achievement motivation—Your child is motivated to do well in school.
- School engagement—Your child is actively engaged in learning.
- Homework—Your child reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- Bonding to school—Your child cares about her school.
- Reading for pleasure—Your child reads for pleasure two or more hours per week.

## Birthday Announcements

Aug. 4 - Christina Newton (16)

Aug. 7 - Demetra Davis (15)

Aug. 8 - Carriene Mosley (16)

Aug. 18 - Shannon Williams (15)

Aug. 21 - Akudo McGee (14)

Aug. 26 - Ishara Pinkney-Lee (15)

Sept. 5 - Kenya Thompson (16)

Sept. 6 - Sade McClinton (17)

Sept. 9 - Somaya Anderson (14)

Sept. 14 - Saeida Bethea (14)

Sept. 17 - Arith Reyes (16)

## Final Word

**"To your child, all of life is a 'school.' Every event is educational. Every encounter is instructive."**

Jan Dargatz, author of *52 Ways to Help Your Child Do Better in School*