



Winter
Quarterly
February
2015

THE PMSD ESL CONNECTION

A Message from Dr. Catherine Sweeney

Pocono Mountain School District Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Tips for Parents of ESL Students

Top 10 Tips for Parents of English Language Learners.

10. Make sure your child is prepared for school. This means they are getting plenty of rest and assistance on homework assignments. If you are unable to provide your student with homework assistance, look into programs within your school to help your child.

9. Work with your child's teacher. Talk about problems you've noticed, progress that's been made and ask questions about what they think may help your child.

8. When your child is having difficulty understanding school-work in English explain concepts in your home language first. Once they understand then work on the concept in English.

7. Encourage your child to be proud of your heritage. Find ways for them to incorporate their knowledge of this in their classroom (like on class projects). Encourage them to read and write in your home language. Books in different languages can be found on Amazon.com and other online book retailers.

6. If your stay in the U.S. is not permanent, encourage your child to learn all he or she can while here. Remind them that learning English is not to replace what they already know but instead is to enhance it. Talk to them about their feelings about being in a different place because a lot of time negative feelings can have a huge impact on what is learned. Help your children to feel pride in themselves and their heritage.

5. Have fun with language! Play games such as Scrabble and Boggle to help with English spelling. Use I SPY and ABC Books to increase vocabulary in a fun way. Read the comics in both languages and play games where you think of words in one language and your child has to think of the same word in the other language.

4. Help your child to focus on understanding of books as well as pronouncing the words. Encourage your child to read and read again, in your home language and in English.

3. Your child should be reading books for pleasure at an easy independent level. Encourage them to do this by doing so yourself. These can be in either language and any type of reading: magazines, comics, graphic novels, newspapers, and even online articles. Use every sign, billboard, or menu as an example of reading.

2. Tell your child how important you think school is and encourage him or her to participate in class. Then point out ways you use education daily. Examples could be reading for pleasure, using money in stores, or how you use science, math and language at your job.

1. You need to find a balance in using both English and your home language in your home. When children never hear their home language after they begin school then they begin to lose that language. Bilingual people have more options in our world so your goal should be that your child know both languages well. You should have books in both languages, and watch television in both languages. There might be certain activities where it is more appropriate to use one language or the other and that won't create problems. Above all don't make your child feel embarrassed or ashamed of either language. No language is better than another, but it is important to learn English in order to do well in the United States.

DATES TO REMEMBER



- ☉ January 26th thru March 6th: WIDA ACCESS for ELLs test
- ☉ ONGOING: Kindergarten Registration
- ☉ February 13th and 16th: SCHOOL IN SESSION FOR SNOW MAKE UP DAYS
- ☉ March 4th: 3 hour early dismissal
- ☉ March 12th: ESL Home/School Connection Night @ CREC (Storyteller night)
- ☉ March 24th thru April 8th: PSSAs for Reading and Math grades 3-8
- ☉ April 2nd: SCHOOL IN SESSION FOR SNOW MAKE UP DAY
- ☉ April 3rd: NO SCHOOL FOR SPRING RECESS
- ☉ April 6th: SCHOOL IN SESSION FOR SNOW MAKE UP DAY
- ☉ April 7th thru April 10th: Writing PSSA for grades 5 & 8



A Glance at ESL Around PMSD

SECONDARY NEWS

WJHS: Happy New Year 2015 from WJHS! 8th grade is closing out the first semester by working on vocabulary, grammar, literary skills and finishing Unit 1. 7th grade has been working on parts of speech, vocabulary, literary skills and Easy English News. We are all looking forward to the second semester and all the new and exciting skills it has in store for us!

PMWHS: We are very busy at the WHS as Keystone testing fills our days. Senior students have been obtaining Prom certification during testing. Shortly, ACCESS for ELL's, will be administered to participating students. All grade levels continue with vocabulary, writing development, and reading of interesting novels. Theme identity and analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's, Annabell Lee, has proven to be very interesting and a challenge. Once testing is completed, we anticipate delving into more novels! Keep warm as we move through our winter season!!!



EJHS: The EJHS students are completing the Study Island benchmarking and preparing for different State exams. Writing skills is a current area of focus with essay writing being front and center! We have finished our novel, Freak the Mighty, and are writing our final essays about the book.

PMEHS: ESL in the EHS is preparing for the many tests that will occur during second semester. We are working on writing structures and essay writing. Also, we will be completing research papers - a graduation requirement for seniors. We finished reading our novels (Tears of a Tiger) and are moving on to Macbeth by William Shakespeare

ELEMENTARY NEWS

SIS: At Swiftwater Intermediate School our students have been busy practicing their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Also, thank you to our parent visitors for sharing their time, stories and foods from their families' culture. We look forward to more parent visitors in January, February and March. Mrs. Malinowski and Ms. Menendez wish you all a healthy and happy 2015!

CRIS: Students in Mrs. Garrett's, Mrs. Gonzalez's, and Ms. Snipas' classes have been busy reading novels, writing, comparing and contrasting, reading biographical nonfiction, and getting ready for the WIDA state ESL testing since returning from Winter Break. It has been a busy new year so far with much to look forward to!

CREC: During the month of December second grade students read about how trees start out as tiny seeds. In science and social studies students learned about how Christmas is celebrated around the world. First grade read about fish, they learned there are many different fish in the ocean. They celebrated the holidays by having Polar Express day. Kindergarten finished learning the -ap, -at, and -ag word families. They made special holiday gifts to give to their families.

TEC: Happy New Year! The ESL Students at Tobyhanna Elementary Center are working hard in the New Year. The students are preparing to take the annual WIDA ACCESS language proficiency test. We hope to start this test the week of January 26, 2015. All the students have been given a parent letter to bring home. Please make sure you ask your child about this letter. Have a great New Year!

SEC: Starting the week after winter break, students in Mrs. Davis' ESL classes began a project on "Understanding your Classmates." Each week one student is showcased on a bulletin board entitled: "All About Me." The students complete a biographical sketch highlighting their likes/dislikes and cultural background. Their families are invited to come in during their child's special week to present features of their cultures, i.e., music, traditional dress, and foods to the class. After the presentation, all students are welcome to partake in any of the dishes that are brought in, along with the recipes in case someone in the class is allergic. Everyone enjoys the celebrations of "Me."

Test-taking tips for your child:

With the ESL state test (WIDA ACCESS) upon us , as well as PSSAs and Keystones quickly approaching, here are some test-taking tips for parents and students to keep in mind for standardized testing.

PARENTS:

- * Make sure your children have eaten well on test days. Studies suggest that good nutrition is related to improved attention and concentration.
- * Help your children by encouraging a good night's rest before exams. Children who are tired will have difficulty focusing on their work.
- * Make the morning of test days pleasant. Stress will impair your children's ability to perform their best.
- * Remind your children to dress comfortably, perhaps in layers, so that they are able to adjust to the temperature in the room.
- * Ensure that your children make it to school on-time so that they do not miss any instructions and are allowed ample time to settle in and relax before the test begins.
- * Have students attend school regularly and be on time every day.

Sources:

http://www.keydatasys.com/common/downloads/Parent_Test_Taking_Tips.pdf,

<http://www.scholastic.com/resources/article/standardized-tests/>

STUDENTS:

- * Come to school prepared, rested, and ready to learn every day.
- * Get a good night's sleep the night before the test.
- * Eat a good breakfast before the test.
- * Read/listen to the directions carefully. If something is unclear, ask for clarification.
- * Read every possible answer--the best one could be last.
- * If you get stuck on a question, mark it and move on. You can come back to it later.
- * Make sure to record the answer in the correct place on the answer sheet.
- * Only change an answer if you are sure the first one you picked was wrong. Be sure to completely erase changed answers.
- * After completion of the test, use any remaining time to check your answers.
- * Keep a good attitude. Think positively!

KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION

Calling all 2015-2016 Kindergarten students!

We need you to schedule your appointment to register your child!

NEW PROCEDURES ARE IN PLACE FOR KINDERGARTEN REGISTRATION:

If you have a child who meets the eligibility for the 2015-2016 school year Kindergarten class, please contact the Pocono Mountain School District Central Registration Office at 839-7121 ext. 40400 to schedule an appointment. The child must be five (5) years of age or more, on or before September 1, 2015.

After the registration process has been completed, your child will be scheduled for a Kindergarten orientation session sometime in the spring at their respective school building.

The required documents are available on-line at www.pmsd.org

It is strongly recommended that you complete all required documents prior to your scheduled appointment.



ESL STAFF SPOTLIGHT

We continue the newest feature to debut in the quarterly newsletter this school year, an interview of one of the ESL teachers around the district. Ms. Rosemarie Toussaint is featured in this issue. Ms. Toussaint is an ESL Program Specialist at Clear Run Elementary Center. Read all about her below!



Ms. Toussaint's Interview

Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade ESL, CREC

Do you like being a teacher?

I love being a teacher. I enjoy working with children. Seeing them succeed gives me great satisfaction.

How many years have you been teaching?

I have been a teacher for fifteen years.

Where were you born?

I was born in Guyana, South America.

Were you named after anyone?

No. My mother thought that it was a beautiful name. I was her first daughter, and so she gave me the name.

Are you married? Do you have children?

I am married, and I have four grown children.

Do you like your handwriting?

No. My handwriting is not very neat. I always admire people with neat penmanship. Unfortunately, I am not one of them.

Do you have any pets?

No. I don't have any pets

If you were another person would you be friends with you?

Yes. If I were another person I would be friends with me. I believe that I am a good person.

Do you still have your tonsils?

I still have my tonsils even though I suffered from tonsillitis a lot during my childhood.

Did/Would you bungee jump?

Absolutely not! I would never consider it. I am not a very adventurous person and I am also terrified of heights.

What is your favorite Ice Cream?

My favorite ice cream is Butter Pecan.

What is your favorite kind of music/Musician?

My favorite kind of music is R&B, but I like lots of other kinds of music as well. My favorite singer is Luther Vandross.

ESL PARENT SPOTLIGHT

Another new aspect of this year's newsletter making its debut in this issue is the "PARENT SPOTLIGHT CORNER." In this Issue, a parent from PMSD's East Campus chose to write a letter about her and her family's experience with ESL in Pocono Mountain School District.

To Whom it May Concern,

I wanted to share my lovely experience with ESL and ELA. I have 3 of my daughters that have not only benefited but to say the least that it has made a big difference in their lives. Thanks to the wonderful teachers like Mrs. Malinowski, as well as Mrs. Ritchie, they have helped my daughter, Ayah, and have taken the time to see her grow and become a wonderful young lady who's in sixth grade. When my daughter first started in Kindergarten, she was not only a handful, I but had no idea what to do. Over the years with the wonderful care and guidance of the wonderful staff, my daughter Ayah has bloomed and blossomed and is doing wonderfully. My daughter is now able to be on the honor roll. So thanks to all of the dedicated teachers and the great ESL program that exists in the Pocono Mountain School District; it has helped me and my daughter grow in so many ways. Thank you so much.

From a concerned parent,

Nuha Al-Alfi

Home/School Connection

On October 16th, ESL families from around the Pocono Mountain School district came together for an "ESL Movie Night" with popcorn. Information from WIDA webinars was presented to parents including:

- What does it mean to be an English language learner?
- How is my child expected to use language in school?
- What does the ACCESS for ELLs Parent/Guardian Score Report tell me?

ESL teachers were on hand to answer any questions and share in the evening with families. Another evening is being planned for the near future! Stay tuned for more details!



Mrs. Casablanca Retires

The ESL department wished one of our own a happy retirement in January. Mrs. Evelyn Casablanca retired after teaching for over 40 years; most of them in the Pocono Mountain School District.

During her years of service with PMSD, Mrs. Casablanca was involved with many programs. For Clear Run Elementary Center, she participated in numerous cultural awareness events. She helped implement the award winning, "Home School Connection" program that brought ESL parents into meetings to discuss school programs, laws, and other topics to help non-English speaking parents interact with the schools. She participated in Read Across America and the more recent "Ambassadors in Reading" program. The goals were to provide parents with reading skills to teach their children. These skills linked the classroom lessons to the home.

For her, the most rewarding work was the 1/2 day ESL Kindergarten program. Even today when Mrs. Casablanca runs into the students of this program she learns how they reached fluency and are succeeding in their college careers or with other life goals. "It's very rewarding to know that during this concentrated time in learning the language, I help them succeed in life."

Through the years she has been an asset to the district. She wore many 'hats': teacher, translator, ESL Department Head, and Mentor. As well as outside programs: Instructor for the IU20 (ESL Program Specialist courses and Spanish for Educators), State presenter (For Adult Education), and many more!

When asked what she will miss most about teaching, Mrs. Casablanca said, "The children!" She loved being a part of their educational process and seeing them grow. She is very grateful for the many years of teaching that she enjoyed at Pocono Mountain.



SAVE THE DATE: Home School Connection

"Bed Time Stories from Around the World"

On March 12 (snow day March 26) The ESL Home School Connection will once again host the professional story teller, Lisa Facciponti!!!! Come out for story time! Students can wear their pajamas, bring their favorite teddy bears, and bring a blanket! If you missed Lisa Facciponti last year, she is back! We received so much positive praise that we asked her to return! Ms. Facciponti will do a fun, interactive story with the crowd! After the story, we will enjoy hot chocolate and cookies as we share reading a book with our parents, so also be sure to bring your favorite bedtime story!

Reading is essential to language growth and academic performance! Come and experience the wonderful world of reading!

Date: March 12
Place: CREC
Time: 6-8pm



Pocono Mountain School District

Mission & Vision Statement

**To prepare all students for tomorrow's challenges and opportunities.*

**To create a culture of achievement, improve student performance, maintain safe schools, and promote strong character.*



Home Help Tips for Parents of ESL Students

- Establish specific routines for your child to follow.
- Practice vocabulary daily with your child using household objects.
- Read to your child daily in your native language or English.
- Practice good study habits daily. Set aside a time for your child to study on a regular basis.
- Have family meetings where your child is the leader of the discussions. Allow your child to speak in either English or the native language.
- Visit the ESL resource site at the PMSD main web page. Plentiful resources for parents to use at home are available.
- www.pmsd.org

The Pocono Mountain School District's ESL Program is a regular education program that is aligned with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's ESL standards.

A specialized, certified ESL teacher works with students in large or small groups.

A program designed to assist students with the reading, speaking, listening, and writing of the English language.

ESL is NOT a bilingual program.

