



# THE PMSD ESL CONNECTION

## A Message from Dr. Catherine Sweeney

### **Pocono Mountain School District Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction**

#### **Homework Tips for Parents of ELLs**

Homework is important for students and their academic success, but helping children with homework can be difficult — especially if you are still learning English. Here are some ways you can make homework easier for everyone — and remember that your involvement is the key to your child's success, no matter what language you are using!

#### **The homework routine**

Help your child get organized

Help your child pick out a special homework notebook or folder, and make sure your child has homework supplies, such as:

- pencils
- pens
- writing paper
- a dictionary

*Get into a routine:* Set a regular time for homework every day, and look for a homework area with good lighting. Help your child get into the habit of getting homework done before doing other activities.

*Limit distractions:* Turn off the TV and video games, and restrict phone calls and texting during homework time. If your child is using the computer for homework, check in periodically to make sure he is getting homework done.

#### **Talking about homework**

*Show your child that you think homework is important*

Ask your child about her homework each day, and check to see that it is completed. Even if you don't understand the assignment or don't speak English, you can still check to see that it is finished. Tell your child that you are proud of the work she is doing.

#### *Don't be afraid to use your native language*

Talk with your child about what she is learning, and ask her to explain new concepts to make sure she understands them.

#### *Study the same things in different ways and places*

Help your child learn about new words or content in a variety of ways. Talk about new vocabulary words several times over the course of the week, in different settings. This will help enrich your child's understanding of the word.

*Let your child choose the first subject to study*

Often, this is the one that your child likes the best. The next subject should be the hardest, and then your child can finish in any order.

#### *Space out the learning*

If your child has a big test coming up next week, help her study a little bit each day rather than cramming it in the night before. An hour or so every other day, spacing out the learning, is a better way to really learn the material.

#### *Help your child without doing their homework*

It's important to answer questions if you can — but remember that homework is supposed to help children learn and that doing your child's homework does not help in the long run.

#### **Extra help**

##### *Use the library for books and computers*

The school and public libraries are great places for homework help, books, reference resources, and computer/Internet access.

##### *Learn about your school's after-school programs*

If your child needs extra help or you work late, your child may be able to find extra help in an after-school program. Ask your child's teachers if any programs are available at your school.

##### *Talk with your child's teacher*

Find out what the teacher's homework rules are. If your child has a problem completing or understanding homework, call or e-mail the teacher to talk about the issue. Request or bring an interpreter if necessary to communicate with your child's teacher.

## **DATES TO REMEMBER**



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|---|---|
| ☺ January 18th: NO SCHOOL—<br>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day | ☺ February 26th: NO SCHOOL—<br>parent/teacher conferences<br>8AM-3:30 |
| ☺ January 25th: ESL ACCESS<br>testing begins              | ☺ March 2nd: 3 Hour Early<br>Dismissal                                |
| ☺ February 12th: NO SCHOOL—<br>Inservice                  | ☺ March 24th thru March 28th:<br>School Closed for Spring<br>Recess   |
| ☺ February 15th: NO SCHOOL—<br>President's Day            | ☺ March 29th: School<br>Reopen!!!!                                    |



## A Glance at ESL Around PMSD

### SECONDARY NEWS

**WJHS:** Students at the WJHS are reading short stories and novels and continuing to work on vocabulary, grammar and literary terms and devices. We wish everyone a happy and healthy 2016!



**PMWHS:** May all be fortunate to have a happy and healthy 2016! We, at West, continue to work to increase our English language skills. Through reading of novels, writing and conversation, we strive for improvement. Our goal will be achieved through teamwork!

**EJHS:** The 7th grade students read, "Tom Sawyer" and completed PowerPoint presentations on different topics based on the novel. 8th grade completed "Romeo and Juliet" and looked at different literary characteristics and poetry. Both groups are reading "A Christmas Carol" and a writing project will follow. All students continue to practice new vocabulary and focus on different grammar skills.

**PMEHS:** Second quarter has been busy for the EHS ESL students. We completed our first novel, "The First Part Last", and have begun exploring the early settlers, puritans, pilgrims and will be analyzing "The Crucible". We continue to increase our active vocabulary and focus on different grammar skills.

### ELEMENTARY NEWS

**SIS:** At Swiftwater Intermediate School our students have been busy practicing their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills through a variety of stories and Reader's Theaters plays. In addition, our students have been writing research papers about different countries around the world. Mrs. Malinowski and Ms. Menendez wish you all a healthy and happy 2016!



**CRIS:** ESL students at CRIS have been busy working on many skills. In particular they have been working on writing, including comparing and contrasting writing projects. The students are also very excited for the winter/holiday break, working on various holiday/winter activities with Mrs. Garrett, Mrs. Gonzalez, and Mrs. Haggerty.

**CREC:** On December 4, 2015 Clear Run hosted "Under the Lights" many students and their families attended a good time was had by all. Students have been participating in many different activities such as The Brain Show Mania Assembly and PTO Book Fair. It has been a great year at Clear Run Elementary Center, we look forward to 2016!

**TEC:** The ESL Students at Tobyhanna Elementary Center have been working very hard and are really excited for their holiday vacation. First grade ESL students have been learning new sight words and had the opportunity to learn about Hanukkah with a fourth grade class. Second grade ESL students have been reading nonfiction stories and writing the main idea of the story. Third grade students are reading about the many different holidays all over the world. Kindergarten students have been listening to the middle vowel sounds in words and practicing reading Consonant Vowel Consonant words. All of the students wrote about how their families celebrate the holidays and were able to decorate the class Christmas tree. We hope everyone has a great holiday and Happy New Year.

**SEC:** Kindergarten students were singing songs and playing word-matching games to learn rhyming words. They were creating patterns in their math classes and comparing and contrasting fairy tales. First grade worked on writing stories in sequential order and identifying the Problem and Solution in stories they read. The second and third grade students were able to share and write how they celebrate the holidays and why it's special to them. All students work is on display in the hallways and display cases at SEC. Great job everyone! We hope everyone had a restful Winter break and a joyous New Year!

# ESL STAFF SPOTLIGHT

We continue our feature in the quarterly newsletter this school year, an interview of one of the ESL teachers around the district. Mrs. Michele Mascia is featured in this issue. Mrs. Mascia is an ESL Program Specialist at the East Junior High and East High school. We were so happy she agreed to be interviewed for the newsletter! She had a few of her students interview her for this segment.

Below is their work.

Mrs. Mascia is the ESL teacher for the East High School and East Junior High school. She has been a teacher for 12 years at Pocono Mountain School district and this is her second year as ESL Department Head. She loves working in ESL because she learns about different people from different cultures all around the world! Best job ever! She was inspired to become a teacher by her great grandparents who were teachers! Even as a child, she wanted to be a teacher.

She was interviewed by her 7<sup>th</sup> period, 7<sup>th</sup> grade students:

The first thing the students wanted to know is, "Were you named after someone?" Yes, she was named after her mother's best friend, Michele. Speaking of friends, she met her longest best friend in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Her first job was working in a convenient store. She was the only person in the store, so she had to do all the jobs: cashier, deli counter, stock, ice cream cones, clean...

The farthest she has been from home is Spain. She lived in Valencia, Spain while taking college courses.

When meeting new students, the first thing she notices is their smiles. Smiles are important when the student is struggling to understand the language - everyone smiles in the same language!

She does not have any desire to bungee jump. The most dangerous adventure she has in mind would be to go diving with sharks in a shark cage!

When asking her about sports, she made it very clear that no one wants to see her play a sport! Very scary! But, she does like to watch football - Steelers! Or watching school sports because she knows the players! Go, Cardinals!!

She enjoys fishing, camping and canoeing. She likes going to the movies. She frequently goes to the Casino Movie Theatre to enjoy dinner and a movie! And, she can't wait for the new Star Wars movie!!!! She also loves reading which all the students know because she preaches about it all the time! READ!!!!

Her favorite food is pie! She loves pie! All types of pie! And her favorite cereal is frosted flakes. Sugar! Shamrock shakes are another guilty pleasure - luckily they are only sold for a short time!

Her screen savers are her children and her yorkie dog, Gilligan!

Though she doesn't have a favorite genre of music, her most recent music purchase was Adele 25.

She has never had any major surgeries so her tonsils are still there.



## WIDA ACCESS: PARENT NOTIFICATION

You should be receiving the following letter making you aware that your child or children will be participating in the test.



## Pocono Mountain School District

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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Between January 25, 2016 and March 4, 2016, ELL students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade will participate in the administration of the ACCESS for ELLs language proficiency test. ACCESS provides a standardized measurement of academic language proficiency for English Language Learner (ELL) students throughout the state of Pennsylvania. Each form of the test assesses the four language domains of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. With this information, we will also be able to monitor individual ELL student progress on an annual basis.

If you have any questions regarding these tests, please contact your child's ELL teacher, the building principal, or me.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Catherine Sweeney*

Dr. Catherine Sweeney  
 Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction



# Homeschool Connection News!!!

On October 14, the first Home School Connection night occurred at Swiftwater Elementary Center. The focus of this night was ESL: rules, laws, entrance, exit, testing and more!!!!

Perhaps the night was not as fun as other HSC nights, but it was filled with essential information on how PMSD meets the needs, legal and educational, of its ELLs.

Four round-robin rooms were set-up. Two rooms showed WIDA's ESL program informational movies. These videos, one in English and one in Spanish, discuss the importance of ESL classes in assisting non-English speaking student in achieving their language goals for academic success. In a third room, Karen Davila-Davis hosted a presentation on PMSD's ESL testing and exit criteria. Another room was set up for a movie and snack to keep young ones entertained while parents attended the educational questions and answer rooms.

Also, the cafeteria hosted tables of information that included community awareness, school policy and procedures, plus some information for Parent/Teacher conferences.

Keep your eyes open for more HSC nights to be schedule during the second semester!



## 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.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!



# Former ESL Student Spotlight:



How ESL class has helped me.....

Anna (Zysk) Kopala – Class of 2002 - CPA – “The ESL program helped me by equipping me with the necessary fundamentals of the English language. The course made me more competent and confident in my abilities to further my education with great success.”

Sunday Nah –Class of 2003 – Computer Science -“I am very appreciative of the opportunities that the ESL program provided me with during my high school years. ESL has given me the ability to understand the English language through reading and interacting with one another in the classroom. Mrs. Colyer was a guardian to all of my classmates and I. Today, I am a college graduate and have a career in Information Technology. I don’t know how my life would have been without Mrs. Colyer and the ESL program.”

Luis Ferrin – Class of 2013 – Full time student- “ESL helped me while we worked in groups with one another. It helped me understand vocabulary that I didn’t know and I learned about other cultures and had a better understanding of them. I learned to find key information while reading and I developed better communication skills.”

Raheem Grant – Class of 2015 – Full time student - “During my years in ESL class, I learned a lot. I learned the differences between verbs, nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, and more. ESL taught me how to be a better reader, write comprehensive paragraphs, and expand my vocabulary. ESL class was a plus for me.”

## 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](http://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.*

