

A Short History of Pennsylvania Department of Education's State Parent Advisory Council

In 1990 the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) formed the Title I State Parent Advisory Council (SPAC) to serve as the collective voice of Title I parents across the state. These parents met periodically with the Division of Federal Programs to offer recommendations about the best ways to meet the needs of Pennsylvania's Title I parents. After the initial meetings with the Division of Federal Programs staff, it became apparent that these parent volunteers were willing and able to assume a more active role in improving the academic performance of Title I students across the Commonwealth.

Like all parents, the current SPAC members want to help their children do their best in school. These parents commit to gaining a clear understanding of the parent and family engagement components of Title I requirements and then sharing their knowledge with other parents and school staff in Pennsylvania through a variety of strategies. Parent volunteers in SPAC focus on all aspects of parent and family engagement, from working with children at home to developing partnerships between parents, teachers, administrators, and community leaders to create effective and engaging parent and family engagement programs.

SPAC membership fluctuates from between 12 to 20 volunteers. Interested parents submit written applications to the Division of Federal Programs at PDE. Diversity in the membership is important as is a sincere interest and commitment to increasing student achievement through focused parent and family engagement. The membership includes parents from diverse racial groups; two-parent, single parent, and adopted families; urban, rural, and sub-urban schools; plus a wide spectrum of income and education levels. Despite their varied backgrounds, each SPAC member is an involved parent in their children's schools.



Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV SPAC Staff

Lorinda Hess

lorinda.hess@miu4.org

Carrie Fusco

1-800-942-8035 x1244

carrie.fusco@miu4.org

For more information about SPAC
please visit our website at:
www.spac.k12.pa.us

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Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV
Dr. Wayde Killmeyer, Executive Director

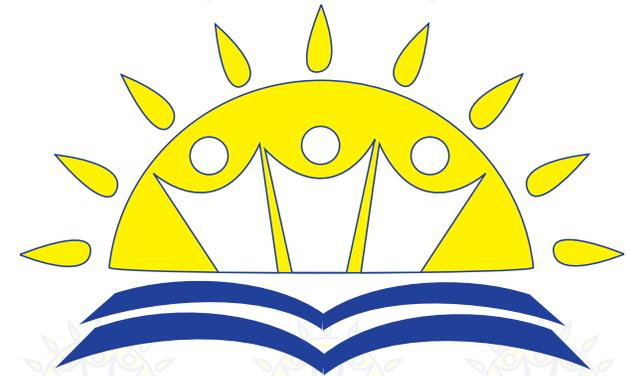
453 Maple Street
Grove City, PA 16127
724-458-6700

www.miu4.org

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Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV

PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL



S P A C
State Parent Advisory Council

www.spac.k12.pa.us

Title I schools can participate in SPAC activities in the following ways:

Parent Involvement in Education (PIE) Consultant Technical Assistance Visits

The purpose of technical assistance visits is to provide support, on-site training, and follow-up to schools that want to go beyond the minimum Title I parent and family engagement mandates. PIE consultants act as parent and family engagement facilitators to get parents and school staff working together from the beginning of the process and to provide non-threatening, parent-centered support to districts. Consultants visit LEAs to deliver site-based training to parent and family engagement groups, emphasizing the importance of working together to help children succeed and sharing strategies to rally family-school-community partnerships.

In support of promoting “best practices” and more effective parent and family engagement, SPAC encourages schools to consider providing professional development to staff and parents simultaneously.

Some topics for parent-focused workshops include *Raising Rock Star Readers*, *Texting: How Well Do You Know Your Teen?*, *Positive Parenting*, *“Perk Up” Reading, Writing, and Speaking Skills w/Children*, *Mindful of the Invisible Backpack*, *Knowledge is Power*, and *Title I Involvement Requirements*.

PIE visits to schools include

- An initial conversation with the principal or Title I teachers to list the specific parent and family engagement needs in the school,
- the actual school technical assistance visit or workshop(s),
- a comprehensive report that describes the parent and family engagement strengths and challenges in the school along with suggestions for strengthening parent and family engagement, and
- a follow-up conference call and survey from SPAC’s communications coordinator to measure the progress that the school has made in increasing the parent/school connection.

PDE requires PIE consultants to maintain up-to-date content knowledge related to the law, parent and family engagement strategies, and effective practices related to Title I, and new/updated SPAC initiatives.

It is easy to get more information about technical assistance visits. Simply go to the SPAC website and download a Technical Assistance Visit Request.

Annual Title I Parent Training Conference

During summer vacation, SPAC hosts an annual parent training conference at Seven Springs Resort in Champion, PA. It is unique because it is the only parent conference in the state to offer a day camp for children ages 4 to 12 while their parents attend workshops.

Parents from 100 LEAs attend the annual conference at Seven Springs Mountain Resort each summer. Each parent can choose from numerous breakout workshops, general sessions, panel discussions, networking, and family-centered activities. Many of the presenters’ handouts are on the SPAC website. Parents and teachers are welcome to use these PowerPoint presentations in their Title I meetings at their schools. SPAC will pay for one Title I parent from each LEA to attend the conference, space permitting.

Regional Meetings and Workshops

SPAC has presented at numerous national, statewide, and district meetings and workshops. National conferences include the National Association for Bilingual Education, National ESEA Conference, and the National Coalition for Title I Parents. Recent state conferences include the annual Pennsylvania Association of Federal Programs Conference, the Governor’s Institute for Parental and Family Engagement, the Family Involvement Conference, and Improving Schools Performance Conference.

Parent Resource Center

Midwestern Intermediate Unit IV houses a Title I Parent Resource Center that distributes information to parents about such topics as attitude and motivation, parent and community involvement, Title I program resources, child safety, parents in the military, and helping children learn. Title I parents can request a single copy of up to ten free booklets that might help them to discuss important issues with their kids.

Parents have two ways of accessing the resource center order forms. Twice each year, the intermediate unit sends a memo and order form to each LEA, or parents can download a form on the SPAC website. It is common for staff to fill at least 5,000+ requests for resources every year.



**Annual Title I
SPAC Conference
Seven Springs Mountain Resort
July 8-10, 2019**