

Parenting Connection

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Students Assess Impact of Parenting Inside Out Program

In their *Interrupting the Intergenerational Cycle of Criminality through Parent Training* workshop at the 2008 Annual CEA Conference in Denver, Tracy Schiffmann, Ed.M., Schiffmann Curriculum Design & Training, and Lauren Booth, Executive Director at the Children's Justice Alliance, emphasized how Oregon's Parenting Inside Out program (PIO) brought together the best from the research and practitioner worlds to create a parenting education program specifically designed for corrections.

In the process of developing PIO, a team from the non-profit Oregon Social Learning Center (OSLC) and the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC) were careful to include assessment tools in the program. In addition, the Children's Justice Alliance and its service delivery arm, Pathfinders of Oregon conducted a Post Graduation Survey. This survey was also conducted to evaluate the impact participants feel PIO had on their family's involvement with the child welfare system, as well as on their skill development, skill implementation, and parenting confidence.

The following are survey results from parents who graduated from PIO while incarcerated in an Oregon state prison and were still incarcerated at the time of the survey.

Parenting role post release:

80% of parents expect to be in a parenting role with their current children following their release from prison. Each Parent expects to be responsible for an average of 2.16 children.

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The Parenting Connection is a publication of the Parenting Special Interest Group and the Wisconsin Chapter of the Correctional Education Association.

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Visitation:

When asked how often they receive visits from their children, the incarcerated parents reported that 18% of them receive no visits, 3% receive annual visits, 23% receive monthly visits, 26% receive visits more than once per month, and 9% receive weekly visits.

Of minor children brought to visit their incarcerated parents, 44% are brought by their caregiver, 27% are brought by their case worker, 12% are brought by a family member, and 6% are brought by a mentor or social service provider.

83% of the parents who are receiving visits from their children reported that their visits are now more beneficial to them and to their children as a result of applying skills they learned in PIO.

School age children and educational involvement:

86.4% of respondents have school aged children. Only 5.3% of those parents with school aged children have participated in a parent-teacher teleconference during their incarceration. Of those with school age children, 75.9% of parents are interested in talking with their child's teacher or school counselor by phone in order to play a more active role in their child's education.

Communication with caregiver:

60.9% of respondents reported that they have regular communication with their child's caregiver. 75.6% reported that PIO helped them communicate more effectively with the caregiver(s).

Communication with DHS Case Worker:

59.4% reported that they currently have a DHS Case Worker. Of those, 73.2% reported having contact with their DHS Case Worker during their incarceration. Of those with a DHS Case Worker, 48.8% reported that their communication with their DHS Case Worker had improved since taking PIO and 70.7% reported that they have discussed their progress in the PIO classes with their DHS Case Worker.

Communication as an advocate for their children:

40.6% of respondents have advocated for their children to receive services or participate in programming in the community. When parents advocated for their children, they requested the following services/programs/activities: Counseling=4%, Camp=4%, Sports=4%, Visits=15%, Mentoring=18%, Home Visiting=9%, Girl Scouts Beyond Bars & Cub Scouts=15%, Education=18%, Early Childhood=13%. Of those who did advocate on behalf of their children, 67.9% of parents reported that their advocacy was successful and their children received the services/programming requested.

Skills learned in PIO:

When asked what the two best parenting techniques learned in PIO were, parents reported 78 different skills and techniques that they viewed as the most beneficial things they learned. Of those, the parenting techniques and skills that were reported most frequently were:

- Communication (with caregiver, children, and other adults in child's life)
- Emotion Regulation
- Stages of Development
- Problem Solving
- Love Language
- Listening Skills

Recommendation of PIO to others:

92.8% of respondents have encouraged others to participate in PIO.

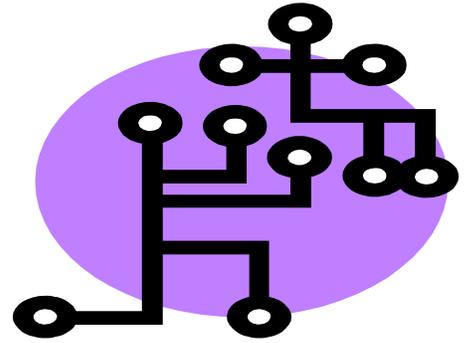


Self-evaluation of parenting skills before and after PIO:

When asked to rate their parenting skills on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the most positive) after completing PIO, no parents rated their skills as a 1 or a 2, 7 rated their skills as a 3, 29 rated their skills as a 4, and 23 rated their skills as a 5.

Summary of rating changes before and after PIO:

- 10% reported no improvement in their parenting skills
- 30% reported that their parenting skills improved by one point on the scale of 1-5
- 38% reported that their parenting skills improved by two points on the scale of 1-5
- 17% reported that their parenting skills improved by three points on the scale of 1-5
- 3% reported that their parenting skills improved by four points on the scale of 1-5



A list of the PIO lesson topics may be found in the “Oregon’s Parenting Inside Out Program” article in the September/October 2007 issue of the *Parenting Connection* newsletter. That newsletter may be found on the www.ceawisconsin.org website.

There are currently three versions of the curriculum: Prison, Jail, and Community. Classroom time for the prison version is 90 hours. The community version includes 48 hours of classroom time and the jail version includes a minimum of 24 classroom hours. All versions of the Parenting Inside Out curriculum are now available for sale nationwide. Those interested in implementing PIO in their state or community agency should contact Lauren Booth at 503-892-5396 or lauren@childrensjusticealliance.org for more information about products and training opportunities

Bridging the Gap

Again this year, CEA-Wisconsin has teamed with the Wisconsin Technical College System and Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to plan workshops for the 2008 Wisconsin GED/HSED & Adult Literacy Conference to be held at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton on October 21-23.

If you work or volunteer in family literacy, ESL, ABE instruction, inmate education, or community-based organization or literacy programs, or if you are a GED examiner or administrator, GED/HSED teacher, or disability specialist – this exciting educational opportunity is for you! Among the over 50 different sessions planned is a track of sessions designed by and for corrections educators.

Barb Rasmussen, teacher; Beth Gilbertson, Education Director; and Pam Petersen, Guidance Counselor at Racine Correctional Institution will present the following workshop for Parenting instructors in corrections.

Bridging the Gap between Incarcerated Parents and Their Kids through Books

Book-sharing is a wonderful tool to help make/maintain family connections for incarcerated parents—and also a great way to increase reading and writing skills. Connect with your “inner child” during this interactive workshop that discusses how Fatheread® is used to promote both family connections and literacy skills.

You can find further details and registration information for the 2008 Wisconsin GED/HSED & Adult Literacy Conference at <http://www.wactonline.org/>.



A Father's Presence

Note: The following story is based on an event that took place at a prison-based summer camp in August 2008 that reunited children with their incarcerated fathers for a week. The camp is sponsored by a non-profit organization called Hope House DC. In addition to summer camps at two prisons each year, Hope House DC provides other services for families separated by prison, including a storybook taping program and video conferencing. The author is a member of the Board of Directors and volunteers each year as a camp counselor. For more information about Hope House DC, please go to: www.hopehousedc.org

Fourteen year old Kenya (all names are pseudonyms) is standing outside the camp latrine, looking up at a star-filled sky, countless and intensive, like the glitter on the boxing mural he worked on with his father that afternoon, and for the past four days, inside prison. I had just checked in on the boys assigned to bathroom clean up, and approached Kenya with what I thought was a casual question, "So what will you be doing when you get back to Buffalo tomorrow night?" An hour later, deep in the same conversation, I noticed little Tre, a 10-year old from Virginia, waiting patiently in the shadows.

It's the last night of Hope House Summer Camp, and the kids are reflective and talkative. Tomorrow will be the last day they spend with their fathers for a while—in Tre's case, possibly for years. Last Monday was the first time Tre had seen his dad since he was five—half a life time ago; Kenya, on the other hand, visits his dad about six times a year. If Tre stays out of juvvy hall and his father remains incident free for the year, they will get a chance to reunite at next summer's camp. For Kenya, however, this is his last one; campers age out at 14. But, when he turns 16 he is eligible to come back as a junior counselor. I hope he does; he sets a good example for the younger ones: self-possessed and focused on a better future.

Kenya is an athlete, and lethally good looking. His hardest year was seventh grade, when he squeaked by with D's and E's. He turned a corner this past year. His eighth grade teachers were fond of him and his grades improved to C's. As a rising ninth grader, Kenya expects to make the junior varsity cut as back-up quarterback. But his focus almost came to naught earlier this summer. For a few chaotic weeks, his future slowly spiraled out of reach, like that of many children¹ with incarcerated parents. In early May, an ex-girlfriend began spreading a rumor that Kenya was planning to kill her (which he denies). The next day his ex's ex-boyfriend called Kenya and said he was gunning for him and bringing his whole family along to hunt him down.

While Kenya's story is unfolding, he drifts away from our star-lit rural camp deep in Amish country in western Pennsylvania, to an urban neighborhood in Buffalo. He is in the moment. "At first I think I can just ride this out. Just lay low for a while. But then it's like, I have to take it to the street—even though it's not me—to keep up my respect in the neighborhood. My cousin—we're like brothers—brings over a gun. We call other cousins; they are ready to go to the street for me." His face contorts as he retells the story, which comes from a place so far removed that my attempts to understand only trivialize the crisis: Gunsmoke? West Side Story? The Wire?

This young, composed athlete is almost in tears. He is less storyteller, more plaintiff. "I wake up on Sunday and see the gun. That's when I remember something my father told me: 'It's easy to get into trouble, but a lot harder to get out of it.'" Kenya called off the shoot out. He also left his mother's house and moved in with his uncle across town. (A month later his mother was evicted and moved in with them as well, but that's another story.)

Nothing about his story was meant to impress me. I simply asked Kenya what his plans for the rest of the summer were, and this is what tumbled out. But his story did impress me, greatly. In my eyes Kenya

¹ The Child Welfare League (2004) reports that fifty-five percent of adjudicated youth had a parent in prison.



transformed from a boy to a young man in the course of an hour. Someday he might look back on that decision as one of the most important of his life. And whose voice did he hear in the moment of the decision? His father's. A flawed man to be sure. A man who has been locked up since Kenya was a preschooler. Yet also a man that is profoundly present in his son's life.

Though out of danger—at least for now—Kenya still had a tough decision to make: he could remain with his uncle for the upcoming school year, be surrounded by cousins and an active social life, and attend a mediocre school, or he could move in with his step mother in yet another part of town, be relatively isolated socially, and attend a very good school. In the starlight I asked him if he had made up his mind yet.

He said, yes: tomorrow he was going to ask his father what to do.

by: Bill Muth
Virginia Commonwealth University



Every Child Matters

According to a UNICEF report, the U.S. ranks 20th among 21 rich democracies in child well being. 13 million children live in poverty. 8 million children have no health insurance. 3 million children are abused or neglected. 14 million children are alone after school.

Abundant research proves that we know how to reduce these problems, that we know a lot about healthy human growth and development, and that smart new investments in kids have a huge return on investment. Yet, as a percentage of the federal budget, spending for children is down sharply and the long-term trend remains downward.

If we fail to make new investments in kids, our global competitiveness is threatened, We will have trouble caring for an aging population, and we will have failed in our moral obligation to the generations behind us.

We can do better than this. Our government has a responsibility to provide leadership in providing for the homeland security of our children, but many live in insecurity.

People in every state are stepping up for children and asking the candidates about their plans for the needs of children in the future. Please exercise your right to choose by voting in this election. Our children's futures depend on this.

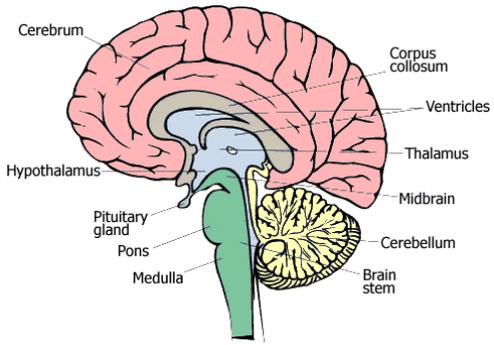


Children of Incarcerated Mothers

The following facts about children of incarcerated mothers were taken from the books *Children of Incarcerated Parents* by Katherine Gabel and Denise Johnston and *Working with Children and Families Separated by Incarceration: A Handbook for Child Welfare Agencies* by Cynthia Seymour and Lois Wright.

- Children are usually between 7 and 12 years old when their mother is imprisoned
- Parental incarceration can cause children to experience trauma, anxiety, guilt, shame, and fear
- As children enter adolescence, their suffering can manifest itself in poor academic achievement, juvenile delinquency, gang involvement, violence, and eventually, adult criminal behavior --- the link perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of criminal justice involvement
- Approximately one in five children of incarcerated mothers witness his or her mother's arrest
- Although 67% of the mothers in jail are primary caregivers for at least one of the children, mothers are allowed few opportunities to make arrangements for her children's care
- About 9% of incarcerated mothers receive visits with their children weekly, 18% monthly, 21% less than monthly, and 52% of mothers receive no visits while incarcerated
- Children of incarcerated mothers experience tremendous instability and uncertainty while their mother is imprisoned
- The "average" child of an incarcerated mother will move at least once and live with at least 2 different caregivers while his or her mother is in prison
- More than 50% of children live apart from their siblings
- Maternal incarceration causes between 19% and 25% of the separations
- Between 1991 and 1999, the number of children with incarcerated mothers nearly doubled
- Children of women in prison have a greater tendency to exhibit many of the problems that generally accompany parental absence including:
 - Low self-esteem
 - Impaired achievement motivation
 - Poor peer relations, withdrawal
 - Feelings like anxiety, shame, sadness, grief, social isolation, and guilt
 - Developmental regression/exhibiting behaviors of younger children
 - Anti-social tendencies in adolescence
- The children of incarcerated parents are five to six times more likely than their peers to end up in prison
- The average prison term for women is 18 months
- According to the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997, states can begin terminating a parent's rights to her child who has been in foster care on an involuntary placement for 15 of last 22 months
- Under AFSA, the state may choose not to file a termination proceeding against a mother with a child who has been in foster care for 15 months if
 1. the child is being cared for by a relative
 2. the foster care agency documents that it would not be in the child's best interests
 3. the foster care agency has not provided the family with appropriate services





Being BrainWise!

BrainWise¹ is for anyone who has ever wondered, "What was I thinking?" and for others who *should* be asking the question, but don't. The BrainWise program provides basic tools, called the 10 Wise Ways, to teach thinking skills. The Colorado Department of Corrections Parent Educators are using the program concepts to

enhance the learning of inmates by teaching and providing materials that help incarcerated mothers and fathers "Be BrainWise".

Developed in 1995 by Patricia Gorman Barry, Ph.D., BrainWise explains complex brain concepts so clearly that children as young as five, as well as adults are able to learn and "Be BrainWise." The "Brainwise" concepts are woven into the lessons of the Parenting From Prison curriculum developed for the Colorado Department of Corrections by Colorado State University Extension CFERT Project. The 10 Wise Ways are taught specifically to the inmates and offer a method that helps them learn to apply thinking skills to a wide range of problems, including parenting skills, reading comprehension, financial literacy, job retention, and disease prevention.

How BrainWise Works

Based in neuroscience and including research on the brain and how it learns, BrainWise helps individuals learn thinking skills (the 10 Wise Ways) and use them to make responsible decisions. The program has been scientifically tested² and is taught successfully cross-culturally in America and other countries, including China.

The 10 Wise Ways are simple terms that explain complex concepts -- how the brain works and why thinking skills are an important component of decision-making.

Many children, youth, and adults have never learned thinking skills, shown by behaviors such as the upset parent shaking a crying child, the mother leaving her children alone while she goes out, selling drugs or an individual violating probation. By helping people understand how the brain works, parent educators at the Colorado Department of Corrections are teaching inmates to "Be BrainWise" and giving them skills to MAKE DREAMS REAL.

For more information on the BrainWise Program go to: www.brainwise-plc.org and www.howtobebrainwise.com

1 "BrainWise", "10 Wise Ways", and "Wizard Brain Over Lizard Brain" are registered trademarks of Dr. Patricia Gorman Barry).

2 Barry, P. and M. Welsh, (2007). The BrainWise curriculum: Neurocognitive development intervention program. In D. Romer and E. Walker (Eds.), *Adolescent Psychopathology and the Developing Brain: Integrating Brain and Prevention Science*. Oxford University Press, New York, N.Y.

For old issues of the *Parenting Connection* newsletter, go to www.ceawisconsin.org



Unlocking the Mysteries 2008: Adolescent Brain Development

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families is sponsoring a training workshop on Adolescent Brain Development at the Madison Department of Corrections Training Center on November 12-13. The training will be similar to the workshop held in Eau Claire on August 21-22.

Speaker/Trainer:

MaryAdele Revoy has over ten years of training design and curriculum development. She has worked in both adult correctional facilities with youth and the state level juvenile justice system. Her work with violence in families has been at national, state and local non-profit agencies. With a Masters in Human Development with an emphasis on adolescent development, she is thrilled about the advancements in brain research and the benefits it can bring to understanding human development, family relationships, and helping adolescents.

About the Training:

This two-day training summarizes the latest research on adolescent brain development and popular trends affecting adolescent programming and treatment.

Participants will learn about:

- Starting at the Beginning: Baby Brain Basics
- When Are They Going to Grow Up? Adolescent Brain Basics
- What Could They Be Thinking? Cognitive Development and the Change Process in Adolescent Development
- Truth or Dare: Risk Taking by the Adolescent Brain
- Mad and Moody: Emotions, Hormones and the Mental Health of the Adolescent Brain
- Teaching Empathy to Kids Who Don't Give a SH*T
- Get Going! Motivating the Adolescent Brain

Date, Time, and Location:

Both days of the training will begin at 9 AM. First day ends at 4 PM. Second day ends at 3 PM.

Cost:

Through an arrangement with the Madison Training Center within the Department of Corrections (DOC), WCCF will be presenting this two-day training to DOC employees and the training will also be open to the general public.

- **Wisconsin DOC Employees:** The training is *free* to WI DOC employees. DOC employees need to complete and fax a DOC-1097 Training Registration form to the DOC Training Center
- **General Public:** Community partners/public members are invited to attend at a fee of \$75.

For more information about *Unlocking the Mysteries 2008: Adolescent Brain Development*, please contact MaryAdele Revoy by telephone: (608) 284-0580, ext. 328 or via email at mrevoy@wccf.org

Check out the Parenting Special Interest Group
Discussion Forum at www.ceanational.org



Touchpoints: Building Families, Strengthening Communities

On Thursday, November 20, 2008 from Noon-1:30 pm, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families will present a special luncheon with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton and Dr. Joshua Sparrow. The presentation entitled "Touchpoints: Building Families, Strengthening Communities" will be held at the Monona Terrace at One John Nolan Drive, Madison, WI. The charge for the luncheon is \$40 per person.

A noted international expert on child development, Dr. T. Berry Brazelton is Clinical Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and the Founder of the Child Development Unit at Children's Hospital, Boston. He is also Founder of the Brazelton Touchpoints Center, which offers programs and services designed to shift the paradigm of care so that our service delivery systems are appropriately focused on discovering and meeting the needs of families.

The Brazelton Touchpoints Center (BTC) at Children's Hospital Boston was founded in 1993 to mobilize communities around children and families in order to bring relationships back into healthcare and to transform child care into family care. To date, BTC has supported the development of over ninety Touchpoints sites around the country.

Dr. Sparrow, child, adolescent, and general psychiatrist, is Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, Director of Special Initiatives at the Brazelton Touchpoints Center, supervisor for outpatient psychiatry services at Children's Hospital, Boston.

Co-author with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton of eight books, Dr. Sparrow most recently collaborated with Dr. Brazelton on the revised 15th anniversary edition of the original *Touchpoints Zero to Three*. He has lectured extensively nationally and internationally on child and adolescent development.

For more information about attending/supporting this event: Please contact Wenona Wolf by telephone: (608) 284-0580, ext. 304 or via email at wwolf@wccf.org or address written inquiries to:

**Attention: Wenona Wolf
2008 Child Policy Forum
WI Council on Children and Families
555 W. Washington Ave, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703**



Editorial-Mary K. Knox

Every Child Matters!!!!!! We can shout those words loud and clear every hour of every day but there seems to be little regard for the message. We work everyday to try to improve the lives of just a few children and our work matters. We have just a few short weeks until all the commotion is over and the work in Washington can begin again. Let's hope that the work will include making the lives of every child in the US a little better.

This issue has some good information on a curriculum using brain based research for working with young parents and the continuation of an article written by folks in Oregon using the Parenting Inside Out Program. I hope to see some of you at the Adolescent Brain Training in November.

In Wisconsin, we are working hard on the International CEA Conference to be held in Madison, WI next summer. If you have any ideas for workshops to promote our parenting, education efforts please send them in. I am also putting out a plea to keep those newsletter entries coming in. I want to hear from all of you.

Enjoy the fall, rake some leaves with the children, make some memories. Stay safe.

Mary K.

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