The call for help usually comes from the director of a preschool school or childcare program who has run out of ideas as to how to deal with a child’s disruptive behavior or support a child’s social emotional development. If the problem is serious enough, the child faces expulsion—an outcome that prior to 2006 was likely, but no longer is today. The small team of consultants in Southwestern Pennsylvania that responds to such calls has worked with some 400 children over the last six years and, more often than not, has been able to come up with an effective plan to help them, their parents, and teachers navigate the stormy times so they can remain in class and avoid a setback to their education.

“Our first goal is to prevent expulsion and then work to improve the social and emotional development and quality of life of the child,” said Sharon Geibel, who is the director of the Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation program at the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development (OCD). “If we can make a change that helps the child and the rest of the class, that’s our gold standard.”

The consultation program administered by OCD is part of a statewide Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation initiative that makes consultants available to all state-registered or certified early care and education facilities enrolled in Keystone STARS, Pennsylvania’s program to promote continuous quality improvement in early learning and school-age environments.

Locally, the program staffs the full-time equivalent of two consultants who cover about 2,000 early childhood education programs, facilitating screenings, making observations and providing referrals and intervention plans for children who’ve yet to enter kindergarten in Allegheny, Fayette, Washington, Westmoreland, and Greene counties. Recently, the OCD Policy Initiatives Division began another project to identify and address the social and emotional needs of young homeless children.

Policymakers and practitioners today are more aware of the need to address mental health issues among young children than ever before. Separating early symptoms of serious issues from behaviors typical of early development has always been difficult. Until a few decades ago, preschoolers and infants were considered far less susceptible vulnerable to such things as trauma and grief than older children, if at all. But advances in brain
research, other studies, and experiences in early childhood education classrooms suggested otherwise.

OCD's involvement in early childhood mental health consultation grew from a pilot program funded by The Heinz Endowments to better assess social and behavioral issues among children in early education programs and find ways to address any problems found. At the time, expulsion from preschool programs was on the rise. In fact, the rate at which young children were being expelled from early education programs was rising faster than the expulsion rate found in Pennsylvania's high schools. And behavioral issues were the most common reason young children were being expelled. Both early behavioral issues and expulsion pose considerable risks to children's futures, particularly to their academic progress, and improving the social-emotional development of such young children emerged as the focus of the consultation program in Southwestern Pennsylvania and across the Commonwealth.

Consultants go to a classroom at the invitation of the director of the early education program the child is enrolled in and with the written permission of the child's parent or legal guardian. They spend several hours in the classroom on more than one occasion observing the child and classroom environment. “We not only try to get a sense of the child’s strengths, challenges, and social and emotional development skills,” Geibel said, “but also the quality of the environment and the relationships that are going to support this child’s social and emotional development.”

Following their observations and talks with teachers and parents, the consultants draft an action plan recommending steps that can be taken in the classroom to support the child's social and emotional development and help resolve problem behaviors. In some cases, referrals are made for mental health and other services. Collaborating with the adults involved, including the early education director, teacher, and parent or other caregiver, is a key part of the approach.

“We start with the child's strengths. By the time we are called, people often have forgotten the child has strengths. We want to remind them of that right out of the gate and to put them at ease, particularly parents. If you know the child’s strengths, then you can use the strengths to address the challenges.”

—Sharon Geibel

State-wide, 73 percent of the children who consultants are asked to help are between the ages of 37 and 60 months and 5 percent of the requests are for children as young as 0-24 months, according to the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning, which funds the program.

During the 2011-2012 fiscal year, self-regulation problems were the reason for 49 percent of the requests for consultation services statewide and 30 percent of requests were for aggressive behavior.

Research suggests early childhood mental health consultation is an effective way to promote social-emotional competence in young children who are having difficulty in preschool and other early learning settings. Portland State University researchers found, for example, that children who receive help from consultants show greater improvement in social-emotional development and decreased problem behaviors than children who don't receive consultation. Teachers report feeling more competent and effective, as well as more sensitive to the needs of children. Early education programs that call in consultants also report benefits, including lower staff turnover and fewer expulsions, according to the study.1

In the past year, 58 percent of the cases undertaken by Pennsylvania’s early childhood mental health consultation program cases were closed with positive outcomes, which are defined as a successful referral to another level of service or meeting the goals of the action plan. Another 36 percent of cases were closed for neutral reasons, such as the family moved or the child changed programs or entered kindergarten. Only 1 percent of the children seen by consultants were expelled from their early education program, down
from 3.7 percent in 2010-2011.

OCD's Policy Initiatives Division last year began another project to address the socio-emotional challenges of young children who are homeless or experience other housing instability in Allegheny County. An estimated 49 percent of the children in homeless shelters throughout the county are under 6 years of age. Some are in early education programs, but many are not.

As part of the project, a full-time consultant is assigned to help identify children and address the challenges they face, including finding a stable early education program in which they might thrive. “Our experience from early childhood and mental health consultation led us to think we needed to have a component to be able to have a consultant available to these families,” said Geibel. “What we were seeing in terms of instability was that the children who had the most challenges were the children who had instability in their lives. How are you going to develop your sense of self when you are in different places with different people all of the time?”

References

The family income of students is a consistent predictor of academic achievement across the United States, where an achievement gap between the most and least affluent students has long persisted and shows no sign of narrowing.

On standardized tests, for example, low-income students are two to three times more likely than students from higher-income families to score at the lowest proficiency levels in reading and math. And recent research shows the gap separating their test scores has grown by more than 40 percent over the last 50 years.

The income-related academic achievement gap is especially pertinent today in the United States, where an estimated 21 percent of U.S. children live in poverty. These children are at risk of performing more poorly than their more affluent peers as early as kindergarten and research suggests the gap widens as they progress through school.

Moreover, school achievement has long-term implications. Economically disadvantaged third-graders who struggle with reading, for instance, are three times less likely to graduate from high school than their more advantaged counterparts. Such findings are in line with studies that show early academic success to be a robust predictor of high school graduation. And failing to graduate deprives students of the improved career prospects, future earnings, and a path toward social mobility that a high school education offers.

Extending the learning time of students is among the approaches used to improve academic achievement, particularly among children from low-income families. Studies find that students from both economically advantaged and disadvantage backgrounds learn at similar rates during the school year. However, lower-income students tend to lose more skills over summer recess than their more affluent peers, who either gain or maintain their academic skill sets.

The current body of research is insufficient to draw conclusions about whether extending learning time is effective in closing the academic achievement gap between lower-income and more affluent students. Studies, however, do find that strategies ranging from extended school years to summer learning opportunities show promise as a means for improving the academic achievement of the lower-income students exposed to them.

### Extended Learning Strategies

Strategies for extending learning time are grounded in the idea that providing additional time in school could boost academic achievement and help prevent the loss of academic skills during summer recess, which research suggests is a particular problem among low-income students.

The most widely used and studied approaches to extend learning time include lengthening the school year, extending the hours in the school day, offering academically focused after-school programs, and providing students with summer learning opportunities.

Extended-year strategies add days to the beginning of the school year, the end, or to both the beginning and end of the school year. For this review, extended year approaches were considered to be any program that added days to the traditional 180-day school calendar. Nearly all added days to the end of the school year. And the programs were distinguished from summer learning opportunities by key design characteristics. Extended-year programs, for example, were largely mandatory and were structured like a regular school day, while the summer learning programs were mainly voluntary and included a mix of academic and enrichment activities.

Extended-day and after-school programs both extend students’ learning time and share a largely academic focus. In this review, extended-day programs are those that lengthen the traditional 6.5-hour school day and are considered to be an extension of the regular school day. An important distinction is that extended-day programs tend to be mandatory for students in a particular school, while after-school programs are often voluntary. Full-day kindergarten programs that operate for more than 3 hours per day fall into the category of an extended day program due to the fact they extend the learning time offered in half-day programs.
Programs considered to be summer learning opportunities operate solely during summer recess and emphasize academic instruction, although enrichment and recreational activities could also be offered. Several program characteristics distinguish summer school from summer learning opportunities. Summer school, unlike summer learning programs, is largely remedial, has mandated attendance policies, and is provided to students in danger of grade retention. Summer learning programs generally offer a mix of academic and enriching opportunities, have a voluntary attendance policy and tend to be shorter in duration than summer school programs.

**Key Characteristics**

Although program design varies widely between and within the types of extended learning programs, recent research identifies several characteristics of those that have been shown to be effective.

An extensive review of summer programs, for example, found certain characteristics to be effective with low-income students, such as making learning enjoyable by joining academic content with enrichment. Effective features also included incorporating hands-on learning activities, small student-to-teacher ratios of roughly 5:1, employing professional teachers, and aligning summer program curriculum with that of the regular school year. It was also noted that economically disadvantaged students might particularly benefit from enriching activities because they often do not participate in school year extracurricular activities.

Several other characteristics have been found to be important to the success of extended learning time programs, including parental involvement and rigorous, engaging programming that encourages student attendance. Among the most important characteristics of effective programs appears to be getting students engaged in learning, which has long been linked to improved achievement outcomes, even after controlling for gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.

Staff training is another key factor. In this review, each of the programs that produced the largest effect sizes employed either professional teachers or volunteers from colleges and universities who received training.

The size of a program in terms of students enrolled can also influence its effectiveness. In general, programs serving larger numbers of students were more likely to produce small or no effect. One study suggests that program size may act as a proxy, with smaller programs allowing for greater flexibility and control among teachers or perhaps relate to socioeconomic circumstances of a community. Programs that produced large effects used small groups or individualized instruction compared those that resulted in small effects, no effect, or negative effects.

**Effectiveness and Conclusions**

The extended learning programs examined in this review were largely beneficial to the students who participated in them, at least to some degree. The programs overall were four times more likely to produce positive student outcomes than to have insignificant or negative effects.

How effective the programs were in promoting academic achievement varied, both within and across the different types of programs. In general, however, the different types of programs did not produce markedly different outcomes and no single program type emerged as the most effective, although evidence suggests summer learning opportunities to be a particularly promising approach to improving academic achievement.

Extended year programs produced small to moderate positive effects, although there were too few programs to draw firm conclusions. Extended day programs, which included full-day kindergarten and academically focused after-school programs, were largely beneficial for students, but the effects tended to be small. The promise of extended learning was more broadly seen among summer learning opportunities, including mandatory summer school. In this review, more than 9 in 10 of the findings for those programs were positive and about half demonstrated effects ranging from moderate to large in size.

**Student Implications**

Recent research suggests extended learning is beneficial to students who are economically disadvantaged, low-performing, and of racial/ethnic minority. One study, for instance, found that economically disadvantaged students experienced nearly twice the benefit of an additional week of classes than students overall.

Other evidence includes an evaluation of a New York City after-school program for highly disadvantaged students, which found that racial/ethnic minorities, low-performing, and low-income students, in particular, were likely to benefit academically, especially those who attended regularly. For example, African American students demonstrated gains in math that increased linearly for each year they participated in the program compared to similar students who did not participate. And after two years in the program,
children who qualified for the federal free lunch program and those in the lowest proficiency levels in math gained roughly one-fifth of a standard deviation unit above similar students who did not participate.\textsuperscript{14}

This review also indicates that younger students tend to be the most likely to benefit from extended learning time, particularly those in kindergarten and first grade. The finding corroborates other studies that report that programs are more effective for younger children than for older children.\textsuperscript{15, 16} The number of studies included in the review that focused specifically on kindergarten students was limited, however.

Studies reporting the benefits of full-day kindergarten compared to half-day kindergarten suggest that it may be especially useful to offer extended learning time programs starting from kindergarten and going forward.\textsuperscript{17} Studies also find that summer vacation becomes increasingly detrimental for academic skills after second grade, which suggests that summer learning opportunities may be advantageous for young children.

**Time and Learning**

Another conclusion drawn from this review is that allocated time does not appear to be linearly related to academic improvement. If that were the case, it would be expected that programs would not produce insignificant or negative outcomes, given that the all of the programs provided students with additional learning time.

The weakest outcomes were generally found among programs whose duration was on the extreme ends of the spectrum—programs that were among those offering the fewest or greatest number of hours. Among summer programs, it appears that the most beneficial duration is somewhere between 70 and 130 hours. For extended-day and after-school programs, it appears that the duration needs to be more than 22 hours, but fewer than 210 hours.

Other researchers have also noted a similar relationship between duration and outcomes. A large-scale analysis of out-of-school time programs, for example, found those that with a duration between 44 and 84 hours and 85 and 210 hours were significantly related to reading improvement among students, while programs with a duration of fewer than 44 hours or greater than 210 hours failed to produce improvements. The same study reported that math programs were most effective when they offered between 46 and 100 hours of instruction. The effects tapered off when program duration exceeded 100 hours, but were still significant.\textsuperscript{18}

**Other Issues**

This review provided some insight into other issues related to extended learning programs, including measuring academic improvement, the impact of academic instruction and enrichment, and program features associated with the largest effects on student achievement.

Among the conclusions drawn is that academic improvement may be better measured by examining changes in particular skills rather than global composite measures. Global measures of reading, for example, may not be sensitive enough to report changes in any one particular skill, such as spelling. Yet understanding how a program affects a range of academic skills is important to informing program improvement.

In addition, the review found evidence that it is just as important to consider when academic improvement is assessed as it is to consider how it being assessed, which supports the findings of other studies that suggest programs are likely to produce significant and larger effects when the pretest and posttest are in closer proximity to one another.

Not all extended learning programs supplement academic instruction with enrichment activities and evidence suggests those that don’t are not necessarily at a disadvantage. Among the programs included in the review, those that offered academic instruction and enrichment did not appear to be more effective than those without enrichment components. Other recent studies have reported that the evidence for enriching programs to yield more positive academic results is mixed and generally low. One study, for example, found enrichment was beneficial in helping students with math, but not necessarily reading.\textsuperscript{19}

The last inference drawn from this review is that there were features of programs, regardless of type, that predicted larger effects. Specifically, small-group instruction and one-on-one tutoring as well as having professional teachers appeared to relate to more effective programs. The finding corroborates previous studies that suggest one-on-one tutoring may be a particularly beneficial strategy for boosting academic achievement.

The review of the research related to extended learning time programs suggests they can be effective mechanisms for improving academic achievement, especially for low-income, low-performing, and racial/ethnic minority students who attend regularly. However, whether extending students’ learning time...
is an effective strategy for closing the achievement gap that separates low-income students from their more affluent peer is a question for which a definitive answer remains elusive. At the moment, there simply isn’t sufficient research specific to the issue from which to draw firm conclusions.

References

This Special Report is a summary of the author’s original paper, “It’s About Time: Extending Learning to Narrow the Achievement Gap.” References noted in the text follow.


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19 Lauer, Akiba, Wilkerson, Athorp, Snow, & Martin-Glenn, op. cit.

Office Announcement

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At Nonprofit Relief Centers, a Glimpse of Those In Need

Last December, Amanda did her Christmas shopping in a church basement in Bellevue. The single mother of two would've gone to Toys 'R Us or Walmart, if she had the money. But her finances were strained, so the gifts her 3-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter would find under the tree would be selected from tables laden with donated toys that the North Hills Community Outreach Holiday Toy Shop offered for free. From time to time last year, she had also relied on the nonprofit's food pantry to help stock her kitchen cabinets during the tougher months.

Amanda is college educated. She holds a full-time job with a social services agency helping troubled teens mend their lives, although recently she hasn't been able to count on steady hours. She has health insurance. “But, I avoid going to the doctor. The copayment is too big,” she said.

Her circumstances are not unlike those experienced by several thousand others who turn to the North Hills nonprofit for help now and then, especially during times of national and regional economic distress. “We see a lot of people in need who are educated and are working,” said Eric Kofmehl, a retired health care executive and North Hills Community Outreach board member, who was serving as a volunteer at the toy shop when Amanda arrived.

Those who rely on the social safety net in times of hardship or whose incomes are not high enough to require them to pay federal income tax became a high-profile topic of debate during the past national election. Nonprofits whose work accounts for part of the safety net offer a glimpse of this population, which by no means is homogenous.

The demographics and economic condition of the communities a nonprofit serves are among the factors that can influence the general characteristics of the population of people who turn up in need of support, as is the type or range of services a nonprofit offers. North Hills Community Outreach, for instance, covers 48 communities, mostly in the Pittsburgh north suburbs, which are notable for the absence of neighborhoods with dense populations of families living in poverty.

The nonprofit offers a wide range of services at its six locations, including two weekly food pantries, emergency relief and utility assistance, employment coaches, budgeting help, legal advice, winter coats for children, used cars at below Kelly Blue Book prices, and senior citizens programs, such as drivers to get them to and from doctor’s appointments and the grocery store. And it does so by stretching limited funds with an army of volunteers and a knack for getting everything from office space to the chairs they sit on donated.

North Hills Community Outreach provided more than $1.6 million in funds, services, and other support to 6,083 families during the past fiscal year with a paid staff of 30 people and about 1,400 volunteers. To receive support, families must register and show that they meet the nonprofit’s financial qualifications, which, for the most part, require household incomes to fall within 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines, with the exception of some programs for seniors.

Executive Director Fay Morgan estimates that about 30 percent of the people the nonprofit serves have disabilities and are unable to work and another 19 percent are senior citizens. “The other 51 percent are basically the working poor.”

“About 30 percent of the people North Hills Community Outreach serves have disabilities and are unable to work and another 19 percent are senior citizens. The other 51 percent are basically the working poor.”

—Executive Director Fay Morgan
they don’t want their children to do without. “They’ll go without a coat that fits or that is warm. But they don’t let their kids go without coats. Like at the toy shop, they go there because they don’t want their kids to go without on Christmas,” Morgan said.

The number of households in Allegheny County and Southwestern Pennsylvania that report having difficulty making ends meet is not insignificant. More than 21 percent of residents in Allegheny County report that they sometimes, often, or always have trouble paying for basic needs such as housing, food, and utilities, according to the 2011 Pittsburgh Regional Quality of Life Survey conducted by the University of Pittsburgh University Center for Social and Urban Research and PittsburghTODAY, a regional indicators project. The same level of hardship is reported by nearly 24 percent of residents across the seven-county Pittsburgh Metropolitan Statistical Area.

“With my salary I qualify for food stamps,” Amanda said as she selected a World Wrestling Federation action figure at the Holiday Toy Shop for her son and a Bath Beauty Belle doll for her daughter, who she describes as a “girly” girl. The nonprofit also gives the children a scarf and a coat, stocking stuffers, and other gifts. “When I have the amount of food stamps that we need, I don’t have to go to the food pantry. When I don’t have enough food stamps is when I have go, but if there’s food there that I don’t like to eat, I tell them to leave it there for someone else.”

That evening, the line began forming at 4:30 p.m. for the 5 p.m. opening of the nonprofit’s North Boroughs Food Pantry in the Allegheny General Hospital Suburban campus in Bellevue. It included several Bhutanese refugee families, who had fled ethnic strife in their country to settle in the neighborhood.

“Most people who come to the pantry come right at the beginning,” said Morgan. “We tell them we will be open until 8 o’clock, but when you are almost out of food or don’t have anything to eat that night, you are going to show up at 4:30.”

Charlotte was among the early arrivals. She’s employed full-time as a security guard. Her husband, a former truck driver, suffered a serious neck injury in a motor vehicle collision and is not able to work. They own a home, where they live with three of their children and two of their grandchildren, including a 10-month-old. Charlotte was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis several years ago. Although drug therapy had succeeded in holding the symptoms in check much of time, they have returned, making her job more physically demanding and future employment uncertain, which is a concern. “I keep working because we need the benefits,” she said.

She and her husband have other concerns. Like many working families who rely on the food pantry, their household finances are fragile. Even with her salary and her husband’s disability check they worry that pending property tax reassessment could make their house payments unaffordable. And feeding her family is always a challenge. The food she would later receive from the pantry—five bags filled with canned goods, produce and other items—“doesn’t last long, about a week and a half or two weeks,” she said. “But without it, we wouldn’t make it.”

Charlotte was one of about 80 north boroughs residents scheduled to receive food from the pantry that evening. Volunteers and staff had worked through the afternoon to stock two rooms with items donated by local grocers, individuals, and organizations and pre-pack bags for the families who would soon arrive. When the doors opened, the shelves were heavy with cereal, pasta, sauce, peanut butter, canned beans, lettuce, potatoes, bread, desserts and more. “By the end of the evening,” Morgan said, “most of it will be gone.”

References

Schools, Human Services Renew A Promising Data-Sharing Pact

It was only about two years ago that human services caseworkers were still in the dark when it came to knowing how any of the Pittsburgh Public Schools students whose cases they worked were performing in class or even whether they attended school regularly. Likewise, city public school officials had no reliable way to keep track of how many of their students were in the human services system, let alone which students were getting services for circumstances, such as homelessness, that can influence their school performance. The problem wasn't neglect, but legal barriers to sharing data contained in federal and state confidentiality laws.

Those barriers were largely overcome with the signing of a novel legal agreement between the city public schools and DHS that allowed them to integrate their data on students who receive human services. Over the past two years, it has inspired a level of collaboration and insight into the lives and needs of the students that has exceeded initial expectations.

In light of such outcomes, the agreement was recently renewed and revised following legal negotiations that were less challenging and protracted than those that led to the signing of the first memorandum of understanding between the city public schools and DHS.

Moreover, the Clairton, Woodland Hills, and Elizabeth Forward school districts recently signed similar data-sharing agreements with DHS and negotiations are underway with several other Allegheny County public school districts where significant numbers of students receive human services.

In general, the agreement allows student data ranging from personal identifiers to grades, attendance, and disciplinary action to be integrated in the DHS data warehouse, which contains data specific to services, such as child welfare, mental health, and homelessness, as well as juvenile justice information. A key provision authorizes the use of the data to conduct an “action research” project—a problem-solving process in which DHS and school districts work toward improving the way they address certain issues involving students of mutual interest.

Almost immediately, the pact led to a fuller understanding of city public school students involved in human services. A preliminary analysis of the integrated data revealed, for example, that 14,450 students—about 53 percent of district enrollment—had prior involvement with at least one of 17 human service programs and that 36 percent of those students received services within the last year. Families of 34 percent of students in the district received support services, including food stamps and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families support. The shared data also revealed academic achievement gaps among city public school students involved in human services and those who do not receive services.

The insights gleaned from the integrated data have given school guidance counselors, child welfare caseworkers, judges, and others a more complete picture of city public school students in the human services and juvenile justice systems. And it has helped inform new collaborative interventions.

Analysis of the data, for example, identified more than 700 students who scored proficient or above on the Pennsylvania System of State Assessment reading and math test, but were performing poorly in class. It lead to a collaborative effort among DHS and school personnel to design a pilot after-school program for more than 30 such students aimed at improving their grades, school attendance, and academic ambitions.

More recently, access to integrated school, human services, and juvenile justice data helped inform a new project for curbing truancy, which identifies students who miss school, investigates the reasons they do, and attempts to intervene early to correct the problem. The shared data has contributed in other ways, as well. Data-sharing capabilities, for example, helped DHS win an Annie E. Casey Foundation grant to develop software to help make better-informed child welfare placements so children have a better chance of being placed in neighborhoods where they can continue to attend the same schools and avoid disrupting their education.
Office Announcements

Parenting Guide Series Available From OCD
The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development is offering a series of easy-to-use parenting guides offering information and advice on 50 parenting topics. These guides are available free of charge to parents and organizations, agencies, and professionals who work with children and families.

The You and Your Child parenting guide series, written and edited by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, covers topics ranging from how to deal with children’s fears, finicky eating habits, and aggressive behavior to getting a child ready to read, setting rules, and coping with grief.

Each guide is based on current parenting literature and has been reviewed by a panel of child development experts and practitioners. The series is made possible by the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

To receive a printed set of all 50 guides by mail, send a request along with your name, organization, mailing address and telephone number to:

Parenting Guides
University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development
400 North Lexington Street, Suite LL104
Pittsburgh, PA 15208

The parenting guides are also available on the OCD Website as portable document files at www.ocd.pitt.edu/You-and-Your-Child-Parenting-Guides/47/Default.aspx.

Free Background Reports Cover Children’s Issues
University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development offers a recently-updated series of free background reports providing concise overviews of current topics important to children and families.

- New topics in the series, Children, Youth, and Family Background, include childhood obesity, foster care, early literacy, parent-teen relationships, and the trend among nonprofit agencies to help support their missions by starting money-generating social enterprises.
- The reports, originally produced to keep journalists and policymakers up to date on children’s issues, are available free of charge to anyone interested in learning about the latest developments in areas ranging from education and child development to child welfare and juvenile crime. These reports are written, edited, and reviewed by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development.
- All Children, Youth, and Family Background reports are posted on the OCD Web site as portable document files (.pdf) for viewing and downloading at the following address: www.ocd.pitt.edu/Default.aspx?webPageID=49&parentPageId=5.

Free OCD Parenting Columns Well-Suited For Newsletters
Dispensing parenting advice, long the domain of grandmothers and other family relations, is drawing more attention from policymakers and others looking for ways to strengthen families and communities—and for good reason. Studies show effective parenting improves a child’s chances of healthy development.

Sound parenting advice on more than 50 topics is now available free of charge in a series columns written by Robert B. McCall, PhD, codirector of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development and former columnist for Parents magazine.

The columns, well-suited for newsletters and community newspapers, provide clear, concise, and accurate information on topics such as dealing with a child’s lying, how to toilet train, what to do about nightmares, discipline and finicky eaters, and how to recognize and address grief in children.

OCD offers the columns free of charge as Microsoft Word documents. All columns are available on OCD Web site at www.ocd.pitt.edu/Parenting-Columns/151/Default.aspx.

The public service initiative is made possible by the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education, whose contributions support production of the columns and other Office of Child Development projects.

The Office of Child Development is now on Twitter.
Follow us by visiting our Twitter page:
www.twitter.com/OfficeChildDev
A new Web site devoted to children and local organizations working to improve their lives and their futures was recently launched by Kidsburgh, a community partnership.

The Web site regularly posts news and feature stories about local children and their latest accomplishments, as well as stories about the programs, people, and organizations devoted to their well-being. In addition, the Web site provides links to services such as after-school, early childhood education, and mentoring programs, and links to a wide range of community partners that offer children services and opportunities to help have fun, learn, and thrive. The online newsletter can be found at www.pittsburghskidsburgh.com.

Kidsburgh is a growing movement by a large and collaborative group of partners in Western Pennsylvania to make Pittsburgh “the best place for kids on the planet.”

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