



March 23, 2009

## Family Literacy Conference in Piscataway aims to get kids into books

By *JARED KALTWASSER*  
*Staff Writer*

Students, parents, teachers and librarians will gather this Saturday, March 28, with the goal of promoting literacy and education throughout the township.

The district will hold a Family Literacy Conference for parents and pupils in kindergarten through the fifth grade, beginning at 8:30 a.m. at Piscataway High School, 100 Behmer Road. A special workshop for parents of students that will be in kindergarten next fall will begin at 10 a.m. That workshop is for parents only.

"We want to educate parents about the home-school connection and what they can do to improve and enrich their relationship with their child when it comes to literacy," said Carolyn Keck, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction.

Keck said the Family Literacy Conference will teach parents the terminology and methods district teachers use, how to pick out books that will challenge their child, how to deal with reluctant readers and address other topics.

In previous years, the event has drawn about 250 to 300 parents. This is the first year the conference has been open to both pupils and parents.

Keck said the district decided to incorporate the students because the format of the day provided a good opportunity to teach reading skills in a new format.

"We thought it was a really great opportunity to be able to do things that normally necessarily couldn't be done in school buildings, and this is a rather efficient way to get lots of cross-school kids together to meet authors."

The day will be broken up into keynote addresses and workshops. Pupil can choose between hearing from a children's fiction author and a nonfiction children's author. The youngsters also will attend one of two experiment-based "Sciencetelling" workshops.

Karen DePalma, a support specialist and former kindergarten teacher at Knollwood Elementary, said the workshops give parents tools to help their child achieve success in school.

"The biggest thing parents ask is "What can I do to help them? What can I do to make them successful?" " DePalma said, speaking of parents of kindergarteners. "That is their first experience away from you for a full day . . . you want to make the parents feel comfortable."

The literacy conference also will serve as the kick-off of a larger initiative titled PiscatawayREADS! that Keck said is being launched to bring the community together through a shared love of reading.

Parents and pupils are asked to bring a used book from the school's recommended reading list. The school then will put the used books on bookshelves in various stores across the municipality, where students can take a book for free.

The district also will open a PiscatawayREADS! bookstore during the conference. The store's inventory will be made up of books from the authors speaking at the conference as well as other books from the district's recommended reading list. The books will be sold at the school district's discounted rate.

Families are asked to register for the event online at [www.piscatawayschools.org](http://www.piscatawayschools.org). To register, click on PiscatawayREADS! under the "Teaching & Learning" menu. Free child care for 3- and 4-year-olds will be available, courtesy of the high school's child-development class. However, parents must register in advance.

## Additional Facts

### PISCATAWAY FAMILY LITERACY CONFERENCE

**WHO:** Parents and students in kindergarten through fifth grade

**WHAT:** Workshops and speakers promoting literacy and teaching parents how to help their child become a better reader

**WHEN:** 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, March 28; a workshop for pre-K parents begins at 10 a.m.

**WHERE:** Piscataway High School, 100 Behmer Road

**COST:** Free, including child care for 3- and 4-year-olds, with registration; but all are asked to donate a used book from the district's recommended reading list

**CONTACT INFO:** Call 732-572-2289 Ext. 2561; to register visit [www.piscatawayschools.org](http://www.piscatawayschools.org) and click on PiscatawayREADS! under "Teaching & Learning"