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MARYLAND PARENTAL INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER (MD PIRC) LAUNCHES WEBSITE IN SPANISH TO ENGAGE SPANISH SPEAKING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Bethesda, MD, July 14, 2008—The Maryland State Parental Information and Resource Center (MD PIRC) is proud to announce the launch of its website in Spanish (www.mdpirc.org). The Spanish section of the website is aimed at giving Spanish speaking parents and educators the tools they need to boost family engagement and achievement for all students.

The Maryland State PIRC was launched in October 2006 as part of a five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement. The grant was awarded to the Bethesda-based Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium (MAC), which oversees the project, in collaboration with community partners.

Though the Department of Education began offering the PIRC grants in 1995, this is the first time that “the emphasis of the program is a coordinated, statewide effort,” according to Maryland PIRC Project Director Susan Shaffer. Except in large states like California or New York, Shaffer points out, “there is now only one PIRC grant per state.”

The Spanish website, which can be accessed by clicking the “en Español” link on the homepage, has a wealth of information for Spanish speaking parents. Currently, only the “Parents & Families” section of the website is available in Spanish. The English website, which has been fully functional since September 2007, features two additional sections intended for Advocates and Educators. In the near future, the “Advocates” section will also be available in Spanish. The Maryland PIRC already offers a bilingual, toll-free Parent Hotline.

Spanish speaking parents and community members will find an abundance of useful information spanning a range of topics that include, but are not limited to: Achievement Gap Issues, the No Child Left Behind Act, Early Childhood Education, Literacy & Reading, Health & Wellness, Learning Disabilities, Social Services, Legal Issues, School Reform, and Learning Tools for Children. Users can browse answers to frequently asked questions; consult insightful studies, reports, and guides; access a list of helpful websites and organizations; and read relevant news articles from a variety of local and national publications.

The goal for the Spanish website, according to Shaffer, is for it to be “a one stop destination for our Spanish speaking families and partners. We want Spanish speaking parents and advocates to be able to look to our website for all of the information they need regarding parental involvement, education, and raising successful children.” She continues by emphasizing that the PIRC will “work diligently to keep the information current.”

The website’s content will be comprehensive, featuring content that is up-to-date, and reflective of current educational and parental involvement issues.