



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS
Working Together for Our Children

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Slow down and enjoy life. It's not only the scenery you miss by going too fast – you also miss the sense of where you are going and why.

--Eddie Cantor

PARENT INVOLVEMENT FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

While electing a new President, celebrating Thanksgiving, and planning for December holidays, we Americans are thinking more about our long-held traditions and beliefs as a nation. The education of our young to meet the demands of an ever-changing world and to be citizens of a democracy is one of our core foundations. Parents now, as well as in generations past, believe that a good education is essential to their children's future.

According to a new study by Civic Enterprises (October 2008)*, they also are well aware of the importance of their own involvement in their children's education, with agreement among parents of all educational levels, socioeconomic backgrounds, and cultures. However, many parents of high school students attending low performing schools feel they are not on an even playing field. Parents' perceptions of opportunities offered by high-performing schools and low-performing ones are different. "One Dream, Two Realities"* argues that 25 million parents of high school students are ready to help their children with their education; but they need better information and tools to do so.

Three principal findings in this new study:

1. A large majority of parents, 61%, believe that what today's students need is different than when they were students.
2. Parents have high aspirations for their children, with 78% of Caucasians, 92% of African-Americans and 90% of Hispanics reporting the importance of college for their children.
3. Parents recognize their importance as advocates for their children, as reported by 80% of all parents and 85% of those with students in low-performing schools.

Consider the impact on all our high schools if this high interest and motivation of such a tremendous number of adults were marshaled into action. The potential of increasing our efforts in parent involvement is astounding! Although parent perceptions from high performing and low performing schools differ, the numbers reveal improvement in home-school relationships is needed across the board.

Percent of parents satisfied with their school's:	High-performing	Low-performing
Challenging students	58%	15%
Helping children (prepare for college or job, develop confidence, maturity, skills, talent)	50%	20%
Informing about graduation requirements	70%	30%
Encouraging parent involvement	85%	47%
Giving opportunity to help select courses	68%	30%
Informing about child's place on track for college	57%	29%
Informing about child's ongoing performance	53%	25%

The study asked parents about barriers to their becoming more involved in their children's education. Although lack of time was cited as the number one critical factor, more than a third identified real disconnects between them and their children's schools. Parents from all backgrounds and all schools provided the following suggestions:

1. Promptly notify parents about child's problems - academic or otherwise.
2. Contact earlier, 8th or 9th grade, about high school expectations. Issues named were the transition from middle to high school, including effects on their children; increasing demands for academic achievement; and uncertainty about parents being welcome at the school.
3. Give more information about graduation and college requirements and how they match.
4. Provide a single point of contact, homework hotlines and flexible conferences. Parents indicated they especially want an advocate, teacher, or advisor to be in frequent contact with them about child's academics and their fit in the school, not just when problems arise.

Those conducting the study give the following suggestions:

1. Homework assignments that involve families
2. Parent information packets about school and courses
3. Meeting at start of high school between parents, contact person, and student
4. School accommodations for varying needs of parents - time, place, language, home visits, transportation
5. Parent liaisons
6. Stipends or other benefits for teachers who spend time after school with parents
7. Community organizations as school partners to help provide parent involvement classes
8. National discussions to include parents and national conferences to have parent tracks
9. Local parent summits
10. Federal and state governments and foundations to provide challenge grants to test strategies to systematically engage large numbers of parents in students' academic achievement, foster high school reforms, coordinate efforts to ensure parent involvement is a top priority and becomes institutional practice.

Practical Parenting Partnerships is poised to work with parents, schools, governments, and organizations to institutionalize parent involvement as a vital force in helping students achieve to their potential. Attention to struggling schools, as well as those considered successful, will require diligence and persistence. We can not tell students and parents to "pull themselves up by their bootstraps". We must provide the opportunities for them to feel hopeful and move toward realizing their dreams for their children. As Malcolm Gladwell (author of popular books *Tipping Point*, *Blink* and his newest release *Outliers*) said in a CNN interview on November 21, 2008:

"When we understand that success is so much a part of the world of which we're a part, we move away from this idea that's about self-help and we move towards this idea that it's time for us to be providing opportunities to a group." Good schools and parent involvement work together to help students achieve academically. PPP can be a vital force in this cooperative effort.

*Report by Civic Enterprises in association with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, October 2008. For the full report, see www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/onedream.pdf

PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

This month we come to you bearing gifts! Actually changes in storage space available to the company which does our printing has forced us to do some late fall house cleaning. Additionally, for some time now we have

been moving toward fewer print and more electronic resources. All of this adds up to a surplus of 2-inch poly boxes and 2.5-inch three ring poly notebooks. We will give these away to our Missouri schools as long as supplies last. If you need them shipped, you must reimburse us for the actual shipping charges. They may be picked up at our office or at the printer's in Mexico, Missouri. Call us if you are interested and we will add you to the list. Check this month's home visiting column for additional freebies. All of the notebooks and containers have the PPP logo and name of a training imprinted.

In addition to cleaning, the staff has been busy with training, regional meetings and conference exhibiting. There are still several opportunities to attend a regional meeting. We hope to see you in Rolla on January 8th, Portageville on January 13th, St. Joseph on February 4th, or at the PPP Center on February 10th.

Proposals for break-out sessions at the conference are due to us by December 19. We hope to have several PPP schools presenting. Presenters receive discounted registration. You will find the form on our website at http://www.pppctr.org/pages/uploaded_files/PPP%20PRESENTER%20PROPOSAL%20FORM.pdf

Like you, your students and their families, we are looking forward to the upcoming break. The PPP Center will be closed December 24th through January 2nd. Enjoy the holiday season!

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

Conference Keynote Speakers

by Janet Shepard, Director

Dr. William Elder, Director of the Office Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSED) at the University of Missouri will give the opening keynote address on the state of our state. OSED is responsible for collecting and disseminating MSIP school data and the Missouri Kids Count data. Bill will share social and economic trends in Missouri and discuss the challenges for our schools and communities. Bill has a gift for making data come alive and helping his audience apply data to their daily work.

Dr. Hal Lawson, a Professor of Educational Administration and Policy Studies and also Professor of Social Welfare at the University at Albany, The State University of New York will give the keynote on Saturday. Hal is especially interested in helping urban schools challenged by poverty, social exclusion and isolation, and multiple social problems (dropouts, health disparities). Thanks to support from governments and charitable foundations, he and his colleagues have been able to develop and study timely innovations such as school-linked health and social services integrated with school improvement, school-based and -linked parent and family resource centers, youth-led social services, and youth-led school-community partnerships. Hal's work in Missouri includes Danforth Foundation-sponsored initiatives including the creation of Leadership Development materials for the integration of Caring Communities and School Reform for the Missouri Department of Education and consulted with state department officials on systems change with service integration for vulnerable children and families.

PPP SITE NEWS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

Mansfield R-IV promotes parent involvement using its high school students as a resource. When celebrating Dr. Seuss's March 2nd birthday, the high school English students prepare a project/activity highlighting Dr. Seuss and his many children's books. Students then present these activities or projects to grade school students and their families at the family celebration.

At **Couch R-I**, high school student clubs volunteer to help out at family nights by manning stations, serving snacks, or providing child care as needed.

The same concepts could be expanded and used for National Children's Book Week (May 11-17, 2009) not only with English students, but also Speech/Drama, Geography/History, and more depending on the theme of the family night. Imagine a Cultural Night where high school Geography students share information on customs, activities and foods of different countries. Storytelling, performing speeches, singing songs, and playing games are good ways to build mentorships between young students and high school students while increasing parent involvement.

WORKING ON THE WEB

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

Have you visited School Tube yet? Here is a reason why you should; an 11-year old boy speaks before all Dallas school teachers at the start of the school year. This may be a good video to post on your favorites list and watch again and again for motivation. <http://www.schooltube.com/video/10112/Do-You-Believe-...Dalton-Sherman>

All of our PPP schools know that parent involvement throughout the high school years is vital for student success. Do you need help to reaffirm this knowledge with recent research? The article on the web address below, *Strengthening Parents' Ability to Provide the Guidance and Support That Matter Most in High School*, by Tim Taylor and Jennifer Dounay, is very supportive of parent involvement at the high school level. At PPP, we try to emphasize the importance of making parent involvement a part of teaching. The article supports this approach saying, "Among the defining features of high-performing schools is that parent involvement is viewed not as an impediment or an add-on, but rather as a vital force for change and improvement." According to survey findings, many parents don't understand (or provide) the kind of support and involvement that matter most during students' high school years -- often simply because they don't know the best way to provide that support. Young people with involved parents are more likely to attend school regularly, to earn a high school diploma, and to continue their education. Many parents don't know where to find information on post-secondary education, or other challenges their high school students may be facing-- a problem that could be remedied through strengthened parental outreach efforts at the high school level. Read the complete article from the Education Commission of the States at <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/78/48/7848.pdf>.

GRANTS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator



Horace Mann Companies Offers College Course Scholarships for K-12 Educators

Deadline: March 12, 2009

The Horace Mann Companies are offering \$30,000 in total scholarships for public and private school K-12 educators to take college courses. Visit the Horace Mann Companies Web site for complete program information.

<https://www.horacemann.com/resources/scholarships/default.aspx>

Library Services and Technology Act grant opportunities

Deadline: February 15, 2009

The Missouri State Library is offering four Library Services and Technology Act grant opportunities. See the library eligibility guidelines listed on the State Library Grant Program Definitions Web page. Grant award amounts can range from a \$500 minimum to a maximum of \$19,000.

<http://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/localrecs/grants/>

Olive Garden/Red Lobster

Deadline: Rolling.

The Darden Restaurant Foundation offers an array of community-based grants for the improvement of K-12 education. Projects should meet community needs as well as emphasize diversity and fairness.

Info: www.dardenrestaurants.com/community/grant_request_form.html

Entries Invited for Intel Schools of Distinction Awards in Math and Science

Deadline: February 17, 2009

The annual Intel Schools of Distinction Awards recognize U.S. schools that implement innovative, replicable programs that inspire their students and lead to positive educational outcomes in the areas of math and science. To apply or learn more about the application process, visit the Intel Web site.

<http://www.intel.com/education/schoolsofdistinction/index.htm>

Bayer and UN Environment Program Launch International Painting Competition in Elementary and Middle Schools

Deadline: January 15, 2009

To help raise environmental awareness and foster science literacy among elementary- and middle-school students, [Bayer Corporation](http://www.bayer.com) and the United Nations Environment Program's Regional Office for North America (UNEP RONA) have launched the second year of their partnership in the United States to bring the International Children's Painting Competition to schoolchildren nationwide. With this year's theme, Climate Change - Our Challenge, UNEP and Bayer Corporation are inviting students ages six to 14 to learn more about climate change and express that knowledge creatively through art. For complete entry rules, please visit the Bayer Corporation Web site at http://www.bayerus.com/msms/MSMS_Home.aspx, and click on 18 Annual International Children's Painting Competition.

Educators Invited to Apply for ING Unsung Heroes Program

Deadline: April 30, 2009

The [ING](http://www.ing-usa.com) Unsung Heroes program helps K-12 educators and their schools fund innovative classroom projects. Each year, the program selects 100 educators to receive grants of \$2,000 each to help fund their innovative class projects. Visit the ING Web site to download the program application. <http://www.ing-usa.com/us/aboutING/CorporateCitizenship/Education/INGUnsungHeroes/index.htm>

Entries Invited for National School Library Media Program of the Year Awards

Deadline: January 2, 2009

Established in 1963, the National School Library Media Program of the Year Award honors school library media programs working to ensure that students and staff are effective users of ideas and information. For complete program information, visit the American Association of School Librarians Web site.

<http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/aaslawards/natlsImprogram/aaslnational.cfm>

State Farm Companies Foundation -- Foundation Grants

Deadline: Proposals are accepted year-round and are reviewed in a timely manner.

The following types of grants for K-12 public schools will be considered by the foundation: support for academic achievement initiatives; funding for regional, state, and local organizations that promote and support education reform initiatives that do not engage in lobbying as their primary activity; funding for public K-12 school programs and curriculum changes that improve student achievement; after-school programs that focus on increasing students' academic achievement in math, science, reading, and English as a second language; teacher excellence programs that improve teacher quality; school-to-work programs that teach high school or technical school students a specific trade, helping them to get a job once they graduate (for example, as an auto repair technician). Funding Amount: Requests exceeding \$100,000 are considered quarterly.

For more information, go to:

<http://www.statefarm.com/foundati/foundati.htm>

General Mills Foundation Invites Applications for Champions for Healthy Kids Grant Program

Deadline: January 15, 2009

The [General Mills Foundation](#), in partnership with the [American Dietetic Association Foundation](#) and the President's [Council on Physical Fitness](#), developed the Champions for Healthy Kids grant program to encourage communities in the United States to improve the eating and physical activity patterns of young people between the ages of 2 and 18.

Grants will support community-based groups that develop creative ways to help youth adopt a balanced diet and physically active lifestyle. The program will award fifty grants of \$10,000 each. Visit the General Mills Foundation Web site for complete program guidelines and application instructions at <http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/commitment/champions.aspx>

FACILITATION TIPS – Working with Families of High School Students

by Janet Shepard, Director

With just a few exceptions all of our work at PPP is geared toward helping you build strong relationships with the families of your students, kindergarten through high school. Parent involvement certainly will look a little different at the high school level. This issue of the newsletter describes both research and practice on family engagement at the secondary level. Here are some additional ideas which may be helpful to you:

- Include students and parents on the advisory board and on planning committees
- Survey parents
- Place a suggestion box in the community
- Offer free admission to ballgames for parents who attend a parent meeting prior to the game
- Try a family movie night, parents vs. students trivia night, or family talent show
- Make sure parent representatives on A+ and other advisory boards are representative of the parent population you serve
- Open the school library or computer lab to students and their families once a week especially if students do not have easy access to the public library or community computer center
- Offer career and college nights to students and their families well before the senior year
- Ask teachers to call the home of each student in their home room once a quarter
 - These are positive and informative not calls to talk about what the student is doing wrong
- Copy tri-folds from the PPP resource notebooks to include in any mailings going out from the office
 - Deficiency slips might include a copy of *Attitudes for Homework Success* from the Home – School Relationships notebooks (4.III.A.I.S.5)
- Add tips for parents to sports and music programs
 - List one or more tips on communicating with teens from *Intimate Communication* (1.III.B.I.S.7) or *Positive Speaking and Communications* (1.III.B.I.S.8) . These are from the Family Systems notebook or Home Visiting Book 9

HOME VISIT SPECIAL FOR 2008-09

by Janet Shepard, Director

Now through the end of this school year or until supplies are exhausted, we will run a special on Home Visit training and resources. We would like to update the notebook for this training but first need to use the supply we have on hand.

If you already have the resources or do not need the resource notebooks, you may attend training for \$50. That is a \$25 savings. If you want the resource notebooks, you may attend for \$275. Instead of receiving the Basic

set of notebooks and your choice of A or B notebooks. You will receive the complete set of notebooks. The complete set includes Basic, A, B, C, D and E! That is a savings of \$150. You will find the titles listed on home visit training of the web page at http://www.pppctr.org/pages/uploaded_files/hv.pdf.

The specials apply only to the scheduled training sessions including:

January 28	Springfield
February 27	Maryville
April 29	Cape Girardeau
May 1	Jefferson City

We will certainly be glad to come to your site / state with this training, but will need to quote those prices as requested.

Our surplus includes empty maroon carrying cases and storage trays which we will give away on a first come first served basis. Call or e-mail to let us know how many you want and how you plan to get them. We cannot provide free shipping. You may pay for shipping or pick them up.

The notebooks are, of course, a great resource for home visitors. They also make great outlines for group meetings for parents, parents and kids together or for kids. School social workers and counselors often use the notebooks for group and individual work with students of all ages.



THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Added or Relieved Stress?

Will this holiday season add stress to an already stressed society and to your family? The answer doesn't have to be yes. During these tough economic times, families are challenged with how they might get through the holiday season in a joyful manner. Some families are eliminating elaborate gifts and reducing the amount of money spent overall on what in the past has been proven to be beautifully wrapped presents that never were used once opened. With this scaling down approach, stressors leading up to the holiday season are also scaled back. Once families realize and agree that the commercialism is not what is most important to them during the holidays, they move forward with a different approach.

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator



The holidays can give families cherished time together and a commitment to celebrating with traditions. Keeping it simple can help put the focus on memories and time together, something we often don't have time to enjoy when hustling and bustling to get all of the gifts bought and wrapped. Annual holiday celebrations filled with rituals and family can be an opportunity to take a holiday from worrying. Families might choose to avoid conversations about the economic doom and focus on family stories and blessings. With an attitude of having fun together, families can take a mental break from other stressors. Physical exercise such as a walk together or a quick driveway basketball competition can help the brain and body reduce stress. It is family time and there are so many fun things to do together as a family without spending a lot of money.

Families might consider the following ideas:

- Volunteer your time in serving a community meal during the holidays to families in need if you can't afford to adopt a family and buy gifts as you may have done in the past.

- Make home-made gifts (baked goods or crafts) for family members, teachers, and friends. These gifts are often less costly and greatly appreciated.
- Utilize creative gift wrapping techniques such as self decorated paper (from newspaper rolls) and self decorated gift bags.
- Be flexible with travel dates to get better air or train prices. Sometimes travelling just outside of the holiday itself is less hectic, quicker, and may allow you to spend more time together with family.
- Gather family photos of holidays of the past to initiate memories and storytelling. Time spent collecting pictures might prove to be time better spent than making sure the house is perfectly decorated and spotless.
- Create a memory book together during the holidays; ask everyone to bring a written memory or picture with a story to share. This results in a wonderful means to preserve family tradition for the younger generation.

As families spend less on material things this year and put more focus on family traditions, culture, stories, and time together, it might prove to change holidays in the future. We may come to realize that we can minimize holiday hassle and still have a good time over the holidays. In addition, we give the family one of the greatest gifts of all, serenity!

PPP Wellness Notebook 3, Section III., includes several modules on understanding and dealing with stress in the family. During this holiday season, handouts and activities from these modules may be useful tools.

A newsletter published by the PPP Center for parents and educators participating in the PPP program.

The Practical Parenting Partnerships program was developed with funding from the Danforth Foundation, St. Louis through the MO Dept of Elementary & Secondary Education. PPP is supported in part by professional development funds through the Missouri General Assembly

For information on the PPP program, please contact:

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Growing Toward Independence: Answering the Question “Who Am I?”

by Darlene Robinett, Founding Director



The goal of parents and teachers is to assure children grow into capable, happy adults. Children will form a picture of themselves, a self-identity, through their everyday experiences. Adults must keep in mind that answering the question, “Who am I?”, is the foundation for our children’s behaviors. Do they see themselves as capable to be successful in school? Do they feel they are good enough to have friends and to expect respect from those around them? Do they look forward to possibilities of the future and their ability to change to meet new demands? Parents and schools need to work together to give children a variety of experiences, for limited opportunities can make a young person close in on his picture of himself too quickly. He may find it difficult to apply himself to other possibilities in the years ahead.

“Part of what makes a child healthy, happy, and successful is developing a sense of mastery and self-sufficiency...Good parenting requires a balance between involvement and independence. At either extreme - when parents are disengaged or when they are intrusive - children’s mental health suffers.”* How can parents achieve this balance? First, spend time with your child. Look for chances to do something together that your child is interested in. Try not to always push your child into something you want to do and teach her about. You don’t want to be constantly lecturing and telling her how to do it. Let your child take the lead occasionally. For example, if she wants to play a computer game with you, try it. Your willingness to be engaged in an activity with her, to make a connection, is what is important.

Give your child some breathing room and encourage her to find her own way whenever possible. One pitfall to avoid is trying to live your life through your child. Celebrate accomplishments, enjoy her activities; but do not become enmeshed in her life so that neither of you has a life of your own. Sharing experiences where you show you care about each other is called “reciprocal transformation” and can have great impact on your child’s identity development. For example, together you cook a meal for grandparents or build a shelter for a pet and enjoy the excitement of a job well done. Your child’s engagement in a competitive athletic event or speech tournament at school will often bring joy to both coach and student - another experience that will effect your child’s self identity. Here again, school and parents are influencing how a child sees herself. Allowing your child to engage in a variety of activities does not mean every minute of her day is scheduled; that balancing act of parents comes into play.

Do provide opportunities for your child to make choices. If you want to make sure what he chooses is something you can live with, give him only choices you have preapproved. Over the years, help your child understand that there is usually more than one way to solve a problem. Shared discussions are necessary in building your child’s ability to think critically. He will be better equipped to analyze his strengths and weaknesses.

Knowing your child at home and at school is also important for your child’s future. Work with teachers and a school counselor to plan courses and find activities that might lead to college or another opportunity to learn after high school. Ask about scholarships or if your high school is an A+ school that might allow your child to attend college even if you have limited ability to pay for it. Talk together about his skills you recognize in, for example, his ability to earn a good grade in a particular subject, the responsibilities he completes well at home,

what he does to keep his part time job, or how he performs in a group activity at school or in church. Talk about other ways he can use these same skills. Continue to provide opportunities for him to see himself in new ways.

“We are who we understand ourselves to be, as that understanding is shaped and lived out in everyday experiences.”** The role of parents in their children’s development of self-identity is indisputable. The time we spend with our children, the love and respect we give them, the variety of experiences we provide for them, and how we are involved with their school will certainly contribute to how they view themselves. With more fully developed self-identity, our children will be open to expanded possibilities for the future.

*Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D., *The 10 Basic Principles of Good Parenting* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2004)

**Michael Nakkula, “Identity and Possibility”, in Michael Sadowski, *Adolescents at School: Perspectives on Youth, Identity, and Education* (MA: Harvard University Press, 2003)

