



**“No one keeps his enthusiasm automatically. Enthusiasm must be nourished with new actions, new aspirations, new efforts, new vision.” ...Papyrus**

## LEADERSHIP

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Beginning again – Each new year invites us to both reflect and envision as we vow to take new actions. One prominent headline issue for 2008 that calls our attention nationally and globally is the concept of leadership. Recent events in Pakistan and the frantic pace of political maneuvering of Presidential candidates in the U.S. make us consider the questions: What is good leadership? What structures make good leadership flourish?

In democratic institutions, power and responsibility are shared. Leaders must be willing to risk and accept criticism. They must remain open to consideration of others' thoughts and ideas. Those who would follow must also be willing to participate in the decision-making. Within a school, the principal is designated the leader. He or she can dictate new rules and policies; but if there have been no discussions with staff, no seeking of input from those affected by the rules and policies, the principal will most likely fail to see the expected outcomes.

Two-way communication becomes the basic requirement for any good leader to establish. How do effective principals accomplish this? They learn about the people with whom they work – teachers, counselors, custodians, bus drivers, aides, and very importantly, the students and their families. They know about the community. They also must be knowledgeable about district, state, and national expectations for schools and stay abreast of effective curriculum and pedagogical practices. Sharing what they learn and seeking information from others will allow better decisions. Providing time and avenues for this communication is essential. Here are a few examples:

- One principal makes it a point to be seen throughout the day. She greets students as they arrive several mornings a week; she says a few welcoming words to parents who drop off their children. She visits a classroom for a few minutes as she heads for a scheduled meeting or before lunch supervision. She picks a different place in the hall each day to stand and greet students and staff who are transitioning from one activity or class to another. She welcomes the opportunity to attend students' extracurricular activities at school or in the community. She invites conversation and shows a willingness to listen.
- A different principal pays great attention to faculty meetings, making sure that various groups and individuals are asked to provide part of the agenda. A 10-minute time allowance is given at each meeting for staff to voice opinions, concerns, or accolades. In respect for people's time, faculty meetings are set for no longer than 45 minutes. Any questions or suggestions at a meeting are always recognized with some kind of follow-up.
- Another sets a late start for Wednesday each week so that staff may meet with one another, with the principal, or with parents. The community is aware of the time and recognizes the openness this time represents.
- One administrator takes over various classrooms throughout the semester for one hour to allow teachers to contact parents with encouraging phone calls or emails. He also found funding for a homework and parenting warm line to be installed.

These planned practices encourage communication, rely on a collection of thoughts, and force shared responsibility. All, including parents, are seen as active participants in the life of the school. Using PPP's vision as a base for building a well-functioning school, you will discover new ways to share knowledge, ideas and insights for the education of our children and youth. Strong leadership relies on contributions from others.

## CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP AT THE PPP CENTER

As I retire from my full-time position as Director of PPP, I reflect on the wonderful experiences I have enjoyed since those initial meetings of insightful individuals from across Missouri who envisioned a program for K-12 that would complement the success of PAT in children's early

years. In 1990, Dr. Stephen Barr, former DESE Coordinator of Federal Programs and Early Childhood, took a chance to assign Vicki Ehlers (then a DESE Supervisor in Early Childhood) and to hire me to unconventionally job-share a new position as creators of such a program. So began PPP, a name adopted after our association with PPE (Practical Parent Education) of Texas. Vicki moved to another state, leaving me, under the leadership of Dr. Barr, to put together our first PPP Implementation Training and set of manuals in October 1992. From those initial 21 school districts, PPP now boasts close to 300 districts in Missouri with an additional 100 located in 12 other states and Canada. With the opening of the PPP Center in July 1994, many trainings, professional development opportunities and resources have been added through the years. The expertise of an outstanding staff, group of trainers, and advisory board, as well as the contributions of all of you in our school sites, have made PPP what it is today. PPP has always exemplified shared leadership. It is with confidence and high expectations I pass my leadership position as PPP Director to Janet Shepard, who has been the PPP Training Coordinator since 1994. New ideas and plans will surely continue to blossom at PPP!

(Note: Don't look for me to fade completely into the sunset of retirement, as I will still contribute to the newsletter, serve on the advisory board, and make some site visits!)

## PPP CENTER UPDATE

By Janet Shepard, Director

Family Festival is our main focus right now. We hope you are making plans to join us! We have mailed the program to all schools in the state, but you may also access it on the website at <http://www.pppctr.org/2008FFPR.PDF>

There are many education conferences in February and March and we will attend as many as we can. If we don't see you at one of these conferences, perhaps we will see you at your school. Remember any school that has sent staff to training is considered a PPP site. As a PPP site you are placed on a three-year rotating cycle for a site visit. Your first site visit is scheduled in the school year following the year you first attend training, then every three years thereafter. Schools receiving a visit this year will receive a complimentary copy of the *Parents Guide to GLEs* and *PPP Guide to School Terms*.

We are working on our new website and transitioning to an all electronic newsletter. You will find the newsletters from this school year posted on our web at <http://www.pppctr.org/newsletter.asp>

## PPP SITE NEWS

by Valerie Nielson, Teacher, Montgomery Co R-II

Jonesburg Elementary is proud to announce a success with a recent Practical Parenting Partnership event. We hosted a Veteran's Day Celebration Friday November 16, 2007. In attendance, were 12 grandparents and parents, who are active or retired military servicemen. Our students honored the veterans with a Girl Scout color guard and recited the National anthem. The children had worked all week preparing for their visit with the soldiers. They wrote questions and signed a banner of thanks to greet the veterans as they entered the school. The entire school also sang a song of freedom to our guests and the third grade recited a poem.

We had Commander Keith from the local V.F.W speak on the honor of being a soldier. Active serviceman SGT. John Hawkins of the Army told the students his meaning of the flag. The children were respectful and kind to our presenters. They were so honored to have both retired and active veterans attend our assembly. After the celebration a small coffee and doughnut breakfast was served as a thank you.

## WORKING ON THE WEB

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

[www.scholastic.com/freeprograms](http://www.scholastic.com/freeprograms) has lesson plans, activities, games, and free stuff for your class and their parents.

[www.kid-lit.com](http://www.kid-lit.com) offers quick book lists for boys and girls by age or reading levels.

[www.schooltimegames.com](http://www.schooltimegames.com). is a cool site offering games based on themes-Social Studies, Language Arts, Science, Math, Sports, Logic, Arts and Music, and Arcade games.

Contest for Students--Zaner-Bloser's 2007-08 National Handwriting Contest encourages students to practice good handwriting skills. Finalists receive a \$500 savings bond, a technology package, and prizes for their teachers, classmates and principals as well. One Grand National Champion will receive prizes worth over \$1,500, including a computer for the school! The contest is for any student in grades 1-8 whose school uses Zaner-Bloser Handwriting products. Deadline: March 1, 2008. Visit [www.zaner-bloser.com](http://www.zaner-bloser.com) for more information or to enter.

## GRANTS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

**The McKenzie Foundation** – The purpose of the McKenzie Foundation is to encourage and support nonprofit programs, primarily in the areas of education, health, human services,

and cultural and environmental concerns. Faced with the task of translating these broad-reaching goals into a more focused set of grant guidelines, the board has selected four initiatives that will shape its grant-making for the next few years: early childhood, development, education, the environment, and arts and culture.

*Who May Apply:* The foundation makes grants only to tax-exempt organizations with 501(c)(3) classification from the Internal Revenue Service. It does not support for-profit organizations or candidates for political office.

*Application Deadline:* The foundation reviews letters on a continuous basis, and they may be submitted at any time during the year.

For more information, go to: <http://www.mckenziefoundation.us/guidelines.php>

## Free Tools for Schools

**ConocoPhillips** – For the past 25 years, ConocoPhillips Co. has been producing high-quality educational videos and teachers’ guides for math, science and environmental topics. These free teaching guides and videos cover topics ranging from math and science to problem-solving and protecting wildlife. The programs focus on critical classroom needs and not on forwarding ConocoPhillips’ interests or promoting its products. Videos include the 10-part series, *The Search for Solutions*, which takes students on a journey exploring the nature and process of scientific discovery. *Search for Solutions* brings science alive with more than 60 different scientists and storytellers discussing their work and scientific philosophies. Log on to: [www.teachingtools.com](http://www.teachingtools.com) for more information. No deadline.

## RECENT RESOURCES

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

This month’s selection of books reminds us that a little humor is sometimes the best way to teach. The books are short, easy to read, funny, and good lessons for kids who might otherwise ignore the great advice being given on some tough topics. The titles might give you a good idea of what I mean.

*Dude, That’s Rude (Get Some Manners)* by Pamela Espeland and Elizabeth Verdick was read out loud to my family at the dinner table one evening about a month ago by my pre-teen daughter. My kids are still talking about it and roar with laughter remembering some of the lines from the book. My favorite quote is on page 10-“Your family deserves your very best manners.”

*Stress Can Really Get on Your Nerves!* by Trevor Romain &

Elizabeth Verdick discusses stress and the many ways we try to handle it. It also offers ideas on good ways to deal with stress.

*Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain* by Trevor Romain teaches children tried-and-true ways to deal with bullies.

*Cliques, Phonies, & Other Baloney* by Trevor Romain tells us all about cliques and why they exist: Because everyone wants to have friends. Learn important facts about friendship and popularity with this book.

*What on Earth Do You Do When Someone Dies?* by Trevor Romain isn’t funny. It’s really not possible when dealing with loss. However, Romain uses simple, honest words to help kids through this tough time and suggests ways to feel better.

*True or False? Tests stink!* by Trevor Romain & Elizabeth Verdick offers proven strategies, practical advice, and information to help readers survive all kinds of test situations. These include tips on overcoming test anxiety and procrastination, test preparation, and the pros and cons of guessing on tests. This may be a fun book to use before those Spring Achievement tests!

## FACILITATION TIPS

by Janet Shepard, Director

This year’s Family Festival has an emphasis on leadership development. We are encouraging you to attend as a team and have built team planning time into the conference agenda.

We hope you will take the time to meet as team before Festival so you can talk about your goals in attending the conference, plan which sessions to attend, and anticipate how you might share the experience upon your return.

Having a staff member or parent leader attend with families provides someone who can model conference participation and answer questions about the conference program or facilities. Leaping Into Action prior to Festival should help you have a better conference experience and provide your school with more return for their investment in the conference.

## HOME VISITING

by Janet Shepard, Director

Some districts require that home visitors go in pairs, while others will leave it up to the discretion of the person making the visits. There is no hard and fast rule that applies here. Go with district policy, instinct, and with what works best for families.

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***Working Together For Our Children***

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**We're on the web @ [www.pppctr.org](http://www.pppctr.org)**

It may feel a bit overwhelming to families to have two school staff members making the home visit. When Study Middle School in Springfield began their home visiting program, they paired a teacher and a trained parent volunteer. This is a great way to share leadership with parents. The visits were made to help students and their families transition in to middle school. The visiting teacher shared information about curriculum, expectations and schedules while the parent leader shared ways parents can remain involved at the middle school level and experiences about parenting a middle schooler.

## **FAMILY FITNESS**

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator  
Winter time often is a time when families are less active. We tend to spend more time inside due to the cold and inclement weather and get less exercise. We are typically more sedentary during the winter months. How can we reduce our time as couch potatoes in the winter? Here are a few tips:

- Schedule a regular time throughout the week for indoor physical activity.
- Take turns selecting an activity for the family to do as a group each week.
- Adapt activities to suit the needs of all family members, so that everyone can feel successful.
- Designate indoor play areas where rolling, climbing,

jumping, and tumbling are allowed.

- Play “Twister” or other indoor active games.
- Encourage everyone to “act out” a story as you read it.
- Buy toys or equipment that promote physical activity.
- Select fitness-oriented gifts that encourage movement.
- Limit time spent watching television programs, videotapes, and playing computer games.
- Use physical activity rather than food as a reward (ex: family goes skating).
- Include grandparents, other relatives, and friends whenever possible.
- Emphasize the importance of having fun and learning over a push to win.
- Create a family video of exercise routines.
- Host a dance contest; invite neighbors and friends.
- Share dances from each generation in your family.
- Use a bench or steps for step-aerobic workout.
- Build an obstacle course in the basement or garage.
- Explore community offerings such as ice skating, roller skating, and bowling.

It might be helpful to keep a record of family members’ daily physical activity. Looking at it can be rewarding as well as a motivator to get in gear. Family fitness doesn’t have to cost much money. Every family can get active during the winter! It just takes setting fitness as a priority, motivating each other, making it fun and being positive role models for each other. PPP can also help motivate families by facilitating a “Family Fitness Fun” workshop at your school.



# Working Together for Our Children

February, 2008

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## Bullying via the Internet

by Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Let's face it. Young people love their ability to communicate with one another. We parents realize that they need to become more social with their peers. It is a natural part of growing up. Most of us can surely remember hanging on the telephone, driving our parents and siblings crazy, and forcing new rules of phone use in our homes. Now, with personal cell phones and home computers hooked up to the internet, youth have found new ways to declare to the world that they are growing up and can communicate without their parents or other adults interfering. Under most circumstances, that's fine.

However, the possibility of real harm to our children lurks whenever adult supervision is difficult or non-existent. The Journal of Adolescent Health has reported that the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) research shows almost 10% of children ages 10 to 17 have been harassed online, and the number has been rapidly increasing. Harassment is in the form of very hateful text messages or emails and cyber-gossip. Bullies enjoy their relative anonymity on the internet. Those who are harassed can not respond in the same ways we've taught them if they are face to face with someone bullying them. In addition, our children may hesitate to tell us about being bullied for fear they will lose all their privileges to be online.

Studies at John Hopkins University revealed that students who had been harassed online were significantly more likely to have skipped school or have been more than once in detention or suspended in the past year. Even more frightening, these students were eight times more likely than all other youth to report having carried a weapon to school in the past 30 days. Cyber-bullying has become a safety concern for all of our children.

Both school and home must cooperate in setting rules and policies and in teaching proper behavior for the internet. Obviously, this means parents must first model respect for others – our children watch us even when we think they are not looking. As children mature and seem to be more independent, parents must continue to foster every chance to talk with them. Parents also need to be very observant of any changes in their children's behavior or school performance. They must be prepared to address problems immediately, not be lulled into thinking it will all just go away. Even good kids can be swept up in nasty gossiping about someone else through peer pressure. Being a bully or a victim can bring serious consequences. It is our collective responsibility to deal with the threat of cyber-bullying.

