



EMPHASIS ON HUMAN CAPITAL IN A RECESSION IS IMPORTANT TO OUR NATION'S FUTURE

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

The effects of the recession are now being felt across the country. While economic experts and political leaders have been promoting ways to stimulate the economy immediately and plan for future long-term growth, they have given little attention to the development of human capital for the years ahead. According to a GAO report in 2007, "Research shows that poverty can negatively impact economic growth by affecting the accumulation of human capital and rates of crime and social unrest." A new report by First Focus, *The Cost of Doing Nothing: Economic Impact of Recession-induced Child Poverty*, forecasts the results of doing nothing now to thwart the increase of children living in poverty. The loss in dollars is predicted to be over \$1.7 trillion if the current recession causes 2.6 to 3.3 million children to live in poverty as predicted, based on past recessions. This figure includes the cost of lost potential for earnings as well as increased health costs. Research suggests that children living in poverty for more than half of their childhood will earn 39% less than the median income. Additionally, a poor child loses approximately \$250,000 worth of "health quality" over their lifetime - a lower life expectancy, greater incidence of serious illness and generally lower quality of health.

One only has to look at the differences in poverty levels between urban and suburban schools and the corresponding academic achievement levels to realize the educational impact of poverty. Poor and minority urban students are about a year and a half behind suburban students. Only 60% of urban students graduate in 4 years, while 75% of suburban students do. Add to these dismal numbers the comparisons of U.S. students with those in other countries in recent years. When academic achievement was compared in 38 countries, 15 year olds in the United States trail their peers in math in 23 countries, and in reading, they trail 11 other countries. U.S. adults age 45-54 have post-secondary completion rates higher than all but 3 other countries, while younger adults age 25-39 trail 9 other countries. For the first time in the history of the United States, adult generations will be less well-educated than many of their foreign competitors.

In October 2008, the Brookings Institute issued a report, *Changing the Game: the Federal Role in Supporting 21st Century Educational Innovation*, authored by Sara Mead and Andrew J. Rotherham. The authors have called for change to alleviate the disparities in achievement and to make sure that future American workers are competitive in the global economy. They have suggested that the federal government take a more intensive role by creating an Office of Educational Entrepreneurship and Innovation (OEEI) within the Department of Education. They claim that federal support for research and development seriously underfunds the development aspect of implementation and scaling of new efforts to improve education. Investment in educational innovation has not enjoyed the strategic and long-term philosophy that involves a certain amount of risk taking that is found in the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program. Challenges in education will always involve equity and excellence issues; the barriers to resolving these issues have been appropriate funding to continue good ideas and bring to scale successful efforts. The Brookings report asks that hundreds of millions of dollars be made available to answer the challenges. Specifically, it mentions that the new funds "could bring together cross-disciplinary experts to undertake the most difficult questions in public education, like how to design program interventions to improve the parenting behavior of high-risk families to improve children's outcomes."

An early leader in the Department of Education's NCLB but who opposes it in its current form is Dr. Susan B. Neumann. She recently shared her perspectives in an interview with Public School Insights as she talked about her new book, *Changing the Odds for Children at Risk*. She said that successful educational programs need to be intense, use highly trained professionals, and focus on language and accountability. Accountability was a cornerstone of NCLB but Neumann said accountability means that first, funding has to be appropriate, and second, studying data has to be constant. She strongly believes that family supports, safe communities, and after school programs are essential; because schools can't do it all. Communities need to be revitalized. Government needs to be more transparent by engaging the public in public discussion and allowing them to be part of the process. In agreement are Pilar Marin, M.P.P. and Brett Brown, Ph.D., authors of *The School Environment and Adolescent Well-Being: Beyond Academics*, published in November 2008. They stated "Beyond what goes on inside the school walls, schools must coordinate their practices with the rest of the community—with health care providers, after school programs, and perhaps most importantly, students' families."

All of these reports and ideas are encompassed in the vision of Practical Parenting Partnerships. Since its beginning in 1992, PPP has emphasized the importance of children's environment in their ability to achieve success in school. Combining influences of home, school and community is the foundation of PPP. The voices of all need to be heard when policies and plans are set. For years, researchers have suggested the key role parent involvement has in boosting student achievement. PPP has built on that premise to encourage public engagement, share home activities that support school curriculum, help families understand children's growth and development, and strengthen schools' ability to work with parents and cooperate with community resources to enhance children's opportunities. With PPP's study several years ago, the reality of parent involvement to offset the negative effects of poverty on MAP scores was encouraging to the efforts of PPP. Human capital in the present recession must be seriously considered if the United States is to experience world prominence in the future. National attention must be riveted on educational excellence and the avoidance of growing numbers of children in poverty who experience detrimental conditions in childhood. We can not afford to lose the promise of the American dream for a whole generation! The beginning of 2009 offers another opportunity to determine our future.

PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director



Our best wishes and sincere thanks go to two PPP trainers who have worked passionately and tirelessly to advance parent involvement in education in Missouri. Dr. Virginia Shain has been a member of the PPP training team since it was formed in 1992. Virginia, a former school teacher and administrator, is retired from

University of Missouri Extension where she served first as a Continuing Education Specialist and then as 4-H Youth Development Specialist. Virginia is an active volunteer in the Kansas City community where she spent many of her professional years and in Harrison County where she and her husband live. Virginia retired from the PPP training team this year.

Darcel Patterson of Kansas City joined the PPP training team in 1995. During the time Darcel worked with PPP she also worked in direct services with families for a large greater Kansas City agency, served as a monitoring specialist for Head Start and worked in schools and in school age care. Darcel contributed to our understanding of working with families transitioning from early childhood to school, with families in poverty and in multicultural communities. Darcel is moving to Atlanta to be closer to her daughter and granddaughter. If Atlanta calls for PPP training, we will know who to call!

January finds the center staff and their partners busy planning for the new [*Partnering for Success Conference*](#). You will find information about the plenary speakers in this edition of the newsletter. We expect to post the full conference schedule on the website around the middle of January.

There are four remaining [regional workshops](#). Shelly and a PPP trainer will be in Rolla on January 8, Portageville January 13, and St. Joseph, February 4 and here at the PPP Center on February 10. Remember, we offer a discount to those who qualify to receive a PPP Certified Facilitator lapel pin. Give you a call if you need a new copy of the discounted registration form.

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS CONFERENCE

by Janet Shepard, Director

The State of Our State is the topic to be addressed by Bill Elder in the opening general session of the **Partnering for Success** conference. Dr. William Elder is the Director of the Office Social and Economic Data Analysis ([OSED](#)) at the University of Missouri. OSEDA 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. Dr. Lawson plans to participate in the conference with us then on Saturday will share insight into how to take what we learn and plan at the conference back to our communities. He is a co-author of *Family-Centered Policies and Practices*.

Plan now to join us for this new conference opportunity. School – community teams are encouraged to register together. An incentive has been added offering half-price for every fifth team member registered for the conference. [Registration](#) is open!

PPP SITE NEWS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

Advanced planning almost always pays off. That's why **Fair Grove Elementary** has already started planning "Flight School-A Program Helping Students MAP Success" in preparation for the upcoming Grade-Level MAP tests. Fair Grove's Counselor, Susan Wisdom, is planning a 6-week program to help students boost their performance. Flight School is designed to give students extra practice on the skills and knowledge learned in the classroom while also involving parents. The program will begin with a family night in which families learn about the Grade-Level MAP tests and commit to the next four sessions. These sessions take place once weekly after school, and students are given the chance to practice their skills in a small group setting. The program will end with another family night where students who have attended all sessions of Flight School will earn their "wings"! Kudos to Susan and Fair Grove on your ideas and planning, and good luck with achievement testing!

WORKING ON THE WEB

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

[Parent Involvement in Schools](#) gives ideas for parents and teachers on supporting student achievement. This great article by Kimberly Keith gives continued support to parent involvement programs in schools.

[About.com](#) is a site with ideas designed to help busy parents, teachers and childcare providers. The specific site above shares "Top 7 Ideas for Involving Kids In Setting New Year's Goals". This is a good list to help us prepare for the year ahead!

The [Harvard Family Research Project](#) - Visit the Publications and Resources section of each research area: [Complementary Learning](#), [Family Involvement](#), [Out-of-School Time](#), and [Evaluation](#).

GRANTS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

NEA Foundation

Deadline – February 1, June 1, October 15

The [NEA Foundation](#) supports a variety of efforts by teachers, education support professionals and higher education faculty and staff to improve student learning in public schools, colleges and universities. Grants to individuals fund participation in professional development experiences. Grants to groups fund collegial study, including study groups, action research, lesson study, and mentoring experiences for faculty or staff new to an assignment. The grant amount is \$2,000 for individuals and \$5,000 for groups.



Lexus Environmental Challenge

Deadline – Varies.

Lexus has joined with Scholastic, Inc. to bring you the [Lexus Environmental Challenge](#), a program designed to educate and empower students to take action to improve the environment. The program encourages middle and high school students across the United States to develop and implement environmental programs that positively impact their communities.

Share Our Strengths/GADO Awards

Deadline – January 16, 2009

[Share Our Strength's Great American Dine Out](#) (GADO) grants support programs and projects helping connect children who are at risk of hunger with nutritious food where they live, learn and play. GADO grants are available to organizations that propose programs that will accomplish the following: Increase access to public and private programs that provide food to children and their families; strengthen community resources that connect children to these programs; educate families about nutrition; improve families' knowledge about food and nutrition programs and facilitate their access to related programs and services, especially in vulnerable or underserved communities.

Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship Program from NASA

Deadline – January 13, 2009

Current public or private elementary and secondary mathematics, technology, and science classroom teachers who have shown excellence in teaching may apply for the [Einstein Fellowship](#). Eligible applicants must have been teaching full time for at least five of the last seven years to apply. Those who are chosen as fellows will spend a school year in a congressional office, the Department of Energy, or a federal agency such as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Science Foundation, or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Fellows will also receive a monthly stipend of \$6,000 along with a \$1,000 living allowance, as well as some help with relocating expenses.

FACILITATION TIPS

by Janet Shepard, Director

Time and money almost always are mentioned as barriers to parental engagement. The current economic situation makes these even greater barriers for school personnel and for families of your students. It seems timely to review some of the ideas for encouraging family participation which do not require a trip to the school.

Using technology can be a great tool for getting information to all parents in a timely and economical way. Technology allows parents to receive and respond to the information in a time frame which works best for them. The 2003 edition of the *PPP in the Classroom* notebook list several great ideas for using technology as a means of communicating with parents. You will find that list on page 105 of the orange binder if you have it available in your school. The list has some good suggestions such as:

- e-mail
- class / building listserv
- class web pages
- homework information messages recorded daily
- campus radio / television stations or programs on community stations
- books on audio and video tape in the lending library
- open computer lab nights for families
- video tapes or DVDs recorded by the school showing:
 - typical IEP meetings
 - enrollment procedures in several languages for new ELL families
 - family nights and other events which parents are encouraged to attend
 - typical classroom day
 - math calculations, book report format or tips on science fair entries & more

Since the notebook was written, there are new words in our vocabularies and new ways to communicate with families! How about a class or building blog? Twitter, Facebook, and similar websites have possibilities for home – school communication. National professional organizations are using these tools as a way to communicate with members and to help members network with one another. *Education Today* utilized Twitter during the political conventions this summer to keep members up to date on convention happenings of interest to educators.

Vickie mentioned a great video on *School Tube* last month. *School Tube* and *Teacher Tube* can also be great source of ideas for ways to engage families and they can be a way to get information to parents. When I searched *School Tube* for parent involvement, I found a video which I liked called “BGS Digital Directory.” A high school created a back to school digital open house. Staff members introduced themselves and in some cases shared a bit of information important for parents to know. Ladue School District posted a series of five informative interviews on in-district programs. These short interviews should be helpful to parents and the community. In addition to posting on a website, copies can be produced inexpensively for families to check out on DVD or video. How have you utilized technology to engage families? Share your ideas with PPP.

HOME VISIT

by Janet Shepard, Director

Home visiting continues to receive national attention as a successful strategy for strengthening families. This year five national leaders in home visiting released a shared vision statement. You will find the document on the [Parents As Teachers National Center](#) website.

This document makes a strong statement about the importance of home visiting and may be useful to you in sustaining an existing home visiting program or in creating a new one. If you are creating a new home visiting program, you may want to take advantage of the special price we have for this school year on home visit training and resources. Please see [last month's home visiting column](#) for details.

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION

by Janet Shepard, Director

If your kindergarten transition team has not started planning for the kindergartners who will begin school in the fall of 2009, it is time to begin making plans. You will want to make sure your team has:

- early childhood representatives from the school and community
- reviewed and evaluated past efforts
- surveyed parents, community members and school staff for new ideas
- considered new issues such as the required vision screening
- searched out additional needs for children which you team might address

One example that you might consider on the last bullet is health insurance for children. I learned at the Kid's Count Conference in early December that we have 127,000 uninsured children in the state of Missouri. Of that number an estimated 84,000 qualify for Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIPS). You can find more details on the [Citizens for Missouri's Children](#) website. Your school social worker or nurse should have applications or details on how families can qualify. You could easily share this information with families at your spring open house event for next year's kindergarten class.

A NEW YEAR FOR THE FAMILY

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

The parent page of this month's newsletter focuses on how parents might support their children in setting goals or resolutions for the new year. Adults can help children set goals for self improvement and maintain these goals. In doing so, children are being taught important life skills. Listed below are possible goals that children might set. PPP family activity sheets, information sheets, and resources that coordinate with each of these categories are noted. Consider copying and sending home some of these tri-folds to support families in their New Year's resolution efforts. You might also do a New Year's bulletin board in the school foyer with pocket folders offering these tri-folds and have them available in family resource centers. When schools support parents in helping their children establish and keep goals, the children benefit!

Improving Daily Routines and Organization

- (Refer to PPP tri-folds in *Notebook 4 - Home-School Relationships* 4.I.B.I.S.6; *Notebook 2 – Lifespan Development* 2.III.D.I.S.b1, b2)

Study Habits

- (Refer to PPP tri-folds in *Notebook 4 – Home-School Relationships* 4.III.A.I.S.3, 4, 6: 4.I.B.I.S.6)

Hygiene

- (Refer to PPP tri-fold in *Notebook 3 – Wellness* 3.II.B.I.S.17)

Reading Daily

- (Refer to PPP Promoting Reading At Home booklet and poster.)

Healthy Eating Habits

- (Refer to PPP tri-folds in *Notebook 3 – Wellness* 3.II.C.I.S.1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

Physical Activity

- (Refer to PPP tri-fold in *Notebook 3 – Wellness* 3.II.B.I.S.20)

Positive Attitude Toward Others

- (Refer to PPP tri-folds in *Notebook 1 – Family Systems* 1.III.B.I.S.8; *Notebook 2 – Lifespan Development* 2.III.D.I.S.d, e1, e2)

Good Safety Practices

- [\(Refer to PPP tri-folds in Notebook 3 – Wellness 3.II.B.I.S.1, 2, 3, 4, 5\)](#)

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PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS
Working Together for Our Children

January 2009

A NEW YEAR FOR THE FAMILY

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

New Year's Eve and Day are exciting and fun times to reflect on the past year and look forward to the year ahead. Setting goals is a healthy way for ourselves and our children to plan for the new year. Even young children can be taught to make some positive changes, particularly those concerning their health, education, behavior and safety. Here are some New Year's resolutions or goals that adults can help children make. In doing so, children learn to set goals, maintain goals and be self motivated to do their best.

Improving Daily Routines and Organization - Children can practice organizational skills such as picking up after themselves, putting belonging away, and organizing school papers by what stays home and what needs to be turned in. Daily routines will run more smoothly if children reflect on what challenges them the most. For example, if the morning before school is too hectic, they may want to get clothes ready, book bag prepared and choose breakfast the night before. These are life skills, and learning time management and organization at a young age is beneficial.

Study Habits - When is the best time to study? This varies from child to child. For many children it is best to get homework done immediately after school. Others need a break before they can concentrate on homework. Parents and teachers can help students figure out what works best for them and set a homework plan that meets the child's personality and schedule. As students get older, it is also beneficial for them to learn to manage their study time and work ahead when appropriate.

Hygiene - As children get older, they take responsibility for their own hygiene, such as brushing their teeth, and showering. Parents can help children establish a routine and use reminders when necessary.

Reading Daily – The value of reading is tremendous! Reading to children, with children or listening to children read all have a positive impact on overall academic success. A family may want to set a goal to read together (or separately), each day. Consider making more time for reading in the new year. Children should see adults reading, too!

Healthy Eating Habits - Good eating habits should start young. Families might discuss healthy choices and try to make them available in the upcoming year. Pack healthy lunches for kids. Give them a variety and present them in interesting ways to encourage them to eat well.

Physical Activity - Are you and are your children physically active? In the new year, encourage physical activity by family participation in sports, taking classes that involve physical activity, joining a gym or making time to play and run around outdoors. Families should be creative and plan ways to get in physical activity such as taking evening walks or going for bike rides. When this is done, less time is spent sitting in front of the TV or computer monitor.

Positive Attitude Towards Others - Good citizenship and being kind, caring and helpful to others are traits that can be taught early on. Focusing on treating others with respect is a worthy goal for all. Remind children of the harm that bullying and hitting other children causes. Role playing is a good way to prepare children to react in a respectful way in various circumstances.

Good Safety Practices - The new year is a good time to remind children of important safety practices. Review rules and limitations and discuss the importance of parental or teacher permission. Adults might set a goal to be diligent about always making the child wear a seatbelt in the car and a bike helmet when biking. Adults might also remind themselves of the importance of role modeling these behaviors.

Remember that goals for self improvement are healthy ways to challenge ourselves to be the best we can be. Sometimes as adults help children set goals for themselves, adults are reminded of practices they need to work on themselves. Children may lose sight of their New Year's resolutions every now and then. (Adults do too!) That's ok. Continue to remind each other of the goals and resolutions and try to keep each other on track.



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS
Working Together for Our Children

January 2009

GATHERING NEW IDEAS

by Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Are you refreshed when the winter holidays end? Perhaps you feel tired after a whirlwind of activities and want to just relax for a while. However, as your children return to school, they will probably be learning lots of new information and trying out new skills. The winter months allow schools opportunities to concentrate their efforts with fewer distractions. You will need to stay on your toes and look back to what have been successful strategies for you to help your child in the past. Here are just a few ideas to consider:

1. Have you established good morning routines? Breakfast is not rushed. Your child's backpack has been checked to see that all notes have been read and all homework and books are packed.
2. Is there a good place for your child to study? You may have designated an area in your home; but it is not working out as well as you had planned. Now is the time to talk with your child about changing it for the following months of the school year. Could you make it more cheerful? Could it be quieter? Might you add a shelf above a desk or a closed container on the floor to store needed items? Does time allowed at the computer need to be changed? Maybe he needs more time than you had thought in August.
3. Did your child receive books or games over the break that could be used to build on new skills? For example, have you ever used a game of dominoes to predict what numbers might be left in the "draw" pile? Have you used a computer game to talk about the plot of a story? How might it be compared to a book or short story that your child is reading for school?
4. Have you talked with your child's teacher(s) since the first report card parent-teacher conference? You might want to make a quick call or write a short note about any question you have about what your child is studying now or ask about any new ideas the teacher has on how you can help your child.
5. Are you developing better conversations with your child as she grows and matures? If you still have issues with finding time to spend talking with her about everyday things, this is a good time of year to prioritize your own activities and make plans that are realistic. You may have tried to do too many things and you may want to take some time now to plan what is truly manageable.

Use this perfect time of year to reflect and plan for the future. Your child will certainly benefit from your attention. Happy New Year!

