



## SAFETY AND SECURITY IN SCHOOLS

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

When surveyed about what they most want from their child's school, parents commonly respond with "safety." Parents want to know that their child is safe at school. This expectation encompasses so much. School staff must be concerned about safety in so many ways, including physical and emotional safety.

Schools must provide a *safe physical environment*. This includes constant monitoring of school buildings, playgrounds, and equipment. For example, the school is responsible for knowing and following the regulations on playground equipment and surface. Schools must make sure the water in the bathrooms is set at a safe temperature. Schools have taken great measures to make sure they are asbestos and lead paint free. Ongoing improvements to the school grounds helps keep it safe.

*Close supervision of children* during the school day and during school events is another safety requirement. School staff being visible and available is crucial. Close supervision can help ward off accidents on the playground, fights among children, inappropriate behavior, unsafe interactions with those who are not a part of the school community and more.

There are times that schools need to provide *emotional* support to children and sometimes *to their families*. When communities experience horrific crime or disaster, it often affects the behavior of children in the school. Children struggle to make sense of what goes on in the world around them. They experience grief, anger, fear and more. Schools can provide additional support to children through school counselors and by bringing in professional help when needed during these trying times.

*Teaching children prevention skills* can give them the tools to deal with challenges that could compromise their safety. Children can be taught problem solving and communication skills that can help them handle their emotions, help them get out of uncomfortable situations, help them deal with peer pressure, and can help them avoid potentially dangerous situations. This social support is a preventative tool.

*Providing safe alternative activities for children* can prevent them from getting involved in unhealthy behaviors such as gangs. School clubs, organizations, teams and activities can give students a sense of belonging, enhance their self esteem, and help them to feel successful. These groups can provide a healthy focus for children and fill void time.

*Monitoring visitors to the school* has become a necessity for school safety. Doors to the school may be locked, resource officers may be present, or intercom systems may be used to control entry into the school. Schools should communicate to parents and community supporters that this is for the safety of the children and that visitors are welcome. With that, proper signage should clearly state the procedures for school visitors. For example, schools might place a sign at each locked door indicating where visitors should enter. At the main entrance, a sign might read, "Visitors are welcome. For the safety of our children, please use the intercom button to request entry." Once visitors are inside the building, signs should guide them to the office for check-in.

Proper *staff professional development* can help staff members be more effective in warding off and dealing with *acts of violence and bullying*. *Training for students and parents* is also beneficial and leads to the school staff, parents, and children working together to prevent bullying and violence from harming the school environment and those in it.

Schools and families can work together to promote safety for children. A safety fair would be a fun and interactive way to share safety tips with all. You could set up booths with folks who can share safety messages and offer activities to reinforce these messages. Consider inviting: law enforcement agencies, hospitals, health department, social services agencies, Big Brother Big Sisters, organizers of school extra curricular activities, and other community programs. This event could be set up in a school gym, at a local YMCA, or at a community park.

The PPP Notebooks offer activities that can be incorporated into a school safety night. PPP also offers family nights that focus on a strong partnership between home and school, thus fostering a safer environment.

Get off to a good start by doing all you can to promote the safety and security of children in 2010! Children rely on the adults around them to provide an environment that promotes learning and healthy social and emotional development!

## **PLAN NOW TO ATTEND ONE OF THE 2009-1010 PPP REGIONAL WORKSHOPS!**

The topic for this year's regional workshops is organizing, maximizing and utilizing school volunteer programs. These workshops will support schools in their efforts to utilize volunteers, especially in the challenging times we now face. This workshop will explore the value of volunteer programs, discuss how to establish a program, strengthen volunteer skills, look at working with students, teachers, and parents, review management and legal issues and provide tips and resources. The workshop should be attended by:

- school staff members and/or volunteers who are interested in taking the information back and training volunteers in their school community;
- volunteers interested in receiving training.

Participants will receive a training notebook. Come join us and others in your region for support in strengthening parent and community involvement in your school, thus improving education for students!

Follow the link for registration:

[Click Here for PPP 2009-10 Regional Flyer](#)

## **PPP CENTER UPDATE**

by Janet Shepard, Director

In February we should be moving into shared office space with Missouri KidsFirst. We are quite excited and will give you details in the next edition of the newsletter. We will continue to use PO Box 104151, Jefferson City MO 65110 as our mailing address. The main phone number will remain 573-761-7770. If you have other office phone numbers listed for us, please delete those. Janet and Shelly's cell phone numbers remain the same. The fax number is 573-632-4601.

Thanks for your patience as we continue to try to make a decision about holding an annual conference. We have decided if there is a conference it will be Thursday and Friday March 25 and 26 at Tan Tar A. The conference would be for general education and alternative education staff, parent liaisons, parents and

community partners. We will not include students in this year's conference. We have meetings in the next two weeks to make the final decision. If you have thoughts to share with us, please complete the brief on-line [survey](#) today!

Three sessions of the regional workshops on volunteers in schools remain. Cape Girardeau, St Joseph and Jefferson City are the locations. The registration forms are included in this issue of the newsletter. We can also schedule this as an on-site workshop for your school or community. Contact [Shelly](#) for scheduling.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month and our partner, [Missouri KidsFirst](#) holds the Prevent Child Abuse Missouri charter. We promoted Go Blue activities last year, but are stepping up our participation this year. Here are some ways you can promote child abuse prevention in you school and community:

- Host a *Stewards of Children – Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Workshop* at your school or with community partners. Contact PPP to schedule.
- Ask everyone in your school to wear blue on Friday April 16 for Go Blue Day
- Order Go Blue t-shirts (order form enclosed)
- If teachers contribute to a cause in exchange for wearing jeans on Fridays, collect for Prevent Child Abuse Missouri on April 16 or for the entire month of April
- Create awareness in your community by making posters, decorating windows, writing articles for the newspaper
- Talk with community partners about others things you can do

The new legislative session has begun. We may be calling on you to help us tell our story if an opportunity arises for us to be considered for some state funding. There are many good e-newsletters for keeping abreast of legislative issues relating to schools, children and families. If you don't already subscribe to at least one such newsletter, I would encourage you to do so. There will undoubtedly be difficult decisions to make this year. It is our right and responsibility to assist our elected officials in making the best possible decisions.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, February 4

Wednesday, February 10

Monday, March 1

Friday, April 16

[PPP Regional Workshop](#) – St Joseph

[PPP Regional Workshop](#) – Jefferson City

[Kindergarten Transition Training](#) – Cape Girardeau

[Go Blue Day](#)

## FACILITATION TIPS

by Janet Shepard, Director

Schools often ask us about resources on grieving. We do have some, including a [resource lending packet](#) on Grief and Trauma. The packets will be available for lending once we are settled in to our new office space. You can also find resources for checkout through our PIRC partner, [ParentLink](#). Their resource library may be searched on-line.

Sadly, requests often come to us after a tragedy occurs and schools realize they needed a plan in place. It is natural to think about how we as adults will help students cope with death or trauma, but we also need plans in place for helping staff cope and for helping parents and the community. Here are some things that you may wish to think about as you put a grief / trauma plan in place.

- Identify community professionals such as counselors and social workers who are willing to be on call
- Select resources for your staff library
- Identify age appropriate books about grieving for students – these might be included in the regular library or in the counselor's office – search bibliotherapy booklists for titles
- Hold staff workshops or discuss grief and trauma plans at staff meetings being sure to review the plan annually

- Offer informational meetings for parents about your grief and trauma plans before they are needed
- Include a few books and other resources for parents in your family resource library
- Encourage parents to share with the school when children experience personal loss such as the death of a family member

Experiences with grief, loss and tragedy vary widely from children who experience violent deaths in their neighborhoods on a regular basis, to children who have little or no experience with losing someone they know. Each situation will be different as will our reaction to it. Anticipating and planning though may help ease the situation for us and the children and their families we serve.

## HOME VISIT

by Janet Shepard, Director

Just as soon as funding becomes available and current supplies are exhausted, we will be updating the home visit training manual. Nationally home visiting has been receiving a lot of attention by policy makers and those who effect policy change. This national attention has probably been the motivation behind newly released research.

We always try to keep up on current research, but are probably doing a better job than usual since we are requesting funding for research on PPP home visits and the updating process. Two recent publications caught our attention. Both are focused, as is most of the national attention, on early childhood visits, but I believe there are implications for school-based visits.

The first article, [\*Extending Home Visiting to Kinship, Caregivers and Family, Friend, and Neighbor Caregivers\*](#) serves as great reminder to us that children often are supported by family, fictive kin and others who are not the child's parents but who are an important part of their support system. An interesting benefit described by Hoffmann and Perrin, the researchers and authors of the article, is the ripple effect. They discuss that members of the family, friend and neighbor caregiver networks may support multiple families so your visits may actually benefit more than the child you have identified for the visit.

If we apply this to a common PPP practice of back to school visits and you offer to visit the child at the family day care provider's home if the parent is not available, the provider may share the information you leave with all of the families she serves.

Another worthwhile article on early childhood home visits is found in the [SOCIAL POLICY REPORT BRIEF](#) from the Society for Research in Child Development. Click on *Home Visitation and Young Children: An Approach Worth Investing In?* If you are seeking support for continuing or starting a home visiting program at your school, I think you will find both of these research articles useful.

## KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION

by Janet Shepard, Director

Practical Parenting Partnerships was, of course, created as the K-12 follow-up to Parents As Teachers. PPP created Kindergarten Transition training with the cooperation of PAT, DESE and other partners in recognition of the need for some intentional planning and best practices to help children and their families transition first into early education programs and then into kindergarten.

There is still work to do in strengthening partnerships around early, high quality parent education and early childhood education programs. Here in Missouri, we are lucky to have programs in place, but reaching children and families with the programs can sometimes be a challenge. A colleague on the NPEN listserv recommended a clip on [You Tube](#) which points out the importance of early intervention. I hope you will take the time to watch it and ponder how your school might strengthen early education partnerships for the benefit of children and their families.

March 1, 2010 we will be presenting Kindergarten Transition training in cooperation with the Southeast Regional Professional Development Center in Cape Girardeau. Please register directly with the RPDC on their [website](#). As always teams are encouraged to attend together when possible. Team members might include kindergarten teachers, early childhood educators in-district and community partners, PAT, local public health agency, Head Start and more. Those attending are encouraged to bring a copy of the district transition plan. Each participant will receive a notebook containing training and resource materials. E-mail [Janet](#) if you have questions.

## SITE NEWS

by Janet Shepard, Director

This month I sent a message to our Facebook members asking for ideas to share in the *News from the Sites* space and I got this immediate reply:

Mark Twain in Carthage had a parent Math Night in October. Our theme was “Math is a treat...not a trick”. We set out several games from each grade level on tables and just let the parents play games with the kids. We reminded parents that opportunities to teach math occur daily, in all settings, and that math can be fun. The parents loved the event, there was LOTS of parent interaction between parents and kids and parents and parents! We will definitely do this again!”

Thanks to Lisa Sweet and our other Facebook members. If you are on Facebook and not a member of our group I hope you will [join us!](#) Additional ways we can network include [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). On LinkedIn you can request to become a member of the PPP Certified Facilitator and have this logo displayed on your LinkedIn page.



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PPP Is sustained by a fee structure, contracts and grants with major funding from the U. S. Department of Education Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC).

For information on the PPP program, please contact:

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## TECHNOLOGY SAFETY

By Cherisse Thibaut, MO KidsFirst

The virtual world, not unlike the real world can pose serious dangers to children. Modern technology can be a wonderful tool for children to learn, create and connect with others, however the technology is neutral; it is the way in which we use it that determines its positive or negative impact. Modern technology becomes more dynamic and efficient every minute. Therefore, it is our job to teach kids at a young age the rules of the technology superhighway. Below are some tips that show how to use technology to strengthen positive communication between parents and children.

- **Communicate**- Have an open, ongoing conversation with your child about their digital activities.
- **Spend time with your child online**- Use the Internet together to help with schoolwork, let your child show you how to send a text message or play an online game.
- **Stay Plugged In**- Encourage your child to talk to you about how they use the latest technologies.
- **Set clear rules and boundaries**- Ask the same questions as you would for after school activities or a night out...
  - Who are you going with...interacting with digitally?
  - What activity are you doing...digitally?
  - Where are you going...digitally?
  - When are you coming home...unplugging?

Teach children to protect their Name, Identity and Reputation.

- **Name** - If it's on the Internet, it's NOT PRIVATE! Don't disclose last names, passwords, contact information or pictures that may give clues as to where you live, work or go to school. Be aware that a "friend" you interact with on the Internet, while gaming or via cell phone may be a stranger.
- **Identity** - What you post or send to the digital world can STAY THERE FOREVER! Your identity should be fun, creative and protected.  
So uphold your ...
- **Reputation** - Online, cell phone and gaming behavior is still your behavior! Peers, parents or employers can see what you do digitally: so leave the doors to your future open by protecting your digital reputation.

### To Report...

More than 90% of both parents and kids could not identify the appropriate authority (i.e. local police, FBI, CyberTipline or an Internet Service Provider) to report unwanted online incidents. [Source: 2006, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)]

- A child in immediate danger contact 911.
- Online child exploitation contact [www.cybertipline.com](http://www.cybertipline.com) or 1-800-THE-LOST.
- Cyberbullying, contact the Internet service provider and save the offensive material. Depending on the circumstances contact school administration, school violence hotline (1-866-748-7047), school resource officer or local law enforcement.

For more information on Internet Crimes Against Children or to inquire about presentations on technology safety please contact Cherisse Thibaut at 573-632-4600 or [cherisse@missourikidsfirst.org](mailto:cherisse@missourikidsfirst.org). This information is brought to you by the partnership between Missouri Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (MOICAC) and Missouri Kidsfirst.



[www.moicac.org](http://www.moicac.org)



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