



“Parents crave communication—real communication that specifically describes how their child is doing, tells them what is going on at school, and gives them practical and reasonable ways they can help their children at home.”

...E. K. McEwan, in *How to Deal with Parents Who Are Angry, Troubled, Afraid, or Just Plain Crazy* (2005)

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT MEANS ONGOING COMMUNICATION

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Summer may be a good time to reflect and recharge your parent involvement efforts. With all the end of school activities, you may not have had time to fulfill the review process as obligated through SB480. Remember that parent involvement does not mean just a series of planned events; it is also a culture of shared responsibility. Perhaps more importantly, sharing means providing and promoting various ways to communicate between home and school.

For example, your school may have a summer school or child care program where parents are more apt to transport their children, making it easier to develop a ritual of teachers or volunteers personally greeting families at the drop-off or pick-up point each day. This simple gesture may pay dividends when the regular school year begins, when these same parents are more comfortable in talking with school staff.

Other summer ideas:

1. Develop an agreement with a local newspaper or radio announcer to describe appropriate summer learning activities for various ages. If someone or a committee can devote more time, provide an email address parents can share their own ideas or ask questions. Then, refer to them in the next article or broadcast.
2. Some schools have been successful in using a bus or van with a small group of school personnel (teacher, counselor, coach & principal) to visit different neighborhood gathering places or sports events to provide handouts about the start of school and to answer questions.
3. Many schools use their website effectively by keeping it current with news about the school. You might post at least a monthly thought for parents. This is also a good time to post a survey for parents to complete that can guide your fall parent involvement planning.



When school begins again, you might initiate a record-keeping plan for communication with parents. Encourage all staff members to contact parents throughout the year and to write it on a contact form that could be included in each teacher's lesson plan book. The form might have the following headings: *Date, Time, Form* (email, phone, etc.), *Who, Topic, and Initiator* (teacher or parent). Ongoing communication allows opportunities to change a course of action with a particular student before any real problems occur. This record will allow you to assess the results of your efforts; for example, are more parents now contacting you on their own, or did students show improvement in their work or behavior.

Other tips:

4. Ask parents to sign off on a project after they have discussed it with their child, or ask parents to fill out a simple evaluation about their child's work at home on the project.
5. Remember to use simple words and avoid educational jargon when talking with parents. Show your sincerity by offering praise and encouragement and genuine interest in their children.
6. Provide a calendar of classroom activities for parents. This might be in a weekly newsletter or on a website planning page. This will allow parents to feel a part of what is going on at school. Assignments listed could also include ideas for parents to do at home or reading references.
7. Start some kind of incentive program that encourages everyone at the school to greet parents with a smile. This includes office staff, custodians, and bus drivers. Some schools have used a smiley face pin and handed them out to visitors at the school.



Keep your eye out for any idea that will create the welcoming climate at your school that will encourage parents and school staff to become partners in the education of all our children. Let PPP help you in your quest for excellence!

## PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

Our Missouri schools are aware that this year's General Assembly made some changes to the way professional development funds are distributed to DESE and then to the programs which receive those funds. They also reduced the funds by 25%. This is a major source of funding for PPP so our funds have been cut for the coming fiscal year.

The staff has met and made some changes which we hope won't have a major impact on our work with you and on your work with families. We will visit our participating schools on a four-year cycle now rather than three and will reduce the number of training sessions we offer each year. We will still travel to Maryville, Cape Girardeau, Kansas City, Springfield, Kirksville and St. Louis with training but will have to set a minimum number of participants in order for us to make the trip.

We are still planning on a conference April 3 and 4, 2009 at Tan Tar A but expect that it will look a little different this year and that there will be other participating partners. If you have suggestions for things you would like to see added or changed, now is the time to let us know. We will keep you posted and in the mean time, please hold the date!

Thank you to each of you who contacted your legislators this Spring on our behalf. We heard many positive responses from them and had opportunities to share more about our work. It will be important that we continue to do this throughout the year.

## PPP SITE NEWS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

**Laquey R-V** had an unforgettable Family MAP Night this spring. After beginning the Family Night to help families prepare for the upcoming Missouri Assessment Program tests, severe weather warnings made it necessary for the group to seek shelter in the Girls' Gym locker room. When the severe weather had passed and

everyone had a few minutes to assess any damage to their vehicles, the night proceeded as planned! We're guessing those students probably did well on any MAP science questions related to weather!

## WORKING ON THE WEB



by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

Summer is here, and with it comes the promise of family vacation fun. Many families will vacation close to home this summer due to the continuing spike in gas prices. Included in this issue are sites to help you plan for low cost vacations close to home.

[www.visitmo.com](http://www.visitmo.com) The Missouri Tourism site has everything you need to plan an in-state trip (or summer school field trip) this year. Log on for money-saving coupons, a trip planner, several destinations and area events to consider. Click on "Getaway Guides" for your guide to Missouri Lakes and Rivers, Historic Places, Scenic Drives, Music and Entertainment, Caves, Civil War, and Route 66. Another great feature of the site will take you to separate regions of the state, and by clicking on the city name, you'll have access to local events and things to do.

[www.gasbuddy.com](http://www.gasbuddy.com) With Gas Buddy, find the lowest gas prices in your area, or check trends across the nation. You can also read helpful tips on how to improve gas mileage and reduce costs.

[www.gmap-pedometer.com](http://www.gmap-pedometer.com) Gmap Pedometer can help you map your routes for summer walks or jogs and this handy tool will calculate how many miles you traveled.

[www.wlearning.com](http://www.wlearning.com) "On the Go" free parent-child early literacy materials--This is a set of 14 birth through preschool early language and literacy development activities designed to be used outside the home: in the car, while walking, during bus rides, etc. Direction is provided to modify the activities to meet the needs of children with disabilities. To access the "On the Go" file, click on the "Free Parent Education Handouts" button on the site's home page. These materials were developed with grant support from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Program and can be reproduced and distributed as long as they are not sold.

## RECENT RESOURCES

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

We were fortunate enough to have the award-winning author, Joseph Kropp, present at our PPP Family Festival Parent Involvement Conference this year. Joseph is the author of the books, *Bowlegs' Bounty* and *Hickok's Gold*. He has a unique writing style that will keep many reluctant readers interested. Both books take readers on family adventures that weave historic fiction and storytelling with the Kaye family's vacations, first in Emerald Coast, Florida, and then in Black Hills, South Dakota. Enjoy these adventures at home by reading them as a family this summer!



## HOME SAFETY & HYGIENE

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Prevention plays a huge role in good health and safety. When parents and teachers model safe and healthy practices, children are more likely to follow. Children must also be educated on the importance of good hygiene and safe behaviors. Here are a few things to think about when it comes to staying healthy and preventing the spread of illnesses:

- Food safety

- Are foods we eat properly washed?
- Are our foods cooked to proper temperatures?
- Are foods refrigerated properly?
- Are food preparation surfaces cleaned and disinfected carefully?
- Are precautions taken to prevent raw foods from contaminating other foods?
- Clean hands
  - Are we washing hands regularly?
  - Are we scrubbing long enough when we wash? (at least 20 seconds)
  - Are we washing hands after using the restroom?
  - Are we washing hands prior to cooking and eating?
- Immunizations
  - Are adults and children properly immunized?
  - Are we knowledgeable about new immunizations and boosters?
  - Have we discussed immunizations with our doctors?
- Antibiotics
  - Do we use antibiotics appropriately? (Antibiotics don't work against viruses, such as colds and flu.)
  - Do we only use antibiotics as prescribed by doctors?
- Animal Safety
  - Do we avoid contact with wild animals? (They carry diseases and can pass them on to humans.)
  - Do we take our pets to a veterinarian for routine care?



Awareness of these precautions can have a positive effect on the health and safety of our family and school population. For example, according to one study, kids who washed their hands four times per day had up to 51% fewer sick days than those kids that did not. (*Family Fun magazine; April, 2008*) The time we spend on an ounce of prevention will pay off in the long run for adults and children.

## FACILITATION TIPS: Connecting with Families During the Summer

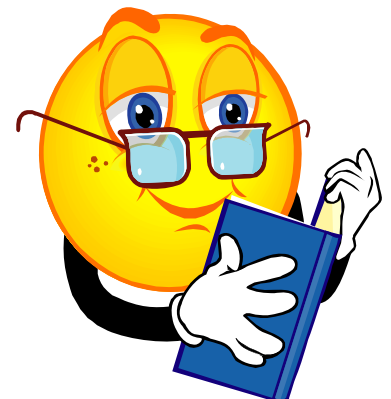
by Janet Shepard, Director

Just as we worry about students losing academic gains over the summer, we should be concerned about maintaining our relationship with parents. Some activities could support both student learning and parent involvement. ***Got Books?*** an article by Allington and McGill-Franzen in the April, 2008 issue of *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP* brings to light the importance of making books available to low-income children over the summer.

The authors suggest rethinking the use of school libraries for the summer and recommend having them open and accessible to children over the summer. This might be done once a week. The Family Resource library could also be available at this time for parents to check out activity bags, games and parenting resources. Handouts from your PPP resource notebooks might also be available for parents to take.

If a school-based social worker or other representative from the school is making home visits during the summer, he or she might also carry books for families to check out. Books could be returned at the next visit or returned to school when the new school year begins.

You might partner with someone in the community to make books from the school library or your classroom library available at community sites. Think about



partnerships with members of the faith based community, housing groups, summer recreation programs, Big Brother / Big Sister organizations and school-age care programs. All of these organizations see a lot of children and their parents / caregivers in the summer and can help you make books available to children.

Summer school could be a great time to promote vacation time reading. Your culminating summer school activity could be a good time to get parents on board with summer reading. An all-school or grade level picnic in July or early August could be a great way to connect with parents and check up on summer reading progress. Enjoy the summer and take time to read a few good books!

## HOME VISITING – What to Leave with Families

by Janet Shepard, Director

Many teachers visit each of the students in their class before school begins in the fall. Some schools will ask every teacher for all grade levels to this. Others will concentrate on the entering grade such as kindergarten or freshmen. In some schools individual teachers make the decision to make these welcome back to school visits.

No matter who is visiting, deciding what to include in packets to leave with families can be a major consideration. Some of the things you may want to think about are:

- School handbook
- Grade level handbook
- Picture book about school for kindergarten
- DVD of school and school day routine starring students from previous year's class for any students new to the building
- Information sheet for the family to complete about their child and return to school the first day of school
- School supplies or school supply list
- Magnet with school contact information / abbreviated school calendar
- Printed school calendar for the year
- PPP flyer with family participation opportunities for the year listed

Page 61 of your PPP Home Visitor's Guide has additional suggestions for your Home Visiting Took Kit. Remember, less can be more. Families may be more likely to use what you leave if you don't overwhelm them with too much material to review and read.

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PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS  
*Working Together for Our Children*

June 2008

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## Summer Fun Ideas

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Summer is a time for thinking outside of the box of structured schedules and routines and for exploring opportunities for fun and learning. Here are ideas for your family to consider doing this summer.

- Contact your area Chamber of Commerce or Convention and Visitors Bureau for local summer vacation or mini outing ideas. With soaring gas prices, this is a great summer to go on field trips in your own city or state as a family.
- Pack a picnic lunch or dinner and go to a location your family has never been before (the woods behind your house, a park, a creek, picnic benches on campus) and enjoy a healthier alternative to dinner out at a restaurant.
- Clean out your extras in your home and have a family garage sale or take things to the pawn shop. Spend the money on a family outing.
- Have each member of the family choose a vacation location of their choice. You can restrict the choice to your town, your state, the US or beyond and research it. Each family member will plan out what the itinerary for the trip would be and the cost. Then each member of the family would present their proposal to the whole family, followed by a vote to decide where the family would vacation.
- Visit the library to stock up on books for great summer reading.
- Hold a neighborhood Olympics in your back yard. Invite neighborhood families and divide into teams. Teams would compete in various games such as volleyball, hoola-hoops, water balloon tossing, watermelon eating and more. Awards and medals can be given for various fun categories.
- Have a neighborhood pet show in which children dress their pets up and parade them around the block for all to see.
- Teach children to recycle over the summer. Mark bins accordingly and your children can sort the recyclable materials.
- Take time to read with your child. Start a good book and read a bit in it every night together. Read under a shade tree or on the front porch swing.
- Visit a historical landmark in your area. Have your child make a poster or write a report about it to share when he/she goes back to school.
- Encourage your child to write a letter to a grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, friend or someone who lives far away. Hopefully the person will write back and a pen pal relationship will form.
- Lie outside and gaze at the nighttime sky. Look for patterns with the stars, pictures in the clouds, and observe the shape of the moon. If you do this nightly with your child, you could help them track and document the moon phases.
- Cook with your child. Have your child create a dinner menu, make a grocery list of ingredients needed, go grocery shopping together, then do the cooking together. Best of all, enjoy the meal as a family.
- When watching TV together, as your child questions about the show during commercials. You might ask if that could happen in real life or what she would have done if she were in that situation.
- Set a fitness goal as a family. You could walk together in the evenings and tally the miles you cover as a family. Celebrate when you reach your goal.
- Have a book fair. Invite your child's friends or neighborhood children over to trade books.
- Play board games as a family inside or outside.

- When traveling, discuss road signs and signals. Look for license plates from each state. Make a list of states you spot.
- Visit a zoo or petting zoo with your child.
- Play pitch and catch, Frisbee, football, or kickball as a family.
- Create a treasure chest by covering a cardboard box with wrapping paper. Collect great finds from walks in the park and from your back yard to put in the box.
- Go swimming together. Swimming can make everyone feel young and bring back great childhood summer memories.
- Make a picture collage or scrapbook of summer family fun!
- Have a family scavenger hunt. Each person has a list of types of things to find, such as 3 round objects, 2 yellow objects, 1 object that makes noise, etc.
- Camp out as a family. You can camp in a tent in the backyard, on blankets in the family room, or under the stars if you so dare.
- Visit a farmers' market if there is one near you. Discuss various fruits and vegetables and how they grow with your child.
- Observe the birds, squirrels, and wildlife in your area. Get books to learn more about them.
- Plant a little garden together and have your child water it and pick the produce.
- Have a family read-a-thon. All family members can get into pajamas, grab their favorite books, pillows, and blankets and read all night long. Don't forget the popcorn.

Get busy and have fun as a family this summer. Not only will you create great memories, but you will also keep your child's learning going strong throughout the summer.

**LAND LEARNING FOUNDATION'S  
YOUTH GAME FAIR**

**SATURDAY, AUGUST 23, 2008  
DEAN LAKE, MO- Open 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

Come see the State Patrol Helicopter at 10 A.M. until noon and then sit back and enjoy the entertainment of Ralph Duren, master of wildlife calls.

Meet Bruce Horrell and Tom Nelson with Wolf Creek Productions. Bruce is co-host and co-producer of "Wingshooter" and Tom is producer and host of "American Archer" on the outdoor channel. The National Shooting Sports Foundation will be filming the event. Pro fishermen John Sappington and Rick Lisek, Jr will be on hand to give you fishing tips and sign autographs.

**EVENTS/DISPLAYS:**

AgriServices of Brunswick  
Bass Pro  
Chariton Co. Historical Society  
Delta Waterfowl Foundation  
Dept of Natural Resources  
Ducks Unlimited  
Fountain Grove Conservation Area  
Grand Pass Conservation Area  
Gras-Land Kennels  
Kansas City Corp of Engineers  
Kansas City Woodcarvers  
Boon Crocket/Pope & Young Measurers  
Mo. Department of Conservation  
Mo. Soybean Association  
Mo. Trapper's Association  
Mule Deer Foundation  
NRA  
National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association  
National Wild Turkey Federation  
Noodler's Anonymous

Quail Unlimited  
Rash Pro  
Pheasants Forever  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Safari Club International  
Sierra Bullets  
Sporting Dog Association  
Swan Lake Refuge  
University of Mo. 4-H  
The Watershed Institute, Inc  
Aquatic Identification  
Archery  
Duck Calling Contest  
Fishing Events  
Fly Fishing  
Fly Tying  
Knife Making  
Live Wildlife

**FREE EVENT**



Every youth age 17 and younger that registers will receive a free Jakes subscription from the George Clark Missouri State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

**Directions:** The event is held 4 miles west of Triplett, Missouri on Route Z. Just follow the signs from Highway 11.



**SPONSORS**

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Cargill Cares  
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Ducks Unlimited  
National Shooting Sports Foundation  
Pheasants Forever  
Ranger Boats  
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation  
Savage Arms  
Mathews, Inc

Register at [www.youthgamefair.com](http://www.youthgamefair.com) or call 660-634-2240

As vendors and sponsors continue to commit to this event, please visit our web site at [www.youthgamefair.com](http://www.youthgamefair.com) for updated listings.