



**“Non-school factors matter greatly, and a child’s home life is a key element in school success or failure.” .....Gary K. Clabaugh, professor, La Salle University**

## TOO MUCH PARENT INVOLVEMENT

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

March brings renewed pressure for focused test preparation and the hot pursuit of higher achievement scores. Students, teachers, school administrators, and even state leaders experience the stress of public scrutiny and the real fear of possible consequences for falling short of expectations – loss of confidence, prestige, revenue, and community economic growth. This is the time of year for strident voices to criticize our public schools in America.

Missouri is certainly aware of its shortcomings as reported in the recent Education Week Quality Counts rating of states’ performance and policy. With an overall grade of C-, Missouri ranked in the bottom quarter of all states. The nation as a whole only received a C, reflected also in the mediocre showing of our students on international tests.

For years, state and national government officials have complained that our students are not learning what they should. They have emphasized school-based learning factors while tending to ignore non-school factors. Experienced classroom teachers know that what goes on beyond the school hours will either help or hinder student performance; but they are not supported by the insistence of some, like William F. Bennett, a former Secretary of Department of Education, who said that any explanations of school failure outside the school are “sociological flim-flammy”.

Obviously, academic rigor in the classroom is paramount to good learning. However, other factors involved in student achievement must also be considered. The important role of parents can not be denied. According to researchers, home variables and school factors that result in school success are similar and should be encouraged (Bryck, Lee, and Holland, 1993). These variables include such things as routine, consistency in use of time and space, priority of schoolwork over other activities, encouragement, quality of help available, use of language, opportunities to explore ideas and the larger environment, and expectations and aspirations (Kellaghan, Sloane, Alvarez, and Bloom, 1993).

Finding the right balance in cooperation between school and home becomes a thorny issue, however. Do schools put too much pressure on parents to take up the slack for insufficient instruction and resources at school? This interesting viewpoint is expressed in Jeanne S. Chall’s book, *The Academic Achievement Challenge*. She asks if parents and advanced media are expected to fill in learning gaps revealed in lagging test scores. If so, will children of lower socioeconomic status and fewer resources be faced with even greater academic challenges? Can there be such a thing as too much parent involvement? Might schools expect too much from parents in some homework assignments? For example, a teacher may assign a special project that she believes will be fun; but to complete it may involve certain art supplies or other materials or researching information that is difficult to find and beyond the skills of the average student. Going to the store for items not commonly found in the home or spending hours wading through internet or library resources to help their children complete an assignment may be an infringement on more quality family time. Conversely, not providing parents information and understanding about what their children are learning and why impedes parents’ ability to support their children in academic learning.

Like it or not, the responsibility for educating our children is a joint effort between home and school. Understanding how to best work together to encourage self-motivated lifelong learning is our challenge. Allow PPP to help in this endeavor.

## PPP CENTER UPDATE

By Janet Shepard, Director

By the time this newsletter reaches you another Family Festival will be history. We will post a special edition of the newsletter on the web featuring highlights and awards from the 2008 Festival. The 2009 Festival is scheduled for April 3 and 4 at Tan Tar A. Mark your calendars now and make plans for your school to be represented. We were pleased this year to have PPP schools from Arkansas and Iowa in attendance at Family Festival!

We plan for our new website to be live April 1, which means this will be your last mailed newsletter. Please log on to the website after April 1 to sign up for the electronic letter.

Remember our Parents Guide to the Map is posted on the front page of the current website. Your district or building may want to place a link on your website to this booklet. We also have printed copies available for \$1.30 each. The PPP Center makes publications available at our copy cost. Your order for publications must be accompanied by a purchase order or at least a purchase order number.

## WORKING ON THE WEB

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

<http://parenting247.org/> Parenting 24/7 “is a ‘one-stop’ source of news, information, and advice on parenting and family life from University of Illinois Extension. Designed for parents and grandparents of children from birth through the teens, it provides feature articles with research-based information, video clips of parents and experts, breaking news and commentary, newsletters, and recommendations to the best parenting resources on the web.”

In that same vein, I read with interest the article on Positive Sports Parenting from the same site, <http://parenting247.org/article.cfm?contentid=1305&agegroup=3>. Its focus is on how to positively encourage children in sports as opposed to negative or inappropriate involvement by parents. Much too often, we’ve heard of, read about, or witnessed a parent’s inappropriate behavior on the side lines. I encourage you to read this article and pass it on!

[www.edreform.com/ParentPower](http://www.edreform.com/ParentPower) Parent Power! is an on-line newsletter sponsored by The Center for Education Reform. This would be a good site for parents who have questions about testing, school report cards, charter schools, home-schooling, school choice, teaching, how to get involved, and many other topics related to education. Check it out, and then post it in your next school newsletter for parents to take advantage of.

## GRANTS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

The **Saucony Run For Good Foundation**, established to help end childhood obesity by providing financial support to nonprofits across the United States that support children’s running and fitness programs, is accepting applications for its grant program. Saucony, Inc., a subsidiary of the Stride Rite Corporation, is a global supplier of performance athletic footwear and apparel.

The grants are open to nonprofit organizations that initiate and support running and fitness programs for kids. Eligible applicants are programs whose participants are 18 years of age or less, have 501(c)(3) status, and can demonstrate their program positively impacts the lives of participants through their increased participation in running.

The foundation has two grant cycles per year, with up to seven awards granted each cycle. Grants are in amounts up to a maximum of \$10,000 each.

Deadline: *June 13, 2008*

To apply: [www.sauconyrunforgood.com/](http://www.sauconyrunforgood.com/)

The **Jordan Fundamentals Grant Program** awards \$1 million annually to teachers across the United States who motivate and inspire students toward achieving excellence. The program is presented by the Jordan Brand, a division of Nike, Inc.. Applicants must be public school teachers or paraprofessionals working with students in grades one through twelve. At least 50 percent of the school’s student population must be eligible for the free or reduced school-lunch program at the time of application.

The program makes grants in two categories:

Innovation Grants: Grants averaging \$2,500 each will be awarded to individual teachers for projects that will impact classroom innovation and improve instruction.

Inspiration Grants: Winners of Innovation Grants may apply for an Inspiration Grant. Grants totaling \$10,000 will be awarded to teams of teachers in support of scaling-up implementation of approaches developed with Innovation Grants.

Deadline: *March 30, 2008*

To apply: <http://www.nike.com/jumpman23/features/fundamentals/overview.html>

Take advantage of a source of newly available Federal funding from the **US Department of Education**. Eligible schools are: Full-service Community Schools (FSCS), which provide comprehensive academic, social, mental, physical, and vocational programs and services to meet individual, family, and community needs. This priority will support

projects that propose to establish, through collaborative efforts among State and local agencies, community service organizations, and parents, full-service community schools offering a range of student services.

Notice of Intent to Apply: March 17, 2008.

Deadline: *April 15, 2008*

For more information:

<http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20081800/eocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/E8-2934.htm>

## RECENT RESOURCES

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

***Teens Under the Influence: The Truth About Kids, Alcohol, and Other Drugs-How to Recognize the Problem and What to Do About It*** by Katherine Ketcham and Nicholas A. Pace, M.D. is a comprehensive book that provides knowledge to adults working with teens to defeat drug addictions. It covers the following topics: common myths about drug addiction; the crucial differences between adult and adolescent dependency; the reasons kids get hooked; stages of adolescent addiction; different kinds of drugs kids use and combine; various treatment options and how to choose the best treatment for your child; and strategies for handling relapses.

***Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family*** by Sylvie de Toledo and Deborah Edler Brown is a practical guide for grandparents who find themselves responsible for raising their grandchildren. The first nine chapters deal with predictable and unexpected issues grandparents may face in their relationship with the child: effects on the grandparent's life, effects on other family members, getting help for a troubled child, and dealing with the child's natural parent(s).

Teachers: Are upcoming assessments and spring activities stressing you out? This book is for you! ***Laugh Lines for Educators*** by Diane Hodges provides you with a smile and a little tension relief. It contains lots of funny material about children, teaching, school, and holidays. Good humor for educators to read and share with others. You'll wonder why you didn't think to write this book yourself!

## PARENT INCENTIVES

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Parents want what's best for their children and want their children to succeed. That is the greatest incentive parents have for getting involved in their child's education. Schools

also want what's best for children and for them to succeed. When schools extend opportunities to families to get involved, everyone wins. Many schools offer workshops for parents, family fun nights, parent resource centers, conferences, open houses, parent lunches, volunteer options and more. During these types of events, parents and school staff build a partnership, parents meet and network with other parents, and a message is given to children that their education is important. Together, parents and teachers learn how to best support the child's learning process. Parents often learn strategies for extending learning beyond the school day for their child. Parents learn new ways to interact with their children and to promote their academic success. They learn how to support the child with homework, how to use questions to extend the child's learning and to build on his or her curiosity. Teachers learn more about the child from his or her first teachers, the parents. Teachers see an improvement in the classroom in student performance. Teachers appreciate the contribution parents make to the learning process as well as to the school. Parent support of the school and school events is of great value to the school; volunteers save the school money as well as add to the quality of programs. With parents involved, schools can accomplish so much more!

To show appreciation, schools might offer incentives to families for their involvement and support. These incentives can increase parent awareness of the wide variety of ways they can be involved, including involvement in educational activities at home, in the community, and in school. Some schools do parent passports in which parents get stamps on the passport as they complete an indicated number of involvement efforts in each category. Then, a reward is given to the family when the passport is completed. Some schools do recognition programs, such as a breakfast, for volunteers to show appreciation. Sometimes teachers will offer an incentive for follow through in the home of a lesson taught in the classroom. Schools often give out door prizes, donated by community supporters, at family events. These incentives are just a way to say thanks to families for their support in education! We know this support makes a difference, so why not recognize and celebrate it!

## THIS WILL BE THE LAST MAILED PPP NEWSLETTER

**THE NEW PPP WEBSITE WILL GO LIVE APRIL 1ST - LOG ON AND SIGN UP FOR THE NEWSLETTER AT [www.pppctr.org](http://www.pppctr.org)**

**PRACTICAL PARENTING  
PARTNERSHIPS**

2412-C Hyde Park Road  
Jefferson City MO 65109

Phone: 573/761-7770  
Fax: 573/761-7760

Email: [pppctr@pppctr.org](mailto:pppctr@pppctr.org)

***Working Together For Our Children***

PRESRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Columbia, MO  
Permit No. 286

A newsletter published by the PPP Center for parents and educators participating in the PPP program. Edited by Darlene Robinett; layout by Patty Stegemann.

The Practical Parenting Partnerships program was developed with funding from the Danforth Foundation, St. Louis through the MO Dept of Elementary & Secondary Education.

**Postmaster, send all returns to:**

PPP Center, 2412-C Hyde Park Road  
Jefferson City MO 65109.

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

**PPP FOR AFTER-SCHOOL**

by Janet Shepard, Director

PPP for After-school, a four hour training designed for school age care staff, whether the program is school or community based, has been approved by the Department of Health and Senior Services for four clock hours. Our PPP trainers are listed in the OPEN Registry. The training is also listed in the Arkansas Early Childhood Professional Development Registry. The training is designed to help establish the after-school program as a link between teachers and families as well as to help staff involve parents in their program. We have a few more sessions scheduled this school including one that was just added in St. Louis for May 15 and hosted by St. Louis for Kids. The schedule is one line at [www.pppctr.org](http://www.pppctr.org).

**Mark your calendars!**

**2009 PPP Family Festival**

***April 3-4, 2009***

**TanTarA Resort  
Osage Beach MO**



# Working Together for Our Children

March, 2008

---

## RELIEVE STRESS!

by Darlene Robinett, PPP Founding Director

You may have been under a lot of stress lately - trying to meet the unrealistic demands of an overbearing boss, making your pay check last until the end of the month, caring for an ailing grandparent, and battling with income tax forms. You may come home and look at your kids and think how wonderful to be so carefree! However, kids can feel a great deal of stress in their lives, too. Attempting to fit in socially, please you, their teachers and other adults, while keeping up with schoolwork, chores and other activities can be equally daunting.

How do you recognize a child experiencing too much stress? Your child's personality will bring different reactions. Some children tend to hold their feelings in. They may always try to be good. They may be a worrier, be fearful, seem shy and cry easily. These children who internalize stress may frequently complain of stomach aches, headaches, or other physical ills. Other children may let all their feelings out. They may act out, lose their temper easily, become very demanding and/or destructive, or they may tend to tease and bully their siblings or friends. They may also express being anxious or depressed. The key to recognizing stress in your child is any noticeable change in behavior.

How can you help your child either avoid or relieve stress? Basic actions of good parenting will go a long way in stabilizing your child's emotions – for example, talk with your child regularly and really listen to what she says; model calm behavior; provide routines and consistent expectations; ensure that she gets enough sleep, eats healthy foods, and exercises each day. A few specific suggestions:

- 1) Allow your child to have some downtime. Is it really necessary to complete chores or homework as soon as he arrives home? He may need time to unwind. One idea is for you and your child to prepare a list of 10-minute enjoyable activities and post it somewhere. The list may include taking the dog for a run, practicing free throws or dribbling a basketball, listening to a couple of favorite songs, playing a musical instrument, checking email or playing a short game. Refer your child to this list and encourage him to do one of them when his day has been particularly stressful.
- 2) Review your child's weekly schedule. Can you carve out at least one day after school without any planned activities to allow your child to relax and recharge? For a high school student, help her build a realistic class load. You may want to work with the school counselor.
- 3) Help your child focus on learning, not strictly on getting high grades or excelling on tests. Obviously, you will celebrate an outstanding report card or test score; but be ready to praise hard work and original ideas. Ask your child questions about topics he is studying - "What's the most interesting thing you learned about people during the Great Depression?" You might also want to help your child practice stress-relievers for test-time, like take several deep breaths or close your eyes and imagine yourself in the midst of a peaceful scene right before starting the test.
- 4) Help your child break down responsibilities or school assignments into smaller, more easily managed tasks. Sometimes what is expected seems overwhelming, and your child may simply give up. Help her see that she can accomplish the expectation by doing a little bit at a time.

The daily lives of all family members can become stressful. Even in the lives of children, it is important to be aware of stress and take steps to deal with it.