



**“Although thinking is innate, skillful thinking must be cultivated.”**

... Arthur L. Costa, Emeritus Professor of Education, California State University

## **TEACHER APPRECIATION**

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Who are the teachers we remember with clarity and appreciation? Perhaps someone who entertained us or gave us great grades for little effort on our part comes to mind; but those we truly remember as outstanding teachers challenged us to think in new ways. We grew from their knowledge and expertise in a subject combined with their instructional skills and ability to inspire us to explore possibilities, to listen to other viewpoints and to make informed decisions or conclusions. The teachers who looked at us as individuals and saw potential, who could help us understand the importance of learning and lead us to discover new insights, who could somehow design group work that involved every student, are the teachers who educated us for life.

We often hear about “getting back to basics”; but if students never move beyond the acquisition of basic skills and storing of information, they will remain mired in egocentric viewpoints, unable to deal with life’s complexities. As the Commission on the Whole Child in 2007 stated, “instruction must become more reflective, complex and relevant.” Teachers must promote critical thinking through teaching in intellectually challenging ways.

Teachers must be able to answer both “how” and “why” questions about content. They can not depend on standard tests to assess their students. Rather, they value multiple assessments, keeping abreast of students’ understanding and progress in order to guide and modify their teaching strategies. Helping students in their thinking processes is tantamount to good teaching and learning for life.

When introducing new content, good teachers lead students to think about what they already know about it, what resources they might have that will help them with it, what the possibilities are for approaching it in a different way, how they can gather data and evaluate validity and reliability of sources of data, how the content might be broken down into easier components to tackle, and how others in the class might help them learn more about it. Good teaching involves student participation, not simply rote memory. Thus, education that provides opportunities for students to excel involves a rich curriculum infused with practice in critical thinking.

Teachers who help students learn to think critically have to respect their students and demonstrate how all in the classroom must respect each other. In like manner, good teachers show respect for their students’ families through ongoing communication that encourages their input and suggests how they might extend learning at home. May is traditionally the time to appreciate how teachers and students throughout the year have developed their capacity to think. Use PPP as a vehicle to bring teachers, parents and students together to celebrate your accomplishments!



*Shelly Lock represented PPP at the proclamation signing where Governor and Mrs. Blunt declared April Child Abuse Prevention Month in Missouri.*

PPP staff members participate in several statewide prevention and promotion coalitions. These coalitions include Missouri Prevention Partners, which works toward child abuse prevention; Bright Futures with a focus on healthy social and emotional development; Strengthening Families, which promotes five protective factors for strong families, and Healthy Marriages.

By definition and practice PPP is a primary prevention program. Parenting education and open communication are keys to prevention and promotion. We hope PPP teams are represented in these efforts at the local level when opportunities are available.

This month we join National PTA in celebrating Teacher Appreciation week. Thanks for all you do for students and their families!

This electronic newsletter is open to anyone, any where. Please pass the word. It is posted the first of each month, year around and will be archived at the end of the month to make room for a new edition. Please give us your feedback and ideas to share.

For those of you beginning summer vacation this month, enjoy your much deserved time off. The PPP Center is open 12 months and the staff members are available to assist you. Please let us know how we may be of assistance to you.

## GRANTS

by Vickie Dickneite, Recourse Coordinator

The **LIVE GREEN** Teacher Grant program, a Discovery Education program presented by General Motors, challenges middle school teachers to develop innovative ideas for furthering environmental and energy sustainability. Teachers will identify an issue or problem, create a plan to address it, and integrate the topic into classroom teaching.

**Earn a \$1,000 LIVE GREEN grant** - 40 grants will be awarded to teachers for the most forward-thinking ideas. In addition, the 40 recipients will be treated to an exciting **online professional development** program designed to help them reach their school's specific green initiatives, including a **free digital camera** to document and share the experience!

Think about your vision, apply for a **LIVE GREEN** grant, and pass on a brighter future to your class.

Deadline: May 15, 2008

Log on to <http://livegreen.discoveryeducation.com/> for more details or to apply.

**NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**  
**Student/Newspaper Partnership Grants**

The Newspaper Association of America Foundation encourages middle and high schools to partner with professional newspapers in their communities and seek funding to start, relaunch, or revitalize student newspapers, whether online or in print.

All public and private schools serving grades 7 through 12 and working in partnership with daily or non-daily professional newspapers are eligible to receive Student/Newspaper Partnership Grants from the NAA Foundation. Schools are also encouraged to seek a university or a college as an additional partner. Funding priority is given to startup student newspapers. However, grant applications to relaunch or revitalize former or current programs also will be considered. The NAA Foundation especially welcomes grant applications from urban, rural, or minority-majority schools.

The NAA Foundation will fund up to twelve partnerships in 2008-09. Each partnership may receive up to \$5,000 in Year One, plus an additional \$2,500 in Year Two. Grant funds may be used for equipment, software, adviser training, and printing.

Deadline: May 16, 2008.

Log on to <http://www.naafoundation.org/Home/NAAFoundation/ScholasticPress/PartnershipGrants.aspx> for more information.

## WORKING ON THE WEB

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

### ENERGIZE YOUR TEACHING CAREER

<http://www.teachermagazine.org/tm/toc/2008/03/01/index.html>

As teachers advance in their careers and increase their effectiveness, how do they continue to grow professionally and find personal satisfaction? You'll find fuel for thought about 'Energizing Your Career' in Teacher Magazine's new print periodical, the Teacher Professional Development Sourcebook. Among the offerings are articles about school-based coaching roles, new-teacher support, online professional development, and revitalizing your classroom practice.

### NEW TEACHER HELPLINE

[http://snipurl.com/newtchr\\_helpline](http://snipurl.com/newtchr_helpline)

Are you a new teacher who's nearing the end of your first year, and you still have questions or doubts about your future in the classroom? Take a few minutes to check out Scholastic's "New Teacher Helpline." There are many teacher discussion boards around the Web that aren't very dependable. The Scholastic board seems to be well populated, with responses coming both from other visitors and from a savvy moderator who is also a full-time teacher. The range of participants is K-12, but heavier on the K-8 end. For a sample, take a look at this recent post "Bad Teacher?" and the replies: [http://snipurl.com/bad\\_teacher](http://snipurl.com/bad_teacher)

### TEACHERTUBE TEACHES AND ENTERTAINS

Have some fun while learning new teaching ideas. Have you checked out TeacherTube? Like YouTube, this site has many videos on many different topics. Search a specific topic or browse through the "Most Discussed", "Most Viewed", "Top Favorites", and more to give your teaching a boost. Some videos are meant to make us think, others just to laugh, and still others to teach and learn. [www.teachertube.com](http://www.teachertube.com) Try it!

## RECENT RESOURCES

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

This month, you are presented with a hodge-podge of the PPP Center's newly collected books.

*E-parenting—Keeping up with your Tech-Savvy Kids* by Sharon Miller Cindrich is a reference to provide everything you need to know about new technologies and how to make the most of them with your family. Included are ways to protect kids online, launch a family (or classroom) blog, create a digital photo archive, and choose a “first” cell phone.

*No Room for Bullies* by Jose’ Bolton, Sr., Ph.D., L.P.C., and Stan Graeve, M.A. shows parents, teachers, and school administrators how to find ways to work together to provide students with a sense of safety and learn what to do when a child bullies, is bullied, or suffers “bystander silence”. The book offers ideas for any type of bullying “from the classroom to cyberspace.”

*Between Two Worlds-The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce* by Elizabeth Marquardt was written for adults. This book seeks to uncover if there really is such a thing as “a good divorce”. While divorce is sometimes necessary, even amicable divorces sow lasting inner conflict in the lives of children. Included are stories and comments from 1500 young adults from divorced and intact families. This is a fairly good book. I caution public schools thinking about buying and using the book—there are many references to God and religion.

*Afterschool Matters-Creative Programs That Connect Youth Development and Student Achievement* edited by Sara Hill is a collection of promising programs for Out of School Time (OST) which emphasizes and addresses the multiple needs of youth: academic, social, physical, emotional, civic and artistic. The program descriptions show not only strengths, but challenges faced in designing and maintaining their OST programs.

## **SHOWING APPRECIATION**

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

“To teach is to touch a life forever.” There are so many people who touch our lives and have great impact on us. With May 6<sup>th</sup> being Teacher Appreciation day and May 11<sup>th</sup> being Mother’s Day, what a great month to reflect on and honor those who do so much for us. Why not take this opportunity to teach children ways to show appreciation for those who do for them. In our fast paced society, children (as well as adults) often take for granted services, care and kind deeds others do for them. During the month of May, we can encourage them to:

- share a story about their favorite educator
- write a thank you note to mom
- make a donation to help raise the status of teachers ([non-profitteacherscount.org](http://non-profitteacherscount.org))
- write a letter to a teacher reflecting on great memories from the school year
- offer to do a favor or task for a teacher
- do extra chores at home for mom
- make a poster about everything a teacher does
- list ways mom or a teacher has had a positive impact on his life

These are just a few ideas. Be creative and give children a chance to be thankful and show appreciation. It is a good lesson for children and definitely will give them a warm fuzzy feeling.

## **ANNUAL REPORT TIME AND FACILITATION TIPS**

by Janet Shepard, Director

Each participating school is asked to complete the PPP Annual Report. This year the survey is posted on Survey Monkey. The contact person for each building should complete the annual report. You may want to pull your parent involvement team together to look at the survey and select your responses as a team. With a little help from technology you could project the survey so everyone can read it together.

Working as a team on the survey is a good way to review where you have been this year, celebrate success, and think about what you want to accomplish next year. This information once compiled for all responding schools helps your PPP Center staff do the same thing. We then share your good work with other state leaders, decision makers and funders.

Remember, we consider a participating school one which has sent participants to any of our PPP training offerings. Sometimes schools think they are not doing enough to justify reporting. I think once you begin filling out the survey, you will see you are making more of an effort on parent involvement than you might realize.

Let us hear from you! You will find the survey at the link below

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1Xc3nPqX\\_2bcqUTL1C0phgqw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=1Xc3nPqX_2bcqUTL1C0phgqw_3d_3d)

Thanks in advance for your help with this request.

## HOME VISITING

by Janet Shepard, Director

This month we salute and celebrate the classroom teachers who make home visits whether the visits are paid, career ladder, or voluntary. Here are some ideas teachers have shared with PPP on the way they are doing their home visits:

- Visiting the home of each student in their class before school starts in the fall
- Visiting the home of each student at the end of the school year to share successes for the year and to make suggestions for reading and other summer enrichment work
- Drawing names of students throughout the year using a lottery system with dates announced that home visits will be made
- Using a home visit as an opportunity for a parent – teacher conference with those families who cannot / do not attend the scheduled conference at school
- Tutoring in the home rather than having students stay after school
- To explain an IEP meeting the family missed

It takes time to plan, organize and follow through with home visits, but every teacher we know who makes home visits believes they make a difference for the students and their family and in the way the teacher works with the student. Thanks to those who incorporate this method of communicating with families into your yearly work!

A newsletter published by the PPP Center for parents and educators participating in the PPP program. Edited by Janet Shepard; 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.

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PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERHIPS  
*Working Together for Our Children*

April 2008

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## Teacher Appreciation Week

by Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

*“A teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in the pupils.”*

- Ever Garrison

*“Silent gratitude isn’t much use to anyone.”*

- G. B. Stern

The National PTA has named the first full week of May as Teacher Appreciation Week; in 2008, it is May 5 - 9. Teachers have a most influential job, that of educating and caring for our children over an extended period of time. Teachers serve as role models for students. They recognize each student as a unique individual, while leading and inspiring a whole group to experience the joy of learning. It is appropriate that parents and students express their gratitude to teachers for providing them opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understandings.

Many teachers have indicated that a simple, heartfelt “thank you” anytime throughout the year will bring a special glow to their day. Think what even the most simple expressions of appreciation you give to teachers this month will mean. You and your child may wish to do something on your own, or you may join with other parents through PPP, the PTA or some other group. Following are a few ideas that others have shared:

### *Individual:*

1. Write a poem or a short description of a favorite activity the teacher provided you this year. You or your child may sincerely and truthfully tell what you like about the teacher.
2. Make a collage of photos, words, pictures, etc. to represent the year or what you appreciated.
3. Make a bookmark with a photo and a caption.
4. Make a notepad with your child’s artwork in one corner of a piece of paper, copy it on about 50 sheets of paper that are then glued together at the top to form a notepad.
5. You might send a written note or email message. You could copy the email message to a school administrator so that it may become a part of the teacher’s employee file.

### *Group:*

1. Make a memory book with students completing sentence prompts, like “The best thing you did for me this year was...”
2. Provide a poster board for students (maybe parents also) to autograph and write a comment to the teacher.
3. Prepare a recipe book for the teacher, with each student bringing one recipe to be included.
4. Parents volunteer to provide a simple luncheon for teachers, decorate the teachers’ room or area in the cafeteria, and some parent volunteers to substitute in the classroom while the teacher is dining.
5. Make a Walk of Fame by laying out donated carpet or red butcher paper down the hall and decorate with stars with each teacher’s name. Have a greeting committee there when they go to lunch.
6. Especially for young children, you might take photos outside with children creating letters with their bodies to make one large photo that says “Thanks for a great year.”

Appreciation can be given in many ways, simply or more complex. Use your own imagination and consider working with other parents in making Teacher Appreciation Week a tribute to your partnership with the school in educating your children.