



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERHIPS
Working Together for Our Children

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KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

by Janet Shepard, Director

During the month of April, I presented on Kindergarten Transition at each of the Spring Regional Meetings hosted by [Moving on Together](#). At each location we had great discussions about school readiness, developmentally appropriate practice, forming transition teams and sharing responsibility for transition planning as well as ideas for transition activities. In our conversations I referenced a number of research and position papers on the topics discussed. Rather than print each article for participants or even print a bibliography, I have dedicated the May column to links to the referenced articles. Even if you were not in attendance at the sessions, I hope you will find the articles useful.

For those of you reading this who are not in an MPP classroom, touch base with the MPP staff to get their thoughts about kindergarten transition in your building or district. They have a survey tool you can use as a team to evaluate existing practices. You might also wish to review as a team your district's board approved kindergarten transition plan.

Status of Early Education: Just this week a newsletter came across my email announcing the availability of the annual report from the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIERR). The newsletter came from [Learning First](#) and includes links to the [NIERR Annual Report](#).

Academic Achievement: The *Learning First* article also contains a link to the academic and fiscal benefits of pre-kindergarten educational programs. The academic link leads to a study funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts and conducted by NIEER. In addition you may want to search the Abecedarian program which is a classic study of a preschool program for low income, minority youth in Chapel Hill, NC. Analysis is still being conducted of this 1972 program as well as the also classic High Scope Perry Preschool program. The Perry project is the basis for the economic benefit article linked on the *Learning First* page.

Dropout Prevention: I shared with the group my frustration that most dropout prevention programs target high school or middle school students when dropout prevention really must begin in the early years. Setting an early pattern of regular school attendance is one dropout prevention method. In the September 2008 Kindergarten Transition column which is archived on the [website](#) under the newsletter tab, you will find a discussion about and link to *How Maternal, Family and Cumulative Risk Affect Absenteeism in Early Schooling: Facts for Policymakers*, a scholarly article from the [National Center on Children in Poverty](#). Coincidentally, I heard [OSEDA's](#) Director, William Elder speak in mid April at the Children's Trust Fund Conference and he said, "We don't create high school dropouts in high school, we create them in third grade or earlier." OSEDA publishes Kid's Count which gives county by county demographic information on many indicators.

School Readiness: A number of scholarly articles and position papers are available on kindergarten readiness and minimum age requirements for beginning kindergarten. Joseph Gulino, Ph.D., Principal at St. Peters School in Jefferson City is a strong advocate for children beginning kindergarten at an older age. One of his articles, [Kindergarten Readiness: A Challenge](#), appeared in the May / June issue of **Principal**. A parent

friendly article with similar information titled *How Young is Too Young* appeared in **Jefferson City Magazine**, September – October 2008 and is available on the [St Peter's School website](#).

Participant packets included a copy of *School Readiness: Implications for Policy* which along with other great resources can be downloaded from the [Center for Family Policy and Research](#) at the University of Missouri.

Transition Resources: Remember, the PPP Kindergarten Transition binder contains a wealth of resources for teachers and parents on transition. If you are not sure whether the binder is available in your district, or if you would like to participate in Kindergarten Transition training, please email [Janet](#).

If you know of other articles on this topic which should be shared, please send the link to me for inclusion in an upcoming newsletter.

PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

As we near the end of the school year, it is time to plan for next year. PPP is scheduling training, family nights and professional development for the coming school year. See Shelly's column this month for additional information. Once again PPP's financial situation is forcing Shelly Lock, Program Coordinator, Rosalee Johson, St Louis Area Coordinator and me to take the summer off. The PPP telephone will be answered or you can email any of us.

We will also try to keep some news on the Facebook page which was just updated to the new group style. This makes the page a bit more open and I hope more active and useful. Remember, those of you who are a PPP Certified facilitator and a member of LinkedIn can join the certified facilitator group on that social networking site. Please help us keep these free networking and awareness active and useful.

We still need your support with our fundraising efforts through Schnuck's. Those of you in Southeast, Central Missouri, and St. Louis who shop at Schnuck's can earn money for PPP simply by handing them your E-scrip card at checkout. To get a card email [Janet](#) with your name, mailing address and email address and we will register you and mail your card to you.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May is:	Foster Care Month
May 1- 7	Teacher Appreciation Week
May 2-8	Children's Book Week
May 8-14	Food Allergy Awareness Week
May 11	National School Nurse Day

HOME VISITING

By Janet Shepard, Director

Home Works! The Teacher Home Visit Program in St. Louis is featured in an article in the May issue of **Educational Leadership** published by ASCD. [Connecting with Parents at Home](#) was authored by Maplewood Richmond Heights Superintendent, Dr. Linda Henke and describes a visit to the home of a freshman who is new to the district. The father and son are cautious about the visit, but are clearly won over by the two visitors and

the reader feels certain the son will be more successful in school and the father will be more supportive if both his son's efforts and of the school. You may read the article in its entirety online. Just click on the article title to go to the full text.

For information on [Home Works! The Teacher Home Visit Program](#), visit their website. You may also contact founder [Karen Kalish](#) directly. You will also find additional information about them in the February, 2011 issue of this column.

For training, resources, or coaching to create your own custom designed home visit program, contact PPP. A full list of PPP home visit resource notebook titles is on the website. We are also currently seeking funding to create resource notebooks for those visiting with families with younger children. Check the June newsletter for more information and an opportunity to provide input on the early childhood resources.

GRANTS

By Janet Shepard, Director

Applications for Sonic's Limeades for Learning are now being accepted for fall funding. The program is open to classroom teachers. You can find more information [online](#). Funding is determined by votes. You could write a family engagement proposal then enlist parents to vote for your idea.

PTO is again sponsoring *Today's Parent Group of the Year* contest. All school based parent groups are eligible to apply. Log on to the [PTO website](#) for details. Applications are due June 1.

PLANNING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR 2011-2012

By Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

As we are wrapping up the 2010-2011 school year, we are simultaneously planning for the upcoming 2011-2012 school year. It's the nature of the game for educators. Proper planning includes quality professional development which is based on performance, assessment, and diverse forms of feedback. District and school goals are inclusive of various components of quality education. As you are planning a comprehensive professional development program, here are some important things to keep in mind.

Effective professional development is...

- Directly focused on helping to achieve student learning goals and supporting student learning needs.
- A collaborative endeavor – teachers, support staff, parents, and administrators work together in planning and implementation.
- A long-term commitment.
- Differentiated including some large group, small team, individual, on site, conference, etc.
- Tied to the overall district and school goals.

The content of the professional development should be based on student needs. Research shows that for continuous improvement, schools should focus on the following categories and the connections among them:

- Instruction
- Assessment
- Curriculum
- Leadership
- Learning styles and processes

Family engagement is an underlying component in each of these areas. When parents are aware of what is being taught and how it is being taught (curriculum and instruction), they can support learning at home. When clear communication with families regarding assessment takes place, students are more prepared and perform better on those assessments. When teachers and parents work together to identify individual learning styles and

needs, students can better reach their full potential. When schools staff, families, and communities come together to plan for improvement, schools excel!

Family engagement is at the heart of all professional development topics. With this in mind, explore ways to incorporate PPP into your professional development needs for 2011-2012. PPP can provide technical assistance in strategic planning, provide staff development, provide family workshops or provide guidance to teams planning family events, provide training around parent involvement, and more! Visit the PPP website for more information: www.pppctr.org.

PPP SITE NEWS – SHELLY LOCK

SPRING 2011

Families + Reading + Dinner = A Successful Evening

Reading Carnival Recap

On the evening of Friday, March 4, nearly 450 Gotsch students and their families came to Gotsch Intermediate School's Reading Carnival. The evening was coordinated by Sheri Hogland along with the help of Shelly Lock from the Practical Parenting Partnership (PPP) organization. This year is the fourth year that PPP has helped coordinate a night for families and children to interact with one another. Several classroom teachers also presented information about Alphaboxes in the content areas,



The Reading Carnival is a great way for parents and children to spend quality time together.

how to read with your child, and using the Tumblebooks/Study Island websites. Science Fair Projects and the Book Fair were also popular attractions for guests.

The evening began at 5:30. The weather was threatening, but families braved the stormy weather so that they could spend quality time together. Upon entering the gymnasium, students and their families roamed visited various stations. Gotsch staff members facilitated activities at stations designed by the Practical Parenting Partnership. Stations

included a Book Walk, a Name Game, Reading Trivia, Story in a Can, and more.

The evening was made possible through Title I funds. Guests were treated to pizza from Happy Joe's Pizza Parlor and salad from The Affton Pasta House, two local favorites.

It is our plan to continue to host an evening each school year in which families can interact with their children and one another. Many thanks go to the Gotsch staff who worked so hard at making the evening run smoothly! Likewise, many thanks to the students and families who took the time to spend an evening with us!



A third grader enjoys writing a Story in a Can.

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PPP is a program of Missouri KidsFirst.

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CELEBRATIONS AND TRANSITIONS

By Janet Shepard, Director

As the school year draws to a close, it is time to celebrate success! As a family, create a list of accomplishments for this school year. Look beyond honor roll and perfect attendance to celebrate even the little improvements being sure that each child in the family has a list of successes. Accomplishments worthy of family recognition can include:

- Improving grades
- Reading for pleasure
- No or fewer behavior referrals
- Attendance
- Completion of the year
- Working hard
- Good peer relationships – being a friend
- Serving others through volunteering or service learning opportunities
- Finishing the year
- Trying a new extracurricular activity



Your family may want to use the list to do some goal setting for the upcoming school year. This could be done when the list is created. It might be even better to save it for review a few days or weeks before school begins and talk about goal setting at that time.

With the closing of a year, comes the anticipation of what comes next. Whether your child will be transitioning from pre-school to kindergarten, from elementary to middle school or from high school to college or trade school, it is important to keep in mind that change is challenging for all of us including kids. Just as your family celebrates together this spring, you can plan together for the new venture.

Whether your child is changing buildings within the same school district or moving to a new school district, look for opportunities to visit the campus before school starts. There may be building tours during registration or an open house before school starts. If these opportunities are not available, call and ask if you can visit. While at the school, ask for suggestions of things to practice or to read over the summer. Try virtual visits too by checking the district and building website. Try to meet and share ideas with other families whose children will be in the same building and grade.

Look for little ways to practice new skills, talk about new routines and answer unspoken questions and fears. Older siblings, extended family and neighborhood friends can help with this too. If moving to a new district, try to sign up for youth sports or summer enrichment activities during the summer as a way to make new friends before school starts. Most of all create a relaxing and fun summer as free as possible of anxiety about the new school year!