



INTERDEPENDENCY OF FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS IN DEVELOPING LIFELONG LEARNERS

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Stressed families living in stressed communities can place children under too much stress, which can have devastating effects on children's healthy development and ability to achieve. For example, a Cornell University study released in February 2009, shows that the working memory of young adults can be adversely affected by chronic stress experienced in long-term childhood poverty. Working memory is necessary for language comprehension, reading, problem solving, and long-term memory storage, all factors in academic achievement.

Awareness of children's stress can guide educational decisions. Unstructured time for play in early childhood and kindergarten classrooms is an important component that is being phased out. Play and physical activity not only provide learning opportunities, but promote good health. A report from the Alliance for Childhood, published in March 2009, entitled "Crisis in the Kindergarten: Why Children Need to Play in School", states that "play is rapidly disappearing from kindergarten and early education as a whole. We believe that the stifling of play has dire consequences - not only for children but for the future of our nation." Although most adults remember their kindergarten and earlier experiences as largely play and self-directed activity, today's emphasis on high test scores has pushed a preponderance of academic and teacher-directed activities into early childhood. Researchers found that two to three hours of kindergarten children's days in the classroom were spent in literacy and math instruction, almost half an hour in testing or preparing for testing, and less than thirty minutes in free play. These children are under pressure to meet academic expectations that are largely inappropriate and, at the same time, are being denied the stress-relieving benefits of play and physical activity. Even at home, many children are not engaged in creative play or exercise. Instead they watch television, play video games, or have every minute structured in adult-planned activities. These experiences are often shared across income levels and may be endangering their ability to develop creativity and higher thinking skills so very important in our future economy. Schools and parents can do a better job of setting realistic expectations for young children and providing time for play and experiential learning, thereby relieving children's stress and promoting the joy of learning.

Another concern of schools and families should be supporting the role of family strengths. Regardless of high or low family income, four distinct forms of family strengths positively influence adolescent outcomes. (Moore, Whitney, and Kinukawa, April 2009) Parents, who are close and caring, monitor or supervise their children well, are involved in their children's education, and provide a positive role model will help their children become more socially competent, be more engaged in school, and avoid risky behaviors. School leaders need to recognize these important contributions of parents and support them however possible. For example, encouraging parents in communicating with their children, and providing ways for parents to be involved in their children's education will go a long way toward having classrooms full of children ready to learn and likely to perform well in assessments. Every public school in Missouri should be reviewing, or have already reviewed, its legislatively-required parent involvement policy for next year. Actions suggested in that policy will support family strengths.

Remember that Practical Parenting Partnerships is a resource for families and schools to use in encouraging cooperative processes for setting policies and providing resources and information for students to achieve in school and life. Working together will surely lower our collective stress levels and promote better outcomes for children of all economic backgrounds.

PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

The Partnering for Success Conference was a success! Our thanks go to the new partners, keynote and break-out session presenters, the PPP training team and advisory board members, and to the administrators, teachers, school social workers and nurses, parents and students who attended. Congratulations to the schools which were recognized for their achievements. You will find more about their work in this issue. Keynote speaker, Dr. Hal Lawson's handout and PowerPoint slides are on the [website](#) and keynote speaker, Dr. William Elder's [PowerPoint](#) presentation is on the [OSED](#) website.

As we publish this issue of the newsletter, PPP's funding for 2009-10 is uncertain. I would encourage you to invite your local representative and senator to PPP events at your school. During the legislative session, many spend their Fridays and weekends attending local events. June through December when the legislature is not in session, their schedules may be a little more flexible.

Plan now to attend the 2009-2010 Regional Workshops!

Our topic for the upcoming year is
**Organizing, Maximizing and Utilizing
School Volunteer Programs**

Below is a tentative schedule for the workshops.

LOCATION	DATE
Cape Girardeau – RPDC	09-08-09
Springfield – Clarion Hotel	09-22-09
Kansas City	TBA – (Schedule with KCSD)
Macon – Comfort Inn	10-7-09
Webb City – SW Ctr for Excellence	TBA
St. Louis – SL 4 Kids	TBA
Blue Springs School District	TBA
Rolla – Rolla School District	1-6-10
St. Joseph – Holiday Inn	TBA
Jefferson City – PPP Center	02-10-10

WORKING ON THE WEB

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

[Project SUCCESS](#) is intended to focus on providing information and tools helpful in implementing and sustaining school improvement initiatives at the district level in Missouri through Project SUCCESS. Particularly helpful are the SUCCESS Team suggestions on increasing parent involvement in schools. All other schools striving to improve student performance are welcome to use this site.

[Parent Involvement in Missouri](#) schools is made easy through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. This page provides links to parent involvement professionals and resources, including PPP.

PPP SITE NEWS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

Partnering for Success Conference Comments from Kansas City Schools

- The partnership conference for me was informative, filled with a variety of workshops and networking. As a grandmother, SAC participant and community worker, my knowledge and skills were greatly enhanced. I will share information with SAC parents and teachers next week and will use the activities with my grandchildren and other youth. I especially want to try some of the suggestions to get more parents involved. Thank you for giving me this wonderful experience. It was great also to meet so many families. (From a Grandparent, Paige School)
- I had a great experience at the conference. I've learned how to work with other parents, because we are all a family. We all strive for one thing, and that's to see our children succeed. I did not bring my son to the conference, but I have many ideas to take home to my family. The best part of the conference was bonding with some parents whose children attend the same class at Ladd School as my son. When we see each other at school, it's always hi and bye, but this conference took us to another level. We sat and discussed what changes need to be made for our kids and took action at the conference. (From a Ladd School parent)
- I learned how good it is to become more involved with your community as well as with family. The first day I attended the Missouri Board meeting. The speaker talked about how Missouri's poverty rate has increased rapidly over the past 6 years. To prevent poverty, it's best to be more involved with your community activities and family. It wasn't until the second day I realized that my decision to take this trip and attend the sessions was like being involved with my community and family. And now I have a different outlook on education and community service. (From a teenage student from Troost School)
- I would like to take this opportunity to say, "Thank you, thank you" from my family. At first, I was nervous to take the children but after observing I saw the conference was very family oriented. During one session the children were given reward for their behavior, which they were surprised! They were even invited to take part in the activity. Not only was I able to bring back ideas to the school but I am able to use them at home. Throughout the conference I heard the game is the same but the rules have changed. If we want our children to succeed then we need to change the rules and make sure we have their input as well. It's never too early for kids to advocate for themselves. The speakers were willing to give their support once we return if we were in need for support. At night, it was filled with family fun activities. This was a fun learning experience for my family that will be cherished for years to come. (From a Parent Involvement Representative, Swinney School and Foreign Language Academy)

Annual Surveys are due **July 2nd** – [click here](#) to take the survey on-line.

PIRC sites must have their surveys completed by **Friday, May 8th**.

Follow Janet Shepard ([PPPJanet](#) and/or [Partner4Success](#)) on Twitter, and join our Facebook group ([Practical Parenting Partnerships](#)) for the most recent PPP training and conference updates. If you are not a member of Facebook or Twitter, it's easy to join. Just go to www.facebook.com or www.twitter.com and follow the prompts to get started. Anyone can join!

GRANTS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

[Books for Babies Matching Grants](#), in partnership with Nordstrom, the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends, and Foundations, a division of the American Library Association, will award twenty grants of \$500 each to match \$1,000 raised by selected Friends of the Library groups, women's groups, libraries, and other nonprofit organizations to purchase Books for Babies kits from ALTAFF. 'Books for Babies' is a national literacy program that acquaints parents of newborns with the important role they play in the development of their children. Parents are presented with a 'Books for Babies' kit containing a board book, baby's first library card, and a variety of brochures with reading tips and early literacy information from nationally recognized educational organizations. Any type of nonprofit organization with a current program or interest in starting a 'Books for Babies' program is encouraged to apply. Ten matching grants will be awarded in October. Deadline: October 1, 2009.

The [Dollar General Youth Literacy Grants](#) provide funding to schools, public libraries, and nonprofit organizations to help with the implementation or expansion of literacy programs for students who are below grade level or experiencing difficulty reading. Grants range in amounts up to a maximum of \$3,000 each. Deadline: May 22, 2009.

The [Dollar General Back-to-School Grants](#) provide funding to assist schools in meeting some of the financial challenges they face in implementing new programs or purchasing new equipment, materials, or software for their school library or media center. Grants range in amounts up to a maximum of \$5,000 each. Deadline: May 22, 2009.

[Target](#) offers store grants to support nonprofit programs that impact the arts, early childhood reading, and family violence prevention in the locations where the company does business. **Arts Grants** are awarded to programs that bring the arts to schools or make the arts accessible to children and families, such as school touring programs, field trips to the theater or symphony, or artist's residencies and workshops in schools. Programs that make the arts accessible to school children are of particular interest.

Early Childhood Reading Grants support programs that foster a love of reading and encourage children, from birth through age nine, to read together with their families.

Family Violence Prevention Grants support programs that strengthen families and communities by keeping them safe. Target store grants support nonprofit programs that help prevent family violence, such as parenting classes and family counseling. Grants may also provide assistance for support groups and abuse shelters. Most grants average between \$1,000 and \$3,000 each. Applicants may be 501(c)(3) organizations or schools, libraries, or public agencies. Target only accepts grant applications online. Deadline: May 31, 2009

[ING Run for Something Better Awards seek to increase youth physical activity](#) ING has partnered with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) to offer schools grants of \$2,000 each for running programs that target students in grades 5-8. The purpose of the grant program is to increase physical activity in students and help fight childhood obesity by creating these school-based running programs. The program will make 50 awards of \$2,000 each to public schools that are planning to create such programs or to expand existing running programs. Activities must be based on the National Standards for Physical Education created by the NASPE. Programs may be facilitated by a physical education teacher, coach, classroom teacher or administrator, and they may be as short as eight weeks in length or longer. Deadline: June 1, 2009.

HOME VISITING AND DATA

by Janet Shepard, Director

Recently as I was sharing home visiting training dates on Twitter, I mentioned that Kennett is expanding their home visiting plan for the coming school year. For several years, teachers of kindergarten through second grade have been asked to visit each of their student and their families before school begins in August. It has been suggested that third through fifth grade teachers also make visits.

For the 2009-10 school year all teachers pre-K through fifth grade will be asked to visit the home of every student before school begins in August. PPP applauds this wide spread effort to build relationships with families. We frequently promote this idea with others. One of my Twitter colleagues asked if Kennett is tracking graduation rates for students receiving home visits. It is a great suggestion.

In addition to long term data such as graduation rates, there are some more immediate kinds of data worth watching in conjunction with implementing a home visiting program. School attendance, discipline referrals, parent participation including parent initiated contacts are all places where we might expect to see improved numbers as a result of a home visiting program.

Data can help us tell our story to decision makers and determine best practices, but most importantly data tells us when we are making a difference for kids.

SUMMER: A TIME TO KEEP THE LEARNING GOING

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

As we wrap up another school year and think about summer, don't think of summer as a break from learning. Think of it as a time for learning! So many learning opportunities present themselves in the summer. Schools can help families make the most of these opportunities by sharing ideas and encouragement before the bell rings on the last day of school.

Teachers might share reflections on what students learned during the school year that can be built upon over the summer. They might also share objectives for the upcoming school year that families can begin preparing their children for. Simple suggestions of ways families can do this at home can be shared in a newsletter, summer packet, or spring family night. Schools might also send packets or letters home during the summer months with new ideas for learning at home over the summer.

The PPP notebooks offer a wide variety of family activity ideas. Family activity sheets can be shared with families to provide summer activity ideas, such as:

Notebook 1, Family Systems:

[1.III.C.FA.2](#) Reflective Listening

[1.IV.A.FA.3](#) Making choices

Notebook 2, Lifespan Development:

[2.I.C.FA.b](#) Twenty Questions

[2.III.D.FA.h](#) What Can I Do For You?

[2.I.B.F.Ab](#) Look at Me Grow!

Notebook 3, Wellness:

[3.II.B.FA.5](#) Pancake Pictures

[3.II.C.FA.6](#) Choose Your Own Adventure Pizza

Notebook 4, Home-School Relationships:

[4.I.B.FA.9](#) What Can You Teach Me?

[4.II.C.FA.4](#) Would You Buy It?

Family time over the summer allows for conversation between parents and children, exploration of new places, trying new skills together, doing fun activities together and more time for recreational reading. Here are a few family activity ideas that can be done over the summer:

- Cooking – whether it is in the kitchen blending a smoothie with fresh fruits and yogurt or over a camp fire making s'mores, cooking together can build listening, reading, math and science skills.
- Journal – keeping a family journal of things the family or individuals in the family do over the summer is a nice way to reflect and also work on written communication.
- Crafts – doing crafts together helps children with following directions and other applied skills. Craft books can be checked out from a library or ideas can be found in the Internet. Try making a wind puppet by cutting out a shape and hanging streamers from it to decorate your front porch. Recycle things like paper towel and toilet paper rolls, milk jugs and cartons, popsicle sticks, shoe boxes and more to be creative with.
- Picnic – planning, packing and having a picnic together can be fun, educational, and good bonding time for a family.
- Camp out – camping in the back yard is a fun challenge for a family. Learning how to set up a tent, figuring out the necessities for the campout, and then games played once everyone is in the tent can be great family learning time.
- Black out – having your own black out in your house can not only conserve energy but can present challenges for the family to work through together. All electricity is turned off – lights, stove, computer, etc. Figuring out what to eat and do might lead to roasting hot dogs and playing board games.
- Bike ride – going on a family bike ride gets everyone active and exploring together!
- Water fight – Using water balloons, hoses, squirting toys and whatever else is handy can open the door to great fun and laughter as a family on a warm summer evening!
- Sky view – using binoculars or a telescope, enjoying the beauty of the summer nighttime sky is something worth taking the time for and increases science knowledge.
- Puppet show – creating your own puppets and then doing a family puppet show utilizes the imagination of children and adults alike.
- Flashlight tag – getting the family outside for some fresh air and physical activity is important and flashlight tag is a great way to have fun together.
- Bird house – building a bird house together is a way to enhance math skills such as measuring and angles.
- Reading – taking the time to read in the summer is critical to keeping reading levels up.
- Community functions – participating in summer camps, sports, music events, activities at the parks, and more provide great learning opportunities for children and fun family time together.
- Nature scavenger hunt – scouting for 10 items on a list that are found in nature, such as: a flower petal, an acorn, a white rock, a feather, an insect and more can get the family outside exploring and talking.
- Summer garden – growing your own vegetables and flowers can be rewarding, educational and yummy.

With a little planning, summer can be filled with the sounds of fun and learning rather than the sound of, “I’m bored!” When schools take the time to hare ideas with families and families take the time to plan, children’s learning is expanded and families bond! Happy summer!

Mark your calendars now and plan to join us for next year’s
Partnering for Success: School, Family and Community
Annual Conference at Tan-Tar-A on
March 26-27, 2010



2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AWARDS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

FOUNDER'S AWARD

Our first ever Founder's Award honoree is **Lincoln Elementary**. Lincoln Elementary hosted a Family Fair in response to requests from families to assist in helping their students do better in school.

PEARL AWARDS

Crest Ridge Elementary in Johnson County R-VII was one of our finalists for the Founder's Award. It seems only fitting to reward their efforts in Dimensions I, II and V of parent involvement.

We honor **Doniphan Elementary** at Doniphan R-I for their efforts in all six dimensions of parent involvement.

Our final Pearl Award goes to **Lincoln Elementary**. Lincoln Elementary's PPP team has made great strides in adding all components of family involvement to ensure student success.

VIPs

Betsy Henry - Ms. Henry is a teacher at Vineland Elementary in DeSoto.

Art Schneider – Art Schneider is a Human Development Specialist with University of MO Extension and a long-standing member of the PPP Training team.

Glenn Berry – Glenn has been with the Center for Safe Schools for eight years and served thirty years in public education.

Ginny Vandelicht – Ginny is the Director of School Improvement at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

FIVE YEAR SCHOOLS

Bakersfield School District uses their knowledge gained from PPP with a parent request program. They are particularly proud of their success in using PPP materials with at risk students and their families in kindergarten through high school.

Bayless School District believes parent involvement is the key to success. When children witness their parents participating in school activities and working in the school, they know and understand that learning is important and is valued by their family.

McDonald County, Rocky Comfort has had an exciting five years. Parent participation events include Kindergarten/Pre-K screening, Afterschool programs in which parents teach classes in cooking, 4-H, photography, MAP prep and Tai Kwon Do.

Moniteau R-V School District at Latham has been hard at work the past five years to increase parental involvement. Various activities planned by the school include Fall and Spring Festivals with a planning committee for each.

TEN YEAR SCHOOLS

Blue Springs School District has maintained a strong, active, and rewarding relationship with PPP in the Past ten years. The relationship that began with John Nowlin Elementary has expanded to include James Walker Elementary and Prime Time, the district's before and after-school care program.

Center School District #58 is committed to building a positive learning environment where parents feel welcome, comfortable communicating with the school, motivated to participate in activities and confident that their input is valued.

Fredericktown R-I Elementary considers PPP a lifeline between the school and community. PPP brings community support to the school district and has had a tremendous impact on parent involvement.

Johnson County R-7's Crest Ridge Elementary set a goal for once monthly Family Reading Nights to involve more parents in the reading process.

Osage R-3 Fatima has boosted parent involvement these past ten years with the help of a growing Parent/Teacher Organization. Dedicated teachers and parents work together to provide fun learning opportunities for their students, families and community members.

Smithton R-VI School District's PPP chapter hosts a Hot Dog Dinner and Open House Night in August. This is a great way to get parents and children involved and excited for the new school year to begin.

North/Ruth Mercer Elementary in the Warsaw R-IX School District has accomplished many things in the past ten years with PPP. Attendance at Parent/Teacher Conference is consistently above 95% as a building.

Wellston School District in St. Louis has always been committed to staff development and to parent involvement. At their tenth anniversary as a PPP District, they made a system-wide commitment to parent involvement.

For ten years, **Willard R-II Schools** has had a very successful partnership with PPP. Over the years, PPP has been instrumental in training the staff of Willard Schools in parent involvement programs and activities.

Certified Facilitators, Administrators & Schools

Facilitators

Patricia Hancock, Middle Grove
Barb Engelhard, PPP Trainer
Chrysta Forrest, PPP Trainer, Willard Schools
Francine Nichols, PPP Trainer, Moberly Schools
Judy Saurage, PPP Trainer

Administrators

Sue Fields, Principal, Keeven Elementary, Hazelwood
Dr. Mary Jo Jensen, Assistant Superintendent, Fredericktown

Schools

Center Elementary, Center School District
Fredericktown Elementary, Fredericktown R-I
Keeven Elementary, Hazelwood School District
Middle Grove Elementary, Middle Grove
Willard South, Willard School District

Applications for Certified Facilitators, Administrators or Schools received now will be honored during the 2009-2010 school year.

Certified PPP School

Requirements: Presence of one administrator and at least one other individual trained in implementation training. [Annual Survey](#) must be completed each year. [Click here to go to the application.](#)

Recognition: The PPP Center will post the list of PPP Certified Schools on our website, visit your school to deliver a special banner and provide a certified school logo for your website. The logo will be updated each year upon completion of the annual survey.

Certified PPP Facilitator/Administrator

Requirements: Attending PPP Implementation Training and submitting the completed certification form. Stay current and be recognized by attending additional training, annual conference and regional workshops. [Click here to go to the application.](#)

Recognition: A certificate and lapel pin will be presented upon approval to qualified applicants at a regional workshop or annual conference.

A newsletter published by the PPP Center for parents and educators participating in the PPP program.

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 PARTNERSHIPS
Working Together for Our Children

May 2008

SUMMER IS GETTING CLOSE!

by Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Looking back on the school year, you have probably experienced both uplifting and disappointing moments. Perhaps you have seen real progress in your child's ability to write complete paragraphs or to actually enjoy reading a story. On the other hand, your child may still be having trouble completing questions about a scientific experiment. Maybe your child has made new friends and is happier by participating in a particular school activity. Whatever you have observed in your child's work and activities this year will provide you with useful information to guide summer activities and plan for next year. Now is the time to stop for a moment to reflect on your child's accomplishments, challenges, and enjoyment. What role have you played in supporting your child? What might you do in the coming months?

Consider the following actions:

1. With your child, make a list of things you think he or she did really well this year. Celebrate those successes - post the list on the refrigerator, bake a cake, go out for an ice cream cone or do something fun together. Let your child know that his efforts are appreciated. Recognize him as a special individual; feeling confident will help him tackle new challenges.
2. Schedule time soon to visit with your child's teacher in person, by phone or email. See if the teacher has any suggestions for what your child might need to work on this summer to be better prepared for next year. For example, are there books or web sites the teacher can recommend?
3. Encourage your child to be physically active this summer; taking walks together, riding a bike, mowing the grass, house-cleaning, playing ball, or doing exercises. Check your community parks and recreation schedule for free or low-priced sports or camps; see if your church sponsors a camp or organized activities for the summer months. Physical exertion releases healthy endorphins that stimulate brain activity for both learning and emotional well-being.
4. Continue to be aware of who your children's friends are their whereabouts. Be sure that they know how to contact you at all times and what to do in an emergency if they are home alone. Discuss use of the computer and monitor what web sites they visit; remind them to interact only with people they know. Be available to have conversations with your children on an ongoing basis. You'll be surprised how much you can learn about how they think, what brings them joy or what worries them in just simple conversations. Listening to your children is one of the most important skills you can develop as a parent.
5. Give yourself a break, too. Know that all parents have concerns and are not always perfect. Also know that children will overcome your mistakes as long as they know you are loving and caring. They will feel secure in themselves if you remain attentive to their daily activities, involved in their school and learning experiences, willing to discuss things that matter to them, and help guide and support them as they plan for the future.

