



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS  
*Working Together for Our Children*

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## **ENHANCING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT WITH QUALITY COMMUNICATION**

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

School staff members are some of the hardest working people I know. Whether you are a teacher, bus driver, administrator, nurse, counselor, secretary, cook, aide, janitor, or other school staff member, you likely wear many hats. One of responsibilities each of you holds is to do what you can to build and strengthen the relationship between home and school. Those who work in schools, have children's best interests at heart. Family engagement is a key component in helping children become the best they can be and therefore part of the work we all are a part of.

Communication within the school environment is the first step. Most likely various staff members in your school put effort into fine parent involvement activities and communications. Are these efforts discussed and shared with other staff members to promote collaboration among staff in this work? Often what one person can do in their position could assist another staff member in their efforts. Think about bus drivers for example. Teachers may try diverse methods to get in contact with a family including phone, notes, email, and more without success. Perhaps the child rides the bus and the bus driver sees the parent at the bus stop. A note or message sent with the bus driver could be the best way to reach the parent. What about the school nurse? Are there times that a parent and nurse converse about a child's health and that information is not shared with the child's teacher, yet the health issue impacts the performance in the classroom. (Note that parent permission should be granted prior to sharing health related information about a child.) Taking time to brainstorm parent communication opportunities that each staff member has can help a staff achieve more seamless family engagement.

In addition to good communication among staff members regarding parent involvement, communication with our families is another challenge. When you think of communication with families, do you think of the many ways that you communicate with your families such as weekly teacher letters, school newsletters, website, auto phone calls, flyers and notes home, emails, and more? What about the opportunities that you give parents to communicate with you? Our goal should be to have strong two way open communication with families in which parents feel comfort and ease in sharing their thoughts, questions, suggestions, and resources. Ask yourself what forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications are embedded in your school system. Are your parent-teacher conferences set up to encourage two way communication? Are parents invited to be part of the planning teams for your school? Is communication provided to every family in the language that they understand? Does your school feel open and is your staff approachable? The goal of improving the parent-school partnership is one that is shared by all school staff!

# PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

Fall is definitely in the air. We can tell by the moderate temperatures, turning leaves and the ringing phone! We at PPP love it when the new school year is underway and you begin ordering materials, asking for assistance in planning, scheduling professional development or family workshops and enrolling for the regional meeting in your area of the state. Shelly has several of the regional meetings scheduled and those dates are enclosed. She is working with the Regional Professional Development Centers and our PIRC partners to schedule the remaining meetings.

Many observances are also scheduled for the beginning of the school year such as Red Ribbon Week and National School Bus Safety Week. Our parent page this month is on school bus safety. I heard Debra Clink School Finance / Transportation Consultant for DESE speak about bus safety and asked her to share resources with us so we could help you share this good information with parents.

Remember the Parent Page is for you to copy and attach to your own printed school newsletter or to link to from your electronic newsletter for parents. Please share the entire newsletter with colleagues in your school or in other school districts. You might prefer to send an e-mail to friends and colleagues suggesting they subscribe to the newsletter. There is a button for doing so on the front page of the website at [www.pppctr.org](http://www.pppctr.org).

If you are on Facebook, please [join us](#) there too. We post events and updates. If you already are a member, please help us grow by clicking on *Invite Friends* below the umbrella logo and invite your friends and colleagues to join us. As we grow, this can become a good place to post questions and share ideas. I am still on Twitter as PPPJanet and those of you who are certified facilitators and administrators can join the Practical Parenting Partnerships Certified Facilitator group on LinkedIn. All of these are ways we can stay connected and share ideas with one another. By joining us in any or all of these locations, you are also helping us spread the word about PPP and our resources and services. These are all also free methods for you to communicate with parents and community partners.

Please note our mailing address has changed. The correct address is 520 Dix Rd, Suite C, Jefferson City MO 65109. We no longer have direct phone lines so 573-761-7770 is our only number. The fax number is 573-632-4601.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- October [National Bullying Prevention Month](#)
- October [National Principals Month](#)
- October 3-9 [Fire Prevention Week](#) This year's theme is "Smoke Alarms: A Sound You Can Live With."
- October 11-15 [National School Lunch Week](#) -- "School Lunch - What's on Your Tray?"
- October 18-22 National School Bus Safety Week - This year's theme is "Cross in View"
- October 23-31 Red Ribbon Week
- November 2 [Home Visit Training](#)
- October 26 [Webb City: SW PD Center](#)
- November 3 [Rolla: RPDC](#)
- November 4 [Warrensburg: RPDC](#)
- November 16 [St. Joseph: RPDC](#)

- November 30 [Cape Girardeau: RPDC](#)
- December 7 [Springfield: Burrell Behavioral Health Center](#)
- January 11, 2011 [Macon: RPDC](#)
- January 20, 2011 [Kansas City: RPDC](#)

## HOME VISIT TRAINING

by Janet Shepard, Director

PPP's home visiting resource notebooks cover 35 topics ranging from typical development in children from ages five through 18 to conflict resolution and health and hygiene issues. The full list of topics is on the website under home visiting. While designed as a resource for school based home visitors many can also be used for group meetings, bulletin boards, handouts on community literature racks and more.

As with all of our other PPP resources, the notebooks are available with the training. We have a session scheduled in Warrenton, Missouri for November 2 from 9:00 – 3:30. We are still running a special of \$275 for training plus all 35 resource notebooks. This is a savings of \$150. Additional persons who will share the materials or who already have the materials available in their school may attend for \$50 per person. Fax your completed [registration form](#) and purchase order to 573-632-4601 to sign up.

Individuals who have attended the training, but do not have the complete set of [resource notebooks](#) may order them. We are also happy to schedule this training in your area. Just give us a call.

## FACILITATION TIPS – SURVEYING PARENTS

by Janet Shepard, Director

Parent surveys typically are conducted at the end or the beginning of the school year. If you did not conduct a survey last spring, please consider doing one now. If you are not sure what surveys have been conducted, check with your Title I Coordinator, A+ or anyone else who is required to conduct an annual parent survey. There may be data you can use in recently collected surveys, but you may also want to ask additional questions.

Surveys should be a reasonable length, be sincere in their intent, contain easily understood words and be simple to complete. It pays to know your audience in order to determine whether you have met the above criteria.

A reasonable length will be determined by the types of questions you are asking as well as past experiences with surveys in your school. If surveys have been lengthy in the past, you might try shortening or changing the type of questions to see if you receive more responses. Multiple choice or short answer questions may be better received than Likert scales or open ended questions or the reverse may be true. Perhaps you might create a brief survey for all parents to complete and then ask smaller number of parents to complete a more detailed form.

Sincerity will not be present in your survey if you have already made the plans and just want parents' responses to validate those plans. Surveys should be given before any planning is done so respondents truly feel that their answers will help shape plans. If you do not want parental input on some area such as school schedule, then do not ask for it.

Be sure you use easily understood words. Avoid “educationese” and alphabet soup in your survey. Try to create your survey in time to ask a few parents to fill it out as a test run. If you have multiple languages in your school, have the survey translated, then test the translated survey with a few parents who speak the language as their first language. The tone of your survey should suggest a partnership not a provider client relationship.

Survey Monkey and Constant Contact are two examples of on-line surveying tools which may work well with your parents. Many school websites also have a survey feature. Surveys could be completed from home computers, at a family computer night or by using the computer available for parent use in the family resource center. Pencil and paper surveys will work well for other schools. Parent Teacher conferences will be held soon in many districts and this can be a great time to survey. Once the November election is over, you might also enlist volunteers to conduct telephone surveys.

Once the survey is completed, be sure to share the results with parents and use the survey as a marketing tool. Additional information about surveys can be found in the Planning and Implementation chapter of your facilitator’s guide from PPP Implementation Training.

## **REGIONAL WORKSHOPS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Do you have openings in your professional development schedule? Perhaps your school has professional development days scheduled and is looking for facilitators to cover objectives aligned with your school improvement plan. Does your plan include family involvement/parent engagement as a means for improving student performance? If so, we can help. PPP offers **professional development workshops** and can develop a session specific to your needs as a part of a district or school PD day. We also can provide professional development for your families through interactive family workshops.

Are you looking for an off-site workshop or training? PPP will be hosting **regional workshops** at various locations around the state titled: **Staying Focused on the Mission: Strengthening Family Engagement**. During these workshops, we will explore:

- ❖ How parent involvement can be more than planned events
- ❖ How to support parents in helping their child learn
- ❖ How to reach all parents
- ❖ Strategies for building and strengthening positive relationships
- ❖ Correlations between parent engagement and school achievement
- ❖ Collaboration of various school and district parent involvement efforts
- ❖ Ideas to motivate parents, school staff and community members to team together for children

The regional workshop is appropriate for all school staff members, parents, community partners and volunteers.

The following locations and dates have been confirmed. More locations (Jefferson City, St. Louis, and Macon) and dates are to come. Continue to check the PPP website for updates and a registration form.

- October 26 [Webb City: SW PD Center](#)

- November 3 [Rolla: RPDC](#)
- November 4 [Warrensburg: RPDC](#)
- November 16 [St. Joseph: RPDC](#)
- November 30 [Cape Girardeau: RPDC](#)
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**SAVE THE DATE!**

**Children's Trust Fund Conference**

*April 13-15, 2011*

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PPP is sustained by a fee structure, contracts and grants with major funding from the U. S. Department of Education Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC).

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## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

By Janet Shepard, Director

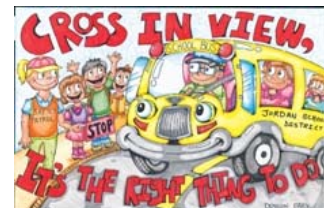
Whether your oldest child has just begun riding a school bus as a kindergarten student or whether your middle schooler has been riding for eight years, you may have questions about how safe the bus is. School buses are one of the safest forms of transportation in this country.

Today's school buses have many safety features including:

- ❖ Seats which are designed for crash protection with lots of padding, high backs and energy absorbing materials. There are no parts which come loose or which have injury causing sharp edges.
- ❖ Specially designed brakes which allow them to stop more quickly than other large vehicles can.
- ❖ Warning lights and reflective devices alert other driver to the presence of a school bus.
- ❖ Mirrors which allow driver to watch students both inside and outside the bus and to view critical areas directly in front and along the side of the bus.
- ❖ Swing out stop arms which warn motorists to stop while the bus is loading or unloading.
- ❖ Emergency exits
- ❖ Rollover protection which reduces the chance of a roof collapse.
- ❖ Protection against fuel spills in the event of a crash.

Passengers are protected without the use of seat belts. Only small buses are required to be equipped with seat belts. Extensive studies have been conducted on seat belt use in buses with the conclusion that children are just as safe on a bus without seat belts due to these special design features.

The area around the school bus poses a greater risk for students. Accidents occur because other traffic fails to obey the school bus stop sign or when children cross where the bus driver cannot see them. This year's National School Bus Safety Week theme is ***Cross in View, It's the Right Thing to Do.***



Talk with your child about following the safety rules on and off the bus. Encourage them to watch the traffic and to make sure all traffic has stopped if they have to cross the street or highway from where the bus lets them off. If you have more than one child riding the same bus, ask them to watch out for each other. Get to know your child's bus driver if you have the opportunity and stress to your child the importance of listening to and following the driver's instructions for safety.