



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS

Working Together for Our Children

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“To gain traction in practice and policy, family involvement must be a shared and meaningful responsibility among families, schools, communities, and the wider society.”

.....Heather Weiss, Ed.D., Director, Harvard Family Research Project

PARENTS INFLUENCE CHILDREN'S SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT

By Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

Parent involvement in education encompasses many personal relationships that have direct impact on how children approach learning. Intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, and the ability to see and pursue new possibilities are all dependent on a child's experiences both in and out of school. On a typical school day, one child may have encountered an angry parent who resorted to harsh punishment, causing physical pain. Another child may be disheartened by a series of criticisms from his parent, teacher, fellow students, and an after-school leader. Still another child may have received a big hug from her parent, a special greeting from her bus driver, and a backpack with a parent response to a happy note from her teacher. Who will most likely be ready for learning a new concept in math today?

The Missouri legislature recently approved a bill that asks the governor to declare the second week of September each year as Parent Involvement in Education Week. The Missouri PTA promoted this legislation and we should all work to publicize its importance. Recognizing the special role families play in children's education means that schools have policies and practices that reflect that fact. According to Joyce Epstein, Johns Hopkins University, the best predictors of parent involvement at school and at home are the specific school programs and teacher practices that encourage parent involvement at school and guide parents in how to help their children at home.

School personnel and others who influence our children must first believe that families are important before they can effectively design and carry out programs and activities to encourage parent involvement. They must consistently reach out to families, providing a variety of opportunities for parents to participate in their children's education. Half-heartedly implementing a parenting program on the periphery of the school's curriculum is not sufficient. Ongoing two-way communication embedded in the school's daily life allows the growth of true partnership between parents and educators. Parents need to know what is expected of them, realize their own competence, and receive specific support in helping their children from pre-school through high school graduation.

In the 1997 Review of Educational Research, journal of the AERA, three major factors of parent involvement in education were outlined:

1. Parents' beliefs about what is important, necessary and permissible for them to do with and for their children
2. Extent to which parents believe they can have a positive influence on their children's education
3. Parents' perceptions that both their children and the school want them to be involved

Educators have improved their communication skills in the last few years to inform parents about such things as testing procedures, scoring and grading, and graduation requirements. Specific ways to help their children

approach learning or information about parenting practices that research shows most encourages student achievement are not as easily provided. The parent-child relationship is the most basic support for a child's success in school and in life.

For example, consider Moore's (1992) research on parenting and school achievement based on positive behaviors in the classroom, students' social competence, that the researcher says is directly influenced by parents. Moore speaks of the positive benefits of parents being nurturing and exercising moderate control* of their children to develop their children's social competence. Children who experience a nurturing environment tend to accept their parents' values of being considerate of others and seeking fairness in interpersonal relations. Children with cooperative social skills are more confident in facing the learning challenges that school brings.

The parent-child relationship and its effect on school achievement, though extremely important, is only one aspect of parent involvement. A portion of basic PPP Implementation Training provides workshops and resources for parents and educators to look at child development, family interactions, home-school communication and other topics that incorporate discussions of parenting strategies that encourage school achievement. However, Practical Parenting Partnerships (PPP) is a more comprehensive framework for parent involvement that includes interactions among homes, schools and communities. Professional development, resources and ongoing support for parent involvement initiatives in your school are offered through PPP. Let us participate in the formal recognition of Parent Involvement in Education week and renew our collective efforts in making schools, families and communities true partners in children's education.



*Parents who exercise moderate control:

- give reasons and explanations for the demands they place on their children
 - use positive reinforcement (praise, approval, awards) to encourage children to comply with rules of behavior
 - use discipline strategies that involve explaining the issue and enforcing an appropriate solution
 - expect their children to acknowledge and make up for any wrong-doing
 - avoid extreme forms of punishment, because it can spill over in children's other relationships as hostility or resentment
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PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

Welcome back! We hope you have the new school year off to a great start. The newly designated Parent and Family Involvement in Education Week in Missouri is a great time to host a welcoming event for families if you have not already done so this school year. PTA partnered with Representative Will Kraus who introduced legislation in the Missouri General Assembly to designate the second week in September as Parent and Family Involvement in Education week.

PTA, ParentLink, LIFT, Mo-PIRC, PAT National Center, DESE and PPP will be represented when Governor Blunt signs the proclamation September 10. Your county, city or school officials might want to sign proclamations as well.

Several years ago we began a PPP Certification program as a way to recognize schools, facilitators and administrators. We present a banner to the schools upon acceptance of the application and have published the names of individuals who qualify for certification. This year we will expand the recognition.

Those who have received a PPP Certified School banner and who are in good standing for the 2008-09 school year, will soon receive electronically a logo which can be placed on the building website and added to letterhead and newsletters. Schools remain in good standing by completing the end of the year annual report.



Individuals who have completed the certification application will be recognized at Fall regional workshops with a pin and small certificate. Those of you who qualify for the pin will be receiving a letter soon. In coming years new designees will receive their pin at a regional workshops.

Please let us hear your success stories this year and let us know how we may be of assistance to you!

PPP SITE NEWS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

Dogwood Elementary in Camdenton teamed with PAT to hold their second Kindergarten Orientation meeting in April. It was attended by approximately 120 families plus many more siblings, grandparents, aunts, etc. PAT educators greeted the families and presented each incoming Kindergartener with a book and a bag filled with informational handouts. The families gathered in the cafeteria, and after a brief presentation by the principal, they were divided into groups for a tour of the building. The guides were the PAT educators, and they moved with their groups through out the building. Special stops were made in the art room, music room, computer lab, library, gym and at a school bus. The future students received a surprise at each station, such as pencil, stickers, or crayons. The families enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and the ability to move around and see the school.

In March, **Bellflower Elementary** in Montgomery County R-II invited several community leaders to a meeting to promote the school's character education program. They discussed the program and how it benefits the students and the community. They then asked the community business leaders if they would be willing to post the school's monthly character words in their businesses. The community members were also asked to promote and encourage good character when they saw students in their businesses. Bellflower Elementary had many business leaders step forward and be willing to work cooperatively with the school. They are so pleased to see the character words throughout the community, and hope it has an impact on the students and their families.

WORKING ON THE WEB

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator



<http://www.nmoe.org/> The National Museum of Education is hosting a Bubble Wrap Competition for students in grades 5-8. The contest encourages innovative thinking and reminds us that inventing is fun. The deadline for entries is Nov. 3. There is also a Rubber Band Contest for young inventors in grades 5-8. The deadline for entries is November 14. This would make a fun class project! Also part of this amazing site is "Inventucation Central", where teacher resources, science activities, and more contests are waiting for you!

Washington Mutual

www.wamoolaforschools.com Washington Mutual sponsors the WaMoola for Schools program, which donates a portion of purchases made on a Washington Mutual Debit MasterCard or Visa Check card to participating schools in the community. The program is nationwide.

To participate, schools must register for the program either online, by phone or at the nearest Washington Mutual branch office. Individuals then can arrange to have a portion of their card purchases donated to the registered school. There is no fee to participate, and donations are tallied and delivered to the school during the first calendar quarter. Many Missouri schools and towns are already listed! This is worth checking into!

GRANTS

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy -- National Grant Program

Deadline: September 5, 2008

Funding Amount: Up to \$65,000 each

This grant program seeks to develop or expand projects that support the development of literacy skills for adult primary caregivers and their children. Family literacy programs funded through this opportunity must include all of the following components:

Reading instruction for parents or primary caregivers, literacy or pre-literacy instruction for children, intergenerational activities where parents/primary caregivers and children come together to learn and read. Programs can also include additional components such as parent support groups, parent involvement, home visits, and job training.

Who May Apply: Organizations with nonprofit or public status

For more information, go to: <http://www.barbarabushfoundation.com/nga.html>

Lois Lenski Covey Foundation supports providing books for all children

Eligibility: School libraries, public libraries, and 501(c)(3) organizations in the United States.

Deadline: Sept. 15, 2008.

Funding Amount: \$500-\$3,000 to buy books.

Contact: Michael Covey, The Lois Lenski Covey Foundation, Inc., PO Box 255366, Sacramento, CA 95865; michael.covey@loislenskicovey.org, Lois Lenski was an award-winning children's book author who wanted to ensure that all children have access to good books. The Lois Lenski Covey Foundation was established to ensure that even children who are disadvantaged have access to books. The foundation makes grants for purchasing books for young people from preschool to grade 12. Public libraries, school libraries, and nonprofits with 501(c)(3) status are eligible to apply. Priority consideration goes to organizations that serve at-risk children, have limited book budgets, and demonstrate real need. The foundation typically makes grants ranging between \$500 and \$3,000. The grants must be used for book purchases rather than administrative or operational uses.

For more information, visit <http://www.loislenskicovey.org>.

ACT NOW—THESE GRANTS HAVE A QUICK DEADLINE!!

Target Field Trip Grants

Deadline: Apply between September 2 and November 1.

Have you ever thought, "I'd love to take my students to (fill in your idea) if only it weren't so costly."? This is the grant opportunity for you! Target will award 5,000 Field Trip Grants of up to \$800 each during the 2008-2009 school year. That adds up to 5,000 more opportunities for students to explore more of the world outside the classroom. To apply, go to www.target.com/teachers.



RECENT RESOURCES

by Vickie Dickneite, Resource Coordinator

Teachers and parents are faced with many challenges when it comes to teaching our children. Parents may assume that the teachers will impart on their children the art of social graces and values as well as academics. Teachers may believe that the students will enter their classroom with many of these assets already taught by their parents. In reality, these behaviors are modeled by parents, teachers and community members daily. Our children learn by watching the world around them. Below are just a few books that can help us remember to be positive role models for our children.

The 100 Simple Secrets of Happy Families by David Niven, PH.D., offers one hundred essential ways-proven by research-to find satisfaction in all family relationships. Included are true stories of real families showing the results in action.

The Adding Assets Series for Kids is a series of many books to help guide youth on their way to becoming responsible and confident individuals. Pamela Espeland and Elizabeth Verdick are the authors of the three books below.

People Who Care About You-The Support Assets helps kids to recognize who their supports are in life--those people who love you, care for you, and accept you, and having places to go where you feel happy, welcome and safe.

Making Choices and Making Friends-The Social Competencies Assets helps kids add social skills to their lives with stories and ideas to try. Choose an idea and try it today!

Knowing and Doing What's Right-The Positive Values Assets helps kids understand that values are the beliefs that guide your choices and behaviors. Kids can learn positive values with these stories, scenarios, and ideas.



FACILITATION TIPS

by Janet Shepard, Director

This month's column features bulleted points from an article entitled Cultural Differences in School Expectations by Latino Parents prepared by PPP Trainer *Art Schneider*. This article should be a useful tool in planning parental engagement opportunities for Latino parents. You will find a link to the complete article at the end of this column.

Dr. Dario Almarza, assistant professor of learning, teaching and curriculum at the University of Missouri, addressed these issues at MU's fourth annual Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) conference in March 2005. He explained 11 differences in cultural expectations that could lead to misunderstandings and gave suggestions for Latino parents:

- 1. Americans do not have a national curriculum.** Parents should ask their child's current teacher for subject information to give to the new teacher.
- 2. Americans group students by ability.** Visit with your child's teacher to learn about your child's placement.
- 3. In the United States, standardized tests are used to compare student proficiency and ability.** These tests compare local students and schools to the national and state averages. Parents have a right to know at what level their children perform and what they can do to help their child succeed.

4. **American schools recognize many types of disabilities and, by law, are required to assist students with disabilities.** Children with disabilities are required to have an Individual Educational Plan in which the parents are involved.
5. **In America, there are five levels of grading:** To graduate and be promoted, children should earn C's or higher grades.
6. **Parents in America are expected to be actively involved in schools with their children.** This means attending school activities for parents, maintaining close contact with the teachers on your children's progress, and learning how to help your child do well in school.
7. **Parents have many rights in America.** They have a right to know how well their child is doing, to provide teachers with information about their child, and to see their child's school records. They also have a right to assist in their child's education.
8. **It is common in Latino countries for students to wear a uniform. In public schools in the United States, it is rare.** While uniforms are not required, all schools have dress codes that explain what attire is permissible and not permissible.
9. **In the United States, children are expected to take time for lunch** (a meal in the middle of the day, usually between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.). The time for lunch will vary by school.
10. **Students are expected to attend classes everyday.** If children miss more than a day, parents should notify the school. If children miss many days, they may be required to have a physician's excuse and be given homework to do at home. Parents are expected to contact the school about children being absent.
11. **Most American schools assign homework.** Usually, homework increases as children become older.

For the complete article see: <http://missourifamilies.org/features/parentingarticles/parenting58.htm>

HOME VISIT

by Janet Shepard, Director

This school year we will be editing and reprinting the home visit training manual and resource notebooks. If you have comments about content, please let us know soon. Are there issues or questions about doing home visits that we do not cover in the training manual?

We are planning to conserve space, paper and cost by eliminating the small resource notebook format with laminated pages. We will still have the resource information. Do you want the resources on a compact disc with an abbreviated visit outline in the training manual? Would it make more sense to "park" the materials in cyberspace with password protected access?

Are there topics you wish we would add to the resource notebooks? The list of topics is at http://www.pppctr.org/pages/uploaded_files/hv.pdf. Please e-mail your thoughts and suggestions to Janet at jshepard@pppctr.org.



KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION

by Janet Shepard, Director

Attendance is critical to a child's success in school. As a part of your kindergarten transition plan you can include information for parents about school attendance. Starting students and families off with good habits in kindergarten may be one of the best prevention practices you can put in place. Some families may need additional encouragement and assistance for their child to have a good attendance record.

A study released in February from the National Center for Children in Poverty can help you in identifying families for additional support. Children found to be at greatest risk for school attendance were those:

- Living with a single mother
- Below the Federal Poverty level
- In a large family (four or more children at home)
- With a mother who has not completed high school (page 1)

Other risk factors identified include food insecurity in the home, unemployed or undereducated mother, teen mother, racial and ethnic minorities, and poor health.

The article does not provide protective factors so that will be a task for your kindergarten transition team. Pairing moms in a mentoring program, referral to adult education / literacy programs, partnering with community family resource programs and offering a backpack food program, are just a few ideas that come to mind.

The complete article entitled *HOW MATERNAL, FAMILY AND CUMULATIVE RISK AFFECT ABSENTEEISM IN EARLY SCHOOLING* is available at http://www.nccp.org/publications/pub_802.html.

HOW TO MAKE PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION WEEK LAST ALL YEAR

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

The second week in September, now declared "PARENT AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION WEEK," is only a start to increasing awareness of the importance of family involvement in children's education in the school and at home. Schools can use this week to kick off many ongoing efforts. Schools can encourage parents to get involved from a selfish perspective – the benefits for their own children and for themselves. The research overwhelmingly demonstrates that parent involvement in children's learning is positively related to the child's achievement. The research also shows that the more intensively parents are involved in their children's learning, the more beneficial the effects are on the child's achievement. This is true for all types of parent involvement in children's learning and for all types and ages of students. The most effective types of parent involvement are those which engage parents in working directly with their children on learning activities in the home. Activities which involve parents in reading with their children, supporting their work on homework assignments, or helping them using materials and instructions provided by teachers, have very positive academic results for the children. The benefits also extend to the parents as they come to enjoy the closer relationship with their child that results from this partnership. Parents learn more about what their child is learning and their child's school day, promoting increased conversation between parent and child. Thirdly, the schools naturally benefit from the parent involvement as well as they see increased support.

How can schools build this meaningful parent involvement? Here are a few ideas...

- Repeatedly communicate the message that parents are partners of the school and that their involvement is needed and valued and will improve their child's performance in school.

- Offer parent involvement programs that include a focus on parent involvement in instruction--conducting learning activities with children in the home, assisting with homework, and monitoring and encouraging the learning activities of older students. Give concrete ideas at these programs.
- Communicate to parents that their involvement and support makes a great deal of difference in their children's school performance. Let them know that all parents can be involved; they need not be highly educated or have large amounts of free time for their involvement to be beneficial.
- Remind parents that activities such as modeling reading behavior and reading to their children increase children's interest in learning.
- Offer parents resources that they can use at home to work with their child. These can be checked out through a family resource center and might include books, games, videos, activity sheets, and more.
- Build relationships with parents in a positive way by:
 - Making the first contact with a parent a positive one
 - Avoiding educational jargon
 - Communicating with parents in a manner that they have meaningful access to (written, oral, phone, e-mail, conference, home visit, etc.)
 - Making the communication two-way
 - Accommodating parents' work schedules
 - Learning about cultural differences of families you work with

For more ideas to get parents involved in their child's education, join us for our annual **PPP Regional Workshops**. They are being held at 11 locations in Missouri and will focus on "Supporting Families Through Parent Resource Centers & Family-School Functions." For more information or to register for this workshop, see the regional flyer included in this newsletter and on our website. Celebrate Parent and Family Involvement in Education Week!

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.

For information on the PPP program, please contact:

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HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME AN ABLE LEARNER

by Darlene Robinett, Founding Director

We all know that parents influence their children in many ways. How we interact with our children can effect how well they perform in school. If we show love and respect in dealing with our children, they will tend to develop social skills that show consideration for others and fairness in getting along with adults and other children. Research has shown that children's social behavior in school can directly influence their academic achievement. They feel confident in themselves and are more willing to learn new things.

One researcher (Moore, 1992) found that children who experience nurturing and moderate control from their parents show appropriate behaviors for classroom success. What does "moderate control" mean?

1. When you ask your child to act in a certain way, explain why. For example, you ask your child to walk on the sidewalk to school, not run up into neighbors' yards. You explain that their yards are personal property, that a dog might be out protecting that property, that walking in the yard may kill new grass seed, or that they may get mud on their shoes before they get to school. You want your child to understand why you ask him to follow a certain rule.
2. Encourage your child to follow rules by using positive reinforcement. Tell her you appreciate her actions when you see her doing something you asked. Perhaps give her a hug or a special treat sometimes.
3. When your child makes a mistake and acts poorly, use discipline strategies that involve explaining what was wrong and then finding a fair solution. For example, your child gets frustrated with his little brother always following him around the neighborhood, so he tells his friends what a stupid kid little Johnny is and they all make fun of Johnny. You should have a discussion with your son about the importance of respecting others' dignity. You might decide that an appropriate solution is for your child to reserve the next two days to playing at home with his little brother.
4. Expect your child to acknowledge and try to make up for any wrongdoing. In the example above, your son apologizes to his little brother and spends time with him.
5. Avoid extreme forms of punishment, because it will effect how your child relates to others. She may become very timid and withdraw from everyone, or she may become overly aggressive and angry with her peers.



With this pattern of parenting, children will adapt more easily to school rules. They will understand that there are reasons for rules and that others have rights and feelings. They will find it easier to get along in a classroom setting. They will also be more ready to listen to their teachers' explanations and seek understanding of what they hear and read. They will know that making mistakes can be overcome. You will help your child be a more able learner by exercising moderate control as a parent as well as creating a loving and nurturing environment for your child.