



PRACTICAL PARENTING PARTNERSHIPS

Working Together for Our Children

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MORE PARENTS EXPECTED TO VOLUNTEER AT SCHOOL THIS YEAR

by Janet Shepard, Director

President Barack Obama's inaugural request of Americans to take responsibility and do their civic duty seems to be resulting in a revived interest in volunteering in schools. In the results of a national poll released just a few weeks ago by GreatSchools.net, nearly 65% of parents indicated they believe it is more important than ever before for them to volunteer in their child's school. Almost 50% of the parents surveyed felt there was a lack of volunteer opportunities for them at their child's school. You will find more details about the survey at [GreatSchools](#). Additional information in a [USA Today](#) article compared an increased commitment to volunteering in schools by black and white parents. While more parents regardless of race say they will volunteer, the survey showed a 37% increase in African American parents who plan to volunteer compared with a six percent increase among Caucasian parents.

Capitalizing on the Obama effect and offering new opportunities for volunteering in your school may be one way to increase student achievement, foster new and stronger relationships with parents and make up for some short fall in the budget. You may wish to conduct your own survey of parents in the district or in your building. Don't overlook other community members such as retirees, job seekers, grandparents and more as potential volunteers for your school.

Remember volunteering *for* the school does not have to take place *in* the school. Out of school opportunities for volunteers could include escorting students in walking to school programs such as *Walking School Bus*, tutoring in after school supplemental education programs, school gardens, working on bulletin boards and other task which can be done at home. Making phone calls to other parents on a telephone tree, writing positive notes, or mentoring a child or another parent are all volunteer jobs which can be carried out in a variety of locations.

Interested but not sure where to start in creating a program for volunteers? Volunteering is the topic for PPP Fall regional meetings. Information will be shared on recruiting, training, utilizing, and celebrating volunteers. Check the registration flyer for your region of the state for details. If you would prefer to have this workshop offered in your district for your volunteers, call Shelly Lock to work out the details.

PLAN NOW TO ATTEND ONE OF THE 2009-1010 PPP REGIONAL WORKSHOPS!

The topic for this year's regional workshops is organizing, maximizing and utilizing school volunteer programs. These workshops will support schools in their efforts to utilize volunteers, especially in the challenging times we now face. This workshop will explore the value of volunteer programs, discuss how to establish a program, strengthen volunteer skills, look at working with students, teachers, and parents, review management and legal issues and provide tips and resources. The workshop should be attended by:

- school staff members and/or volunteers who are interested in taking the information back and training volunteers in their school community;

- volunteers interested in receiving training.

Participants will receive a training notebook. Come join us and others in your region for support in strengthening parent and community involvement in your school, thus improving education for students!

Follow the link for registration:

[Click Here for PPP 2009-10 Regional Flyer](#)

PPP CENTER UPDATE

by Janet Shepard, Director

Parent and Family Involvement week is celebrated the second week in September as established by state statute during the 2008 General Assembly. This year the parent involvement partners in Missouri are suggesting you observe this week September 6-12. If the dates do not work for you, please select another time to celebrate family involvement. The parent involvement partners including Parents As Teachers, LIFT-MO, PIRC ParentLink, and PPP will participate in a proclamation signing with Governor Jay Nixon and key legislators on September 23 in the Governor's office.

The August newsletter contains more details on the designated week. Back issues of the newsletter are archived on the website under the newsletter tab and are organized by month and year. Please forward the newsletter to your colleagues.

Observing Parent and Family Involvement in Education Week early in the school year provides a great opportunity to establish family involvement as a right, responsibility and an expectation at your school. It is also a great time to recruit volunteers. We have dedicated this issue of the newsletter and our regional meetings to volunteering in schools.

UPCOMING EVENTS

September 6-12	Parent & Family Involvement Education Week
Tuesday, September 22	PPP Regional Workshop – Springfield
Wednesday, October 7	PPP Regional Workshop – Macon
Monday, November 10	PPP Regional Workshop – Webb City
Wednesday, December 2	PPP Regional Workshop – Blue Springs
Wednesday, January 6	PPP Regional Workshop – Rolla
Thursday, February 4	PPP Regional Workshop – St Joseph
Wednesday, February 10	PPP Regional Workshop – Jefferson City
New Date – TBA	PPP Regional Workshop – Cape Girardeau

FACILITATION TIPS

by Janet Shepard, Director

Keeping current on a having a trained PPP Coordinator is often a challenge for schools. This year offering training when and where is it needed is a bit of a challenge for us. In an effort to make the best use of our very limited funds, we are scheduling training regionally as there seems to be interest.

Just last week I sent an e-mail to several PPP coordinators, parent liaisons, and parent educators in the greater Kansas City area who had expressed an interest in training last Spring or this summer. We are looking at

October dates. If you did not receive that e-mail and would like to be included, please e-mail jshepard@pppctr.org.

Southeast Missouri and the Springfield area are two other places in which we hope to offer training within the next month or two. Again, please let us know if you are interested in training in either of those locations.

Remember, it is acceptable for your PPP coordinator to be a volunteer!

KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION

by Janet Shepard, Director

Parent volunteers are often more prevalent and enthusiastic in kindergarten than in the upper grades. You may have more offers for help than you can accept. Hopefully you will be able to accept everyone's offer of help as this is a step to keeping them engaged throughout their child's school years.

A parent to parent mentoring program would be one way to use every parent who volunteers. To start a new mentoring program, enlist this year's kindergarten parents to plan. You will want to know from them:

- What they wanted to know before school started this fall
- How and when they wanted to receive the information
- What they liked about your school's current transition to kindergarten plan and process

You may also want to know what they did at home to prepare their child for kindergarten and what early childhood experiences their child had.

Depending on survey results mentoring next year's kindergarten parents might begin right away as part of your transition plan or it might start as late as summer. Pairings could be random or by common interests, neighborhood, child care center or other common community based programs. Kindergarten kids are sometimes mentors to next year's class. You could have a parent-child kindergarten team mentor a parent and their child in the Title I pre-school, Head Start or from PAT group meetings for 4 and 5 year olds. Share your thoughts and ideas with us!

VOLUNTEERS AS HOME VISITORS

by Janet Shepard, Director

At least one Missouri school district has successfully used parent volunteers as home visitors. When we created PPP's home visit training at the request of a Springfield middle school which was offering back to school visits to all students transitioning to their building, parent volunteers were on the visiting teams. Each student and their family received a visit from a teacher and a parent volunteer prior to the beginning of school. Teachers and volunteers received the same training and everyone worked together to plan the visits.

The teacher or other school staff member would share information about the school day and the parent volunteer answered questions from the parent perspective. The parent volunteers were active members of the parent – teacher organization and were well informed of all opportunities for parents to participate at school. The parent volunteers and teachers were paid stipends for the visits.

This same district noted a two percent increase in average daily attendance in one building the first year visits were made to the homes. Home visits are wonderful time to reinforce with parents and students the importance of being at school.

Volunteers might also be utilized to provide welcoming visits to families new to the district or to organize the packets to be left on a visit. Volunteers could also make follow-up visits dropping off literature requested or

school supplies needed. As always PPP is available to train your home visitors whether they are district employees or volunteers.

BOOSTING YOUR VOLUNTEER SERVICES IN SCHOOL

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

There's been no better time than now to enhance our volunteer programs. With budget cuts and financial woes as they are, schools, companies, agencies and organizations are relying on the services of volunteers more than ever. Volunteers are a great way to achieve our goals with less money. With volunteers, we often can prevent cutting services and resources. If your school already utilizes volunteers, now is the time to look at strengthening your volunteer program. If your school relies minimally on volunteers, now is the time to reach out to parents and community members to help make your school the best it can be!

As you explore your volunteer program options, think about what it is you would like for volunteers to help with. Here are a few ideas of ways volunteers can serve a school:

- Mentor new school families
- Contribute to a school newsletter
- Read to students or listen to students read aloud
- Lend a hand for special projects in the classroom
- Chaperone field trips
- Provide assistance to individual students
- Put up a bulletin board in the school hallway
- Make event reminder phone calls to families
- Demonstrate a lesson to the class related to an interest, talent or career
- Seek donations from the community for school events
- Help with organization in the library
- Plan class parties
- Update school web page
- Office support: run copies, file papers, etc.
- Set up tables and chairs for a meeting/family night
- Serve on planning committees for the school
- Help with maintenance, repairs, and cleaning in the school

As schools build volunteer programs, the expectation for volunteering services becomes a norm. When teachers and school staff meet with parents or community members, discussion of volunteer opportunities should be included as the expectation with mention of the correlation between involvement and student achievement.

Volunteer programs are a win-win arrangement. Schools benefit from the additional services and resources provided. Parents and others benefit as they see the direct results of their efforts on children, develop new skills, and network and make new friends. There is an increased appreciation for the work of the school and volunteers. Volunteers promote respect and understanding, which in turn generates more volunteers.

To help your school with organizing, maximizing and utilizing your volunteer program, attend the upcoming PPP Regional Workshop in your area. For registration information, go to www.pppctr.org. Volunteers and school staff are encouraged to attend!

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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**GET INVOLVED!
VOLUNTEER IN SCHOOL!**

by Shelly Lock, Program Development Coordinator

Did you know that you might extend your life expectancy if you volunteer? Did you know that your services could reduce the impact that these challenging economic times are having on your child's school? Did you know that you could help children be successful in school and inspire them to reach their dreams?

Volunteering in school brings many benefits to not only the school, but to the volunteers and to the community. Everyone benefits as we share responsibility for educating students and developing productive citizens of our community.

Benefits to volunteers can be social, emotional, and even physical. Benefits include:

- A sense of pride in seeing the direct results
- Development of new or enhanced personal skills
- A venue for sharing special skills
- Meeting of others with similar values and goals, network and make new friends
- Becoming part of a team
- Learning more about the educational experience of students
- Being viewed as a resource to others
- Being healthier (based on a study at Cornell that found that people involved in volunteer work tend to live longer)

Benefits to the school as a whole and to individual students are tremendous. These benefits include:

- Increased services to students with less financial support
- Academic progress for students receiving direct help
- Elimination of some barriers to learning
- Strengthened relationships with families and the community
- Greater appreciation for the school's work
- Donations of supplies and materials
- Enhanced academic programs with the resources of others

Benefits to the community are evident when positive school volunteer programs are in place. Benefits include:

- A sense of community when many different groups of individuals support one another and the goals and values of the school
- Mutual respect and shared understanding of the school's purpose and efforts
- Pride in the community's school and increased school spirit
- Productive citizens who become employees, business owners, and partners

Challenge yourself to get involved as a volunteer. Make a list of your strengths, talents, and abilities that you could share with your child's school. Think about your personal characteristics and the time commitment you are able to make. Check with school or child's teacher to find out volunteer opportunities that the school has to offer. Match your list with the school's list and get signed up! It doesn't matter if your volunteer efforts are sporadic or on regular basis. Your help could be given in the school or out of the school building. There are

services that can be done during the school day or in the evenings, mornings or weekends. Try not to make excuses, but rather look for a fit for you! Your volunteering might involve:

- Social support for the school such as being a club sponsor, mentoring a new school family or engaging community businesses to partner with the school,
- Work with individual students in ways such as reading with or tutoring him/her,
- General support to the school such as setting up the chairs for a meeting or school event, or helping with the school newsletter or website, or
- Support to the classroom teacher such as hanging up a classroom bulletin board, helping with a classroom activity, or chaperoning a field trip.

Parents have a lot to offer a school. You bring and share real-life experiences and expertise. Volunteers can bring new ideas and approaches to a school. Parents bring motivation and a desire for the students in the school to do well because of the direct effect the school has on your own children and on your community.

Make the 2009-2010 school year, your year to get involved. Volunteer in your child's school. You'll be glad you did!