

The Parent Educator

A Newsletter for Parent Educators Throughout the State of Arkansas

Implementing an Effectiveness-Based Parent Education Program

Prior to the 1990's policy and practices related to substance abuse and mental health prevention and intervention were based on the desire and good intentions to provide help to those most in need. Most of us got into our respective fields out of a desire to help people in need. Though many training programs emphasized and required research, the reality was that research had little effect on actual practice. The programs and practices we adopted were determined by the indoctrination and observation of our mentors and teachers, and subsequently shaped by our own trial and error experiences. In many ways, our practice was more art than science. The pressing needs in our communities and our desire to help was sufficient to justify our requests for continued and expanded resources and funding. We were not required to provide documentation of the actual results of our efforts, nor

did we feel compelled to do so, for we knew in our hearts that we were doing our best to help people. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on your perspective), those days are over. The advent of managed care and the conservative fiscal practices of funding agencies have ushered in what has been called the "Era of Accountability."

In the 1990's, in an attempt to reel in the spiraling costs of health care, managed care companies began requiring practitioners to provide justification for their services and documentation of outcomes. Concurrently, the federal government began to require recipients of federal funds to justify their use of tax dollars. Since 1999, all federally funded programs are required to develop strategic plans that link programs with measurable outcomes. Continued funding requires demonstration that the programs are having the desired effect on the



population (Government Performance Reporting Act of 1993). These two events have dramatically changed the landscape of policy and practice. In the field of parent education, this can be seen in the push for communities to adopt and implement "effectiveness-based" and "research-based" programs. *Continued on page 3*

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From The Editor

Linking parent educators across the State of Arkansas is one of our main goals for *The Parent Educator*. With your help, we are enlightening and educating those whose important role is parenting education and parental involvement. If you have any comments or questions please feel free to write, fax or e-mail at the following:



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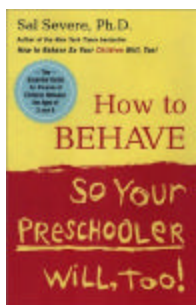


See you at the Fifth Annual Arkansas Conference For Parent Educator's March 3-5 Hot Springs, AR

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Book Spotlight

Books are a great accompaniment to enhance your parenting curriculum. There are so many great topics to choose from. Here are some books that are worth checking out



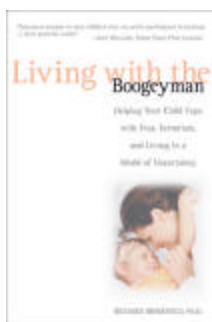
Author Sal Severe has taken his bestseller *How to Behave So Your Children Will, Too* and wrote a book for the preschool level *How to Behave So Your Preschooler Will, Too!*. His original has been developed into a curriculum.

Viking Press, ISBN#0670031089, \$24.95

From setting up parental interventions when necessary to guidelines for school principals, *Please Don't Call My Mother!* is packed with solid information, sometimes presented in concise point-by-point format. Authors-John Lazares and Coleen Armstrong.



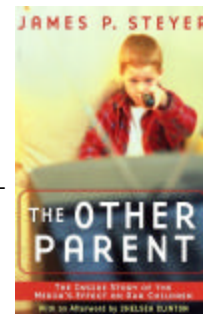
Parenting Press, ISBN#1884734626, \$18.95.



In *Living with the Boogeyman*, father and noted child psychologist Dr. Richard Bromfield offers clear, reassuring advice and a broader and more farsighted vision of parenting in this new world. **Prima Publishing, ISBN#0761527141, \$14.95.**



James P. Steyer's explosive investigation into how the media affects our children is a groundbreaking book called, *The Other Parent*, that will shock most parents. Through songs on the radio, Internet access, television, and movies, our kids are learning how to live in an adult world long before they are ready **Atria Books, ISBN#074340582X, \$26.00.**



Rita Sommers-Flanagan, John Sommers, Ph.D., Flanagan, Rita Flanagan, John Sommers-Flanagan are authors of the book *Problem Child or Quirky Kid?* Many parents wonder, "Is my

child normal?" They may be concerned about their child's behaviors, attitudes, feelings, or general development. They may worry if their child doesn't seem to be fitting in socially, isn't happy, isn't getting along with others, or seems overly anxious, fearful, sad or angry. This book gives parents the advice, reassurance, and practical knowledge they need to help their child and themselves.

Free Spirit Publishing, ISBN#1575421216, \$15.95.

More detailed descriptions of the above books can be reviewed at Amazon.com

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Effectiveness-Based Family Strengthening Programs

There have been several efforts to produce lists of “effective” programs. One notable effort in cataloging effectiveness-based parent education programs was the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Family Strengthening Project. In 1989, a national search was conducted in which nominations were solicited. Program developers submitted a 10 page description of their program in addition to research publications and/or evaluation reports detailing the effectiveness of the program. A panel of experts reviewed and rated over 500 programs. Using specific criteria, the programs were categorized on the basis of the quality of their evaluation results, ranging from Promising Programs (evaluation data appears promising, but requires confirmation using appropriate research design) to Exemplary I Programs (highest quality of research). This effort resulted in identification of approximately 35 research-based parenting and family interventions. Details of their methodology and results can be found on their web site (www.strengtheningfamilies.org).

While research has identified programs that work, these programs have not been well disseminated in the field. Program selection and adoption seems to be impacted more

by marketing than by research. In an effort to explore the process by which communities select and implement family strengthening programs, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention has funded over 100 family strengthening projects. In these projects, communities underwent a process of coming to consensus about which effectiveness-based family strengthening program would best meet the needs of the local community, adapting the program to best fit the unique culture of the local community, and implementing and evaluating the program in the local com-



munity. In 2000, the Center for Effective Parenting-Little Rock (CEP) received one of the family strengthening grants. In this project, the CEP collaborated with Child Development, Inc., a Head Start agency, to select, modify, evaluate, and disseminate a family-strengthening program that addresses the needs of at risk families enrolled in Head Start programs in rural western Arkansas (Johnson and Pope counties).

Local Implementation of an Effectiveness-Based Family Strengthening Program

The Strengthening Rural Families Project was implemented in multiple steps. The project utilized a steering committee composed of stakeholders in the local community, including parents. This committee had the responsibility of selecting the model program and overseeing the project. The steering committee adopted a consensus approach to decision-making. The steering committee was provided with information on model programs and the results of focus groups and a parent survey that were conducted to identify critical issues related to the local culture. The

steering committee narrowed the list of preferred programs to five. The project staff was able to attend a workshop which showcased these five effectiveness based family strengthening programs. The steering committee chose the program that they felt would best address the needs in the Head Start community. The committee felt that the risk and resiliency factors related to substance abuse needed to be targeted. After reviewing the available programs, the committee selected the DARE To Be You Program (DTBY).

DTBY was designed to reduce poor outcomes among youth, especially substance use, by increasing resiliency factors and reducing risk factors in families with young children. The target population is 2-5 year old children and their families. The project implemented the child and family components of the DTBY intervention.

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Just For You

Teachers Page

10 Things Any School Can Do to Build Parent Involvement . . . Plus Five Great Ways to Fail!

Presentation by John H. Wherry, President, The Parent Institute

- 1. Help parents understand why they are so important to their children's school success.** Point out to parents how much time children spend at home vs. at school (birth to H.S. graduation 15% at school, 85% home and other). Remind parents that they are their children's first & most influential teachers—and that education training is unnecessary. Remind parents how well children mimic them, even when parents don't want them to. Help parents understand how to model the behaviors they want. Discuss in parent meetings, newsletters: ·How soon children start learning. ·How children copy parents. ·How parents can set an example. ·How to make use of "bits and pieces" of time with children. ·Why parents really are children's first & most influential teachers
- 2. Give parents specific things they can do to help their children.** ·Parents say they don't know what to do. ·Parents say they don't have time. ·Specific suggestions help. Practical Strategies: Class by class, or schoolwide, decide on 3 to 5 specific things you would like parents to do at home: 1) Read to your child every day. 2) Ask about school work every day. 3) Tell your child 'I love you' every day. 4) Talk with your child and listen to what she has to say every day. Be specific with parents. Provide specific ideas in many ways: ·Tell parents face to face. ·Give them handouts. ·Show them videos. ·Demonstrate ideas at meetings. Parents have as many learning styles as their children. When we specifically target what we want, we often get it!
- 3. Work to win parents' endorsement of your school's educational program.** Parents and educators are often different—and always will be. We share a common interest in the well-being of the children. We should respect parents' expertise. We can build respect for school expertise. Win parents' en-

dorsement: ·Parents and schools each bring unique strengths to the education of children. ·We are a TEAM. We each have strengths, weaknesses—neither of us can do the job alone. ·Respect must be the basis of our relationship. Practical Strategies: ·Discuss each other's strengths at parent and staff meetings. ·Discuss how we can support each other. ·Share your school's educational goals—and how you plan to accomplish them.

- 4. Give parents the specific information they want.** Do you know parents' top concerns? ·How can you find out? ·How can you stay up to date? Here are the results of over 100 opinion polls ·What is being taught? ·How is it being taught? ·How are school funds spent? ·How are school policies formed? How would parents at your school rank these topics? ·Discipline ·Peer pressure ·Motivation ·Self-esteem ·Inclusion ·ADD & ADHD
- 5. Know how to get parents to READ what you send home.** ·One sheet of paper is best. ·Use 4th to 6th grade reading level. ·Know the 30-3-30 Rule: 80% of the people will spend just *30 seconds* reading what you send home; 19% will spend just *3 minutes*; 1% will spend *30 minutes*. ·Use the dollar bill test: A dollar bill, placed any direction, should touch some graphic element—such as: ·a bullet, rule, picture, screen, boldface type, underline, different color, etc. Practical Strategies: ·Learn what parents want to know. ·Provide it very briefly. ·Provide it frequently. ·Remember—you are not talking to an audience, but a parade!
- 6. Provide staff training and support for parent involvement.** ·Most educators have had no such training. ·Many fear parents and avoid them. ·Training and support build understanding—which overcomes fear. Staff Training and Support: ·Share research findings. ·Jointly develop ideas the whole school can implement. Jointly develop ideas individual staff members can implement. ·Provide a steady drip of parent involvement information. ·Spotlight successful staff practice. ·Provide non-threatening social activities so staff can meet parents. More Strategies: ·Ask staff with successful experience to talk with others. ·Invite speakers to staff meetings. ·Hold school workshops. ·Make telephones and note cards available to staff.
- 7. Provide training and support for parents.** ·Most parents have had no involvement training ·Many fear educators and avoid them. ·Training and support build understanding—which overcomes fear. ·Share research findings—parents are interested, too. ·Help parents share ideas with each other (network). ·Jointly develop a list of important topics. ·Provide non-threatening social activities so parents and staff can meet. ·Stress the importance of what parents do every day at home.
- 8. Recognize and Reward Exemplary Parent Involvement Practice.** ·Most parents and staff are starved for recognition and encouragement. ·A little makes a big difference! Recognize Exemplary Practice of Staff: ·The most parent phone calls. ·The most home visits. ·The most notes to parents. ·The best idea to involve parents. ·The most parent visits to class. ·The most parent group members. Recognize Exemplary Practice of Parents: ·The most books read aloud. ·The most improved grades. ·The most class visits. ·The most help to teachers. ·The best idea to help their child. ·The most help to your parent group.
- 9. Ensure Your Success by Making a Plan** ·Specifically, how will you get staff involved? ·Specifically, what will you ask parents to do? We must have a plan ·Having a plan does not guarantee success. ·Not having a plan does guarantee failure!
- 10. Adapt Ideas That Have Worked for Others.** Why try to reinvent the wheel? There are lots of proven ideas ready for you to use: ·Remember the 3 Fs for success: 1) Food, 2) Families, 3) Fun. ·Establish a friendly contact early in the year—In Time of Peace! ·Remember to stress Two-Way communication.

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Five Great Ways to fail



Implementing a parent education program continued . . .

(Continued from page 3)

The child component is designed to increase intermediate protective factors of developmental level, self-worth, empathy, competence, problem solving, social skills, and self management. These resiliency factors are linked to success in school, good peer relations, and assertiveness. The family component works to improve parents' self-efficacy, self-esteem, internal locus of control, decision-making and reasoning skills, stress management skills, and child-rearing practices. The content of the course is taught primarily through a variety of experiential activities. The intervention included 25 hours of training over 10 weekly sessions. Each session includes a social meal (30 minutes), a parent-child activity (15 minutes), and simultaneous classes for the parents, preschool youth, and siblings (2 hours). Incentives of meals, children's program and \$200 honorarium for each completing family were used for recruitment and retention. In one Head Start year, the project conducted four cycles of the program. Fifty one families were enrolled and 46 successfully completed the program (90% retention). The project has conducted pre and post assessments of the participants and is currently collecting follow-up assessments. This data will be used by the project to evaluate the effectiveness of the program within our communities.



Lessons Learned

1. Personal invitation is the best recruiting strategy. Getting families involved in parenting programs is a challenge. Recruitment and retention is a problem that programs are facing across the country due to the significant obstacles that prevent families from participating. In our project, we were able to hire a parent educator

who was able to focus her attention exclusively on implementation of the program, without having to divide her attention with other responsibilities. This allowed her to spend the time to develop relationships with the Head Start families and to make personal

invitations to enroll in the classes. As a result, the project was able to exceed the goal of 30 families completed. In order to be successful in recruiting families, much effort needs to be dedicated to marketing the program through personal contact with the target families.

Parenting programs need to be responsive to the needs of the families. The primary obstacle to participation in parenting programs is time and resource constraints. Parent educators need to plan their programs to make it easier for

families to participate. For our families, this meant offering meals for the families at each meeting, providing childcare at each meeting, and offering incentives to families for successfully completing the classes. As a result, we were able to maintain a 90% retention rate in a 10 week program. The need for parenting help is there, but the barriers to participation must be addressed in the design of the program in order to be successful.

3. Doing parent education well requires resources. To do parent education right requires sufficient resources. For example, one class had over 50 family members in attendance. This required planning to provide a full meal for the families and to have sufficient help for child care. In addition, our project provided \$200 in gift certificates for completion of the program. The developer for DTBY built this graduation incentive into the DTBY design. Since we desired to replicate the DTBY in our local community, we retained this feature of the program. While we do not know to what extent this contributed to our high retention rate, we feel that the incentive helped to offset transportation costs and provided families with an additional incentive to stick with the program. To do parent education well, agencies need to count the cost and invest in the success of the program. ■

Mark Edwards, Ph.D. is with the Center for Effective Parenting and UAMS/Arkansas Children's Hospital

Getting To Know You

A spotlight on Parent Educators and Parent Education Programs across the State of Arkansas

This issue our spotlight is on *Healthy Connections, Mena Arkansas.*

Healthy Connections, Inc. (HCI) is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization that has served area residents since 1998. In keeping with HCI's mission statement "to create and maintain a professional, caring service in which families are treated with dignity and where goals are realistically set and accomplished in full partnership with parents," the organization has provided a broad spectrum of health and social services programs targeted for "at-risk" families throughout western Arkansas.

Describe your organization.

HCI received the Arkansas Children's Trust Fund and the Rural Health Outreach grants in 1998 to provide a home-visiting program to reduce the probability of child neglect and abuse in the region. Most of our clients are young Moms with little or no family support. We enroll them into the program and provide parenting and living skills classes in the homes. We also provide transportation to local medical and social service providers.

Since that time, HCI developed a partnership with Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families and became one of two Arkansas pilot sites funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to enroll eligible children in Arkansas' SCHIP program. We covered five counties in western Arkansas. In January of 2002, the funding was extended three more years expanding up to Crawford and Sebastian County with an Outreach Specialist stationed at Harbor View Mercy Hospital.

Healthy Connections has played a key

leadership role in the Family Living Support Program TEA Coalition and currently provides one of only three Individual Development Account programs in Arkansas. We currently are offering this program in four counties.

On July 1st of 2002 HCI received a Tobacco Education/ Cessation grant from the Arkansas Department of Health. Funding is for one year to provide five school districts in Polk and Scott County with training and materials for tobacco



education and cessation.

Healthy Connections, Inc. received word from the Office of Population Affairs July 15th that we would receive a Title XX grant to fund our home visiting program for the next five years at even a greater capacity! Our prayers for funding were heard and answered.

On July 19th, Healthy Connections, Inc. received a grant from the Office of Health and Human Resources to open a new access federally funded Community

Health Center. Now the work begins...

What key points helped with the success of your parent education program?

We had a strong community coalition to work with. We have a dedicated and knowledgeable staff. We have strong partnerships with the local medical and social service providers and we have developed a good reputation, as 25% of our new clients are self-referred.

Did you have any problems that you could share with other parent educators?

We had problems with an inconsistent funding stream. Client non-compliance led us to develop policies to deal with the situation. We have a large rural area that complicates home visiting and transportation to service providers.

How did you get the parents involved?

We got our clients involved by sponsoring Parent-Program Management Meetings quarterly. We provide a parenting class, food and incentives to attend. We recruited two clients to serve on the HCI Board of Directors.

In what parenting series/ curriculums have you and your staff been trained?

Training has been provided in parts of the "Nurturing" curriculum and various trainings from APEN workshops. At this time, we are not using any specific curriculum but are working to get our new grantors to approve a curriculum out of Vanderbilt Medical University called "MIHOW"

Thank you Healthy Connections for sharing your program with parent educators.

Continued from page 4

Five Great Ways to Fail!

1. **Think of yourself as the main parent involvement person at your school.** School survey results: "Can you give me the names of any people you know who work up at school?" 1) School Secretary, 2) Custodian, 3) Food Service/Bus Driver, 4) A Veteran Teacher, 5) A Music Teacher, 6) Nurse/Coach 7) The Principal.
2. **Think of parent involvement as something that only happens when parents are in your school building.** By far, the most important involvement happens at home! ·Reading to children. ·Being seen reading. ·Setting an example (for better or worse). ·Showing interest in school work. ·And MUCH more!
3. **Try to build positive attitudes among parents by just using newsletters, memos, newspaper articles, TV, other mass media** Mass media is best for providing information. ·All mass media—radio, TV, signs, bumper stickers—can do is reinforce attitudes that already exist! Use face-to-face contact for creating and changing attitudes: ·Conferences. ·Workshops. ·Home Visits. ·Class Visits. ·Open House. ·Even Phone Calls.
4. **Keep on thinking that children from 'broken' or 'disadvantaged' homes do not have the benefit of parent involvement.** The 'Extended Family' What these children often have is amazing. ·Mother/Father, ·Grandparents, ·Neighbors, ·Sisters, Aunts, Uncles, ·Friends. We need to enlist their support! ·Children often have many people who can and will help if we will invite them to get involved—and help them know what to do.
5. **Write parents off as apathetic & uninterested after you repeatedly provide programs for them and invite them to come to school, but they don't show up!** The vast majority of parents want to help their children. We need to: ·'Walk a Mile' in their shoes. ·Respect what they now do to help their children. ·Issue 'genuine invitations.'

In Conclusion . . . Getting parents involved in their children's education is not just a 'nice idea' We can't DO OUR JOB without parents' help! We Know How to Make Parent Involvement Work: ·In ANY school . . . ·With very LITTLE MONEY . . . ·Using PROVEN, TESTED IDEAS. The fact is . . . A New Day is Dawning! It is the day of parent involvement. It will help every child, in every school, everywhere . . . and we are exactly the ones who can make it happen! ■

This information was prepared by Dr. John H. Wherry, President, The Parent Institute, P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474, 1-800-756-5525. The Parent Institute publishes parent involvement materials for schools, including the Educators' Notebook on Family In-



volvement newsletter for staff, the parents make the difference!, Parents STILL make the difference!, Helping Children Learn, Helping Students Learn and Building Readers newsletters for schools to distribute to parents, as well as informative booklets, pamphlets and videotapes for schools to distribute to parents. Permission is granted for noncommercial professional reproduction of this summary if this credit message is included.

Fifth Annual Arkansas Conference For Parent Educators

March 3-5, 2003 Hot Springs, Arkansas

For more information about the conference contact, Arkansas Parenting Education Network at (501)664-2227 or email tammygray@arkansas.net.

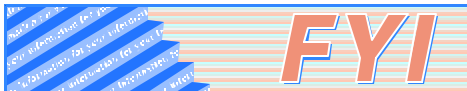
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We're on the Web
www.parenting-ed.org



— Important Web Sites —

Websites for Parent Educators

Colorado Parent Information and Resource Center
<http://www.cpirc.org>

U.S. Department of Education Publications
<http://www.ed.gov/>

Blueprints
<http://www.colorado.edu/cspv.blueprints>

Child Trends, Inc.
<http://www.childtrends.org>

New York University Child Study Center
www.AboutOurKids.org

Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org

Time for Kids-Parents-Teachers
www.timeforteachers.com

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

National Mental Health and Education Center
www.naspcenter.org

Knowledge Kids Network
www.familyedge.com
www.kidsedge.com

National Education Association
www.new.org

Detection & Prevention of School Violence
KeysToSaferSchools.com

www.parenting-ed.org

The website of the Center for Effective Parenting. Be sure and look over the publication *Parenting in Arkansas*, as well as other information of interest.

What's Coming In The Next Issue

- ◆ Teachers' Page
- ◆ More Websites
- ◆ Getting To Know You
- ◆ Let's Discuss Parenting Curriculum Critique



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