



# From the Playroom

SEPTEMBER 2012 • A PUBLICATION OF CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE INC.  
A NOT-FOR-PROFIT AGENCY • COPYRIGHT ©2012

## The Importance of Relationships...



It's a new school year, and so much has happened this summer. I finally accomplished a lifelong goal and was simultaneously thrown one of life's biggest punches...all within a matter of days. In reflection, these experiences served as an unforgettable reminder of what is truly important...our relationships. Nothing else compares.

The intervention in Primary Project is "relational" which separates it, in my opinion, from all other evidence-based interventions.

Perhaps that is why I am so clearly drawn to it. At the core of the program, is a unique focus on "how and what" it takes to build relationships with young children. Everything from the playroom set up, to the words spoken by the child associate, to creating an experience that encourages the child to make decisions are all very intentional.

The importance of relationships ripples out beyond the playroom experience. The relationship among the supervisor and the child associate ensures a high quality of care. The relationship between the principal, teachers, and parents ensures a clear understanding of how Primary Project helps with school transitions and provides a broader context of the child's past and current experiences. There are relationships within and across districts, and in many cases with mental health care agencies and Children's Institute. Each relationship works in tandem with the overarching goal of providing early detection and intervention services to the children who will benefit most.

In a world filled with lists of things to accomplish, sometimes life events remind us that our relationships are what truly matter. As we continue our work this year in the busy world of schools, let's remember what is truly important.

*The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even heard, but must be felt with the heart.*

*—Helen Keller*

*—Mary Anne Peabody, Ed.D., LCSW, RPT-S  
Director of Primary Project, Children's Institute*

# Relationships and Successful Consultation



While Primary Project programs across the country work to adhere to program fidelity, each school operates within its own culture. This culture may be shaped by administrative leadership, staff personalities, and district policies and procedures. With that in mind, consultation delivery to programs must consider the uniqueness of each building and work collaboratively with Primary Project teams on effective and quality program implementation. The purpose of consultation is universal—to provide

ongoing support in the implementation of the core components of the program, maintain objectivity, provide a framework for defining challenges, and facilitate alternatives and solutions to those challenges.

As a Primary Project consultant, I find the most critical element in successful consultation is building a strong, collaborative relationship. A consultant supports, enriches, and expands the Primary Project team's knowledge of the program. Consultants may provide an independent perspective for specific challenges at hand due to their externality. For a program to reap the benefits of the consultation, the process should be driven by the school's team and specific project needs. In turn, the consultant can draw from his/her exposure to various programs and experiences to meet the individual needs of the school.

When supervisor Marie Dionne from the Primary Project program at Charter School for Applied Technologies in Kenmore, N.Y. was asked to speak about the value she places on consultation, she had this to say, "There are many things we value about our relationship with our consultant from Children's Institute. As a coordinator of a new program, I've had many questions. Our consultant responds in a timely fashion, providing us with knowledgeable answers to our questions and concerns. She engages our team in comfortable conversation, giving positive and constructive criticism necessary to strengthen our program. She is an asset to our school that we feel very fortunate to have!"

Your task this fall is to find time to reflect on how to strengthen the relationship with your building/district consultant and partner to positively impact program implementation. As a team, identify program goals for the coming year to review with your consultant. Together, your team and consultant can develop strategies to meet these goals.

To learn more about consultation services for Primary Project, contact Mary Anne Peabody at (877) 888-7647 ext. 237 or [mpeabody@childrensinstitute.net](mailto:mpeabody@childrensinstitute.net)

*—Shelley Sanyshyn, MS  
Clinical Associate, Children's Institute*

# Relationships with Parents

JC Mitchell Elementary School in Boca Raton, FL, knows the importance of reaching out and building relationships with Primary Project parents, who naturally know their children best.

Our youngest daughter, Evelina, experienced Primary Project at JC Mitchell last year. We knew little of the program going in, but what we did know was that Evelina needed help that we could not offer. Evelina had a disconnect with her school interactions. Because Evelina is our fourth child, experience told us that being so reserved and not as engaged as other students would be a handicap to her education. Additionally, she has an extremely high IQ that, in part, provides her with an incredible perception and awareness. These qualities provide her with a comparative analysis of her classmates and her environment; which, in turn, drew her inward.

Primary Project was in a word, “extraordinary.” We saw Evelina blossom in her enjoyment of school and witnessed an improvement in her academics and social interactions with her peers and teachers. We even learned how to manage certain situations differently in order to bring out the best in our daughter. Overall, we had a positive experience with the program and everyone who worked with us in the process. Evelina’s child associate, Mrs. Amezaga, has passion, knowledge, and great communication skills. Mrs. Amezaga’s love for her work shines through and is a blessing to our daughter and Primary Project.

*—Zev and Alba Rolfe, Boca Raton, FL*



# Primary Project: Understanding Its Impact



Researching the impact of Primary Project is not a simple task. This year we will take the leap to conduct a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) of Primary Project. A RCT is used to test the efficacy (or the ability) of Primary Project to reproduce an effect under ideal circumstances. It means that after children are selected to receive Primary Project, they will be randomly assigned to receive Primary Project or continue with standard school services. Exciting, yes. Complicated, yes. Needed, yes!

We need your help. If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact me at (877) 888-7647 ext. 224 or [djohnson@childrensinstitute.net](mailto:djohnson@childrensinstitute.net).

Currently there are three other research efforts and publication projects underway. The first relates to the support and management of behavioral health agencies offering school based services (one of the more recent Primary Project expansion efforts over the last decade). A series of interviews were conducted last year with school and community individuals, including funders, to better understand the development of Primary Project across multiple districts. This qualitative study will initially be presented at the Center for School Mental Health national conference in October, 2012.

Secondly, in New York State, a series of surveys have been completed by school administrators and school mental health professionals to better understand how Primary Project is being implemented and maintained over the years. A third survey will be distributed this fall to child associates.

Finally, the history of Primary Project is being updated from the last report found in the classic text, "School-Based Prevention for Children at Risk: The Primary Mental Health Project" (Cowen, Hightower, Pedro-Carroll, Work, Wyman & Haffey, 1996). The update will focus on the expansion of Primary Project in new communities and new settings with younger children.

Your help and support are appreciated as we continue to learn and develop this important work. We look forward to collaborating with you and sharing our progress as the year unfolds.

*—Deborah Johnson, Ed.D.  
Director of National Services, Children's Institute*

# Congratulations...

## **The following schools have passed Primary Project national certification:**

### **Arkansas**

Centerton Gamble Elementary School - Centerton, AR

Washington Elementary School - Fayetteville, AR

### **Florida**

Barton Elementary School - Lake Worth, FL

Highland Elementary School - Lake Worth, FL

J.C. Mitchell Elementary School - Boca Raton, FL

### **New York State**

Charter School for Applied Technologies - Buffalo, NY

Northern Adirondack Elementary School - Ellenburg Depot, NY

Lake Placid Elementary School - Lake Placid, NY

Palmyra-Macedon Primary School - Palmyra, NY

Rochester, NY:

Adlai E. Stevenson School No. 29

Clara Barton School No. 2

Dr. Charles T. Lunsford School No. 19

Dr. Louis A. Cerulli School No. 34

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School No. 9

Dr. Walter Cooper Academy School No. 10

George Mather Forbes School No. 4

John James Audubon School No. 33

John Walter Spencer School No. 16

John Williams School No. 5

Kodak Park School No. 41

Lincoln Park School No. 44

Pinnacle School No. 35

The Flower City School No. 54

Theodore Roosevelt School No. 43

World of Inquiry School No. 58

Country Parkway Elementary School - Williamsville, NY

# Bringing the Lessons Home

## **Building a Relationship with your Child's Teacher**



As a parent of a 3½-year-old, I am excited that my son will start his first formal school experience this fall. We wonder together about what his teachers will be like, new friends that he will make, and the structure of his morning. This is just the beginning of many years to come of his school career. I think of the relationships that he will form both with other students and teachers, but more specifically how he will manage those relationships. I wonder about my role in all of this, and how I can best support him through not only this upcoming year, but the many that will follow. As simple as it is to send your child off to school, there really is a lot to consider! Positive parent-teacher relationships demonstrate and model to your child that you are a team, which in turn may help your child feel good about his/her school experiences.

Here are some ideas to make connections and build relationships with your child's teacher during their early school years.

**Getting to know each other:** Find time to introduce your child and yourselves as parents. Perhaps provide your child's teacher with a note that shares some of your child's strengths as well as likes and dislikes. Share what might be the easiest way to stay in touch during the year, such as phone or email and the best time to connect.

**Communication:** During the year, find time to share how your child is incorporating new learning at home. Similarly, let your child's teacher know if there are concepts or learning that are particularly difficult for your child and areas of frustration. Share significant events or things that might be happening in your child's life (i.e. a move, new baby). In a partnership with your child's teacher, regular, two way communication is important to foster your child's learning.

**Volunteer:** Many schools welcome parents' energy and enthusiasm for helping out. Whether in your child's classroom or in some other way within the school building check in with your child's teacher to see how you can contribute your time.

Building relationships with your child's teacher is critical. You are partners together in your child's learning. Effective parent-teacher relationships amplify your child's success in school and provide a greater likelihood of positive outcomes for children.

*—Lynn Smith, LMSW  
Social Worker, Children's Institute*



*Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.*

# Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

## Relacionándose con la Maestra de su Hijo(a)



Como madre de un niño de 3½ años, estoy emocionada porque mi hijo va a tener su primera experiencia escolar formal este otoño. Juntos nos preguntamos cómo serán sus maestras, qué nuevos amigos va a tener y cómo será la estructura de su mañana. Esto es solamente el comienzo de muchos años que vendrán en su carrera en la escuela. Pienso sobre la relación que va a establecer con los demás estudiantes y maestros, pero más específicamente cómo él tratará estas relaciones. Me pregunto sobre mi papel en todo esto, y cómo puedo apoyarle mejor no solamente en este año que viene, sino también en los muchos años que vienen después. Aunque es sencillo enviar a su hijo a la escuela, ¡hay realmente mucho para considerar! Relaciones positivas entre padres y maestros demuestran y modelan a su hijo(a) que ustedes son un equipo, que a su vez ayudará a su hijo(a) sentirse bien sobre sus experiencias en la escuela.

Aquí hay algunas ideas para hacer conexiones y establecer una relación con la maestra de su hijo(a) durante sus primeros años en la escuela.

**Llegar a conocerse uno al otro:** Busque tiempo para presentar a su hijo y presentarse ustedes mismos como padres. A lo mejor usted puede proveer a la maestra de su hijo(a) una nota para compartir algunos puntos buenos de su hijo(a) como también lo que le gusta y no le gusta. Comparta lo que sería la forma más fácil para comunicarse, tales como el teléfono o el correo electrónico y el mejor tiempo para conectar.

**Comunicación:** Durante el año, busque tiempo para compartir cómo su hijo(a) está incorporando en casa lo nuevo que aprendió en la escuela. Igualmente, deje saber a la maestra de su hijo(a) si hay conceptos o enseñanzas que son particularmente difíciles para su hijo(a) y áreas de frustración. Comparta eventos o cosas importantes que puedan ocurrir en la vida de su hijo(a) (Ej., una mudanza, un bebé nuevo). En asociación con la maestra de su hijo(a) la comunicación regular de ambas partes es importante para estimular el aprendizaje de su hijo(a).

**Ser voluntario(a):** En muchas escuelas a los maestros les encantan la energía y el entusiasmo de los padres para ayudar. Investigue con la maestra de su hijo(a) cómo usted puede contribuir su tiempo en el salón de clases de su hijo(a) o de alguna otra manera dentro de la escuela.

Establecer relaciones con la maestra de su hijo(a) es muy importante. Juntos ustedes son socios en el aprendizaje de su hijo(a). Relaciones efectivas entre padres y maestros aumentan el éxito de su niño(a) en la escuela y proveen una mayor posibilidad de resultados positivos para los niños.



—Lynn Smith, LMSW  
Trabajadora Social, Children's Institute

# Join Us...

## Relevance, resiliency, and relationships

Conference and introductory training



For more details and to register, visit:

[www.childrensinstitute.net/conference](http://www.childrensinstitute.net/conference)

### October 3 & 4, 2012

#### Woodcliff Hotel & Spa

199 Woodcliff Drive  
Fairport, NY 14450  
(585) 381-4000  
[www.woodcliffhotelspa.com](http://www.woodcliffhotelspa.com)

**All are invited** to the special conference reception on the evening of Wednesday, October 3, 5:30-7:30 pm. Please attend and be one of the first to view the new Primary Project DVD: *Creating Connections* and to recognize Primary Project donors and legacy society members. Don't miss this wonderful opportunity to share our work and our passion for early prevention efforts with one another.

### For new programs...

#### Wednesday, October 3

Brand new programs will begin their introductory Primary Project training on Wednesday, October 3 through Thursday, October 4.

### For returning programs...

#### Thursday, October 4

Join us for a day of professional development by program leaders.

**Relationships:** Keynote speaker, *Rebekah Crofford, Ph.D., LCSW-R, RPT-S*, Associate Professor of Social Work, Roberts Wesleyan College, on the critical importance of relationships.

**Relevance:** Administrator panel on the relevance of Primary Project.

**Resiliency:** A choice of workshops facilitated by leaders in Primary Project to keep your professional development goals fresh.

## children's institute

### STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

274 N. Goodman Street, Suite D103  
Rochester, New York 14607  
(585) 295-1000 (phone)  
(585) 295-1090 (fax)  
(877) 888-7647 (toll free)

[www.childrensinstitute.net](http://www.childrensinstitute.net)



Children's Institute is affiliated with the University of Rochester

A PUBLICATION OF CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE, INC.  
A NOT-FOR-PROFIT AGENCY

Contributors: Deborah Johnson, Mary Anne Peabody,  
Zev & Alba Rolfe, Shelley Sanyshyn, Lynn Smith, Paula Wooters

Design and production: Mary Maiolo

To receive this newsletter, please send your e-mail address to  
[sfernandez@childrensinstitute.net](mailto:sfernandez@childrensinstitute.net)