



Primary
Project

Fall 2008

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From the Playroom

Fall Focus

Another school year is here. As children settle into the routines of the classroom, so do we. We take inventory of our Primary Project playrooms, ensuring that the correct balance of expressive materials and toys are selected. We focus on our new staff members to acquaint them with our purpose and program. We pay attention to the seasoned staff as well, reminding them of which children are best responders to the program.

Fall is a time to set goals and parameters on both our programs and for ourselves. Where will your team focus? Which key components of Primary Project could you pay extra attention to during the upcoming year? Are you ready to join the ranks of other nationally certified programs?

The fall edition of *From the Playroom* is about focus and paying attention. We know paying focused attention to children in the playroom is what the “special relationship” is all about. We also know how critical it is to focus on adult relationships within our team, within the school community and with our funding sources. Primary Project is all about relationships and every relationship needs attention.



Nationally Certified Schools

Adlai Stevenson School #29
Rochester, NY

Dr. Martin Luther King School #9
Rochester, NY

John James Audubon School #33
Rochester, NY

Roberto Clemente School #8
Rochester, NY

Theodore Roosevelt School #43
Rochester, NY

Victor Primary School and
Early Childhood Education Center
Victor, NY

Westmoreland Elementary School
Westmoreland, NY

Egret Lake Elementary
West Palm Beach, FL

Golden Grove Elementary
West Palm Beach, FL

Jupiter Elementary
Jupiter, FL

Lantana Elementary
Lantana, FL

Seminole Trails Elementary
West Palm Beach, FL

South Olive Elementary
West Palm Beach, FL



Musings from Maryland...

A Project Coordinator's reflections on what Primary Project brings to the county, the children, their families and to his own parenting

Primary Project services are currently being provided in four elementary schools in Talbot County, located approximately 30 miles east of the Chesapeake Bay on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The initial funding for Primary Project came in September 2000 to the Talbot Family Network through the Coalitions for Prevention grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. In January 2002, Channel Marker, Inc., a nonprofit organization, was selected as the service provider for the key component of this federal grant. The initial pilot program was launched at one school, Saint Michaels Elementary School in March 2002 and served 15 children. To our knowledge, Channel Marker continues to be the only service provider of Primary Project services in the state of Maryland. We recently completed our sixth year.

The initial grant money for the service was only for one year. During the subsequent years, Channel Marker, as the service provider, has been responsible for obtaining funding through local resources that included an anonymous donor. Funding for the program has varied each year and directly determines the amount of children we are able to serve. Currently, Channel Marker provides Primary Project services in four schools and targets the fall session to assess children in grades 1-3 and the spring session to assess children in kindergarten. The highest number of children served in a school year has been 94, which included a staff of a Project Coordinator and several Child Associates, to a low of 15, which included a Project Coordinator and one Child Associate.

In the spring of 2007, Saint Michaels Elementary School obtained national certification by meeting best practices and excellence and it is our goal to have national certification for the other three schools we serve.

In evaluating the value of Primary Project services from a provider perspective, several thoughts come to mind:

1. There is a strong correlation between Primary Project services and a decrease of school-based mental health referrals.
2. New teachers can be skeptical of the program at first, but they do experience positive results with their students once they complete the program.
3. Parents often communicate how their child has improved in their transition to school after completing the program.
4. Seeing children's faces light up and smile when they see their Child Associate is a powerful interaction to watch and validates the hard work and commitment to sustain the program. Many times, when I am at the various schools with a Child Associate, children that we served years ago will approach the Child Associate to say "hi" and many will actually come up and give a hug.

(continued on page 5)



Bringing the Lessons Home

Reverse report card

On a typical report card, there may be comments about a child's ability to stay focused and to pay attention. But what if the report card was grading the adults in children's lives? What if our children were given the opportunity to grade us on the subject of "paying attention?"

What comments might be written?

No parent can give undivided attention to their child at all times. That is both impossible and unreasonable. In our busy, multi-tasking, technology filled world, we are distracted by many things. Work, chores, friends, pets, responsibilities and our own worries all seem to contribute to our distraction. For many, paying focused attention has become a lost skill.

It takes real effort to slow down and to pay really focused attention on our children—the kind of attention that is undivided with no interruptions. Luckily, paying attention doesn't cost a thing, and yet the payoff can be huge.


If you can pay focused attention to your children when they are talking to you about the daily small things that are important to them at that moment, it conveys the message that they are worth it and deserve your utmost attention. When a child feels this, it helps build a strong self-worth and sense of competence. If a child feels and knows this, when the issues are larger, they will turn to you. This message starts when they are young and is so critical as they become teenagers.

Remember, the attention that you are giving your children is going to teach them a lot about you, about their family and about how they should treat other people. Teaching your children to pay undivided attention to people when they talk is a great way to show you value and respect them and teaches them how to relate to others.

So what does your "attention report card" say today?

The attention that you are giving your children is going to teach them a lot about you, about their family and about how they should treat other people.

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



Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

Tarjeta de calificaciones en reverso

En una tarjeta de calificaciones típica, podría haber comentarios acerca de la habilidad del niño/a para mantenerse enfocado y prestar atención. ¿Pero que pasaría si la tarjeta de calificaciones está dando las notas (calificaciones) a los adultos en la vida de los niños? ¿Qué pasaría si a los niños se les diera la oportunidad de darnos calificaciones en el asunto de “prestar atención”?

¿Qué comentarios escribirían?

Ningún padre o madre puede prestar atención constante a sus niños todo el tiempo. Eso es tanto imposible como irrazonable. En nuestro mundo ocupado, con múltiples tareas y lleno de tecnología, hay muchas cosas que nos distraen. El trabajo, las tareas, amigos, mascotas, responsabilidades y nuestras propias preocupaciones contribuyen a nuestra distracción. Para muchos, el prestar atención enfocada se ha convertido en una destreza perdida.

Requiere esfuerzo real para coger las cosas más suaves y realmente prestar atención enfocada a nuestros niños—la clase de atención que es indivisa y sin interrupciones. Afortunadamente, el prestar atención no cuesta, y sin embargo la compensación puede ser inmensa.

Si usted puede enfocar su atención en sus niños cuando ellos le hablan acerca de las pequeñas cosas diarias que son importantes para ellos en ese momento, eso les da el mensaje de que ellos lo valen y merecen su máxima atención. Cuando un niño/a siente esto, le ayuda a crear una autoestima fuerte y les da un sentido de ser competente. Si un niño/a siente y sabe esto, cuando los problemas son mayores, ellos le buscarán a usted. Este mensaje empieza cuando ellos son pequeños y es muy crítico a medida que llegan a ser adolescentes.

Recuerde, la atención que le presta a sus niños les va a enseñar mucho acerca de usted, acerca de su familia y acerca de cómo deben tratar a las otras personas. El enseñar a sus niños a prestar atención indivisa a la gente cuando hablan es una gran manera de demostrar que usted los valora y respeta y les enseña cómo relacionarse con los demás.

¿Qué dice su “tarjeta de calificaciones de atención” hoy?

La atención que le presta a sus niños les va a enseñar mucho acerca de usted, acerca de su familia y acerca de cómo deben tratar a las otras personas.

Siéntase en libertad de copiar esta página y compartirla con los padres del Primary Project.

Musings from Maryland

(continued from page 2)

I want to share excerpts of a letter that parents wrote to us about their son's progress in the program. Names have been changed for confidentiality.

Our son, Ryan, started first grade in the fall. He came home from school those first few weeks asking us to teach him at home. We told him we were not teachers and he asked if we would hire a teacher to come to our home to teach him. He was angry and frustrated those first weeks and we really did not understand the source of the behavior. Later we realized he was in "school shock" as we refer to it.

We received a letter from Channel Marker explaining Primary Project and asking permission for Ryan's participation. We enrolled him in the program hoping it would help. We never expected the results and positive effect it has had on Ryan.


Ryan's early social and academic reports from school showed great room for improvement. He is a loving little boy, but was trying overly hard for acceptance and getting extremely frustrated with his daily and nightly school work.

He has just completed the Primary Project program. His mind is now open to learning, he is no longer afraid to fail and is able to listen to correction and guidance. His social behavior is greatly improved; he is a very happy child and looks forward to school daily. We know that the program helped him by the increasingly positive reports from his teacher and our interaction with him at home. We are sure this will make a difference in his whole academic career and in his life.

As the Project Coordinator, I feel extremely proud and rewarded being part of Primary Project services. The true value and success the program has on children, as in Ryan's case, has been extremely positive both socially and academically.

Lastly, the importance of play has also transferred to my personal life. As a parent of four young children, when they ask me to engage in play with them, I think about the value and benefits of play and always find the time.

*—Marty Cassell, LCSW-C
Project Coordinator
Channel Marker, Inc.*



If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

—Rachel Carson



Thoughts from the Hallway...

Zoom...zoom...zoom...schools can be distracting places!

Watch the adults...many are walking quickly and multi-tasking. While multi-tasking is a valued skill in some situations and settings, not being able to focus on tasks for any length of time is a trait becoming commonplace in our society.

Never before has communication been so instantaneous and information distributed so quickly. Never before have people been so connected with e-mail, text messaging and phone communication. Many of us have this ever growing need to check messages after a long length of time away from our computers. This connectivity has both an up and down side to it.

We zoom from the parking lot to the front door. We zoom to the teacher's lounge, grab the mail and zoom to the meeting. We zoom thinking ahead about the next place we need to be. For individuals who value "being present with children," we need to take a good look at just how present we are with adults.

Hmmm...perhaps this is a perfect Primary Project professional goal for this school year.

Transitions

A goodbye to **Gail Ferguson**, Ph.D. as she travels across the country to begin a professorship in psychology at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois. Gail brought a wonderful variety of skills and expertise to the New York Primary Project team, including moving our Model School program forward, jumpstarting research initiatives and bringing a new narrative look to our evaluation report. Gail was involved in many other projects throughout Children's Institute, touching many during her time here. The students at Knox College are lucky to have her. We will miss her and wish her the best of luck.

children's institute

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From the Playroom

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Possibilities of Play-Building Connections: DVD Available

Do you need a great resource for a parent night idea?

Do you need to help explain the importance of play to adults?

Do you need a great "new parent" gift?

Consider the latest DVD from Children's Institute, Possibilities of Play-Building Connections. This 28 minute video looks at play through the eyes of parents, grandparents, educators, pediatricians, play therapists and psychologists.

The DVD:

- Examines the crucial importance of play to the healthy development of children's emotional, social, physical and cognitive growth.
- Explores play definitions, different ages and stages of play, the universality of play and the significant role of parents and other adults in providing ample and enriching play opportunities for children.
- Highlights child-led play, where parents/caregivers use special playtime as a way to enhance and strengthen emotional relationships with children.

With a special guest appearance from Dr. Garry Landreth, world recognized play therapy expert, this DVD is a great idea for your next parent group, faculty presentation or simply a wonderful way to spread the message about the importance of play.

Available at \$45.00, the DVD can be ordered from our website at www.childrensstitute.net