



Dear Educators:

I am ready for summer. The winter was long and the spring has been cold and rainy.

This is the second issue in this newsletter's fourth volume. I want to take this opportunity to introduce you to a new resource just published. As I told you in the last newsletter, I have been working on a new series related to specific policy and practice issues. The series entitled *Policy Briefs in Family and Youth Resiliency* is now available on the Family and Youth Resiliency Website

(<http://resiliency.cas.psu.edu/policybriefs.html>)

The first brief deals with after-school programs. This policy brief is designed for county commissioners and state policymakers related to after-school programs for children. The brief highlights what we know about the effectiveness of after-school programs. In addition, this brief reviews the major policy issues related to after-school programs that need to be considered by policymakers. Two other documents are also available related to this brief. One document entitled *Practice and Programming Issue* is designed for practitioners. This brief identifies the best practices found in research that are critical in terms of implementing an effective after-school program for children. The second document is a book review of *America's after-school choice: The prime time for juvenile crime, or youth enrichment and achievement*. The summary highlights the major findings and points of the book. This summary would be especially useful to practitioners. Please contact me with questions or if you have any trouble downloading these files.

As always, I welcome suggestions and information for this newsletter.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins
Associate Professor
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy

....What's Inside ...

Family Activity

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FAMILY ACTIVITY

Potato Face Family*

Potato heads is a creative family project that provides lots of enjoyment and laughs, especially when the potato faces turn out quite silly. For this activity you need: large baking potatoes, clay or play dough, toothpicks, construction paper, felt or ribbon or other craft materials, scissors, and crayons or markers. To make them:

1. Clean the potatoes with hot water and a vegetable scrub brush or a dish cloth.
2. Make different faces on your potatoes. Use the clay or play dough to make a nose eyes, mouth, and ears. Felt, construction paper, and other craft materials also make great features if you do not have play dough. Felt also makes a great beard or mustache.
3. An older youth or adult can cut toothpicks in half. Use these stick features on your potato face--they are especially good for sticking clay or play dough items.
4. Make a clay base for your potato head. Press the bottom of the potato into some clay and mold the clay snugly around the bottom. You can mold the clay to make a shirt collar, bow tie, or add a real bow or ribbon.
5. Use different sizes of potatoes to make a potato face family. Mix and match potato face features, hair, hats, and other decorations to make your potato faces silly, scary, or beautiful.



*This activity was adapted from Keeshan, B. (1994). *Family fun activity book*. Minneapolis MN: Deacon Press.

POLICY POINT

The Nellie Mae Education Foundation recently commissioned Dr. Beth Miller to synthesize information available from existing studies of after-school programs and offer conclusions based on her assessment. The result, *Critical Hours After-school Programs and Educational Success*, pays special attention to the effects of after-school programs on the academic achievement and overall development of middle school students. Dr. Miller's central conclusion is that after-school programs can, indeed, make a valuable contribution to how well children perform in school. To download a copy of the report and summary materials, go to <http://www.nmefdn.org>

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Social fathers: Who are they?

In recent years, the percentage of American children living with their biological fathers has declined, resulting in a number of studies regarding the influence of nonresidential fathers on their children's development. However, fluid marital relations and living arrangements mean that children can be influenced by a wider range of adults than simply their biological parents; children may have relationships with important men who are not their biological father but who act like a father to them. This article examines the presence and impact of social fathers on preschoolers' development, defining a social father as a male relative or family associate who demonstrates parental behaviors and is like a father to the child. The article examines what factors are associated with having a social father and whether having a social father influences a child's development. The data were drawn from the Fulton County Descriptive Study, a component of the Child Outcomes Study (COS) in the National Evaluation of Welfare to Work Strategies. All sample mothers had a child between 3 and 5 years old, and the majority (96%) of the sample were African American. The majority (76%) had never been married, 35% had not graduated from high school, and 79% had had no earnings during the prior year.



The results showed that approximately 52% of the children in the study had a social father. Approximately 32% of children's social father was the mother's current partner or boyfriend, while 20% was a male relative. Children had frequent contact with their social fathers, with 50% having daily contact and only 9% seeing him less than once a week. This contrasts with low involvement of nonresident biological fathers, with only a quarter having at least weekly contact with their child. Indeed,

34% of nonresident biological fathers had not seen their child in the last year, and only 18% made child support payments.

The presence of a relative social father was associated strongly with higher levels of child school readiness, regardless of whether the social father actually resided with the child. It may be that male relative social fathers engage in activities that allow poor single mothers more time with their children, and that they may also provide the child with books and cognitively stimulating material. Results further indicated that children who have a romantic partner social father had significantly lower levels of personal maturity, again regardless of the residential status of the social father. It may be that mothers with less well-adjusted children are more likely to introduce a male role model in the hope of stabilizing their child's behavior, or perhaps male partners compete with children for the mother's time and attention. The sex of the child had no effect on these results.

The influence of social fathers appears to differ depending on whether he is a male relative or the mother's romantic partner. These findings highlight the need to consider children's wider social networks and adopting a more nuanced view of the adults who influence children's development. The past few years have seen a growing number of program and policy efforts geared at increasing non-resident biological father involvement. While these efforts are important, other efforts should focus on the potential contributions to child development to be made by other men such as grandfathers, uncles, and other male friends and relatives.

Found in: Jaykody, R. & Kalh, A. (2002). Social fathering in low-income, African American families with preschool children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 504-516.

Promoting Early Literacy

Reading is an essential skill for modern life, for the development of our country, and for communities. Thus, increasing attention is being paid to the development of early literacy, or the skills, competencies, and attitudes that precede and influence a child's learning to read. This article identifies some family and community factors that influence the early literacy development of young children.



Within reading there are two major components required for a child to become a proficient reader: (1) decoding, which is breaking the phonics code to produce the spoken equivalent of written words; and (2) comprehension, which is interpreting the meaning of written text. The following are characteristics of the home environment that promote early literacy:

- Shared book reading.
- Availability of books and other language-related materials such as alphabet blocks, magnetic letters on the refrigerator, writing and drawing utensils, and educational television programs, such as Sesame Street.
- Frequent visits to public libraries.
- Verbal interactions with parents that increase language skills and vocabulary, such as word games, rhymes, and songs.

The following are community characteristics that foster early literacy development:

- Community-wide attitudes and values that promote early literacy.
- Formal community literacy programs that enroll children, children and parents together, or parents only. Such programs should be designed and evaluated specifically to produce direct, and important, changes in young children's development.

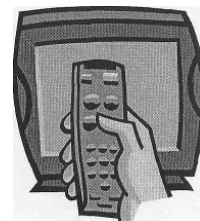
- Informal community activities and resources such as libraries that provide access points or materials to support families' efforts to promote early literacy development.

Found in: McConnel, S. R., Rabe, H. L. (1999). *Home and community factors that promote early literacy development for preschool-aged children*. University of Minnesota Extension. Retrieved on January 3, 2003 at: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/components/7286-05.html>

TV Affects Children as Young as 12 months

A new study, supported by a grant from the National Institutes of Health, indicates that children as young as 12 months old can read emotional cues from television, affecting their behavior. After watching a person on television interact negatively or positively with a set of objects, babies at twelve months avoided the negative objects in their own environment.

"Infants spend many of their waking hours watching the actions and reactions of other people as well as participating in social interactions... Through experience in both of these roles, as bystander and as participant, young children learn how to interpret and predict the behaviors of other people and to relate this understanding to their own behavior."



This new evidence suggests that parents, more than ever, must be media wise with children of all ages. Very young children are affected by violent and emotionally upsetting television images. According to the study, they are not merely passive observers, a very important and significant distinction.

Found in: Mumme, D.L. & Fernald, A. (2003). The infant as onlooker: Learning from emotional reactions observed in a television scenario. *Child Development*, 74, 221-237.

WEB RESOURCE

RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS

About Families

<http://fanTily-jnfo.info/>

This new consumer website uses information from Cooperative Extension's Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at NC State University to convey brief articles for families. Extension educators recommend it for writing their county newsletters. The articles change weekly and are archived on the website.



Healthy K.I.D.S. Newsletter

<http://www.childrenshealthfund.org>

A new project and newsletter have been developed by The Children's Health Fund's National Children's Health Project Network. Healthy K.I.D.S (Knowledge Improving Diet and Strength) is designed to address the increasing rate of obesity in children. The program is aimed at middle school children, focused on exercise and nutrition. Quarterly newsletters are produced in English and Spanish with age appropriate activities and information.

Community Conversations about Teens

<http://www.previewforum.com/teens/epostcard.html>

The organization Preview Forum is distributing free multimedia resources to help organizations host forums with community members and local journalists on "Teens in a Changing America." The idea is that local organizations can organize community dialogues to talk with teens about how it feels to live in a globalized, media-saturated, overworked and absent-parent world, and how communities can help. The deadline to get free resources is July 30, 2003.



Effective Learning Environments for Urban Youth

<http://www.jff.org/Margins/Index.html>

New learning environments and out-of-school approaches can reach students who are not well served by traditional high schools. This online resource from Jobs for the Future provides educators, policymakers and researchers with much-needed information about effective programs and approaches.

Soda and School Don't Mix Well

<http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/consumer/takingfiz.html>

California Project LEAN (Leaders Encouraging Activity & Nutrition) developed this guide to help individuals or groups combat soft drink contracts. The guide has resources for discussing school district policy on soda and other sugary drinks with parents, students, community members and school decision makers, as well as fact sheets on youth soda consumption and the related health consequences.



Everything You Need to Know about Adolescents

<http://education.indiana.edu/cas/adol/adol/html>

Adolescence Directory On-Line (ADOL) is an electronic guide to information on adolescent issues. A service of the Center for Adolescent Studies at Indiana University, the website is designed for use by educators, counselors, parents, researchers, health practitioners, and teens. Topics covered include: conflict and violence (prevention and mediation); mental health issues, including ADHD, eating disorders, depression, and adolescent development; health issues, such as alcohol and other drugs, obesity, AIDS, sexuality, and acne; resources for counselors; and resources for teens, including sites for help with homework, games, sports information, and teen magazines.

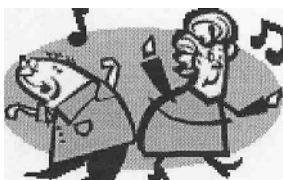
RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Spanish Resources for Parents

<http://www.zerotothree.org/magic/Spanish>

<http://www.zerotothree.org/music/Spanish>

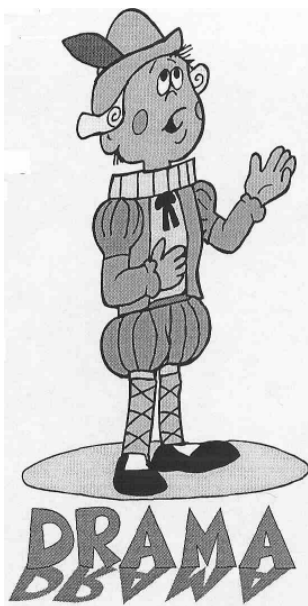
For young families, time often seems in short supply! But this Zero to Three brochure can help you make the most of every moment you have with your baby! "The Magic of Everyday Moments" ("La Magia de la Vida Cotidiana") shows how everyday routines can support babies' or toddlers' healthy emotional and cognitive development. Zero to Three's "Getting in Tune: The Powerful Influence of Music on Young Children's Development" ("AfinAjndose") tells parents and caregivers how music can support bonding, learning, and creativity for very young children.



The Power of Story Retelling

<http://www.nwrel.org/learns/tutor/spr2003/spr2003.html>

Asking kids to "retell" a story they've heard — through their own words, drama or pictures — can improve their reading comprehension and ability to analyze information. The North West Regional Education Laboratory has tips on story retelling for teachers and caregivers.

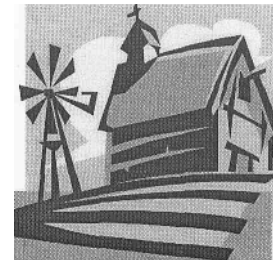


RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

Down on the Farm

www.ics.uci.edu/~pazzani/4H/InfoDirtRoad.html

This website describes the 4-H Farm at the University of California, Irvine. The Farm closed in 1998, but the website describes the animal-raising programs the farm ran. Also included are links to other websites on animals and farming and information on joining 4-H.



What Did You Build

www.cityspace.org

This website describes the city space project, a virtual city environment built collaboratively by kids, educators, and media artists across the Internet. The project invites young people to share stories, pictures, sounds, and 3D models of their own creation, and to assemble them into a navigable, three-dimensional city model. By clicking on links, visitors can explore parts of the virtual city and view pictures and movies. However, many of the links are now inactive.



Connecting to Other Youth

www.kidlmk.org

On the site, youth can chat in chat-rooms, take place in e-mail discussions, correspond with pen-pals, and take part in educational projects across language areas. Projects include family history and genealogy projects, language projects, and art projects.

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

Money for Youth Environmental Projects

<http://www.captain.planetfdn.org/aboutUs.html>

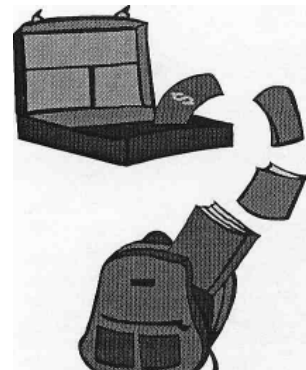
The Captain Planet Foundation support hands-on environmental projects for children and youth ages 6 through 18. The Foundation is interested in funding innovative programs that empower children around the world to work to solve environmental problems in their communities. Nonprofit organizations and elementary and secondary school teachers are eligible to apply.



Guide for Writing Proposals

<http://www.learnerassociates.net/proposal/>

This resource is a step-by-step guide on writing a grant proposal for nonformal education projects and human service project. The guide, created to help professionals who have never written a grant before, was created by Dr. J. Levine from Michigan State University. Dr. Levine has continued to improve on this guide throughout the years with the input of professionals who have employed it in their grantsmanship efforts.



*Please check out policy briefs in family and youth resiliency on the FYRP Web site:
<http://resiliency.cas.psu.edu>*

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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