



SAMPLER

IMPROVE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PRESCHOOLS

**I'm getting started. I'm on my way.
Like the big kids, I'm going to school today.**

**In partnership, teachers and parents are on a mission
To "ready" preschoolers for the next school transition.**

Young children benefit from high-quality preschools. When preschool children gain reading, math, and social-emotional readiness skills, they are more likely to make successful transitions to kindergarten and grade 1. As they talk daily with teachers and other children, preschoolers learn to get along with others, take turns, and conduct other school-related behaviors. Importantly, preschool programs improve in quality if they include well-organized practices for family and community involvement.

Although most preschool teachers value connections with young children's parents, many early education centers do not have well-organized programs of family and community involvement. With a few basic steps, preschool teachers, directors, parents, and community partners can work together to organize school-wide partnership programs that guide all parents to support their young children's reading, math, and socio-emotional readiness for elementary school.

Like elementary schools, any preschool in a community center or school setting can organize an Action Team for Partnerships (ATP), write an annual plan with family and community involvement activities linked to learning goals for students, evaluate progress each year, and continually improve outreach to all families, participation by parents, and results for students.

Today, many kindergarten teachers teach early reading and math skills that used to be taught in first grade. This means that preschool programs must do

more to prepare young children with reading and math readiness skills so that they can continue to learn apace in the elementary school. Students who enter kindergarten without requisite skills (e.g., knowing letters, sounds linked to letters, colors, how to write their names, and how to count to 10 or higher) are at an immediate disadvantage that may have long-term effects on their learning and progress.

Improve classroom teaching at the preschool level. This *Sampler* includes a few of many activities reported by preschools and early childhood education centers in annual books of *Promising Partnership Practices*. The activities, arranged alphabetically, involve family and community partners with children in reading, science, health and safety, and other school readiness skills. The goal is to help young children make successful transitions into preK, out of PreK to K, and into grade 1.

The featured activities were conducted by preschools' Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) to engage parents, students, and others across classes or age levels. Individual teachers may adapt the activities to strengthen partnerships with their own students' families and communities on important readiness skills. For example, a teacher of 3- or 4-year olds may organize reading-buddies, as in the *Barnum Buddy Program*. Individual teachers may help parents work with children on small motor skills, as in *Handwriting without Tears*, or invite their own students' fathers to become more involved in early education, as in *Digging with Dads* or *Father Friendly Environments*.

This **Sampler** was developed by Marsha D. Greenfeld, Joyce L. Epstein, Darcy J. Hutchins, and Brenda G. Thomas.
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Review of Research: Family and Community Involvement in Preschools

Joyce L. Epstein, Director

Preschools and early care and education centers serve different groups of young children. Some programs admit infants; others serve 3 and 4 year olds; and kindergartens are attended by 5-year-olds. Research conducted over several decades confirms that, for all age groups, high-quality preschool programs matter for students' success in school and in life.

Strong longitudinal studies with case and control groups found that children in high-quality preschools—including children in economically-stressed families and communities—did better in school, were less likely to be assigned to special education, more likely to graduate from high school, be employed, had fewer juvenile and adult arrests, and demonstrated other positive adult behaviors compared to similar peers who did not attend preschool. These long-term results along with less child abuse and more parental involvement were reported in extensive evaluations of half-day kindergartens in Chicago Child-Parent Centers (Reynolds & Ou, 2011). Other studies of diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups of children and families documented significant short-term and long-term effects of preschools on the cognitive skills and citizenship of young adults.

Studies indicate that effects of preschool education are stronger if educators engage families and community partners in activities to promote children's reading, math, and social readiness for elementary school (Fantuzzi, et al., 2004; Powell, et al., 2010). For example, it is well documented that 2- and 3-year olds in families with low incomes have about half the number of words in their vocabularies and hear fewer words each day than do children from economically-advantaged families (Child Trends, 2007). In high-quality preschools, teachers help these students learn new words (Wasik & Hindman, 2011) and talk and play well with others. Teachers also guide parents to practice new words with their children at home, read picture books, learn letters and colors, and talk about what they are learning in school. In a meta-analysis of results from 16 controlled intervention studies, Sénéchal and Young (2008) reported that parental involvement significantly affected children's reading acquisition from kindergarten to grade 3. Similar results have been reported for children's numeracy and social development.

Preschools may use research-based structures (e.g., an Action Team for Partnerships) to organize their programs of family and community involvement (Epstein, et al., 2009). Each school must customize its plans by selecting practices that meet the interests, time, and talents of parents and the ages and needed readiness skills of students to ensure a successful transition to primary school. It is a fact that parents transition with their children to each new school. When involved at the preschool level, parents are more likely to continue to be involved as their children proceed through the grades (HFRP, 2006). These findings are reflected in the activities featured in this *Sampler*.

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Resources

- Child Trends Data Bank**, Washington, D.C. <http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/?q=node/291>
- Chicago Longitudinal Study**, Institute of Child Development, U. of Minn. <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/icd/cls/publication.html>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)** <http://www.naeyc.org/>
- Perry Preschool Project**, High Scope Research Foundation, Ypsilanti, MI <http://www.highscope.org/content.asp?contentid=219>



Barnum Buddy Program

*Barnum School
Taunton, Massachusetts*

To provide individual attention to pre-kindergarteners who have difficulty learning important readiness skills, the Barnum School developed the Barnum Buddy Program. The school recruited high school, parent, and community volunteers as “big buddies” to be paired with a “little buddy.” These Barnum Buddies work together twice a week for 20 minutes, reading books, playing learning games, and practicing skills that the teacher highlights for each student.

The program supports Barnum’s School Improvement Plan, which calls for greater achievement in literacy, language arts, and math. Teachers refer potential participants after carefully analyzing the child’s initial academic performance and mastery of basic skills. Each child has a binder that includes a learning prescription, written by the classroom teacher, which indicates the specific skills the big buddy should focus on, along with notes on effective ways to work with the child.

The school set aside a special space for the Barnum Buddies. This area includes plenty of activities, books, and games for the buddies to share. Each time the big buddy works with his or her little buddy, the child receives a paper to take home, indicating what skills have been worked on. The child’s progress is noted in the binder.

The school recruited volunteers by contacting a local public high school, giving talks at other area schools, and putting notices in community newsletters. Though some of the volunteers are paired with more than one little

buddy, most are not. The Barnum Buddies program is being funded by School Improvement Plan funds. By recruiting volunteers, Barnum has contained the cost.

The first year of the Barnum Buddies program had eight students. During the second year, the program expanded to 30 children. The school is closely monitoring its academic data to see what impact the Barnum Buddies are having on student achievement.



DIGGING WITH DAD

MEADOWS PARKWAY EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

Little kids will always find ways to get dirty; it's a fact of life. At Meadows Parkway Early Childhood Center, though, they wanted to encourage getting dirty in order to learn. They created outdoor classroom experiences for the young students. To further motivate the students, the school's Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) recruited experts in playing outside—the children's dads.

The partnership team of teachers, parents, and the administrator planned a mix of teaching, learning, playing, and bonding experiences for students and their fathers or father figures. They created a series of learning stations to provide a variety of activities in outdoor classrooms.

Digging with Dad took place from 6-7:30 p.m. to accommodate working parents' schedules. As students and their fathers arrived, they received necklaces with one of four pendants: a bird, a flower, a bug, or a butterfly. The different pendants guided groups to their first stations to begin their explorations. Butterflies began in the Motor Area, bugs began in the Music Area, birds started with a Scavenger Hunt, and flowers started in the Digging Area. After set periods, the groups moved through all of the explorations.

The Motor Area introduced families to the school's new playground. Wooden balance beams and logs formed an interesting, textured, and adventurous climbing area. Children explored the new wooden jungle gym under their dad's supervision. They could also play with parachutes provided by a staff member at this station.

The Music Area featured a pair of instruments in the outdoor classroom—a large xylophone and a drum made from a barrel. Children also could play other instruments brought out from inside or make an instrument with materials at the Music station.

For example, some students and dads made “shakers” from paper towel tubes. A local band volunteered to play music, ranging from the *Alphabet Song* to bluegrass.

The other two areas introduced the real dirty work. For the Scavenger Hunt, the school showcased its nature trail. Students and dads traveled that scenic walkway. A local conservationist set out animal pelts along the trail for the hikers to find. With the pelts came wildlife information for the dads to share with their children.

In the well-named Digging Area, there was a big pile of dirt for students to dig into using student-sized shovels, spades, and rakes. They could plant sunflower seeds, shrubs, and trees, donated from a local nursery. Getting dirty while learning about plants was fun, and their work and play also benefited the environment and beautified the school.

Fathers seemed to enjoy the activities as much as their children did. One dad commented, “This was a great opportunity to spend time with my son. We really enjoyed everything—especially the digging!” Students and dads enjoyed their time together and learned some things about the world around them. No one had to dig very far to see the value of providing children with opportunities to learn outside of school.



FATHER FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENTS

CUYAHOGA COUNTY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN CLEVELAND, OHIO

Getting more fathers involved in their young children's education was the focus for the year at the Universal Pre-Kindergarten initiative. This goal started simply with a desire to increase the participation of fathers and other male role models in the 24 pre-kindergarten sites in Cuyahoga County.

The project moved quickly from a list of tips for creating a father-friendly environment to a resource manual and a November workshop on the same topic. When the manual, *Creating a Father-Friendly Environment in the Early Childhood Setting*, was completed and distributed, the program's engagement coordinator urged its two dozen sites to assess their situations and host events to encourage the men in children's lives to come to school.

Some sites hesitated at first to plan such programs because they did not think the fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, and others would participate. But after brainstorming creative ways to attract these family members, the sites' administrators planned a variety of events. Such activities included Donuts with Dudes, Bring Your Dad to School Day, and Read To Me, Daddy, as well as community-run programs, such as one conducted by the local children's museum.

When the myriad events were over, about 300 fathers and other caregivers had attended. Some youngsters learned things with their fathers, some played, others completed art projects, and still others shared meals. The most beneficial aspect of this initiative was not what they did, but the fact that children spent quality time with a male role model.

At least one youngster captured that sentiment: "I am so excited!" he said. "My grandpa is coming to school today."

The program offered the adults benefits, too. They learned new ways to interact with their children, enjoyed non-threatening activities at school, and saw first-hand what their children

were learning. School staff seized the moment to present volunteer opportunities for those who wanted to get—and stay—involved.

Each pre-kindergarten site that completed an assessment of father-friendly practices and made a corrective action plan, in addition to hosting an event, was deemed a Father-Friendly Site. They received a poster proudly proclaiming, "Here, Fathers Count. We Have a Father-Friendly Program."

The father-friendly initiative was an outgrowth of the work the parent coordinator did with all sites, assisting them in implementing the Family Engagement Model from NNPS. This was the second year for the sites to implement the model. Members of the Action Teams for Partnerships (ATPs) from the sites worked on this initiative. The group also worked with the Cuyahoga County Fatherhood Steering Committee and the Cuyahoga County Fatherhood Initiative, which provided financial support, as well as ideas for increasing fathers' involvement in the lives of their young children.



HANDWRITING WITHOUT TEARS INFORMATION NIGHT

**EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER – CENTRAL SCHOOL ROAD
SAINT CHARLES, MISSOURI**

Handwriting without Tears Information Night brought a lot of smiles to the children and adults who attended the evening of hands-on learning at the Francis Howell Early Childhood Center. They sang songs, made letters out of Play Dough, and turned shapes into letters of the alphabet.

This family-friendly event offered a close look at the district's new handwriting curriculum that promotes fine motor and letter recognition skills. It is used in Pre-K through first grades in the district.

"We invited the parents and students to an evening event where the parents could get a general overview of the handwriting curriculum and see their children working with the materials, singing the songs, and learning to write," explained the assistant site leader. About 25 parents and 30 youngsters attended.

This year's event replaced an adults-only information night that was not well attended last year. Parents on the Parent Action Team suggested that children should be included and play prominent roles in the program. The team decided to let the youngsters work with the curriculum materials while their parents observed.

The parents and children rotated among four classrooms. In each room, the teacher led the children in a song, dance, or finger play, and explained the rationale for the activity. In one room, the youngsters strengthened their hand muscles by forming letters out of Play Dough; in another, they used magna doodles, magnet letters, and wet/dry boards to write letters. Each teacher also gave out information, materials, and activities for the families to work on at home.

"Parents enjoy seeing their children working with their hands . . . and will more likely carry it over to the home when they can see it in action," said the site coordinator.

In keeping with the theme for the evening, the snacks served included Alphabets cereal,

Scrabble Cheese-Its, and juice.

The action team played a leading role in this successful activity. Not only did its members come up with the idea, they also helped develop activities, prepared manipulatives, made copies of materials, publicized the event, and worked in classrooms. The company that produces the handwriting curriculum also helped with information that was distributed to parents.

An occupational therapist from the school district got the evening started with a short presentation on fine motor skills development. She also was available to answer parents' questions. School administrators also pitched in to plan and implement the program. The event cost less than \$100 for materials and refreshments.

Everyone involved declared the evening a success. It was well attended and families were enthusiastic about the information and about the skills their children were learning.



KINDERGARTEN BOOT CAMP

ALICIA CORTEZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
CHINO, CALIFORNIA

Kindergarten and boot camp do not seem like words that go together, but Alicia Cortez Elementary has made the combination work. Summer Kindergarten Boot Camp grew from a pre-kindergarten assessment program that the school began in 2008 to help teachers plan instruction, and to help parents get their youngsters ready for school. Each incoming kindergarten student and his/her family had a conference with a kindergarten teacher. The youngsters completed individual assessments naming letters, colors, and shapes, and printing their names, while their parents filled out a readiness inventory.

From the assessment, the kindergarten teachers and literacy coach realized that some students needed a jump-start to be ready for kindergarten in the fall. They selected about 20 students to attend Boot Camp—a free two-week program that acquaints youngsters with kindergarten routines and builds their readiness skills.

“We wanted to give incoming students an opportunity to “practice school” by learning academic skills and kindergarten processes and expectations,” said one teacher. “This Boot Camp helped ease the minds of parents and students alike because the children got a head start to kindergarten.”

The students’ parents attended one day each week to observe what their children were doing and learning. The children demonstrated the alphabet, recited poems, and sang songs. The parents also learned some School Strategies for Success. These included making sure the child gets a good night’s sleep and an adequate breakfast before school; asking the child what he or she did or learned in school each day; and how to reinforce early reading skills at home. At the end of camp, teachers reassessed the students to determine how much growth there had been in their readiness skills.

“The students who were in boot camp were

proud to show they knew how to line up, what to do when it was time for centers, and how to use the Zoo Phonics Alphabet,” said one kindergarten teacher. “They had smiles of confidence because they were familiar with the routines.”

Although only about 20 students were enrolled in Kindergarten Book Camp, about 70 more kindergartners completed the assessment process and were introduced to other programs that would improve their school readiness, such as library story times, and the TYKES – Training Young Kids for Early Success – Center, a seven-week kindergarten preparation program. Some of the community programs were free and others, such as TYKES, charged fees.

Kindergarten Boot Camp cost about \$3,600 to operate for two weeks, paid for by Title I funds. Because the camp could not accommodate all of the families that wanted to participate, the ATP scheduled a two-hour orientation workshop for all parents of incoming kindergartners during which they toured classrooms, received materials, and learned more about preparing their children for school over the summer. They also had an opportunity to meet other families, so that on the first day of school adults and children would see some familiar faces.



LITTLE COYOTE KINDERBAGS

WILKINSON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL WILLISTON, NORTH DAKOTA

With the help of the Williston Public Schools, Wilkinson Elementary welcomed its kindergarten students in a special way that helped parents, too, feel more comfortable when their youngsters went off to school.

Each child received a nylon backpack filled with storybooks, a get-ready-for-kindergarten CD, word games, and other summer activities for parents and children. The little coyote on the bag inspired the project's name: Little Coyote Kinderbags.

Each family attending the Spring Kindergarten Open House received a coyote bag. Families who did not attend could pick up a bag at the school, and those who registered their children after the open house received the bag then. More than 180 students received bags.

Many community organizations and the North Dakota Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) put together information on community resources for parents that was also tucked into the bags. Instructions explained how to do the activities and how to use all of the materials in the kinder bags.

This acquainted parents with the kindergarten curriculum and ideas for spending quality time with their youngsters in activities that would prepare them for school. The bags and activities actually answered a need that parents had expressed. They wanted to know: What could they do at home during the summer before kindergarten to foster their children's success?

The bag also contained a stamped, addressed postcard for parents to send back with their reactions and opinions. About half of the parents did so, and "those responses were overwhelmingly positive," said school officials.

"Thank you. My child loved all of the activities," remarked one parent.

Wilkinson's principal was enthusiastic, as well: "It was so enjoyable to see the delight on

the children's faces when they received the bags." Teachers reported that many of the youngsters carried the bags as backpacks throughout the school year.

The bags cost about \$10 per student, with the ND PIRC using its Title I parent involvement funds to finance the project. The school district paid for the staff time to put the bags together and distribute them.

The school intends to continue the practice, updating and enhancing the activities and parent information each year.



New Parent Orientation

*Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center
Peoria, Illinois*

Everyone knows how tough the first day of school can be, especially for brand new students! But many forget how hard that same experience—filled with required forms, unfamiliar bus routes, and complicated school calendars—can be on parents. The administrators at Valeska Hinton Early Childhood Education Center haven't forgotten. At their New Parent Orientation event, they guide parents through a host of potentially confusing activities, making sure they know the ropes before their children start school.

Members of the school's Action Team for Partnership (ATP), who developed the orientation, help fulfill a key goal in the school's improvement plan—to empower parents to be involved. The school builds on the African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child." Accordingly, it is important for the school to increase the ranks of supportive parents. First, though, they knew that parents need a primer with good, basic information about their children's education.

The school prepares for the event by sending out letters to the parents of every newly enrolled student. Teachers also send notes home with siblings reminding parents about the event. Making the orientation mandatory helps to ensure that *all* parents receive vital information about their children's success in school. In fact, registration is not considered complete unless the parent has attended the orientation session.

In 07-08, a few days before classes started, about 100 parents and 50 teachers gathered at the school for the meeting. Staff members guided them through the paperwork required to complete their child's registration. Parents then attended a presentation about the school's program and education philosophy. At the end of the session, parents visited their child's future classroom. Teachers answered any questions the new parents had and introduced the day-to-day classroom routines.

Valeska Hinton boasts excellent parent involvement! However, every activity has its challenges. One challenge that the school faced with the New Parent Orientation was making the program inviting and motivational not only for parents, but for staff as well. The school jumped this hurdle by having each teacher plan an enjoyable introductory activity for the parents of their future students. Staff members also ensure that parents feel welcome by providing both verbal and written information in friendly, non-jargon-laden terms.

Valeska Hinton's hard work is paying off! Last year, the event was more popular than ever. "This gets better and better every year," one person said.

The orientation cost \$300 to produce. The price tag covered printable items, child-care, and anything that teachers needed for their classroom presentations. The school used Parent Involvement Funds to cover the expenses. The school plans to continue the practice every year, and they are working on improving the orientation for returning parents.



Preschool Transition to Kindergarten

*Greendale School District
Greendale, Wisconsin*

The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) and the preschool and kindergarten teachers in the Greendale School District know firsthand the anxiety that families and students feel on the first day of kindergarten. To help these youngsters and their families, the school district developed the Preschool Transition to Kindergarten program, which includes the Kindergarten Adventure Program and Parent Information Night.

The Kindergarten Adventure Program is a 90-minute program that allows incoming kindergarteners and their parents to meet the principal, teachers, and other students. The children also participate in activities such as finger plays, songs, story time, and a short recess. Parents take advantage of this time to informally speak with the principal. At the end of the event, preschoolers are partnered with a kindergartener to participate in free-choice centers. Preschool students left with a school folder and school supplies. Students and their parents also left feeling excited and comfortable about the upcoming school year.

Parent Information Night is the second phase of the transition program. Families have a picnic one evening in August and then receive information about kindergarten. After the picnic, children played games with high school volunteers while parents received general school information and learned about volunteer opportunities, the kindergarten “phase-in” program, and developmental stages of 5-year-olds. As a follow-up to the Parent Information Night, the district holds a “Meet Your Teacher” hour before

the first day of school, giving children a chance to meet their teachers, see their classrooms, and drop off their school supplies.

The cost for implementing the Preschool Transition to Kindergarten is estimated at \$400 for refreshments and school supplies. The money was apparently well-spent, as parents reported that the anxiety surrounding their child’s first day of kindergarten decreased because of the program. They also noted their children had a good night’s sleep and were ready for a positive start to their school year.



Walk a Mile with a Smile

*Roger Wolcott Early Childhood Center
Windsor, Connecticut*

Everyone knows that an apple a day keeps the doctor away – but can an apple tree in a school lobby make an entire student body healthier? The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) from Roger Wolcott Early Childhood Center thinks so. Last September, the ATP partnered with the physical education teacher and a new school principal to teach preschoolers and kindergartners the importance of healthy choices.

The program was launched in response to a health and wellness goal set by the ATP for the 07-08 school year. Teachers and parents decided that children at the school should learn the importance of making healthy snack and exercise choices. The ATP put their plan into action by implementing age-appropriate activities for young children to learn about health and wellness.

Teachers and ATP members kicked off the program by announcing their intention to construct a large paper orchard in the center's foyer and asking parents to help. Parents and teachers then gathered in the lobby, cutting plant parts and stapling them to bulletin boards. Each class had its own apple tree, complete with branches and leaves, but devoid of any fruit. Fliers went home to parents announcing the program and offering healthy snack ideas.

As the program officially began, students received a journal to take home and record two healthy activities per day, such as eating a healthy snack or participating in some kind of physical exercise. At the end of two weeks, students returned their journals to their teachers. Every student who successfully completed the program received a paper apple, with their name, to hang from their class tree.

Toward the end of the program, students participated in an interactive walk during their gym class. The PE teacher created the activity, complete with clues and rhymes to help the students move from one location to

another. As an added reward for the increasingly healthy youngsters, the Principal attended each PE class and led the interactive walk. At the end of the program, parents and school staff provided the children fresh cut apple slices, donated by a local orchard.

Approximately 250 students participated in the project, which boasted a 70% successful completion rate. Teachers measured success by tabulating the number of apples on the paper trees in the foyer.

The total cost for the entire project was only \$50. Funds came from the school's Family Resource Center budget. The ATP plans to repeat the event next year, pending approval at their end of year ATP meeting. School staff members envision only minor changes for next year's activity. They hope to advertise the event with a few more flyers, and to create an alternate indoor course for the interactive walk, in case of rain.



WELLNESS FAIR

EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION CENTER—HACKMANN ROAD ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

What could be more important to parents than ensuring the health and safety of their children? “Safety first” is the goal of the Early Childhood Family Education Center on Hackmann Road. Providing information at a Wellness Fair is one way that the school shows parents that they are not alone and that they have many community resources at hand.

Held every year since the building opened its doors, Wellness Fair has proven so popular that despite the main focus on pre-K families, a number of the Center’s distinguished alumni return with their parents and siblings year after year. The event is run as an open-house, giving parents the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the school building, network with each other, and explore the health and safety resources available to them. Fun activities and prizes keep the little ones busy and happy.

While browsing the booths set up throughout the building, families receive helpful information and participate in activities provided by 14 local agencies and community organizations. At the station run by the Lion’s Club, for example, parents could have their kids screened for amblyopia (lazy eye). The St. Louis Children’s Hospital ran a booth offering free bike helmet fittings and discounted helmets for purchase.

Volunteers from the Parents Actively Lending Support (PALS) organization made Child ID kits for participating families. Outside, the district’s bus company donated their services to give early childhood students a taste of what it’s like to ride on a school bus, shuttling families to the building from a nearby parking lot.

Other participating agencies included the County Fire Department, County Division of Environmental Services, County Parks and Recreation Office, City/County Library, Poison Control Information, Hair Care on Wheels (run by a traveling hair stylist to service special needs children), an area chiropractic clinic, and

the Parent Involvement Committee. The offerings from community resources ran the gamut from providing hearing and vision testing, blood pressure checks, and free samples from a local bread company, to face painting and Tae Kwon Do demonstrations. Mr. Jim the Banjo Guy and Clifford the Big Red Dog also made appearances. Each child got to win a free book purchased with points from the Scholastic Book Fair.

The \$100 cost was well worth the investment, as illustrated by one alumni family who remarked, “We come back every year. This is a great event for our family!”

Organizers steered away from vendors or anyone selling merchandise, making the Wellness Fair a strictly informational event focused on free, non-profit community resources. As many community organizations are booked up for their services (e.g., this was especially true for the Fire Department and for the hospital’s helmet fitting/distribution service), the organizers of Wellness Fair urge others who are planning similar events to contact their community agencies at least a year in advance. Wellness Fair organizers are taking their own advice and are already securing resources for next year’s fair.