



Practical Parent Education

# Connections

Fall 2009

## A look inside...

Reflections..... 1-2  
 7 Keys to Positive  
 and Effective  
 Communication.....3  
 Seen and Heard at the  
 2009 Conference.....4-5  
 Annual Award  
 Winners.....6-7  
 Introducing New PPE  
 Trainers.....8  
 PPE Training Schedule.....9

### Need to reach us?

Toll-free  
 877.340.6262  
 FAX  
 972.423.6565  
 E-Mail:

[ppe@practicalparent.org](mailto:ppe@practicalparent.org)

Website:

[www.practicalparent.org](http://www.practicalparent.org)



Practical Parent Education

Working Together to  
Strengthen  
Today's Families

## Reflections...

When the Nineteenth Annual PPE Conference ended this year, the PPE staff sat down to debrief and we were all struck by the number of stories that we had heard about how different people and different organizations are using the PPE curriculum and tools around the country. This article is a compilation of our reflections.

Those of you who have been through PPE training probably remember your trainer ending the last day by giving you a small squishy green frog and telling you the story behind it. You see, legend has it that if you put a live frog into a pot of cold water and turn on heat under it, the frog will become conditioned to the increasing heat and stay there until he boils to death. But, if you drop a live frog into a pot of already boiling water, he will jump out. The analogy is made to families with generations of family dysfunction who continue the unhealthy cycles because they are accustomed to the chaos and problems that result from them. Those issues destroy the chances that the children have to break out of their boiling pot of water and reach their full potential. They are unlike the families who face a first time serious parenting issue and go for help to fix it as quickly as possible. At the end of the PPE training, the trainer always says, "Now you have tools to share with families who are in hot water to empower them to jump out of the pot and into the pond."

There are a lot of inhabitants in that pond who are supporting families around the country. We were awed by the stories surrounding Mrs. Nora Garcia, parent liaison for Sunset High School in Dallas ISD, who was awarded the 2009 Linda Johnston Parent Educator of the Year Award because of her untiring work with parents in her community. Mrs. Garcia certainly understands that pond life is better for everyone when all of the inhabitants work together to provide support for their families. That is what she was thinking when she got the organization that refurbishes old bicycles to give them to Sunset HS students who could not get a bus pass to get to school. In applauding Mrs. Garcia for her part in getting Sunset High School's Texas Education Agency rating up to Recognized, Principal Tony Tovar understands that the job of raising emotionally healthy children who come to school ready to learn is a community effort that can bring about academic achievement.

**Only PPE subscribers are granted legal rights to reproduce articles and other information in this newsletter. Credit should be given at all times to PPE Connections, Practical Parent Education.**

---

Our hearts were warmed when we learned how Red Oak ISD is supporting families who suffer an unexpected loss and need their community to help them transition through their grief and go on with their lives. Their support group, CAGED, Caring About Grief Everybody Deals with, was awarded the 2009 Making A Difference for Families Award. This group rallies their entire community to provide for their families' emotional and economic needs after they have experienced a tragedy. Churches provide meals for meetings, school supplies for children and food care packages. People who have graduated from the support group come back to offer support and to give hope. Using PPE materials, parents, caregivers and children learn skills that will allow them to cope with their changes and rebuild healthy families who communicate effectively.

Dr. Steve Constantino's keynote address on Monday generated some great memories from our conference audience about folks who have done things outside their job descriptions that made families feel that their schools really value them. One mom remembered the custodian who was known and loved by everyone at her daughter's elementary school. He had been there much longer than any principal and he knew all of the families. If a new family walked in, he welcomed them and took them to the office – smiling and talking all the time about what a great school they were joining. He knew the children. When a child went home from school without his coat and the parent came back after school to retrieve it, this custodian always knew how to help the parent find the coat. He helped parents load and unload refreshments or decorations for school parties. Some parents described him as being “sort of a security officer” and more of a beloved grandfather than a custodian. The safety and well being of all of the families in his pond was important to him and he changed the way a lot of families felt about going into their students' schools.



PPE parent educators and trainers had a lot of stories to tell about schools where they really felt welcomed and some where they did not. There were stories about doors being locked when a parenting class was supposed to start, office personnel being grumpy and unwelcoming, air conditioning and heating not being available and parking lots that were obstacle courses. But we also heard about the school that stuck large colorful cut out footprints leading from the front door, down the hall and into the library where the parenting class was going to be so that everyone knew where to go. And we heard about the middle school principal who called three families every Wednesday night to tell them about something good that he had observed about their student that week.

One of the best stories was shared by Carol Lane, PPE's Director of Professional Development who goes into many schools all over the country all of the time. She had just been to a large high school that had a high rate of poverty to do three days of training for seventeen people. As she walked up to the building the first day, she was trying to juggle her boxes of materials and to figure out which door was the main entrance when a young man asked if he could help her. Not only did he hold the door and help her with her things without being asked, this student took her to the main office where she was to check in and get further directions. During the three days that she was there, the students all made her feel welcome. They smiled and spoke to her and to other adults in the halls. They were genuinely comfortable sharing their “hall space” with adults and providing help whenever they could. That attitude made the adults comfortable being there. This kind of school culture is not the result of one person who is following his or her job description during school hours, but it is the result of everyone sharing a belief that all families in our pond make a difference.

After sharing our reflections for a while, we knew that the time had come for us to look forward again and begin planning for our next year. The trainers began checking their schedules and training supplies, the sales associates started making their telephone calls, Ellen Rusch ordered some more squishy green frogs so that we can continue to empower families to jump out of their hot water, and we all began thinking about a theme for the Twentieth Annual PPE Parent Educator Conference.

# 7 KEYS TO POSITIVE AND EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

~Mike Brock, LPC

What we've got here is a failure to communicate," famously declared the prison warden in the Paul Newman classic, *Cool Hand Luke*. Yet what the warden was blithely unaware of is that we never fail to communicate. Everything we say or don't say communicates. What we've got here is not so much a failure to communicate as it is a disconnect between the words that are spoken (a purported desire to improve communication) and what is being experienced by the listeners (control and brutality).

Effective and positive communication is perhaps our greatest human challenge. We communicate but are not heard . . . or our words alienate and we are tuned out. To address the frustrations that accompany poor communication, I offer the following seven suggestions:

1. Reach out and touch someone. Communication is only 85-90% verbal. So much more of what communicates is eye contact, touch, tone, physical positioning, whether we are smiling, frowning, or staring blankly, and so on. Be aware of how your body communicates.
2. Listen . . . just listen. Have you ever shared a problem or concern with a friend only to have that friend interrupt you half way through with a solution? Did you feel somewhat discounted as a result? It's been said that we Americans' weakest communication skill is listening. Yet that's exactly what most of us want when we're sharing—just to be listened to. Give that important person in your life the gift of an attentive ear.
3. Create routines that work for you. Routines—in the home, on the job, in the classroom—communicate what's important to us and create the framework within which effective communication can take place. Family routines around dinner time and bedtime communicate the importance of family belonging and significance. Routines on the job such as regularly scheduled meetings and daily informational memos help all employees feel connected to the organization. Create routines that effectively communicate what's important to you.
4. Beware the false god technology. Technology is morally neutral; it's appropriateness is all in how it is used. An email to employees reminding them of an upcoming meeting is technology used effectively and appropriately. One mailed to an employee to inform of his or her pending termination is technology used inappropriately . . . and with gross insensitivity. Be sure the medium of communication you choose—email, texting, phone, hand-written note, one-on-one conversation, etc.—is appropriate to the message.
5. Know your mission and make sure everyone else does. In *The Path*, Laurie Beth Jones states that a good mission statement should be one sentence long, easily understood by a 12-year-old, and able to be recited at gunpoint by everyone in the organization. Does your mission communicate who you are and what you do, simply and without unnecessary verbiage?
6. Be the change you want to see. On the job, in the home, in the classroom, leaders communicate best by being the person they want everyone else to be. In common words, walk the talk.
7. Give yourself sacred time and space. Take care of yourself—physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, relationally, recreationally, and spiritually. When we feel healthy and whole we communicate out of that health and wholeness. Be healthy, be whole—and you will communicate out of your true self.



Mike Brock is a licensed professional counselor in private practice working with adults and adolescents (individuals, couples, and families) and counselor for the students at the University of Dallas. His new book, *Parenting through the School Years . . . and Beyond!* is available through the author or at amazon.com. Mike can be contacted at [mike@mikebrock.org](mailto:mike@mikebrock.org), or [www.mikebrock.org](http://www.mikebrock.org).

# Seen and Heard at the 2009 PPE Conference!

Dr. Steve Constantino leaves the audience wanting more as they line up for autographed copies of his books!



Dr. Ann Corwin wows the crowd with her keynote presentation!



*Both (keynote speakers) were dynamic speakers. They appeared to be loving what they do. These sessions were motivating to me.*



Carol Lane, PPE Director of Professional Development, Lucy Long, PPE Director of Operations and Ellen Rusch, PPE Director of Subscriber Services enjoy meeting conference attendees at the registration desk.



Attendees enjoyed networking opportunities!

*I learned things I didn't know...glad I came!  
This was my first conference and I loved it!  
Keynoters were great! Very good info!*

*Dr. Constantino "motivated me into a greater level of action"*



Dallas ISD Parent Educators enjoy themselves



Popular workshop presenters  
Cynthia Small and  
Cynthia Garrison



A conference workshop in session



Master of Cermonies Carolyn Raiser presides over a keynote luncheon



Conference sponsor Region X Educational Service Center staff members take a break between sessions

*Fabulous conference! Speakers and presenters were well prepared and lively, a wonderful combination!*

# **2009 MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR FAMILIES AWARD RED OAK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT RED OAK, TEXAS**



**Cindy Dooly, Co-Director of Red Oak ISD Practical Parent Education Program and  
Dr. Lucy Long, PPE Director of Operations**

Using the Practical Parent Education curriculum and *Parenting Quick Tips*, Red Oak ISD started the C.A.G.E.D. program in their community in the fall of 2008. C.A.G.E.D. stands for Caring About Grief Everyone Deals with and it deals with the needs of families who have suffered the loss of a loved one. Both emotional and economical needs are met through the program. Partnering with local church groups and community organizations, meals are served to grieving families, school supplies and food packages are provided, and emotional support is given through bi-weekly classes that help build grief survival skills. The success of the program is measured in many ways, especially by noting the progress parents and students make as they proceed through the series of classes. After a time, tears turn to laughter and their neediness turns to helpfulness to the new members. When individual goals are met, graduation celebrations for the family take place. This allows everyone in the C.A.G.E.D. group to realize there is truly a light at the end of the long, dark tunnel of grief.

Practical Parent Education congratulates the Red Oak ISD for their outstanding dedication to the families of their community!

**2009 LINDA JOHNSTON  
PARENT EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR  
NORA GARCIA,  
DALLAS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**



**Nora Garcia accepts PPE's Linda Johnston Parent Educator of the Year Award from PPE's Director of Operations, Dr. Lucy Long as her Principal Tony Tovar is on hand to congratulate her.**

**E**ach year, the Parent Educator of the Year is chosen from nominees from across the country who use Practical Parent Education curricula and materials in their family life programs to improve the lives of children in their communities. In congratulating her on her award, Sunset High School principal Tony Tovar acknowledged Mrs. Garcia's contributions to the improved academic accomplishments of the students in their school which resulted in Sunset High School receiving the Recognized Rating from the Texas Education Agency.

According to the Award Application, Mrs. Garcia is a walking, talking commercial for her school throughout her community. She has lived in the Oak Cliff area for eighteen years and says, "I love this neighborhood. Whenever I see a parent, I approach them, introduce myself and tell them what Sunset has to offer." Sunset High School's PTA meetings regularly have over 100 parents at them.

Mrs. Garcia teaches PPE parenting skills classes and computer classes to parents five nights a week. She also stresses community service to the parents and students and helps them find ways to give back to their community.

She is frequently called a Problem Solver. Recently she noticed that some of her students could not get DART bus passes so she went to her community, found a group that was refurbishing old bikes and persuaded them to give her the old bikes for her students. Now the students have transportation to school. This is just one of the many collaborations that she has facilitated within the community.

Practical Parent Education congratulates Nora Garcia for her dedication to her community!

Thanks to the growth Practical Parent Education has enjoyed this past year, we have added new national trainers to our staff. Meet the two newest...



## Brenda Bird

If you have ever attended the PPE conference, you have probably had the pleasure of attending one of Brenda's dynamic workshops. Her infectious personality lends itself perfectly to training new parent educators and her personal experience in the field gives her great insight about working with families.

Brenda is a Baylor graduate, Pastor's wife and mother of three sons. She taught Middle School and High School for 9 years before getting into the field of Parent Education in 1993 when she became the Lead Parent Educator for the Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD. For 9 years she was responsible for coordinating parent engagement efforts and training for this large, very diverse suburban school district. Along with her PPE duties, she is a motivational trainer providing workshops, keynotes and seminars on a variety of topics. Her programs are filled with energy, enthusiasm, and humor, as well as practical tools and techniques. She is excitedly expecting her first grandchild next summer.

## Adina Rich

Adina's experience as a private educational consultant combined with her enthusiasm for working with parents made her a great choice for joining the Practical Parent Education team. Adina has been in the field of education for over 15 years. She holds a B.A. in English and Education, and obtained her first master's in Educational Leadership, Reading, and Bilingual/ESL Education. She obtained her second master's in the area of Counseling/Psychology. She is also a certified counselor and Special Education counselor who has had the privilege of working with all levels of students from Pre-School to College Age. She is endorsed by the state of Texas, has passed a rigorous state registry exam, and obtained national certification in the area of Educational Diagnostics. Mrs. Rich is also a fluent Spanish speaker who has extensive experience in cross cultural evaluations.

Adina spent many years as a bilingual general and special education teacher. She was a professional development trainer, mentor, and master teacher. As a counselor, she served as an At-Risk coordinator, TAKS coordinator, and led guidance classes and facilitated small group sessions for children in a variety of situations and settings. She worked with students with behavior and emotional problems which led to her interest in diagnostics. As a school district diagnostician, Adina worked with second language learners, students on the Autism spectrum, learners with ADHD, and even had the opportunity to test students for the district's school for the gifted learners. She has served as a Pre-school evaluator, Autism team evaluator, and district bilingual evaluator.





## 2010 Initial Parent Educator Training Dates

**January 13-15, 2010 - Garland, Texas**

**February 9-11, 2010 - Garland, Texas**

**March 10-12, 2010 - Garland, Texas**

**April 14-16, 2010 - Garland, Texas**

**May 5-7, 2010 - Garland, Texas**

**June 9-11, 2010 - Garland, Texas**

Due to increased registration at our local trainings, we have moved the training location to a hotel facility in Garland, Texas which is approximately 10 miles from our home office. Please email [ppe@practicalparent.org](mailto:ppe@practicalparent.org) for hotel registration information.

Training registration forms available at [www.practicalparent.org](http://www.practicalparent.org)  
To schedule a training in your area,  
please call 877.340.6262

