

Arkansas School-Age "LINKS"

November/December 2007

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ASU Childhood
Services

Jo Ann Nalley
Director

PO Box 808
State University,
AR 72467
870-972-3055
1-888-429-1585

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was compiled
and formatted by
ASU Childhood
Services

Feeding Bodies Like Minds

David L. Katz, MD, MPH, FACPM, FACP
Director, Prevention Research Center
Yale University School of Medicine
www.davidkatzmd.com



Around the country, more and more is being done to improve nutrition standards in schools. But we clearly still have a long way to go. There are questionable choices in most cafeterias, and in the vending machines that still reside in most corridors.

And there is even overt resistance to improving school food. It comes at times from school officials, and at times from parents, who feel that we "nutrition police" should just mind our own business. Their kids deserve choices!

OK. I invoke the time-honored adage: if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.

Let's not ban junk food or soda from schools. Let's avoid heavy-handed state policies. Let's rely instead on the responsible parenting the reform opponents invoke to make sure our kids eat well while surrounded by chips, fries, and sodas.

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But let's be consistent. As I acknowledge my defeat, that's all I'm asking. If we're into parental responsibility for a penny, let's be into it for a pound.

Let's treat food, and food for thought, the same way. Let us invoke similar policies to govern the feeding of growing bodies, and developing minds.

Let's make school, not just school food, a matter of personal choice, and responsibility.

One would be hard pressed to find a public school district anywhere in the country not struggling to make ends meet. So one could argue that all of public education is an 'under-', if not quite 'un-', funded mandate. On behalf of superintendents everywhere, I protest.

School should be a matter of personal responsibility, not a mandate- and certainly not a mandate imposed without adequate funding. Public education should not be required.

After all, if parental responsibility is supposed to be the final arbiter of what kids put in their mouths, should it play a lesser role for what kids put in their brains? Parents should be responsible for decisions about school attendance.

Now, of course, just as every responsible parent is expected to encourage healthful eating, so, too, would responsible parents be expected to encourage school. And I bet they would.

But again, I want consistency- nothing less, nothing more. So our kids should know their options. Since we advocate for good nutrition, but then surround kids with enticing alternatives, I think it would only be fair to provide a comparably tantalizing array of alternatives to school attendance.

The scene I envision is this. Each morning, conscientious moms and dads around the country would wake their kids and encourage them to go to school. Really responsible parents might even ensure that their children pack books, have a good breakfast, and get out the door on time.

But once outside, on their own, the kids

should encounter alternative ways to feed their curiosities, just as they encounter alternative ways to feed their appetites in the corridors and cafeterias of most schools around the country. Perhaps parked outside their home would be one bus to the circus, one to the water park, one to the zoo, one to a carnival, yet another to the mall, perhaps one to the ski slopes in winter and one to the beach on warm days in spring. Oh, and one to school, too.

Naturally, none of the attractive options would be intended to replace school on a regular basis. In fact, each responsible vendor of daily diversions might go so far as to post a sign over the door of their bus: "this activity is fine on occasion, and can be part of a complete and healthy lifestyle." No one would be saying kids should go to the circus instead of school every day.

We can all agree that, in general, school is the best option for our kids. But the occasional trip to the circus never hurt anybody, did it? And besides, we're not in the business of imposing the best option, are we? We can offer, even recommend, but we believe parents and kids should decide.

If you are a parent- as I am- perhaps you don't much like my idea of letting your child's education come down to a daily choice between school and more enticing alternatives. But that is exactly what we would do if we treated what we feed the minds of our children and what we feed their bodies the same way.



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Apparently, we deem it reasonable that healthy food for thought should be mandatory, while healthy food for the body should be a matter of personal responsibility. Yet an overwhelming body of medical science, not to mention the meanest application of common sense, indicates that a healthy mind and healthy body are interdependent.

We have evidence that this relationship is expressed in terms of school performance. A substantial number of articles in the peer-reviewed medical literature indicate that children eating relatively wholesome foods tend to have fewer behavioral problems than those eating a cornucopia of highly processed junk. And, by the way, researchers at San Diego State University have shown that academic performance tends to improve with physical activity during the school day. Somewhere along the line, we all learned that the shin bone is connected to the ankle bone. The same relationship holds between the bodies and heads of our kids, but the inconsistent way we feed their development would suggest otherwise. Whether we favor personal or public responsibility for the nurturing of our children, we have little rationale for choosing one approach for above, and another for below, the neck. Whichever way your ideology takes you, when you chew on inconsistency like this, it should stick in your craw.

Dr. Katz has developed a nutrition education program (Nutrition Detectives) and a physical activity program (ABC for Fitness) for elementary schools. Both programs are very streamlined and designed to fit into the school day without interfering with other school obligations; in fact, ABC for Fitness is actually designed to INCREASE teaching time! Both programs are available for free. See:

<http://www.davidkatzmd.com/nutritiondetectives.aspx>

<http://www.davidkatzmd.com/abcforfitness.aspx>



The United States is facing a potentially devastating public health crisis of overweight and obesity, and the epidemic is reaching dangerous levels among our children and youth. According to the latest data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys (2003-4), 12.6 million children ages 2-19 or 17.1 percent are overweight. An additional 16.5 percent are considered at risk of becoming overweight.

In response, four of the National Institutes of Health have created We Can!, a national education program designed for parents and caregivers to help children 8-13 years old stay at a healthy weight through improving food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time. It also offers resources to implement programs. Many useful tip sheets on exercise, nutrition, and more available to download at no charge.

To learn more about this program and how you could go about utilizing it with the families at your program visit their website at:

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/index.htm>

Consider using this program as a great foundation for year-long, theme based family nights!

Turning “Problem” Staff into Great Staff

by Michael Morrow

Finding and keeping qualified staff in after-school programs is always challenging, which makes it all the more difficult when directors have to fire staff for performance or attitude problems. So we constantly seek ways to work with “difficult” staff.

A recent SAC-L listserv posting asked for help in ways to reprimand staff who are not meeting expectations. As someone who has been a reluctant manager—because I have a very difficult time reprimanding staff—I could relate to the question.

So I put on my presenter hat and pulled out information from my basic “working with children” workshop, as well as my “Bosses from Heaven, Bosses from Hell” workshop, and provided some thoughts on working with difficult staff.

Interestingly, reprimanding staff can be a lot like doing it with children. First, I don’t like the term “reprimand.” That’s really negative, kind of like when your puppy pees on the carpet and you do the “BAD DOG!!” thing. What might be preferable? How about “correcting” or “shaping” or “mentoring”?



It is all about relationships. The more they like, trust and respect you, the easier it’ll be to do the “tough stuff.”

Here are my Top 10 Principles for working with staff:

1. **Catch it early:** If you let it slide the first time, the person will expect you to continue to let it slide.
2. **Do it privately:** Embarrassing people in front of others is relationship suicide. Avoid it.
3. **Make sure the person understands** what they did, or did not do, and is clear about their responsibility. To do that you *ask* before you tell: “Do you understand what time you’re supposed to arrive?” “Do you know why it is important to be here at that time?”
4. **Get them to commit:** “Can you be on time in the future?”
5. **Ask how you can assist:** “What can I do to help you be on time?”
6. **Make sure they know the consequences** of not being able to keep their word (see #4).
7. **Document everything!** You might even consider a written contract, which the employee signs (see #4), and goes into their file.
8. **Have a very clearly defined process**, stated in your staff handbook, for dealing with issues like this.
9. **Don’t take it personally:** This one is tough for many of us because we’re “people oriented,” and don’t like “disciplining” people. But it is your job—and why you make the big bucks (yeah, right!).
10. Most important: **When the staffer does it right—notice it!** Improving behavior—as we know from working with kids—is a “baby steps” process. Notice and reward each step, no matter how small.

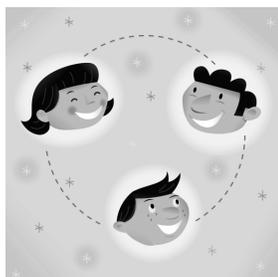
This last one is vital. Whether it is kids or adults, we tend to spend far more time trying to change negative behavior than we do reinforcing positive behavior. Turn that around. Celebrate with your staff. Thank them often—and in a variety of ways. Never forget a birthday. Surprise them with a card “just because.” Throw a party. Bring pizza to a staff meeting.

In our field we don't have many carrots we can dangle in front of people. If they don't like how the job is going, they can usually walk and make as much—or more—doing something else. So it is *much* more effective to emphasize the positive in order to minimize the negative. It is all about relationships. The more they like, trust and respect you, the easier it'll be to do the “tough stuff.”

Great bosses almost invariably create, and inspire, great staff. For more resources I highly recommend Brinkman and Kirschner's *Dealing with People You Can't Stand* and Carson and Carson's *Defective Bosses*. And Roger Anderson's *100 Tips for Managers* (Oct 1995 Rotarian) has been a super resource for me, from #1: Spend at least 15 minutes a day handwriting thank-you notes; to #49: Be a positive role model; to #73: Don't play favorites; to #100: Accept that some days you're the pigeon, some days you're the statue.

Celebrate the pigeon days, and remember that being a great boss—and minimizing the statue days—takes lots of knowledge, experience, and hard work. Good luck!

Michael Morrow is an after-school program director, consultant and trainer in Portland OR



7 Characteristics of a Successful After-School Group

*The previous article focused on how to deal effectively with staff when there are behavior or attitude issues. To carry on this theme, we've excerpted below a portion of the book **Bringing Yourself to Work: A Guide for Successful Staff Development in After-School Programs** by **Michelle Seligson and Patricia Stahl**. The book's driving theme is the importance of relationships in after-school programs and how developing strong group dynamics among staff will circumvent the problems Mike Morrow addresses in his article. The authors' premise is that the most successful after-school programs have a staff in place who are self-aware as individuals and understand the impact they have on the group (both other staff and the children) and the impact that group has on them. Through their research and experience in this area, the authors have identified seven key characteristics of “successful, emotionally intelligent after-school environments.”*

Emotional Safety

These after-school programs provide honest, respectful, and emotionally safe environments where staff members look out for your well-being. In an environment like this, you could tell a coworker you're having a bad day and expect support and understanding, not repercussions. Gossiping and back-stabbing are not acceptable group norms. People feel comfortable asking for help when they need it. In a safe environment, everyone can be himself or herself because there are genuine feelings of acceptance and support among the group members.

Caring

People are friendly and social in these groups. In a caring environment, there is humor and a genuine interest in other people's lives. In a caring environment, members of the group realize they're working as a team. When one of its members wants to share an exciting story or express frustration or sadness, other members of the group are there to listen. Why? Because

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they realize they may need similar support in the future and because, ultimately, caring about each other makes their group stronger.

Sensitivity

Successful after-school programs often have a "listening environment," where people's suggestions, concerns, fears, and preferences are heard and respected. If someone has a problem, people take it seriously. They listen, they take responsibility for any role they play in the program and they find ways to make things better. In a sensitive environment, people are empathetic. If someone is tired or stressed out, they try to imagine how they would feel and act accordingly. They might give the other person a break from what he or she is doing or offer some other show of support.

Opportunities

A healthy after-school environment offers you the opportunity to be creative, and to learn more about yourself, your work, other people, and the world around you. It's an environment that supports each person's abilities and offers guidance when indicated. People aren't left to succeed or fail on their own. In an environment like this, there are opportunities for people to grow and change.

Leadership

In these organizations, everyone in the center feels comfortable assuming a leadership role. They know that a leader isn't someone in an ivory tower who hands down decisions from above. Members of these groups realize that a leader is anyone who helps strengthen relationships within the group or who moves the group toward its goals. Members of these groups care about staff morale and look for ways to improve it.

Personal Responsibility

A healthy after-school program promotes the responsibility of its members to shape their experience within their group. Members don't rely on other people to solve problems within the group; instead they look at what they can do to make changes and improve things. Rather than pointing fingers or looking for a scapegoat, members of these groups take responsibility for their own behavior.

Vision

A functional group also has a very clear vision of what they want to do and how they want to behave. Do they want to endorse yelling at meetings or gossiping behind people's backs, or do they want to promote calm, friendly meetings and honest, forthright discussions? A group with vision also passionately moves toward the goal of establishing the best possible environment for children and staff. They ask themselves: How can we prepare kids to be caring participants in the world? How can we give them the tools they'll need to be happy, productive citizens in the community? In other words, they ask if they're doing everything they can to help children and staff grow and develop as human beings.

To find out more about creating a staff that embodies the characteristics just listed, and other ways to improve attitudes and create a climate of cooperation and support, see Seligson's and Stahl's book Bringing Yourself to Work: A Guide to Successful Staff development in After-School Programs, available from School-Age NOTES for \$19.95, or \$16.95 for newsletter subscribers plus \$4.95 shipping and handling.

Lights on Afterschool 2007 National Update

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A Million Turn the Lights on Afterschool

From the Empire State Building in New York to the Space Needle in Seattle, the lights were on in big cities and rural townships last week as communities across the country joined the eighth annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the only nationwide rally for afterschool programs. Students, parents, teachers, policy makers, and business and community leaders participated in more than 7,500 events around the nation and at U.S. military bases around the world.

"More than 14 million children have nowhere to go after school, but afterschool programs make a big difference...They build communities and help train the workforce of the future. Without enough funding for afterschool programs, we all lose," said actress and *Lights On Afterschool* national spokesperson Rhea Perlman.

The thousands of *Lights On Afterschool* events were as diverse as the communities that hosted them. In Colorado Springs, Colorado, students celebrated literacy with Lights On Rural Afterschool. Students joined in a dictionary scavenger hunt and then became key pieces of a life-size scrabble game.

In New York City, Mayor Michael Bloomberg used *Lights On Afterschool* to announce new funding for afterschool through the Out-of-School-Time (OST) initiative. The funds will provide 14,000 additional slots for youth in 112 new programs.

In Atlanta, Georgia, students were treated to a special performance by Grammy Award winning singer-songwriter Johnta Austin. Record producer, rapper and Georgia Music Hall of Fame Inductee Jermaine Dupree introduced Austin. Mayor Shirley Franklin and community and business leaders participated in the event, which included student performances of drumming, step and jazz.

In Cincinnati, Ohio, some 800 students attended a region-wide event at the Music Hall downtown featuring comedian and television personality Wayne Brady. He told the crowd that, as a child, he did not have an afterschool program, joking that his mother was his afterschool program and she never let him out of the house. Also at the event, Mayor Mark Mallory presented a *Lights On Afterschool* Proclamation, and students participated in a bicycle give away, resource fair, face painting, MadCap puppets, double-dutch, and more.

Highlights

Also this year, for the first time ever, the Empire State Building in New York City was lit with yellow lights the evening of October 18 in honor of *Lights On Afterschool*, and the PECO Tower in Center City, Philadelphia displayed a special message. State first ladies also participated in Lights On Afterschool events in Maine, Montana and Ohio. All 50 governors issued proclamations for *Lights On Afterschool* this year. Businesses - from T-Mobile USA to Feit Electric to Torani to JCPenney - stepped up to sponsor and support events.

Congressional Support

On the federal front, the Senate passed a resolution declaring October 18 "*Lights On Afterschool* Day." It highlights the role that afterschool programs play in providing safe places for children after school. Senators Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and John Ensign (R-NV) introduced the resolution. In the House of Representatives, Representatives Nita Lowey (D-NY) and Ralph Regula (R-OH) introduced a similar measure. *Lights On Afterschool* 2007 also marked the kick-off of a year-long celebration of the 10th anniversary of 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool programs. *Lights On Afterschool* is organized by the Afterschool Alliance. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is National Chair, a position he has held since 2001.

Websites to CHECK OUT

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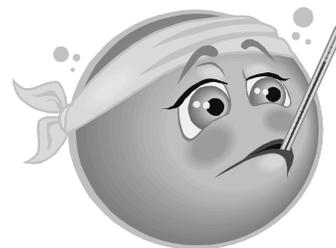
AfterSchoolPRO.net

Designed to serve as an easy-to-access comprehensive resource for the afterschool professional, this new website has the potential to be a great “one-stop shopping” place for great information as it relates to after school programming. This site can work for you by accumulating, consolidating, listing, linking, and sorting the resources and information that matters most to you. Check them out at www.afterschoolpro.net

The Stop Bullying Now! Campaign Resource Kit includes information for children, parents and families, directors and staff. The kit, available free of charge, includes a CD-ROM and facts sheets on the ***Take a Stand. Lend a Hand. Stop Bullying Now! Campaign***. Fact sheets cover topics such as the characteristics of children who bully, risk factors, community involvement and prevention, development of policies to prevent bullying, intervention, State laws, long-term impact, and methods of providing support to children who are bullied. The kit can be ordered by calling 1-888-ASK-HRSA or can be ordered online via the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website at

www.kidnetic.com

Kidnetic.com, the Kidnetic.com Leader’s Guide, and the Kidnetic.com Real-Life Guide for Parents together comprise an integrated educational resource that is a great resource for the after school provider. The Web site is designed for kids aged 9-12 and their families, the Leader’s Guide is a lesson-based curriculum guide for health professionals and educators to use when working with patients and students, and the Parents’ Guide provides quick and easy-to-use information just for parents. All components of Kidnetic.com promote healthy eating and active living in a way that is fun and relevant. Check out the recipe section for some great snack options too! The Kidnetic.com resources are aimed at inspiring kids and their families to move toward healthier lifestyles. Learn more about Kidnetic.com resources and download copies of the Leader’s Guide and Real-Life Guide for Parents at <http://www.ific.org/kidnetic>.



The FLU season is upon us!

Be prepared to help combat the flu by checking out The American Academy of Pediatrics handout, [Preventing the Flu in 2007-2008: Strategies and Resources for Child Care Providers and Out-of-Home Caregivers of Children](http://www.healthychildcare.org/) It is now available at: <http://www.healthychildcare.org/>. You may e-mail questions or relevant resources to childcare@aap.org. This is a great resource to have in your family resource area and to hand out to staff so that we can all do our part to stay safe and healthy.

AOSN Afterschool Conference: A SUCCESS!!!

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On Friday and Saturday, September 14th-15th, various afterschool programming stakeholders from around the state met in Little Rock to discuss topics relative to creating quality out of school time programs in Arkansas. Over 100 participants were in attendance to include providers, representatives for the Department of Education, advocacy groups, higher education, municipal government, state government, the business community, youth development agencies like 4-H, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc. and many more.

The main theme of the conference was on a relatively new concept that looks to redefine the way that children learn. Known as "A New Day for Learning", this concept looks to organize a youth's day more efficiently and look to redesign it in a way that the youth can be provided with multiple ways to learn and achieve high standards that extend beyond the final bell of the school day. The purpose of this conference was to help those involved in working with youth (regardless in what type of capacity) to catalyze conversations, raise awareness, and begin looking at what next steps need to be taken to create seamless whole "new learning days" for youth in Arkansas.

The conference was organized by the Arkansas Out of School Network which serves as a organization invested in the creation of safe, healthy, and enriching experiences for Arkansas youth during out of school times. The conference was also structured in a manner to consist of three different tracks that each correspond to the various goals of the network:

- partnerships that support policy development,
- the development and growth of statewide policies that secure new resources that are needed to sustain new and existing after school programs, and
- supporting systems to ensure that programs are of high quality.

Highlights of the conference sessions included sessions that focused on partnerships

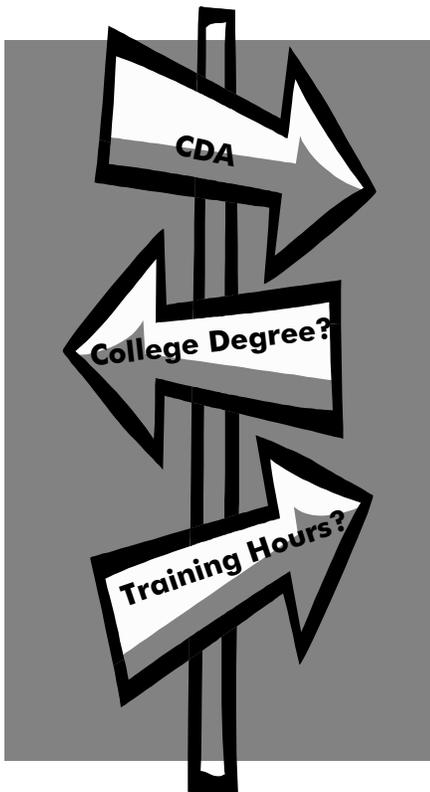
and the impact that they have on policy development and it included panel presentations by various entities already working in partnership with other invested stakeholders to create sustainable afterschool systems in their communities. Other sessions looked at the challenges and opportunities around developing a state afterschool policy agenda and the ways that an afterschool policy agenda can be used to support broader policy goals such as those focused on economic development. Emphasis was also placed on quality programming and various programs had the opportunity to share some of the "best practices" they utilize.

On addition to the various break sessions, two special presentation opportunities were held during the conference. On Friday, Dan Princiotta with the National Governors Association, explored the importance of the national movement surrounding afterschool and extra learning opportunities and the role that NGA and other states play in making this a top priority. On Saturday, Kareem Moody, Program Director with P.A.R.K. (Positive Atmosphere Reaches Kids) talked about his book **Raise Them Up: The Real Deal on Reaching Unreachable Kids**, which uses compelling and inspirational stories to show parents and caregivers how to positively redirect the lives of troubled adolescents.

In conclusion, this conference provided individuals the opportunity to join with other and discuss the recent accomplishments, challenges, and opportunities affecting afterschool programs in Arkansas. The dialogue will continue to occur as even more exciting developments affecting afterschool programs are sure to unfold in the upcoming months.

To learn more about AOSN visit their website at www.aosn.org or contact Paul Kelly at (501) 371-9678 or at pkelly@aradvocates.org.

To learn more about "A New Day for Learning" visit the Edutopia website at <http://www.edutopia.org/new-day-for-learning>



Which direction are you heading on your professional journey in the school age profession?



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professionalregistry.ate.edu**

Congratulations to the Arkansas Out of School Network for being selected to receive technical assistance and a \$10,000 grant from the National Governors

Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) to hold a Governor's Summit on Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELOs) such as after-school, summer learning, and extended day programs.



NGA Center for
BEST PRACTICES

Arkansas has demonstrated a strong comprehensive plan to advance the state ELO policy agenda, engage new leaders and partners in statewide efforts, and focus attention on how ELOs can support state efforts in education and other policy areas.

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The third week in November marks “**Book Week**”, but why not make every week book week and promote literacy in your program. Below are some great resources and activity ideas to check out in order to keep the pages turning in your program throughout the year!

Book Buffet

If you are not sure where to start to look for good books, a great resource is the Database of Award-Winning Children’s Literature at <http://www.dawcl.com/>. Regardless of what topic you are discussing, you can search the database of children’s books by one of many different categories. Not sure what types of books the children in your program like? Why not go to the library, grab some books and host a “Book Buffet”. Have enough books available for each child in your program and set a timer for 8 minutes. Each child will then have this time to sample the book. At the conclusion of the 8 minutes, the children will be offered another book to sample. Do this a couple of times and then have kids report back on some of the excerpts they read and discuss as a group what types of themes they liked sampling best. Mystery? Science Fiction? Autobiographies? This is a great activity to consider doing in order to stock your shelves with good books that kids will like to read during the upcoming winter break. Winter break full days provides youth the ideal time to relax and spend time kicking back and reading a book!



Poetry Slam

Help kids reinforce their creative thinking and speaking skills by having them create their own poetry from words cut from the newspaper. To help this activity run smoothly, staff are encouraged to cut out various words from the newspaper prior to conducting this activity and have them ready for the children to choose from. Start by first reading some good examples of poetry to the children to spark their interest in creating their own poems. A good book of poetry to try out is Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein. Children may also be encouraged to bring in some of their favorite published poems to share. Sharing good examples of poetry helps to get the children excited about sharing their own works. Children then begin to choose words for those cut out from the newspaper to serve as the theme of their own poems. Whether you introduce children to particular types of poems such as haikus or you allow them to create on their own, encourage children to share their works with others and possibly display for everyone to see.

Looking for a design template to introduce poetry writing to children? Try this template:

“Getting to Know You” Poem

Line 1: First name

Line 2: 4 Descriptive words

Line 3: Relationship to (sister, brother, mother, uncle, etc.)

Line 4: Lover of (three things)

Line 5: Who feels (three feelings) ... when ...

Line 6: Who fears (three things)

Line 7: Who would like to (three things)

Line 8: Resident of (location)

Line 9: Last name

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Poetry sample:

Jennifer

Happy, quiet, curly hair, lots of freckles,
Sister of Rob

Lover of my dog, my family, dolls,
Who feels shy when meeting new people,
happy when home with family, exhilarated when playing

Who fears swimming alone, snakes,
stitches,

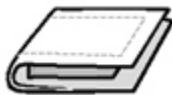
Who would like to meet the President,
sing the National Anthem at a baseball game,
and appear on a game show

Resident of Little Rock, Arkansas
Smith.

Book Covering Party

Have some old books that could use a face lift? Try this activity provided by Family Fun magazine to help give old books a new look to be proud of!

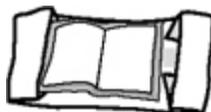
1. Fold paper in half around a closed book. Crease the paper sharply around all edges of the book.



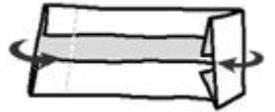
2. Remove the book and trim the paper leaving a 2-3 inch margin around the creased rectangle. It works best to measure and mark the margins with a ruler and pencil before you cut.



3. Fold in the top and bottom edges of the paper along the lengthwise crease lines. The fold in the right and left edges of the paper along the side crease lines.



4. Slide the front cover of the book into the folded "sleeve" along the left edge of the paper cover. Repeat with back cover and right side.



Instead of using regular paper, consider using fabric, wrapping paper, old maps, old movie posters (can get these from video rental stores), comics, butcher paper, etc.

Have a D.E.A.R. Day

Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R) during a portion of your day and have the children bring their favorite books from home along with a favorite pillow, stuffed animal, blanket, etc. to program. Then allow time for children to do silent reading, reading with buddies, reading to younger children, and listening to younger children read.

Host a Book Swap

With the holidays just around the corner, no time is a better time for children to trade the gently used books they have already read for gently used books from other children. This activity can be incorporated into a great family night activity as well by encouraging adults to bring books too for trading. All books not traded can be donated to a local children's hospital, doctor's office, etc.

