



School-Age NOTES



Resources for AfterSchool Professionals

School-Age NOTES
April 2009
Volume XXIX
Issue #8

Inside This Issue

Financial literacy is a crucial tool for children, youths 3

Also:

2008 AfterSchool Professional Network Quest for Excellence Award winner named 1

Emotional intelligence helps children learn coping skills 2

May Activities 4

May Calendar 5

Encourage families to start a nature club 8

Passion for job in evidence every day

Site director named 2008 Quest for Excellence winner

By Erika Konowalow

Jean Phillips spends her days working with children at an after-school program in Overland Park, Kan. The children, however, spend their days eating the foods of the world, exploring cultures of other countries and embracing the diversity around them.

A native of Jamaica, Phillips loves introducing the children in her program to different foods, different cultures and a lot of fun at the Y's Kids Club at Overland Trail Elementary. Her passion for teaching prompted Lisa Muntz to nominate Phillips for the 2008 AfterSchool Professional Network Quest for Excellence Award.

Among 80 site directors, the decision to nominate Phillips was unanimous, said Muntz, senior vice president for the YMCA of Greater Kansas City School-Age Services. "She's just a little fireball, which is great when you're working with 40 or 50 kids every day."

Phillips was selected as the winner from 37 nominations and of those, there were many excellent candidates, said Kathleen Hermes, president of the School-Age NOTES Foundation, which created the Quest for Excellence award in 2005.

In the previous three years, Hermes said, there has been one nominee who stood out, but this year, many candidates were highlighted by selection committee members. "Any of those nominees would have been a fine choice," she said.

The award honors frontline staff members who work directly with children daily. More important, Hermes said, is that the award isn't meant to reward a lifetime of working in the field but to recognize one person who "reflects the type of after-school professional that everyone can be."

"She really exemplifies a philosophy of interacting with children that is exemplary," Hermes said. "She actually creates a kind of magic."

Phillips, meanwhile, has been thrown for a loop by winning the award. "I didn't think I had a chance" at winning, she said. "I'm still trying to wrap my head



**"If there were an after-school program on every street corner, children would flourish."
Jean Phillips**

around it."

Phillips said education is very important in Jamaica, and she was surprised when she came to the United States and saw how often children lacked adult support. Phillips started her career as an elementary school teacher and saw how valuable after-school programs are for positive relationships.

"If there were an after-school program on every street corner, children would flourish," she said.

Working for five years at an after-school program in Washington, D.C., she was able to be a mentor to many children as they progressed from kindergarten through fifth grade.

"Those relationships and the trust build up over the years," she said. "All of it comes together to support them. You can actually rescue them. They see that someone else (besides a parent) cares."

She has continued to offer that support through her 14 years in the after-school field career. Phillips enjoys inviting parents and families to take part with the children in program activities. While any week's activities could be a variety of things, she especially enjoys cooking and promotes healthful eating and exercise.

"She is intentional about decreasing the childhood obesity rate by acting as an advocate for healthier lifestyles," Muntz wrote in her nomination of Phillips. "She shares with the children, their families and other staff ways to eat healthier and be more physically active as a family."

Please see WINNER on page 6

Emotional intelligence helps children cope with stress, turmoil

Skills provide compass to navigate challenges

By Ginny Deerin

Everyone needs emotional intelligence, whether navigating playground politics or the ups and downs of Wall Street. Especially now during the financial crisis, these fundamental capabilities offer kids vital coping skills when the adults in their lives are experiencing so much worry and fear.

Social and emotional learning helps kids develop confidence, empathize with others, manage stress and worry, and gain a sense of optimism about their futures. Research in thousands of classrooms has demonstrated that these skills can be systematically developed with feedback and reinforcement in a respectful, encouraging learning environment — an after-school program setting, for example.

There are five core competencies, according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, known as CASEL.

Socially and emotionally skilled kids:

1. are self aware — able to recognize their emotions, have a sense of confidence and optimism about the future.
2. are able to regulate their emotions — able to manage stress, control impulses and persevere in overcoming obstacles.
3. are socially aware — able to see others' perspectives and empathize with them, and recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities.
4. have good relationship skills — can cooperate, resolve interpersonal conflicts, seek and provide help.
5. demonstrate responsible decision-making — consider likely consequences, respect for others, appropriate social norms and can apply in academic and social situations.

Weave lessons into everyday activities

The hours after school offer a rich opportunity to build these competencies by weaving lessons into everyday activities that children already are doing and enjoying.

At our program, WINGS for kids in Charleston, S.C., a comprehensive curriculum of social and emotional learning is woven into all after-school activities. One of our key learning objectives is recognizing when feelings take over and what situations cause the loss of control. This objective is taught in many ways, depending on the age and activity.

For example, frequently we tell kids: Don't become a human volcano! If you're about to erupt:

- Think — What happened?
- Feel — Name the emotion.
- Respond — Choose an appropriate reaction.



Publisher: Tracey C. Ballas
Managing Editor: Erika Konowalow
Shipping Clerk: Stefan Sanderson

Subscriptions — \$33.95/12 issues

Send inquiries to: School-Age NOTES, PO Box 476, New Albany, OH 43054, 1-800-410-8780, 614-855-9315

School-Age NOTES (ISSN 0728-3126) is published monthly by School-Age NOTES Inc., 7191 Talanth Place, New Albany, OH 43054, for \$33.95 per year. Periodicals postage paid at New Albany, Ohio, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to School-Age NOTES, PO Box 476, New Albany, OH 43054.

Airplane Anger

This template is used at WINGS to design activities that tie emotional and social learning objectives to everything we do — and have fun.

Learning objective: Kids will understand factors that can cause an emotional hijacking

Materials: Sheets of paper and crayons, pencils or markers

Activity:

- Hand out sheets of paper. Have the children write down some situations that make them lose control. They can also draw a picture, and use both sides of the paper if they wish.
- Once they have thought of several things that cause them to “lose it,” show everyone in your group how to make a paper airplane with their sheets. Make sure you lead the group and have them all do this at the same time.
- Once they have their paper airplanes, take them outside or to an open space inside and have the kids line up shoulder to shoulder. After they send their paper airplanes soaring, you can judge whose went the farthest. Continue the activity until time is up.

Tie in:

- After the activity, discuss emotional hijacking and what it means — losing control of your emotions.
- Emotional hijackings usually happen when you are upset, but sometimes people lose control over small things and end up making a problem worse.
- Even though we talked about thinking first before you react to your feelings, you might forget sometimes.
- To stay in control of your feelings, you have to learn this technique so that you:
 - Think — What happened?
 - Feel — Name the emotion.
 - Respond — Choose an appropriate reaction.

The leaders in our program find all kinds of opportunities to use this process with the kids so that it eventually becomes automatic.

For example, before basketball starts, the coach asks what happened during the last game when the referee made a call that distracted and disappointed team members. Can they identify those feelings? In response did they erupt or think first? When has this happened to them in other situations? What are some alternate and appropriate ways to handle the next call that upsets them? The coach uses the opportunity to reinforce the essential lesson to think first, feel second and then react.

It's important to brainstorm alternative emotional responses to positive situations as well. The coach reminds the kids it's not always appropriate to cheer about your victory when you're shaking hands with the losing team at the end of the game. The kids are asked to think about how they would feel if the situation was reversed — and what might be a better way to handle it? Waiting to hoot and holler after you get on the bus with your teammates? Telling your opponents, “Good game!”

Through small lessons like these, you give kids the tools they need to navigate challenging situations and everyday problems. You get them in the habit of thinking about their feelings and how to manage them. And during after-school activities, opportunities to practice are everywhere.

Emotions affect how children learn

Strengthening the ability to regulate impulses and manage stress does more than help kids cope with emotional turmoil. It enables them to focus their atten-

Please see COPE on page 7

discuss ways to achieve that goal. It may require applying an allowance or getting a job, both of which could require saving to achieve the financial means necessary for the goal.

"Financial literacy is like eating your vegetables. How do you make it fun? How do you make it pizza and not salad?"

If the child comes up with ways to make money — walking dogs, raking leaves, shoveling snow, — then it's likely that the child will be successful in achieving his or her goal, Heckman said.

The idea of goals and motivation can work as a program activity, too, Heckman suggests. Children can come up with an item they would like to have and then research how much it costs.

For example, a child who wants a bike could research who carries that type of bike, comparison shop online and seek out any deals that stores might offer. The child then could determine how he or she would pay for it and how long it would take to earn the money.

"Every kid has appetites. Coming up with goals isn't a problem," Heckman said. "And children are more likely to do well when there's something in it for them."

Helpful Web sites for budgeting, saving and learning

- The American Bankers Association promotes teaching children to save. The association has resources available at <http://www.aba.com/ABAEF/teachchildrentosave.htm>.
- CNNMoney has a series called Money 101, featuring money lessons, at <http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/money101/>. Lesson 12 is about kids and money; the others cover topics such as budgeting, banking basics and investing.
- The Credit Union National Association's site offers resources for youth at <http://www.cunapfi.org/>.
- *Family Education* offers articles about topics relating to kids and money and money concepts at <http://life.familyeducation.com/money-and-kids/personal-finance/34481.html>.
- Find some tips to help save money by changing an everyday habit at

"But I don't know how to budget!"

Don't let a fear of your own financial-literacy shortcomings derail you from helping the children and youth in your program. In addition to the Web sites listed below, look to your community for help.

Many banks have divisions in which bankers visit after-school programs and talk to children about money management. If you have the resources, consider a field trip in which the children get to go to a bank.

In addition to banks, consider contacting a local credit union. Some credit unions create partnerships with youth programs.

Reference

President's Advisory Council on Financial Literacy. 2008 Annual Report to the President. Retrieved February 18, 2008, from http://www.jumpstartcoalition.org/PACFL_ANNUAL_REPORT_1_16_09.PDF

Erika Konowalow is managing editor for School-Age NOTES.

- <http://www.feedthepig.org/savingtips>.
- The JumpStart Coalition offers a personal financial literacy page at http://www.jumpstart.org/realitycheck/pgv_money_rc_main.html.
- MarketWatch offers links to sites broken down by age at http://www.marketwatch.com/pf/started/GettingStarted_KidsMoney.asp.
- The Mint offers tools to educators (and parents) to help teach children to manage money at <http://www.themint.org>.
- Money and Stuff offers resources for educators, children and youth at <http://www.moneyandstuff.info>.
- Money Talks offers financial and job-related tips for teens at <http://moneytalks4teens.ucdavis.edu>.
- The U.S. Mint offers teachers and children resources at [h.i.p.p. pocket change](http://h.i.p.pocketchange) at <http://www.usmint.gov/kids>.

Cope *continued from page 2*

tion on classroom tasks and regulate potentially disruptive behavior that can be detrimental to learning. Feelings also govern whether a child experiences an active interest in learning and remains engaged. The social and emotional skills of students play an important role in forming the relationships that affect how children learn — from teachers, caring adults and other children and youth.

"We all know that how we feel about ourselves and others can profoundly affect our ability to concentrate, to remember, to think and to express ourselves," said Jonathan Cohen, president of the Center for Social and Emotional Education.

A growing body of research shows that building these capabilities actually improves academic performance. A summary analysis by CASEL, *The Impact of After School Programs That Promote Personal and Social Skills*, looked at hundreds of studies conducted by independent researchers. The analysis showed multiple benefits for students, including an average gain of 11 to 17 percentile points on achievement test scores.

"We must do more to ensure that children leave school with a strong foundation of social and emotional capabilities," said CASEL President Roger P. Weissberg, an LAS Distinguished Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, who co-wrote the analysis with Joseph Durlak of Loyola University of Chicago.

Some model programs that build the social and emotional skills of chil-

dren include the Responsive Classroom approach to creating learning environments, the emotional literacy curriculum for elementary school classrooms known as PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) and the Caring School Community program focused on building connections and community. CASEL offers guidelines on its Web site, www.casel.org, for effective lessons and programs.

Reach them young to build a strong foundation

Reaching kids in the elementary school years amplifies the power of social and emotional skills to help them succeed. Social and emotional learning provides tools to cope with stress and worries they now experience.

It also gives kids a vital head start in building a foundation of capabilities they can practice and improve. By the time they grow older, the current financial crisis will have passed. But what guides people through this or any other crisis in their lives is emotional intelligence.

Ginny Deerin is founder and chief executive of Charleston, S.C.-based WINGS for kids, providing comprehensive social and emotional education through after-school programs since 1996. Additional information can be found at www.wingsforkids.org.