



Bits 'n Pieces Winter 2007-08

A Champions for Children™ resource



Bits 'n Pieces is provided by MASA, MESPA and MASSP as Champions for Children™. Feel free to use any of the following content in newsletters, websites, speeches, or as a part of other communications as with stakeholders.

Just the Facts

Bragging Rights

- ★ Minneapolis has been identified as the most literate city in the country for the third time in the past five years. The other two years it was identified as the second most literate city. (*John W. Miller, President of Central Connecticut State University, USA Today, December 27, 2007*)
- ★ St. Paul has been identified as the third most literate city in the country and has risen from eleventh place during the past five years. (*John W. Miller, President of Central Connecticut State University, USA Today, December 27, 2007*)

Parenting

- ◆ **Can your child pass the marshmallow test?** In a famous 1960s Stanford University experiment, four-year-olds were given a marshmallow and a choice. “You can eat this marshmallow now, or if you wait to eat it until I come back, I will give you a second one and then you will have two.”

The dilemma for the child boiled down to his or her ability to delay gratification. What the researchers found, over time, was that those children who were able to wait at age four were more successful in school, happier, and more competent at age eighteen than those children who couldn't wait and gobbled up that marshmallow when the researcher left the room.

Self-discipline, a key development skill, helps kids to pursue healthy, productive and successful lives. Parenting strategies are foundational to kids' ability to set limits.

- ◆ According to the National Institute of Media and the Family, self discipline is twice as strong a predictor of academic success as is intelligence.
- ◆ **Self Esteem**

Myths about self esteem

1. self esteem is feeling good
2. self esteem comes first and leads to success in school, relationship, careers
3. stress, challenge and disappointment damage self esteem

Truth about self esteem

1. self esteem is built on competence

The above information was gathered from the National Institute of Media and the Family. For access to research and MediaWise® responses, go to the following: www.mediafamily.org/, www.mediawise.org/earlychild, www.SayYestoNo.org, www.mediafamily.org/research/index.shtml

- ◆ An Educational Testing Service (ETS) study suggests that students' low standardized test scores may have little to do with school quality, and much to do with outside factors like poverty and home environment, according to the *New York Times*.

Red Flags

- ◆ In 2005 kids spent 500 percent more money, after adjusted for inflation, than did their parents at the same age.
- ◆ In October of 2006 The Conference Board for Workforce Readiness identified their biggest concern about future employees as “work ethic”.
- ◆ Unlike most state subsidies, JOBZ program tax breaks are confidential and not even disclosed to the legislators that vote on the proposals. (*StarTribune, December 27, 2007*)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

- ◆ The NCLB law requires that states test how different groups of students fare in school. If one student group—such as special education students – fails to meet targets on a statewide standardized test, the whole school is labeled as not making “adequate yearly progress” (AYP).
- ◆ By 2014 the law requires that every student group in the country passes the test.
- ◆ In Minnesota, children in grades 3 through 11, take the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA-II) tests in the spring.
- ◆ **Public opinion** based upon the findings of the 39th (2007) *Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll* of public opinion.
 - Of the public polled forty-six percent (46%) say they know very little or nothing at all about NCLB. Thirty-five percent (35%) of public school parents say they know very little or nothing at all about NCLB
 - Based upon the responses of those who feel they know a great deal or fair amount about NCLB, fifty-five percent (55%) say they have somewhat or very unfavorable opinions about NCLB. That is the greatest percent of unfavorable opinions since the poll began in 2003.
 - The largest group of respondents believes the failure of large numbers of public schools to meet the requirements established by the NCLB law would be more the fault of the law than the fault of public schools.
 - Over eighty percent of all respondents believe that a better way to measure a school’s performance would be improvement shown by students within a given year rather than the current NCLB standard of the percentage of students passing.
 - Majority of respondents believe that NCLB’s emphasis on English and math has reduced the amount of instructional time spent in the local public schools for science, health, social studies, and the arts. Ninety-three percent of those respondents are very concerned about that trend.
- ◆ The following is taken from *Built to Teach*, Joel Packer, *Phi Delta Kappan*, December, 2007
 - **Test scores:** Although the Bush Administration cites NCLB as the reason for improved tests scores of nine year olds, the reality is that the entire improvement occurred prior to mandated testing for Grades 3 through 8.
 - **Achievement gap:** “federal accountability rules have little to no impact on racial and poverty gaps.” (*Civil Rights Project*, Harvard University, June, 2006)
 - **Curriculum:** 71% of the nation’s schools have reduced the hours of instructional time spent on history, music and other subjects. 27% reported reduced instruction in social studies, 22% reported cuts in science, and 20% reported similar cuts in art and music. (Center for Educational Policy).
 - **Public support:** Six out of 10 Americans believe that NCLB is hurting or making no difference in their community schools.
 - **Funding:** The shortfall between appropriations and the amounts authorized in the law exceed \$56 billion over six years. According to the U.S. Department of Education, states and schools are expected to spend 6,688,814 burden hours and \$135.9 million to comply with the paperwork requirements of NCLB.
 - **Conclusions:** An NEA survey of members suggests that “NCLB has not improved public education because of inadequate funding, the punitive nature of the law, and its sole reliance on standardized testing to measure student learning.” (June 2006, NEA survey)
 - **Strategies for improvement:**
 - Retain but overhaul the law.
 - Provide adequate resources.
 - Help schools build capacity to improve – instead of labeling and punishing schools.
 - Ensure that every school has a highly qualified educational leader.
 - Provide the services and resources children need to be successful in school.

School leaders

According to the AASA Center for System Leadership...

- ◆ Nearly 90 percent of U.S. superintendents are satisfied in their job.
- ◆ 93 percent of superintendents say they have a good relationship with their board.
- ◆ Women are entering the superintendency in record numbers.

The world around us

- ◆ Students in most countries in Western Europe, Canada, Mexico, Korea, Japan and Singapore (OECD nations) spend an average of 701 hours per year in school. In Finland students spend only 600 hours in schools. U.S. students spend 1,100 hours in schools.
- ◆ U.S. secondary students spend an average of 140 minutes per week on Math homework. Korean teachers assign about 120 minutes. National patterns of homework and achievement suggests that more homework may actually undermine national achievement. (*Phi Delta Kappan*, October 2007, *Learning from the World: Achieving More by Doing less*, Six out of 10 Americans say global warming should be a very important priority)
- ◆ Seven out of 10 Americans say cooperating with other countries to solve environmental and health problems should be a very important foreign policy goal.

Quotes and Quotables

Parenting

- ◆ “It’s our job to unlock the potential in every child. We can’t use a remote control to do it.” – National Institute on Media and the Family

Perspectives for 2008

- ◆ “Out of the daily chaos comes the dance of balance.” – Denise Kester
- ◆ “These are the magic years...and therefore magic days...and therefore magic moments.” – Anonymous
- ◆ “The less our routine, the more of life.” – Almos B. Alcott
- ◆ “The essence of health is an inner kind of balance.” Andrew Weil, M.D.
- ◆ “Guard well your spare moments. They are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be known. Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson
- ◆ “Prevention is better than cure.” – Desiderius Erasmus
- ◆ “You only have one body—respect it. You only have one mind—feed it. You only have one life—live it and enjoy it.” – Des’ Ree
- ◆ “There is more to life than simply increasing its speed.” – Mahatma Gandhi
- ◆ “Learn to pause...or nothing worthwhile will catch up to you.” – Doug King
- ◆ “Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some, and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.” – Robert Fulghum
- ◆ “Take time every day to do something ridiculous.” – Philipa Walker
- ◆ “My advice in the midst of the serious is to keep an eye out for the tinker shuffle, the flying of kites, and kindred sources of surprised amusement.” – Jerome Bruner
- ◆ “A great time to relax is when you don’t have time for it.” – Sydney Harris



These materials are provided by:
Minnesota Association of School Administrators
Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
Minnesota Elementary School Principals’ Association

To request more information contact the above organizations or sprest@arkassoc.com