

The Children, Youth and Family Consortium was created in 1991. Its mission is to build capacity at the University of Minnesota and in Minnesota's communities to use research, influence policy and enhance practice to improve the well-being of Minnesota's children and families.

CONNECTIONS

IN THIS ISSUE

Educational Disparities: The Role of Informal Supports

The Fall 2006 issue of Consortium Connections introduced CYFC's focus on the topic of Educational Disparities, and highlighted the "Circles of Influence" model that will guide CYFC's work in this area. Each of the next several issues of Connections will concentrate on one of the Circles of Influence, featuring articles on various influences within the circle. The Circles of Influence graphic will be included each time.

Informal Supports

As we consider factors that affect children's learning, we begin with the influences that are closest to them: their parents, siblings, grandparents and extended family, neighbors and other informal mentors. How does the way children are parented influence their learning? How does social class affect parenting? Does the environment in the home offer an atmosphere in which children are encouraged to study, ask questions, explore and develop curiosity? Several articles address these questions.

Families who are not the majority culture, particularly new immigrants and non-English speaking families, face some unique challenges when it comes to supporting their children's learning and involvement in schools. The perspective of new immigrants is addressed here.

Other cultural perspectives will be considered in future issues.

Extended families, neighbors, informal mentors, and other important adults can be powerful influences in children's learning, including things like teaching them skills, nurturing their curiosity, supporting them in trying out new things, and modeling a positive attitude toward learning. Grandparenting and mentoring are considered in this issue.

Although it's impossible to address all of the many and complex issues related to educational disparities and children's learning in this limited format, we intend to cover topics related to educational disparities as thoroughly as we can in upcoming issues, using Circles of Influence as a framework. We welcome your comments on the current issue and suggestions for future issues of Connections as we continue to explore educational disparities. The Spring 2007 issue will focus on The Community Circle – specifically addressing schools.

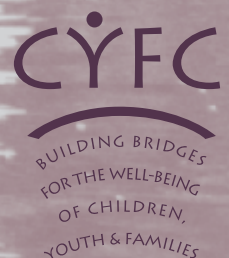
As is our practice, articles in the print version of Connections do not include citations. But full citations and additional resources are included in the online version that can be found at: <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/publications/connection/index.html>

We Need Your Help!

Please help us evaluate Consortium Connections.

CYFC would like to hear readers' opinions about the usefulness of Consortium Connections. A short survey can be found on a postcard included in this issue. If you would take a couple of minutes to answer the questions and drop it in the mail, it will help improve the quality of this publication. If you prefer, you can fill out the survey on-line. Go to: www.cyfc.umn.edu/publications

Thank you in advance for your help.



Volume 16, Number 1 · Winter 2007

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2006-07 Academic Year

March 29, 2007

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St. Cloud Behavioral Health
Services; Panel of Respondents

April 25, 2007

**Attachment:
Intervention/Treatment
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Featuring: Anne Gearity, PhD,
LICSW; Panel of Community
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*These events are offered on-site
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locations around the state via
web and ITV streaming.*

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Understanding Children's Mental Health: A Parent's Perspective

By Mary Kay Delvo

Grown-ups talking, children laughing...I relax for a minute and feel like a 'normal' parent; enjoying my grown-up friends. Moments later I hear the cry, "He hit me." It wasn't a typical cry that comes from a willing, tattling participant, but a cry that said "I am hurt," a cry that glued the eyes of the other parents on me. As I try to calm my son and prevent further escalation, those eyes become more intense. They're saying: "If she would set some limits he wouldn't act like this;" "What he needs is a good crack on the behind;" "If they would just give that kid a nap..." and "If she had a man around, this wouldn't happen."

As the children share what happened, my child remains focused on the fact that someone else broke the rules and it wasn't "fair." It was a scenario I had gone through many times before. Limited by his inability to process external stimulation, read social cues or think flexibly, my child had solved his problem the only way he knows how. When left to his own devices, the fact that he is intellectually intelligent is of no regard. What he has learned becomes trapped between thought and action and can't find its way out when he needs it.

My son has Aspergers Syndrome, anxiety, ADHD and learning delays. It is almost to his detriment – and mine – that at times he looks and acts 'normal.' The assumption of those around us is that if he looks 'normal' his behavior must be due to bad parenting. Imagine that you are this seven year old boy. You have the same desires and interests of other children but the outside world is organized nothing like yours. You think you are following the rules but others act in a way that does not fit with how you experience the world. Now imagine that you are the parent of this boy. You have the same desires and dreams as other parents yet your life looks nothing like what you imagined for yourself, your family or parenting. You watch other parents and it looks so easy. They get stressed by sibling rivalry or wrestling. I wish for sibling rivalry. Instead we develop safety plans, teach siblings to dial 911 and talk about where to go if it becomes unsafe.

Learning to parent is the most difficult job we will ever have. Yet it is a job at which we are judged most critically, even by those who have never done it before. These judgments are often a ruling without facts, an uninformed assessment of the problem and a verdict that places blame. This judgment causes families to move into the 'closet' in order to protect their children against stigma.

When I used to tell people my son had mental health issues they would say something like "Oh, that's too bad" and never mention it again. They would offer me a break by inviting my other son over anytime. After some time, I began to experiment with my language. I would say my son had a brain disease instead of mental illness. Others would gasp, get a concerned look on their face and want to know if he would be okay. They immediately reached out to our family.

My family is fortunate enough to have the resources we need. Even so, our tank is nearly empty. We can't leave our child with just anyone, medical appointments are frequent and require time away from work, the supports that exist for our son are expensive, and our situation threatens the mental and physical wellness of our entire family. My son is an incredible child with gifts beyond belief. It is unfortunate that at the end of the day our energy to appreciate and enjoy these gifts is limited.

How others can help:

- Think of mental illness as similar to any other disease.
- When people know a family whose child has a physical illness such as kidney disease or diabetes, they will often learn more about the disease and offer to help. Consider doing the same with mental illness.
- Refrain from judgmental statements within your circles of friends and family; you never know who has a mental illness you can't see.
- If you see a child/parent struggling in public, don't stare, ask if you can help, gently guide others away to avoid a crowd of gawkers, and if the parent has more than one child, keep an eye on the other children to ensure that they are safe and supervised.
- Pay attention to your nonverbal reactions – they can say more than words.

Mary Kay Delvo lives in the Twin Cities, and has two sons, one of whom has Asperger's Syndrome.

Parent Involvement Challenges for New Immigrant Families

When it comes to being involved in their children's learning, immigrant parents whose children are becoming acculturated into Minnesota schools face some unique challenges. Some of these challenges are common across cultures, others are specific to individual cultures; some may also be experienced by cultures who have been here for generations, and have retained a strong cultural identity.

Language: The most obvious challenge is language. When nearly everything related to schools is in English, much of it written or web-based, not being able to speak, read or write the language is a significant barrier in communicating with schools, teachers and sometimes even one's own children. Although interpreters go a long way toward assisting with this, people may still feel like outsiders when they can't speak the language and are often reluctant to appear ignorant, so they may instead choose to say nothing. Children generally learn English very quickly once they are in school, but having children serve as interpreters may not be viewed as respectful in some cultures.

The role of schools and teachers: Some cultures view the education of children as the teacher's job, and believe it is their responsibility, not the parents', to make sure children are learning. Parent involvement in the education process may actually be viewed as disrespectful in some cultures. Therefore, parents defer all educational responsibilities to school systems. In the U.S., parents are expected to be involved in schools and in children's learning. This may require a significant shift in mind-set for the new immigrants, and draw on experiences that they have not had.

The relationship between students and teachers: Students are also expected to be respectful of teachers, and in some cultures, this means not speaking up in class, or even having eye contact with the teacher. When the teacher's expectation is that students answer questions and participate in class discussions, and the student's and parent's expectation is that they keep quiet, it creates a dilemma – especially when the teacher evaluates student progress based on class participation.

Parenting: Perhaps no area is more challenging for immigrants than parenting. Guiding and assisting their children in the learning process is very difficult in a new culture when the parenting practices they have been used to – and even felt morally bound to – in their country of origin are not appropriate here. So parents feel torn because they cannot use the tools – such as authoritarian discipline and physical punishment – that they may have used in the past, to encourage their children to attend school and do their homework. Yet they also feel they are judged negatively if their children don't do these things. It creates a double dilemma for them.

In addition, as immigrant children become “Americanized,” their values may become more and more distant from those of their parents, many of whom may prefer to retain the values of their culture of origin. The way they dress, the activities in which they participate, the friends they keep, their style of relating to each other in romantic relationships, and the value they put on learning and school attendance may fly in the face of their parents' expectations. This has the potential to strain the relationships between parents and children, and can lead to children “acting out” in sometimes unhealthy ways.

So what's the solution? It's important to begin working with new families as soon as possible, to better prepare them for their experiences here. While encouraging them to retain the richness of their cultural identity, we also need to help them understand the norms and expectations of schools and education systems, and learn new skills to help their children.

Using the lens of the Circles of Influence framework highlighted in this publication, it's also important to work in the community circle, by educating school administrators, teachers, counselors, service providers, and others who work with students and families, through in-services or other professional development mechanisms. A basic understanding of the cultural norms and values of the many diverse students, parents and families with whom they work can go a long way toward helping schools involve immigrant parents in ways that respect the needs and values of both cultures. Another option might be to offer parent involvement opportunities in venues other than schools – perhaps faith communities or community centers - where immigrant parents may feel more comfortable talking about educational issues.

Research and other information for this article was supplied by Dr. Zha Blong Xiong, Associate Professor, Department of Postsecondary Teaching and Learning, University of Minnesota

References and additional resources can be found in the web version of Connections.

CONSORTIUM CONNECTIONS

Consortium Connections is published three times a year by the Children, Youth & Family Consortium: A University and Community Collaboration.

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Helping Youth Succeed is a culturally sensitive program developed by Southeast Asians for Southeast Asian Families. Through stories presented both on video and in writing, families learn about other Southeast Asian parents and youth in familiar and current situations. The issues are common, developed from the real experiences for Southeast Asian families. The stories are designed to prompt discussion and facilitate problem solving, and allow families to participate without revealing their personal family information. Helping Youth Succeed is research-based. It has been successfully tested and used by Southeast Asian families, and is available in Cambodian, Hmong, Lao and Vietnamese, as well as English. Ordering information is available online at:
<http://www.extension.umn.edu/cap/acity/fd/sites/biculturalParenting/>

Editors Note:

This article, Parenting, Social Class and the Achievement Gap, was commissioned by CYFC based on the book *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap* by Richard Rothstein. CYFC staff read the book in preparation for our work on Educational Disparities. Rothstein's approach is that the achievement gap requires solutions from many sectors of the community, as per the Circle of Influence Framework, rather than just schools alone. Rothstein is a research Associate with the Economic Policy Institute, and a lecturer at Teacher's College, Columbia University. The authors, Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder, describe themselves as junior colleagues of Richard Rothstein. Both are PhD Candidates in Politics and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Parenting, Social Class and the Achievement Gap

By Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder

Policy conversations regarding the achievement gap often focus solely on the role of the school. However, researchers have found that the gap actually appears before children begin school. Different social classes have, on average, different parental practices that impact children's readiness for academic success. Understanding the ways in which these differences affect academic success will help policy makers and practitioners develop programs that narrow the gap before children even enter school.

Before outlining the various social class differences in parental practices and activities that support academic success, it should be noted that we are speaking about average characteristics. For example, researchers have found that on average, mothers who were on welfare spoke 600 words per hour to their infants while professional parents spoke over 2,000 words per hour. They estimated that by age 4, children of professional parents heard 45 million words while children of mothers who were on welfare only heard 13 million words creating a 30 million word gap. This is not to say that all professional parents speak 2,000 words per hour to their children; of course, some speak less. Furthermore, some mothers who are on welfare speak far more than 600 words an hour to their infants. But, on average, these social class differences contribute to lower class children entering school with smaller vocabularies.

Social class also impacts pre-reading activities that take place in the home. While parents of all classes read to their children, how they read a story can vary. Lower class parents often ask more factual questions while reading a story. (What color is the girl's dress? Where is the dog?) Upper class parents tend to ask more complex questions that require children to use critical thinking skills. (What do you think will happen next? How is this trip to the zoo similar to your trip?) These different approaches to reading impact a child's reading ability upon entering school. Upper and middle class children who have become accustomed to interacting with text on a more complex level will, on average, show greater progress on standardized tests.

Approaches to encouraging or reprimanding children's behavior also affect academic achievement. Toddlers of professionals receive an average of six encouragements per reprimand while toddlers of parents on welfare receive two reprimands per encouragement—a reversal of the ratio. Children receiving more encouragement from an early age

will build self confidence and willingness to try new activities, both of which lead to greater success in the classroom.

Disciplinary differences between social classes, often a result of the types of daily experiences had by parents at work, also impact learning. Parents with professional occupations who are expected to ask questions and solve problems at work will bring these traits home. Upper and middle class parents are more likely to negotiate disciplinary issues like bedtime or dinner choices and are more likely to explain why particular rules are being implemented. Working class parents, whose work is often more routine and authoritative, tend to instruct children without extended explanations. When upper and middle class children arrive at school, their experiences, on average, make them more comfortable asking the teacher questions and clarifying rules.

These differences in how one views authority also impact parent-teacher relationships. In an extensive study of home-school relationships, Annette Lareau found that working class parents believed teachers had specialized knowledge and thus, did not feel it was their place to intervene or supplement with lessons at home. In stark contrast, upper class parents interviewed believed they were partners with teachers and often guided and supervised their child's educational experiences through supplemental lessons at home or through negotiations for special provisions at school.

The cumulative effect of these various social class differences in parenting style is that upper and middle class children arrive at school with experiences and abilities that give them an educational advantage.

Because many of these gaps begin to appear long before children arrive at school, programs to close them must begin early in a child's life. One successful program for teenage mothers is a home visiting nurse who provides well baby care as well as parenting tips and techniques. In one study where teen mothers received such home visits from pregnancy through age 2, follow ups showed that their children developed fewer behavior problems at school and had higher test scores.

Early childhood care and education programs can also help low income children acquire social and academic skills prior to entering school. Such programs are most effective if they begin when the children are toddlers and are staffed by instructors with degrees in early childhood education.

Achievement Gap — continued on page 5

Parenting for School Success

By Kathleen A. Olson

In many ways, parents are the most important teachers children will ever have. How can we strengthen connections within families and between families, their communities and schools for better outcomes for children and their families? Parental involvement that is linked to their children's learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement.

Why is parenting important as it relates to school partnerships? How a child learns to balance freedom and responsibility, learns to solve problems, develops an eagerness for learning, a sense of self and forms values are all dramatically shaped by parents. Thus, how well prepared parents are for this level of responsibility is of critical importance. Every parent needs far greater levels of support than they have been provided, but our entire society must find ways to elevate the importance of parenting. When parents believe their involvement can have a positive influence on their child's education, it can positively influence student educational outcomes.

Social factors from the parents' own experiences and history influence their participation in their child's education. These include parents' own educational experience in school and their beliefs about parental involvement. Both are shaped by cultural norms and values. We also know that outreach to parents of low achieving students results in long term benefits for student achievement. Parents are more likely to become involved if the tone of school invitations, requests and opportunities for involvement is welcoming and encouraging. All of these issues are more complex when parents come from a country other than the U.S. and/or speak English as their second language, or don't speak English at all.

Several University of Minnesota Extension faculty have reviewed the latest research on parent-school connections for a new publication, "Parenting for School Success". Six factors have been found to be important for parent/school partnerships, based on the work of Sandra Christenson, Professor, Department of Educational Psychology, University of Minnesota. These factors are: Learning, Expectations, Structure, Support, Relationships, and Modeling. The focus of the publication is on practical ways, using the six factors, that parents can support student learning at home and how they can improve communication or initiate contact with their child's school and teachers.

Working together on parent-school connections means parents and teachers are engaged together in common goals for the effective learning of children. Working together as partners is a philosophy and an attitude, but practical, specific activities and ideas that parents can do are needed. Parenting for School Success will help meet this need.

The family is the most fundamental influence affecting the lives and outcomes of children. Better parent-school partnerships will help strengthen families and build systems that support healthy family development, resulting in stronger schools and communities.

For more information, contact Kathleen Olson at kaolson@umn.edu or 507-536-6306. Kathleen Olson is a Family Relations Educator with the University of Minnesota Extension. She is based in Extension's Rochester Regional Center.

Achievement Gap — *continued from page 4*

One way that home-school connections can be emphasized in early childhood programs and elementary school is through the creation of a home-school teacher position. Ideally, the home-school teacher visits to help parents in their homes to support classroom instruction, and offer workshops on academic activities and disciplinary practices that facilitate learning. To supplement more formalized parent-teacher conferences, the home-school teacher can act as a liaison throughout the school year to explain school materials such as test results and pedagogical practices to parents.

Schools can also encourage active parents to become parent mentors. Parents themselves are invaluable resources to one another. Many lower class parents are isolated from one another, lacking information about after school programs,

specific teachers, and in-school services that most middle and upper class parents receive through informal parent networks. Because lower income parents may perceive teachers to be experts, parent mentors are particularly important to bridge this gap.

Without efforts focused on child-rearing practices and home-school connections, the achievement gap will persist despite even the most extensive school reforms. There are many causes of the achievement gap. Enabling all parents to provide their children with the home environment and skills proven to be influential for academic achievement may go further in narrowing the achievement gap than school-based reform alone.

Full citations for this article can be found in the web version of Consortium Connections.

University of Minnesota Extension faculty and the Children, Youth and Family Consortium are partnering on the **Parenting For School Success** project to reach families across the state. Programs and resources will be developed to encourage parent involvement in their child's educational development. These will include sessions for parents on how they can be more involved in supporting their children's learning, and in-service trainings for school staff on how schools can be more supportive of families in the school system. Parenting for School Success materials will also be reviewed by Latino parents and professionals to adapt the materials for cultural appropriateness and translate them into Spanish.

Grandparents Can Be Powerful Partners in Learning Readiness

By Madge Alberts

Grandparents fill many different roles where their grandchildren are concerned. Some take on total responsibility for raising their grandchildren. Others are intimately involved in their lives through regular care, while still others see them occasionally, but aren't involved in the day-to-day aspects of their lives. Many grandparents have no involvement at all in the lives of their grandchildren, due to geographic distance, emotional distance from their own children, by their own choice, or for a host of other reasons.

Since I began just over three years ago caring for my now three year old grandson two days a week, I've become acutely aware of the importance of grandparents as a part of the "Informal Supports" Circle of Influence. The opportunities for informal mentoring are regular...and he and I both count on those. In this article, my intention



Talk to your grandchildren in adult language about things related to your daily life.

is to share some thoughts about things grandparents can do to enhance their grandchildren's learning, based on my own experience as a part-time care provider and the research I know. These are things that don't require a lot of financial investment or particular living situations.

- Take every opportunity you can to build a relationship with your grandchild/ren. The importance of the role of non-parent adults in children's lives is well documented.
- Talk to them in an adult way (be cautious to use language that you feel is appropriate for them to mimic, because they WILL repeat it).
- Take them to normal, everyday places and events and talk about what's going on, so they get a sense of what your life is like.

- Read to them. The research on brain development is clear about the importance of reading and talking to children. They learn words from hearing words.
- Read yourself, in front of them. Less well publicized is the importance of showing children that you value reading by doing it yourself, on a regular basis, in front of them.
- Play games with them. Games provide tremendous opportunities for things like counting, letter and number recognition, thinking – and they are fun and help build relationships too.
- Express to them often that you love them, through words, hugs, smiles, approving looks and more. Again, the research is very clear about the importance of support and care from non-parent adults in the lives of children.
- Tell them about the "good old days" in ways that help them understand how important your early years are in who you become as an adult. A grandparent can provide grandchildren with a sense of history that they just don't get second or third hand.

One cautionary note – try hard not to overindulge your grandchildren. Grandparents have an unfortunate tendency to do this sometimes. It isn't helpful to children for anyone to overindulge them, because it sets up expectations that can carry into adulthood. Bill Doherty from the University of Minnesota, and David Bredthoft from Concordia University - St. Paul, with well known author and educator Jeanne Illsley Clark, have been speaking and writing recently on the consequences of overindulgence. Giving children too much "stuff" can lead to the expectation that they will always be given things, and may limit their ability to be creative in meeting their own needs. But maybe more importantly in terms of educational achievement, doing too much for them can result in an inability to problem solve, to think through answers on their own, and to take responsibility for their own learning.

Children need formal and informal mentors and meaningful adults in their lives as they grow and develop. Grandparents have a unique opportunity to fill that role for their grandchildren, as well as providing a model for life-long learning and how to apply that learning to daily life.

Mentoring Matters: Making a Difference During Life's Journey

By *Tex Ostvig*

Imagine you are taking a trip that you have been anticipating for weeks, months or even years. As you plan for this journey you have no idea of how to prepare, no idea of the do's or the don'ts, and worst of all you are taking the journey alone.

This is the story of nearly every youth in the United States that does not have a mentor to lead them, guide them or walk beside them. It is estimated that over 15 million youth are on waiting lists just to have a caring and nurturing individual step into their lives and guide them during their journey in life.

The history of mentoring is based on a similar story in Homer's *Odyssey*, where Odysseus, king of Ithaca, seeks out a man named Mentor to be his son's teacher, advisor and counselor while he is gone to fight in the Trojan War. He expects that Mentor will teach his son all he needs to know to be successful and to assume his throne.

Since this story, the word mentor has been used to describe someone who is willing and able to guide another on whatever path that is taken. A mentor may take on attributes of a teacher, a coach, a counselor, an advisor, and most of all a supporter. A successful mentoring relationship can and should be an exciting and energetic process in which the protégé can begin to develop their potential.

Can a mentor make a difference in the life of a young person? Yes. The national program of Big Brothers/Big Sisters conducted an evaluation of the effectiveness of mentors in the lives of youth and their academic achievement. The results showed that youth who had mentors in their lives were less likely to skip school, less likely to skip classes, and more confident in their school performance – and thus more engaged in school. There was a small positive impact on grades, but most studies have not found a significant improvement in grades solely from non-academic initiatives such as mentoring. The study also showed a slight improvement in the relationship of youth with their parents, and a decreased likelihood to become involved in drug and alcohol use – both of which can affect academic performance. A young person's academic success can be influenced by a mentor who has already traveled that path.

I recall a mentor who was a graduate of the University of Minnesota who brought his mentee to a college basketball game. As they were walking to their car, the mentee asked him what all the big buildings were for. This simple question led to a future visit to the campus to explain and discuss such words as major, minor, and career. The discussion finally resulted in this mentor expressing the importance of getting good grades in high school, being admitted to a college or university and finally graduating better prepared to follow a career path and then participate as a global citizen.

We are in a time of crisis when it comes to our youth, and especially our youth at risk. Testimonies and evaluations confirm over and over that mentoring can make a difference and that mentoring is one of many ways to reach out to youth and guide them in their paths of life. In the Big Brother-Big Sister study, what appeared to matter most to the youth was that they had a "caring adult in their lives." Whether it's a parent, a grandparent, a neighbor, an informal mentor or a mentor through a structured program, the involvement of adults who are willing to guide them is a key factor in the success of young people.

May each of us look at mentoring as an opportunity to be a guide, to share our experiences with another, and most of all to make a difference for someone else during their life's journey.

References for this article can be found in the web version of Connections.

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Richard Weinberg Institute of Child Development, U of MN

BRIEFS...

"Family, School and Community Involvement: Working Together for our Children," a one day conference for parents, educators, and community members to come together and share successful strategies in supporting children's education, will be held on April 14 at Arlington High School in St. Paul. Sponsored by The Minnesota Department of Education, Saint Paul Public Schools, Minnesota Parent Center and Children Youth & Family Consortium, the conference will offer learning opportunities for parents of school age children who are most at risk of not making academic standards, school staff that work with these children, and community agencies. For more information visited the conference website at: <http://www.parentsunited.org/070414.html>.

The Minnesota's Promise Summit will be held April 24. This will be the second event CYFC has coordinated to discuss the vision of 27 school superintendents for world class education in Minnesota. The first event, on October 6, provided the opportunity for a diverse audience to comment on the superintendents' vision. Based on these comments, revisions to the vision have been made. At the April 24 working summit, a diverse group of stakeholders in Minnesota's educational system will approve the final report, signing their names just as the original 27 superintendents signed the preliminary report. However, the summit's main purpose is to generate ideas for action and implementation. It is hoped that the final version of the vision and the strategies generated at the summit will be released prior to the end of the legislative session.

Courses for the **Parent Education Licensure Program** in family education in the College of Education and Human Development at the U of MN have gone on-line. The parent education courses are graduate level and are offered online in sequence beginning in June of each year. This long-standing program prepares parent educators to work in Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programs and other Minnesota settings and in other states and countries. For more information, visit the Parent Ed Licensure website at: <http://education.umn.edu/CI/Programs/FYC/parent.html> or contact Chris Buzzetta at (612) 624-1294 or buzze001@umn.edu.

We Need Your Help!

Please help us evaluate Consortium Connections.

CYFC would like to hear readers' opinions about the usefulness of Consortium Connections. A short survey can be found on a postcard included in this issue. If you would take a couple of minutes to answer the questions and drop it in the mail, it will help improve the quality of this publication. If you prefer, you can fill out the survey on-line. Go to: www.cyfc.umn.edu/publications

Thank you in advance for your help.

Who's The Consortium?

Gevonee Ford is the Executive Director of Network for the Development of Children of African Descent (NdCAD) in St. Paul. In his work with NdCAD, he is committed to helping parents develop the skills and gain the tools they need to help their children achieve academic success. Gevonee has been working with CYFC and several other community partners to develop a parent involvement network throughout Minnesota.

Kathleen Olson is a family relationships educator with the University of Minnesota Extension. Based at Extension's Rochester Regional Center, Kathleen has worked with developing and teaching parenting education programs, as well as training parent educators, all of her professional career. While a county Extension educator in Goodhue County, Kathleen was the instrumental in the development of the well-known Kids Handle With Care Project. With several other Extension colleagues, Kathleen is now coordinating Extension's work on Parenting for School Success (see article on p. 5). CYFC is partnering with Extension in this work.

Wm. Tex Ostvig works with multicultural initiatives in the Office for Equity and Diversity at the University of Minnesota. Born in Juarez, Mexico and raised in rural Minnesota by his adoptive parents, a Norwegian father and Irish mother, Tex has been involved in diversity issues all of his life. At the U, he works with youth/student mentoring, including UConnects, PK-8 outreach, and service learning. He also teaches a First Year Experience Seminar – "Leadership and Business – A global impact." Tex has been a long-time partner with CYFC and is currently co-located in CYFC's office.

Ramon Reina is on the steering committee of the Center of Excellence in Children's Mental Health. He is a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker currently working as a School Social worker at Hopkins High School. He is very active in community mental health issues, serving on the State Advisory Council on Mental Health, and as Co-Chair of Minnesota's Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health. Ramon has done post graduate work at the University of Minnesota in Guidance and Counseling and Social Work.

And the Consortium is YOU!

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