

Welcome to the December edition of Iowa Public Television's (IPTV) Ready To Learn eNews. The purpose of this free monthly electronic newsletter is to keep families, educators and child care providers informed of the great resources IPTV and our partners have to offer those who care for children ages birth to eight years of age. RTL is public television's response to a critical national education goal: All children will enter school Ready To Learn.

RTL eNews for December 2004

_____Contents_____

December Feature

* Family Involvement

The Learning Triangle

* Families Theme Learning Triangle

* Winter Theme Learning Triangle

Program Schedule, Episode Descriptions and Record Rights for PBS Kids Programs

Resources for December

Tip of the Month: BOOK FUN NEWS Newsletter

IPTV Children's Schedule

Series Spotlight: POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER

Subscribe/Unsubscribe

_____December Feature_____

Family Involvement

“The evidence is consistent, positive, and convincing: families have a major influence on their children’s achievement in school and throughout life.”

“The research shows that all parents, regardless of income, education, or cultural background are involved in some way in their children’s learning and want their children to do well.”

“Children with involved parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to:

- earn higher grades and test scores
- be promoted, pass their classes and earn credits
- attend school regularly
- have better social skills, show improved behavior and adapt well to school
- graduate and go on to post-secondary education (Henderson and Mapp, 2002)

Involving families in their children’s education has long been talked about as a “good thing” to do. Now, research indicates that it is also an important strategy for improving student achievement. Early care and education providers play a critical role in promoting family involvement. They are the parents’ first contact with “out of home,” more formalized, care and education. The way in which early care and education providers interact with families and what they do to promote family involvement can set the stage for how families are involved in their child’s education for rest of the child’s school career.

There are many ways families can be involved in their children’s education. Volunteering in the classroom, serving on decision making committees, providing a safe and healthy home environment and communicating with early care and education providers are only a few. Current research indicates that what families do at home with their children is the family involvement strategy that promotes student achievement. That is not to say that the other forms of family involvement aren’t important but helping families understand what they can do at home with their children is

the strategy that will help children be successful in school. (Henderson and Mapp, 2002) These activities or actions are referred to as learning at home or the curriculum of the home. (Epstein, Sanders, et.al, 2002)

What can families do at home that will contribute to their children's academic success? What ways of interacting can providers help families get in the habit of doing with their young children and hopefully continue as the children progress through school?

1. Encourage families to TALK, TALK, TALK with their children about what happened in "school" or at childcare. Give them examples of questions to ask children of different ages. With young children, "yes" or "no" questions such as, "Did you have fun today?" or "Did you color today?" are appropriate. As children grow older, ask, open ended questions that require more thought to answer such as "What did you do today?" and "What fun things are you going to do tomorrow?"

Talk with families about good times to have these conversations with their children and techniques for remembering to do it! Perhaps writing questions on sticky notes and attaching the notes to the car dashboard or coat closet door would work as a reminder.

2. Explain to families that a child's learning during the day is often represented by the items he/she brings home in his/her backpack. (For some families from different cultures, you may need to explain that it is important to check backpacks.) Ask families to spend time with their child each day looking at the items in the backpack. Explain that this is another time to talk about what happened in preschool or at childcare. When looking at the child's work, ask families to praise it as well as ask questions. Talk with them about displaying a child's work on the refrigerator, or other areas, which may be a new concept to some.

3. Ask parents to be positive about the school experience when they are talking to their children or talking to other adults when the children are listening. Tell them to talk about the fun things children can learn and do at preschool or childcare and why school is important. This may be hard for some parents who did not have a positive experience in school or with teachers but it is very important that they talk positively about the school experience.

4. Encourage families to have high expectations for their children and to tell their children that they know they can do well. Remind them that the "sky is the limit!" with children. Children have their whole lives ahead of them and nothing is impossible!

5. Explain to parents the importance of encouraging their child when their child is learning something new or trying to do something that has been difficult for them in the past. "You can do it" are important words for children to hear.

6. Ask families to read to their children and teach them how to do so. Some of the literature on family involvement indicates that the simple phrase, "Read to your child" is overwhelming for some families. Even if they know how to read, they are concerned that they don't know how to read the "right way." Workshops on how to read to your children where the presenter models different strategies and gives parents the opportunity to practice them, and/or showing video tapes with parents reading to children are good ways to teach families these skills.

What can early care and education providers do to help families implement the above ideas?

1. Talk with families about what "learning at home" means, why it is important and give them one or two suggestions about what they can do. Clearly explain what you would like them to do but avoid being demanding. Model for families how to do what you are suggesting.

Ask families what you could do to help them implement some of the ideas. If there are barriers, talk about how to solve them. Keep in mind that there may be some families who choose not to do what you suggest. Respect their wishes and honor whatever way they do choose to be involved.

Talk about the strategy of learning at home often and in different ways. Mention it frequently in notes home or newsletters, at conferences, and conversations during drop off and pick up times.

2. Explain to families what you expect the children will learn when they are with you and what you expect their behavior to be like. Again, be as clear as you can be and give lots of examples.
3. Give the parents frequent reports on how the child is doing. This is another opportunity to reinforce learning at home.
4. Build a trusting relationship with families. Relationships matter! Families are more likely to implement suggestions about what they can do at home with their children if they trust the person making them.
5. Let families know that you want them to contact you if they have concerns or want to talk about any aspect of their child's life. Tell them how and when to do so.

Here are a few other thoughts about family involvement drawn from the resources listed below.

1. Define the terms "family" and "parent" broadly to include siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents and "fictive kin" who may be friends or neighbors.
2. Offer a variety of ways families can be involved in their child's education at home. Some families may never be able to find time to read to their children. What other activities could they work into their home environment/routine? Individualize for families just as you do for children. Welcome and honor however the family can be involved.
3. Keep in mind that family situations change and at some points, some families may not be able to be involved as they once were or at all. Most parents don't need any more guilt so again, it is important to welcome and honor however the family can be involved. Always be ready to offer more opportunities for involvement if the family situation changes again!
4. Your idea of how families should be involved in their child's education may be different from the families you work with. Beliefs about child rearing and their role as a parent influence what parents think about involvement in their child's education. Culture and class contexts as well as the groups parents belong to or with which they identify also shape their thoughts about their involvement.
5. If you work with families from cultures different than yours, ask the families or your supervisor for information that will help you understand the beliefs and values of those cultures. This information will help you individualize your family involvement strategies to meet the needs of families.
6. When planning for family involvement be sure to always ask families what kind of information they need, what are the best ways to communicate with them and, if you do workshops, the time, day, and place that is most appropriate.

References

- Carter, S. (2003). *Educating our children together: A sourcebook for effective family-school-community partnerships*. Washington, D.C. CADRE: U.S. Office of Special Education Programs.
- Epstein, J.L., Sanders, M.G., Simon, B.S., Salinas, et.al. (2002). *School, family and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Henderson, A.T. and Mapp, K.L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Mendoza, J., Katz, L.G., et.al. (2003). *Connecting with parents in the early years*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Young children learn by doing—by interacting with people and objects around them. To learn, they need to experience things again and again.

Ready To Learn uses the learning triangle to teach children skills and concepts by using PBS KIDS programs, books, and activities. Engage children in these theme-related activities in any order and at any time. Point out the connections between the segment they VIEW, the book they READ, and the activity they DO. The repetition and variety of media used reinforces the skills and concepts you teach.

_____Families Theme Learning Triangle_____

Families come in many different shapes and sizes. Sometimes our family is made up of people who aren't related to us by blood at all, but they are still a part of our family because they're the ones who love us and care for us. Understanding and building the relationships within a family between parents and children and brothers and sisters, is an important part of growing up.

READ IT

Mama Do You Love Me? by Barbara M. Joosse—A child living in the Arctic learns that a mother's love is unconditional. (Infant - Preschool) (This book is also available in Spanish.)

Alternate Titles:

1. *What Mommies Do Best What Daddies Do Best* by Laura Numeroff— Mothers and fathers participating in everyday activities show their love for their children in very similar ways. (Infant - Preschool)
2. *Whose Mouse Are You?* by Robert Kraus— A lonely little mouse has to be resourceful in order to bring his family back together. (Ages 4-8) (This book is also available in Spanish.)
3. *Families* by Ann Morris—Through spare, simple text and appealing color photographs, Morris shows readers that "all children-are part of families" and that they come in all sizes, nationalities, and configurations. (Ages 4-8)

VIEW IT

POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER – We Are Family #120

Friday, December 3, 2004 at 6:30 a.m.

Monday, December 6, 2004 at 6:30 a.m.

Friday, December 31, 2004 at 6:30 a.m.

While in Salt Lake City, Buster is invited to spend the day with of the Hirschis, a Mormon family and old friends of Bo. Buster learns firsthand what it takes to run a family of seven children, and he gains some perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of being an only child.

Alternate Titles:

MAYA & MIGUEL – Family Time #114

Wednesday, December 29, 2004 at 3:30 p.m.

Noticing that everyone in her family is overworked, overtired, and overstressed, Maya concludes that they all have been missing "family time" – quality time spent alone as a family. Maya and Miguel plan a camping trip to a state park – and do all the planning and packing themselves to make things easier on their parents and grandmother. But when they arrive at their campsite, the kids have forgotten some essentials, and rain, wildlife, and a capsized boat threaten to make their escape a disaster. In the end, however, the Santos family discovers the only thing they really need is time together.

CAILLOU – People I Love #205

Monday, December 20, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

This episode explores the special people in Caillou's life.

DO IT

1. Tell your child stories from your own childhood. Share the family photo album often, talking about the events that were photographed. Be sure to include pictures of when your child was a small baby. Talk about the people in the pictures and how they are related to each other. Think of different names for the person. For example: your mother's sister is your aunt.
2. Using family photos, create a memory card game using duplicate prints. Place photos on a tray or table in front of the child. With the child's eyes closed, remove one picture and see if he or she can tell which one is missing.
3. Make a family album, dedicating a special page to each child and including a family tree so the children can see who their grandparents are and other relatives they see and know. Include pages about favorite activities the family

enjoys, food they eat, homes and neighborhoods they live in. Children can decorate pages with drawings, pictures cut from magazines or photos from the family's collection.

4. Sing a song to help your child feel close to members of the family. It's also an opportunity to learn names. Teach this song beginning with the child's name and continue using names of immediate and extended family members.

(Tune: "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

Amber loves her brother Mark, brother Mark, brother Mark.

Amber loves her brother Mark. He is family.

_____Winter Theme Learning Triangle_____

Winter can be a fun and beautiful season for children. Help them learn about the season of winter and how to enjoy it. Talk about the things you can see and do in Iowa only in the winter.

READ IT

The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats—The adventures of a little boy in the city on a very snowy day. (Infant - Preschool) (This book is also available in Spanish.)

Alternate Titles:

1. *The Jacket I Wear in the Snow* by Shirley Neitzel— A young girl names all the clothes that she must wear to play in the snow. (Infant - Preschool)
2. *The Snow Family* by Daniel Kirk— A young boy decides to build a snow family to take care of his snowboy the way his parents take care of him. (Infant - Preschool)
3. *The Mitten: A Ukrainian Folktale* by Jan Brett—Several animals sleep snugly in Nicki's lost mitten until the bear sneezes. (Ages 4-8) (This book is also available in Spanish.)—

VIEW IT

READING RAINBOW – Snowy Day: Stories and Poems #805

Tuesday, December 14, 2004 at 12:30 p.m.

LeVar travels to Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where viewers experience a variety of ways to beat winter's chills and enjoy the thrills. Playing in the snow, constructing a snow person, riding in a horse sleigh and snowshoe hiking are a few of the things LeVar does in the snow. This episode also takes viewers to Alaska to find out about the Iditarod—a famous dog sled race.

Alternate Titles:

CAILLOU – Winter #121

Thursday, December 23, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

This episode features four segments where Caillou explores wintertime activities.

CAILLOU – It's Cold Outside! Brr! #208

Friday, December 24, 2004 at 8:30 a.m.

Three of the four segments in this episode features Caillou, his family, and friends enjoying the snow.

POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER – Winter Gold #118

Wednesday, December 29, 2004 at 6:30 a.m.

At the Utah Olympic Park, home of the 2002 Winter Olympics, Buster finds out what it really takes to be an Olympic athlete. He meets Squirt, a talented and dedicated ski jumper, who introduces Buster to the world of speed skaters, luge racers, and ski jumpers.

DO IT

1. Play outside as often as you can. Sledding, making snow angels, snowmen and "tracks" with sticks, hands and feet are just a few things you can do. Outdoor games like tag, Red Rover, hide-and-go-seek, all seem special and more fun when played in the snow.

2. Stuck indoors? Consider Freeze Tag or a version of Red Light/Green Light called Freeze/Thaw.

3. Bring in some snow and watch it melt. *Does a glass full of snow melt into a glass full of water? Why or why not? Does snow melt faster or slower when it is packed together into a snowball? Why or why not?*

4. Make a book about winter by cutting out pictures from magazines or catalogs or drawing winter related objects. Organize the book with a special page for each section: snow, winter coats, hats, scarves and mittens, winter sports, cold things, indoor warm things (fire, hot drinks, etc.) Sort pictures into piles and ask questions such as: *Which pile do you think this picture goes in? Why did you pick that pile?*

5. Snow pictures are a good way to help children think about winter. Clipping a piece of sponge to a clothespin to dip in paint or gluing cotton balls add dimension to winter pictures.
6. Have a snowball fight. You can even do this indoors by using crumpled up paper snowballs.

_____Program Schedule, Episode Descriptions and Record Rights for PBS Kids Programs_____

Finding Program Schedule and Episode Descriptions:

- * Go to Web site: iptv.org
- * Click on Educational Resources button at the top center of the page.
- * Click on the Today link under the Educational TV Schedule heading on the left side of the page toward the middle.
- * Click on the program you are interested in to find a description for today's episode of the program.
- * To find future episode descriptions, click on a date in the left column to find the description of the episode that will be shown on that specific date. Reading them will help you identify episodes that correspond to your curricular themes. The listed dates are the next 28 air dates of the program you've selected. Upcoming TV schedules on www.iptv.org are updated by the 15th of each month for the following month.

Record only, one year tape and erase. No duplication allowed.

What does that mean?

Educators may record a program from the broadcast. The recording may then be used in an educational setting and retained as long as that program airs on IPTV. No copies may be made from the original recording.

If available, educators also may borrow a recording from a lending library, such as the media centers in Iowa's Area Education Agencies.

_____Resources for December_____

Sesame Workshop's View & Do Newsletter—This monthly publication gives episode descriptions and activity tips for SESAME STREET and DRAGON TALES.

- * English: <http://www.iptv.org/kids/grownups/resources/documents/ViewDec04Engfinal.pdf>
- * Spanish: <http://www.iptv.org/kids/grownups/resources/documents/ViewDec04Spafinal.pdf>

Reading Rockets Current Newsletter—This monthly newsletter provides information for families and educators about teaching kids to read and helping those who struggle.

<http://www.readingrockets.org/subscribe/newsletter.php>

This month's Reading Rockets Newsletter highlights:

- * Put Downs & Comebacks: How to Respond to a Discouraged Kid
- * Join Our Chat With Dr. Sally Shaywitz on January 27
- * Sleepytime Books: November's Recommended Booklist
- * An Exclusive Interview With Chris Van Allsburg

NEWS ABOUT READING

- * "Somebody's Got to Be Crazy About That Kid"
- * The Fourth-Grade Reading Classroom

ESPECIALLY FOR PARENTS

- * Six Games for Reading
- * Conversations in Child Care
- * Poster, Stickers, and Bookmarks for Your Guy

ESPECIALLY FOR EDUCATORS

- * Word Study: A New Approach to Teaching Spelling
- * The Gift of Reading
- * Teaching Fluency With Maryanne Wolf
- * 42 Pages of Graphic Organizers and Generic Patterns

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood—Fall Edition (November-January) of the Neighborhood News Newsletter—This quarterly newsletter helps families and care providers plan their viewing of MISTER ROGERS' NEIGHBORHOOD by providing schedules, descriptions, activities, book suggestions, and timely articles of interest to adults who work with children.

<http://www.fci.org/newsletter/>

Themes for December:

November 29-December 3 – Celebrating the Arts

December 6-10 – Music

December 13-17 – Sharing

December 20-24 – Giving and Receiving

December 27-31 – Celebrations

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood *Mad Feelings* Newsletter—A monthly newsletter dealing with anger management and challenging behaviors in young children, including articles, activities and tips.

<http://www.fci.org/madfeelings/default.asp>

PBS Parents Electronic Newsletter

Each week the PBS Parents electronic newsletter brings you activities from your child's favorite programs, events in your local community, and headlines from the PBS Parents site. To receive this FREE electronic newsletter, subscribe at the following Web site:

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/> (The link is towards the bottom of the page.)

_____Tip of the Month_____

The following information comes directly from the November issue of the BOOK FUN NEWS Newsletter. Each month, Jim Kaisen, Ph.D., associate professor at Western Illinois University and Karen Hindhede, M.A., Blackhawk College, put together a one-page newsletter designed to encourage parents and caregivers to read to children. In fact, BOOK FUN NEWS is so committed to sharing the love and importance of reading with caregivers that it allows anyone to copy the information in the newsletter and pass it to other interested adults. If you are interested in receiving the BOOK FUN NEWS newsletter each month, send a request to BookFunNews@aol.com and ask to be added to their list.

+++++++

BOOK FUN NEWS for November 2004

Recommended Read Alouds:

* *Pajama Time!* by Sandra Boynton pays rhythmic, rhyming homage to pulling on one's pajamas for bedtime. The cartoon drawings of various animals wearing a wide variety of PJ's add a great deal to the party like atmosphere of this book. Parents may find themselves wanting to read this book aloud as often as their children will request it. Very highly recommended. (Infants to Toddlers)

* *When Sophie Gets Angry- Really, Really Angry...* by award winning author/illustrator Molly Bang deals quite realistically with the strong feelings of anger felt by children. Sophie loses a tug of war with her sister over a favorite stuffed gorilla. The brightly colored illustrations show how incensed Sophie becomes. How will Sophie deal with such strong feelings? The answer may help your child deal with his/her frustrations. (Toddler to Kindergarten)

JUST FOR PARENTS:

“You may have tangible wealth untold:

Caskets of jewels and coffers of gold.

Richer than I you can never be-

I had a mother who read to me.”

“The Reading Mother” by Strickland Gillilan found in *The Read Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease

_____IPTV Children's Fall 2004 Schedule_____

This schedule is provided to assist children, their families, and child care providers as they plan their television viewing.

Monday—Friday

6:30 a.m. Postcards from Buster
7:00 a.m. Arthur
7:30 a.m. Clifford the Big Red Dog
8:00 a.m. Dragon Tales
8:30 a.m. Caillou
9:00 a.m. Sesame Street
10:00 a.m. Barney & Friends
10:30 a.m. The Berenstain Bears
11:00 a.m. The Big Comfy Couch
11:30 a.m. Boohbah
Noon Between the Lions
12:30 p.m. Reading Rainbow
1:00 p.m. Classroom TV
2:30 p.m. Mister Rogers' Neighborhood
3:00 p.m. ZOOM
3:30 p.m. Maya & Miguel
4:00 p.m. Clifford the Big Red Dog
4:30 p.m. Arthur
5:00 p.m. Dragon Tales

Sunday

8:30 a.m. Angelina Ballerina
9:00 a.m. Clifford's Puppy Days
9:30 a.m. Thomas & Friends

_____Series Spotlight_____

POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER airs weekdays at 6:30 a.m.

Program Summary

POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER is a new and innovative blend of animation and live action starring Arthur's best friend, Buster. Buster's dad, a pilot, is flying Los Viajeros, a rock group, on a North American tour and he's invited Buster to come along. Buster's mom has given him a video camera so he can record his new friendships and discoveries and send "video postcards" back to his pals in Elwood City.

Designed to delight and intrigue young audiences, POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER has two key educational goals: to build awareness and appreciation of the many cultures in America and to support the language learning of children in the process of acquiring English.

In each episode, Buster travels to a new location and meets new kids and families. The kids invite Buster (and us, the viewers) into their lives, sharing their enthusiasms, experiences, and family cultures. These children reflect the many different voices and faces of young Americans today. Many of them are bilingual and/or bicultural.

Buster is a curious and open learner, always ready for fun and adventure. As he meets new people and explores new places, he models the language young English learners need in order to find their way around, make new friends, learn more about other people's lives, interests, and cultures, and share information about themselves.

Each episode features key vocabulary and sentence structures in a natural, authentic way. Key language is introduced in the opening song and then woven throughout the animation and live action segments.

Educational Philosophy

Targeted at children aged 4-18, POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER has two key educational goals:

1. Build awareness and appreciation of the many cultures of North America.
2. Support elementary school-age English Language Learners.

To learn more about the series, visit the "Parents & Teachers" section of the POSTCARDS FROM BUSTER Web site:

<http://pbskids.org/buster/parents/index.html>

_____Subscribe/Unsubscribe_____

If you received this message from a friend, you can sign up for IPTV's Ready To Learn eNews by going to <http://www.iptv.org/enews.cfm>. From there you will be able to select from a variety of lists from IPTV to help you be more connected.

If you would like to unsubscribe from the IPTV's Ready To Learn eNews please go to <http://www.iptv.org/enews.cfm> or respond to this email with "Remove" as the subject line. Feel free to forward this message to a friend.