

*Maine Parent Federation's
Family Life Calendar
Because Every Family Matters*



August 2010 – August 2011

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Please contact me at



Maine Parent Federation
Since 1984 . . . because every family matters

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Maine Parent Federation's ***Family Life Calendar***

August 2010 – August 2011

Maine Parent Federation (MPF) first created this calendar in 2008, inspired by a calendar offered through the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center. Originally focused on school life, we have expanded the theme this year to “Family Life”, including articles that are relevant to school, home and community. We would like to thank NAMI Maine for their help in the planning and design of this year’s calendar. We hope that you find this calendar helpful when keeping track of all your family’s appointments, activities and special events. The calendar can be used to write down important dates, homework assignments, medical appointments, community events, or to record other information that is useful to you and your family.

As a statewide family organization that provides information and referral, support and workshops to families and other professionals, MPF believes that families are their child’s first and most important teacher and advocate. This calendar is just one of many publications we offer to encourage and support ALL parents to increase their role in every aspect of their children’s lives.

Through its projects, individuals can receive information and technical assistance in a variety of ways including: print materials, Parents as Teachers home visitation program (in Kennebec and Somerset counties), Parent-to-Parent of Maine support, workshops, telephone and email support, newsletter, website information and lending library.

MPF, a non-profit organization, is able to provide this support and strengthen the voice of families in Maine through numerous state and federal grant awards and private donations.

For more information on any of the topics in this calendar, please contact Maine Parent Federation.

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27	28	29	30	<p>A child educated only at school is an uneducated child. -- George Santayana</p>		

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29	30	<u>Notes:</u>		<p>Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">-- James Baldwin</p>		

Using Behavior Strategies Effectively

You might feel exasperated with your children when they behave in an undesirable manner. Here are a few tips for using behavior strategies effectively.

1. Stay calm and quiet
2. Listen reflectively to your child's point of view
3. Be sure you genuinely understand your child's feelings
4. Be sure your child understands what s/he was **not** supposed to say or do
5. Keep what you say simple and short
6. Be consistent and predictable
7. If you take actions, do it soon
8. Keep the consequence short
9. Keep the consequence small
10. Avoid threatening
11. Always give your child a chance to redeem him/herself, and redirect to appropriate behavior
12. When it's over, it's over

Using Your Behavior Plan

All kids misbehave, but when the behavior goes beyond the typical expectations for a child, parents may want to consider a behavior plan. A good behavior plan can make a big difference in how a child with a challenging behavior acts and reacts in different settings.

1. Look for patterns and cues
2. Structure your child's environment for success
 - Daily schedule
 - Plan for change in schedule
 - Pick the playmates and toys
 - Keep 'em busy
3. Label and praise good behavior
4. Use the right reward system for your child
 - Think social not material rewards when possible
 - Use immediate rewards
 - Relate the reward to the behavior
 - Reward empathy and responsibility
5. Try a "time-in" instead of a "time-out" (time with the child vs. time away from the child)

For more information on behavior strategies/plans, call MPF and ask for an information packet.

Recess—It's Indispensable!

Most of us remember recess as an important part of the school day. It was a time to be outdoors; to organize our own games; to play on the swings, slides and other playground equipment; or to just hang out with friends. In contrast, children today are likely to have 10 to 15 minutes of outdoor playtime during the school day, if they're lucky.

A recent study in *Pediatrics* (Barros, Silver, & Stein 2009), using a national data set of 11,000 children, found that 30% of third-graders had fewer than 15 minutes of recess a day. Recess time is often cut because of academic pressures or as punishment.

There is considerable research to suggest that recess has many benefits for children in the cognitive, social-emotional and physical domains.

A few of the benefits are listed below:

- Children are less fidgety and more on-task when they have recess and children with ADHD (attention deficit/ hyperactivity disorder) are among those who benefit most.
- Research on memory and attention shows that recall is improved when learning is spaced out rather than concentrated. Recess provides breaks during which the brain can "regroup".
- Brain research shows a relationship between physical activity and the development of brain connections.
- On the playground, children exercise leadership, teach games to one another, take turns and learn to resolve conflicts.
- Intervention programs during recess can successfully improve social skills.
- Children who are active during the day are more active after school, whereas children who are sedentary during the day tend to remain sedentary after school (couch potato syndrome).
- Teachers rated children's behavior as better in classes where children had at least 15 minutes of recess (Barros, Silver, & Stein 2009).

Depriving a child of recess as punishment is similar to depriving a child of lunch. It is not only unfair, it is also unhelpful. Just as hungry children cannot concentrate well, children deprived of breaks cannot concentrate well either. Sometimes the most disruptive children need recess the most.


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For more information on recess, call MPF and ask to speak with an Information Specialist.

December 2010

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28	Notes:			<p><i>When one door of happiness closes, another opens, but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one that has been opened for us.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>-- Helen Keller</i></p>		

Bullying

Bullying is when someone (or a group) tries to harm someone else by direct attacks such as hitting, name-calling, teasing/taunting or spreading rumors. Bullying can also happen online or electronically. This is referred to as cyber-bullying and involves the use of the Internet, cell phone or other technology.

Children who are bullied experience real suffering that causes stress and anxiety. Some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide to escape the harassment and punishment. The effects of bullying can last a lifetime.

Some warning signs that your child is being bullied include:

- ★ Unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches and torn clothing
- ★ Appears afraid of going to school, riding the bus or takes a long 'illogical' route when walking to and from school
- ★ Loss of interest in school work and/or sudden drop in grades
- ★ Appears sad, moody, teary or depressed
- ★ Complains of physical ailments and has trouble sleeping
- ★ Experiences loss of appetite
- ★ Has few, if any, friends with whom he or she spends time

These signs do not necessarily mean that your child is being bullied, but it is worth exploring. Talk with your child and school personnel to learn more.

Source: www.education.com

For more information on bullying, here are some helpful websites:

www.education.com/topic/school-bullying-teasing/
www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/bullying
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/bullying.html



*For more information on bullying,
call MPF's Lending Library.*

Cyber-Safety

The Internet has opened up a world of information that is available to anyone with a computer and Internet connection. The first step to reducing online safety risks is talking to your child about what they should and shouldn't do online. Most Internet service providers and computers offer parental controls but that is no substitute for direct supervision.

- ★ Set guidelines for computer use at home and when using a friend's or relative's computer outside of your home
- ★ Know your child's passwords
- ★ Keep the computer in a central location within the home so that you can view your child's activity
- ★ Pay attention to the websites your child visits and monitor who they meet/chat with online
- ★ Encourage your child to tell you if they receive threatening or offensive Emails or messages
- ★ Talk with your child about cyber-bullying
- ★ Tell your child to never give out their full name, address, the name of the school they attend, telephone number, or send photos without your permission
- ★ Limit the amount of time your child spends on the computer each day

Source: www.fbi.gov

Here are some websites with more information:

www.ncpc.org
www.fbi.gov/kids/k5th/safety2.htm
www.cyber-safety.com/parents.html

*For more information on cyber-safety,
call MPF and ask to speak with an Information Specialist.*

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Transitions and Special Education

Children with disabilities often go through several changes throughout the school years, but the two most important and often most stressful, are the transition from preschool services to kindergarten, and the transition from public school services to adulthood.

Preschool to Public School: Preparing for the Transition

If you are the parent of a preschooler who has a disability, you may feel anxious about the move to kindergarten. This transition from preschool to public school is a big step, so it understandably causes you and your child some fear as well as excitement. The best thing you can do to help your child make the change is to get yourself prepared. Then you can relax and concentrate on easing the way for your child.

1. To get specific ideas about the kindergarten program, ask for a copy of the curriculum and look for areas that match your child's strengths and those that may need special attention. Some activities to consider are:
 - Visit kindergarten classes to see their routines and activities
 - Talk to other parents who have been through the transition
 - Attend meetings for all parents of children entering kindergarten
 - Ask the preschool staff and providers for suggestions
 - Ask the kindergarten teacher for suggestions
2. Think about your hopes for your child -- for kindergarten and well into the future. Make a list of long-term goals you would like to see your child achieve; then write down the skills he or she will need to learn in order to reach them.

3. Invite school personnel to get to know your child. Ask them to observe in the preschool or to visit your home. Talk with them about your child's likes and dislikes and your family's values and goals. You may also want to share your fears and dreams for your child. Encourage them to ask you questions and share their concerns.

Planning for Transition to Adulthood

In Maine, transition planning must begin no later than 9th grade. All students with disabilities should receive transition planning as part of their IEP meetings. The student and his or her IEP team create a vision for the future, and then each year specific goals and services are identified to work toward that vision. This plan becomes part of the student's IEP. Transition is a process that builds on itself each year, and goals evolve and change as the student gets older and gains new insights.

Transition planning should focus on these issues:

- Assessment specific to transition preferences, needs, strengths and interests
- Instruction
- Related services
- Community experiences
- Employment

and, if needed,

- Vocational evaluation
- Daily living skills
- Connecting with community agencies

Adapted from: Worried about what path your child will take after high school? Transition Planning can help you with the answers..., retrieved May 29, 2009 from the website: transitioncoalition.org/transition/tcfiles/files/docs/tp_brochure1213214652.pdf/tp_brochure.pdf

***For more information on transitions,
call MPF and ask for an information packet.***

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27		28		29		30		<p><i>If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much.</i></p> <p><i>-- Marian Wright Edelman</i></p>					

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AIM: Accessible Instructional Materials

In most schools, print-based instructional materials are a prime way of delivering curricular content. This system works fine for many learners. But for others—those who struggle to read because of physical, sensory, cognitive or learning differences—such materials may not be appropriate for learning.

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) are specialized formats that can be used by and with print-disabled learners. They include Braille, audio, large print and electronic text.

Schools need to provide instructional materials in accessible formats in a timely manner. The State of Maine requires that children with print disabilities receive specialized instructional materials at the same time as students without print disabilities.

Source: Maine AIM website -- aim.mainecite.org

For more information on accessible instructional materials, call MPF and ask to speak with an Information Specialist.

Extended School Year Services (ESY)

Your child may receive special education services called extended school year services (ESY) if the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team feels that he or she will be unable to recoup any loss of critical skills within a reasonable period of time. These services are not meant to assist the student in acquiring new skills or behaviors, but are a way for the child to maintain their current skills.

The IEP team considers three factors when deciding if a child is eligible for ESY:

1. The significance (nature/severity) of the child's disability
2. The progress toward the goals contained in the child's IEP
3. The impact of previous service interruptions and the probability that the child is unable to recoup, in a reasonable amount of time, skills previously mastered.

The team will determine what specific, critical skills are most vulnerable to significant regression and how best they can be addressed. The ESY services will become part of the child's IEP.

For more information on extended school year services, call MPF to request an information packet.

Suicide Prevention

If you are concerned that your child may have suicidal thoughts, talk with your child about your concerns and seek professional help from your family doctor or a mental health professional. Children and teens who are suicidal can heal with the support of their family and the appropriate treatment.

Many of the signs and symptoms of suicidal thoughts are similar to depression, such as:

- ★ Personality change
- ★ Violent or rebellious behaviors
- ★ Unusual neglect of personal appearance/hygiene
- ★ Loss of interest in hobbies/activities
- ★ Change in sleeping and/or eating habits
- ★ Sudden drop in grades, difficulty concentrating, complaints of boredom
- ★ Withdrawal from friends and family

Other signs:

- ★ Complaints of feeling like a bad person
- ★ Verbal hints - "Nothing matters anymore", "Don't worry, I won't be a problem much longer"
- ★ Reckless/high risk behavior(s)
- ★ Giving or throwing away prized possessions
- ★ Mood swings from feeling depressed to suddenly appearing happy

Source: aacap.org
Adapted from *Teen Suicide*

Here are some websites with additional information:

www.namimaine.org
www.maine.gov/suicide
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

For more information on suicide prevention, call MPF's Lending Library.