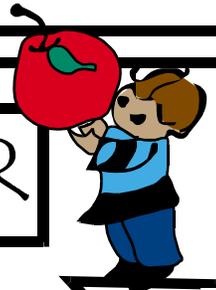


# AN APPLE FOR THE TEACHER

February, 2006

Volume 9



## Section 1: An Overview of Volume Focus

Application of  
Personal &  
Professional  
Learning  
Experience

Welcome again to **APPLE**—a newsletter for kindergarten teachers. And, we hope, soon to be read by teachers in the Four Year Old At-Risk program as they also begin to participate in a project with KSDE. This volume will examine one of the articles from the January, 2006 Young Children. The focus of the Young Children volume is family—a topic that is very important to teachers. **Section 2** will give an overview of the article “*Understand Families: Applying Family Systems Theory to Early Childhood Practice*”. Teachers and schools know that when they interact

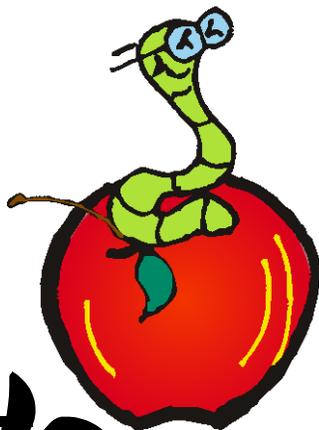
with children, they interact with families. Hopefully, this article will provide some support to you in your work with families and children.

The state update (**Section 3**) will provide you with an update of the fall 2006 training. It will look a bit different from last year’s training (and it WON’T be in August, we are sure you will be glad to hear!) as well as some other updates on the work we are doing.

**Section 4** is the application portion of the newsletter, but as in the last APPLE, we are going to include something a bit different. We will provide you with the overview of the preliminary results for the School Readiness Project. You have done your work—now we need to do our part. Check out the preliminary results of the fall 2005 data collection. We will put this in a handout format and attach it to the newsletter. Remember, it is PRELIMINARY. Look it over and see what you think.

Finally, **Section 5** provides a list of resources, websites, and conferences that might be of interest to you. This time we have listed several websites and other resources that came from the January 2006 Young Children and from state resources as well. Enjoy!

As always, we appreciate you and all the work that you do. Please address any comments, suggestions, or questions to the editor, Gayle Stuber. (785-296-5352 or [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org))





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## Section 2:

*Understanding Families: Applying family systems theory to early childhood practice, Vol. 61, #1, pp. 12-20.*

The author, Linda B. Christian, begins with the statement that “working with families is one of the most important aspects of being an early childhood professional” (p.12). This is true for kindergarten teachers (who are also early childhood professionals), as well as for other early childhood educators. Christian makes her opinion clear: “to serve children well, we must work with their families” (p.12) and to do this, teachers need to understand the families from which their children come. As with children, families are different—but all have some characteristics in common.

Family systems theory focuses on family behavior (rather than individual behaviors) and can be useful to explain why members of a family behave in the ways that they do. There are six characteristics of a family as a system that the author believes will be relevant for teachers and other early childhood professionals: boundaries, roles, rules, hierarchy, climate, and equilibrium. Knowledge of these characteristics can provide the understanding necessary to build relationships with the families of your children. The author provides a short description for each of the six characteristics as well as ideas for working with families.

1. **Boundaries:** These relate to limits, identity of family members within and outside of the family. There are two types of families: disengaged and enmeshed. Neither is ‘better’—just different. *Teachers should:*
  - a. Recognize different parenting styles and families boundaries
  - b. Avoid stereotypes
  - c. Recognize that for some families everything is a family affair.
  - d. Balance children’s activities and curriculum to incorporate both individual and group identify.
  - e. Respect families’ need for control.
2. **Roles:** Individual family members have roles and each role has certain behavioral expectations. Therefore, some children may have difficulty

learning ‘new’ roles within the classroom structure. *Teachers should:*

- a. Give children ample opportunity for role play, in both structured and unstructured situations.
  - b. Observe children carefully.
  - c. Help families recognize their children’s many and varied strengths.
3. **Rules:** These are sets of standards, laws, or traditions that tell family members how to interact and live together. Rules may be spoken or unspoken. Teachers should:
    - a. Make distinctions between home rules and school rules.
    - b. Watch for unspoken rules.
    - c. Ask for families’ input and assistance when conflict arises over rules.
  4. **Hierarchy:** A family structure related to decision making, control, and power in the family. The basis for the hierarchy differs across families and may differ according to culture and other traditions. Teachers should:
    - a. Engage in careful and keen observation of the family (e.g. who answers the phone).
    - b. Note the signs that a family’s hierarchy is in the process of changing.
    - c. Watch out for hierarchies emerging in the classroom and on the playground.
  5. **Climate:** This is the emotional and physical environments in which a child grows up. Teachers should:
    - a. Provide opportunities for families to discuss their beliefs about children.
    - b. Create a classroom climate of safety, positive feedback and guidelines, and healthy sensory experiences.
  6. **Equilibrium:** This is the balance or consistency within a family. Rituals and customs often keep



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a family together during times of stress or change. Teachers should:

- a. Consider inviting a trained family professional too facilitate discussion when a big change is impacting a number of families (e.g., economic changes, school re-districting)
- b. Provide as much consistency as possible during school

- c. Encourage families to plan ways to increase stability and security.

The author concludes by noting that each family is unique, as is each teacher. The key to supporting families and a 'win-win' situation is to be aware, willing, sincere, and to show respect in your interactions with families.

## Section 3:

### An Update from the State

#### School Readiness Project



As was noted in the last APPLE, the School Readiness Project has (thanks to all of you!) completed the first data collection (fall 2005). We received child data from 232 kindergarten teachers on 2367 kindergarten children. The preliminary results are attached to this APPLE.

We are planning on training all kindergarten teachers who did NOT attend a face-to-face training last year. We plan to provide the training through ITV (interactive TV) so that you will not have to travel far to a site. The training date will come out soon (this week, we hope!), but are planned for dates across the month April and into May. We have included one early evening session and a Saturday morning session. You will be happy to know that we have cut down the training and focused only on the assessment instruments. The trainings should take about 2 1/2 hours at the most, and should be a bit less, depending upon your questions and comments.

We would like to have some mentor teachers (those who participated this year) help with the trainings by being there and handing out papers. We have some funds to help pay for your time. We will be contacting some of you soon to ask if you can help us. If you are interested, please let Gayle know at [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org)

We are hoping to provide a larger stipend that should cover college credit costs (at Friends University).

However, due to a funder who backed out of the project, we have had to discontinue the payment of a membership in NAEYC and KAEYC. The stipend should cover most of that membership (approximately \$51 each) if you want to either maintain your membership or become a new member. The APPLE will continue to summarize at least one article in the Young Children journal. For information on membership, go to [www.kaeyc.org](http://www.kaeyc.org) or send Gayle an email at [Stuber@ksde.org](mailto:Stuber@ksde.org).

Also, as an FYI—we are going to start collecting child data and classroom data on the Four Year Old At-Risk children and programs. We have a KELI for four year olds (the KELI-4) and have developed a set of classroom questions based upon the Quality Early Childhood Standards document developed in Kansas.

Finally, as of fall 2006, we have enough funds to add an observation of a sampling of both kindergarten and four year old at-risk classrooms. We will use the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) which should provide information that supports the practices that we all know promote child learning in kindergarten and all grades—more interaction between teachers and students. In other words, more support for all-day kindergarten!

If you are interested, have questions, or need more information, please contact Gayle Stuber at [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org) or Renee' Patrick at [rpatrick@ksde.org](mailto:rpatrick@ksde.org).





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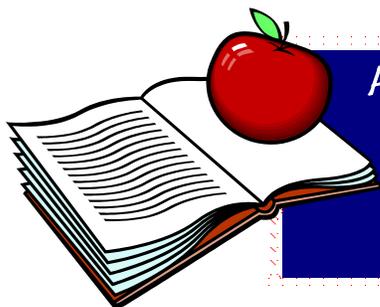


## Section 4:

### School Readiness in Kansas

The School Readiness Project has (thanks to all of you!) completed the first data collection (fall 2005). We are working to set up the training and other materials for next year and hope that we will be able to encourage more teachers to participate. If you were unable to participate this year, but would like to next year, please keep us in mind. This is our chance to provide hard data that supports the best practices that we all want for our students! So—Thanks to all of you who are participants, and we look forward to working

with you all and MORE next year! More information on trainings and meetings around the state will come to you late next month. We are hoping to provide a larger stipend that should cover college credit costs (at Friends University) as well as continued membership in NAEYC and KAEYC. If you are interested, have questions, or need more information, please contact Gayle Stuber at [gstuber@ksde.org](mailto:gstuber@ksde.org) or Renee' Patrick at [rpatrick@ksde.org](mailto:rpatrick@ksde.org)



*Please be aware that this project provides crucial data that support the Governor's Early Childhood initiative—which includes funding for all-day kindergarten.*

## Section 5:

### SEEDS of Knowledge and Resources

- a. For a copy of the brochure, go to [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)
- b. Some websites quoted in Young Children are:
  - i. Early years are learning years (NAEYC) [www.naeyc.org/ece/eyly](http://www.naeyc.org/ece/eyly)
  - ii. National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education [www.ncpie.org](http://www.ncpie.org)
  - iii. Parents as Teachers [www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org)
  - iv. Zero to Three resources for families:

[www.zerotothree.org/ztt\\_parentAZ.html](http://www.zerotothree.org/ztt_parentAZ.html)

### 2. Conferences:

- a. KSDE Annual conference—April 26–28, 2006. (There will be early childhood/kindergarten sessions!) [www.ksde.org](http://www.ksde.org)
- b. KAEYC Annual Conference –October 21, 2006 in Manhattan. They are accepting proposals so if any of you want to present on your school readiness work or action research—here is the place and the time! [www.kaeyc.org](http://www.kaeyc.org)

