

PARENT CONNECTIONS

A Newsletter for First Steps Families ♦ Spring 2012

First Steps Annual Family Survey

Each year, the Missouri Office of Special Education mails a survey to all families currently participating in the First Steps program. The purpose of the survey is to gather valuable feedback from parents about their experiences with First Steps and provide families an opportunity to have their voices heard. The survey results are used to determine how the program is doing and plan for improvements.

In April 2011, a total of 4,724 surveys were mailed to families, and 1,078 were returned (a return rate of 27 percent).

Highlights from the 2011 family survey include:

- 97 percent of respondents said that First Steps service providers were effective and knowledgeable in working with the child's disability.
- 97 percent of respondents said that First Steps services helped them and/or their family to participate in everyday routines even though they have a child with special needs.
- 98 percent of respondents said that First Steps services helped them be more optimistic about their child's future.
- 98 percent of respondents said that First Steps service providers listened to them and respected their opinions.
- 98 percent of respondents said that First Steps services gave their family the tools to directly improve their child's development.
- 98 percent of respondents said that First Steps services helped them and/or their family to feel more confident in their skills as a parent/guardian.

To view the complete 2011 survey results, please go to dese.mo.gov/se/fs/data.html#annual.

2012 Family Survey Information

Families in the First Steps program should watch their mailbox in April or May for the 2012 Family Survey.

The First Steps survey provides you with an opportunity to make your opinion known. Your responses will be completely anonymous, and no one will be able to link your answers to you (unless you provide your name and contact information). There is no cost to submit the survey – a self-addressed stamped envelope is included.

The First Steps Program wants the survey results to represent all families in First Steps, so it is very important that you complete and return the survey.



A Missouri Family's Story

By Christine of Wentzville, Mo.

Our daughter, Madeline, was born five weeks premature and had complications during delivery. When Madeline was 2 years old, we were put in touch with First Steps. When we started, our daughter was speaking only a few words, could only walk a few steps and would not use her left side. Her speech therapist was able to give us ideas for some alternative ways to communicate with our daughter. The most helpful way for us was cards for her to point at. The cards allowed her to communicate to us what she needed such as milk, water, more, etc. We were able to implement these ideas immediately, which greatly reduced Madeline's frustration. This was a huge stepping stone to get her to effectively communicate with us.

Madeline's physical therapist was able to help by always bringing new ideas to keep it fun. The therapist was never short of ideas to keep our daughter happy while she worked. The therapist gave us suggestions such as throwing pillows on the floor so our daughter has to crawl over them or making tunnels for her to crawl through. Not only is it helping our daughter's balance and overall strength, she loves doing it.

Our daughter's occupational therapist was fabulous, too! She not only worked on Madeline's weakness, but she incorporated learning in all of the sessions. We used different colored blocks, play dough, pencils, etc., so she was working on stacking, strength, or writing as well as learning her colors, counting and sorting, too. The therapists would always include us in every session so we would know how to best help our daughter when the therapists went home. This left us feeling confident and empowered. In addition, our team was able to give us great references to local doctors and other resources. They also provided personal support and understanding for what we were going through.

After a year in First Steps, our daughter speaks in complete sentences, walks, climbs, colors and socializes with other children. We don't just have a service coordinator and therapists, but friends who we love. We cannot begin to express our gratitude to the First Steps program and providers. We can't imagine where our daughter would be today if we would not have had early intervention from First Steps!

Just for Fun...Painted Toast

Materials

- 2 tablespoons milk
- Food coloring
- New (clean) paintbrush
- White bread
- Toaster

Directions

1. Mix the milk with a few drops of food coloring in a small container.
2. Use a paintbrush to paint designs or faces on the bread.
3. Then toast the bread, butter it, and eat it, or use it to make a sandwich.



To read more about this activity from Family Education, visit: fun.familyeducation.com/cooking/recipes/36814.html#ixzz1iMLX9Qjs.



Office of Special Education
205 Jefferson St., P.O. Box 480
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480
Website: dese.mo.gov/se/fs

Phone: 573-522-8762
Fax: 573-526-4404

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Office of the General Counsel, Coordinator – Civil Rights Compliance (Title VI/Title IX/504/ADA/Age Act), 6th Floor, 205 Jefferson Street, P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or TTY 800-735-2966; fax number 573-522-4883; email civilrights@dese.mo.gov.