

Contents...

Rewards for Children	2
The Pros and Cons of a Casein-free Diet	3
Boonslick School Opens Technology Learning Lab	4
Students Celebrate Chinese New Year	4

Parent Focus

March 2012

Missouri Schools for the Severely Disabled

Managing Behavior at Home

By Becky Brozovich, Home-School Coordinator, Lakeview Woods School

Consistency and clear expectations are the foundation of obtaining the type of behavior we want to see in all children – especially in children with special needs. We will have the best success if parents or caregivers have a similar philosophy and use some of the same techniques used at school.

Some specific ideas and techniques used at school that parents may want to try at home include:

- Use as few words as possible to get a point across to your child. Parents often use sentences when a few well-chosen words will suffice. For example say, “please sit” rather than “You need to get back in your seat. We’re trying to have a nice dinner here and you have no business wandering around the kitchen.”
- Use the same words to get the same point across. Be consistent.
- When your child’s hands are where they need to be, he or she will be less likely to touch others and touch objects inappropriately. At school, we remind students to use their hands appropriately and to have their hands in place to learn. To help teach this at home, a few techniques you may want to use are: social stories, putting handprints on a place mat to help your child keep their hands on the table, modeling for your child by showing them where their hands need to be, and singing songs about where their hands need to be.
- Discuss with your child’s teacher words and phrases to use when communicating with your child. Use the same phrases in different environments.
- Decide which behaviors are most important to you and focus on a few. Don’t sweat the small stuff! Does your child really need to wear shoes all the time? Does your child really need to eat all the food on their plate? Work around the behavior if possible.
- Let your child make choices when possible. This helps with increasing their level of independence and builds a sense of pride and self-worth.
- Praise a lot, at a ratio of five positive comments for each negative comment. Decide which behaviors you want to see and when you see your child showing progress in achieving the behavior, provide verbal praise. Everyone likes and responds to kind words and praise, and this is a great motivator. ➔

Key Reminders:

- Use few words to make point
- Be consistent across environments
- Let your child make choices
- Help hands stay where they need to be
- Stay calm
- Take a time out if needed
- Catch your child being good
- Reward desired behaviors
- Be consistent
- Keep things structured



- Talk to your child's teacher about the techniques you use effectively at home and ask what works at school.
- Stay calm, at least on the outside. Children are very aware of body language and other non-verbal cues. If you use a calm voice, keep a neutral facial expression, and keep your cool – you are modeling for your child. Staying calm also can help avoid power struggles. No one wins in a power struggle.
- Take a time out if you need to. Every parent has times in which they need to just step away from a situation in order to keep calm. All parents get tired and frustrated. Parenting is not an easy job.
- When there are things your child has to do, tell them in a firm tone of voice and use the “broken record” technique. Tell them calmly but firmly what they need to do.
- Anticipate when your child may have behavioral difficulty at home and in the community. For example, if your child gets cranky when hungry and you plan a drive, have snacks available; or if loud unexpected sounds can set off behaviors, try using headphones with calm music.
- Use structure as much as possible. All kids – especially those with special needs – thrive on predictability. Children are comforted by knowing that they can expect certain things at certain times, both at school and at home. Schedules work great for kids with special needs.
- Get outside help if your child has behaviors that are hurtful to himself or others.

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More Ideas for Rewards for Children

- Write a story with your child as the main character.
- Take a nature walk and collect rocks, leaves, sticks, etc.
- Check with a local appliance store to obtain a refrigerator box and turn it into a play house, puppet theater, rocket ship, etc. for your child.
- Allow your child to wear a special piece of jewelry that belongs to you for the day.
- Take your child for a ride or walk and look for items that begin with a certain letter or are a certain color or shape.
- Make sock puppets with your child and then have a puppet show.
- Take your child to the local fire department to see a fire truck (as long as department employees are not busy).
- Cut out paper stars and decorate them with your child then place them on the ceiling in your child's bedroom.
- Make a grab bag with rewards written on a piece of paper and then let your child pick their reward from the bag.
- Allow your child to choose a story for the family to read together.
- Let your child ride to and from school with you rather than ride the bus.
- Help your child make a picture to frame for for your office.
- Surprise your child with a scavenger hunt around the house. Use pictures for clues as to where the next item is hidden.
- Make a story on the computer using Microsoft PowerPoint or some other graphics software with your child as the main character.
- Let your child take pictures with a digital camera and then print them to make a book to share with grandparents.
- Start a family story at the dinner table and each family member adds to the story. Allow your child to start and finish the story.
- Allow your child to earn five minutes to stay up late or sleep in the morning.
- Let him help you with the laundry and reward him with his favorite dessert.
- Let your child choose the route to drive home, having them tell you when to turn left or right and see where you end up.
- Check with your local humane society to see if they allow children to volunteer to feed and water the animals. If so, let your child earn the privilege to visit the shelter to assist with the animals.

The Pros and Cons of a Casein-free Diet

By Merv Blunt, Central Office

A casein-free diet is an eating plan in which milk protein (casein) is eliminated by removing all dairy products and all foods containing casein from the diet. It is often used in combination with a gluten-free diet, which calls for the elimination of wheat, barley, rye, oats and any products made from these grains. Both diets are called elimination diets because a particular type of food is virtually eliminated from the child's meals.

Casein is a protein found in dairy products and other foods containing dairy or lactose. Even foods claiming to be dairy-free or lactose-free contain casein. Casein is an ingredient in many milk products, such as cheese, cream, butter, yogurt, ice cream, whey and even some brands of margarine. It is also used as a food additive in lunch meats, canned tuna or chicken and has also been found to be an ingredient in McDonald's french fries.

Many soy products use casein as a binder. It may be added to non-milk products such as soy cheese and hot dogs in the form of caseinate. Because many soy products and imitation dairy products also contain casein, it's important to read labels carefully when following a strict casein-free diet.

There is growing interest in the link between autism and gastrointestinal (GI) ailments. A study by the University of California Davis Health System found that children with autism born in the 1990s were more likely to have gastrointestinal problems, including constipation, diarrhea and vomiting, than autistic children who were born in the early 1980s.

Some advocates of dietary intervention suggest removing one food from the diet at a time, so you will know which food is causing a problem. In a casein-free diet it is often suggested to remove milk first because the body will clear itself of milk/casein the quickest. Typically, most advocates

Casein is a protein found in dairy products and other foods containing dairy or lactose.

suggest giving the diet a trial of six months. It also is helpful to ask people who do not know about the dietary change if they see any improvements in behavior after a few weeks.

Like the gluten-free diet, most of the success stories related to a casein-free diet are mainly anecdotal, and there is little scientific evidence that a casein-free diet has a positive effect on students with autism. Some parents and doctors say that children have shown mild to dramatic improvements in speech and/or behavior after casein was removed from their diet. Some parents have also reported that their children have experienced fewer bouts of constipation and diarrhea since starting a casein-free diet.

A casein-free diet is very restrictive and eliminates all dairy products. The lack of adequate dairy consumption may result in calcium and vitamin D deficiencies. Calcium and vitamin D are especially important for your child to build strong bones. Your child would benefit from calcium and vitamin D supplementation to meet her needs.

The implementation of such a strict diet for a child with already-diagnosed behavioral problems might prove to be too difficult when the possible benefits are uncertain. Talk with your child's doctor about fortified foods and/or supplementation to avoid any nutritional deficiencies.



Missouri Elks Provide Mobile Dental Program

The Missouri Elks Mobile Dental Program provides basic dental care for children and adults with developmental delays. The Missouri Elks partner with Truman Medical Center Lakewood in Kansas City to provide the mobile dental program. Typical services include screenings, assessments and routine care (cleanings, fillings and referrals if necessary). The 2012 schedule, eligibility guidelines and further information is available at www.trumed.org/truweb/lw/lw_medical_care/lw_health_services/lw_elks_dental_van.aspx or call (816) 404-6904. The school nurse or home school coordinator may also be able to provide further information and assistance.

Boonslick School Opens Technology Learning Lab

By Bryan Blackford, Building Administrator, Boonslick School

Boonslick School opened its new Technology Learning Lab (TLL) at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. Staff at Boonslick converted an empty classroom that was being utilized for storage into a bright, student-friendly room full of technology designed for student learning. A monetary grant from Clarke Power Services in Wentzville, Mo., made it possible to purchase a SmartBoard, three touch screen computers, a flat panel TV and a Wii.

While classroom staff members were excited about the additional equipment to the school, most were concerned about their lack of training in the area of technology. To ensure that all classroom staff members were prepared to integrate technology into instruction, several training sessions were held at the beginning of the school year. All training sessions included staff members actively using the equipment to display their newly discovered technology skills.

The TLL is now the most scheduled and most used instructional area in the building. In a typical week, students placed in small groups may be using www.starfall.com displayed on the SmartBoard to move shapes and animals around the screen or to manipulate items on an interactive daily calendar. Some students may be using the touch screen computers to paint a picture onscreen with their fingers or activate a head switch to control whether or not a character onscreen gets an umbrella to hold when it is raining.

The Wii seems to be one of the most accessible items to many of the students at Boonslick because of its use of motion sensors and a few students are familiar with it by using it at home. During a recent activity, students participated in a downhill skiing game. Students skied downhill by tilting the controller left and right to avoid obstacles they encountered. One non-ambulatory student was lifted out of his chair and placed in a supported seating position with his physical therapist and they skied together by swaying from left to right. The student was grinning from ear to ear, as was the entire classroom staff.

The staff at Boonslick is quick to note that they do not use the TLL just to teach technology. Rather, technology is integrated into the teaching of student goals. The TLL is a tool that teachers utilize in their instruction. While visiting her child at school early this school year, one parent said "Wow! Now I know why my child wants to come to school!"

Students Celebrate Chinese New Year

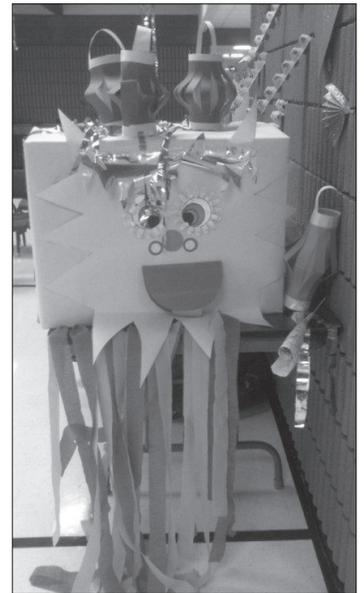
by Becky Brozovich, Home-School Coordinator, Lakeview Woods School

Students at Lakeview Woods School celebrated Chinese New Year in January. Students made art projects with symbols and representations of Chinese culture.

The school was decorated with items created by students such as Chinese lanterns, dragons and symbols written using calligraphy. Students enjoyed a special Chinese lunch of eggrolls, seasoned rice, stir-fry vegetables and fortune cookies.

An all-school assembly, featuring Alan Chang, provided information about Chinese culture. Mr. Chang is an 88-year-old retired Harvard Yang Ching Librarian who emigrated to the United States from China with his family in 1959. Over the years, he has presented information about Chinese culture to students at several area Missouri Schools for Severely Disabled. He indicated that this year is special as it is the Year of the Dragon. In Chinese culture, the dragon is widely revered, thus the Year of the Dragon will bring good luck.

Mr. Chang showed students artifacts of Chinese culture, including artwork and foods and explained a visual chart depicting the evolution of the Chinese language. Using the Chinese art of calligraphy, Mr. Chang wrote each of the students' names in ink, which they were able to take home to show their parents.



Lakeview Woods students made a dragon for their Chinese New Year Celebration.