

TEACHER'S PET



A NEWSLETTER FOR THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS OF TENNESSEE

February 2003 Volume 9, Number 5 www.teacherspet.com

2003 PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR IS PET MEMBER

Robbie McGowan, principal at Mooreland Heights Elementary School in Knoxville and a member of Professional Educators of Tennessee, was named Tennessee Principal of the Year at the 2003 Excellence in Education Awards banquet in Nashville. "The purpose of this program was to recognize and reward the very best among Tennessee educators," said Grace Grissom, founder of Mrs. Grissom's salads, which sponsors this program. Robbie received a \$5,000 award to be used for school improvements.

Nominees underwent a rigorous evaluation process by a selection committee to make it to the finals. Eighteen winners, selected from a field of 2,000 nominees, were announced from among principals, supervisors and teachers. "We let those closest to the educators tell us who is doing the best job," said Faye Taylor, Tennessee commissioner of education.

Principal of Mooreland Heights since 1999, Robbie was chosen from a field of six finalists from across Tennessee. She has served Knox County Schools since 1975 as a teacher, curriculum generalist and then principal.

This achievement is the culmination of Robbie's three-year commitment as principal to Mooreland Heights Elementary School. She has received many awards in her 4-year tenure as principal at Mooreland Heights, including CARE Visionary Award with the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce.

Charles Lindsey, Knox County school superintendent, said, "Robbie's innovation, dedication and leadership have been instrumental to some rather dramatic improvements in student performance at Mooreland Heights. One of the areas we are most excited about is the improvement in reading proficiency at the school."

Robbie first came to Mooreland Heights as a Curriculum Generalist. Then when the principal position came open, she was hired as principal in spite of the fact that she had never been an assistant principal.

Mooreland Heights, with its history of low achievement scores and lack of parental support, proved to be a real challenge for Robbie during the first year. An inner city school it is composed of housing projects in which one-third of her students live and older homes. About 65% of her students qualified for the free/reduced lunch program. When Robbie first became principal, students had little interest in academic achievement, and little experience with reading on their own. Likewise, parents generally did not have high expectations for their children.

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Praxis II Workshop

Saturday February 22, 2003, 9 am – 1 p.m.
Shamblin Theater, David Lipscomb University
Nashville, Tennessee

Free to PET Members

\$35 for non-members

Call 1-800-471-4867 to register and secure a seat.

Admittance for those not registered as space permits

YOUR PERFECT RIGHT

It's a typical school day, and the usual pressures mount. Students are antsy, there are papers to grade, and the faculty meeting this afternoon is going to be a long one. You've got enough to do. And now there's a knock on the door. The school's association rep wants to talk to you for the hundredth time about joining the local association.

When, you may be asking, is enough enough? Don't you have the right be left alone?

Yes you do. Tennessee law provides protections to teachers who do not wish to join associations. In fact, it is your perfect right not to do so according to Tennessee Code Annotated 49-5-603:

Professional [education] employees have the right to self-organization, to form, join or be assisted by organizations, to negotiate through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in other concerted activities for the purpose of professional negotiations or other mutual aid or protection; provided, that *professional employees also have the right to refrain from any or all such activities* (emphasis added).

In other words, just as you have the right to join associations, you also have the right not to. Once you clearly and emphatically say "No," you have the right to be left alone. In fact, it is against the law for representatives of local teacher's associations to "interfere with" teachers who choose to exercise their right to refrain from joining associations. (T.C.A. 49-5-609(b)(3)).

Once you have clearly stated your opposition to joining a local association, the school rep should refrain from harassing you any further. To continue doing so—especially during the school day—interferes with your duties as a teacher and may violate the law.

So what can you do? Here are some tips:

1. State clearly and politely that you are not interested in joining the organization and you do not want to be asked again.
2. Record the conversation in writing, including the date and time.
3. Keep a similar record of future attempts by the representative to get you to join the association and your continuing refusals. This will help to establish a pattern of harassment if it exists.
4. If the behavior persists (three times is probably enough to establish a pattern of harassment), call PET's Legal Department for help.

Remember, you are a professional educator. There is no requirement to join associations. It is your perfect right to be left alone. Exercise it.

Roger Abramson, PET Staff Attorney

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READING-INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

A major research project set to kick off this year will compare the effectiveness of remedial programs for struggling readers in the 3rd and 5th grades. Researchers will track the academic fortunes of children, randomly selected from six communities around the country, to determine which of six commercial reading programs are effective in closing the achievement gap between struggling readers and their peers. The privately financed study, unveiled in Washington in November at a meeting for foundation executives, will follow the progress of more than 4,300 students over three years. That will make it one of the largest studies to look at the impact of specific reading interventions for youngsters in the later elementary grades.

Education Week, December 4, 2002

FINAL "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND" RULES

Final rules for the "No Child Left Behind" can be seen at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/cepprogressp.html#reg>.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS OF TENNESSEE FOUNDATION AWARDS THREE ACTIVE EDUCATOR GRANTS

John Rodney Kiser is a 4th grade teacher at Cedar Bluff Intermediate School in Knox County. Rodney plans "to gain the knowledge and experience to become an administrator who will foster a positive, high achieving environment for teachers and students." Mr. Kiser's principal stated, "... an excellent teacher in every area. He is child centered, flexible, focused, creative, professional, and works well with all parents and staff members. He has innate administrative intuition as to what should happen in different situations." Rodney is an example of professionalism and believes, "We should walk-the-walk and talk-the-talk and let our actions and results speak for themselves."



Gloria Roberson is a 4th grade teacher at Pikeville Elementary School in Bledsoe County. Gloria hopes to gain greater understanding of learning styles and update her teaching strategies to be even more effective with her students. Gloria remembers, "My favorite high school teacher (Biology) made learning fun, and I knew she cared. I hope my students feel the same way towards me."

Amy Floyd Pellegra is a kindergarten teacher at Brighton Elementary School in Tipton County. Amy's professional goal is to continue learning and improving her teaching skills. "I desire to learn more techniques on how to enhance my classroom. This coming semester I hope to learn how to more thoroughly meet the needs of all students in my classroom." Amy remembers how her third grade teacher made each student feel like the most important person in her class. "She encouraged us in all areas. Most of all, she made learning fun ... When handling certain situations in my own classroom, I often think, 'How would Mrs. Yelverton handle this?'"



In 1998 the Professional Educators of Tennessee Foundation was formed by the members of Professional Educators of Tennessee for the purpose of receiving, administering and expending funds for purposes relating to improvements in education. Awards include grants for continued study, research, and professional development.

Donations to the PET Foundation are tax deductible and receipts are furnished. Send your donations to PETF, P.O. Box 1175, Columbia, TN 38402

NEW AND IMPROVED TAX DEDUCTION!

It's tax time again. Yuck. But here's some good news: full-time educators can deduct up to \$250 for qualified education expenses they paid in 2002! Are you married to a full-time educator? That means up to a \$500 deduction if you file jointly (\$250 each). **You do not have to itemize deductions to take advantage of this adjustment to your gross income.**

Here are the requirements:

- The expenses must have been for an ordinary educational expense, and the expense must have been helpful and appropriate for your profession as an educator.
- Possible qualified expenses include: books, supplies, equipment (including computer equipment and software), and other materials used in the classroom.
- Reimbursed expenses may not be deducted.
- Like any other tax deduction, you must be able to show proof of expenditure (such as a receipt).

This is not intended as professional tax advice. For more information on the educator's expense deduction, consult the instructions provided by the Internal Revenue Service for the "Educator Expenses" deduction on Line 23 of Form 1040 or consult your tax advisor.

"I knew that the key to student achievement in all academic areas at our school was reading," said McGowan. "Therefore, the vision that came to be known as 'Every Child, a Reader', became not only a goal, but also an initiative that would help our students become capable readers, as well as readers by choice."

From the beginning, Robbie has focused on finding something that students can do, rather than lamenting what they can't do. The Accelerated Reader Program, used at Mooreland Heights stresses not remediation, but rather acceleration, and word walls are used in every classroom. All students are taught reading at grade level with students paired according to ability in guided reading groups. The "I Was Caught Reading" program has encouraged and rewarded students who read. Each student is encouraged to raise his or her own individual student score, with the result that 75% are now proficient in writing.

In order to promote better behavior and motivate students, Robbie needed to get students and parents to buy into the philosophy that "Knowledge is Power." She has provided ongoing incentives for students to be strong academically. For example, she rewarded writing improvements by building the longest banana split.

Setting of Goals is a key component of success at Mooreland Heights. The principal and teachers model setting of goals for the students, with academic achievement foremost in these goals. Each year the school considers four or five challenges. To improve attendance and eliminating tardiness reward programs such as "The Early Bird Gets the Worm" and "Don't Be a Sleepy Pig" have been developed. High expectations are the norm because all know that this principal won't let them do less than what they are capable of.

The Major League Math challenge allowed classes to move from "bases" on a diamond by memorizing math facts. When 25% of the class memorized their math facts, they moved to first base; when 50% learned them, the class moved to second base; with 75% they moved to third base; and finally with 90 – 100% the class scored a home run. The celebration was a "major league party" with a baseball theme with former major league baseball players, home run derby from pitches pitched by a major league pitcher, and small baseball helmets for ice cream.

In order to promote academic achievement through the years, Robbie has done some creative and unusual feats herself, and she doesn't know what might be next. Some things she has already done include: Riding a Harley into the gym dressed in black leather and sunshades; taking a public bubble bath, becoming a U.T. cheerleader and dressing like an M & M chocolate candy.

With Robbie's leadership, Mooreland Heights is a very different place today than it was when she took over as principal. Students value their learning and are proud of their many achievements. Students and teachers have had fun and celebrated together each time a challenge or goal is met, which has become more and more frequent. Parents have also realized that their children can be true achievers in a learning environment that excites and challenges them.

Each morning at Mooreland Heights, the tone is set for a focused learning environment. After a song is played on the intercom system, Robbie announces, "It's a great day to be at Mooreland Heights Elementary School. I can't think of any other place I had rather be than here at MHES!" She ends the time for music, pledge, moment of silence, and congratulations of students with academic accomplishments, with the saying, "Today, tomorrow and always, let the learning begin."

Robbie's core beliefs are the all children can learn at high levels, and that teachers' actions matter, as does her support as administrator. She has no canned program for improving academic achievement, however she and her staff have developed a school improvement plan that is based not only on the best practices according to effective school research, but on information about brain research, multiple intelligences, and programs that address personalities and learning styles. Additionally, the staff has looked carefully at student data to determine students' specific strengths and weaknesses so that strategies can be developed that will positively affect student learning.

The faculty at Mooreland Heights is composed of 17 classroom teachers, two Title I teachers, two teaching assistants, and several part-time teachers for 240 students. Robbie has nurtured and built a devoted and closely-knit faculty. Because Robbie believes that the morale of her staff is a major component in school success she has developed a family atmosphere among the staff, where more experienced teachers are paired with those needing mentoring. Non-teaching duties are shared equally and kept to a minimum so that teachers can concentrate on teaching.

Robbie McGowan's first interest in education was in helping to educate the deaf. She added to this interest in getting her Master's Degree when she was encouraged to obtain certification for administration. Robbie is the daughter of a Baptist minister from middle Tennessee, and has three sisters and two brothers. Her daughter is a PCA in a Knoxville area hospital, and her son plans to enter Belmont University on a baseball scholarship after graduation this year. He is interested in religion and music.

Gail Forsythe, Professional Educators of Nashville, PET

WHAT REALLY WORKS IN EDUCATION?

The Department of Education is circulating the draft guidelines it hopes to use for evaluating the studies that go into its What Works Clearinghouse. When it's up and running next year, the clearinghouse is intended to provide an online "one-stop shop" where policymakers and educators can go for scientific evidence for what really works in education. Beginning on November 11, the proposed criteria were posted on the clearinghouse's Web site at www.w-w-c.org.

Education Week, November 27, 2002

ED. DEPT. OFFERS RESEARCH GRANTS

The Department of Education is looking for researchers to apply for more than \$90 million in new grants to support studies on reading comprehension, preschool curricula, learning and cognition, and strategies for moving proven programs into classrooms on a wide scale.

For details on any of the research grants, go online to www.ed.gov/offices/IES/funing.html.

Education Week, January 8, 2003

RITALIN USE MAY CUT THE RISK OF FUTURE DRUG ABUSE

Children who take Ritalin or other stimulants to control symptoms of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder cut their risk of future substance abuse by 50 percent compared with untreated ADHD children, a new study has found. The study was conducted to answer the number one question of parents with ADHD children: Do stimulants make a young child more addiction-prone later in life? The study, reported in *pediatrics*, a publication of the American Academy of Pediatrics, involved a reanalysis of six earlier studies that followed a total of 674 ADHD children treated with stimulants and 360 children with the same diagnosis who were untreated. The children were followed for four or more years into late adolescence or early adulthood to determine their use of cigarettes, alcohol, marijuana and other drugs. Untreated ADHD children are known to have about twice the risk of substance abuse as non-ADHD children. The reanalysis showed that children who were prescribed stimulants has half the rate of substance abuse as untreated ADHD children. The level of drug abuse among the treated children approached the same level as that of non-ADHD children.

"Ritalin may help kids avoid drugs", Ronald Kotulak, Chicago Tribune, January 6, 2003

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Dear Friends,

Our words are powerful tools that daily build or tear down people or ideas. Words are used either to encourage or empty people of worth, value, and dignity. I've discovered in the Old Testament book of Proverbs that there are three primary categories we can place our words in: wasted words, wise words, and wicked words.

For example, Proverbs 10:19 instructs us that, "He who holds his tongue is wise." Why is that? Well, have you ever been mad? Then you know how hard it is to "hold your tongue" and not say something that you'll soon regret. This isn't a call to absolute silence, but it is a challenge to make a lifestyle of choosing our words carefully.

Proverbs 17:27 says, "A man of knowledge uses words with great restraint." Wow! Wouldn't it be great to live in a world that way? The Biblical admonition for us is to live (and speak!) in such a way that we glorify God by both word and deed. Hard to do? Yes! But is it pleasing to God? You bet it is...

Try practicing these simple tips, and see if they assist you in your "word power":

1. Consciously evaluate your words for a day. Did you build up? Gossip? Share an untruth?
2. Ask the Lord to give you pure words. By that I mean words that are clean and gracious to the ear and heart.
3. Purpose in your heart to never gossip or pass along an untruth about someone.

Have a glorious New Year, and enjoy the great gift of words with your family and friends.

Grace to you.

Dr. Bobby Tucker, PET Chaplain

NEW INSURANCE BENEFIT

PET members now have access to a new benefit included in our Professional Insurance Package, which is carried on all member classes except Associate. The endorsement is referred to as Coverage D. The coverage is outlined as follows:

The company will pay up to \$250 per ASSAULT for damage or destruction of the insured's personal property or other people's personal property when being used, in the care, custody or control of the insured, provided that the damage or destruction is caused by an ASSAULT upon the insured on or surrounding school property or while away from school on an authorized school activity. This coverage is excess over any valid and collectible insurance available to the insured including Homeowners and Personal Property Floater policies. This coverage does not apply to damage or destruction of a vehicle of any kind. This coverage also does not apply to damage or destruction to property leased to, owned by, or rented by an EDUCATIONAL UNIT.

For the purposes of this endorsement only, ASSAULT shall mean a physical attack on an insured. Proof of an ASSAULT shall be a report of such ASSAULT to the appropriate civil police entity as soon as practicable.

CLARIFICATION ON LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Two types of legal assistance are available to PET members. Foremost is that provided by our Professional Insurance Package. In those situations, you have the opportunity to choose your attorney. If you talk to a PET attorney initially, you may still change the attorney who represents you on cases covered by our insurance. Examples of these type incidents are; a criminal charge arising from the activities of the member acting in his/her professional capacity as an educator, an action involving dismissal, salary disputes, leaves of absence, improper assignment, credential revocations, sexual misconduct, violations of another's civil rights, and those actions dealing with other professional rights and responsibilities arising within the scope of employment.

If you are being sued (monetary damages), the attorney for the insurance company will always be in charge of your defense. However, PET will furnish an attorney to guide you and look out after your interests.

Many members run into situations that are not covered by any associations' policy and yet they still need guidance. In those cases, we are able to let you talk to an attorney even though the situation would not be covered under the insurance. You should always contact PET first even if you have a covered incident in which you want a specific attorney to assist you. This gives us the opportunity to determine if the situation is covered by our insurance and lets us contact your chosen attorney and furnish the information and forms which will be needed to provide your assistance under the terms of the policy. Of course there are occasions when it is not practical to contact PET in advance, and in those situations you must use your best judgment.

Our insurance will pay up to \$1,000.00 on the premium for bail bond(s) for members only if the bond is required from activities of the member in his/her professional capacity as an educator.

As with any insurance, you must have been a member of PET when the incident first occurs to have access to our insurance coverage. We have had several who would want to join PET after they were in trouble. In those cases the insurance will not cover anything.

This is not by any means meant to be a total tutorial on our insurance policy. It just addresses some areas in which there seems to be confusion. Hopefully, you will never be in need of help from one of our attorneys. If you do need that help, possibly this will help you understand the process a little better.

Walter Jewell, PET Executive Director

GOOD NEWS ABOUT FINANCIAL AID - INCLUDING FOR PARA-EDUCATORS

The U.S. Department of Education released new regulations that will eliminate the "12-hour rule," which restricted financial aid for students enrolled in distance education and other non-traditional programs.

This is *good news* for public school employees who would like to attend college, especially para-educators who must do so to meet the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. (These require para-educators hired using Title I funds before Jan. 8, 2002, who assist in instruction, to complete two years of college, obtain an associate's degree, or pass a state-administered exam.)

WHY OUR CHILDREN CAN'T READ AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Author Diane McGuinness, Ph.D.

In 1987, a military move placed this writer in Lawton, Oklahoma, working with special needs students in a self-contained classroom, grades 3-6. Whole language instruction was barreling its way from California, through Oklahoma, across the nation.

It was during a whole language conference that I discovered, much to my dismay, where we were headed with this current method of reading instruction. Several of us were chatting during a break between sessions, when a principal of a nearby elementary school turned to me and gushed, "Isn't whole language marvelous? It is the answer to our problems of teaching children who are experiencing reading difficulties!" Unable to mask my look of disbelief, I replied, "If whole language is the answer to our problems, why do I still have a job as a special educator?" Speaking facetiously, I believe I made a friend that day.

When questioned as to why I did not like whole language, my answer always brought arguments. One needs a good foundation before a house is constructed. It is the same with teaching children to read. Children must be given a solid foundation of individual sounds (phonemes) before they will be able to learn to read with fluency and comprehension. In Diane McGuinness's book, she not only points a finger at whole language programs but also gives little support to most phonics programs used in our schools today. After 25 years of reading research, McGuinness believes we are in a reading crisis in America with 43 percent of our children testing below grade level in reading and 42 million of our adults functionally illiterate. The core of this problem appears to be in the reading programs.

McGuinness outlines the overall structure of a successful reading program to include the following:

- Phonemes must be the basis of our programs as they are the basis of our writing system. DO NOT teach sight words, word families, or analogies. According to this author, it causes reading/spelling problems.
- Reading, spelling, and writing must be taught from the very simple first skills to the complex.
- The alphabet must be regarded as a letter code for phonemic speech, not as a sound code for words on a page.
- Teach the alphabet as phonemes, but do not teach letter "names" until after the sounds have been learned. This confuses the beginning reader.
- Using the phonemes to segment, blend, and unglue words is the key to developing a good reader.

There are very few reading programs in schools today which adhere to these aforementioned guidelines. Research studies presented by McGuinness negate the terms "dyslexic," "learning disabilities," and "developmental delays." Children do not learn to read in school due to incorrect teaching techniques. The author painstakingly guides the reader through the steps involved in teaching the correct alphabetic code for successful reading. Two reading programs the author suggests follow the guidelines are the Lindamood-Bell programs and the Phono-Graphix method. (The Phono-Graphix method is taught in the Read America clinics.)

This book review will probably create more questions than it provides answers. This writer lends support to her research and step-by-step process of teaching reading as I have used a similar method with my special needs children this year. The progress in many of my students has been overwhelming to put it mildly. Consider how one learns to speak. For most, it comes naturally due to the specific section (Broca's area of speech/language) of our brain devoted to speech. We do not learn to read naturally; therefore, we must learn those sounds (phonemes) from whence our speech originates.

Make this a "must read" this summer. It will question one's philosophy of reading instruction and give cause for possible revisions of those techniques for the coming school year.

Cathy A. Kolb is a special education teacher in the Clarksville-Montgomery Co. School System. She has taught special education for 22 years in Kentucky, Tennessee, Germany, and Oklahoma. She recently completed her Ed.S. in Leadership Studies at Austin Peay State University and has plans to pursue a doctoral degree in special education.

NEW COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

In his inauguration speech, Governor Phil Bredesen stated that educating our children would be his first priority. Prior to his inauguration, Governor Bredesen appointed Lana Seivers, superintendent of Clinton City Schools, as the new Commissioner of Education. We have hopes that Governor Bredesen and Commissioner Seivers are successful in improving education for the children and educators of Tennessee.

JOIN WITH OTHER PET MEMBERS IN CHATTANOOGA
2003 Annual Meeting
Professional Educators of Tennessee

June 27—28, 2003
407 Chestnut Street
Chattanooga, TN 37402

Speakers will include the 2003 Tennessee Principal of the Year and the 1993 National Teacher of the Year.

Your lunch Saturday is included in the conference registration fee. PET members pay only \$10 registration for the entire conference. All other are welcome at a \$50 registration fee.

Rooms at the Clarion are available at a special rate of \$70+tax/night. This rate is available for the nights of June 26-28. Rooms can be reserved through the Clarion Hotel by calling (423) 756-5150 by June 25, 2003 or the PET office at (800) 471-4867 by June 20, 2003.



**FRIST LAUNCHES FOURTH STATEWIDE
ESSAY CONTEST**

U.S. Senator Bill Frist is again sponsoring his fought statewide essay contest, "Salute to Good Health," to encourage Tennessee sixth graders to reflect on the essential components that make up good health.

To be eligible, contestants must be in the 6th grade and attend a Tennessee school. Each essay must be between 500 and 800 words, typed or printed in double space format. All essays must be postmarked by February 17, 2003.

The winning essay will be read by Senator Frist into the Congressional Record, and a framed copy given to both the winner and the school. First, second, and third place awards will also be given in each of Tennessee's nine congressional districts.

A registration form must be completed to participate in the contest. Copies of this form may be obtained by calling one of Senators Frist's offices and requesting that a copy of the registration form be mailed or faxed to you.

Nashville
615-352-9411
615-352-9985 (fax)

Knoxville
865-602-7977
865-602-7979 (fax)

Kingsport/Tri-Cities
423-323-1252
423-323-0358 (fax)

Memphis
901-683-1910
901-683-3610 (fax)

Jackson
731-424-9655
731-424-8322 (fax)

Chattanooga
423-756-2757
423-756-5313 (fax)

Press Release Of Senator Frist, M.D., Thursday, November 7, 2002

**PRAYER IN SCHOOL-
A CLIMATE OF INTIMIDATION**

"Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our Country."

This was the simply prayer that provoked the Supreme Court to ban state-organized school prayer in 1962. This prayer, which was used in New York schools before 1962, has had a chilling climate of intimidation cast upon it. As a result, teachers and students often have the misimpression that no religious expression is permitted. Students who do communicate their beliefs are frequently intimidated by school officials' overly aggressive misapplication of the "separation of church and state" notion. The heart of the New York prayer is the heart of the debate over religious expression in schools. The prayer describes a dependent relationship between man and God that the secular humanists are unwilling to admit. It has been their project for the past three decades to purge such acknowledgement from the public schools, substituting a materialist view of man's existence as independent and self-sufficient. State and school boards must find creative ways to dispel the climate of intimidation against religion that pervades public school corridors today.

Washington Watch, Volume 13, Number 5, December 2001

LIFE IS LIKE THAT

As my wife and I were driving down to Florida for the holidays, we drove for the majority of the day in very heavy storm conditions. Actually, the driving conditions were the worst we have ever seen (standing water, cars spinning out of control, limited visibility, and incessant noise).

At one point we had to leave I -75 and take shelter! There were two tornadoes crossing the highway behind us, and one crossing in front of us. What an experience!

As I reflect back on this occurrence I considered the idea that *Life Is Like That*. Even in the midst of a storm we still were making progress toward our destination. Without being too philosophical, our lives here on this earth are being driven towards a destination. Even in the darkest times we're making progress. We are making steps forward in our social selves, physical selves, emotional selves, and our spiritual selves.

This concept remains true even with Professional Educators of Tennessee. As we reflect back on 2002 and look at what we have come through (even in times of

turbulent storms), PET's organizational life has witnessed dramatic positive progress. Our membership is more vibrant, focused, and more determined to be the best professional educational organization in the state. We have made progress in working with the state board of education, working with state legislators on new and improved measures to help educators (ideas taken directly from your annual questionnaire). Even now, with the change in state administration, we are preparing to meet with the new members of the State Board of Education in order to continue our dialogue, and close involvement with the educational process of Tennessee's children.

The year 2003 will be full of wonderful opportunities for Professional Educators to continue its role to fill its mission of improving the educational process of children and to improve the working conditions of Tennessee's educational professionals.

Finally, may 2003 be one filled with hopefulness, joy, expectation, and, oh yes, showers of blessings.

Michael G. Miller, PET President

STATE BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOMINATIONS

It is time to nominate new members for the PET Board of Directors. Each member nominated will be screened to see if the candidate is qualified under our by-laws for election. Those who meet the qualifications will be contacted for permission to place their name on the ballot. All nominations must be postmarked no later than March 3, 2003. Current board members can be nominated for another three year term.

Qualifications:

- D-2 The board of directors shall be composed of nine class one (Professional) members, who have been members for at least the two full preceding years, and shall be elected by class one members.
- D-4-a No more than two members of the board of directors shall be from any one local unit or potential local unit. Directors elected before January 1, 1997 are excluded from this provision.

Current board members whose terms expire in June of 2003 are:

Dewey Esquinance	Technology	Polk County
Cathy Kolb	Vice-president	Montgomery County
Karen Stroud	Communications	Rutherford County

Nominations must be made by Professional members. Nominations should be placed using this form or style.

I place into nomination for the 2003 - 2006 Board of Directors of Professional Educators of Tennessee:

_____ of _____
name school system

Mail to: PET - Nominations
P.O. Box 1175
Columbia, TN 38402

Nominations must be postmarked no later than 3/03/2003.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Looking at the results of this year’s survey, it is apparent that getting parents involved in the education of their children is the largest concern for professional educators in Tennessee. This is supported by the “National Committee for Citizens in Education” when Anne T. Henderson and Nancy Berla located critical evidence that family involvement, not social status or income, is *the* vital component in student success. Conversely, the lack of family involvement can be the missing component leading to student failure.

This issue is so important that to find solutions, we shall look both to successful educators and successful businesses. If we are to influence parents, we must first think of them as our customers, whenever we have the opportunity to interact with them. We can accomplish more by getting them on our side than through coercion and controls.

In recent times one of the best businesses to create customer satisfaction is Scandinavian Airlines. They developed a purposeful process to accomplish this:

1. Identify every point of contact with the customer.
2. Determine how the customer would like to be treated.
3. Determine ways to exceed the customer’s expectations.
4. *Then, do it!*

This process has been applied to other businesses (i.e. Saturn, Lexus, etc.) leading to many awards for customer satisfaction. One business that represents this success is Cohoes, a department store chain in the northeastern part of our nation. You can identify their customer before entering the store – there are parking rows, closest to the door, identified for parents with children. Beside these rows you see two covered lines of shopping carts – one with child carriers and one without. *The store wants these parents involved*; therefore they make it easy and comfortable to be involved. When you enter any one of the store’s four entrances you see the child care area (staffed by a store employee) where for no charge you may leave your child(ren) while shopping. *The store wants these parents involved*; therefore they take care of the parent’s needs.

FIELD TRIP – feel the difference

? Go visit your local Lexus or Saturn store, just to find out how it feels to walk in and find your way around.

? Where was your parking?

? How were you greeted?

? How easily did you find your way around?

? How comfortable were you made to feel?

? Visit your school as a parent, just to find out how it feels to walk in and find your way around.

? Where was your parking?

? How were you greeted?

? How easily did you find your way around?

? How comfortable were you made to feel?

? What should / can be changed to help parents become more involved?

If we want parents involved, how can we take care of the parent’s needs while making it easy and comfortable to be involved? As educator Max Fisher wrote in *Education World*, “Educators,

THINGS TO CONSIDER – How does the parent feel	
FOR TEACHERS	FOR PRINCIPALS
? Always have good news (too) - “Catch the student doing something right.”	? Consider the subliminal message received as someone enters your school.
? Contact parents early and often (phone, postcard, letter, email, etc.).	? Where do parents park? How are they greeted? How easy is it to find your way around? And, how comfortable are parents made to feel?
? Consider a classroom newsletter.	? At what contact points can changes be made?
? Avoid “Educationalese”.	? Encourage teachers to contact parents often.
? Invite parents to visit your classroom “in action”.	

especially those at the secondary level, can’t expect the obligatory open house and parent conferences to suffice when trying to connect with parents. They must be *proactive* in launching a counteroffensive that targets parents as essential partners in the education of their sons and daughters.” *If we want parents involved*, our question is when and how do we interact with them and how can we make it easier and more comfortable for each parent?

Max Fischer also said, “I have found that successful teaching often hinges on employing a variety of instructional methods to meet the varied learning styles of my students. I also have discovered that my methods of dealing with parents must be just as diverse. ... One common denominator does link the great majority of parents, however – the need for personal attention and a sense of caring from those who work with their children on a daily basis.” As a professional educator, who recognizes the importance of parental involvement, you need to take care of the parent’s needs while making it easy and comfortable for them to be involved. *Now, do it!*

Next newsletter – What about that Parent-Teacher Conference?

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