



# School Psychology Services

# NEWSLETTER FROM YOUR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

Volume 1, Back-To-School Elementary Parent/Guardian Edition: September 2009

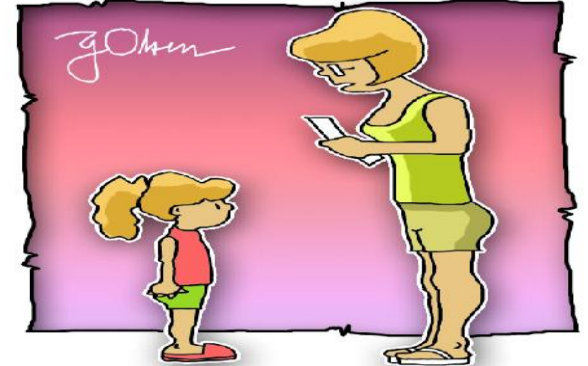
## Clinical Corner **Helping Children and Families Cope with the Economic Crisis**

As a new school year begins, parents, educators, and children are full of anticipation for new learning experiences and the opportunity to develop new relationships. Unfortunately, this year will be especially stressful for many because of changes in our economy. Over recent months when we have turned on the car radio, watched television, or read newspapers, we have been flooded with news of the financial crisis in our country. Fairfax County is no exception as our communities have been impacted by soaring unemployment rates and home foreclosures. When we think about these issues, we tend to focus on adults. If job loss, losing a home, and not being able to pay utility bills are stressful for adults, imagine the confusion and feelings of uncertainty that children are experiencing.

The manner in which parents cope with their financial challenges will have a direct impact on their children. Monitoring your own level of stress is very important. If children ask questions about your situation, be honest, but limit how much information you share depending on the age level. Only state what is factual. Worrying about something that may not actually happen can increase a child's anxieties. Even though your financial situation has changed, remind yourself and your children that the most important things in their lives are still there; your love and support. Reassure them that you are still a family and will get through this together as a family.

Signs of stress in children may include changes in physical, behavioral, and emotional functioning. Changes in eating and sleeping patterns, as well as physical complaints such as headaches and stomachaches may occur. Children may have difficulty focusing and paying attention because they are preoccupied with stressful issues. Changes in behavior such as becoming withdrawn and irritable may take place. These problems may contribute to a decline in academic performance in school.

*(Continued on the Back Page)*



"Hannah Montana backpack, Hannah Montana pink totebag, Hannah Montana cellphone case, Hannah Montana personal diary and 'cozy cushion?' From what Web site did you download this school supplies list?"

Gary Olsen, Dubuque Schools, [www.dubuque.k12.ia.us](http://www.dubuque.k12.ia.us)

## What is a School Psychologist?

School psychologists are mental health professionals who help children and adolescents overcome barriers to success in school, at home, and in life. We collaborate with school staff, parents, and other professionals to develop strategies that enhance learning environments and promote success for all students.

School psychologists provide a range of services including the following:

- Consultation with school staff and parents to provide effective interventions for learning and behavior problems.
- Individual and group counseling to help resolve student problems that interfere with school performance.
- Direct training to students in social skills, anger management, and other essential life skills.
- Identification of learning strengths and areas in need of intervention, and assessment of social-emotional development and school related adjustment.
- Behavior assessment leading to an intervention plan.
- Training to school staff and parents on a variety of educational and mental health issues.
- Assistance to families in accessing community resources.
- Implementation of programs that improve our schools and promote safe, effective learning environments.

## My School Psychologist

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## Did You Know?

**“There is ample evidence that one of the major differences between poor and good readers is the difference in the quantity of total time they spend reading.”**

**National Reading Panel, 2000**

*(Coping with the Economic Crisis continued)*

### Suggestions for Parents

- Monitor your own stress level and take care of yourself.
- Watch for any regression in behavior or social relations.
- Look for changes in emotions such as irritability, anger, and sadness.
- Stick with the normal routine of your family as much as possible; make your child aware of anticipated changes.
- Be available to listen to your child's concerns and answer questions honestly in a calm and optimistic manner.
- Make sure your child is eating healthy and getting proper exercise and rest.
- Participate in activities that do not cost money (e.g., exercising, going to the library, reading together).
- Limit television viewing about the negative economy.
- Remember that children may overhear tense discussions about money.
- Some children feel better by helping out; offer them tasks that are reasonable and don't over burden them.
- Talk to your child's teacher and make him/her aware that your child is feeling stressed.

Resources are available to families to help children cope with these issues. Contact your school psychologist for strategies and interventions to assist with academic, behavioral, and mental health issues. School psychologists are also helpful in accessing community resources that offer support to families. In addition, free information is available on this topic from the website of the National Association of School Psychologists:

<http://www.nasponline.org/educators/economic.aspx>.

*Prepared by Debrah B. Martin, FCPS school psychologist at Hayfield Secondary School.*

## Parent Tips

### Reading: Developing Positive Attitudes in Children

As children progress from early childhood through their school years, they develop strong likes and dislikes, including positive or negative attitudes toward reading. Parents may underestimate the critical role they play in the development and shaping of their child's reading attitude. For example, young children view their parents as experts. Therefore, the information and values that parents share with their children about the importance of reading can significantly affect the attitudes that children develop.

Parents are also role models for their children. By observing the attitudes that their parents exhibit—both verbally and non-verbally—toward reading, children will tend to develop and demonstrate similar attitudes and values that parents will praise and reinforce.

### What can I do as a parent?

- Provide a variety of reading materials, such as magazines, newspapers, books, dictionaries, encyclopedias and other reference materials in the home. These can often be purchased at used bookstores or library sales. By having easy access to reading materials, your child will be more likely to read for pleasure and/or to obtain information.
- Let your child know how much you enjoy and learn from reading a book, newspaper article, magazine story, etc. As a result, your excitement and interest in reading will transfer to your child. Just observing you read helps your child to become aware of the value you place on reading.
- Read with and to your child. Young children as well as older children enjoy listening to stories read with and to them. Also consider setting aside a "family reading time" on a regular basis. Each member of the family could read a portion of a book.
- Talk about reading materials with your child. Ask different types of questions and have a conversation with your child about the contents of a story.
- Visit the library so your child can select his/her own reading materials based on individual interests. Frequently, "story time" is offered at the local library, which can be a particularly enjoyable activity for young children.
- Acknowledge your child when he or she reads or shares information obtained from reading. Because children want to please their parents, your recognition and positive reaction will have a significant impact upon their desire to read.

*Taken from Reading: Encouraging Positive Attitudes which appeared in a publication from the National Association of School Psychologists titled Helping Children at Home and School II. It was written by Laurice Joseph, Ph.D. of Ohio State University.*

**Resource  
on the Web**

**FCPS School  
Psychology Services**

[www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/  
psychologists/index.htm](http://www.fcps.edu/dss/ips/psychologists/index.htm)