

Unifying Your Community Around Education

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Presented by Chris Shade, Director of School Improvement and Support; Jamie Wilson, Superintendent; Glenna Harris, School Board President; Gary Henderson, CEO, United Way of Denton Co.; and Kevin Roden, Denton City Councilman



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Many want to know what brought everyone to the table (Denton ISD, United Way of Denton Co., Denton City Council).



When our local United Way of Denton County conducted it needs assessment, it identified a number of community and educational needs...



35,537 economically disadvantaged students live in Denton Co.



37% of (8,217) children living in poverty are under age 5.



% of adults 25+ years with no HS diploma:

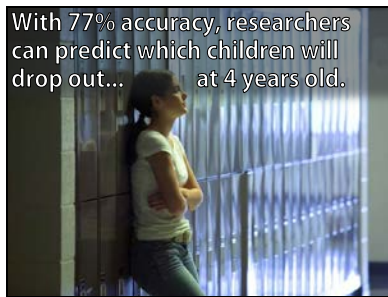
Denton (city)	15%
Sanger	12%
Lewisville	14%
Highland Village	1%
Little Elm	12%



As a result, a number of initiatives were formed in the past couple of years to tackle some of our community's biggest challenges:

Pre-K,
predatory lending,
mental health,
mentoring.

Let's start with your Pre-K initiatives. Universal Pre-K is one of the hottest educational topics out there today. So what does Denton see to as the problem and how are they addressing it?



Using measures of early parenting only and ignoring the students' own characteristics and abilities, the researchers found they could have predicted with 77% accuracy, when the children were not yet four years old, which ones would later drop out of high school.



Beginning at birth, the attachment formed between parent and child predicts the quality of future relationships with teachers and peers and plays a leading role in the development of such social functions as curiosity, arousal, emotional regulation, independence, and social competence.

This process starts with students' core relationships with parents or primary caregivers.



Those first few years are critically important in the development of a child's brain.



To grow up emotionally healthy, children need...

- **a reliable caregiver**
- **predictable environment**
- **10-20 hours of interaction**
- **enrichment**



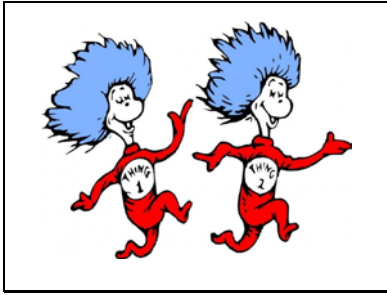
Eric Jensen

Recent evidence suggests that the complex web of social relationships students experience—with peers, adults in the school, and family members—exerts a much greater influence on their behavior than researchers previously assumed. This process starts with students' core relationships with parents or primary caregivers in their lives, which form a personality that is either secure and attached or insecure and unattached. Securely attached children typically behave better in school.

Those first few years are critically important in the development of a child's brain. But the most significant skills he is acquiring during those years aren't ones that can be taught with flashcards. The most profound discovery this new generation of neuroscientists has made is the powerful connection between the infant brain chemistry and adult psychology. Lying deep beneath those noble, complex human qualities we call character, these scientists have found, is the mundane, mechanical interaction of specific chemicals in the brains and bodies of developing infants. These scientists have demonstrated that the most reliable way to produce an adult who is brave and curious and kind and prudent is to ensure that when he is an infant, his hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis functions well. And how do you do that? It's not magic. First, as much as possible, you protect him from serious trauma and chronic stress; then, even more important, you provide him with a secure, nurturing relationship with at least one parent and ideally two. That's not the whole secret, but it is a big, big part of it.

To grow up emotionally healthy, children need

- A strong, reliable primary caregiver who provides consistent and unconditional love, guidance, and support.
- Safe, predictable, stable environments.
- Ten to 20 hours each week of harmonious, reciprocal interactions. This process, known as attunement...helps them develop a wider range of healthy emotions including gratitude, forgiveness, and empathy.
- Enrichment through personalized, increasingly complex activities.



There are two primary emotional needs children have of their parents...

Attunement is the establishment of a positive, reciprocal, relationship with the primary caregiver.



attunement (parents' reactivity to their children's emotions);

Attachment is harmonious, reciprocal interactions.



and attachment (safe, trustworthy relationships which builds faith in others).

There is a particularly effective
antidote to the ill effects of early
stress, and it comes not from
pharmaceutical companies...



Much of the new information about childhood and poverty uncovered by psychologists and neuroscientist can be daunting to anyone trying to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. We now know that early stress and adversity can literally get under a child's skin, where it can cause damage that lasts a lifetime. But there is also some positive news in this research.

but from parents.



It turns out that there is a particularly effective antidote to the ill effects of early stress, and it comes not from pharmaceutical companies or early-childhood educators but from parents. Parents and other caregivers who are able to form close, nurturing relationships with their children can foster resilience in them that protects them from many of the worst effects of a harsh early environment. This message can sound a both warm and fuzzy, but it is rooted in cold, hard science. The effect of good parenting is not just emotional or psychological, the neuroscientists say; it is biochemical.

Define parent involvement.



Define parent engagement.

Parent involvement...



Parent engagement...



Oftentimes, schools think of parent involvement in terms of getting parents to the schoolhouse for a “parental involvement event” or for a once-a-year parent/teacher conference. Sometimes [unfortunately] educators pass judgment on parents who do not attend believing an “involved parent” would attend.

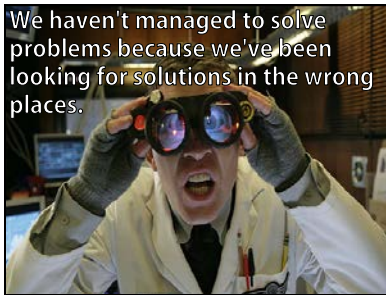
In fact, one recent New York Times op-ed, titled "[Parental Involvement Is Overrated](#)," and an Atlantic piece called "[Don't Help Your Kids With Their Homework](#)," touched off a heated discussion online suggesting that parental involvement is of surprisingly little value to student achievement. Of course, a number of articles such as "[Parental Involvement Overrated? Don't Buy It](#)," followed. But I digress.

What we KNOW matters is parent engagement...

Gary Evans, [a] Cornell scientist, found the higher the environmental risks = the higher the allostatic (stress) load—*unless a child's mother was particularly responsive to her child*. **If that was the case, the effect of all of those environmental stressors, from overcrowding to poverty to family turmoil, was almost entirely eliminated.** If your mom was particularly sensitive to your emotional state during a game of Jenga, in other words, all the bad stuff you faced in life had little to no effect on your allostatic load. (Note: Environmental risks include family turmoil and chaos and crowding, etc. These have a big effect on children's cortisol levels. Allostatic load is the gradual process of the body's stress-management systems breaking down under strain [of stress].) When we consider the impact of parenting on children, we tend to think that the dramatic effects are going to appear at one end or the other of the parenting-quality spectrum. A child who is physically abused is going to fare far worse, we assume, than a child who is simply ignored or discouraged. And the child of a supermom who gets lots of extra tutoring and one-on-one support is going to do way better than an average well-loved child. But what Blair's and Evan's research suggests is that regular good parenting—being helpful and attentive during a game of Jenga—can make a profound difference for a child's future prospects.



Anytime something new comes into existence, there are obstacles. Ours included transportation, time, accessibility, and cost.



But perhaps, we haven't managed to solve these problems because we've been looking for solutions in the wrong places.



The mayor of Denton, Mark Boroughs, challenged all to consider "nontraditional means of collaboration."



On the Pre-K front, to ensure that our children are prepared for school, the Denton Independent School District, the United Way of Denton County, and the City of Denton created a “Pre-K Coalition.” Members from around the community united together meeting monthly to discuss and implement its goal to **increase school readiness, provide equal access to parent resources, and to promote lifelong learning and success.** Partners include, but are not limited to, the following entities:

Denton ISD

United Way

City of Denton (including the mayor and city council members)

Parents

Denton Public Library

University of North Texas

Denton ISD Parks and Recreation

Denton County Housing

City of Denton Community Development Center

UNT Global Leadership Class

DAAEYC/UNT

The Big Event - UNT

Upward Bound at UNT

Workforce Solution

The Village Church

Serve Denton

Cook Children’s Hospital

Communities in Schools

First United Methodist Church

First Baptist Church

Interfaith Ministries

Children’s Advocacy Center

Denton County Housing

Southeast Denton News

W.I.C.

Target

North Central Texas College

Court Appointed Special Advocates

First State Bank

Various child care centers

Etc., etc., etc.

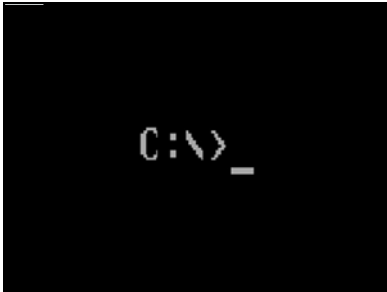




The coalition centered its focus on the implementation of ReadyRosie (www.readyrosie.com), an innovative, online school readiness resource that sends a daily email to parents, caregivers, and teachers with a short video of an interactive activity that can be done with young children to encourage learning foundational skills including problem solving in math, foundations of literacy, essential life skills, and vocabulary. The program is designed to teach adults how to affectively engage their children in learning in every environment.



Over 90% of parents of 0-6 year old children across economic levels are online at least once a day, based on a ResearchNow study on internet usage across the state of Texas. (ResearchNow, 2012).



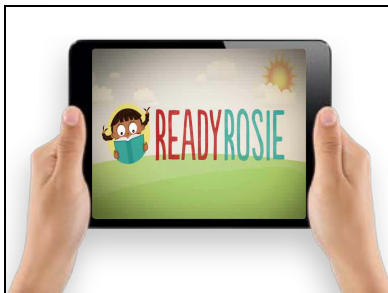
Sometimes, as parents we just need an idea. A prompt. And that's what I really like about ReadyRosie. Since there's not a parenting how-to manual, sometimes it's nice just to see how others are doing it.



Each day, parents receive a two minute video of activities using simple household objects such as rocks and coins. In other videos, it has activities with food such as counting sugar packets or gummy bears. Others take place reading in the floor at the local used bookstore or searching for sounds at the store. And it's real parents teaching real children in real places like a restaurant, the city bus, the grocery store, the doctor's office, the playground, etc. Places where authentic learning occurs.



www.readyrosie.com



ReadyRosie is also available in Spanish. In addition to families who speak primarily Spanish, many families of children in dual language programs use the videos to interact with their children in their second language (i.e. Spanish speaking families view the English videos and English speaking families view the Spanish videos).



ReadyRosie videos include literacy and math as well as an expert video in which a teacher explains why the concept is important to school readiness.



Maps of the school boundaries, apartment complexes, and agencies were provided so volunteers could target the neighborhoods identified by the five elementary schools that the Pre-K Coalition selected. As an example, Lee Elementary School's Spanish-speaking parents, supported by the organization Concilio, hit the streets in their neighborhood to spread the word about ReadyRosie.

The first phase of this effort was to connect with families near five targeted elementary schools with the highest levels of poverty: Borman Elementary, Ginnings Elementary, Hodge Elementary, Lee Elementary and Rivera Elementary.



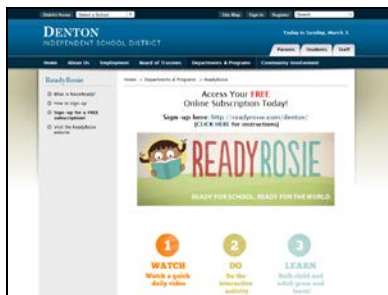
Fun days were held in the community sponsored by students from the local universities; and families signed up for ReadyRosie.



Posters were hung in each campus that receives Title I and the two district schools for young children as well as across the city. Students wore “stickers” home to alert parents of the opportunity to enroll.



ReadyRosie is featured on the www.dentonisd.org website.

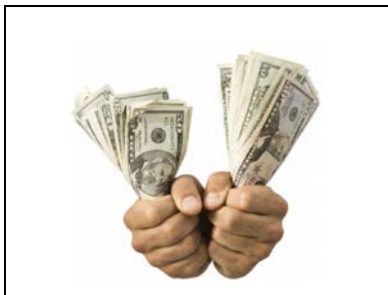




ReadyRosie provides usage reports. Most recently, 3,650 families are accessing the videos program at least 3 times per week.



ReadyRosie is not an app for children. It is a video for adults to watch to understand how to engage their children rather than simply giving them screen time.



Ready Rosie is a program paid by Denton ISD through its Title I, Part A funds for parents of current and potential Denton ISD students at no charge. The program is designed to serve students from birth to age six. Funding meets the requirement to address the needs of preschool children through section II.D. of the Title I, Part A "Assurances Relating to the Title I Program Plan" guidance and the needs of parental involvement through section VI.A. of the Title I, Part A "Assurances Relating to Parental Involvement" guidance.

II. Assurances Relating to the Title I Program Plan
The LEA assures the following:
D. The LEA will coordinate and integrate Title I, Part A, services with other educational services at the LEA or individual campus level, such as Even Start, Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, and other preschool programs, including plans for the transition of participants in such programs to local elementary school programs and services for children with limited English proficiency; children with disabilities; migratory children; neglected or delinquent youth; Indian children served under of Title VII, Part A; homeless children; and immigrant children in order to increase program effectiveness, eliminate duplication, and reduce fragmentation of the instructional program. [P.L. 107–110, Section 1112(b)(1)(E)]

VI. Assurances Relating to Parental Involvement.
The LEA assures the following:
A. If the LEA's Title I, Part A, entitlement is more than \$500,000, the LEA shall reserve at least 1% of its Title I, Part A, entitlement for parental involvement activities, including promoting family literacy and parenting skills.
J. To ensure effective involvement of parents and to support a partnership among the campus involved, parents, and the community to improve student academic achievement, each campus and the LEA will do the following:
ii. Provide materials and training, such as literacy training and using technology, to help parents work with their children to improve their achievement, as appropriate, to foster parental involvement
iv. to the extent feasible and appropriate, coordinate and integrate parent involvement programs and activities with Head Start, Reading First, Early Reading First, Even Start, the Home Instruction Programs for Preschool Youngsters, the Parents as Teachers Program, and public preschool and other programs, and conduct other activities, such as parent resource centers, that encourage and support parents in more fully participating in the education of their children

ReadyRosie is a program paid by Denton ISD through its Title I, Part A funds for parents of current and potential Denton ISD students at no charge. The program is designed to serve students from birth to age six. Funding meets the requirement to address the needs of preschool children through section II.D. of the Title I, Part A "Assurances Relating to the Title I Program Plan" guidance and the needs of parental involvement through section VI.A. of the Title I, Part A "Assurances Relating to Parental Involvement" guidance.

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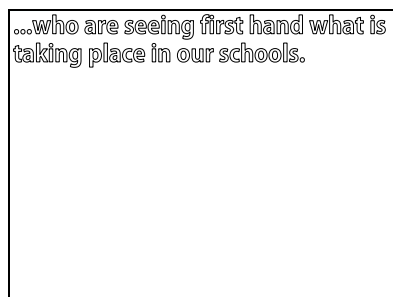
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We are reaching parents BEFORE they even reach the schoolhouse door.



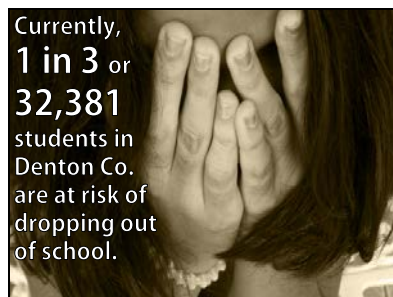
...and partnering with those who no longer have children in school...



...who are seeing firsthand what is taking place in our schools.



But we recognize it's more than young children...



Currently 1 in 3 or 32,381 students in Denton Co. are at risk of dropping out of school.



www.mentordenton.org



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaLW9Yp-vbQ>



The vision... 1000 mentors for the 2013-14 school year, and...
10,000 mentors every year beginning the fall 2015.



What's next in Denton?

Schools cannot do it alone.



We believe schools cannot do it alone.

Our school board and city council meet together quarterly.

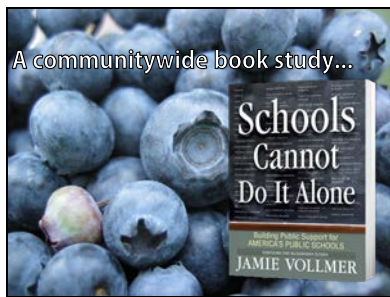


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"All great things begin with a conversation between two people."

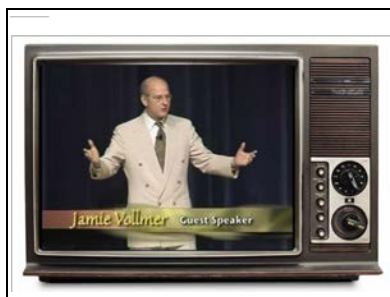


To quote author Margaret Wheatly, "All great things begin with a conversation between two people." Author [Jamie Vollmer](#), talks of the importance of "[The Great Conversation](#)" that must take place about education one community at a time in his book, [Schools Cannot Do It Alone](#).



A communitywide book study...

Our school district is holding communitywide book study groups within the community (i.e. with the United Way board, in community venues around the county, etc.).



For information regarding the Blueberry story, visit <http://www.jamievollmer.com/blueberries>.

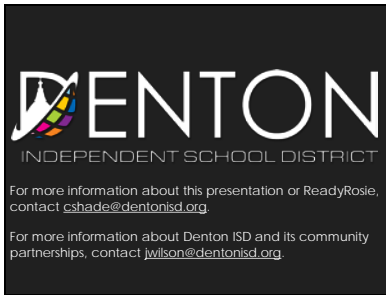
See Vollmer tell the Blueberry Story video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9TUrHMZMno>.



Our efforts are not a one size fits all approach. Each community is unique. But it is possible.



Sometimes, you just have to get off the escalator... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VrSUE_m19FY&feature=kp



For more information about this presentation or ReadyRosie, contact cshade@dentonisd.org. For more information about Denton ISD and its community partnerships, contact jwilson@dentonisd.org.