

# Tucson LINKS Letter

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## NEWS FLASH

It's the ideal solution for those of us who can't be near a TV on weekday afternoons, or who've yet to master the mysterious art of VCR programming.

KGUN9 News recently doubled the amount of air time it devotes each week to Tucson LINKS.

Now, you can catch LINKS stories at 5 and 10 p.m. each Sunday on KGUN-TV, Channel 9. That's in addition to stories on the regular 4:30 p.m. broadcasts on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

International Media Broadcasting produces the TV news spots about LINKS programs and concepts of resiliency.

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## *Effective core teams help LINKS schools get cooking*

At the heart of any successful LINKS partner school is an effective, functioning core team. Like the core of a planet or an engine, the Tucson LINKS core team generates energy and keeps the entire system running smoothly.

The core team drives the LINKS process at a school. The team usually is composed of five to eight people, who share decision-making and tasks so that no individual shoulders all the responsibilities.

The members of a good core team represent all departments of the school, and they maintain open lines of communication with the rest of the staff..

Each core team member also must have a handle on "the vision thing."

"They are able to remove themselves from the immediacy of their daily concerns and see the whole picture," according to school outreach coordinator Dr. Sue Habkirk.

This pertains especially to how LINKS complements other school improvement plans and relates to a school's vision, mission and goals.

It should be stressed, too, that core teams embrace positive change.

Collectively, they are open-minded and willing to consider innovative strategies and solutions. Cooperation and collaboration are primary among a core team's goals, as is a commitment to nurturing student success.

**See next month's issue for a profile of an effective core team.**

Core teams also are strongly involved in a variety of LINKS activities. Their members are willing to attend training sessions and workshops, and to incorporate what they learn there in the activities at their schools. "The best core teams also send more than one person to the required trainings," Habkirk said.

Core teams thrive on strong leadership. Visionary principals acknowledge the efforts of others, and they inspire their school teams to greater achievements.

Good core teams are proactive (as opposed to reactive), they regularly revisit their action plans, use meetings to evaluate success, foster knowledge of prevention programs and stay on task.

"We hope to see the core team is so good, they can find it useful to stay together after LINKS funding ceases," Habkirk said.

### **Recipe for a Healthy Core Team**

Ingredients:

- Large dollops of strength-based approach and resiliency research
- Generous amounts of commitment to student success and enhanced learning
- A bushel of assorted collaboration, cooperation and innovation
- Oodles of willingness to attend training and workshops
- A spoonful of shared decision-making
- A pinch of humor for seasoning

Blend all ingredients at room temperature. Repeat regularly. With proper preparation, it serves entire school.

## **GOOD NEWS** **AT DIETZ**

The Arizona Department of Education this year reclassified Dietz as “performing,” after it labeled the school “underperforming” last year. This reflects improved scores on the state AIMS test.

Principal Lisa McCorkle attributes the success to “hard work and a really focused plan.”

The six-step LINKS planning process inspired the school’s approach to preparing for the test.

“You know how LINKS talks about ‘needs assessments’? Well, we did that with students, parents and teachers, and we tried to develop a plan for the AIMS,” she said.

## **Resiliency spotlight: Caring and Support**

The six concepts of the Resiliency Wheel, created by Nan Henderson and Mike Milstein, have become essential elements in all aspects of Tucson LINKS.

In subsequent issues of Tucson LINKS Letter, we will examine each of the six parts of the Resiliency Wheel, which are: provide opportunities for meaningful participation; maintain high, supported expectations; support prosocial bonding; set clear, consistent boundaries, teach life skills; and demonstrate caring and support.

We look this month at demonstrating caring and support.

Lisa McCorkle, principal at Dietz Elementary School in the Tucson Unified School District, recently reflected on the many ways her school’s culture demonstrates caring and support for its students.

McCorkle said she values quality time spent with students; she finds reading to them especially rewarding.

Also, being sent to the Dietz principal’s office doesn’t always involve discipline. “One of the things that the teachers have done for me is to send students to my office so they can show me something good that they have

done, or so they can read me an especially good assignment,” she said.

McCorkle also recalls the day one student was upset, and a campus monitor spent an entire recess sitting with the student on the grass on the playground and talking with the child. “Fortunately, we had myself and another monitor around so we could afford that attention,” McCorkle said.

She also cited Dietz’s strong tutoring system, through which 36 community volunteers work weekly 54 with students.

Caring and support also are expressed at Dietz when the whole school community gathers first thing Monday mornings to recognize the birthdays of students.

“We sing ‘Happy Birthday,’ and announce their birthdays on our outdoor stage, and sometimes their parents stick around.” Students receive gifts in the form of a bookmark and pencil.

McCorkle knows individual teachers often celebrate students’ birthdays in class, but she’s pleased by the idea that the whole school recognizes each child’s special day.

“Like a lot of good ideas, I borrowed that from another school,” she said.

## ***At Painted Sky, Positive Behavior Supports mean being “cool”***

### **PBS IN ACTION**

*Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) is an evidence-based strategy focused on sustaining healthy school environments by encouraging and rewarding appropriate student behavior.*

Implementation of Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) at Painted Sky Elementary School takes the form of “Cool Tools for Success,” a practice through which students are recognized by faculty for doing the right thing, rather than being singled out for inappropriate behavior. PBS makes good behavior cool.

“It happens in all the specialist areas — art, P.E. and music,” said Debbie Emans, a third-grade teacher and member of Painted Sky’s core team.

At Painted Sky, the key messages of PBS are: Be Respectful, Be Responsible and Be Safe. These were dubbed “cool tools.”

“If you are caught using your cool tools you can get rewarded with a ‘cool point,’ a piece of paper that has a picture of our logo

on it, and says so-and-so was caught being cool,” Emans said.

She said students are proclaimed officially cool during Friday announcements and at a display in the lunchroom.

P.E. teacher Ann Paulson also has videotaped her students performing skits that demonstrate “cool” and “uncool” behavior. After she edits the tapes, she plans to show them to the students as further reinforcement.

Preliminary results show that the changes in attitudes really do affect students’ behavior throughout the school culture, Emans said.

Data recently released by Amphitheater Public Schools show that, at most grade levels, the number of disciplinary referrals at Painted Sky decreased from the fall of 2002 to the same period in 2003.

## Communication workshop to address reaching families

Clear communication between families and schools is essential to any educational organization's operation.

Open discourse and the effective dissemination of information facilitates the creation of a healthy partnership in which the shared goal is nurturing students and preparing them for the future.

Tucson LINKS training has developed the workshop "Building Family-School Partnerships With Effective Two-Way Communication." It will be presented from 2 to 6 p.m. Wednesday, March 31, at Kellond Elementary School, 6606 E. Lehigh Dr.

Steven Nagle, Tucson LINKS training coordinator, will team up with Gene Armstrong, LINKS' communications coordinator, to present the workshop.

The session will help participants identify needs and goals in terms of communication with parents, and it will include brief introductions to key concepts of communications and social marketing.

Principles of effective and productive

communication also will be covered, including a look at techniques that either encourage or halt communication.

Among the tools to be examined will be newsletters, brochures, flyers, parent handbooks, folders, announcements and, briefly, electronic media.

The workshop will go beyond theory to provide participants with useful tools that can enhance their schools' efforts to communicate educational, informational and resource information to parents and other caregivers.

Strategies for successful and productive communication with families will be shared. Those who attend also will be invited to bring current samples of their school's existing materials to have them assessed for effectiveness, usability and design.

Fun is promised in the form of a hands-on workshop that will allow participants to experiment with various communication tools to create a mock-up of a four-page newsletter on the spot.



***Building Family-School Partnerships With Effective Two-Way Communication***  
Wednesday,  
March 31, from  
2 to 6 p.m.,  
at Kellond  
Elementary  
School, 6606 E.  
Lehigh Dr.  
Call 626-4964 to  
register.

## Attending training deepens the LINKS experience

To fully take advantage of being a Tucson LINKS partner, the faculty at each school is strongly encouraged to attend as many LINKS trainings as are appropriate and possible.

Here is a selected list of the workshops scheduled for March and early April. Because some trainings fill up quickly, we request that you make reservations in advance. Please call 626-4964 to sign up. Check [www.tucsonlinks.org](http://www.tucsonlinks.org) for the latest version of the list.

- **Class-Wide Peer Tutoring**  
Thursday, March 11, 4-6:15 p.m.; Learning Acquisition Center, 435 E. Glenn St.
- **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)**  
Thursday, March 11, 4-6:15 p.m.; Drachman Elementary School, 1085 S. 10th Ave.
- **Understanding Fetal Alcohol and Drug Effects**  
Monday, March 22, 4-6:15 p.m.; Learning Acquisition Center, 435 E. Glenn St.
- **Classroom Effects of Family Poverty**  
Wednesday, March 24, 4-6:15 p.m.; CPSA

Training Center,  
2502 N. Dodge  
Blvd.

- **Evidence-Based Programs and Strategies Information Fair**  
Thursday, March 25, 4-6 p.m.; Location: TBA
- **Strategic Tutoring**  
Thursday, March 25, 3-6:30 p.m.; Erickson Elementary School, 6750 E. Stella Rd.
- **Tutoring Skills and Strategies for Non-Teachers and Volunteers**  
Tuesday, March 30, 2:30-6:30 p.m.; Learning Acquisition Center, 435 E. Glenn St.
- **Strengthening Your School's Volunteer Program**  
Thursday, April 1, 4-6:15 p.m.; Learning Acquisition Center, 435 E. Glenn St.
- **Bullying Prevention and Intervention**  
Tuesday, April 13, 4-6:30 p.m.; Ironwood Elementary School, 3300 W. Freer Rd.

# Training

**Our Children Thrive in  
Safe, Drug-free  
Learning Environments**

**Contact Tucson LINKS at:**

Tucson LINKS  
Lee Instructional Resource Center  
2025 E. Winsett St.  
Tucson, AZ 85719

Phone: 520-225-4609  
Fax: 520-225-4860

Direct story ideas and comments to  
[gene.armstrong@tusd.k12.az.us](mailto:gene.armstrong@tusd.k12.az.us).

**Check out Tucson LINKS on  
the Internet:  
[www.tucsonlinks.org](http://www.tucsonlinks.org)**

## What We Do: A Tucson LINKS Primer

Tucson LINKS is a three-year, \$8-million federal grant awarded to five Tucson-area school districts and a wide range of community partners, which are listed below.

LINKS focuses on prevention and intervention efforts that address substance abuse and violence. The objective is to create Protective School environments that remove barriers to learning and enhance achievement to prepare students for the future.

In its second year in schools, LINKS boasts a roster of 53 partner schools across Pima County.

LINKS also supports primary-care clinics, behavioral health services, Community Justice Boards, early childhood education,

training for faculty and parents, and funds for the implementation of prevention and intervention strategies in schools.

Each partner school tailors its participation in LINKS to its unique needs. LINKS coordinators guide each school through the process of creating an action plan that employs a variety of evidence-based strategies, practices and programs.

LINKS is funded by Safe Schools/Healthy Students, a collaboration among the U.S. Departments of Education, Health and Human Services, and Justice. Since 1999, Safe Schools/Healthy Students has given grants to more than 150 community initiatives.

## *Tucson LINKS Community Partners*

- **Amphitheater Public Schools**  
[www.amphi.com](http://www.amphi.com)  
Dr. Vicki Balentine, Superintendent
- **Flowing Wells School District**  
[www.flowingwells.k12.az.us](http://www.flowingwells.k12.az.us)  
Dr. John Pedicone, Superintendent
- **Marana Unified School District**  
[www.maranausd.org](http://www.maranausd.org)  
Richard Lesko, Superintendent
- **Sunnyside Unified School District**  
[www.sunnysideud.k12.az.us](http://www.sunnysideud.k12.az.us)  
Dr. Raúl Bejarano, Superintendent
- **Tucson Unified School District**  
[www.tusd.k12.az.us](http://www.tusd.k12.az.us)  
Dr. Estanislado Paz, Superintendent
- **City of Tucson**  
[www.ci.tucson.az.us](http://www.ci.tucson.az.us)  
Bob Walkup, Mayor
- **The Community Partnership of Southern Arizona**  
[www.cpsa-rbha.org](http://www.cpsa-rbha.org)  
Neal Cash, Chief Executive Officer
- **Family Advocacy Resource & Wellness Centers**  
[www.tucsonlinks.org/partners/fwc.cfm](http://www.tucsonlinks.org/partners/fwc.cfm)  
Dr. Brenda Even, Executive Director
- **International Media Broadcasting**  
e-mail: [nanmontoya@aol.com](mailto:nanmontoya@aol.com)  
Nancy Montoya, Kirt Ijams; Producers
- **KGUN-TV, Channel 9 News**  
[www.kgun9.com](http://www.kgun9.com)  
Ray Depa, General Manager
- **Marana Health Center**  
[www.maranahealthcenter.com](http://www.maranahealthcenter.com)  
Clarence Vatne, Executive Director
- **Metropolitan Education Commission**  
[www.cityoftucson.org/mec](http://www.cityoftucson.org/mec)  
Dr. June Webb-Vignery, Executive Director
- **Pacific Institute for Research & Evaluation**  
[www.pire.org](http://www.pire.org)  
Robert W. Carpenter, President & CEO
- **Pima County Attorney's Office**  
[www.pcao.co.pima.az.us](http://www.pcao.co.pima.az.us)  
Barbara LaWall, Pima County Attorney
- **Pima County Board of Supervisors**  
[www.co.pima.az.us/bos/bos1.html](http://www.co.pima.az.us/bos/bos1.html)  
Sharon Bronson, Chair
- **Pima County Sheriff's Department**  
[www.pimasheriff.org/](http://www.pimasheriff.org/)  
Clarence W. Dupnick, Sheriff
- **St. Elizabeth of Hungary Clinic**  
[www.ccs-soaz.org/saint\\_e.htm](http://www.ccs-soaz.org/saint_e.htm)  
Sister Barbara Anne Stowasser, Executive Director
- **Tucson Police Department**  
[www.ci.tucson.az.us/police/](http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/police/)  
Richard Miranda, Chief of Police
- **Tucson Resiliency Initiative**  
[www.tucsonresiliency.org](http://www.tucsonresiliency.org)  
Dr. Katie Frey
- **University of Arizona College of Education**  
[www.ed.arizona.edu](http://www.ed.arizona.edu)  
Dr. Ronald W. Marx, Dean



*Tucson LINKS is a Safe Schools/Healthy  
Students Initiative funded by the U.S.  
Departments of Education, Health and Human  
Services, and Justice*

