

# Tucson LINKS Letter

Volume 1, Issue 3

November, 2003

## NEWS FLASH

Look closely at the byline on the cover story this month. It was written by a faculty member at a LINKS school!

Suggestions and contributions from the extended LINKS family are always welcome at Tucson LINKS Letter, so don't be shy.

Have an idea for an article about activities at your school or other LINKS-related subjects? Contact Gene Armstrong at 225-4776. His e-mail address is [gene.armstrong@tusd.k12](mailto:gene.armstrong@tusd.k12)

## Inside this issue:

Jefferson Park's Parents Group	1
Grandparents at Brichta	2
Early Childhood Outreach	2
School Safety Officers	3
Upcoming Trainings	3
List of Tucson LINKS partners	4
Contact Tucson LINKS	4

## Parenting takes center stage

### Jefferson Park group addresses variety of issues

*Editor's Note: The 2003-2004 training theme for Tucson LINKS is the connection among families and school. Here is a first-hand account of how one LINKS school puts this into action.*

Platicas, the parenting group at Jefferson Park Elementary School, is designed to help parents implement discipline, establish routines, advocate for their children, provide academic support and communicate with their kids. The class was born of necessity; parents and guardians initially expressed a variety of challenges that even the best caregivers can occasionally face.



The parent population at Jefferson Park varies greatly. A single mother in her 20s has four children, all under the age of 5. Another man in his 70s has 64 grandchildren, two of whom are currently enrolled in our school. At this stage in life, he finds himself again in the position of being a primary caregiver.

The common bond among these parents is that, like all of us, they need support. Lisa (not her real name) has two children, and because of discipline problems she was on the verge of sending the children to live with their father out of state. The children did not want to go. After attending all the classes, she said, "It felt good to be able to see other parents in the same place that I am in. I don't feel so alone now. I have a support system."

The program's founders are Cindy Worthman, community representative, and Saúl J. Ostroff, school counselor. They benefit from the invaluable assistance of Oded Nathan, school/clinical psychologist, and Crystal Perkins, president of the booster club. Principal Larry Haynes has approved and visited the program, which he enthusiastically supports.

The Jefferson Park Platicas is tailored to the needs of our population. The group is completely staffed by volunteers, who also provide free childcare and a family-style dinner. Recent Jefferson Park alumni Chad Worthman, Aisha Reece and Dominique Perkins provide valuable assistance with the childcare and dinner.

The class' third meeting focused on modeled play and activities for parents and their children. More than 100 people attended at the Northwest Neighborhood Center. Such enthusiasm during after-school hours is encouraging, and we look forward to collaborating again with Mike Catherina and Donna Liggins, our hosts at the Northwest Neighborhood Center.

— Saúl Ostroff  
Jefferson Park counselor

**Brichta Elementary, another Tucson LINKS school, is directly addressing the concerns and needs of grandparents in its community. See Page 2 for details.**

## Brichta support group serves grandparents who are caregivers

*When a family can't make it to the grandparents support group at Brichta, principal Sabrina Cruz heads out to pick them up. "Isn't that what LINKS is about — resiliency?"*

More and more, some grandparents are being called to become the caregivers for their grandchildren, and this unique circumstance comes complete with unique challenges and opportunities for growth.

The faculty at Brichta Elementary is addressing these changes and challenges with its grandparents support group, which meets monthly. The gatherings are in keeping with this Tucson LINKS school's implementation of Caring School Community and its action plan, said principal Sabrina Cruz.

"We perceived an un-addressed need for support for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. This is an underserved population in Tucson and in this community."

The support group attracts more than a dozen grandparents-as-caregivers, who attend the meetings with their grandkids. One group member is raising seven grandchildren.

The first half-hour of the meeting is designated for grandparents and grandkids to participate in an activity together. During the second portion, the grandparents gather to share their concerns and successes with each other, while the grandkids work separately on notes to their grandparents.

The grandparents are remarkably frank during the sessions, Cruz said. "Their willingness to lay everything on the table, their fears and frustrations, is inspiring."

Cruz said Brichta faculty does not provide an agenda for the discussions, simply the opportunity. "This is their time," she said. "We are here to serve them."

When one family could not find a ride to a recent meeting, Cruz and a staff member drove to pick them up. "Isn't that what LINKS is about — resiliency?" she said.



*The "Parents as Teachers" curriculum includes time spent on early literacy, developmental milestones, family concerns, and play. It also provides workshops for families at each of the LINKS school sites on a regularly scheduled basis.*

## LINKS hires new Early Childhood Outreach Coordinator

Efforts are underway to enhance Tucson LINKS' Early Childhood component. The Early Childhood Outreach Coordinator is charged with working across the five districts. This component includes two priorities that will impact the early childhood programs.

The first priority is "parent education." LINKS recently supported training for newly-hired parent educators to become certified in the "Parents as Teachers" curriculum. This curriculum is designed to support parent educators through home visits while maximizing the use of time with pertinent and well-prepared materials as well as presentations.

The parent educators are currently trained to support children 0-3 years of age. They will be recruiting through siblings in the early childhood programs. The referral process to be used will be the newly forming Child Success Teams.

The parent educators have a two-fold task. First, they will be working directly with families who have been referred through the process on an individual basis. Within this framework, they will deliver the "Parents as Teachers" curriculum to families.

Second the parent educators will be available to provide workshops to families at each of the LINKS preschool sites.

The second priority is the development of Child Success Teams across the early childhood program. Staff development will be provided for early childhood educators in support of skills necessary to be effective problem-solvers in this process.

This element strengthens the ability of the early childhood educators to provide effective interventions in their classrooms.

— Gail Bornfield, Ph.D.  
Early Child Outreach Coordinator

# An On-site Presence

## School Safety Officers an integral part of Tucson LINKS team

“It’s like a family here,” said TUSD school safety officer Ruthanne F. Penn, during a recent visit to Blenman Elementary. To emphasize her statement, she was greeted in quick succession by the school’s principal, vice principal and counselor.

“I love it when the children come running up to me in the hallways,” Penn said. “They recognize me, they come up and hug me. That makes it all worth it.”

Tucson Unified School District employs 11 school safety officers daily, and two of them are assigned full-time to LINKS schools in the district. The school safety officers visit each of their schools twice a week.

Penn’s colleague in LINKS is Dave Holaway; both are former law enforcement officers for various Tucson-area agencies. Among their responsibilities are truancy abatement, conflict resolution, classroom assistance, disciplinary assistance, response to potentially dangerous situations, safety survey and neighborhood patrols, Holaway said.

When necessary, they also refer juvenile offenders to the Tucson Police Department’s school resource officers (SROs). They spend the most time, as one might guess, curbing truancy, which has shown marked success.

Recently, Holaway visited Grijalva Elementary to present more than 20 students with certificates documenting their dramatic improvements in attendance.



Grijalva principal Emily Munoz said, “One girl who was completely gone all the time last year has only missed three times this year. It was very important to let the children know that he is aware that they’re making progress.”

Of Holaway’s efforts, Munoz said, “He’s really making a difference at our school. He develops the rapport with them. He’s not just the bad guy. He has the job to make us feel safe. Dave also knows the children and families by their first names.”

Holaway and Penn also teach classes in such subjects as personal safety, bullying prevention, bike safety and animal cruelty.

Both officers know their work supports the LINKS goals and objectives.

Holaway said they help “to remove barriers to learning, such as truancy, conflicts. We help create a safe environment, and that fulfills that part of the LINKS mission.”

## Check out these upcoming LINKS workshops

All partner schools are encouraged to maximize their participation in Tucson LINKS by taking advantage of the workshops offered throughout the school year at various convenient sites.

Of special interest is the Class-wide Peer Tutoring workshop, to be held Dec. 3. This training outlines an in-class strategy that pairs students for learning activities. The method has been shown to increase

achievement for both students in the pair.

Space is limited; registration is first-come, first-served. Call 626-4964 for reservations and locations. Spring trainings currently are being planned.

- **Mini-Grant Workshop:**  
Dec. 2, 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- **Implementing "Early Warning — Timely Response":**  
Dec. 2, 4-6 p.m.
- **Class-wide Peer Tutoring:**  
Dec. 3, 4-6 p.m.
- **PBS/Functional Behavior Assessment Overview:**  
Dec. 4, 4-6 p.m.
- **LINKS Overview:**  
Dec. 11, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- **LINKS Overview:**  
Jan. 13, 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.
- **Reducing Truancy:**  
Jan. 20, 4-6 p.m.

# Training

*The LINKS training team is eager to hear your needs and your suggestions. Just call*

## Linking Intervention Networks for Kids in Schools

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Fax: 520-225-4863

We welcome story ideas, contributions or comments. Contact the Tucson LINKS Letter editor at [gene.armstrong@tUSD.k12.az.us](mailto:gene.armstrong@tUSD.k12.az.us) or 520-225-4776.

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

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

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#### Trainers

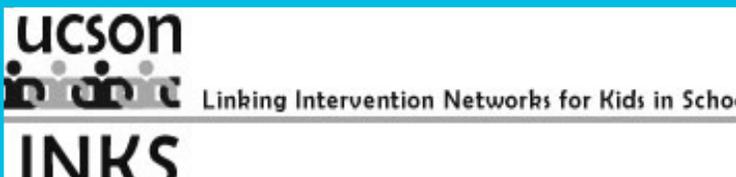
Patricia Helgeson, M.Ed. 626-1615  
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#### Workshop Information/Registration

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## Tucson LINKS Community Partners

- **Amphitheater Public Schools**  
[www.amphi.com](http://www.amphi.com)
- **Flowing Wells School District**  
[www.flowingwells.k12.az.us](http://www.flowingwells.k12.az.us)
- **Marana Unified School District**  
[www.maranausd.org](http://www.maranausd.org)
- **Sunnyside Unified School District**  
[www.sunnysideud.k12.az.us](http://www.sunnysideud.k12.az.us)
- **Tucson Unified School District**  
[www.tUSD.k12.az.us](http://www.tUSD.k12.az.us)
- **The Community Partnership of Southern Arizona**  
[www.cpsa-rbha.org/Index.shtml](http://www.cpsa-rbha.org/Index.shtml)
- **Family Advocacy Resource & Wellness Centers**  
[www.tucsonlinks.org/partners/fwc.cfm](http://www.tucsonlinks.org/partners/fwc.cfm)
- **International Media Broadcasting**  
e-mail: [nanmontoya@aol.com](mailto:nanmontoya@aol.com)
- **KGUN-TV, Channel 9 News**  
[www.kgun9.com](http://www.kgun9.com)
- **Marana Health Center**  
[www.maranahealthcenter.com](http://www.maranahealthcenter.com)
- **Metropolitan Education Commission**  
[www.cityoftucson.org/mec](http://www.cityoftucson.org/mec)
- **Pacific Institute for Research & Evaluation**  
[www.pire.org](http://www.pire.org)
- **Pima County Attorney's Office**  
[www.pcao.co.pima.az.us/index.shtml](http://www.pcao.co.pima.az.us/index.shtml)
- **St. Elizabeth of Hungary Clinic**  
[www.ccs-soaz.org/saint\\_e.htm](http://www.ccs-soaz.org/saint_e.htm)
- **Tucson Resiliency Initiative**  
[www.tucsonresiliency.org](http://www.tucsonresiliency.org)
- **University of Arizona College of Education**  
[www.ed.arizona.edu](http://www.ed.arizona.edu)



Safe Schools  
Healthy Students