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## **START WITH SUCCESS**

### **Stanley M. Makowski Early Childhood Center**

#### **Buffalo, New York**

On October 20, 1999, the doors of the Stanley M. Makowski Early Childhood Center opened wide to parents, children, staff, and community agencies. As each family arrived, they received a paper leaf on which to write something they liked about school.

Each family then followed a scavenger hunt map that took them to their classroom and three other areas in the school. The areas had a special activity for parents and children. Classrooms displayed children's work and offered an opportunity to meet the teachers. The library hosted a music performance while families browsed through the bookshelves, and the Fitness Center offered families the use of the equipment. In the Imagination Center, 30 tables displayed information from community agencies involved with children and families. The main hall presented a video highlighting school programs, special events, and student achievements.

After visiting each area, families had their leaves stamped. When all the activities concluded, families exchanged their leaves for snacks and a parent survey. Staff also completed a follow-up survey.

Through this event, parents had familiarized themselves with the school. We have an extremely large physical plant and one of our challenges was to get parents beyond the front door and enable them to find their child's classroom. Families received information about community resources available to them and had an opportunity to interact with staff members in a positive setting.

The survey comments suggested that the evening was well received by parents, children, and staff. We hope to repeat this practice next year and expand the activity options.

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