

Sources of Family Stress and Relief

Early Childhood Center #61

Buffalo, New York

Stress and parenthood go hand-in-hand. Sometimes it is ordinary, everyday stresses. Other times it is major problems that put parents on edge.

The teachers and administrators at the Early Childhood Center No. 61 believed that stress was holding their parents back from becoming more involved in the school, and that having more involved parents would benefit the students. So they organized Sources of Family Stress and Relief, a workshop for parents and teachers.

Thirty parents of students in pre-K through fourth grade, along with 10 teachers, administrators and staff, and five community members, participated in an evening of stress relief. They saw a PowerPoint presentation about stress management, talked about personal stress and how they coped, and learned different strategies for dealing with stress.

Catherine Collins, an author, mother, school volunteer and educator, conducted the workshop. She has written widely on sources of family stress and stress management.

Among the coping skills she suggested were exercising, eating healthfully, getting enough rest, using relaxation techniques, and talking to others. Organizers modeled each strategy for parents. In addition, a dance teacher taught the parents how to line dance – dancing is an effective stress reliever – and the school served healthy refreshments.

Parents said they learned a great deal about factors that contribute to stress and ways to handle it. Some parents also took home prizes that matched the workshop theme, such as candles and aroma therapy bath products.

The school staff is hoping that less-stressed parents will approach their parenting responsibilities more calmly and have more time and interest in working with their children

on school activities. The school has many single-parent families for whom time is a particularly important factor in their involvement.

The school would like to increase the number of parents attending future workshops. Organizers will advertise the topics, benefits, prizes, and refreshments more widely next time.

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