

Dreams Help Students Achieve *Parkway Educator Advises Parents to Play Key Role in Supporting, Shaping Children's Dreams*

Most parents know the importance of being active in their children's education. But along with school involvement, parents can play a key role in inspiring students to greatness. Advice on how to do this is offered by Charlotte Ijei, director of Pupil Personnel and Diversity in the Parkway school district.

A key factor in fueling students' success is their ability to dream of what they would like to become, according to Ijei. She says that beginning when children are young, parents should guide them in creating a plan for themselves. This requires ongoing conversations about what they see themselves doing, plus communicating what you expect of them. "If we don't expect great things of our children, who will?" Ijei asks. "We need to let them know they can do anything they set their minds to."

She advises parents to support their children's dreams no matter how lofty or unrealistic they might seem. "If children talk about being a doctor or lawyer, allow them to dream that, regardless if you think they are academically capable or if you question whether your family can afford the level of education it requires," insists Ijei. "It should be the student's

dream, not the parents', she points out, adding that what they ultimately choose could be a career that falls within the medical or legal field.

If children have no idea of what they would like to become, help them formulate dreams that are in line with their interests or skill set, advises Ijei. She suggests parents help research occupations that utilize the child's strengths by using books, videos, mentors and field trips to companies. "Some children need to find out what excites them; others discover that early on, but regardless, they can all benefit from knowing as much as possible about particular occupations and what is required for them."

No matter the child's age, "Speak to them as if they are grown-ups," says Ijei. "Talk to them about the dreams they have for themselves and also what you have in mind for their future. Be encouraging but also honest in terms of the preparation required. For example, let them know that professional football players have to do well in school, or that to be the best writer, they have to be the best reader."

Discussions about dreams should touch on the bigger picture of life itself, Ijei believes. "Share with your children that everything surrounding them was once someone's idea which, through hard work and determination, evolved into a product people use. Let them know that life is hard, there will be bumps in the road, but that attitude and focus are paramount to success in life."

Finally, Ijei advises parents to talk to school staff about their students' strengths and challenges. "The educators have insight about your children that can be helpful to you in guiding them toward their dreams. When you partner with the school, your children will see that you are



Charlotte Ijei, Parkway's director of Pupil Personnel and Diversity, conducts workshops for parents and teachers on how to inspire students to greatness. Students need to possess dreams about what they would like to become and parents should also make suggestions based on the child's interests and skill set, she believes. "If we don't expect great things of our children, who will?"

Photo by Parkway School District

Student Success Depends On: *(as noted by Charlotte Ijei)*

- **Being inspired to dream** (see articles).
- **Sense of belonging.** "must feel a connection with their schools"
- **Caring relationship at school.** "someone they can talk to and trust"
- **Proper balance.** "between exercise, homework, other activities"
- **The right attitude.** "toward school — it's important!"
- **A desire to succeed.** "Self-determination and motivation are necessary."
- **Boundaries.** "Tell them: it's time for homework. Kids beg for boundaries."

serious about the high expectations you hold for them and the staff will see that you want your children to realize their dreams."

Most of all, parents should let their children know they believe in them. "Help them dream big and support them in their dreams," she stresses. *By Peggy Magee*

Parents' Strategies Model Educator's Advice: *Communication, High Expectations, Support/Encouragement of Dreams*

Charlotte Ijei's presentation at a Parkway parent event, "How Can I Inspire My Student," validated to Kelsia and Alphonso Ivy, parents of four Parkway students, that their parenting strategies are right on the mark. "When we heard Mrs. Ijei's recommendations, Alphonso and I commented to each other, 'That is what we do!'" reports Kelsia.

What the couple from north St. Louis does is have regular conversations with their children about what they want to do when they grow up. "We talk to them about being on the lookout for skills or abilities they possess that they can channel into a profession," explains Kelsia. "We encourage them to find an interest and then we help them explore the ins and outs of it so they can determine if it is something they could build a future around."

She says their son Atajio, age 11, thinks he's an artist. Kelsia laughs and says she is not sure about that. None the less, she has enrolled him in an art class this summer. Because of Atajio's love of art, Kelsia and Alphonso talk to him about the possibility of becoming a graphic artist or an architect when he is older. He also likes math and science so the family makes visits to the St. Louis Science Center. "We want to keep him interested and curious," Kelsia notes, adding that they don't want to limit their children, but instead expose them to many different experiences.

The Ivy's oldest daughter, Akilah, age 15, dreams of owning her own dance studio, or maybe a center for voice instruction. At age 4 she showed an interest in movement and so her parents enrolled her in a dance class at COCA. "We allowed her to try it even though we didn't see much talent in the beginning," Kelsia admits with a chuckle. Voice lessons followed a few years later and since then, Akilah has dedicated countless hours to both. Aware of her passion, the Ivys have begun looking into colleges where Akilah can specialize in dancing or singing. "Akilah heard about the Juilliard performing arts college and we have done some research on it," notes Kelsia. "We hope to make a college visit there this summer."

Neither the selectiveness of the prestigious arts college in New York City nor its cost has dissuaded the Ivys. "We stress to Akilah that she needs to practice hard, work on her competitive skills and keep her grades up so that she will be eligible for scholarships."

Akilah's dream has also prompted the Ivys to seek advice from the staff at her high school, Parkway West. "We have talked to her choir teacher and her counselor, in addition to her dance instructor at Charley's Body Shoppe and her private voice coach, about how Akilah can best prepare for gaining admission to a college such as Juilliard." Their advice is that she needs to branch out and find other opportunities to put herself in competitive situations, reports Kelsia, adding that Akilah has been with the same dance studio since she was five. "All of her instructors believe that she can achieve her goals, and they collectively say that if she could increase her exposure, she could go far in the arts. As a result, she tried out for the Muny Teens and she plans to audition for American Idol!"

And while Akilah focuses on her plan, the Ivy's other children are trying to find their own interests and talents. "It helps that they see Akilah working toward her dream. It motivates them to find their own," reports Kelsia. *By Peggy Magee*



Kelsia Ivy, seated, and her husband Alphonso talk to their four children often about what they see themselves doing as adults. They are supporting their oldest daughter, Akilah Roberts, in reaching her dream of owning a dance studio or center for voice instruction by researching performing arts colleges and finding out what she needs to gain admission. Here, Akilah gets help with a dance extension from her instructor Lisa Billings at Charley's Body Shoppe.

Photo by Marilyn Zimmerman

- Be follower #100 and win a **\$25 gift card to Best Buy.**
- Be follower #500 and win an **I-Pod Shuffle.**
- Be follower #1,000 and win an **I-Pod Shuffle and an I-Tunes gift card.**

*This issue of the Parent Link is dedicated to those transfer students who are members of the **Class of 2011** -- hardworking students who have left behind an enviable record of accomplishments. For each student who is mentioned, there are scores of others also deserving of recognition. Our congratulations go not only to the students, but their parents and teachers as well. You are at the heart of this program and an important part of the students' successes.*



Matt Arnold
Affton High School



Keegan Kelly
Bayless High School



Endia Thomas
Brentwood High School



Alexis Atkinson
Clayton High School



Kameron Stewart
Clayton High School



Lakesha Walker
Hancock High School



Christyna Johnson
Kirkwood High School



Darice Swink
Lindbergh High School



Angelo Jones
Mehlville High School



Kris Webb
Oakville High School



Hebert Prospere
Parkway South High School



Tamira Davis
Parkway South High School



Candace Perkins
Pattonville High School



D'Autrail Wafford
Marquette High School



Indasha Faulkner
Lafayette High School



Monique Williams
Rockwood Summit High



Altia Paulette
Eureka High School



Adam Mann-Ali
NJROTC Academy



Darreon Tickle
Valley Park High School



Jason Meehan
Webster Groves High School

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE

VICC Staff Ready to Assist Transferring Families

The Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) staff includes five full-time counselors/social workers who can assist families with issues related to their school transfers.

Counselors are happy to respond to concerns and/or questions from parents or students regarding any issue that would interfere with the success of a child in the school setting, such as attendance, disciplinary issues, curriculum, achievement or other concerns. They can also provide counseling assistance for students and help parents understand their educational rights.

Counselors generally are assigned according to the first letter of the student's last name. They can be reached by calling 314.721.8422, and dialing the extension number below, or via email.



A-D Vickie Williams
ext. 3011
vwilliams@choicecorp.org



E-H Laverne Mitchom
ext. 3020
lmitchom@choicecorp.org



I-M Jennifer Christy
ext. 3021
jchristy@choicecorp.org



N-R Mildred Scott
ext. 3027
msscott@choicecorp.org



S-Z Mary Schafer Meehan
ext. 3016
mmeehan@choicecorp.org

The counselors will begin a parent help column, "Ask the Counselor," which will be included in regular VICC parent publications. Please call or email any questions that you would like to have answered to any of the counselors. If you are emailing, please include "Ask the Counselor" as your subject line.

Contact Persons for Voluntary Student Transfer Program Families

Each of the districts accepting voluntary transfer students has a designated contact person. Contact persons coordinate the district's administrative responsibilities for the transfer program, and serve as the liaison between the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) and the district.

Contact persons' responsibilities may include enrolling transfer students, conducting orientations for new students and parents, processing applications and submitting transportation requests.

Contact persons are often the first individual from the district that a new transfer family meets, and they are a valuable resource for transfer families. They can answer specific questions about district policy and procedures and can refer parents to the proper school administrator if necessary.

Aftton

Dr. Ken Weissflug
314.638.8770

Bayless

Ms. Jayne Jackson
314.256.8664

Brentwood

Ms. Colleen Lohbeck
314.962.4507

Clayton

TBA
314.854.6471

Hancock Place

Mrs. Lisa Charles
314.544.1300, ext. 199

Kirkwood

Dr. Shirleas Washington
314.213.6105

Lindbergh

Mr. Chuck Triplett
314.729.2400, ext. 1815

Mehlville

Dr. Brian Lane
314.467.5220

Parkway

Ms. Michelle Wiley
314.415.8065

Dr. Charlotte Ijei
314.415.5063

Pattonville

Dr. Donette Green
314.213.8090

Ms. Helen Weissler
314.213.8075

Rockwood

Mr. Terry Harris
636.733.2177

Valley Park

Mrs. Vickie Pardeck
636.923.3617

Webster Groves

Mr. John M. Thomas (Interim)
314.918.4378

Special School District

Mrs. Mary Lee Burlemann
314.989.8125

Starting Dates for County Schools

Classes will begin soon in your county school. Make plans now to be at school every day, beginning on the very first day. Watch your mailbox for your bus card about one week prior to the beginning of classes. The first day of school for each county district is listed below:

Aftton	August 17, 2011
Bayless	August 16, 2011
Brentwood	August 16, 2011
Clayton	August 17, 2011
Hancock Place	August 18, 2011
Kirkwood	August 17, 2011
Lindbergh	August 16, 2011
Mehlville	August 17, 2011
Parkway	August 16, 2011
Pattonville	August 15, 2011
Rockwood	August 17, 2011
Special/Tech	August 15, 2011
Valley Park	August 16, 2011
Webster Groves	August 16, 2011

Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation (VICC) complies fully with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a law that affords parents and students 18 years of age and older with certain rights with respect to the student's educational records.

A copy of VICC's FERPA statement is included in VICC student handbooks, which can be requested by calling 314.721.8422, ext. 3012. The handbooks are also available on the VICC website at www.choicecorp.org. Click on the link for "City Residents Currently Enrolled in County Schools," and then click on "Voluntary Transfer Program Handbook."

The full policy will be published in the next issue of the *Parent Link*.

Emergency Communication System

To improve communication with parents regarding transportation and their child's participation in the St. Louis Student Transfer Program, the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation uses a telephone broadcast system, similar to ones used in many participating school districts.

This system, provided by School Reach, allows VICC to quickly send all households and parents a pre-recorded message by phone within minutes of a transportation emergency or unplanned event that could significantly delay a child's pick-up for or drop-off from school. These emergencies include traffic jams, bus breakdowns, inclement weather, accidents, etc. The service may also be used from time-to-time to communicate general program announcements or reminders.

This system will simultaneously call a home and one additional emergency number for each student's family who needs to be contacted and will deliver a message from Tami Webb, transportation operations manager, or another official with the transfer program. Calls will be delivered to both live (in person) responders and answering machines. Calls not answered and busy signals will be automatically retried by the system two additional times in 15 minute intervals after the initial call.

Your child's school will also continue to separately announce school closings due to snow or weather, via the media or their own phone system. However, in the event your child's district is open, but road conditions are such that VICC's transportation department feels it is not safe to transport students to school, VICC would use this separate system to notify families attending the affected districts in addition to making the standard media announcements.

For this notification system to best operate, it is imperative that you keep your school aware of any future changes in your home and/or emergency phone numbers. Your school then updates VICC's parent contact records so a separate notification to VICC is not necessary.

Transportation Information

Transportation to and from school is provided by the Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corporation so long as your child goes to a school in the correct attendance area. The phone number for the transportation staff is **314.721.8657**.

Transportation cards with the bus stop location and time are mailed to all transfer families about two weeks before school begins in the fall. If you do not receive your card by one week before the start of school, contact the principal at the school your child will be attending. Please do not call the transportation staff. After the regular school year begins, new cards will be mailed only if it is necessary to make a change to the bus/cab route. Please review each new card carefully, including the effective date, stop location and times and destroy all old cards.

Any day-to-day transportation problems or concerns you may have should be addressed by first calling the bus (or cab) contractor.

These include normal operating issues, such as the following:

- Looking for lost items left on the bus/cab
- Checking on activity bus location
- Questions or cancellations when VICC Transportation office is closed.

Refer to your child's bus card for the appropriate bus/cab company.

If the contractor is unable to resolve a concern, or if you have one of the following issues, please call the VICC transportation staff at 314.721.8657:

- Overall routing issues or concerns
- Pick-up or drop-off location concerns
- Concerns with driver or contractor
- Requesting cab or other alternative transportation service in the event your regular bus does not show.

Student Responsibilities

Students are to board their bus/cab only at their assigned stop. **They must arrive at their designated pick-up location 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up time, and remain at least 15 minutes after the pick-up time**, before calling the transportation staff at 314.721.8657 for advice on alternative transportation. If your children are not at the bus stop a full 10 minutes before the scheduled arrival time and do not wait the full 15 minutes after the scheduled time and they miss the bus, it will be your responsibility to get them to school. The transportation staff does not send alternative transportation in such instances.

For the safety of all children, students must obey general safety rules as well as those established by the school district they are attending. You should obtain a copy of your district's bus regulations and review them with your child. Violations of bus rules can result in a student being removed from riding the bus either on a temporary or permanent basis. If a bus suspension occurs, it becomes the parents' responsibility to transport the child to and from school for the duration of the suspension.

Parent Responsibilities

Transportation may run late and/or routes may not be firmly in place during the first few weeks of school. Please make sure your child knows exactly what to do if his or her bus does not arrive. This includes knowing where to go and whom to call. Also make sure your child knows what is expected when he or she is dropped off at the end of the school day. If you normally meet your child at the bus stop, be sure your child understands what to do if you are not there.

If the transportation route to which your child is assigned does not operate in a timely manner, or other problems arise, please communicate with the VICC transportation office.

It is important for parents to keep the school as well as the district contact person informed of **any changes in either the home phone number or the emergency phone number** for your child. Also, be sure to request that this information be forwarded to the transportation staff.

If You Move

If you move during the summer, call the principal at the county school your child has been or will be attending, or that district's contact person immediately. All districts have central office personnel who work during the summer to handle such situations. Please remember, **it takes up to 10 working days to make a transportation change**. If you are going to move during the academic year, be sure to notify your building principal or district contact person at least two weeks before you move. If you move outside of your school's attendance area, you will need to request a transfer to a school in your new attendance area, or else provide your own transportation in order to remain at your original school.

General Safety Rules

Please review the general safety rules with your student. These can be found in your transfer program handbook. Please refer to the box below if you need a copy of the handbook.

Student Safety

Help us protect your children as they travel to and from school. Certain types of children's clothing can create a hazard as your child exits the bus. Especially dangerous are jacket and sweatshirt drawstrings, long backpack straps, long scarfs or any other loose clothing. Such clothing could become caught in the bus handrail, door or other bus equipment as the child exits the bus. Please take the time to check your children's clothing. Also talk with your child about the behavior and safety rules.

Trespass Policy

To bolster the safety of students riding buses to school, the VICC Board adopted the following trespass policy:

"Trespass occurs when anyone boards a school bus without prior approval from VICC. Any VICC-designated person (including students), contractor or school staff whose job responsibilities require him/her to be on a school bus shall be authorized and not be considered trespassing. Only with prior approval from VICC or a contractor may any parent, guardian or member of the general public be allowed on a bus at any time."

Be sure to review the transportation section in the Voluntary Transfer Program Handbook (pages 9-21) with your child before the start of school.

If you need a handbook, please call 314.721.8422, ext. 3012, or visit our website: www.choicecorp.org