



News

Childhood coalition promotes parent involvement

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The Early Childhood Coalition of Grant County met Thursday afternoon after a long holiday break to refocus on the importance of parent involvement in a child's life.

The current use of the 40 Developmental Assets, which are 40 different resources that can be used to encourage and support child growth, responsibility and care, in Grant County were touched on by Head Start Administrator Michele Kelsay.

She said the Head Start parents have a homework sheet sent home to them once week that highlights a couple of the assets and how they can demonstrate them to their children. For example, asset eight asks parents to take their child's opinion in account for family decisions like a family activity or meal.

Kelsay said the parents then check off the items they have completed and send the sheets back to school with their children. The teachers for each classroom then keep track of how many hours their parents interacted with the students.

In the two weeks in December when they began this initiative, Kelsay said they had already tracked about 136 hours of parent involvement, and that was just in three of the six classrooms.

"I've had good feedback," Kelsay said.

Connie Rose, director of Family Service Society, said such initiatives as the 40 Developmental Assets are simple to implement into a home, business or organization because of the minimal amount of time, cost and stress associated with them.

"We want to provide tools for parents," she said.

Kelsay said she knows the Marion Community Schools administrators are ready to implement the 40 Developmental Assets as a tool to encourage and increase parent involvement.

"We have a lot of administrators who are ready to do something," she said.

Family Services Society Inc. Coordinator of Social Services and Education Barb Nehring said at the meeting she is also brainstorming ideas to increase parent involvement so children aren't continuously reappearing in the detention center. She said when talking to those individuals, they tell her they like it there compared to their home lives.

To decrease the number of stays, Nehring said she would like to begin follow-up visits at home and bring in some former residents to mentor those who are currently there.

Rose said it is such initiatives that need to be at the forefront of people's minds to help combat poverty and encourage child development and school readiness.