

Personal from Dorothy Ric

**MegaSkills® Education Center
The Home and School Institute, Inc.**

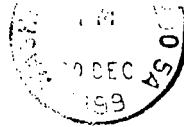
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www.MegaSkillsHSI.org

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Drawing by Brittni Kraft, Minot, North Dakota



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The MegaSkills

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focus

The MegaSkills Education Center
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Audrey Rothblum -

For your commitment to children and to education.

For your support of HSI/MegaSkills and the thousands of
schools and families served.

For your encouragement and friendship, thank you!

Larry Rich

The MegaSkills Education Center
of the Home and School Institute



Summary of Recent Research Finding at Schools Using the MegaSkills Programs

MegaSkills® Classroom Essentials Program (pages 1 & 2)
MegaSkills Parent Leader Training (pages 3 & 4)

Summary of Recent Findings on Implementation and Impact at Schools in San Diego, CA and Weslaco, TX

Source of Data: End-of-Year surveys of Teachers and Professional staff

Data from the Emerson-Bandini Elementary School, San Diego, and Rico Elementary School, Weslaco, TX

Each of these large school-wide Title Elementary Schools serves a very high proportion of Hispanic-American Limited English Proficient Students. The following summarizes the combined data from teachers and staff at the two schools.

Number of staff who actively used the program:	64 (86%)
Number of program users who taught 9 or more of the 11 MegaSkills:	43 (67%)

Changes in student attitudes and behaviors reported by program users:

75% - 98% of the teachers using the program in their classrooms reported some positive changes in student attitudes and behaviors for each of the 11 MegaSkills.

MegaSkills for which the highest percentages of teachers reported change included:

Teamwork:	98%	Responsibility:	98%	Motivation:	97%
Caring:	97%	Confidence:	96%	Effort:	93%

86% of the teachers could identify at least one specific child who benefited from the program. Representative comments of changes observed for that child include:

Student began to focus more on reading each day.
Student demonstrated effort and didn't give up on a very long test.
LEP student became more involved in learning English as a second language.
Student learned that violence didn't solve anything.
LD child showed greater perseverance.
Student became more helpful in class.

Data from Rolando Park Elementary School, San Diego

Rolando Park, a Comer Process School, with a diverse student population, adopted the Classroom Essentials Program in mid-year 1999. End-of-year teacher survey data indicated that the staff were able to implement the program successfully using a team training model in which a small cadre (six) trained staff then trained their colleagues at the school. The school emphasized four MegaSkills during the spring term of 1999: Effort, Responsibility, Focus, and either Perseverance or Caring.

Positive benefits from the program initial implementation period.

Number of teachers who used the program: 14 (93%)

Number of teachers teaching at least three MegaSkills in the spring term: 100%

Percentage of teachers who reported some changes in student attitudes and behaviors for the following MegaSkills:

Effort: 100%	Perseverance: 100%	Caring: 100%
Responsibility: 93%	Focus: 89%	

92% of the teachers could identify at least one specific child who benefited from the program. Representative comments for the changes observed for that child include:

- Student was more confident and willing to try.
- Student became more responsible about completing assignments and homework.
- Child was more able to focus and concentrate.
- Child began to praise others and remind them about using their MegaSkills.

Research Findings MegaSkills® Parent Involvement Leader Training

Winter 1999-2000

Program Outreach to Families: The MegaSkills Parent Workshop Program with support from Kraft Foods, was brought to large city schools in San Diego, CA, and Broward County, FL.

Numbers Reached

Data (Nov. 1, 1999) indicate that 59 workshops were conducted in 9 schools in San Diego with a parent attendance of 1541. In Broward County 101 workshops were conducted at 19 schools with an attendance of 1515.

Diversity of Families Served

The families served at both sites largely comprised of lower socio-economic, ethnic minority, and other families traditionally considered at-risk. All the schools in the Broward County Program are school-wide Title I schools.

Large numbers of Spanish-speaking and Haitian Creole-speaking families participated in the program at the Broward County and San Diego schools. Translated materials included Spanish, Lao, Cambodian, Vietnamese and Haitian Creole for parent use.

System wide Title I Adoption

Broward County has adopted the program as an official Title I parent involvement program and has extended the program to an additional 47 School-wide Title I elementary and middle schools. The **Palm Beach County, FL** school system has also adopted the program as an official Title I parental involvement program.

Sustained Participation

Both sites report that substantial numbers of families attended all or most of the series of workshops (usually 6-8), with 61% attending four or more workshops in San Diego and 47% in Broward County attending four or more workshops.

CLASSROOM EFFECTS FOR CHILDREN OF PARTICIPATING FAMILIES

A study of classroom effects of the program was conducted in San Diego. Teachers of children whose parents have substantially participated in the workshop program were surveyed at four elementary schools as to the changes they saw in these children.

Hispanic surnamed students comprise 73% of the 68 students included in the study.

Major findings of this study include:

Academic Achievement

Improvement in reading/language arts was reported for almost 90% of these students.

Improvement in other subject areas was reported for over 80% of the children. Most frequently mentioned was math (72%).

Behavioral Changes

Positive changes in behaviors and attitudes were observed for large majorities of the children, including:

More organized and ready for learning 74%	More ability to work cooperatively 79%
More regular completion of homework 78%	Better conduct and discipline 67%

Overall, teachers believed the program had positive classroom effects for 95% of the children whose parents participated in the MegaSkills Parent Program.

PROGRAM EFFECTS FOR FAMILIES REPORTED BY PARENTS AND WORKSHOP LEADERS

Parent change

- They understand their children better and are more able to communicate with them
- They have a better understanding of the expectations of the school
- They have more confidence in their ability to support their children's education at home
- They spend more time with their children and enjoy working with them more.

Parent workshop leaders across all schools report:

- Parents became able to communicate with each other and with school staff.
- Parents became supportive of each other and developed networking relationships that extended beyond the workshop program.
- Parents were an important source for the recruitment of additional parents into the program.
- Some parents became school volunteers and involved in other school activities.

Child Change

Parents also consistently report:

- Their children became more confident and developed improved self-esteem.
- Children developed better work habits and became more responsible about homework and chores.
- Children became more interested and more willing to try harder in school.

Relationship to Comprehensive School Reform

The MegaSkills program is used to operationalize, strengthen and support the family involvement component of comprehensive school reform models. In San Diego, the program was adopted by 11 School Development Program (Comer Process Model) schools.



A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Tipper Gore.

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

December 14, 1999

Dorothy Rich
MegaSkills Education Center
1500 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Dorothy:

Thanks so much for your kind words. I'm delighted to hear how much *MegaSkills* has grown since we first connected in 1988. Congratulations! This is an important program that deserves our recognition and support.

MegaSkills still is a unique combination of heart and mind. Thank you and your wonderful staff for continuing to make children's health, hearts and minds a top priority.

Warmest wishes for a bright and blessed holiday,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tipper Gore', with a stylized flourish.

Tipper Gore

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Real-Life Lessons

What kids can learn from doing the laundry

BY JANE DURRELL

WHEN TWO OF GEORGE Taylor's children developed speech and reading problems, the Ypsilanti, Michigan, father of four decided that he had two options: turn their education entirely over to the schools and hope they would overcome their difficulties, or get intimately involved in their day-to-day learning experiences. Taylor and his wife, Karen, opted for the second choice, and enrolled in MegaSkills, an innovative educational program designed as an aid to parents—and increasingly grandparents—to help children navigate the academic and emotional challenges of school. "We stress that learning means practice, and that everybody makes mistakes," says Taylor, 57. "We've had some ups and downs but no falling back."

The MegaSkills program, developed by educator Dorothy Rich, provides a means of instilling in children the attitudes, behaviors, and habits necessary for successful learning. In particular, it stresses 11 "megaskills": confidence, motivation, effort, responsibility, initiative, perseverance, caring, teamwork, common sense, problem solving, and focus. For instance, to build confidence, parents can sit down with their children and help them think about what they've done well at and write down at least two things they like about themselves: "I like to share with others," or "I have a good sense of humor." Children develop megaskills



MegaSkills founder Dorothy Rich believes kids learn as much at home as they do in school—when parents get involved.



when they help make out shopping lists, pump gas, do laundry, and help pay bills. "These real-life tasks show children how school learning is used in life," Rich says.

Rich's ideas first coalesced in The Home and School Institute, which she incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in Washington, D.C., in 1972. The first edition of her book *MegaSkills* was published in 1988; the third edition appeared in 1998. Now there's a Web site: www.megaskillshsi.org. Rich is widely recognized as an early proponent of the vital role families can play in the learning process; her workshops have trained more than 125,000 families in 48 states.

In recent years, Rich has noticed a growing number of grandparents signing up for her workshops (the U.S. Census Bureau reports nearly

5.5 million children living with grandparents), and a chapter in her most recent book is devoted to how grandparents can provide positive learning experiences.

Joan Singleton, who has used the program with her two granddaughters, says, "I wish I'd known for my kids what I know now."

Beyond increasing students' confidence, MegaSkills has proved effective in increasing student achievement. Studies conducted by Memphis State University and the University of Louisville found that the program helped improve test scores, raise parental involvement, and reduce disciplinary problems.

Says Rachele Ackerman, project director of Even Start, a Hackensack, New Jersey, family literacy program: "Parenting is the hardest job people do, but they get very little training for it. MegaSkills helps bridge that gap." ■



MegaSkills® Education Center of The Home and School Institute, Inc.

• Confidence • Motivation • Effort • Responsibility • Initiative • Perseverance • Caring • Teamwork • Common Sense • Problem Solving •

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1/6/2000

TO: ANDY ROTHERHAM

456-5581

FROM: DOROTHY RICH

3 pps.

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NRTE-ED

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2000

E. J. Dionne Jr.

Beyond Scandals

POST 9/10/99

After a season of scandals and scandal-mongering, American voters are tempted to turn off, tune out and drop away from politics and civic life. Before they do, they should catch the signals coming their way from a new batch of presidential candidates. They're not just raising "issues" in an effort to win votes. They're talking about problems and how to solve them.

On the Democratic side, Vice President Gore and former senator Bill Bradley are about to start a serious argument over how to cover the 44 million Americans who lack health insurance. Gore made his bid this week with a sensible if modest plan to help kids and the near-elderly.

Even more striking were the reviews given Texas Gov. George W. Bush's education proposals—not by Republicans but by Democrats. The shrewdest among them pointed to serious shortcomings in the approach Bush outlined in a California speech last week. But they also see Bush pushing the schools debate in the right direction.

"It's very encouraging," says Rep. George Miller, a liberal Democrat from California. "There are a number of themes there that are very consistent with what we've been saying about school and teacher accountability, and also the accountability of the political system."

"What's good about it," says Sen. Jeff Bingaman, a New Mexico Democrat who is a partner with Miller in pushing for improved teaching, "is the emphasis on standards and measuring performance and building accountability into the schools."

Bush shrewdly distanced himself from many of the hot-button education issues and avoided teacher-bashing. "Education is too important to have a strategy of divide and conquer," he said. Bush also condemned the idea that disadvantaged kids should not be held to high standards. This entailed "the soft bigotry of low expectations." Good line, and right, too.

Bush's core policy proposal was also refreshing, if flawed. He wants to use the federal government's Title 1 program—it gives \$7.7 billion a year to schools that educate poor children—as a lever to force states to test children regularly to see if they're making progress. Schools would have three years to get their act together. If at the end of three years there is still no progress, Bush said, federal funds would be used to give parents of poor kids a \$1,500 voucher that they could use at the school of their choice, including private schools.

In pushing for testing, Bush is breaking with some of his fellow Republicans who, on principle, don't want the federal government to do much of anything about local schools. Gary Bauer, trying to corral the party's right flank in his quest for the presidency, quickly denounced Bush for proposing "another layer of bureaucracy at an even larger federal Department of Education."

But as Bush, Miller and Bingaman all argue, if tests aren't given, administrators aren't held accountable and parents are denied useful information on how their schools are doing. What meaning does the word "choice" have then?

The problem with Bush's idea is what he'd do when schools fail. Vouchers are not always a bad idea. But in many areas, a \$1,500 voucher would give parents no choice at all. "In many parts of my state, you go to public school or you don't go to school," says Bingaman. "There's no place to go with a voucher for \$1,500."

And Miller sees Bush evading the reason so many school systems fail: "Poor kids go to poor schools and get a poor education" because their local school districts lack money. "They can't pay their teachers as well, they don't have the education materials, they don't have the facilities," Miller says.

Kati Haycock, president of the nonpartisan Education Trust in Washington, calls Bush's education record in Texas "impressive" and likes his approach to accountability. But she raises the right doubts about his vouchers solution.

"If he means just tossing kids into a set of private schools that are totally unaccountable in terms of... having high standards and high student achievement, then I don't think that's the most effective strategy," she says. "On the other hand, there may be some circumstances where, if there are no high-quality public schools available, we may have to think about that." Vouchers, in other words, are a last resort, not an alternative to fixing the public schools.

But wherever this debate goes, it's a big improvement on the politics of ideological cheap shots and scandal. Any chance we can stick with it?

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DRAFT

Statement by Secretary Riley

Response to request for comments on Governor Bush's recent Education speech
November 3, 1999

I welcome any effort by any public official in America to help America's school children learn basic American values. I am disappointed that Governor Bush should give a speech calling for increased honesty and good character in our nation's schools, and in the process get his facts wrong and assert several untruths.

Speeches about moral integrity require a generosity of spirit and a willingness to acknowledge the good works of others. Generosity of spirit seems to be lacking in the Governor's broad assertion that "American schools surrendered" for "about three decades" their role in teaching American values. This is a slap in the face to millions of America's teachers, principals and PTA members.

Governor Bush asserts that America's schools are unsafe and lack discipline. I believe America's schools are safe and safer than the communities in which the vast majority of students live. Forty-three percent of our nation's schools experienced no crime, and 90% percent no serious violent crimes. Any crime in a school deserves our attention. We have been strong advocates of zero tolerance policies against firearms, the adoption of school uniform policies, and increased funding for school security officers and violence prevention programs.

The Governor takes issue with this department's Safe and Drug-Free School program but does not acknowledge that major reforms were instituted two years ago to increase accountability when new "principles of effectiveness" were issued. There seems to be a complete lack of understanding regarding the Gun Free Schools Act that was authored by President Clinton. This Act does not require federal prosecution of these youth, it does require students who bring guns to schools to be expelled for a year, and be referred to the most appropriate law enforcement agency.

In his speech, Governor Bush asserts that faith-based communities are not allow to participate in federal after-schools program like our 21st Century After-School Learning Centers. Governor Bush assertion is factually incorrect. YMCA's, churches, synagogues and mosques can participate in the school-based consortiums that receive these federal grants.

Governor Bush suggests that the "federal government should not be an enemy of voluntary expressions of faith by students" when speaking about religion. In making this statement he implies that the federal government is somehow an "enemy" of religious expression. Here again, a spirit of generosity seems lacking. Governor Bush is unwilling to acknowledge that President Clinton has done more than any President in the last 30 years to protect the religious liberty of America's school children. My department issued historic guidelines on Religious Expression in Public Schools in 1995 and again in 1998, and on both occasions these guidelines were issued at the specific direction of President Clinton.