Code # BP-ECEP-09
(for office use only)

Clara Barton Elem.

NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2002-2003 APPLICATION

Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.

Application Requirements:

1. **RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS and ACCURATE.** No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in responding to the statements
2. **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4.** Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
3. Applications must be typed on **8 ½" x 11"** white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used. This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.
4. Keyboarded responses to all the statements below must be no more than a total of four pages. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for clarity.
5. **The information on page 4 and the responses** to statements must be copied on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
6. The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
7. **The original and seven copies of the application** must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **December 15, 2002**, with the **Itemized List of District Applications** form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:

Type of School	Grade Levels	
X Elementary School	K-5	**Practice Name** Let's Make Magic Together
___ Middle School	___	Number of Schools with Practice 2
___ Junior High School	___	**Number of Districts with Practice** 1
___ High School	___	**Location** __ Urban/City X Suburban With Urban Characteristics
___ Other: ___	___	__ Suburban __ Small City/Town __ Rural

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.

___ Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	___ Gifted and Talented Programs	___ Safe Learning Environment
___ Assessment/Evaluation	___ Guidance and Counseling Programs	___ School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
___ Citizenship/Character Education	___ Health and Physical Education	___ Science
___ Diversity and Equity Programs	___ Language Arts Literacy	___ Social Studies
X Early Childhood Education Programs	___ Mathematics	___ Special Education
___ Educational Support Programs	___ Professional Development	___ World Languages/Bilingual Education
___ Educational Technology	___ Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards,** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 2002 edition of the ***Core Curriculum Content Standards*** published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at http://www.state.nj.us/education.

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

"We may not be able to pull a rabbit from a hat, but we can help turn our children into readers." Kindergarten parents at our Title 1 school recite this pledge at the October kick-off for our *Let's Make Magic Together* home/school literacy partnership. We created this original early intervention/enrichment program for kindergartners and their families in 1995 out of concern for the approximately 50% of our children who would enter 1st grade each year without any print awareness or letter/sound correspondence. Our mission was to meet two primary objectives:

- **To increase the number of children entering 1st grade with concepts of print and letter/sound correspondence**
- **To increase parent involvement in their children's literacy by offering training and materials to support early reading and writing development at home**

Backed by the research of New Zealander Dr. Marie M. Clay, founder of *Reading Recovery*, and Australia's eminent literacy education scholar Dr. Brian Cambourne, and with the input of the kindergarten teachers and the creative talents of many community members, the two reading specialists created fifteen enticing *Presto Packets* (sticking with the magic theme!) for the children to complete with family members.

***Let's Make Magic Together (LMMT)* effectively extends the two and a half hour kindergarten day by having learning continue to take place at home. Parents provide individualized, differentiated supplemental instruction which reinforces what the children learn at school. Parents can give much support to children who need the scaffolding, or they can modify the activities to be more challenging. It is essential that children learn within their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky).**

What is in a *Presto Packet* that will help turn our children into readers? About every two weeks, students take home the following items in a glittered gallon-size Ziploc bag with our logo:

- ***Presto Press* book – Through these original little books, children develop *concepts of print* (Clay). They become "co-authors" by extending the story pattern on a designated page. For example, in *The Cook*, they write and draw a picture of something else the cook put in the pot.**
- **Parent direction sheet – Consistent in format and easy to follow, it guides the parent/child interaction through each activity and follows Cambourne's *Conditions for Learning* and Clay's strategies good readers use.**
- **Concentration and/or Bingo – The games teach upper and lowercase letter identification and consonant sounds.**
- **Just for Fun – This might be a tongue twister or scavenger hunt for a certain letter/sound. Families come up with wonderfully ridiculous tongue twisters, which we have displayed on a bulletin board.**
- **Poems – Each packet includes two poems, many from *Mother Goose*, for rhyming and visualization practice. Children illustrate each poem and keep them in a separate *Presto* pocket folder. Children who have illustrated all poems at the end of the school year receive a special reward, such as a book of their choice.**

- **<u>Prize</u> – There is always a surprise treat related to the *Presto* book. Children love to discover chocolate coins in a red *lucky money* envelope that goes along with multi-cultural *Dilly Dragon* or plastic ants that accompany *At the Picnic.***

At our latest kick-off family workshop, the principal donned a pigtailed wig to roleplay a kindergartner and our parent co-ordinator played the mother as they modeled before a captivated audience how parent and child should go through the *Presto Packet* activities. The evening concluded with a bountiful dessert buffet. Some years we have a pizza party.

We spend about $1,000 each year to finance *LMMT*. At first a district mini-grant of $1,000 in 1995 and a McDonald's Classroom Grant in 1996 enabled us to provide appealing prizes, as well as the kick-off, mid point, and culminating celebrations of the accomplishments of our families. Proud that we were chosen to present *LMMT* at the 1997 International Reading Association Convention in Atlanta and at the 1999 Convention in San Diego, our PTA voted to give financial support to the program.

Both parents and teachers agree that *LMMT* promotes high student achievement. Here is one comment that expressed a typical response on the midpoint parent survey: "I feel this is a great program, and I am very pleased with the *magic* that has been happening. Keep up the excellent work." A kindergarten teacher observed: "They gained confidence in their abilities and self-esteem. Children who had difficulty attending to tasks dealing with language skills became more aware of the purpose of language. Faces radiated as students exclaimed 'I know that!' 'That's easy!' They were willing to take risks when previously they would hold back. Presto! The magic works!"

***LMMT* reaps two bonus and invaluable benefits: the bonding that takes place between parent and child as they enjoy the books, poems, and games together and the dramatic increase in parent involvement in school activities that continues long after their volunteer days of helping out with *LMMT* are over. Research shows children of involved parents tend to be higher achievers.**

2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standards. Provide an example to substantiate your response.

***LMMT* addresses all five New Jersey Core Language Arts Literacy and two Cross-Content Workplace Readiness standards:**
<u>Standard 3.1 (Reading)</u> – By following the steps on the direction sheet that accompanies each *Presto* book, parents guide their children in developing *concepts of print* and reading strategies. Kindergartners gain fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary through listening and responding to the little books and poems. They begin to recognize words in the repetitive texts, and may even be able to read them independently. The games and poems in each *Presto Packet* focus on phonological awareness. Children keep each packet two weeks, so they have ample opportunity to practice skills and develop fluency.
<u>Standard 3.2 (Writing)</u> – Each little book has a place for the student to write his/her name. In order to complete "their" page, children need to recognize the story pattern, generate an iea that would make sense, and put the idea into writing. This involves spelling and

handwriting. By "co-authoring" these books, children begin to think of themselves as writers.
<u>Standard 3.3 (Speaking)</u> – When the children return their *Presto Packets*, they have the opportunity to stand in front of their classmates and share what they wrote on the student page of the little book. This presentation builds confidence, as well as oral language development.
<u>Standard 3.4 (Listening)</u> – The *Presto Packets* provide many opportunities for active listening. Children listen and respond as their parents read the stories and poems. They also listen in class as their classmates read their completed *Presto* books.
<u>Standard 3.5 (Viewing)</u> – Kindergartners learn to use pictures in the little books to predict and confirm words on the page. They learn to study pictures to enhance comprehension and gain information not in the text.
<u>Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standard 3.3.15</u> – Through co-authoring each *Presto* book, kindergartners learn that parents, teachers, and classmates respond to their writing.
<u>Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standard 3.4.22</u> – Following the direction sheet, these young learners analyze the text of the *Presto* books and poems with their parents.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

***LMMT* addresses the educational needs of our kindergartners by providing both *early intervention* and *enrichment* activities in language arts literacy. This home/school partnership solves the problem of students having too much to learn within the two and a half hour kindergarten day. The *interactive* take-home *Presto Packets* provide families with the materials and support they need to reinforce and build upon the foundation their children are getting at school.**

Based on the teachings of Dr. Marie Clay, the packets help students develop a clear understanding of basic concepts, such as a letter, word, drawing, writing, and reading, as well as the concepts that collections of letters make up words, and collections of words make up sentences. By rereading the engaging little books, students practice directionality and voice/print match. The games teach letter identification and consonant/sound correspondence. Playful poems promote phonemic awareness. All aspects of the program can be modified to be more challenging.

To determine if the *Presto Packets* are effective in helping kindergartners develop *concepts of print* and phonological awareness, we compared the performance of children who completed 75% or more of the packets with those who completed less than 75% on running records administered at the beginning of first grade. For example, we compared the performance of 44 children who were kindergartners in 1999 – 2000:

- **Of the 23 kindergarten students who scored at grade level 1 or above, 83% had completed at least 12 of the 15 packets.**
- **Of the 33 kindergarten students who completed at least 12 packets, many scored in the middle of grade 1 or above.**
- **Of the 11 kindergarten students who did not complete 12 or more packets, only 4 scored at grade 1 level.**

For the years we administered the *Gates-MacGinitie PRE* standardized test at the end of kindergarten, most students who completed at least 75% of the packets scored significantly higher than those who completed fewer than 75%.

Over 90% of our kindergarten families elect to take part in this program each year. Results of the parent surveys taken at the mid and end points give *LMMT* rave reviews: " I like being a part of this program with Patrick—we share this packet together in the evening—it's a time together that is beneficial to both of us." "Amanda's reading has come a long way since the beginning of the Presto Packages. She uses her reading finger and looks at the pictures for clues. She is reading the words individually, not memorizing the story word for word. She is very eager to read and looks forward to the Presto Packages." "This really got my daughter interested in books! So much so, that she ran upstairs and created her own book. She seems much more excited about reading and not just being read to." "It was hard being a good sport when my son beat me 8 to 1 in Concentration!"

The enthusiastic feedback of parents and teachers, as well as the validation of formal and informal assessments, energizes us to continue this powerful home/school literacy collaboration.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

- **Reading specialists and kindergarten teachers determine the content and focus of the *Presto Packets.***
- **"Authors" (ours were the 2 reading specialists and a retired 1st grade teacher) write original little books and artistic parents or teachers illustrate them. Books have appealing text and pictures, few words per page, repetition, and strong picture clues.**
- **Reading specialists or teachers make masters for parent direction sheets, concentration and bingo games. They find & copy poems that relate to themes of books. They buy prizes that also relate to book themes.**
- **A parent co-ordinator organizes parent volunteers, who come in every 2 weeks to collect finished packets, check off names of students, and refill ziploc bag with new contents. Have lots of glitter glue to add *pizzazz* to the packets.**
- **Reading specialists and kindergarten teachers hold kick-off evening workshop /party to introduce Presto Packets and motivate families.**

We spend approximately $1,000 to make 15 packets for each of our 60 kindergartners and to finance the kick-off, mid-point, and culminating celebrations.

We would be happy to assist any school interested in this program by answering questions (on line or telephone), by giving workshops, or by having teachers visit our school to see the program in action.