ECC Times

April/May 2007

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER AT THE ROCHESTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

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Hello Parents,

Spring "sprung" with us in our pajamas! PJ Day happened on March 21st and what a nice celebration that was….everyone was so comfortable! The kids loved seeing the adults in their pajamas, just as we loved seeing the kids in theirs!

This and many other activities have been planned for our young children. Right now, Julie, Angela, and MaryJo's preschool classes have their Community Helpers centers set up for their students to work at as they develop skills and concepts related to that topic. Look for the adorable pictures following this letter. On April 25th the preschoolers visited the Monroe County Library in downtown Rochester as part of our celebration of Week of the Young Child. We participated in an ASL storytelling event there and had the opportunity to explore the children's library and the "Secret Room". What a nice connection to the wonderful resources in our community! Also on April 27th, Angela and Julie coordinated a visit here with another preschool class. It was wonderful to see how our children so naturally interacted with their guests. They fingerspelled/signed their names, sang/signed a song, played outdoors, they then went in the Sound Lab where they danced, to music and used the microphone.

Parent/teacher conferences are nearly finished. It was great seeing so many of you on campus to meet with your child's teachers. Our next Parent Information night is set for Monday, May 7th and will be held with our ASL teacher, Ron Rood.

In addition to the May 7th presentation, please consider joining Kelly Luke and Angela Burrows on Friday mornings twice a month for get-togethers, especially if you already haven't done so. Look for flyers with dates/times and outlines of topics to be presented/ discussed in these hour and a half-long sessions. Those who participate in these have reported them to be quite helpful both in getting to know other parents as well as to learn new things.

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The Shared Reading Program is moving along and we plan to begin visits soon. Tutors were trained so they should be ready to go. It has taken a considerable amount of work to get this off the ground, but I know it will be well worth it.

The 3 year-olds in Peggy' Mudd's and Kathleen Piehler's F.I.R.S.T. class are doing well with their 5 day per week program and now, along with them, Kelly Luke's and Carol Lynch-Ricotta's class has added an additional morning to their week and those kids are now coming to school on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. These children seem to have adjusted to the increase in the number of days quite well. Of course, the rest of us are happy to have them here the additional days!

Please take a minute to read through the attached articles. The first report outlines good nutrition, the second and fourth relate to math and the importance of recognizing patterns, the passage of time and ways to incorporate counting into daily activities. The third article relates to discipline, the fifth on how to build responsibility and the last is a Question and Answer article about safety.

Related to safety, now that the weather is warmer and children are coming to school in sandals and "crocs", please make sure that these fit well and are safe for outside play.

Have a wonderful May!

Sincerely,

Marilyn Curley, Director

Quote...I'm not a teacher: only a fellow traveler of whom you asked the way. I pointed ahead-ahead of myself as well as of you. George Bernard Shaw

Wellness

Boost your child's brain-power with the right nutrients

What your child eats affects how he thinks and feels. His brain needs the proper fuel to perform at its best.

Recent research points to protein as key for mental alertness and memory. Carbohydrates enhance mood. Vitamins matter, too.

Eating right will help your child live up to his smartness potential and have a more positive outlook.

So make sure your child gets:

* **Plenty of protein**—fish, chicken, tofu, beef, cheese, milk, yogurt and cottage cheese. Experiment until you find dishes he likes. Try different ways of preparing and serving these foods.

* **Well-chosen carbs**. Carbohydrates in cereal, rice and potatoes can lift your child's spirits. But chips, loaded with fat, can make him sluggish. Select carbs with low fat content.

* **Very important vitamins**. Vitamins E and C are recommended, as are the stress-reducing B vitamins. Find chewable children's vitamins at your drugstore, but talk to your doctor before giving your child supplements.

Food acts quickly on your child's mind and mood. So serve him extra protein when he's forgetful. When irritable, sad or just "blah," feed him more carbs.

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Building Math Skills

Teach math concepts by helping your child recognize patterns

Quick: What is math about? You probably thought, "numbers."

That isn't wrong. But it is patterns, the sequence in which those numbers repeat themselves that make the numbers meaningful. So if your child can line up a red crayon, then a blue one, then a red one and then a blue one, he is performing an essential math skill.

Besides lining up those crayons, he can:

* **Look at the calendar.** Have your child see how every month begins with the number one.

* **Read a rhyming book.** Rhymes are word patterns.

* **Look for patterns at home.** Fabrics and wallpaper often contain patterns. Start with your child's own clothes.

* **Look at books in the library**. Tell your child the way the books are lined up is part of a pattern. This helps people find them.

* **Teach your child** a simple sequence like clap, clap (clap twice), slap, slap (slap thighs twice). Add other motions as this gets easy, but always repeat them in the same order.

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Discipline

Adopt an 'air of authority' when correcting a child

As your child enters the preschool years, tantrums should be on the down-swing. Better verbal skills at this age reduce your child's need to melt down. But tantrums can still happen, and at this age, you can try a somewhat different technique for dealing with them.

Try to calm your child down with:

* **Prevention.** Encourage your child to use her words and talk, talk, talk. "I'm very angry!" "I don't like that!" Let your child know that she can say this—or other words that convey her feelings—when she feels herself getting very upset. Then you'll work together to solve the problem.

* **Parenting.** You're the adult, so keep cool and keep watch on your child when she's losing it. If things are getting severe, try wrapping your child in a tight hug until she stops flailing.

* **Praise.** Your child will eventually calm down. When she does, let her know you're proud that she did. Remind her again that it's always okay to come to you and tell you she's getting angry.

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Building Math Skills

Make a summer calendar to help your child practice counting skills

Summer is a great time to teach your child about the passage of time in various units—days, weeks and months. This is a key math concept. Plus you can incorporate counting skills.

First make a calendar for June, July and August. Then:

* **Help your child mark** important dates and events—birthdays, Father's Day, vacation trips.

* **Ask your child to tell you** things he wants to do in several days, next week and next month. Write them on the calendar.

* **Review the calendar daily** to count how many days are left until the birthday, vacation or activity you've marked.

* **Check the newspaper** for daily high and low temperatures. Help him write them on the calendar. Every week, discuss how the temperature has gone up or down. Have your child guess if it'll be warmer or cooler next week.

* **Ask your child to draw pictures** of rain, clouds and sun on the calendar to track the weather. At week's end, have your child count the cloudy, sunny and rainy days. Add them up at the end of the month. Were there more sunny days than rainy and cloudy days?

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Building Responsibility

Encourage your preschooler to build responsibility this summer

When your child starts school, teachers will expect him to take some responsibility for himself, even in preschool. Here are a few ways to encourage your child to be self-sufficient:

* **Give your child** age-appropriate tasks. A four-year-old can't weed your whole garden, but he can do a small patch while you work nearby.

* **Teach your child to dress himself** and use the toilet. At times, your child may need your help. But for the most part, a child going to kindergarten in the fall should be able to independently use the bathroom, wash his hands and get dressed.

* **Don't give in to whining**. Some-times, children just don't feel like being challenged. It's easier to whine, "I can't!" than to try. As long as the task is one your child can do, make it clear that the responsibility is his. Say something like, "As soon as you put your toys in the closet, we can go to the library. I'll find something to do until you're ready."

* **Teach your child to say**, "Would you help me, please?" Children take different amounts of time to master skills. While they are learning, they do need help from adults. Encourage your child to do what he can, then guide him through the rest. Slowly withdraw your support as his skills improve.

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Questions & Answers

I love summer and time with my preschooler, but she is so active and adventurous that I am always worried she is going to get hurt! How can I teach safety without squelching her spirit?

Your concern is valid. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, injuries happen more in summer than any other time of the year. Your child's school will also thank you for being safety-minded. A child who follows safety rules is more likely to stay healthy and ready for learning.

Still, you have a good point about not over-restricting your child. Children learn so much by exploring and testing new skills. The compromise: common sense. Let your child play and explore, but practice prevention. Here's how:

* **Be careful around water.** Don't ever turn your back on your child—even if she can swim and even if the water is shallow.

* **Remember the sun.** Apply sunscreen to your child before she goes outdoors. Reapply often. Wear hats. Try to avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

* **Make sure** playground equipment is sound. The surface below should be wood chips or mulch, not concrete or dirt.

* **Insist your child wear a helmet** and protective gear when skating or riding. She should only ride or play in areas that are free of traffic.

* **Use caution around tools!** It will be years before your child is old enough to handle equipment such as a grill or a lawn mower. Until then, she should stay away.

Have a safe summer filled with fun and learning!

Maria Koklanaris, The Parent Institute. Reprinted with permission from the May 2007 issue of Parents make the difference!® (Early Childhood Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2007 The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.