

ECC Times

September/October/November 2009

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER AT THE ROCHESTER SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

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October 21, 2009

Dear Parents,

Many wonderful things have been happening here in ECC. This year has started off great! Right now we are immersed in "Adventures in Education" with David Gallo and this morning we were lucky to view his presentation. He will visit our building tomorrow and all the children and staff are working hard to welcome him. The children have been involved in activities related to the ocean and many concepts have been introduced and/or developed related to marine plants and animals. I hope that you take advantage of this important event by planning to attend David Gallo's presentation on Thursday evening.

We are fortunate to have several new children enrolled with us since the beginning of the school year. Welcome to all of them and their families.

Don't forget that we are now offering weekly Signs for All (SFA) classes here in ECC during daytime hours (Mondays from 2:00 – 3:00 pm and Wednesdays from 8:30 – 9:30 am) in addition to our regular Tuesday evening SFA classes here at RSD. We are also forming a Family Support Group and that will run on Mondays from 1:00 – 2:00 pm. Flyers have been sent home but if you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Enjoy the Activity Calendar, articles included with this newsletter, and the Parent and Child magazine. Also, checking the RSD website will help keep you updated on what's happening here at school. Please take the time to read these and continue to encourage learning at home by following the lead of your child's teachers and supporting what is done in school.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Curley

Director, Early Childhood Programs

Rochester School for the Deaf 1545 St. Paul Street, Rochester, NY 14621

The Preeminent Provider of Educational, Developmental and Evaluation Services to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children and Their Families

To learn more, please contact us today at 585-336-5807 (voice) or 585-336-5808 (TTY) or visit our website at www.RSDeaf.org



Welcome to new students in our ECC FIRST Program!



Zander Gonzalez-



Sha'Mir Stenson



Hailey Rogers



Congratulations to Marilyn Curley!!!

Hands Waving High for our 2009 Lyon Founder's Award recipient

Marilyn has served as Director of RSD's Early Childhood Programs since 2002. Well loved as a friend and colleague, and highly regarded as a teacher, Marilyn was chosen for this award because of her dedication, service and commitment to RSD. Professionals in the community know her as an untiring advocate for RSD, having established and maintained many referral relationships with doctors, school district personnel and teachers of the deaf. More importantly though, she has made a lasting impression on RSD's students over the past 29 years. I will use the students' own words to describe her to you, as was written in their 07-08 yearbook dedication to her. "As a teacher, she not only taught from books, but always brought the world into children's lives. She provided the true meaning of having fun while learning. She touched the heart of every student she had because she taught with her heart. As Director of RSD's Early Childhood Programs is utmost passionate in ensuring that young students are stimulated in their learning and that they are being connected to what the world has to offer them. She is passionate with families and enables them to become involved in their children's education. Most importantly, as a wife and mother she does well to balance work and home." And the students concluded their kudos to her by saying "We are lucky to have such a dedicated and good-hearted person, namely Mrs. Curley, to be part of us."



Building Attention Span



Engage your preschooler's senses to increase attention span, focus

Paying attention to the teacher and the work of the class is a necessary skill for success in school. Young children naturally have short attention spans, but they can increase, especially with adult encouragement.

Here are some ways to get your child to tune in:

- * Ask! For many children all it takes is this: "Madelyn, I need to talk to you. Will you please put the ball down and look at me?"
- * Make noise. Clapping your hands or whistling will get your child to look up.
- * Gesture. When your child is looking at you, use your hands to gesture to the place where you want her to direct her attention.
- * Add a prop. If your child will listen better to a hand puppet, doll or stuffed animal "doing the talking," by all means use one.
- * Use touch. Rubbing or patting your child's back may help her sit five more minutes for a story. Gently squeezing her hand or putting your arm around her may keep her from fidgeting.

Keep in mind that most preschoolers can only sit still for about 15 to 20 minutes before they need a new activity.

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Parent Quiz



Do you look for math lessons everywhere?

Are you building your preschoolers' math skills by noticing math concepts throughout the day? Answer yes or no to the questions below to find out:

- ___1. Do you look for shapes wherever you go?
Plates and clocks are circles and cereal boxes and some street signs are rectangles.
- ___2. Do you count things that interest your child, such as the blocks in her tower or the steps that lead to her preschool?
- ___3. Do you use math words and phrases, including add, subtract, more than, less than and divide?
- ___4. Do you plan activities that involve math? You might measure, cook, set the table or sort laundry with your child.
- ___5. Do you point out numbers on houses, signs, food labels, book pages and elsewhere?

How well are you doing?

Each yes answer means you're teaching your preschooler that math is part of everyday life. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

Reprinted with permission from the September 2009 issue of Parents make the difference!® (Early Childhood Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2009 The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc. Developing Thinking Skills



Give your preschooler plenty of practice making decisions

Success in school (and life) hinges on the ability to make good decisions. Your child's decision on whether to pay attention to the teacher or look out the window, whether or not to observe classroom rules, whether or not to do homework--all these can seriously affect his schooling and future.

Here are some ways to get your child started on the path of good decision-making:

- * Offer choices. Ask your child if he would like cereal or toast for breakfast. Just make sure you find both choices acceptable.
- * Make plans. Example: Your child will have a friend over tomorrow afternoon. What could they do together? Encourage your child to come up with suggestions. Write them down.
- * Ask for your child's advice. Your child will feel empowered and competent if, once in a while, he gets to pick for you. Example: Let your child listen to music from two different radio stations. Ask him which one he thinks you should listen to and then listen to the one he selects.
- * Explain. No one makes the right decision every time. In your child's case, making good choices may take a lot of practice. And sometimes you will have to overrule his decisions.

When you do, take time to explain why. Especially focus on the consequences of his choice. "I know you'd like to watch that movie, but I've seen it, and it's scary. I think it would upset you a lot right now. When you're older, we can think about it and talk again."

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Organizing thoughts prepares your preschooler for writing

As early as first grade, your child will be given a topic and asked to write about it. Teachers won't expect polished prose at that age, but they will look to see if your child can write a few sentences while staying on the topic. "My favorite color is yellow. The sun is yellow. Bananas are yellow."

Staying on the topic requires organization. You can prepare your preschooler for writing by helping him learn to organize his thoughts.

Here's how:

- * Ask your child questions that require him to think about categories. "Can you name three things that are red? Can you name four farm animals?"
- * Combine drawing and categorizing with your child. Drawing is another important step toward writing. For example: Draw a simple picture of a cat. Then say to your child, "Look, I drew a cat. This is a pet. Can you draw two other pets?"
- * Get moving! Your child can use his body to help organize his brain. Ask your child to walk toward you. Then say, "You are walking. What is another way you can move?"

If he is not sure, suggest running or hopping. This will help him get the idea and he may then be able to come up with another way of moving on his own. Or say, "Fish swim. What do other animals do?" Encourage him to demonstrate animal movements such as crawling, jumping and wiggling.

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Building Math Skills



Turn mealtime into a secret math lesson

Preschoolers love to help in the kitchen and it is the perfect place to learn about math. Turn meal preparation into a natural math lesson.

Here's how:

- * Discuss measurements. Let your child help you measure a cup of flour or a teaspoon of salt. You can even alter a recipe together. "This recipe is too small. We need to double it. It calls for one cup of milk. What's one cup plus one cup?"
- * Notice changes. Talk about how a food starts (such as a whole onion) and how it ends up (one cup of onion). Suggest that your child take "notes" about interesting facts. She might draw an onion and write "= 1 cup" or draw a stick of butter and write "= ½ cup."
- Use math words. Say things like, "Can you divide that in half for me?" "Does this need more or less salt?" "Let's add some sugar."

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Spending Time Together



See your everyday surroundings through your preschooler's eyes

Never miss an opportunity to recognize that what is run-of-the-mill to you may be new and exciting for your child. The next time you have a day off to spend with your child, try thinking as he does-- what can you find, right in your own neighborhood or town, that he would love?

Try a few of these fun and free activities:

- * Visit your local chamber of commerce. This organization can be an amazing resource and most people never take advantage of it. Has a new playground opened? Is there a public flower garden you didn't know about? A building with a cool fountain outside, where kids can watch birds splash, or throw a penny in? The chamber of commerce has the answers to these questions.
- * Enjoy the time of year. October can be a great month to be outside with your child, since it's usually not too hot or too cold. Look around and you'll see seasonal places he can explore. (Think outdoor market, or pumpkin patch.) You only have to pay to buy, not to walk around and look.
- * Go to the library. Story hour may be tried and true, but the library often offers more. Many have times for crafts and other activities. Some have community exhibits such as a terrarium or other display of nature. Go and see what you might have missed.

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Talking & Listening



Encourage your preschooler to show gratitude

Being thankful is more than a courtesy. It's a mind set that changes how kids look at life. To help your preschooler enjoy gratitude:

- * Say thanks with pictures. Have your child draw pictures of things he appreciates. Or take photos and let your child dictate the captions.
- * Role-play. Act out situations that involve thanks. What should your child say when he receives a present? What if he already has the item? What if he doesn't like it?
- * Be creative. Help your child make and send thank-you cards. Encourage him to give thanks by saying kind words and doing favors.
- * Imagine. What would it be like without certain conveniences? Try baking bread for a week instead of buying it. Or walk to a nearby store instead of driving. Then enjoy a new sense of gratitude for everyday gifts.

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Questions & Answers

- Q: I've read articles about critical thinking and that many children grow up lacking this skill. I'd like to help my child with this but it sounds so complicated. I'm not sure I'm qualified.
- A: Of course you are! Critical thinking does sound like a fancy term, but much of it has to do with imagining, figuring and questioning. Most children do these every day, naturally. All you have to do is encourage your child a bit.

Here are some ideas for you:

- * Don't rush in to fix everything for your child. For example, your child has put her shirt on inside-out. Put her in front of the mirror and say, "Uh-oh. Isn't there supposed to be a picture of a flower on your shirt?" Give her a chance to realize what went wrong and take care of it.
- * Take a few extra minutes with story time. After reading, ask your child questions about the story and the characters. Questions that inspire critical thinking start with phrases like, "How do you know that ...?" or "What would happen if ...?"
- * Ask questions about your child's work. Ask, "What is the girl doing in your picture?" or "Why does she have a dog instead of a cat?"
- * Give your child time each day to play alone with simple toys such as wooden blocks. This play gives your child the chance to be creative. It also lets her experiment with new approaches. For example, if the block tower falls down, she can find a new way to build it.

--Maria Koklanaris, The Parent Institute. Reprinted with permission from the November 2009 issue of Parents make the difference!® (Early Childhood Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2009 The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

Discipline



Proper praise can make a big difference in your discipline

Studies show that praise is a key part of discipline success. But what kinds of praise work best? Parenting expert Alan Kazdin, Ph.D., explains that effective praise is:

- * Upbeat. When you praise your preschooler, sound excited.
- * Specific. Describe exactly what your child did right.
- * Physical. Reinforce your message with something like a gentle hug, smile or thumbs-up.
- * Dependent. Use praise when it's meaningful and earned.
- * Instant. Make sure praise is directly connected to your child's good behavior.
- * Frequent. Take advantage of opportunities to compliment your child. You should praise your child more often than you criticize!

Parents sometimes mistakenly add criticism to praise. For example, "I asked you to put on your pajamas, and look! Hooray! You got them on!" (There's the praise.) "Too bad you didn't do that last night." (There's the criticism.)

Instead, keep it positive. And don't worry that you might sound too happy. Kazdin promotes enthusiasm and says, "Enthusiastic praise, however sincere you may feel it to be, is always much more effective than sincere punishment, which is the usual alternative."

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Teach your preschooler about the order & pattern of books

Does your child know how books work? This may seem like an odd question--after all, the way to make a book work is to read it!

Your child needs to understand the order and pattern of books (the mechanics) before real reading can take place. And while young children may not be ready for reading, many are ready to learn about book mechanics.

You can show your child how books work if you:

1. Choose a large book from your child's collection--with large pages and large print. Or get such a book from your library.
2. Show your child the front of the book. Say, "This is the front cover. Can you turn the book over?" When she does so, say, "This is the back cover."
3. Show your child the author's name on the book cover and read the name to her. Say, for example, "Marc Brown is the author of this book. That means he wrote the story that we are going to read. The author writes the story." Talk about the illustrator, too.
4. Open the book and begin reading. Use your index finger to indicate the upper-left hand corner of the printed words--the place where reading begins. As you read trace your finger down and to the right, following the natural order of print. Do this for several pages. Then use your child's finger to trace the words.

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