

# Ready to Succeed

An Early Literacy and School Readiness Newsletter for Professionals

## What We Know About Children's Early Learning

May / June  
2002

Volume 1, Issue 3

We now recognize that the years from birth to age five are critically important in shaping a child's capacity and enthusiasm for



learning. Although these years were always thought to be vital to human

development, new technological advances in brain research further support these theories. We also know that it is not genetics alone that determines our development. Nature provides a complex system of brain circuitry, but it is external forces such as nutrition, surroundings, and stimulation that determine how the circuits are wired (Schiller, 1999; and Diamond and Hopson, 1998).

Between the years of birth and age ten, most of the wiring of

the brain occurs. Research indicates that there are windows of opportunity when brain connections occur at a rapid rate. Many of these key opportunities for development are in the first four or five years of life. For example, the best

**"It is not genetics alone that determines our development."**

window of opportunity for emotional intelligence, motor development, and vision are from 1-24 months of age and the next best opportunity for this development is between 2-5 years of age (Schiller, 1999; Karolyn, 1998; and Shore, 1997).

Enriched environments can significantly influence brain growth. According to

U.C. Berkeley researchers, an enriched environment for preschoolers:

- Includes a steady source of positive emotional support.
- Provides a nutritious diet with enough protein, vitamins, minerals, and calories.
- Stimulates all the senses (*but not necessarily all at once*).
- Has an atmosphere free of undue pressure and stress, but suffused with a degree of pleasurable intensity.
- Presents a series of novel challenges that are neither too easy nor too difficult for children at their stages of development.
- Allows social interaction for a significant percentage of activities.
- Promotes development of a broad range of



### *Inside this issue:*

All About Mom	2
All About Dad	2
Cinnamon Letters	3
Children's Early Learning cont'd	3
Check Out UCCE on the Web	4



(Continued on page 3)

# All About Mom ~ A Keepsake Story

This is a fun project to make for Moms on Mother's Day. Create a template suitable for copying using the following story (or your own variation). Have children sit with you one at a time to answer the questions about their mom (or grandma, aunt, etc). Write their answers in the blanks. Be sure to have the children draw a picture of their mom for the story.

Moms will love hearing their story from their child's point of view!



All About My Mom

My mom's name is \_\_\_ and she is \_\_\_ years old. She is \_\_\_ feet tall and weighs \_\_\_ pounds. Mom always says, "\_\_\_." She cooks \_\_\_ the best. To relax she likes to \_\_\_. She likes \_\_\_, but doesn't like \_\_\_. I would like to buy her a \_\_\_. I think Mom would like to take a vacation to \_\_\_. \_\_\_ is the special thing Mom does for me. I love my mom because \_\_\_.

Happy Mother's Day!  
Love, \_\_\_  
May 2002

# All About Dad ~ A Keepsake Story

My dad's name is \_\_\_ and he is \_\_\_ years old. He is \_\_\_ feet tall and weighs \_\_\_ pounds. Dad always says, "\_\_\_." To relax Dad likes to \_\_\_. Dad likes \_\_\_, but doesn't like \_\_\_. I would like to buy him a \_\_\_. Something special Dad does for me is \_\_\_. I think Dad would like to take a long vacation to \_\_\_. I love Dad because \_\_\_.

Happy Father's Day!  
Love,  
June 2002

## All About My Dad



This is a great project to make for Dads on Father's Day. Follow the same directions as stated above in the Mother's Day project.

Dad's too, will love hearing about themselves from their child's point of view.

All About My Dad (Mom, too) is a memento that is sure to be treasured.



# Cinnamon Letters



MaryAnn F. Kohl and Jean Potter

Try this recipe for a yummy way to reinforce letter recognition. Remember to have everyone wash their hands prior to any cooking project ~ safety first.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pkg. frozen bread dough rolls
- 2 tsp flour
- 2 tsp water
- 2 tsp cinnamon
- nonstick cooking spray
- 1 egg
- ½ cup granulated sugar

## UTENSILS:

- Oven preheated to 400°
- baking sheet
- pastry brush
- 2 mixing bowls
- oven mitt
- whisk
- spatula



## DIRECTIONS:

1. Open package of frozen bread dough and let thaw on a clean work surface.

2. Spray a light coating of cooking spray on the baking sheet. Set aside.

3. Sprinkle 2 tsp of flour on work surface. Roll each dough ball into a rope about 18 inches long. Cut the ropes into 3 shorter ropes about 6 inches long. Place the shortened ropes on the baking sheet. Form letters with the ropes of dough.



4. Place the baking sheet in a warm place for 30 minutes to let the dough rise.

5. While waiting, crack open the egg. Separate the egg white from the yolk. Place the yolk in another bowl to save for another recipe. Add water to the egg white and whisk until fully mixed.

6. When the dough has risen for 30 minutes, brush the egg white mixture in each letter for a shiny glaze.

7. In a second bowl, combine sugar and cinnamon. Sprinkle mixture on the letters.

8. Place the baking sheet in the oven and bake for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Wear an oven mitt and remove the baking sheet from the oven to cool in a safe place.

9. When cool remove the letters from the baking sheet with a spatula.

10. Arrange the letters on a serving tray to spell names, words, or the children's initials.

11. Eat the sweet letters as a snack, dessert, or party treat.

## Children's Early Learning continued

(Continued from page 1)

mental, physical, aesthetic, social, and emotional skills and interests.

- Gives children an opportunity to choose many of their efforts and to modify them.
- Allows children to be active participants rather than passive observers. (Diamond and Hopson, 1998).

Learning and building literacy skills begin at birth (Neuman and Dickson, 2001). By the preschool years, children are developing an increased mastery of language and are beginning to think symbolically and logically. They are developing new fine and gross motor skills and are more skilled in social settings. Culture, age, and individual differences, however, affect preschoolers' learning and development (California Department of Education, 2000). Children of the same age will vary widely in their

mastery of various cognitive, social, or physical skills. Nonetheless, a typical three year old will be markedly different than a typical five year old in their abilities and interests. Current child development research and theory emphasize that this development occurs as a "result of interaction between the child and the environment" (Katz, 2000) and that "children are active learners, drawing on direct social and physical experience, as well as culturally transmitted knowledge to construct their own understandings of the world around them" (Bredenkamp and Copple, 1997).

### WORKS CITED

Bredenkamp, S., and C. Copple. 1997. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*. Rev. Ed. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, #234.

California Department of Education, 2000. *Pre-kindergarten Learning Development Guidelines*. Sacramento: California Department of Education.

Diamond, M., and J. Hopson. 1998. *Magic Trees of the Mind: How to Nurture Your Child's Intelligence, Creativity, and Healthy Emotions from Birth Through Adolescence*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Karolyn, L.A. and Others. 1998. *Investing in Our Children: What We Know and Don't Know About the Costs and Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Katz, L. 2000. *Getting Ready for School*. NPIN Parent News, May-June.

Neuman, S.B. and D.K. Dickson. 2001. *Handbook of Early Literacy Research*. New York: Guilford Press.

Schiller, P. 1999. *Start Smart! Building Brain Power in the Early Years*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

Shore, R. 1997. *Rethinking the Brain: New Insights Into Early Development*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

---

University of California  
Cooperative Extension

11477 E Avenue  
Auburn, CA 95603

Phone: 530 889-7350  
Fax: 530 889-7397

Website: [ceplacer.ucdavis.edu](http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu)  
Email: [ceplacer@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ceplacer@ucdavis.edu)

---



**Serving Placer County  
Since 1917**



---

## Check Out UCCE on the Web

The **Ready to Succeed** Program utilizes many methods to disseminate information in the community. If you choose not to participate in our workshops, perhaps you will benefit from the articles and suggested activities published in this newsletter or on our website.

In addition to the **Ready to Succeed** Program, Placer County's UC Cooperative Extension office offers the following services and programs: Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor, Horticulturalist and Small Farm Advisor, Master Gardeners, Master Composters,

4-H Youth Development, Adult Food Stamp Nutrition Education, Youth Food Stamp Nutrition Education - featuring "Let's Eat Healthy," and **"Nutrition BEST"** - another Placer County Children and Families Commission funded program.

All of these programs have valuable information posted on the UCCE website. Be sure to check it out!

UC Cooperative Extension website:  
<http://ceplacer.ucdavis.edu>

---

**Sharon K. Junge**  
County Director

---

**Paula R. Anderson**  
Program Representative