

Ready to Succeed

An Early Literacy and School Readiness Newsletter for Professionals

Children's Early Learning

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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 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 mental, physical, aesthetic, social, and emotional skills and interests.
- Gives children an opportunity to choose many of their



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READY TO SUCCEED

AIMS TO ASSIST EVERYONE INVOLVED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN TO VALUE AND EMBRACE THEIR ROLE IN FOSTERING EARLY LITERACY AND SCHOOL READINESS.

Personalized Alphabet Books

This is a terrific way to help your children with their letter and sound recognition in a concrete and real-life way.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- ◆ camera (the inexpensive disposable kind will work fine or use a digital if you have one)
- ◆ 26 items representing the letters of the alphabet from around your site
- ◆ 7 file folders
- ◆ glue sticks
- ◆ permanent markers
- ◆ clear self-stick contact paper
- ◆ hole punch
- ◆ ribbon or thick yarn

WHAT YOU DO:

1. Have the children help you gather items from around your facility so that you have objects with the beginning sounds for each letter of the alphabet.
2. When you take the picture of

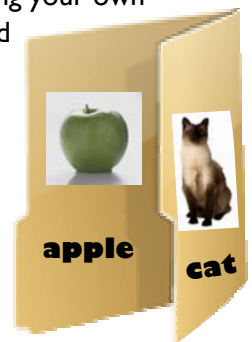
each item, be sure that only that object shows in the frame.

Consider using a solid color sheet or towel as a back drop.

3. Develop or print the film using at least a 4x6 photo size.
4. Design a cover for your book on the front of one of the file folders.
5. On the inside left of that folder begin pasting the photos (one photo per page). The letter 'A' would come first and so on through 'Z.'
6. Write the letter, or the object's name or both on the page with the photo.
7. Paste the letter 'B' photo on the right side of the same file folder and repeat #6.
8. Continue until you have all 26 photos pasted on the file folders using all four sides of each folder. This will make one continuous book.
9. Cover each file folder with clear self stick paper to make

them more durable and easy to wipe off.

10. Because the book will be heavy, punch 4 holes along the left margin for binding.
11. Use the ribbon or thick yarn to tie the folder pages together. Start with the top two holes, feeding the ribbon through so that the ends come out of the two holes on the front side of the book. Be sure to tie the ends in knots so that the book doesn't come apart. Do the same thing with the other two holes.
12. Enjoy reading your own personalized alphabet book with your children. Encourage families to do this activity at home as well!



Letters You Can Eat



Children benefit from exposure to letters in a variety of ways. This activity is a fun way of gaining more

experience in letter recognition and it will make a great snack!

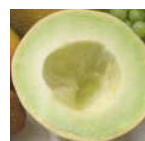
WHAT YOU NEED:

- ◆ cantaloupe or honeydew melon (you can use both if desired)
- ◆ knife

- ◆ cutting board
- ◆ small alphabet cookie cutters
- ◆ small paper plates
- ◆ lowfat yogurt

WHAT YOU DO:

1. Cut the melon in half.
2. Remove the seeds from the inside.
3. Cut the skin off the melon.
4. Cut half of the melon into $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch slices depending on the thickness of



your cookie cutter.

5. Decide what you will spell ~ the children's names would be fun to do.
6. Press the cookie cutter into the slices of melon to make each letter you will need. The children can even do this part themselves.
7. Arrange the letters on the paper plates to write each child's name. Add some lowfat yogurt and you have a healthy and educational snack!

Children's Early Learning *continued*

- 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).

Sing for Spring

Teaching children to sing simple songs is fun and helps their language and literacy development skills. Children's songs are typically easy for children to learn and help them hear the rhyming sounds in words.



Singing songs not only benefits their literacy development, it also promotes healthy brain development. Activities with children that are music related help to make connections in the part of the brain that will later be used for math, science, and problem-solving.

MY KITE

Sung to: *The Farmer in the Dell*
By: Jean Warren

My kite is up so high,
My kite is up so high,
Oh my ~ just watch it fly
My kite is up so high.

My kite is falling down,
My kite is falling down,
Oh no ~ it's down so low

My kite is falling down.

The wind has caught my kite,
The wind has caught my kite,
What fun ~ I'm on the run
The wind has caught my kite.

My kite is up so high,
My kite is up so high,
Oh my ~ just watch it fly
My kite is up so high.

CLOUDS

Sung to: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*
By: Frank Daly



When I look into the sky
I can see the clouds go by.
They don't ever make a sound.
Letting wind push them around.
Some go fast and some go slow.
I wonder where the clouds all go.

IN THE GARDEN

Sung to: *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*
By: Paula R. Anderson-Westeren

Planting time is here again.

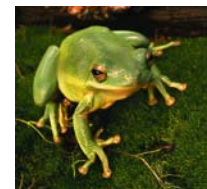
In the garden we dig in.
Broccoli, onions, potatoes, too
Plant the seeds in rows so true.
Watch the seeds as they sprout so tall.
Veggies for our soup this fall.

Harvest time is here at last.
In the garden we pick so fast.
Green beans, corn, and carrots, too.
All so fresh and good for you.
Put all the vegetables in our soup.
I think I'll have another scoop!

I'M A LITTLE FROG

Sung to: *I'm a Little Teapot*
By: Paula R. Anderson-Westeren

I'm a little green frog
Watch me jump.
Look at my strong legs
They help me hop.
When I'm near the water
I dive right in.
It's not a problem
Because I can swim!



Books for Story Time

SPRING

Featured Title:

Mouse's First Spring
by Lauren Thompson
A mouse and its mother experience the delights of nature on a windy spring day.

MORE SPRING BOOKS...

North Country Spring
Reeve Lindbergh

Bear Wants More
Karma Wilson

Wake Up, It's Spring!
Lisa Campbell Ernst

Countdown to Spring: An Animal Counting Book
Janet Schulman

Are You Spring?
Caroline Pitcher

Paperwhite
Nancy Elizabeth Wallace

Mud
Mary Lynn Ray

Spring
Barbara Seuling

Lost in the Woods
Carl R. Sam

Moe McTooth: An Alley Cat's Tale
Eileen Spinelli

Signs of Spring
Justine Korman Fontes

Cold Little Duck, Duck, Duck
Lisa Westberg Peters

Marsh Music
Marianne Collins Berkes

Clifford's Spring Clean Up
Norman Bridwell

RESPONSIBILITY

Featured Title:

The Saturday Escape
by Daniel J. Mahoney
Saturday is Jack's favorite day because it's story hour day. But he can't go until he finishes his chores--unless he comes up with some sort of a plan.

MORE BOOKS ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY...

My Little Car
Gary Soto

Arthur's Pet Business
Marc Brown

Fritz and the Mess Fairy
Rosemary Wells

Harry in Trouble
Barbara Ann Porte

It's Not My Fault
Nancy Carlson

Just Me and My Puppy
Mercer Mayer

Have You Fed the Cat?
Michele Coxon

Do I Have To?
Nancy Loewen

Cubby Bear's Big Responsibility
Elizabeth L. Hamilton

Taking Care of Mango
Cindy Leaney

Nell and Fluffy
C. Unzer



BUGS

Featured Title:

Bugs! Bugs! Bugs!
by Bob Barner
Bold colors and a lively rhyming text combine to make this eye-catching picture book a bug lovers delight.

MORE BUG BOOKS...

The Boll Weevil Ball
Kelly Murphy

The Perfect Pet
Margie Palatini

Feely Bugs
David A. Carter

The Very Ugly Bug
Liz Pichon

Ugh! A Bug
Mary Bono

Pattern Bugs
Trudy Harris

The Little Squeegy Bug
Bill Martin Jr.

Miss Spider's Alphabet
David Kirk

Leo the Lightning Bug
Eric Drachman

Alpha Bugs: A Pop-Up Alphabet
David A. Carter

The Icky Bug Counting Book
Jerry Palotta

The Bugliest Bug
Carol Diggory Shields

Bugs in Space
David A. Carter

The Icky Bug Alphabet Book
Jerry Palotta

Turn Off the TV - Tune Into Family Fun



Our fifth annual **Turn Off the TV ~ Tune Into Family Fun** event will be held on Friday April 20th at Westfield

Galleria at Roseville from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm. The theme for this year's event is "**Fun on the Farm**" and will feature many hands-on activities for preschool age children.

Plan to attend with the children in your program. It would make a great field trip!

Here is a sample of the activities:

The UC Corral

- ◆ watch chicks hatch
- ◆ "rope" a horse
- ◆ search for eggs



The Giddy Up Garden

- ◆ inspect lady bugs and butterflies

- ◆ make salad hands
- ◆ dig for vegetables
- ◆ check out wonderful worms

The Ranch House

- ◆ create a bookmark
- ◆ read a good story
- ◆ make some good music
- ◆ sort out the junk drawer

The Farmer's Market

- ◆ "shop" for produce
- ◆ talk to a real Placer County farmer
- ◆ sensory experiences

Trusting Relationships = Healthy Brain Development

What we know about brain development in children has changed significantly over the past several years. Infants were once thought to be cuddly little creatures



not capable of much learning in the early years. We now recognize that they are in a critical time period of brain development that will affect their learning and functioning for life.

Caregivers with a strong knowledge of child development recognize how important it is for children to have a sense of belonging, being loved, and trust in their environment and daily contacts and the connection this has to healthy brain development.

Warm and caring relationships

with adults provide children with a strong foundation for all types of

learning and healthy brain development. When infants feel secure in their relationships, they feel safe and confident to try new things and explore their world.

It is in their exposure to these new things which promotes new connections in the brain, leading to overall positive and healthy development.

Here are some tips from Penn State Cooperative Extension's *Better Kid Care Program* that can assist in building an infant's sense of trust:

- ◆ Small groups of children so they receive focused attention.
- ◆ A primary

caregiver assigned to infants and toddlers to promote consistency and responsiveness.

- ◆ A schedule that keeps groups of children with the same caregiver for an extended period of time.
- ◆ Low staff turnover to reduce anxiety caused by changes.
- ◆ Active parent participation to establish close communication between staff and family.
- ◆ Touching, hugging, holding and prolonged conversations and interactions.
- ◆ A secure base for exploration.
- ◆ Appropriate stimulation to encourage language and discovery.



- ◆ Meeting physical needs and physical comfort.
- ◆ Positive relationships with other children.

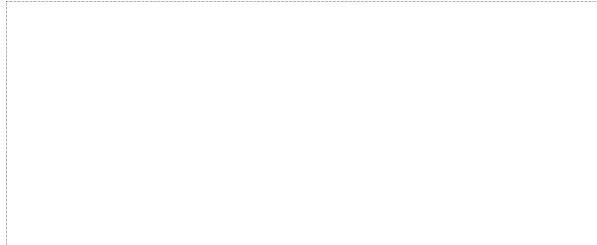


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Thank You!



Thank to everyone who submitted their evaluation of the **Ready to Succeed Newsletter for Professionals.**

Your responses have been entered into the database and results have been tabulated.

The overwhelming majority of you enjoy the newsletter exactly how it is and recommended no changes! That tells us we are succeeding in bringing you the information and activities you

want in a format and style that benefits you and your professional needs.

One suggestion that has been included in this edition was to have a brief description of the books recommended in the book list. While space does not allow for all the books to be described you will notice that each category of books has a "featured title" to let you know what that book is about. We hope you enjoy this change.

We value your input and look forward to hearing of your suggestions at any time by phone or email.

Sharon K. Junge
 County Director

Paula R. Anderson-Westereen
 Program Representative

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