

Ready to Succeed

An Early Literacy and School Readiness Newsletter for Professionals

Preschoolers and Exercise

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► Why is exercise important to a preschooler's health?

Physical activity is needed for the healthy growth and development of young children. Through active play, children learn about their bodies, their physical abilities and how to control their bodies within their environment. In addition, we have learned how important physical activity is to healthy brain development.

Children who participate in regular physical activity from an early age are more likely to develop and continue an active lifestyle throughout their



teenage and adult years. Regular physical activity in childhood:

- Improves muscular strength and endurance.
- Helps build healthy bones and muscles.
- Reduces anxiety and stress.
- Increases self-esteem.
- May improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels.
- Reduces the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Reduces the risk of developing chronic adult diseases such as heart disease and stroke.

Preschoolers enjoy running, jumping, bouncing and catching a ball. They like to bend, twist, swing, and stretch into shapes that mirror what they see. They need opportunities to practice and to repeat these skills while at the same time having successful

experiences with movement.

A successful movement experience for preschoolers is an experience that is fun! They are not interested in the number of minutes that they marched or the number of points they scored. They need a chance to play cooperatively, enjoy movement, and build motor skills. Movement and games should be a positive experience for everyone.

► How much exercise do preschool children need?

The general guideline is that children get at least one hour of physical activity per day. Experts are saying that one hour is an amount that seems appropriate for children to gain the health benefits from being physically active.

It's important to

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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.

Preschoolers and Exercise *continued*

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understand the nature of physical activity for children. Children are "spurters." They spurt; they rest and recover; play hard for five to ten minutes; stop; rest; and the game is on again. They will not be physically active for one hour all at once.



Children need to move. The recommendation is

that children don't go longer than two hours without physical activity. When children walk, jog, run, climb, etc., it is physical activity or exercise. Physical activity sets the stage for life long fitness.

► Incorporating physical activity in your daily routine.

Present exercise in ways that interest children. Plan active games, dancing, group exercises, and relay races. Combine music and movement every day. Give children the chance to be a jet plane, a galloping horse, or a

speeding train. Encourage all children to participate.

Also look for ways to connect physical activities to stories you have read. Books like *Clap Your Hands* by Lorinda Bryan Cauley or *Can You Move Like an Elephant?* by Judy Hindley encourage children to be active by mimicking what is happening in the story.

Source: Junge, S.K.; Carter, R.; Netemeyer, A.; & Raskauskas, J. (2006). *Go Glow Grow: A Nutrition Curriculum for Preschoolers*. University of California, Division of Agriculture & Natural Resources, Cooperative Extension.

Active Games for Children

Here are some simple activities you can do with the children to promote not only their physical development, but their listening and language skills as well.

STUFFED ANIMAL FUN



Give each child a small stuffed animal or toy to hold. Make up simple poems to chant as you give the children directions for what to do with the animal.

For example:

Wave your hands up in the air
Way high up in the air
Fly your "snake" up in the air
Way high up in the air.

Continue the simple poem with other directions for the children to follow ~ turn around, hop, touch the floor, toss and catch, etc.

CRAWLING SNAKES

After you have read one of the suggested books that explains about snakes, try this activity.

Have the children lay down on the floor and crawl on their tummies like a snake. Give them directions such as, "Crawl like a snake to the chair." Then ask them, "Where are you crawling to little snakes?" They should respond with, "We are crawling to the chair." Continue as long as you have their interest and attention.

BALLOON FUN

This game can be played indoors or out. Blow up a few balloons and toss them in the air. Have the children try to tap them up as they fall to keep the balloons from hitting the floor.



WHO IS...?

Have the children sit in a circle on the floor. Ask the children, "Who is clapping?" Select one child to clap and use her name in the response, "Kelly is, Kelly is!"

When the child has been selected have them stand up and walk around the outside of the circle doing the action you have given. When they return to their spot they sit back down. Encourage the children to say the line along with you. Continue with other actions like hopping, crawling, walking on tiptoe, etc.



SILLY SNAKE RIBBONS

Give each child a wide length of ribbon. Have them walk, jog, and hop around waving their ribbons in the air like snakes slithering on the ground.

Supporting Language and Literacy

The following is a brief check list for you to use in ensuring that the children in your program have many opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills.

DO YOU...

- Read daily to the children in your program?
- Engage children in selecting favorite books and participating actively in story time?
- Find ways to encourage parents to read to their children at home?
- Link books and reading experiences with engaging activities that stretch children's learning? (This newsletter contains many excellent examples.)
- Show children the many ways that reading and writing can be used in daily activities?
- Include literacy props and materials in dramatic play areas?

- Put labels, captions, and other print in places where they serve a purpose?



- Create inviting places for children to look at books and read with their friends or on their own?
- Include a wide variety of books and print materials that affirm children's cultures and linguistic backgrounds?
- Place books where the children can easily reach them?
- Display books on open shelves to pique children's interest in reading?
- Rotate and refresh literacy materials in dramatic play areas to keep children's interest and imaginations alive?
- Show children that we read

print moving from left to right and top to bottom?

- Identify the features of a book, such as the author, illustrator, and title?
- Read and reread stories to give children a chance to become very familiar with them?
- Encourage children to retell or reenact stories in their own words?
- Engage children in dramatic play and acting out favorite stories?
- Find meaningful ways to introduce children to a range of writing forms and genres?

This check list is a great reminder and reinforcement of the types of activities children should be involved with to promote their optimum development.

Adapted from: "Learning to Read and Write" by Neuman, Copple, & Bredekamp, 2000.

Sing a Song...

Incorporate singing into your daily routine to assist children in their language and vocabulary development. Children love it when their teacher just starts singing and before you know it, they are singing along!



MARCH ALONG

Sung to: *This Old Man*

By: Diana Nazaruk

March along, march along!
Lift your feet up off the ground!
And we'll march and sing a happy

little song
As we go a marching on!

TOES ARE TAPPING

Sung to: *Skip to My Lou*

By: Barbara Jackson

Hands are clapping, clap, clap, clap
Hands are clapping, clap, clap, clap
Hands are clapping, clap, clap, clap
Clap your hands my darling
Toes are tapping, tap, tap, tap
Toes are tapping, tap, tap, tap
Toes are tapping, tap, tap, tap
Tap your toes my darling

Continue with: *arms are swinging;*

fingers are wiggling; eyes are blinking; heads are nodding; hips are twisting; elbows are bending, etc. Be sure to act out the song with the children!

LITTLE BROWN SNAKE

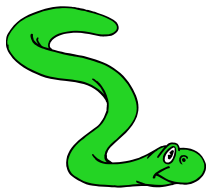
Sung to: *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*

By: Paula R. Westernen

The little brown snake slithered up
into a tree
Wrapped around a branch and
slept so quietly
While she was sleeping she
dreamed a crazy dream
That she wasn't a snake at all
But a lovely, happy queen!

Cheesy Snake Bread

Read one of the non-fiction books about reptiles from page five with the children. Extend the reading with this easy, yummy snack to make and enjoy together.



WHAT YOU NEED:

butter
green food coloring
frozen bread dough (defrosted)
flour
pastry brush
finely shredded cheddar cheese
raisins

WHAT YOU DO:

1. Everyone needs to wash their hands before starting and be sure the work surface is clean.
2. Melt the butter in a small pan on the stove or in the microwave and cool slightly.
3. Add green food coloring to the butter, stir, and set aside.
4. Give each child a mandarin-sized ball of bread dough.
5. If the dough is sticky, you may need to dip it in flour.
6. Show the children how to roll the ball of dough into a snake shape with their hands.
7. Place snakes on cookie sheet.
8. Use a pastry brush to paint the snake with the colored butter.
9. Add two raisins for eyes and sprinkle the snake with a small amount of shredded cheese.
10. Let rise for about 30-45 minutes.
11. Bake according to package directions.
12. Arrange the snakes on small paper plates for each child.
13. Using your imagination, add other foods to the plate to create a natural-looking scene for a snake.
14. Enjoy with a glass of milk or 100% fruit juice.

Slitherin' Good Fun

The following two crafty activities with help children with language, dramatic play, and fine motor skills. These activities should also accompany reading a good snake story for maximum benefit.



► SOCK SNAKES...

WHAT YOU NEED:

- one grey or white tube sock per child
- permanent markers
- felt pieces in a variety of "snake" colors
- tacky glue
- scissors

WHAT YOU DO:

1. Help the children use the

markers to draw a face on their snake.

2. Draw patterns on the felt pieces that are similar to those read about in the book.
3. Cut them out and glue them on the sock.
4. Allow the socks to dry, untouched overnight.
5. Show the children how to use their snake puppet for dramatic play.

Extending the experience: Consider setting up your dramatic play area to represent a reptile habitat.

► SWIRLY SNAKE ART...

WHAT YOU NEED:

- one nine inch paper plate per child
- crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- scissors

WHAT YOU DO:

1. Have the children color designs on their paper plate.
2. When they are finished, start at the center of the plate and draw one continuous line in a swirl pattern that gets wider as you reach the outside edge of the plate.
3. Starting at the outside edge of the plate, cut along the line you just drew. If the children are able, have them do the cutting.
4. The larger end will be the snake's head and the smaller will be the tail.
5. Draw a face on the snake.
6. Hang them from the ceiling by the tail to decorate the room.



There's Nothing Like a Great Book!

SPRING

Featured Title:

Spring Things

by Bob Raczka

Nature is busy budding and flowering; baby animals are being born; gardeners are planting; and everywhere children are running and playing. Isn't it interesting that all these things end in 'ing' and so does spring!

Hello Spring!

Robbin Cuddy

It's Spring!

Samantha Berger

Hopper Hunts for Spring

Marcus Pfister

That's What Happens When

It's Spring!

Elaine W. Good

Mouse's First Spring!

Lauren Thompson

Caterpillar Spring, Butterfly Summer

Susan Hood

Spring

Tanya Thayer

Wake Me in Spring

James Preller

Countdown to Spring: An

Animal Counting Book

Janet Schulman

Mud

Mary Lyn Ray



REPTILES

Featured Title:

Baby Rattlesnake

by Te Ata

In this retelling of a Native American tale, poor Baby Rattlesnake cries and cries because he doesn't have a rattle like his older siblings. The elders of the village decide to give in to the youngster to silence him. As predicted, the baby cannot handle the responsibility and when he loses his rattle, comes crying home to his parents.

The Yucky Reptile Alphabet Book

Jerry Pallotta

How to Hide a Crocodile

and Other Reptiles

Ruth Heller

About Reptiles: A Guide for Children

Cathryn and John Sill

Find the Snake

Cate Foley

My First Book About Reptiles

Kama Eihnorn

Reptiles of All Kinds

Kelley Macauley

Can Snakes Crawl Backward?

Melvin and Gilda Berger

What is a Reptile?

Bobbie Kalman

Who's Hiding Inside? Reptiles

Ida Ageledis

A Color of His Own

Leo Lionni

Hide and Snake

Keith Baker

Counting Little Geckos

Charline Profiri

COOPERATION

Featured Title:

Swimmy

by Leo Lionni

After a big tuna fish gulps up a school of Swimmy's friends, the small black fish journeys through the ocean and comes face-to-face with many marvelous creatures. When he meets up with a school of frightened fish, Swimmy uses his creativity to show them how to swim together as a group and outsmart the other big fish in the sea.

Berlioz the Bear

Jan Brett

Big Pumpkin

Erica Silverman

A Chair for My Mother

Vera B. Williams

Duck in the Truck

Jez Alborough

Eight Animals Bake a Cake

Susan Middleton Elya

Elephant in a Well

Marie Hall Ets

The Giant Jam Sandwich

John Vernon Lord

The Little Red Hen

Paul Galdone

Miss Nelson is Missing

(also available in Spanish)

Harry Allard

Mr. Tall and Mr. Small

Barbara Brenner

Smokey Night

Eve Bunting

Zinnia and Dot

Lisa Campbell Ernst



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Newsletter Evaluation Results Summary

Thank you again to those who responded! Here is a brief summary of the newsletter evaluation:

- 97% of you read half or more of the newsletter
- 81% of you are doing the activities with the children
- 76% of you share the newsletter with 514 other people
- 80% of you keep the newsletters to refer to at another time
- You ranked us 4.53-4.95 on the six items that rated the newsletter on a scale from 1-5.
- 80% of you are using the newsletter as a reference and activity resource
- 47% are using it to instruct parents
- 39% are using the newsletter to guide practice and 32% are using it as a conversation starter
- Those that responded to the evaluation are serving **281** 0-2 year olds, **1,129** 3-5 year olds, and **171** 6-12 year old children
- 49% responded that you are incorporating more literacy activities into your program and engaging children in active learning more often and 22% are reading more often and have a better understanding of its importance
- Additional comments stated that 52% of you consider the newsletter to be a valuable resource and tool and 44% look forward to receiving it and thanked us for writing it

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