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Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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Puppets Can Help Promote Preschoolers Social and Emotional Development

Preschool children are working to accomplish the important developmental milestones of learning social and friendship skills including beginning to share, help others, initiate social interactions, listen, and cooperate with peers. They are also working on emotional regulation skills including emotional literacy, self-control over aggressive behaviors, ability to wait and accept limits, and beginning problem solving skills.

One of the ways to promote your preschool child's social and emotional skills is through the use of puppet play. Puppet play is effective because it helps the parent/teacher enter into the child's imaginary world and allows children to experience the feelings of other characters (early empathy development) and learn important social behaviors and conversation skills.

With puppets, dolls, or action figures you can act out stories you are reading with children, make up fantasies, and explore solutions to pretend problems. You may be nervous at first using puppets, but try it out and before long you will experience the joy of entering into your child's thoughts, feelings and imagination, one of the most intimate places you can be at this age.

*excerpt from theincredibleyears.com

Puppets can also be a valuable tool in preschools. Puppets allow young children to think about solutions to conflicts and are a great way for children to explore their feelings. Children who talk about different points of view with props like puppets often have an easier time getting along with others and making friends. Puppets can also support anti-bias curriculum efforts and introduce feeling words, such as sad, mad, and frustrated. Not only can puppets help teach social skills and problem solving, but they can also help children process difficult feelings as well. By bringing puppets into the daily circle time, teachers can create a strong sense of community among children.

*excerpt from naeyc.org/tyc



This Issue:

<i>Puppets Can Help Promote Preschoolers Social and Emotional Development</i>	Page 1
<i>Resources on Puppet Play</i>	Page 2
<i>Try this at Home</i>	Page 2
<i>Why Early Childhood Development Is Important</i>	Page 2
<i>The First 2000 Days</i>	Page 2
<i>Tips to Help Students with Autism Transition During the School Day</i>	Page 3
<i>No Bake Energy Bites</i>	Page 3
<i>Wonders of Devonian Gardens</i>	Page 3
<i>Triple P Positive Parenting Program</i>	Page 4



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Try This At Home!

- Draw your favourite animals or characters from a story on construction paper or cardstock.
- Cut them out and glue a popsicle stick to the back of each one.
- Put on a puppet show with your popsicle stick puppets!

Fall is a time for illness. Reinforce the habit of a healthy lifestyle by singing and acting out this song with your child:



This is the Way We Wash Our Hands

(Tune: Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush)

- This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands.
This is the way we wash our hands so early in the morning.
- This is the way we brush our teeth, brush our teeth, brush our teeth.
This is the way we brush our teeth so early in the morning.

(Other: Wash our face, Change our clothes, Eat our food)



Resources on Puppet Play

There are excellent resources available to help you incorporate puppet play into your home and/or classroom:

For some ideas on what to have your puppet do when playing with a child, visit <http://incredibleyears.com/parents-teachers> for their free handout on puppet play.

For more examples of how puppets are used in the classroom and to read the entire article from NAEYC's Teaching Young Children publication, please visit http://www.naeyc.org/files/tyc/file/V4N4/Circle_time_puppets_teaching_social_skills.pdf

Why Early Childhood Development Is Important

What happens in early childhood affects a child throughout life. Their experiences, relationships and surroundings can be opportunities for influencing their lives positively as well as be risks for influencing their development negatively.

- Most young children in Canada are developing well. But by the time they go to kindergarten, about 25 per cent have difficulties with basic tasks such as holding a crayon, following instructions and getting along with others.
- A greater percentage of children who grow up in poverty and with other social disadvantages are vulnerable. However, the greatest number of vulnerable children comes from middle-income homes, because of the size of the middle class in Canada (75 per cent of all families).
- Getting children off to the right start reduces juvenile delinquency, addictions, school dropout rates, learning disabilities, obesity and many other problems.
- **Investing in the early years pays off. By one estimate, every \$1 invested in the early years saves \$3 in spending for school-aged children and \$8 for adult education.**

Source: Early Child Development Mapping Project Alberta

The first 2,000 days

The first 2,000 days of your child's life, the time between birth and kindergarten, are important to her:

- Lifelong health
- Friendships and relationships
- Self confidence
- Success at school and, later, in the workforce
- Likelihood of poverty or wealth
- Ability to get a job

Source: Calgary Reads



5 Tips to Help Students with Autism Transition During the School Day

Transitioning between activities can be difficult and stressful for people with autism. Here are five simple techniques that can help to reduce anxiety and give a sense of predictability to transitions.

Create a Schedule

Create a schedule the student can refer to. This can be a simple written list of activities or a sequence of pictures or both. Schedules can prepare a student for a transition by allowing them to anticipate upcoming activities and understand the sequence of events that will occur. Using schedules can decrease transition time and lower anxiety and melt downs.

Show Activities as Finished

Marking activities as finished naturally prepares the student for the next activity. If using a picture schedule have a finished pocket for the student to place the picture of the completed activity in. For routine schedules, laminate the schedule with a box next to each picture that the student can check off the activity as complete. Or use a piece of paper and write out the schedule and allow the student to cross each item off as it is completed.

Use a Timer

Time is an abstract concept that can be difficult for autistic students to understand. Using a timer gives students a visual of how much time is left before a transition. It can also help to keep some kids on task for projects they don't like, because they can see it has an end. Some timers, like the "Time Timer" give an additional visual of the countdown of time.

Make sure there is ample time for transitions.

Rushing to stay on schedule is stressful for anyone, especially with new routines at school. Allow adequate time for autistic students to process the transition and move on to the next activity.

Give the student a transition item.

Sometimes carrying a familiar item or small fidget during a transition can add a sense of continuity and comfort. Some students keep an object with them throughout the day. For others it's helpful if they get the item after they have completed a project. Allowing the student to get the transition item may help them mentally prepare them to move on to the next activity.

Source: National Autism Resources - <http://www.nationalautismresources.com>



"Awareness is a poignant reminder that we all have something to teach each other, and we all have something to learn from one another."

Chrissy Kelly, a mom of two boys with autism

Wonders of Devonian Gardens A Free Program for Kids

The air is getting that familiar chill in it and it won't be long before we have days too chilly to stay outside for long. How to keep youngsters warm, busy and learning? Here's one great idea and it won't cost you anything either!

Drop by Devonian Gardens on **Wednesdays between 10 am and noon** for the City of Calgary's Wonders of Devonian Gardens children's nature program. Enjoy an exciting morning of learning and exploration through nature-inspired games, crafts and stories for children 3 to 12 years old (must be accompanied by an adult).

Program themes include Fancy Fish, Plant Power, Secret Lives of Ladybugs and Shapes in Nature. Topics will rotate on a weekly basis. This is a free program.

Wonders of Devonian Gardens Event

Wednesdays Sept 2 – Dec 16, 2015

(excluding Nov. 11) from 10 am – 12 pm at Devonian Gardens. Address: #400 – 317 – 7 Avenue SW, Calgary AB

Website: www.calgary.ca/parks

No Bake Energy Bites

- 1 cup (dry) oatmeal (can use old-fashioned oats)
- 2/3 cup toasted coconut flakes
- 1/2 cup peanut butter (or no nut WOW butter)
- 1/2 cup ground flax seed
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips or cacao nibs (optional)
- 1/3 cup honey or agave nectar
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds (optional)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Stir all ingredients together in a medium bowl until thoroughly mixed. Cover and let chill in the refrigerator for half an hour. Once chilled, roll into balls of whatever size you would like. (Mine were about 1" in diameter.) Store in an airtight container and keep refrigerated for up to 1 week. Makes about 20-25 balls.

The best thing about this recipe is that it is super flexible as well. So if you are allergic to any of the ingredients, or if you are just looking for other substitution ideas, feel free to experiment.



These delicious little no bake energy bites are the perfect healthy snack!

Triple P Positive Parenting Program

When it comes to raising kids, everyone has an opinion. There are so many ideas out there. So how do you know what's best and what works? The Alberta government is taking the guesswork out of parenting, supporting parents and caregivers with the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program.



Triple P gives parents simple tips to help manage the big and small problems of family life. Problems like toddler tantrums or teenage rebellion. Self-esteem issues. Bedtime battles. Disobedience. Aggression. Triple P can help you deal with them all – and more! Triple P is one of the most effective evidence-based parenting programs in the world, backed up by more than 30 years of ongoing research. Triple P gives parents simple and practical strategies to help them confidently manage their children's behaviour, prevent problems developing and build strong, healthy relationships. Triple P is currently used in 25 countries and has been shown to work across cultures, socio-economic groups and in many different kinds of family structures.

Find a program just right for your family

Most parents agree that when you're raising children there are ups – and there are downs. The ups? Well, of course, they're great. But the downs ... The toddler tantrums, the child who won't go to bed, the son who's being bullied at school, the daughter who's telling lies or the siblings who can't play together without fighting – these are some of the problems that can make home life harder than it should be. Fortunately, if parents in Alberta are concerned about a particular or recurring problem, they can access one of the world's leading parenting programs for support.

Triple P is available free

Triple P is available free through Parent Link Centres in a wide range of formats, from parent seminars and small discussion groups, to one-on-one private consultations and intensive group-based programs. Families of children with disabilities are also supported with a range of Stepping Stones Triple P programs through the Family Support for Children with Disabilities program. In Alberta, one of the largest providers of Triple P has been Parent Link Centres. Triple P Online is also now available to Alberta families.

Parents seek support

In 2013-2014 alone, more than 6,000 Alberta parents took part in a Triple P program through the network of Parent Link Centres, which have served more than 94,000 people in more than 160 communities within the same period.

To find out which Triple P program can help you and where to get help, go to www.triple-p-parenting.net



Upcoming Triple P FREE Programs

Families Matter - Parent Link Centre is one of many locations offering Triple P Programming.

Some of their upcoming programs are:

Power of Positive Parenting

October 8, 2015

Thursday at 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Families Matter - Trans Canada Centre
#158 1440 52 Street NE

Raising Confident, Competent Children

October 15, 2015

Thursday at 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Families Matter - Trans Canada Centre
#158 1440 52 Street NE

Raising Resilient Children

October 22, 2015

Thursday at 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Families Matter - Trans Canada Centre
#158 1440 52 Street NE

Dealing With Disobedience

November 5, 2015

Thursday at 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Families Matter - Parent Link Centre
Bowcroft School - 3940 73 Street NW

Hassle Free Shopping With Children

November 26, 2015

Thursday at 10:00 am - 11:30 am

Families Matter - Parent Link Centre
Bowcroft School - 3940 73 Street NW



For more information and to register visit:
www.familiesmatter.ca/programs/triple-p