

PRESCHOOL PRESS



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the Early Childhood and Elementary Special Education Department

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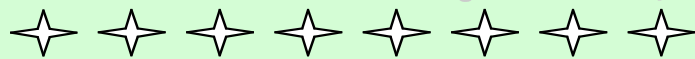
About The Preschool Press

This publication is designed for preschool families in the Anchorage School District. It is mailed to these families at the end of each month. Email subscriptions are also sent out so if you wish to receive this mailing contact:

loutrel_barbara@asdk12.org or
call 742-3868.

Past copies of the Preschool Press can be found on
www.asdk12.org/depts/step

Maintaining Calm During the Holidays



With all the special activities and hectic preparations during the holidays, extra demands are put on our time and energy as parents. In our rush, we sometimes forget that the anticipation, excitement and changes in daily routine can cause emotional upheaval and stress for our children as well. This is the time of year to think about which activities are the most meaningful to your family and which can be simplified.

- **Pay attention to appropriate behavior:** When you are under stress it is easy to get upset by your child's misbehavior. Try to notice the good things your child is doing and comment on it.
- **Ignore Minor Misbehavior:** When children get tired, hungry, sick or overly excited they may whine, cry or have temper tantrums. Try to stay calm and not react. Instead at the first sign of a "meltdown", take a moment to rest.
- **Rehearse:** This time of year children are often exposed to new experiences, places or activities and that may make them uncomfortable. To make them feel at ease, talk beforehand about where you are going and what is going to happen when you get there. Let them ask questions and do your best to answer.
- **Choice:** Children respond better when given choices. Limit them to 2 or 3 and keep them simple.
- **Transition:** Moving from one activity to another can cause difficulty even when it is an activity your child is excited about. Give your child advance notice to prepare them for the change. You can even use pictures to show them what they will be doing next.
- **Basic Family routines:** Try to keep some routines constant such as naptime, bedtime and mealtime.

The Teddy Bear Post: www.theparentline.org

Helping Skills Sparkle Over the Holidays



Here are some helpful activities during the holidays that can help your child practice skill areas. Remember that everything does not have to be perfect. As parents we will often do it ourselves. When this happens children do not get the opportunity to explore and practice skills. Slow down, and enjoy the experience with your children. And celebrate the end product!!



Fine Motor Skills

- **Wrapping presents**
- **Tearing tape while you wrap presents**
- **Baking cookies or bread:** You may want to allow the child to have their own little loaf of bread or their own little dough for cookies (rolling out or kneading dough, stirring cake mixes).
- **Decorating sugar cookies** (squeezing frosting, or smearing frosting)
- **Allow children to cut soft fruits and veggies** (bananas, cantaloupe, cucumber) for salad or snacks. Spreading cream cheese on bagels or crackers. Use a plastic knife or a butter knife that does not have sharp edges.
- **Use cookie cutters to cut bread, cookie dough, or play dough.**
- **Hanging decorations** (stringing beads, berries, popcorn)
- **Crafts:** Making presents for family, play dough that you bake or dry (buy at craft stores), paint items, cutting out decorations.
- **Making cards:** gluing, cutting, taping, coloring, and painting. (Doesn't have to be expensive, use scraps of paper, yarn, and macaroni, tear colored paper and glue down on plain paper.)

Gross Motor Skills

- **If you have to move furniture for the Christmas tree or making room for additional family for visits, let the kids *help* move the furniture.** Pushing, pulling, and lifting are all good gross motor opportunities.
- **Hanging decorations** (reaching, stretching, bending)
- **Bundle up and take some walks around the neighborhood checking out the lights.** Play hopping, skipping, and jumping games as you go along. Follow the leader is a good one to play, raising arms up, waving hands, flapping your arms. You can also play Simon Says as you go along (take three giant steps, take one baby step, hop two times....).



Preacademic Skills

Concepts:

- Count as you measure while cooking
- Let the little ones help set the table, count out cups, silverware, plates and napkins
- Talk about colors and count as you make craft items mentioned in fine motor skills.
- While playing with kids, or hanging decorations talk about up, down, in, and out (spatial concepts).
- Read stories asking "wh" questions (who, what, when, where). Choose books that are fun and colorful. Usually you can incorporate counting, colors and concepts in the stories too.

Following directions:

- Make it fun if possible ☺
- While baking or making cards or other items give two step directions (tear the paper, then glue it down)
- Model what you want and break the activity up into small chunks of information for them to do.
- Children feel happy and successful when they can do what is asked of them.



Holiday Books

- Christmas Lights by Ann Fearington
- Counting Christmas by Karen Katz
- Dumpling Soup by Jama Kim Rattigan
- Froggy's Best Christmas by Jonathan London
- Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg
- The Berenstain Bears Save Christmas by Stan & Jan Berenstain
- This Next New Year by Janet Wong



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What About Language Skills?



Language can be worked on with children while doing all of the above activities.

- For children who need help expanding the number of words they say, add one word to whatever your child says (ex: the child says "ball", you say "oh that's a red ball". Or, the child says "my coat" and you reply, "Your coat is blue, or soft, or warm"). Just add one or two words to whatever your child is saying.
- Help your child to ask for items, and help. We get very busy and as parents, we have a tendency to "know" what our children want or need and just make it happen. Children need opportunities to talk, so create a need for them to express themselves.
- Look at past pictures of holidays and talk about who is in the pictures and what they are doing.
- Cut out pictures of fun items in catalogues and newspaper ads. Talk about what they are or what they do. They may even want to make a wish book to talk about.
- Reinforce all the language based spatial concepts (in, on, under, over, beside, above, etc).
- Ask the child where something is. When they point, help them to tell you where that is (on the mantle, under the tree, behind the couch).
- If you are going somewhere have the children predict what they will do there, whom will they see, what might happen?

You're Never Too Young to Give

It is not too early for preschoolers to begin to understand that the holidays are about giving to others and sharing. It might be fun to start a family tradition of making a gingerbread house or a plate of cookies to take to a nursing home or children's hospital, or to give to someone who does not have family living nearby. Let your child help with decorating and making projects to share with others. This may turn into one of your child's most cherished memories and could be a lasting lesson on the importance of sharing.



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Toys For Creative Play

It is important for children to play and toys can be important 'tools of play.' According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, in their *Clinical Report, Selecting Appropriate Toys for Young Children: The Pediatrician's Role*, 'toys play a supportive role in enhancing a child's development.'

But these toys don't have to be 'trendy or expensive' and there is 'no scientific evidence to suggest that any toy is necessary or sufficient for optimal learning.' So when choosing toys for your child, don't feel guilty if you can't afford new, trendy and expensive toys that claim to boost your child's development or intelligence.

Instead, choose toys that you can afford and which are developmentally appropriate for your child, 'help promote learning and growth', and which encourage your children to use their imagination. And remember that toys should never be substitutes for the attention of devoted caregivers.

Choosing Toys:

A parent or friend choosing a toy for a child must consider several things. A good toy should be:

- * safe for that child's age, well constructed, and durable;
- * appealing and interesting to the child;
- * suited to the child's physical capabilities, and
- * suited to the child's mental and social development.: For an individual child, the parent is the best judge of the child's abilities and interests at any point in his or her development, and should select toys suitable for that child's profile of capabilities.

Types of Play-Types of Toys

ACTIVE PLAY: Push and Pull Toys, Ride-On Toys, Outdoor and Gym Equipment, Sports Equipment

MANIPULATIVE PLAY: Construction Toys, Puzzles, Pattern-Making Toys, Manipulative Toys, Dressing, Lacing and Stringing Toys, Sand and Water Play Toys

MAKE-BELIEVE PLAY: Dolls, Stuffed Toys, Puppets, Role Play Materials, Play Scenes, Transportation Toys, Projectile Toys

CREATIVE PLAY: Musical Instruments, Art and Craft Materials, Audio-Visual Equipment

LEARNING PLAY: Games, Specific Skill Development Toys, Books

www.keepkidshealthy.com

Toy Safety Shopping Tips

Toys for Children Under 3 Years Old

- * Children under 3 tend to put everything in their mouths. Avoid buying toys intended for older children which may have small parts that pose a choking danger.
- * Never let children of any age play with uninflated or broken balloons because of the choking danger.
- * Avoid marbles, balls, and games with balls that have a diameter of 1.75 inches or less. These products also pose a choking hazard to young children.
- * Children at this age pull, prod and twist toys. Look for toys that are well-made with tightly secured eyes, noses and other parts.
- Avoid toys that have sharp edges and points.



Toys for Children Ages 3 Through 5 Years Old

- * Avoid toys that are constructed with thin, brittle plastic that might easily break into small pieces or leave jagged edges.
- * Look for household art materials, including crayons and paint sets, marked with the designation "ASTM D-4236." This means the product has been reviewed by a toxicologist and, if necessary, labeled with cautionary information.
- * Teach older children to keep their toys away from their younger brothers and sisters.

www.keepkidshealthy.com

Don't Forget:

Parent-Teacher Institute



“Surviving Tough Times: Why Doesn't My Child Fit”

Saturday, January 28, 2006

Wendler Middle School

8:30am to 1:00pm

Topics include: Mental health issues (Bullying, Suicide Prevention/Intervention), Positive Behavioral Supports, Assets for Kids, Social & Mental Health Issues for Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and Other Disabilities

***Call for free childcare or general information: 742-3874**



