

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 each month. E-mail 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/dept/step

Individualized Educational Program (IEP) Meetings: What a Parent Should Know

The IEP meeting is the first step to building a positive relationship with your child's teachers. As a parent, it is your opportunity to meet with the school staff and discuss your child's past and future performance in school. This spring you will be invited to an IEP meeting if your child is transitioning to kindergarten. This meeting will include the preschool team of teachers as well as the teachers from the school where your child will attend kindergarten.

Is it important that I attend the meetings?

Yes! Parental involvement is the key to your child's success at school. This meeting will be held to see if the current goals are still appropriate as well as to change the hours to align with the kindergarten schedule. The information that you can provide at these meetings is very important to achieving your child's educational goals in school and at home.

What should I do before the meeting?

- o If you cannot attend the meeting, call your child's current teacher and ask to reschedule. However, the team may meet without you as there are many participants who have arranged their schedules to attend.
- o Write down questions that you have for the IEP team, as well as goals that you have for your child. This way you will not forget anything when you get to the meeting.
- o You are entitled to receive a draft of the proposed IEP documents prior to the meeting. Contact your child's special education teacher if you would like to obtain a copy.
- o Talk with your child to find out how s/he feels about school.

Parts of this article were taken from: *The ABCs of the IEP Meeting: What a Parent Should Know* by Audrey Prince, M. Ed.
www.superduperinc.com

Shopping With a Preschool Child

We've all been there, you're in a hurry, tired, hungry and you must stop at the store. As you get closer and closer to the store your internal feeling of dread increases. You really just need to dash in and dash out, your already visualizing the struggle getting out of the car and into the store safely. You know that candy aisle, first row to the left as you enter will be calling your child's name - let the games begin!

Although there are no absolutes in this world there are some suggestions that may make the grocery store stop a little easier for both you and your child.

Be Prepared: Set the stage

- o If you just picked your child up from daycare and are on the way home, have a healthy snack in the car. Hungry, tired little ones have more difficulty in grocery stores.
- o Take a deep breath, and slow down. Your child will pick up on your anxiety and your own frustration. When we're rushed and in a hurry we do not take time to let our children know what we expect of them.
- o Clear Expectations will win the day!
- o Avoid the aisles that will give you difficulty: Toys, candy, chips
- o What are the rules? Keep them simple, and "teach" the rules at home before you ever go shopping.
- o Model the behavior you expect, and how you will react to both positive and negative behavior. For example: When you scream, I will ignore you. When you use a quiet voice, I will answer you.
- o Remind your child of the rules on the spontaneous shopping trips.
 - What are you there to buy?
 - We are not buying candy today.
 - We are buying milk and cereal.
- o If you can, allow your child to help make some choices. If it's cereal, choose two that you are ok with, and let your child choose from those.

Time

- o Let your child take his/her favorite book or toy: Boredom is deadly.
- o Have a game, song, or idea ready to keep the little one busy and engaged while standing in line. Remember little ones have short attention spans, the checkout stand is filled with goodies!
- o Have a plan, and take a moment to review the expectations "before" you enter the checkout line.

Positive reinforcement

- o Don't forget to reward your child "during" shopping.
- o Hugs and kisses, and "I like the way you are "" Be specific kids need to know what they are doing right.
- o It's ok to plan something fun once the shopping is finished.
- o When we get home we'll read your book
- o When we get home



Growing Up:

Growing Up: But He Will Only Eat French Fries - Now What????



Children between the ages of two and three often appear to be “picky eaters” because they fear new foods. This is a normal part of a child's development. Overcoming a fear of new foods often improves throughout the childhood years. For children with developmental delays, this stage may occur at a later age or may last longer than might be expected. Even children who are considered picky eaters often eat enough variety to maintain a healthy and well-balanced diet.

Some children, however, are resistant eaters. These children often have serious food aversions, which greatly impact the variety of foods the child is willing to eat. Some of the characteristics of a resistant eater include: food selections limited to 1-15 foods or less; refusal to eat from one or more of the food groups; anxiety or tantrums when presented with new foods, including gagging or becoming physically ill when presented with new foods. If your child engages in these types of resistant behaviors, here are some strategies you can try.

- o Talk to your child's doctor about the problem to rule out a medical issue (such as oral-motor problems, postural concerns, etc.) that may be causing your child to resist some types of foods.
- o Try to keep to a schedule for meals and snacks. This would include limiting in between meal “grazing.”
- o Offer the child at least one preferred food item at every meal and/or snack.
- o Have a specific location for eating and drinking. Providing the appropriate supports for maintenance of posture and position can help alleviate the desire for the child to roam about the room while eating.
- o Limit the amount of distractions during meals, such as having the television on or having toys at the table.
- o Show respect for your child and do not invade his or her mouth without permission. Physically forcing your child to try new food items can foster a lack of trust, and reinforce to your child that new foods are something to be feared.
- o Discuss the taste, texture and smell of new foods. You can describe what and how you are eating, such as explaining that, “chewing a piece of cracker is very easy because it dissolves in my mouth. I have to chew longer on a piece of hamburger before I can swallow it.”
- o It is often helpful to begin with a smaller portion size. By keeping the portion size small, the child is more likely to feeling capable of trying new foods.

For more information on helping children with food aversions, check out the book: **Just Take A Bite - Easy, Effective Answers to Food Aversions and Eating Challenges!**

Ernsperger, L & Stegen-Hanson, T, (2004) *Just Take A Bite*, Future Horizons, Inc.



The Family Table: Tips for Dinnertime.

Many families understand the power and benefits of eating together as a family. Mealtimes for families with young children with disabilities, however, can be challenging. Young children with disabilities may have issues related to food preferences or remaining at the table. Here are some ideas to keep in mind to help make mealtimes a more pleasant and relaxed family affair.

Remember how challenging transitions can be. Transitions often involve ending an enjoyable activity and entering into a waiting period - in this instance waiting for meals to be served. When young children are required to wait they often become restless and bored. Fights can start with brothers and sisters. Children may start playing with their food or banging their forks and spoons. They probably will not sit in their chairs for very long. Some children may get up and run through the room, shout and chase each other, or return to their play activities.

- o To help avoid some of these disturbances, have meal ready before calling children to the table.
- o Give children ample warning that the transition will be coming. Letting them know what is coming next will make the transitions smoother.
- o A rest or a quiet activity before eating can be calming for a child. This lets the child know that playing is over, and it is time to switch gears to something else.

Remember that young children often have boundless energy. It may be very difficult for them to sit for extended periods, especially using seating that may be large for them. Interacting with your child during mealtimes can help them focus for longer periods.

- o Have meals at regular times. A definite place to eat helps young children know what is expected.
- o Young children are busy learning about their world and want to explore everything, including their food. Because of this, young child's mealtime behavior can be frustrating to adults. They like to touch, smell, and make sounds with their food. Do not worry - they also like to taste food. This is normal for a young child but some limits need to be set, and consistently enforced, because behaviors such as food throwing can get out of hand!
- o Have your young child help you with preparations for the meal. Having an active role in creating the meal may help your child take ownership in the meal.

Special Education Community Forum

Special Education Community Forums are a disability outreach and informational series of workshops for everyone; parents, teachers, students, caregivers, etc.

***April 14, 2007
Wendler Middle School
8:30 AM to 1:00 PM***

Helping Ease the Way for Changes in the Lives of Children With Special Needs

Topics include: Using Technology to Accommodate the Special Needs of Students, ADD/ADHD, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders, Community Transition Services, Early Literacy Skills, A Child's Perspective in Adoption

For more information contact the STeP Center at 742-3872 or click on the SECF icon on our website:

<http://www.asdk12.org/depts/step/>

***Free childcare by calling 742-3872 24 hours in advance.
This Special Education Community Forum Is a FREE event.***

