

PRESCHOOL PRESS



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the Early Childhood and Elementary Special Education Department

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About Preschool Press

This publication is designed for
preschool families in the
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Email and hardcopy
subscriptions are available. If
you wish to subscribe contact:
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or call 742-3870.

Past copies of the *Preschool
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[http://www.asdk12.org/depts/st
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ep/)

Helping Skills Continue to Grow Over the Holidays

Pre-Academic Skills:

- Have your child help with holiday preparations. Talk about colors, shapes and sizes as you encourage your child to help decorate your home. Spatial concepts can be practiced by putting decorations high and low on walls, shelves or the tree.
- Children can practice counting by helping to set the table.
- Use smaller measuring cups so your child to count out several scoops of ingredients during cooking activities.
- Children can practice sorting and categorizing by helping to unload the dishwasher or putting away groceries. Don't forget about using spatial language such as asking your child to put the crackers on the bottom shelf, putting vegetables behind the milk, or the soup next to the cereal.
- Help your child to practice following two-step directions during craft projects by giving directions such as, "tear the paper and then glue it down."

Fine Motor Skills:

- Making holiday cookies provides a great opportunity to practice rolling, squeezing and using cutters. Don't be afraid to practice these same skills with "cut and bake" dough mixes. Add a touch of flour to hands and work surfaces if cookies are too sticky to work with.
- Have your child hand you small pieces of tape while you are wrapping packages. Encourage your child to add self-stick labels, stamps or stickers to letters and packages as well.
- Cards can be made by tearing or cutting paper that can be glued to construction paper cards. Adding pieces of string, small feathers, yarn segments or small pieces of pasts can add a special flare. Artwork, such as painting and collages, always make wonderful gifts for family and friends.
- Children can use a child-safe plastic knife to cut soft fruit, breads or vegetables for salads or fruit and vegetable trays.
- Have your child help with a variety of spreading projects, such as frosting cookies, spreading peanut butter and jelly on bread, or crème cheese on crackers. Squeezing jelly or frosting out of tubes also helps to develop strength.

(Continued on next page)



Selecting Toys for Creative Play

The holiday season is upon us again. Here are some general suggestions for parents and caregivers to keep in mind when selecting toys for young children.



- Keep in mind that the most educational toy is one that fosters the interaction of an adult with a child in supportive, unconditional play. Toys are never substitutes for the attention of devoted caregivers.
- Provide children with safe, affordable toys that are developmentally appropriate. Include toys that help promote learning and growth in all areas of development. Avoid toys that discourage children from using their imaginations. Social/emotional and cognitive skills are developed and enhanced as children use play to work out real-life problems. Make a thoughtful selection of toys and remember that a good toy does not have to be trendy or expensive.
- Use books and magazines to play and read together.
- Be skeptical of educational or developmental claims made by advertisers, especially product claims of intellectual enhancement.
- Remember that some toys promote violence or negative social, racial, or gender stereotypes. These toys are not recommended for children.
- Limit video game and computer game use. Total screen time, including television and computer use, should be less than 1 to 2 hours per day. Children younger than 5 years should play with computer or video games only if they are developmentally appropriate, and they should be accompanied by the parent or caregiver.



Helping Skills Continue to Grow Over the Holidays

(Continued from page 1)

Gross Motor Skills:

- Encourage your child to help move any furniture that needs to be moved during holiday decorating. Pushing, pulling and lifting are all good gross motor opportunities.
- Take some time to bundle up and head outside. Children can be encouraged to hop, skip, jump, and roll as they play in the snow. If enough snow is present, working together to build a snowman offers a variety of gross motor practice, including pushing and lifting.
- As holiday guests arrive, encourage your child to help to carry smaller pieces of luggage, such as overnight bags, or pull larger pieces with wheels.
- Take a walk around the neighborhood to look at the local lights and decorations.

Language Skills:

- The holidays offer a great number of new things to talk about. Help your child to make up stories about the pictures they see on holiday cards you receive or photos you take during the holidays. Even simple pictures provide the child with the opportunity to identify colors.
- Help your child to practice labeling items. Look in catalogs or newspaper ads and name to toys that you find. Don't forget to talk about how these toys are used. You can expand on your child's language by adding descriptive words, such as saying "that is a big red ball" when your child simply uses the label of "ball."
- During the busy days of the holiday season, it is easy to anticipate your child's needs and provide what they need without your child needing to ask. Encourage your child to continue to ask for what they want.
- Encourage your child to help you find specific items during shopping trips. Children can practice finding things that are specific colors, shapes or sizes. You can also talk about categories, such as fruits, vegetables, toys or clothes.



Good Choices for Toys and Activities for Young Children

- Wood puzzles with 4-20 pieces
- Triangle, wood block
- Texture- and sound-matching games
- Wagon or wheelbarrow
- Riding toys
- Large rubber balls
- Construction toys
- Washable doll with a few clothes and accessories like a bed, high chair
- Dress-up clothes: hats, shoes, shirts, jewelry
- Hand puppets
- Pegboards, sewing cards, stacking toys
- Picture lotto, dominoes
- Picture/story books, poems about familiar things
- Classical, folk, and children's music
- Finger or tempera paint, ½-inch brushes, blunt scissors, white glue
- Unit blocks and accessories
- Wood train set with large pieces
- Simple board games encouraging color identification or simple counting
- Child-size slide, swing, playhouse



For more information on toy selection, check out these sites online:

Which Toy for Which Child: A Consumer's Guide for Selecting Suitable Toys, Ages Birth Through Five

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/285.pdf>

Appropriate Toys for All Ages

<http://www.givingcenter.com/article.html?id=42>

What do you mean, IEP?

Special education is filled with many acronyms, forms and programs. We are beginning a new series to help you unravel some of those mysteries and help you understand this wonderful part of education that you are participating in with your child. We promise not to go into too much detail but rather give you an overall understanding, one step at a time. If you have questions beyond what is in this article please contact your child's special education teacher for further understanding.

We have chosen to begin with the IEP since it is the form that you will most encounter. This topic is being broken up into two parts. Part 2 will be in the next newsletter.

IEP is an acronym standing for **Individual Education Plan**. It is written after a child is found eligible for special education services. Simply put, the IEP describes your child's abilities and states what services are needed to meet your child's needs. It is reviewed and revised yearly by your child's team (Parent – Regular Educator – Special Educator – District Representative and Person to Interpret Test Results).

The main parts of it are:

- Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance
- Measurable Goals and Objectives
- Program Modifications and Adoptions
- Special Education and Related Services
- Supports for School Personnel

At this time let's mention the difference between an IEP or IFSP. An IFSP stands for **Individual Family Service Plan**. It is written for children ages birth to 3 years old. These children are part of an **Infant Learning Program (ILP)** such as PIC and FOCUS. It is similar to an IEP in that it provides the needed services for a child with special needs. The main difference is that this is a document that is written by an agency, not the school district and is intended to be carried out in the home.

Next month we will go into further detail of what is in each of the IEP's main parts.

Please understand that this article was intended to only give a brief understanding of what an IEP is as of how the law is written today. Special education has evolved over the years and continues to do so. Our hope is to make this journey easier for you.

Helping Kids Succeed Alaskan Style: Bonding to School

From: Alaska Ice: Initiative for Community Engagement, Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style, <http://www.alaskaice.org>

Parents and extended family can...

- Ask about school every day. Celebrate the good: support kids through the bad.
- Together, keep track of your child's activities and progress.
- If your child does not like school, ask them "why." Help your child work to solve the problem so they are more able to enjoy school.

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Giving & Sharing

The Holiday Season is a wonderful time to teach children how to give and share. If you either need support during this time or can provide gifts or food to others one way to do this is through the United Way.

The United Way is an umbrella for over 30 or 40 non-profit organizations. They have the contact information for other organizations out there.

If you wish, you can contact: United Way of Anchorage
701 West 8th, Suite 230
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
(907)263-3800 phone
(907)236-3801 fax
www.unitedwayofanchorage.org

Activity Calendar

December 13 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm: Creating Effective IEPs. This is a workshop sponsored by Stone Soup to help parents get a good understanding of IEPs. The workshop will take place at the Stone Soup Conference Room located at 3350 Commercial Drive, #150. For more information contact Becky at 561-3701.

Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 12 noon to 1:00 pm: Cuddlers Group. Sponsored by the Parenting with Providence program this group is designed for new parents to help them adjust to their role of being a parent and other topics. It takes place at the Providence Maternity Center. For more information contact Jennifer Aist at 261-3062.

1st and 3rd Tuesdays from 1:30 - 2:30 pm: Double Cuddlers Group. This is for parents of multiples ages birth to 18 months. They talk about topics related to raising more than one baby at a time. No pre-registration or fees are required. Located at Providence Medical Center, Maternity Center Ed Room.

Wednesdays from 5:30 to 6:30 pm: Becoming a Love and Logic Parent. The class is for parents of children of all ages. Located at the Health, Education and Wellness Center, Neon Bldg, 2nd floor, 4201 Tutor Center Dr.

The Last Wednesday of every month from 9:30 to 11:15 am: Mother's of Preschoolers. Mothers meet for encouragement, friendship and nurturing. Trinity Christian Reformed Church, 3000 E. 16th Ave. Need more information? Email trinitycrc@acsalaska.net or call 272-8431.

Every 2nd Wednesday, Monthly from 6:30 to 8:30 pm: Autism Support Group. Anchor Park United Methodist Church, 2300 Oak Drive.

2nd and 4th Thursdays from 10:00 am to Noon: MOPS International (Mothers of Preschoolers). For all mothers of infants and children through age 5 (including moms to be) to come for education and support). Located at the Cornerstone Church of God, Women's Ministries. Contact Beth Hadsall at 753-3232 for more information.

2nd Fridays from 6-8:30 pm: Autism and Asperger's Support Group.
Sponsored by AYFN the meeting takes place at the AHFC Gateway Learning Center at the corner of 9th and Karluk. To obtain more information you may emails AYFN at ayfn@yafn.org or call 770-4979.

2nd and 4th Fridays from 6-8:30 pm: AYFN Support Group for Parents and Youth. Discuss issues of children's behavioral health with other parents. Located at the Gateway Learning Center, 801 Karluk. To get more information contact Sandy at 770-4979.