



Families

Understanding

Needs

WINTER 2010

DO EARLY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES REALLY COUNT?

A new book, *The Myth of the Early Years* by Dr. John T. Bruer has raised questions about the importance of providing children with high-quality early childhood programs. From the author's perspective, recent publicity about early brain development research has led parents, educators and policy makers to place too much emphasis on children's early learning experiences. He argues that neuroscience research actually provides evidence that learning and cognitive development occurs throughout life.

Dr. Bruer states that providing enriching environments to stimulate early brain development may be less important than identifying and treating children's vision problems, ear infections, or developmental delays.

ZERO TO THREE, a leading organization that focuses on early child development responded to Bruer's book stating, "We know from rigorous psychological and sociological research, and from compelling clinical experience, that early childhood is a time when infants and toddlers acquire many skills needed to become productive, happy adults."

Researchers have found children who attend high-quality early childhood programs do gain skills normally associated with greater brain development, such as problem solving and language, math and literacy skills. They also gain other kinds of competencies such as self-control, a higher motivation for learning and social skills. Families benefit also as they address needed services, develop parenting skills and participate in an atmosphere that promotes meaningful family involvement.

As stated by ZERO TO THREE in their press release, "Efforts to help all children achieve the basic skills of trust, motivation, and self-control needed for later intellectual and emotional development should not be aimed at creating super-babies, or giving anxious parents one more thing to worry about, or overambitious parents one more reason to push their children."

"Our aim should be to ensure that all children reach school age with a solid foundation for learning and relating to others, and that all parents know what they can do to help their children develop."

For the entire article go to

www.education.com

Source: National Association for the Education of Young Children

BOOK REVIEWS

LEMONS ARE NOT RED

By Laura Vaccaro Seeger

Laura Vaccaro Seeger introduces young children to the world of color in this simple, original and utterly beguiling book. As red lemons magically turn yellow, purple carrots turn orange and white reindeer turn brown young readers' faces are sure to break into smiles. Ages 6 months thru 3 years.

WHAT HAPPENS AT AN AQUARIUM?

By Barbara Bakowski

Buddy, the Weekly Reader pal, takes children on a tour of the Georgia Aquarium in Atlanta, Georgia. Children will read about exhibits, touch tanks, aquarists and more. Pronunciations and a glossary of the key words are included in this beginning reader. *What Happens at an Aquarium* is one of the *Where People Work* books that introduce beginning readers to key concepts in the early elementary curriculum. For a complete list of *Where People Work* titles go to www.garethstevens.com.

AMANDINA

By Sergio Ruzzier

Amandina decides to overcome her shyness and show the town what a talented dog she is, but when no one shows up for her performance, she finds that she also has a lot of perseverance. The pretty pastel pictures and cute animals will hold your child's interest to the end. This would be a good book for ages 7-9 to read to you.



CHILD'S PLAY

By Maja Pitamic

Child's Play is an activity book jam-packed with more than sixty Montessori-inspired play-and-learn ideas for parents to enjoy with their children. Activities are designed for ages one to three. Divided into six chapters, the book explores the development of the senses, coordination, art, movement, language, and nature. The activities are simple to set up and follow, and they require no specialized knowledge or materials.

With engaging ideas to improve movement, dexterity, creativity and memory, *Child's Play* offers infants and parents the chance to play together while learning and developing the child's key early skills and abilities. Parents can also track their child's development on a sensory-themed timeline.



JUST FOR FUN

Q. Why did the cookie go to the doctor?
A. Because he felt crummy!

Q. What building has the most stories?
A. The library!
(Laffy Taffy wrapper jokes)

Q. What did Buzzy Bee say to the naughty bee?
A. Bee-hive yourself!

For more riddles, storybooks to read (some audio), online and printable coloring pages, online jigsaw puzzles and games go to www.magickeys.com.

FAMILY FUN

Family Games to Play Anywhere!

Remember those fun, informal games that parents and kids have enjoyed for generations – no batteries or equipment required? The bonus: They help boost language, memory and other learning skills (but you don't have to tell the kids they're educational).

20 Questions

One player thinks of an object, letting the others know only whether it is animal, vegetable or mineral. Then the other players ask questions that can be answered with yes or no.

Categories

One player states a "category" and the other players take turns naming items that belong in that group. The category can be as broad as "animals," or as narrow as "types of dogs". Traditionally, a clapping rhythm keeps up the pace so players won't take forever to come up with a response. The category chosen determines how difficult or easy the game is. The game continues until players run out of ideas for the category.

I Packed My Grandmother's Trunk

Each player starts off with the same sentence: "I packed my grandmother's trunk and in it I put ____". The player completes the sentence with a word that begins with the letter A. For instance, "I packed my grandmother's trunk and in it I put an *alligator*."

The next player repeats the previous sentence and must add a B word. "I packed my grandmother's trunk and in it I put an *alligator* and a *banana*." In turn, each player has to remember what the past players have said and add an item

that starts with the next letter of the alphabet.

(www.highlights.com)

Family Games – 6 Secrets for Making Them Fun

By Istar Schwager, Ph.D.

Traditional games can draw loved ones closer together during the holidays and year round. Games that mix skill and chance also prepare kids for many other experiences in life. To make this time fun for all, consider these half dozen strategies.

1. Plan a game night
2. Include the entire family
3. Encourage collaboration
4. Keep the game going
5. Be a good sport
6. Laugh!

(www.highlights.com)

FREE WEBINAR OR AUDIO TRAININGS

via your computer and/or phone. Dates and titles are listed below:

Jan. 15	Spotlight on the Family
Jan. 20	Is Your Child a Target of Bullying?
Jan. 21	Parent's Rights
Jan. 28	Transition Drives the IEP
Feb. 4	Understanding the Evaluation
Feb. 11	Behavior Focused IEPs
Feb. 18	Understanding and Writing IEPs
Feb. 23	Parent Professional Communication
March 4	Spotlight on the Family
March 10	Parent's Rights

For a complete list, times and details of Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities' trainings or to schedule one, visit our website at www.ocecd.org or call 800-374-2806.

FAMILY PROJECTS

SENSORY WALK

(From Child's Play - ages 1 ½ Plus)

Everyone enjoys the sensation of walking on grass with bare feet, and for young children this pleasure is doubled because they have a heightened sense of touch. In this next activity a sensory trail of different textures is laid out for your child to explore and develop their sense of touch. It also has the advantage of developing balancing skills.

You will need:

Large indoor or outdoor space

Variety of surfaces with different textures, e.g.:

- 4 cushions of any size (if possible, choose cushions with different fabrics)
- Carpet samples (from your local carpet store)
- Small rug
- Doormat (make sure it's not rough)
- Large sheet of bubble wrap

Lay a straight path with your chosen items, each of which should have a different texture.

Demonstrate to your child how you would like them to walk the path, with arms out to help them balance.

Let your child try.

They will need your support at first, so begin by holding each hand. When they are more confident with this activity, let them try a few steps by themselves, but be close by in case you need to steady them again.

Walking over cushions will be the trickiest part, so a steadying hand from you will be required for this.

CARD OR WRAPPING PAPER

What you need:

- Craft foam
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Hot glue gun
- Empty food can without label
- Paint and paintbrush
- Paper plate
- Paper (8 ½" x 11")
- Markers or crayons

What you do:

Choose some simple seasonal or holiday shapes to draw on the craft foam.

Cut out each shape

With an adult's help, glue the shapes onto the can.

Pour a thin layer of paint onto a paper plate.

Roll the can in the paint and then roll the can onto the paper.

Try this several times using different colors.

When your paper is dry, fold it into a card or leave as is for wrapping paper.

FUN WEBSITES

www.kaboose.com is a great website on parenting, health, food, crafts, games and more. A child cough decoder lets you listen to different coughs and what conditions lead to that type cough, the symptoms, treatment and where to find help.

www.kids.yahoo.com includes a science reference dictionary and encyclopedia along with a world fact book with maps, flags, statistics, history, etc. and a whole lot more.



DEVELOPMENT

Solving the Puzzle: Why Do Kids Love Puzzles?

By Istar Schwager, Ph.D.

As kids grow, they acquire new skills that need to be practiced. Puzzles provide enjoyable ways for kids to build their emerging skills. With puzzles, the goal is clear and the feedback immediate; a puzzle piece either fits or doesn't. Because puzzles are fun, kids will persist and discover that sticking to a task pays off. They feel an enormous sense of accomplishment when they've achieved their goal. Seeing the tangible results of mastering a new skill builds confidence to take on the next challenge. So it's not really so puzzling why kids love puzzles.

Here are some of the specific skills kids are developing and how puzzles "fit the picture".

Seeing Similarities - matching activities help kids note similarities, which in turn enable them to generalize. When kids notice which puzzle piece fits in a particular place or recognize that an M and m are related, they are learning how things can be grouped into categories.

Seeing Differences – making distinctions is another basic cognitive ability. When kids recognize that a puzzle piece is the wrong shape or too big, they are seeing what does and doesn't belong in a category. In a Hidden Pictures puzzle, kids are challenged to observe closely and note details as they hunt for objects positioned in different directions and embedded in a complex picture. This skill is important when kids are learning to read and need to see subtle distinctions between letter forms, such as a d and a b.

Sequencing – sometimes, order matters. Young kids are just beginning to understand that the days of the week or the pages of a book are sequenced in a specific way. Dot-to-dot activities provide sequencing practice with a great payoff. If you connect the dots in order, a picture appears!

Remembering – many puzzles and other activities involve memory – something kids seem to have in abundance, especially when it comes to promised ice cream! Solving puzzles encourages kids to hold visual images in their memories. *Where is that blue piece that completes the birdhouse?*

Seeing Patterns – seeing a pattern helps kids predict what's next. The ability to recognize and create patterns is essential in math, reading, and science. Working puzzles and playing games with repetitive rules and procedures provide a hands-on way for kids to practice recognizing and remembering patterns. As they play, kids use what they know to anticipate what follows. Game rules and puzzle-solving strategies follow repetitive patterns. That repetition builds confidence, since kids know what to expect. (www.highlights.com)

SCIENCE/MEDICAL

Immunization Scheduler

Getting your kids vaccinated is the best way to protect them from life-threatening diseases such as polio and rubella.

At www.babycenter.com/immunization-scheduler you put in your child's birth date and a schedule will show you the recommended vaccines they should have at their ages. Other websites for information on recommended immunization schedules, vaccines and preventable diseases, vaccine side

effects and safety and common questions are: www.cdc.gov/vaccines, www.aap.org, and www.aafp.org.

Tooth Care for Toddlers

While your child's early teeth are still coming in, you can clean them with a wet washcloth or a piece of gauze. By the time their back molars have come in (around 18 months), you can switch to a soft nylon-bristle child's toothbrush. Using plain water, gently brush the teeth on both the outside and inside surfaces twice a day. Brush their tongue as well to dislodge the bacteria that can cause bad breath. Replace the toothbrush as soon as the bristles start to look worn or splayed out.

As soon as they are willing and able, it's a good idea to let them try to brush their own teeth, even though they probably won't be able to do a good job of it until they are about school age. Brush your teeth while they are doing theirs and then "check" each other's teeth to see if they're clean. If their teeth sparkle and reflect light, they have done a good job. If not tell them you think they "missed a spot" and finish the job for them.

If your child fusses every time it's time to brush, it might help to buy them a toothbrush with a special cartoon character on it. You can also let your child have several brushes in different colors so that they can choose the one they want when it's time to brush.

Developing teeth can certainly benefit from a little fluoride. This mineral prevents tooth decay by strengthening tooth enamel and making it more resistant to acids and harmful bacteria. Most municipal water supplies are fortified with fluoride. (Call your local water authority or ask your dentist about yours). If it isn't, or if you get your

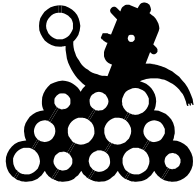
water from a well, consider buying a test kit from a hardware store to determine the fluoride level in your water supply. If it's less than .3 parts per million, ask your pediatrician whether you should give your child a supplement (the amount recommended for children under 3 is .25 milligrams per day). They can prescribe a fluoride supplement in the form of drops or chewable tablets.

A fluoride is a good thing for your child's teeth, but swallowing too much of it over time can lead to a condition called fluorosis that can cause white spots to show up on their adult teeth. If you live in an area with fluoridated water, your child is most likely getting plenty of fluoride. Bottled water and fruit juices may also contain fluoride, although the amount is rarely listed on the label. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends waiting until your child is at least 2 to use fluoridated toothpaste. When they do graduate to toothpaste, you should let them use only a pea-sized drop each time. This is because young children tend to swallow their toothpaste rather than spit it out. Swallowing too much toothpaste over time can lead to fluorosis.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and most pediatric dentists say it's a good idea to bring your child to a dentist around the time they turn 1, just in case there's a problem that your family doctor missed or couldn't diagnose. If your child still hasn't sprouted their first tooth by 16 months, or if you notice tooth decay, mention it to your pediatrician, who will likely refer you to a dentist. (www.babycenter.com)



ACTIVITY PAGE



How many snowballs or eggs would make 1 dozen?

(Circle the correct number)

4 6 8 12

If you have a pumpkin pie cut into 8 pieces, how many pieces would there be in one half of the pumpkin pie?

(Circle the correct number)

2 4 6 8

What do you like to do in winter? Circle the picture or pictures that match your favorite winter activities.



Can you find some of these pictures on other pages in the FUN Newsletter?