

TEXAS

Child Care

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL FOR CAREGIVERS EVERYWHERE

SPRING 2011



GET MORE

**OUT OF
THE OUTDOORS**
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BACK TO BASICS

Language development

Successful communication relies on the ability to use verbal and nonverbal cues.

There are two kinds of language skills: expressive (talking and gesturing) and receptive (hearing and perceiving). In typically developing children, these skills grow through opportunities to listen, respond, and interact with adults and other children.

Infants

- Communicate through body language, eye contact, and crying about their needs.
- Rely on you and others to interpret their signals.
- Imitate some sounds—first vowel sounds like *a*, *o*, and *u* and later some consonants like *m* and *d*.
- Coordinate looking, vocalizing, and moving as they interact with a familiar adult. This coordination is the first step in what will later be the give-and-take of verbal conversation.
- Respond to the tone of the speaker's voice—by startling, feeling fearful, relaxing, or settling down to easy interactions.
- Enjoy songs, rhymes, and music and begin to move to musical stimulation.

Toddlers

- Are frequently frustrated when they know what they want to communicate but others don't understand their gestures or vocalizations.
- Follow simple, two-part spoken instructions like "Bring the ball to me," or "Look for the truck."
- Respond to simple questions with "Yes" or "No" accompanied by head movements.
- Use descriptive words for feelings, thoughts, and desires. By 36 months a toddler uses simple sentences.
- Rely on adults to fill in the blanks of their *telegraphic speech*. For example, when a child points

and says "Truck coming" you might reply, "Yes, the red garbage truck is coming up the street."

- Have fun saying "No" and need you to understand that it's not a sign of negativity or stubbornness.
- Enjoy and follow stories with simple concepts and clear, realistic pictures that they can point to and describe.

Preschoolers

- Speak in complete sentences of varying complexity.
- Can give and follow three-part directions.
- Talk of happenings in the past and the future but often confuse *tomorrow* and *yesterday*.
- Can recognize and reproduce the forms of some letters and associate the related sounds.
- Recognize several printed words and often enjoy writing their names.
- Spend a lot of time talking to themselves—about activities, sequences, and directions. Sometimes this self-talk is critical, repeating adult corrections and sometimes self-congratulatory, repeating encouragements.
- Fluidly and accurately use pronouns.
- Enjoy the mouth play and cognitive flexibility of adding new, unfamiliar words to their vocabulary.
- Enjoy stories with elements of humor, fantasy, and problem-solving. They can remember parts of the story and often retell it with dolls, puppets, or blocks.

School-agers

- Can pronounce and use most sounds. Some children have difficulty pronouncing *sh*, *l*, *th*, and *r* until age 6 or later.
- Share elaborate stories—real and fantasy—in complex sentences of up to 10 words.
- Sometime use unacceptable vocabulary—exploring powerful words that guarantee a swift adult response.
- Use speech that is almost 100-percent intelligible.
- Use visual and auditory symbols to begin learning to read and write but often err when trying to integrate sounds with symbols. Letter and word reversals are common.
- Creatively explore and devise word play and games with rhymes, definitions, sequences, and puzzles.

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HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF THE OUTDOORS

by Heather Olsen and Kevin Finn

Children need opportunities and environments to move about. Unfortunately, during the past decade there has been an increase in sedentary behavior and a reduction in physical activity with young children. Emerging research has found a link between maintaining a healthy weight and children's eating nutritious foods, engaging in daily age-appropriate physical activities, and having limited TV and video time.

Fortunately, an alarm has gone out to the early care and education profession on the importance of healthy lifestyles for young children. It is clear that the prevention of childhood obesity begins with an understanding of healthy behaviors in young children and planning strategies to promote higher levels of physical activity.

This article provides a perspective on the state of healthy lifestyles for young children and suggests ways in which the outdoor environment can safely increase their physical activity.

Why curbing obesity matters

Obesity is defined as excess (greater than the 95th percentile) of body fat in children using the body mass index (BMI) for their age and gender from growth chart standards (CDC 2000).

The problem with obesity is the link to other health issues. One study found that approximately 70 percent of obese children had high levels of at least one key risk factor for heart disease, and approximately 30 percent had levels of at least two health risk factors, such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, cancer, and asthma (Freedman, Mei, Srinivasan, et al. 2007).

In addition, obese children are more likely than non-obese children to have low self-esteem and feel sad, lonely, and nervous (Rofey et al. 2009).

Early weight gain measured in preschool children is associated with physical inactivity. Klesges and other researchers (1995) studied children over a three-year period and found that preschoolers with higher levels of physical activity were less likely to gain weight disproportionate to height changes.

Over the past decade, several organizations have stressed the importance of physical activity and healthy lifestyles in young children. Specifically, the American Academy of Pediatrics has suggested

Obesity increases in children

- In just two decades, the number of overweight children aged 2-5 years increased from 5 percent to 13.9 percent (Ogden, Carroll, Curtin, et al. 2010).
- Approximately one in five children is overweight or obese by the time they reach their sixth birthday (Ogden, et al. 2010).
- More than half of obese children become overweight at or before age 2 (Harrington, et al. 2010).
- The prevalence of overweight preschoolers (ages 2-4) in Texas from the Special Supplementary Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) data (using the Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance System) stands at 16.2 percent in 2008, up slightly from the 2003 rate of 14.4 percent (MMR 2009).

young children sit no more than 30 minutes in one setting and have physical movement incorporated into daily planned activities (2003).

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) recommends that preschoolers spend at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity and at least 60 minutes (and up to several hours) of unstructured physical activity every day. *Structured physical activity* has been defined as a planned activity led by a teacher or caregiver and designed to accommodate the child's developmental level. *Unstructured physical activity* is movement and physical play not led by an adult.

NASPE also recommends that toddlers engage in at least 30 minutes of structured physical activity and at least 60 minutes (and up to several hours) of unstructured physical activity every day (NASPE 2009).

What's the role of outdoor environments?

The outdoor environment is often the most under-used space in early childhood programs. Typically, it is viewed either as an academic recess or an environment for exploring. While both intents have merit, neither can ensure sufficient physical activity to prevent unnecessary weight gain.

Low levels of physical activity have been reported even during periods of free play. Hannon and Brown (2008) reported that 82 percent of the time preschool children were in either sedentary or light activity. They were engaged in vigorous physical activity only 4.5 percent of the time.

The outdoor environment can be used as more than just recess. It is an important component within children's educational programs, and much has been written about children's play (Frost 1992; Vygotsky 1978). In fact, early childhood literature supports the belief that it is through play children learn and develop.

Many scholars in recent years have asserted that the outdoor environment benefits children across domains—intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. Further, the design of the outdoor space, the materials in the space, and the activities available impact the intensity and amount of physical activity.

The reality is that the outdoor environment offers endless opportunities for physical development. The outdoor space is open and children can move about without being confined to a room. Movement may occur in the open grass area, on the playground

equipment, on the hard surface (such as asphalt and concrete), and in the dramatic play area.

Unfortunately, children's physical activity in many early childhood programs is lacking. Pate and other researchers (2004) who monitored preschoolers at their centers found only 7.7 minutes per hour (on average) for moderate and vigorous physical activity.

THE PROBLEM WITH OBESITY IS THE LINK TO OTHER HEALTH ISSUES.

The levels vary based upon the program they attended—program policy and the environment play a role. For instance, research (Dowda, et al. 2009) indicates physical activity levels vary due to the materials in the space, such as fixed and portable play equipment. Other factors include a center's policy related to the amount of time children spend in sedentary and physical movement (Bower, et al. 2008; Dowda, et al. 2004), teacher training and education (Bower, et al. 2008; Dowda, et al. 2009), and the type of children's clothing (Copeland, et al. 2009).

Recent scholarship has provided solid evidence for child care programs to provide opportunities for physical movement in the outdoor environment. Research has consistently shown that during outdoor time, gross motor activity is more likely to happen (Baranowski 1993; Burdette, et al. 2004; Sallis, et al. 1993).

These studies show that it's important for early childhood programs to create an outdoor movement policy and offer a safe and developmentally appropriate environment for children.

Practical guidelines for designing outdoor environments

How do early childhood programs begin to improve outdoor environments? Here are four guidelines.

1 Design outdoor space using standards recognized by professional organizations.

Some states and programs have specific requirements for the outdoor environment. For example, see page 8 for a list of organizations that address safety standards and regulations for outdoor play spaces.

Children's outdoor areas have come a long way in the past 50 years. Early design advocates of play areas lacked information, but many organizations today have contributed to quality designs that enhance enjoyment and learning. Children, especially young children, deserve to play in a safe and developmentally appropriate environment that fosters their growth and development.

It is important that educators not overlook the outdoor environment for programming activities that influence the level of physical activity for all age groups. Quality spaces need to be more than a cluster of playground equipment pieces scattered throughout the space. Ideally outdoor spaces are places where children can learn, move, and enjoy activity in a developmentally appropriate environment.

Children injured on playgrounds

- Each year approximately 200,000 children are injured on playgrounds in the United States (O'Brien 2009).
- In the most recent report from CPSC (2009), 54 percent of the injuries reported occurred in children ages 0-4.
- Forty deaths were associated with playground equipment, and the average age was 6 years.
- Twenty-seven of the deaths were the result of hangings or other asphyxiations, and seven deaths were the result of head or neck injuries.
- Other common injuries included fractures, contusions/abrasions, lacerations, strains and sprains, internal injuries, and concussions.
- Climbers and swings were reported as the top two playground equipment pieces associated with injuries.

Data were obtained between 2001 and 2008 by the Consumer Product Safety Commission's National Electronic Surveillance System (NEISS). NEISS collects playground product related data from a selected sample of more than 100 hospital emergency departments throughout the United States. Only emergency room injuries are recorded and the national statistics are estimates.

2 Design an environment that provides for active opportunities.

Active opportunities are defined as daily opportunities that may result in more physical activity. Therefore, policies should state at least two times a day for outdoor play (McWilliams 2009).

The outdoor space is a powerful environment to physically develop the young child. However, physical development is often overlooked in the outdoor space, and early childhood professionals must be careful to examine the developmental benefits of not just the space but the types of materials and equipment provided. Ideally, children have a variety of opportunities for vigorous movement, such as open space to gallop, run, or skip.

If a program does not have an adequate outdoor play space with age-appropriate equipment, teachers and caregivers can look for opportunities in community parks. Kelly-Goreham (2002) found in the evaluation of children's vigorous physical activity in four different centers (separated by ratings of outdoor space and equipment) that the center that spends time walking their children to the local park engaged in more physical activity than centers with large outdoor spaces and fixed equipment. An important reminder: the playground equipment should be developmentally appropriate and safe.

Children need access to equipment that can lead them to use both large and small muscle groups. Examples include wheeled toys, push-pull toys, balls of various sizes, bags for collecting items and carrying them, noisemakers, hula hoops, tricycles, balloons, tunnels, natural berms for climbing, crawling, and running, and dramatic play toys, such as dress-up materials and action figures.

Another tool that can get young children moving their whole bodies outdoors is music. Children can play rhythm band instruments to their heart's content or dance to the latest hip hop, salsa, and pop tunes.

3 Make manipulative objects available for all children.

Children love to engage with their physical environment and the pieces that are present in these spaces (Nicholson 1971; Moore 1986). Research has shown that when manipulative objects are available, the children are more physically active (Hannon and Brown 2008). Manipulative objects consist of materials that children can pick up, throw, kick, examine, arrange, and chase.

According to two early childhood outdoor designers, loose parts, such as balls and dramatic play materials, make the outdoor play environment complete (Dempsey and Strickland 1999).

THE OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT CAN BE USED AS MORE THAN JUST RECESS.

Teachers can consider rotating manipulative objects so children have a chance to develop a variety of muscles. For example, Monday is wheeled-toy day, Tuesday is music day, Wednesday is Olympic day, Thursday is ball day, and Friday is obstacle-course day.

Teachers can support outdoor unstructured and structured time by designing the environment with manipulative objects. For instance, on Friday a freshly designed obstacle course provides children a new experience when they go outside. Obstacle courses may look different each time and offer different experiences. Ideas include tunnels, ball targets, jumping jacks, balance beams, balloon toss, and treasure hunts.

Child-designed obstacle courses are a great way to incorporate movement as well as build relationships, confidence, and trust. Remember: A variety and sufficient quantity of materials are available so each child has the opportunity to explore and control the objects.

4 Provide for staff professional development.

To enhance physical movement outdoors, teachers need to receive training. Bower and other researchers (2008) found the lack of formal training in physical activity programming (planning and supervision) in teachers in North Carolina as one factor associated with lower scores in children's physical activity.

Physical activity training, in addition to safety training, for teachers is recommended as a best practice (McWilliams 2009). Unfortunately, the hodgepodge of different training requirements and training programs in each state (Morgan and Costley 2004) becomes problematic in training educators. As a baseline, we suggest four skills:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of physical development including fine- and gross-motor skills for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of NASPE's FITT (Frequency, Intensity, Time, and Type) model of physical activity.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of a safe outdoor environment.
4. Plan and implement developmentally appropriate physical development curriculum that influences



the different levels (moderate to vigorous) of physical activity.

Training and education in child care affect the quality of care; therefore, offering physical activity training for staff is vital. A Head Start program, *I Am Moving, I Am Learning*, was implemented in 2005 to address childhood obesity in Head Start children.

WHEN MANIPULATIVE OBJECTS ARE AVAILABLE, CHILDREN ARE MORE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE.

Staff are trained and families are encouraged to apply the practices at home. In addition, administrators and leaders can encourage all staff to receive physical movement professional development.

Make it safe

For decades, professionals and scholars have researched, theorized, and speculated about playground injuries. Unfortunately, some programs have

eliminated play in the outdoors and then seen an increase in behavior problems and injuries occurring inside.

Experts in child injury litigation agree that playground injuries are complex and numerous risk factors are associated with injuries, such as lack of supervision, noncompliant fall protection material, unsafe and faulty equipment, and non-developmentally appropriate materials (personal communication). Thompson, Hudson, and Olsen (2007) suggest the design of the environment is critical to the safety factors. With appropriate planning, materials, and supervision, playground injuries can be prevented.

The decisions made about the outdoor environment affect the children's physical activity and their safety. Teachers can investigate and use the resources on page 9 for refining policies, planning an outdoor environment, encouraging children to move, and helping stem the current epidemic of childhood obesity.

Improve the outdoors— Improve quality care

Early childhood educators and children spend many hours together. If the outdoor environment is well-designed and planned, children will be eager to move. A program's philosophies, schedules, routines, and transitions influence the safety and quality of the outdoor environment.

Each needs to be examined to determine whether programs are providing environments that get and keep children moving safely.





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**PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT
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Standards and regulations for the outdoor environment

National Association for the Education of Young Children

NAEYC has 10 accreditation standards. One is the physical environment standard. It addresses the safe and healthful environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical activities.

National Health and Safety Performance Standards

NHSPS has published *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs*.

National Head Start Association

NHSA has published *Standards for Playground Use Zone Safety and Head Start Design Guide*, which are to assure Head Start playgrounds are well-designed and pose no risk to children.

Consumer Product Safety Commission

CPCSC has published the *Public Playground Safety Handbook*, which presents safety information for public playground equipment.

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Resources for educators

Head Start Body Smart National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play (Head Start)

Get Moving Today activity calendar and physical movement activities such as "Leaping Lillypads"; www.aahperd.org/headstartbodystart

Moving and Learning website

Curriculum packages, activity lessons, and tips for educators; www.movingandlearning.com

National Program for Playground Safety

Resources such as online training, S.A.F.E. (Supervision, Age appropriateness, Fall surfacing, Equipment maintenance) tips, and links to safety organizations; www.playgroundsafety.org

Team Nutrition Learning Tools (Iowa Department of Education)

Physical activities and healthy snack ideas; www.iptv.org/rtl/downloads/TNactivity1.pdf

The Play Book: Preschool Lessons for Active Youngsters (Youth Fitness and Obesity Institute)

12 preschool play lessons, which are theme-based and have a specific goal relating to promoting active play by children. Contact University of Northern Iowa Youth Fitness and Obesity Institute, kevin.finn@uni.edu.



ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS NINE TO KNOW

As early as infancy, children begin learning to distinguish shapes. Using their senses of vision and touch, they recognize a ball, rectangular block, and paper box among their toys and play materials, even without knowing the names of these objects.

Gradually they become aware of shapes in the environment, such as houses, buildings, churches, and sports stadiums. By talking about these shapes and how we use them, we help children learn about architecture. With planned activities, we can help them recognize and know significant architectural monuments.

What is knowing?

Far more than recognizing a photograph, knowing an architectural monument involves research and discovery. As adults, we can use sensory information to evaluate size and maybe even materials. But deeper knowing invites us to harness background knowledge—history, geography, culture, and politics—and to evaluate that

information against current social and economic forces.

For children, however, *knowing* is a layered investigation. Benjamin Bloom (1956) refined these layers in a taxonomy—a set of six question-asking strategies that start at the most simplistic and end at the highest evaluation level, incorporating all the previous levels. Bloom believed that memory, comprehension, and application enable analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—the higher-order, most critical evidence of knowing. (See *Texas Child Care Quarterly*, Winter 2005)

Exploring architectural monuments invites *knowing*—remembering, understanding, and evaluating—through numerous hands-on math, science, art, language, dramatic play, and social studies activities. Use the following as a framework for the exploration of monuments. There are hundreds, both natural and constructed, that can awe and inspire.

By the age of 4, most children have experience with books,

materials, and purposeful observations. This background knowledge makes children from 4 to 7 years (and older) ready and eager for investigations of significant architecture. Emotionally and socially they are prepared to investigate features of the real world and work cooperatively to explore materials and procedures that have sustained builders through the ages. Developing fine-motor skills enables them to use a variety of tools safely. And cognitively they are able to accept working in sequence or through a process to ensure the desired result.

Prepare for architectural study

Gather materials that will make activities run smoothly. In addition to standard art materials, collect colored and shiny papers, cardboard, and foil; sand, clay, and colored gravel; and craft sticks. Plan for discussions of size and be prepared with long tape measures, scales, and graph paper.

Prepare for the exploration of monuments by spending some time online. Gather photographs, travel brochures, books, maps, and physical models. Invite children to formulate questions. “How did the pyramids get built without cranes?” or “How did the Statue of Liberty get to New York?”

Plan the sequence of study by age (like the examples here), size, or function, for example. Invite children to make and share their observations for a group project chart or to keep personal investigation notebooks with drawings, words, and pictures of their work samples and projects.





STONEHENGE

Stonehenge is a prehistoric monument in southwest England. Its most remarkable feature is its orientation to the rising and setting sun. Today, more than 5,000 years after its development, scholars aren't sure whether the monument is an ancient cemetery of a sun-worshipping culture or a huge astronomical calendar.

With primitive tools such as antler picks and bone shovels, builders erected a bank of earth and dug an enclosing ditch, about 360 feet in diameter. Archeologists suggest that originally timber poles stood on the mound marking the site as a burial space. Later the timbers were replaced by bluestones (a form of dolerite, an igneous rock that appears blue when wet) arranged in an arc. The bluestones were transported from Wales 240 miles away. Soon after, the bluestones were dismantled and replaced by a monumental arrangement of stones, including sarsen (sandstone), from the nearby countryside.

The sarsen stones were carved to connect the uprights and horizontal lintels much as a wooden door frame is shaped with mortise and tenon joints. Each stone is about 13 feet high and weighs about 25 tons. The builders

formed an outer circle of 30 sarsen uprights with connecting lintels, a *trilithon*. They formed the inner circle using five enormous sarsen trilithons (each stone weighing 50 tons) arranged in the shape of a horseshoe. Bluestones were re-erected in a circle between the outer sarsen circle and the inner horseshoe.

Ancient structures change over time. In the case of Stonehenge, time, weather, and vandalism have destroyed much of the monument. Investigate change with children documenting construction and deconstruction over time.

Build your own Stonehenge

Here's what you need:

- photographs of Stonehenge
- digital camera and printer
- unit blocks
- props for the block area

1. Offer children background information on Stonehenge. Locate the monument on a world globe or map of England. Talk with the children about how the blocks will *symbolize* or represent the stones of the monument.
2. Challenge children to replicate the monument with unit blocks. Talk about how to start. How can they build the earthen bank? The ditch? Take a picture of the pre-construction site and the prepared site.
3. Help children use the photographs to place the blocks so they represent the bluestones. Take a photo.
4. Narrate the Stonehenge history. The deconstruction of the bluestone site comes next. Take another photo.
5. Again, help the children place the sarsen stones—the trilithons

and the single stones. Continue taking pictures as the monument construction proceeds. As you go, ask, "What's changing?"

6. Print the photos and compose them into a booklet. Invite the children to dictate text to accompany the photos. At the last photo ask, "How long do you think this structure will last?" In most classrooms the structure will endure only until the end of the day to make room for a new structure.

Make a sundial

Calendars, sundials, clocks, and watches are tools that help people measure and track time. If Stonehenge is actually an astrological calendar, it's one of the earliest used by humans. Introduce children to sundials in a simple re-creation of the Stonehenge monument.

Here's what you need:

- construction bricks or cinder-blocks
- outdoor area in full sun
- several fist-sized stones
- clipboard, paper, and pencil

1. Bring the children outside on a clear morning. Talk with them about the location of the sun in the sky. Ask, "Do you think the sun will stay there all day?" Encourage conversation about how the earth rotates to make it look like the sun rises and sets.
2. Introduce measuring the movement of Earth as a description of time.
3. Ask the children to find shadows such as those made by the building, a tree, or their own bodies. Talk with them about how a shadow's length changes according to how high or low in the sky the sun shines.

4. Introduce a sundial as a tool that helps calculate time by the length of shadow.
5. Stack two or three bricks in the open area.
6. Point out the shadow and invite one child to place a stone at the end of the shadow. Note the time.
7. Return to the sundial several times during the day. Each time add a stone at the end of the shadow. Ask, "What's happening to the shadow?" "Is there a pattern?" Note the time for each observation. Leave the bricks and stones in place at the end of the day.
8. The next morning, look again at the sundial at the same time you started the previous day. Ask, "Has anything changed?" Return to the sundial at the same times as the day before. Encourage children to hypothesize about the shadows and time correspondences.



PYRAMID OF GIZA

The Great Pyramid of Giza is in northeast Egypt, near the town of Giza. (Giza is pronounced GEE zah, with a hard g as in *get*.) The pyramid is built from more than two million limestone blocks, each weighing more than 4,400 pounds.

The pyramid was built 4,500 years ago. It took 20,000 to 30,000

workers about 80 years to complete. The construction tools were simple: chisels, saws, stone hammers, ropes, and *squares* to measure angles. The stone blocks were mined from nearby *quarries* and pulled across desert sand on rollers or *sledges*. For 4,300 years, the Pyramid of Giza was the tallest structure on earth. In 1889 the Eiffel Tower in Paris took that honor.

Pyramids were burial places. The Pyramid of Giza is the tomb for Pharaoh Kufu. To guard against tomb robbers, the pharaoh's *mummified* body was laid in a secret chamber deep in the middle of the structure. Food, clothing, and treasures were buried with the pharaoh for his use in the *afterlife*.

The base of the pyramid is perfectly square and covers about nine acres of desert. The four sides are equilateral triangles, with each base the same length as one side of the base square. The *apex* of each triangle meets the others at the top. Geometry and simple machines such as levers, ramps, and wedges allowed the builders to move stones and sand to build this ancient monument and other pyramids around the world.

Ramp control

Investigate the ramp (an inclined plane) to help children deconstruct the process of building pyramids.

Here's what you need:

- cubes or unit blocks
- long flat board
- steps

1. Introduce the activity by informing children that you'll

compare moving an object up steps and the same object up a ramp. Ask questions like the following: "Which do you think might be harder?" "Why do wheelchairs need ramps?" "Is it easier to pull or push a heavy object?"

2. Ask children to create a small set of stairs with blocks.
3. Introduce the board and extend it over the steps top to bottom.
4. Investigate the two structures with a small ball, a toy truck, and an ice cube. Which allows the freest movement?

Option: If possible, re-create the activity on life-size stairs with and without a ramp. Encourage the children to push or pull a heavy box up and down both the stairs and the ramp and compare the results.



GREAT WALL OF CHINA

The Great Wall is a series of stone and brick fortifications in northern China built to protect against foreign invaders. When China was formed from several smaller states in 221 B.C., the emperor linked the walls of three states to form the first Great Wall. Over the next 2,000 years, the wall was rebuilt, modified, and extended.

Like a lumbering dragon, the wall winds up and down across deserts, grasslands, pastures,

mountains, and plateaus. With all its branches, the wall is almost 4,000 miles long. Trenches, hills, and rivers add another 1,400 miles to the barrier that extends from the east to the west of China. The wall's height varies across its length but averages 33 feet high; its width is about 5 yards. Watch towers along the wall enabled armies to sound alarms and call for reinforcements when enemies approached.

The early walls were built from earth and gravel stamped between wooden boards. Later bricks and stone replaced the rammed earth to make a stronger and more elaborate wall. In 1664 invaders penetrated the defensive barrier and left it in disrepair.

Wall building

Here's what you need:

- sand
- clay or play dough
- soil
- water
- flat, open area for construction
- chart paper and pencils
- measuring tools

1. Introduce the activity by asking why walls stay upright. In a framed building, lumber is cut and nailed to make large rectangles. These are connected at angles to hold the walls in place. Show pictures of different kinds of walls: concrete retaining walls, stone fences, brick walls, levees, and corrals.
2. Invite free investigation by presenting materials slowly.
3. Challenge children to make an upright wall with sand. What happens if the sand is wet? How high can the wall be before it collapses? Take measurements and chart the results.

4. Repeat the challenge with dry and wet clay and then with dry and wet soil.
5. Is there a design change that can reinforce the walls to make them higher? Is a wall with a wide base more likely to stay upright? What about a triangulated structure with a wide base and narrow top?
6. Reevaluate the pictures after the investigation. Do children have new observations, hypotheses, and theories about construction stability?



NEUSCHWANSTEIN CASTLE

King Ludwig II of Bavaria in Germany was born in 1845. Of the three castles he had built during his lifetime, the most famous is Neuschwanstein (pronounced *noy SHVAN shine*). And while its name is a challenge, even the youngest children will recognize it as the Sleeping Beauty Castle on which Walt Disney modeled the symbol for his Magic Kingdom. Framed by distant mountains and featuring drawbridge, towers, and turrets, it is indeed a fairy tale castle.

While Neuschwanstein Castle is relatively modern, its features are medieval in style. It's a good template for investigating the Middle Ages and medieval Europe.

Typically castles were surrounded by a *moat*, a body of water, deep

and wide, dug around the castle. A *drawbridge* could be lowered over the moat to let people in and out of the castle. At night and during battles the drawbridge could be lifted to make a thick sturdy door. A *gatehouse*, a small building behind the drawbridge, housed a *sentry* who could monitor and question the movement of people in and out of the castle grounds.

Two walls usually ran around the castle, the inner wall higher than the outer. Both increased security and battle-worthiness. Nobles had sleeping areas and libraries in the towers, people ate in a great hall, soldiers slept on the floor, and prisoners were kept in basement dungeons. Food was usually prepared in outdoor kitchens to minimize the risk of fire.

The early Middle Ages were marked by battles and conquests among people vying for power, land, and wealth. In this age of knights and castles, the world was described as being divided into the Four Alls: The peasants who worked for all, the priests who prayed for all, the knights who fought for all, and the kings who ruled all.

Build the Four Alls

Here's what you need:

- cardboard boxes in a variety of sizes
- sheets of poster board
- tempera and brushes
- scissors
- glue
- gathered natural materials like twigs, pebbles, and moss
- hard-drying clay

1. Introduce the activity with pictures of medieval towns. Describe the idea of the Four Alls and ask questions like

“Which of the four would you like to be?” Encourage explorations of the roles, such as the benefits and hardships of each. Invite children to identify colors, music, or daily activities for each role.

2. Encourage children to work in small groups and to brainstorm ideas for their interpretations of the Four Alls.
3. For each group, offer four boxes in graduated sizes and a sheet of poster board or heavy cardboard as a base. Make available standard art and collage materials.
4. As the children build, continue to ask questions that spark creativity. “Does each building have to be a rectangle?” “Can the insides of the buildings be featured?” “How can you show the outside world of forests, rivers, hills, and fields?”

Coat of arms

Knights in the 12th century marked their identities—and allegiances—with shields that honored their kings, their families, and their skill.

Here’s what you need:

- cardboard
- paper and pencils
- paint and brushes
- markers
- scissors

1. Introduce the activity with pictures of coats of arms, both ancient and contemporary. Encourage the children to interpret the shields in the pictures. Ask, “What are the characteristics of the person this shield represents?” Talk with the children about how they might represent themselves in simple pictures. Note that most of the

shields are divided in half or quarters, each illustrating a different feature of its owner.

2. Invite the children to sketch ideas for their own shields.
3. For each shield, cut the cardboard into the desired shape. (It’s easiest to cut out the shape first and then paint the design.)
4. Copy the design with pencil onto the cardboard.
5. Fill in the design with paint.

Option: Make a class display of the shields on a wall or bulletin board.



CHARTRES CATHEDRAL

Typical of large medieval communities, Chartres Cathedral was the most important building in Chartres in central France.

Cathedrals were centers for the town’s economy, rather like a town hall today. It was a market place for food and textiles, the communication and record center for the community, and bank as well as a place for worship or contemplation of the spiritual.

At least five cathedrals have occupied the site of the current Chartres Cathedral. The first was built before 858. Invasions followed by fire and destruction established a cycle of rebuilding. The construction of the current structure began after a fire in

1194. Scholars estimate that as many as 300 people worked on the construction site at any one time. The speed of construction is reflected in a consistency of design—a colossal building of whole cloth.

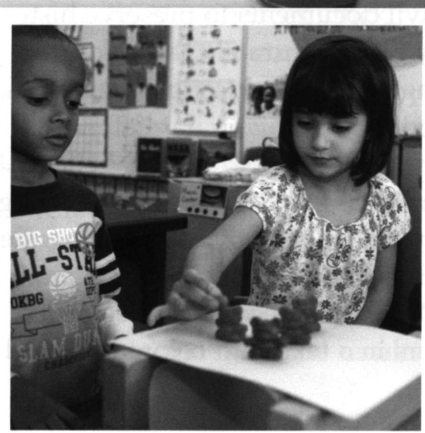
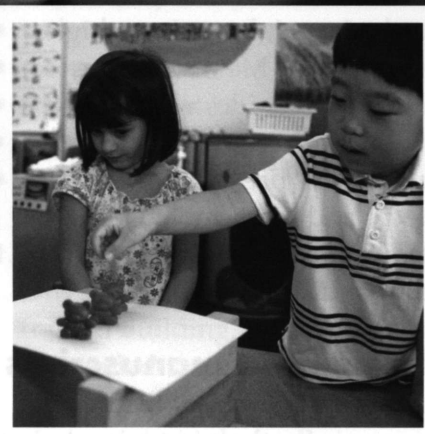
The floor plan of the cathedral is typical of its time: *cruciform* or cross-like. It is 430 feet long (on end a 43-story building) and 105 feet wide. It is Gothic in design and has significant features including *flying buttresses*, *spires*, *bas relief sculpture*, and stained glass windows.

Between 1200 and 1235 more than 110 stained glass windows were made to tell the stories of faith to a population of people who could neither read nor write. Stained glass and wall paintings allowed people to read the stories without words.

The window glass is made from a mixture of wood ash and washed sand, heated to a high temperature. Metals, such as iron and copper oxides were added to the mixture to produce the bright colors. The glass was cut into pieces and reassembled between strips of lead that frame each color and the whole section.

Illuminated manuscripts

Priests and monks of medieval Europe were the most educated of the population. They were often directed to copy sacred texts and civil documents to preserve history more accurately than storytelling could. Manuscripts were copied onto *vellum* or animal hide that was processed to make it smooth and flat. Errors in copying meant starting over—scraping the hide clean and beginning again. Often they decorated specific letters in a text with colored ink and



gold or silver that had been flattened into sheets called *leaf*.

Here's what you need:

- sheets of heavy unlined paper
- markers
- scrap paper and pencils

1. Gather pictures of illuminated manuscripts. Enlarge specific letters so children can see and discuss the details, such as vines, leaves, swirls, angles, and colors.
2. Invite children to choose a letter, perhaps the first letter of their last name.
3. Encourage them to sketch with pencil a rough outline of their illumination.
4. Offer fine and broad tipped colored markers for the work.

Option: Make quills from long feathers. Cut the hard end at an angle with a craft knife and dip into ink for writing.

Stained glass

Here's what you need:

- black poster board
- pencils
- scissors
- tape
- colored tissue paper
- glue

1. Introduce the activity by showing children pictures of stained glass. Examples are the rose window from the Chartres Cathedral, a Tiffany lampshade, or a Frank Lloyd Wright design. Point out how each piece of colored glass must have a frame.
2. Offer each child a piece of black poster board about 10 inches square.
3. Draw an outline of the pattern on the poster board, making a frame for each colored inset.

4. Cut out the shapes of the pattern.
5. Fill in the shapes with pieces of colored tissue paper. Glue the paper onto the back side of the poster board square.
6. Tape the stained glass onto a window so light can shine through the paper.

A book of days

As people learned the mechanics of reading and writing, books became unique and precious possessions. There was no printing press for mass production in Europe until 1440. Each book was a handwritten, one-of-a-kind treasure typically bound in leather.

Here's what you need:

- sheets of heavy unlined paper
- pencils and markers
- brown grocery bags
- scissors
- needles and heavy thread

1. Introduce the activity by asking, "If you had only one book, what would it hold? Would it be a list of important birthdays or other events? Wise sayings or mottos? Goals? Poetry?"
2. Guide the children in making their own book of days.
3. For each book, each child will need several sheets of paper stacked. Fold the paper in half into a booklet.
4. Invite the children to add text to their books. For a birthday book, for example, identify each page with a month. Record any birthdays for that month and maybe add notes about why that person is special.
5. Use a grocery bag to make a pretend leather cover for the book. Cut the bag about an inch larger than the sheets of paper. Crumple the paper and then

smooth it out again. Fold it over the book pages.

6. Thread a needle and stitch the pages and cover together along the fold. Four or five stitches will hold the book together securely.



U.S. CAPITOL

Designed to house the U.S. Congress, the Capitol is one of the most architecturally magnificent and symbolically important buildings in the world.

The original construction—in swampland that the state of Maryland ceded to the new federal government—began in 1793. The building is an example of 19th century neoclassical architecture that features columns, domes, and stately decor. The original Capitol was completed in 1824 at the cost of \$1 million.

Modifications were dictated both by aesthetics and damage from fire and war. The original dome, for example, was replaced in 1855 with one that was bigger, better, and fireproof. Thomas Walter, the architect responsible for the renovation, designed the cast-iron dome that tops the Capitol today. It is three times the height of the original and 100 feet in diameter but had to be supported by the structure's original masonry piers. It is a double

dome—that is, a smaller dome inside a taller one that creates the illusion of height and mass. The tall exterior dome is really a thin shell supported by a ring of 36 curved ribs. Underneath is the smaller dome, with a large *oculus* (opening) at the top. It looks like it's made of stone but is actually cast iron.

Today the Capitol covers about four acres of land and contains 540 rooms, 658 windows, and 850 doorways on five floors. The first floor is dedicated to committee rooms and congressional offices; some spaces are open to visitors, including a sculpture hall and the room that once housed the Supreme Court. The second floor holds the chambers of both the House of Representatives and the Senate as well as additional offices. Public areas include the rotunda, the area under the massive dome, which is used as ceremonial space and an art gallery. The third floor provides access to the House and Senate visitor galleries. Much of the third and fourth floors and the basement are dedicated to offices, committee rooms, and other support areas.

History mural

The *Apotheosis of Washington* is a fresco painted in the eye of the U.S. Capitol rotunda. It depicts the history of George Washington as a figure in war, science, commerce, mechanics, and agriculture. Replicate this classic art with a mural depicting the history of your class.

Here's what you need:

- easel paper
- markers
- paint and brushes
- tape
- chart paper and pencil

Significant domes

- Hagia Sofia was built in Istanbul, Turkey under the reign of Emperor Justinian in 537 and is considered the finest example of Byzantine architecture in the world. After Turkish conquest in 1435, Hagia Sophia became an Islamic mosque. Over time, the ornate interior was obscured by layers of plaster and paint. Today the plaster is removed and Hagia Sophia is a museum of Byzantine art.
- The Skydome in Toronto was completed in 1989 at the cost of \$500 million. It has a retractable roof and is used as a sports stadium.
- Domed igloos are structures built from blocks of compressed snow that are carefully shaved and positioned. They are associated with Inuit culture but many native North American people build igloos, some large and elaborate.
- The first geodesic dome was designed to house a planetarium projector in Jena, Germany just after World War I. Although Buckminster Fuller, the architect identified with the dome, did not design it, he developed the mathematical formula that led to the dome's popularity in the early 1950s.
- The Climatron in St Louis, Missouri is a geodesic dome designed as a greenhouse. It cost \$700,000 to build in 1959.

1. Share pictures of the Washington fresco and invite observations from the children. Suggest that children make a mural of their class.
2. Gather art materials and invite the group to divide itself into interest areas—art, science, math, and so forth. Each small group is responsible for that section of the mural.
3. Encourage small group members to sketch and discuss mural features before putting paint to paper.
4. When each group's portion is complete, tape the sections together.
5. Gather the full group and let the children dictate their interpretation of the class history.

Make a mosaic

A mosaic is an image or design made by assembling small pieces of colored glass, stone, ceramics, or other materials. The richly patterned and colored tiled mosaic floors of the U.S. Capitol can't escape attention. They were installed in 1856 following Thomas Walter's design.

Here's what you need:

- colored poster board
- pebbles, seeds, stones, colored gravel, sand, and beads
- glue
- construction paper
- toothpicks and craft sticks
- tweezers

1. Show children pictures of mosaics from ancient art to the Capitol floor as well as more contemporary compositions. Discuss the variety of materials that could be incorporated into the mosaic, even specially designed ceramic tiles.

2. Invite children to design and execute their own mosaics. Encourage them to sketch their ideas on scrap paper before putting materials in place permanently.
3. Glue different materials into the design. Show how tweezers and toothpicks can be used to pick up and position tiny pieces.
4. Allow the mosaics to dry overnight. Mount to poster board before hanging.

Nature frieze

A frieze is a sculpted and painted panorama of events. In the Capitol, the frieze depicts significant events in U.S. history. Children can create a relief sculpture of nature's seasonal cycles, family events, or favorite playthings.

Here's what you need:

- heavy cardboard
- air-hardening play dough
- paint and brushes

1. Show the children pictures of the frieze in the Capitol as well as those adorning cathedrals and other historic buildings.
2. Prepare for the activity by cutting the cardboard into 24-inch by 6-inch strips with a craft knife and straight edge.
3. Invite children to pinch, pull, and form flat sculptures (bas relief) on the cardboard. The figures have some dimension but aren't visible from all sides.
4. Allow the sculptures to dry until hardened.
5. Invite children to add paint to their friezes.



STATUE OF LIBERTY

The Statue of Liberty was designed by French sculptor Frédéric Bartholdi as a gift to the United States from the French people. It was constructed in France of copper over an iron frame or *aperture* and shipped in crates to the United States. It was assembled on a pedestal on Liberty Island in New York Harbor. The statue was dedicated by President Grover Cleveland in 1886.

The statue is a female figure representing Libertas, the Roman goddess of freedom. She holds a torch and a tablet inscribed with the date of the American Declaration of Independence. A broken chain is at her feet.

The statue is maintained by the National Park Service. Elevators and stairs allow access to the crown 305 feet above New York Harbor. Its image was used on war recruitment posters for World Wars I and II. On D-Day 1944, its

crowning lights flashed dot-dot-dot-dash, the letter V for victory in Morse code.

Investigate rust

Some metals deteriorate over time due to moisture, heat extremes, and salt corrosion. When an object rusts, oxygen is causing a chemical change in its structure. In the case of the Statue of Liberty, parts of the original iron aperture rusted and required reinforcement or replacement. Investigate what rusts and what doesn't.

Here's what you need:

- metal and non-metal objects
- shallow baking tray
- salt
- paper towels
- chart paper and pencil or digital camera

1. Introduce the activity with a conversation about how things fall apart. Skin tears, fabric can develop holes, branches break, and iron rusts. Each is a unique operation; only skin can repair itself because of living cells. Some natural forces can cause deterioration: friction on fabric, wind on a tree branch, and salt and water on iron, for example.
2. Invite children to gather an array of materials, metal and

non-metal. Plan to document the changes with either a chart or photography.

3. Pour about ½-inch of water into the tray. Sprinkle salt into the water (salt will hasten the oxidation of iron).
4. Place a variety of objects into the water. The object doesn't need to be immersed.
5. Observe the tray over several hours and several days. What changes? What stays the same?
6. At the end of the experiment, dry the objects with paper towels. Talk about the colors that rub off on the paper.



EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

When it was completed in 1931, the Empire State Building was the tallest building in the world at 1,250 feet and a symbol of American competitive spirit. The French had completed the Eiffel

The lady of liberty has massive proportions

Height of the copper statue	151 feet
Length of the hand	16 feet
Index finger	8 feet
Circumference of finger	3.5 feet
Distance across one eye	2.5 feet
Length of nose	4.5 feet
Tablet width	13.5 feet
Weight	225 tons

Tower in 1889 (984 feet), which seems to have challenged American architects to build something even taller.

The building has 85 stories of commercial office space (with about 21,000 daily workers) and both indoor and outdoor observation decks on the 86th floor. The top of the building features an Art Deco tower and an observatory on the 102nd floor. The façade has 6,500 windows, and there are 1,860 steps from the street to the 102nd floor. Sixty-seven elevators carry passengers to the 86th floor decks in less than one minute. The building cost about \$40,900,000 to construct in one year and 45 days—on time and under budget.

The Empire State Building uses 210 steel columns for the vertical frame; large cranes raised the steel girders to the higher floors. Riveters had the job of connecting the pieces of the steel frame by heating, tossing, catching, and attaching the fiery hot rivets all the way to the top of the steel frame.

The Empire State Building kept its record as the tallest building in the world until 1972 when the World Trade Center was completed.

Empire city

Build a city of dazzling skyscrapers modeled on the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building (also in New York), the Sears Tower in Chicago, or even Emerald City in the Wizard of Oz.

Here's what you need:

- standard collage materials
- cardboard
- tape
- metallic paper
- sequins, foil, and glitter
- construction paper
- writing materials

1. Share pictures of real and imaginative visions of cities, current or futuristic.
2. Encourage children to work in small cooperative groups as designers, architects, planners, engineers, landscape architects, and builders and build a city in miniature.
3. When each city is complete, encourage the group members to cooperate in writing a story about their city and the people who inhabit it.

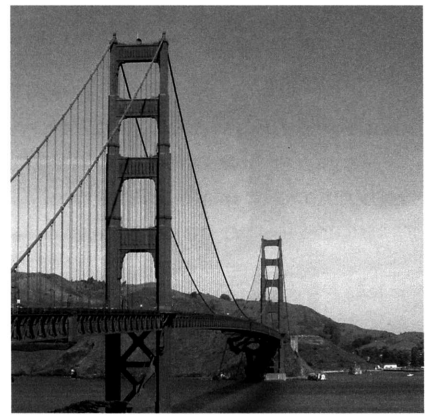
Build a tall tower

Most towers and towering buildings use tons of metal and fasteners in construction. Can one be made without tools?

Here's what you need:

- sheets of newspaper
- tape measure
- chart paper and pencil

1. Introduce the activity by discussing the factors that enable stability and balance. Usually we feel more balanced standing on two feet instead of one. Why? Because two feet widen our base and distribute our weight—balance. Ask children how this principle works with buildings. Fasteners, such as bolts, rivets, nails, and screws, hold buildings together.
2. Challenge children to make a tower as tall as possible using only paper. As needed, offer hints about bending, folding, tearing, and rolling the paper to add stability and increase the height.
3. Measure and chart both the size and construction techniques used by the children. Ask, "Does one technique seem to let us create taller buildings?"



GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

The Golden Gate Strait is the entrance to San Francisco Bay from the Pacific Ocean. The bridge spans the strait and is named for it. The iconic Golden Gate Bridge was the longest suspension bridge in the world when it was completed in 1937 and has been named one of the Wonders of the Modern World by the American Society of Civil Engineers.

The bridge is 1.7 miles long; its middle span is 4,200 feet. The weight of the roadway is carried by two cables that pass through towers at each end of the bridge. Each cable is made of more than 27,000 strands of wire—about 80,000 total miles. Red in appearance, the bridge is painted an orange vermillion color. The color was chosen because it complements the natural surroundings and enhances visibility in the notorious San Francisco fog. Corrosion makes repainting and touch up a routine chore; 38 painters are employed year-round for this job.

All bridges, from simple planks across a puddle to the Golden Gate, have the same function: They must support their own weight plus the weight of the traffic that travels across it.

Bridges tend to fall into one of four styles or designs: beam bridges, suspension bridges, arched bridges, and drawbridges. The first three have high, stable roadways. A drawbridge works

with a system of cables and pulleys to raise, lower, and pivot the roadway typically to allow water traffic to pass under the bridge.

Bridge styles

Investigate *compression* and *tension*, the forces at work on standard bridge designs. The forces must be in balance to ensure stability—and safety.

Here's what you need:

- pairs of unit blocks, preferably double units
- sheets of paper
- lightweight manipulatives like paperclips or bear counters
- tape
- scissors
- digital camera

1. Introduce the activity by informing the children that they will evaluate bridge strength and stability.

Bridge vocabulary

- Every bridge has a *deck*, the surface on which you walk, drive, or cycle.
- *Supports* like *arches* and *towers* rest on *foundations* drilled into the earth, sometimes under water.
- In beam and arch bridges there are two kinds of supports: *Abutments* support the ends of the bridge, while *piers* support the deck in the middle.
- In a suspension bridge, the middle supports are called *towers*. Cables are strung over the towers and secured in *anchors* on land. *Hangers* run from the cables to the deck to hold it up.
- *Approaches* are roads that lead up to the bridge.

2. Place pairs of blocks on a flat surface about 6 inches apart.
3. Place a piece of paper on top of the first pair of blocks.
4. Tape two sheets of paper together lengthwise, and cut so that the paper is about 12-inches long.
5. Curve this paper upward and place the ends under a second pair of blocks to make an arch.
6. Place paperclips, one at a time, onto the decks of each bridge—the beam and the arch. Which one can carry the heavier load before sagging?
7. Combine the features of the first two bridges to make one that will carry a greater load.
8. For the third and fourth pairs of blocks, modify the bridge deck. What happens when you accordion-fold the paper? What happens when you sandwich the accordion-folded paper between two flat sheets? Invite children to make predictions about each design.
9. Document the experiment with a digital camera.

Note: If you don't have unit blocks, use pairs of hard cover books.

Build an arch

Here's what you need:

- clay or play dough
- plastic jar lids
- similarly sized stones

1. Introduce the activity by inviting children to follow the lead of ancient Roman arch builders. Look at pictures of arch bridges. Talk about what they have in common and identify the differences. The Romans used a wooden frame called the *centering* to support the arches as they were constructed. The centering was removed after the *keystone*, the top piece, was locked into place.

2. Have children balance the jar lid on its side.
3. Alternating stone and clay (mortar), build the arch over the centering support working both sides of the arch in turn. The stones and clay follow the curve until there's room for only one more stone, the keystone.
4. Challenge the children to carefully remove the centering without making the arch collapse.

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CHILD CARE LICENSING

Minimum Standard revision

The revised minimum standard rules for child care centers as well as child care homes became effective on Dec. 1, 2010. By the time you are reading this, your center or home should have received a copy of the new minimum standards publication.

The changes to the minimum standards are based on current research and feedback from providers such as you. Throughout the state, local licensing offices have been offering training on the changes. In addition we are providing technical assistance through the end of May. What this means is that when we come to your home or center to do an inspection, we will assess for compliance with the standards, but we will not cite a deficiency of any minimum standards that are new or revised. As always, if you have a question on how to comply with the new rules, contact your licensing inspector for assistance.

The changes to the minimum standards are mainly focused around a few key themes, including obesity prevention, active play, health practices, personnel, emergency preparedness, and record keeping. There is not enough space here to go through all the revisions, but we would like for you to become familiar with the minimum standards related to obesity prevention so you may begin to think about how your program will comply. The good news is that most of the new requirements are low or no cost and there are resources available to

The child care licensing division of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) regulates and monitors child care operations in Texas. For more information about child care licensing and its services, visit www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care.

help you learn more. See the resource list below.

With the alarming increase in childhood obesity nationally as well as in Texas, a major theme was obesity prevention. In most cases existing standards were revised to help children develop lifelong healthy habits.

Outdoor play. Opportunities for outdoor play has increased from once a day to twice a day (morning and afternoon) for children ages 18 months and older.

Screen time. Planned activities for each age group must include opportunities for active play both indoors and outdoors. Time limits on screen-time activities (television, video games, and computer) were added. These types of activities must be related to the planned activities, and they must be age-appropriate.

Nutrition. The consumption of sugary drinks is limited, and water is served at mealtimes, snack, and after active play. It is appropriate to serve water to children who want it after they have finished their milk. Daily limits on the amount of 100 percent juice that may be served to children were added. The portion sizes of food were adjusted to reflect current recommendations.

Breastfeeding. Child care centers are now required to state in their operating policies

that parents have the right to breastfeed or provide breast milk for their child. In addition the policies need to include a comfortable place where a mother may breastfeed her child. This can be as simple as the use of an adult-size chair in the classroom.

Play equipment. Changes to the minimum standards on outdoor play equipment were made to include indoor equipment. These are now referred to as "active play equipment and space."

Resources

- Previous issues of *Texas Child Care Quarterly*, www.child-carequarterly.com.
- The Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program through the Texas Department of State Health Services, www.dshs.state.tx.us/mch/default.shtm.
- Healthy Child Care Texas, www.healthychildcaretexas.org.
- Office of the Surgeon General Child Obesity Prevention, www.surgeongeneral.gov/.
- National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, <http://nrckids.org/>.

TEXAS Parenting News

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS EVERYWHERE

SPRING 2011



Monster under the bed?

"Mommy, there's something under my bed!"

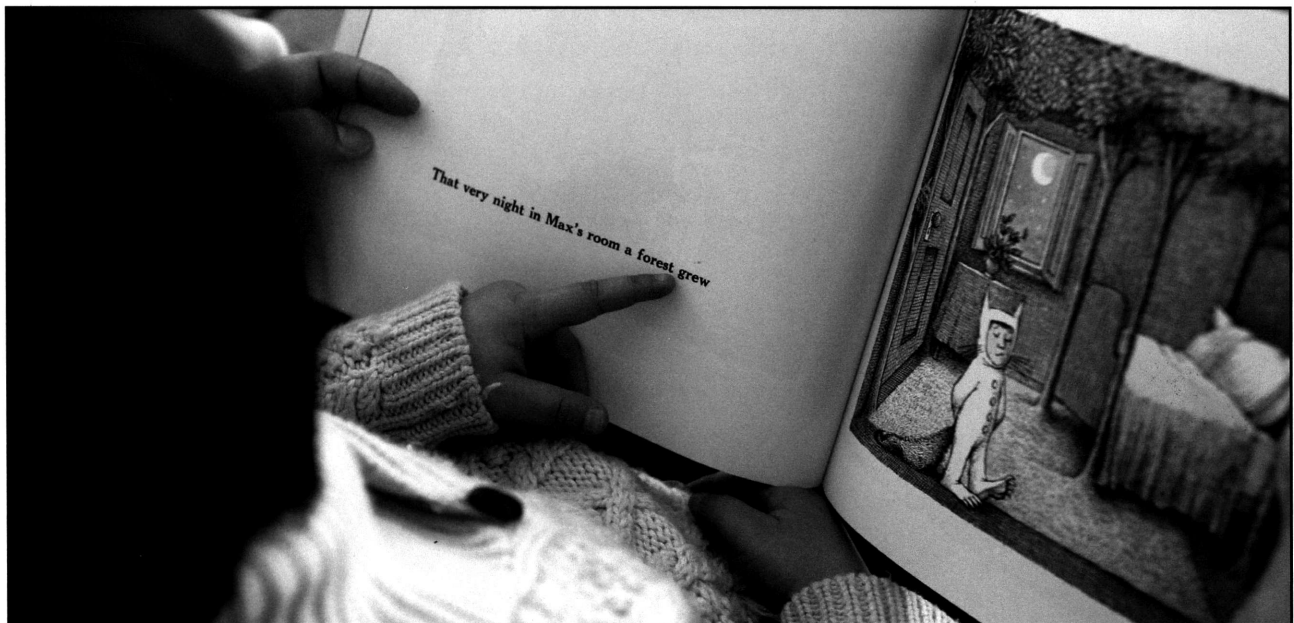
For preschool children, night time can be terrifying. They may be afraid of a crocodile under the bed or a dragon in the closet. They may hear strange sounds or see moving shadows in a corner. Left alone in the dark, they cry out or get out of bed.

Night time fears are not unusual at this age. Beginning about age 2, children develop the ability to create mental images of people, animals, and objects. It's this new skill that enables them to imagine all sorts of frightening creatures. This fear can be intensified when children watch horror movies, violent TV shows, and even the news.

Fear is one of the earliest emotions a person develops. A child's night time fears can be frustrating for parents, but it's also an important learning opportunity. How can you best foster this growth?

Suggestions for night time

- Show compassion for your child's fear. Avoid putdowns such as "That's silly." Remember that fear is real to a child. The goal is to learn how to handle fear in a positive way.
- Model strength. Children rely on you to keep them safe. They learn to handle situations by imitating what you do. You might say: "You're safe. I will always protect you."
- Provide information. Look under the bed or in the closet with your child. Sit with your child in the darkened room and show what causes the strange noise or shadow.
- Find ways to reassure your child, without catering to the fear. Leave the bedroom door open, or turn on a small night light. Provide a flashlight that your child can turn on to see troublesome things in the dark. Say, "I'll come back and check on you after I finish the dishes"—and do it.



⇓ Pull this four-page newsletter from the magazine here. Reproduce and distribute to parents (not for resale). ⇓

- Read a comforting bedtime story book, such as *Goodnight, Moon*; *Guess How Much I Love You*; or *The Velveteen Rabbit*. If you need more suggestions, talk to your child's teacher or local children's librarian.
- Provide a lovey or comfort object, such as a favorite blanket or stuffed animal. Or give the child something that belongs to you such as a sweater or bracelet.
- Remember that requests such as "I need a drink of water" can really be fear in disguise. Books like

How Do Dinosaurs Say Good Night? can subtly remind your child that you can't be fooled.

Use daytime learning opportunities

At bedtime everyone is tired and tempers can be short. Find opportunities during the day to assist your child in emotional growth.

- Ask questions. "What made you think there was something under the bed last night?" can bring the child's fear out into the open. Talking about it can lessen the anxiety.
- Watch a sunset or daybreak with your child and explain what makes night and day. You might spend a few minutes in a darkened space and make it enjoyable by talking or having a snack.
- Read books about the child's specific fear. See the list of monster books at left. Review the book first, and consider whether the message will be reassuring or intensify your child's particular fear.
- Limit the family's screen time. For optimal learning and development, children need to be involved in chores, physical games, art, and other activities instead of passively watching TV.
- When you watch TV programs or videos, select those appropriate to your child's development. Watch them with your child and talk about them afterward.



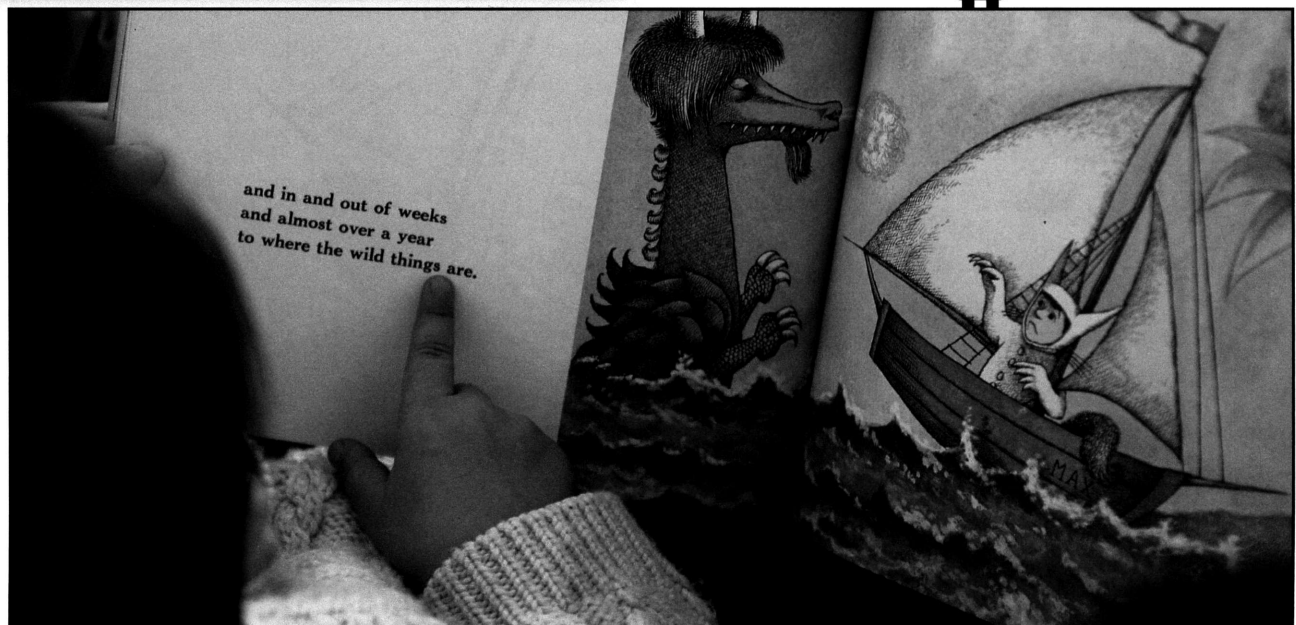
Children's books about monsters

Two authors have written several books you can read to your children:

- Ed Emberley: *Go Away, Big Green Monster! Bye-Bye, Big Bad Bullybug! There Was an Old Monster! If You're a Monster and You Know It.*
- Mercel Mayer: *There Are Monsters Everywhere; There's a Nightmare in My Closet; There's an Alligator Under My Bed; There's Something in My Attic.*

Other authors and their books are:

- Laura Leuck. *My Monster Mama Loves Me So.*
- Amanda Noll. *I Need My Monster.*
- Judith Viorst. *My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins or Things.*
- Lee Weatherly. *The Scariest Monster in the World.*



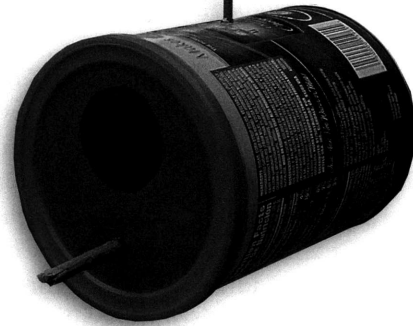
Ideas for family fun

Don't let the economic downturn spoil your family fun. Lots of activities can be educational and won't cost a thing.

Encourage children to use their creativity instead of following a model you have prepared. Set out materials, offer general instructions, and let children do the rest.

Dog puppet. Turn a small lunch bag upside down. Fold down the base for the dog's face. Use markers or crayons to draw eyes and nose. Using another bag or scrap paper, cut out ears and tongue and glue to the base. Insert your hand so that four fingers fit into the base and move them back and forth against the thumb to make the dog bark. Use the same idea for making a cat, mouse, rabbit, bear, raccoon, or another animal puppet.

Handprint butterfly. Cut open a large brown grocery bag and lay it flat. Invite children to draw around their hands to make six handprints on the bag paper. Cut them out. Using the rest of the bag or another piece of paper, lay three handprints side by side with fingers pointing out for one butterfly wing, and the other three handprints on the opposite side for the other wing. Cut out an oval piece for the butterfly body and glue together. Color the wings, draw eyes at one end of the body, and attach narrow paper strips on top for antennae.



Paper bag costume. Turn a large paper grocery bag upside down. Cut a hole in each of the narrow sides for the arms. Cut up the middle of one wide side for a front or back opening and cut a hole in the base for the neck. For a robot, draw knobs and gauges on the front and glue on bits of aluminum foil. For a ladybug, paint a red circle with black dots.

Coffee can birdhouse. In the plastic lid of a 1-pound coffee can, cut a circular hole large enough for a bird to pass through. Just below that hole, punch a smaller hole with a nail and insert a twig to use as a perch. Place the lid on the can, and turn the can on its side. Loop string or wire around the can and hang it in a tree or on a balcony.

Craft stick puzzle. Wash and dry 10 ice cream sticks (or use craft sticks). Lay them side by side and secure with tape on one side. Flip over on the other side, and glue on a picture cut from a magazine or catalog. When the glue dries, use a sharp knife to cut between the sticks and through the picture. Remove the tape from the back, separate the sticks, and mix them up. Invite children to put them back together to form a picture.

Kitchen garden. Nail holes in the bottom of a tin can. Place small pebbles in the bottom and fill with dirt. Plant a seed saved from kitchen fruit or vegetable scraps (lemon, tomato, green pepper) in the can, or use a dried bean. Place the tin can on a saucer on a window sill where it can get sun. Water just enough to keep the soil moist. When the seed sprouts and is 1-2 inches tall, transfer it to a larger container or to a garden bed outdoors.

Providing milk for your baby

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that mothers feed their infants breast milk for the first six months. You can begin introducing solid foods after that.

If you must work outside the home and are unable to nurse on demand, you may choose to express breast milk for caregivers to feed your baby from a bottle.

Alternatively, you might opt for infant formula for bottle feedings. Get guidance from the baby's health professional on the best form of formula for your child: dairy-based, soy-based, or hypoallergenic. Your health care professional can also help you decide whether to use powdered, liquid concentrate, or ready-to-use. The powdered requires more care in handling but is the least expensive. The ready-to-use form is the most expensive. The FDA ensures that all infant formulas—brand name and generic—meet the same nutritional and safety standards.

In either case, talk with your caregiver about the best procedures for storing and using the milk or formula you provide.

When preparing breast milk

- Wash your hands before expressing or handling milk.
- Use storage containers with screw caps or heavy-duty bags that fit directly into bottles. Avoid ordinary plastic storage bags that could leak or spill.
- Label the containers clearly with your baby's name and the date.
- Refrigerate milk for use within 48 hours. Or freeze it. Frozen milk can be stored for three to six months at zero to minus-18 degrees without degradation.
- Transport milk in an insulated cooler bag with ice packs that hold the temperature lower than 40 degrees.

When preparing formula

- Check the expiration date to make sure the formula has not expired.
- Wash your hands.
- Prepare utensils. Make sure mixing containers, bottles, and nipples are clean and dry. Rinse nipples daily in equal parts of vinegar and water to inhibit fungal growth.

Safe heating

Never use a microwave to heat bottles.

Unfortunately, microwaves heat unevenly. Uneven heating can scald the baby. The uneven heating also increases the risk of the bottle exploding. Additionally, there is evidence that this method of heating destroys the nutrient quality of both breast milk and formula.

For safe warming, place the bottle in a bowl of hot (not boiling) water and let it stand for a couple of minutes. Shake the bottle and test the liquid's temperature on the back of your wrist. It should feel neutral on your skin—not hot and not cold.

If you use a crock pot for heating bottles, be certain that it's placed next to the electrical outlet. Never use extension cords and always make sure electrical cords are inaccessible to children.

- For powdered formula, use the provided scoop and follow the instructions on the container.
- For powdered and liquid concentrate formulas, add clean water, bottled or tap.
- For ready-to-use formula, shake well and pour enough for one feeding into a clean bottle; don't add water.
- Measure accurately. Too little water makes digestion difficult; too much reduces nutrients and calories necessary for growth.
- Label the bottles with your baby's name and the date.
- Feed the baby immediately. Discard the formula left in the bottle after feeding.

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EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

ECI roles and resources

A child in my care is about to be enrolled in Early Childhood Intervention services. The mother called to ask me to participate in the IFSP team. What does it mean to be on an IFSP team?

All children enrolled in Early Childhood Intervention programs have a plan for services called the Individualized Family Service Plan or IFSP. This plan includes outcomes or goals for the child and activities to help reach those goals. Some activities take place in the home. Others take place in the child care center or other places in the community.

An IFSP is developed by a team. The child's parents are always part of the team, and they may invite family members, child care providers like you, and others to be team members. The IFSP team also will include at least two other professionals such as an early intervention specialist, an occupational or physical therapist, a speech language pathologist, a social worker, or a nurse.

The IFSP team meets and writes the IFSP together. The plan builds on the child and family's strengths and addresses their needs. It identifies the services the child and family will receive. When the IFSP is completed, it serves as a working tool for the team members. You will be able to refer to it for ideas to help the child.

Your participation in the IFSP is crucial. You know the children in your care. The child benefits when you share information

Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a division within the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS). ECI programs provide services to families with children birth to 36 months of age with developmental delays or disabilities. For more information about DARS/ECI, call 1-800-628-5115 or visit www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis.

about the child's development and daily routines and activities. You can help the ECI staff understand the child. As the child's teacher, you influence how and what the child learns, so you will have an important role in implementing the plan activities.

Working as a partner on the IFSP team, you also can get the help you need to support the child's success. The ECI staff can help you understand the child's developmental needs. Team members can help you find ways to include the child in everyday activities.

How is an "important caregiver" defined in the ECI system?

Infants and toddlers learn through the typical activities that occur in their daily life and through their interactions with familiar people. Consequently, parents, family members, and other people with whom a child spends a significant amount of time are regarded as important. They are the people who are best able to help an infant or toddler grow and develop.

I want to be up-to-date with resources such as child development articles, current early childhood education practices, and training tools. Where can I find these types of resources?

ECI and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

Audio Visual Library Services collaborate to produce *ECI Library Matters*. This publication provides a listing of articles, books, videos and journals on a particular subject—for example, seizure disorder, Down syndrome, autism, infant mental health, and behavioral issues. Visit www.dars.state.tx.us/ecis/resources/librarymatters/index.shtml for a listing of resources.

In addition, the collection contains information on all aspects of early childhood intervention. This collection is housed at the DSHS Audio Visual Library in Austin. Materials can be checked out and are available to any Texas resident. For information on borrowing materials, visit www.dshs.state.tx.us/avlib/default.shtm.

The ECI Library collection includes books, videos, and journals that address all aspects of:

- early childhood intervention
- disabilities and developmental delays
- families and siblings
- assessment and evaluation (including tools and kits)
- advocacy
- child development
- laws and legislation affecting children with disabilities and developmental delays.

Contact the ECI Library by calling (888) 963-7111 or send an email to avlibrary@dshs.state.tx.us.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

SMOOTHING THE TRANSITION

by Helen Berg and Melinda Miller

After running through a list of updates—head lice in the Daisy room, a new sibling in the Lily room, and a still-sick cook—Mrs. Jones, the secretary of an early childhood center in East Texas, stands up. In a quiet but firm voice, she speaks.

“When I bring a new student around to your class, I would appreciate it if you please don’t say, ‘Oh no! Not another one!’ as you open the door. Think about what that child might be thinking and feeling.”

Several teachers nodded.

“Right,” said one. “We need to make newcomers feel welcome.”

A conversation ensued. “How can we do that?”



Historically, the United States has been made up of a diverse population both culturally and linguistically. Today the school-age population continues to become more ethnically diverse.

Consider these numbers:

- In 1976, children from minority groups made up 24 percent of the school population. In 2000, that number rose to 40 percent.
- In particular, the number of Hispanic children rose from 3 million in 1976 to more than 4.5 million in 2000, a 52 percent increase.
- The number of children from the Pacific islands increased by 116 percent, rising from 535,000 in 1976 to 1,158,000 in 2000 (Garcia 2006).

While a number of states, such as those that border Mexico, have experienced immigration for some time, the populations of other states are becoming

more diverse with immigration from many parts of the world including Asia, the Middle East, Central America, the African continent, and Eastern Europe. Some of these population changes are dramatic. As a result, Caucasian children will likely be a minority in an estimated 35 years (Garcia 2006).

English language learners increasing

Children learning English for the first time compose a greater proportion of the K-12 population than in previous years. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs (2006), between the 1989-1990 and 2004-2005 school years, enrollment of English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools increased 150 percent, from approximately 2 million to more than 5 million.

One effect of this demographic shift is an increase in the number of children described as underserved. Children who speak minority languages in general, and Latinos in particular, are underachieving academically in large segments of the United States (National Center for Education Statistics 2006).

In light of the rapidly changing demographics of school populations in this country, welcoming and helping ELLs transition to a new school, language, and culture has become more critical. Further, because a majority of ELLs are born in the United States, providing them the best possible education has become increasingly urgent. This is true regardless of whether the teacher had previously taught an ELL child or not.

Teachers need to be prepared to welcome all learners into the classroom. None of us knows when a child who is learning English as a second language will enter our classrooms. It could be today, tomorrow, or the following day. How can we ease the transition of ELLs into the classroom?

Strategies for welcoming newcomers

Be prepared. The first day is critical for a new ELL entering a school for the first time. “What happens the first day will impact your newcomer’s confidence, motivation, social adjustment, desire to learn, and even health and attendance” (Claire and Hayes 1994).

The best scenario would be that you have made advance preparations and the child has a great first day of school. The worst scenario is a negative first day experience, which is hard to overcome.

Part of your preparation occurs with the whole class during the first couple of weeks of school. Regardless of whether an ELL child enrolls at the beginning or in the middle of the year, it’s imperative to have conversations about what happens when a new child joins the class. Having these conversations as you build a community of learners will help children know how to welcome a child into their classroom and make the child feel included and accepted.

Some activities to include in building your community of learners could be reading books about children moving to a new place or entering a new culture. By reading, you can help children explore their feelings and talk about what it would be like to enter a new culture. Books include *Where Is Taro?* by Elizabeth Clare (1994); *I Hate English* by Ellen Levine (1989); and *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashimo (1955).

In addition, you can have conversations with children regarding similar experiences, such as moving from one house to another or moving to a different state or country. You can lead a discussion, asking questions such as, “Have you ever moved to a new place? How did you feel? What was different? How would you like to be treated if you came into a new neighborhood or school? Would you like to move again? Why? Where?”

You can also encourage children to paint a picture or dictate a story to you about moving to a new home and a new school.

In an ideal situation, a teacher knows in advance that a student is coming and has time to gather background information about that child. This is not

always the case. But if possible, it’s wise to gather information. Here are a few examples.

Personal information

- How long has the child been in this country?
- Which country is the child from?
- Which language or languages are spoken in the home?
- Are the parents bilingual?
- What are the circumstances of immigration? Were there any traumatic events associated with it? Did the entire family immigrate?
- Are any brothers and sisters in the school?
- Who lives with the family?

Academic information

- What is the child’s stage of literacy development in the native language, including oral language?
- Has the child attended preschool or primary school in the native country? For how long?
- If the child is school age, what are the child’s skills in reading and writing? Do the parents have any school work that demonstrates this knowledge?
- What is the degree of oral language proficiency in English?
- What is the child’s stage of literacy development in English?



**TEACHERS NEED TO BE
PREPARED TO
WELCOME ALL LEARNERS.**



Research the child’s culture and language.

Finding out more about the child’s culture will help you understand where the child is coming from and avoid misunderstandings. For example, in Asian cultures it is disrespectful to make eye contact with an adult or teacher. By contrast, in U.S. culture this action is viewed as a sign of attention and respect.

The linguistic history of a child's native language can help communication. For example, a child from Mexico speaks Spanish, a romance language (like French, Italian, and Portuguese) derived from Latin. English, a Germanic language, also has Latin roots. The similarities of common words can bridge language differences.

Cognates are similar words in two languages that are derived from the same language (Tompkins 2006). Typically, cognates are similar in both meaning and pronunciation (Herrell and Jordan 2008). You can use cognates to help the child make connections between their native language and English.

Second language learners need to pay close attention to cognates to transfer concepts they might already know in their first language into English. Consider these examples of cognates in English and Spanish (*¡Colorín Colorado!* 2009).

English	Spanish
circle	círculo
triangle	triángulo
rectangle	rectángulo
color	color
pants	pantalones
line	línea

ELL children can use the cognate strategy to help them in becoming more proficient in English. As the ELL child discovers new ways to learn, so does the teacher in reflecting and learning about how to best teach the child.

THE WORST SCENARIO IS A NEGATIVE FIRST DAY EXPERIENCE.

Greet the student warmly. Instead of the scenario at the beginning of this article, let's picture the same situation happening this way.

As the secretary taps on the classroom door, Mrs. Johnson stops what she's doing and opens the door with a smile.

"Welcome to our class!" she says, the warmth evident in her voice. "We're so glad you're here!"

She turns to the whole class. "Look children! Ahmed is joining our class."

As this scenario illustrates, gestures and voice intonation say more than a thousand words.

Assign a buddy. "When English Language Learners first arrive in school, the first-things-first approach is helpful" (Peregoy and Boyle 2009). The first thing would be to assign a buddy to provide a feeling of safety and security. The ideal buddy is a child that speaks the same home language as the new child.

The buddy is someone who knows the school and the school rules and procedures. The buddy's job is to assist the new student in and around the school for the first few weeks, as the new child becomes familiar with the new environment. The buddy not only shows the new student where to find places in the school but also familiarizes the student with the rules and procedures. For example, the buddy shows the student where the restroom is and explains how to get permission to leave the class. Every class has different rules, and knowing the rules can alleviate anxiety and prevent any uncomfortable situations that might occur.

Consider the case of Omar, a 4-year-old boy from Saudi Arabia who speaks Arabic and French but not English. When Omar entered Ms. Schwetman's classroom, all the children surrounded him and wanted to be his friend. Ms. Schwetman introduced him and mentioned that he couldn't speak English and asked the children to help him. The children assumed that Omar couldn't walk well either, so they all tried to help him by scrambling for his hand when he walked to the art table. Unfortunately, Ms. Schwetman forgot to mention where the restroom was, and Omar had an accident. Keep first things first.

As teachers, we all make mistakes and cannot plan for every contingency, but this situation could have turned out more positively if Ms. Schwetman had assigned a single buddy to Omar. At the same time, she could have explained that although the buddy

has primary responsibility, there might be times when another child could help Omar learn the class rules and routines.

Expect culture shock. Culture shock is real. According to Claire and Haynes (1994), “our nervous systems really do receive a massive electrochemical shock when we are in a strange environment, bombarded with unintelligible noises, unfamiliar faces, and unreadable social signals.”

Haynes (2009) identifies four stages of culture shock. The first is the euphoric or honeymoon stage. Newcomers are excited about learning and experiencing new people, things, and opportunities.

In the second stage the shock takes hold. The excitement is gone, and children become confused and overwhelmed. They realize that there is so much they don’t know about their new environment. They may try to avoid everything that is different, and they may become depressed or act aggressively.

The third stage is integration. Children begin to adapt to the new environment. In some cases, parents may fear that their child might be losing the native language and culture to the new.

The fourth stage is acceptance. Children combine both cultures and become successful in the mainstream culture. Parents may become increasingly alarmed that their children are losing their native culture.

Children who come to this country that don’t speak the language and are new to school will most probably experience culture shock. In addition, parents are unsure of what to expect and therefore are not able to reassure or guide their children through the process of adaptation.

As teachers, we need to be understanding, thoughtful, and patient as we make every effort to ease ELL children’s transition to their new environment. This means we should not assume anything about the children or their parents.

As ELLs are going through culture shock, many questions come to their minds. For example, why are American students so disrespectful that they are calling their teachers by name? In Mexico, for example, students would call their teacher *Maestra* (Teacher) to show respect. Other questions may include “What should I wear? Why don’t they wear uniforms? Why do girls wear pants? Why are boys and girls together in the same classroom?”

Assess the child’s literacy development.

Within the first few weeks of a new child’s arrival, it’s important to assess the child’s language proficiency in both languages. As with all children in the classroom, it is important to find out exactly what the newcomer knows and base instruction upon that knowledge.

AS TEACHERS, WE NEED TO BE UNDERSTANDING, THOUGHTFUL, AND PATIENT.

For preschoolers, observations that include anecdotal records and rating scales will provide valuable insights.

For the school-age child, it is helpful to do the Observation Survey (Clay 1997), which includes a letter identification assessment; a word test that assesses sight word knowledge; an assessment of concepts about print; a dictation test that assesses the child’s ability to hear and record sounds in words; a word writing test that assesses the child’s written sight word vocabulary; and a reading assessment in which the child reads books of different reading levels.

For older elementary children, you can also use an informal reading inventory, such as the Reading Inventory for the Classroom by Flynt and Cooter (2004) to further assess the child’s reading level.

Assessment is ongoing and can include observations of the child’s interactions with other children, anecdotal records, conferences, and running records (Cooper and Kiger 2009).

Provide language-rich activities. According to Cooper and Kiger (2008), ELL children are sometimes isolated. They don’t feel like they belong to the community of learners, and often they are not doing the same things as the other children.

A more positive scenario is a classroom in which the newcomer is right in the middle of all the action, and

the teacher is “bubbling with speech.” “It doesn’t matter that the child doesn’t understand all the words,” but rather “that the child feels a part of the class.”

ELL children need the same things as other learners. That is, they need to be working at a level that is developmentally appropriate, and they need support and scaffolding to help them grow. Cooper and Kiger recommend language-rich activities appropriate for all learners, such as reading aloud, acting out stories, reciting finger plays, singing songs, drawing, and reading familiar texts. “ELL children need to be steeped in the English language” (2008).

Provide ongoing activities. Some activities done at the beginning of the year with native English speaking children may also work for ELLs. In particular, a child may come to school the first day and not have everything needed. You may need to provide an extra set of play clothes for a preschooler, for example, so the child can change after a water play activity. In addition, a picture schedule of the day could help the child know what to expect.

For a school-age child, you might provide a small backpack with a few extra supplies (crayons, and paper, among other things) to make the newcomer feel welcome. You might include picture cards of places such as the restroom, people (aides and volunteers), classroom items, and routines (hand washing), each with the appropriate label or name. An older child may find it helpful to have a simple map highlighting the location of the restroom, playground, and other important places.

Labeling classroom items will help all children begin to develop essential vocabulary words they will need every day, thus encouraging English oral language and conversation with other children and the teacher.

Preparing an audio tape or CD is beneficial in helping an ELL become familiar with the school routines and vocabulary (Claire and Haynes 1994). You and the other children can record songs, finger plays, numbers, names of body parts, and other relevant language activities.

Providing books that represent different cultures authentically is a well-established practice in child care and school libraries. Select books carefully to avoid stereotyping of ethnic groups.

Invite families to share information. After some time, you may choose to ask a member of the ELL child’s family to visit the classroom and share information about their language and culture.

For example, in her kindergarten classroom, Mrs. Hayden had a child named Sajada Patel from India. Sajada was a native speaker of Punjabi and had recently moved to the United States with her family. Mrs. Hayden invited Sajada’s mother to visit the classroom and share a little about their family culture. Ms. Patel came to the classroom excited and honored. To the children’s delight, she brought some Indian food for everyone to sample. She taught them a simple song in her native language and a game. She modeled a sari and showed the children how



and when to wear one. Then she read an Indian folk tale showing a character wearing a sari. Finally, she showed the children how to write their names in Punjabi.

IN TEACHING WE ARE CONSTANTLY LEARNING FROM OUR STUDENTS.

After Ms. Patel's visit, Mrs. Hayden led the students in a language experience story capitalizing on the new information about Indian culture. They wrote a class book that they later laminated and placed in the classroom library. This activity brought much richness to both the ELL as well as the rest of the class.

Embrace cultural diversity

As ELL children enter our schools every day, our role as teachers is to teach all students regardless of their culture, language, or citizenship status. To ease the transition and to welcome ELLs to our schools, we need to emphasize the role they will play in our classrooms and the role our children will play in welcoming them.

We can't forget that in teaching we are constantly learning from our students and the students are also learning from one another. This reciprocity is enhanced from the diversity that exists in the classroom. Each child brings a unique perspective that enriches the classroom environment.

Our goal as teachers is to teach all students by creating a safe and nurturing community of learners and embracing cultural diversity in our classrooms.

Books for children

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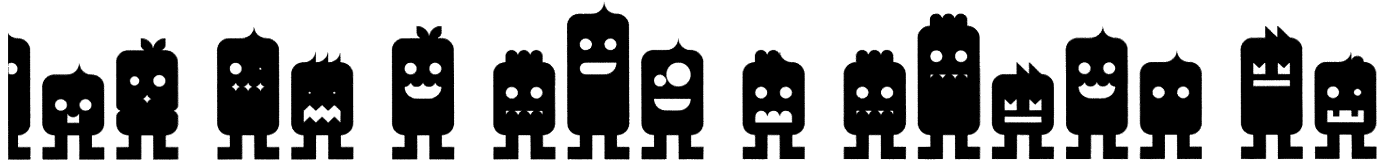
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Talking with children

about monsters



It's a gray, blustery day. The 4-year-olds tug on sweaters and caps as they go outdoors to play. Ms. Andrews looks up at the sky, wondering if it might rain.

"Ayeeeeeee."

She turns to the sound of the scream. A child comes running, her eyes wild with fright.

"Katie, what's the matter?"

The child thrusts herself into the teacher's waiting arms. Ms. Andrews soothes the child, stroking her hair and wiping away tears. Other children stop what they are doing and gather around.

"Are you all right?" asks Ms. Andrews. "What happened?" Between the child's sobs, Ms. Andrews learns that Katie has seen something behind the old oak tree.

"You wait here. I'll go look." Ms. Andrews crosses the yard, passes the tree, and stops. A green plastic garbage bag has gotten caught in the fence, its yellow

drawstrings flapping in the wind. She yanks the bag free and brings it back to the children.

"I thought it was a monster," Katie says. "It had three shiny eyes and yellow tongues trying to get me."

Fear is normal in children. It's one of the earliest emotions and may show up when we least expect it. It's also an important learning opportunity. Talking about it can aid children's emotional growth.

Fear varies by age and child. Babies may develop *stranger anxiety* when confronted with someone they don't know and later *separation anxiety* when parents leave them in child care. Toddlers may develop fears of new or noisy things, such as the toilet or vacuum cleaner. They also may be terrorized by animals, the dark,

and life-sized, costumed characters ranging from Santa Claus to Halloween ghouls.

Between ages 2 and 6, children's increasing ability to create mental images of people, animals, and objects enables them to imagine monsters in the closet or under the bed. Strange sounds on the roof or shadows in a corner may fill them with dread.

By school age, children begin to have fears about real things that might happen to them, such as a car wreck, burglar in the house, or tornado.

Children develop fears at different ages and in varying intensities. What scares one child may delight another. Jonas is afraid of snakes, for example, while Ruby is fascinated with them.

What do children already know?

For preschool children, the line between fantasy and reality is



blurred. They may enjoy watching characters in movies like *Monsters, Inc.* and the Cookie Monster on Sesame Street, but they can panic when they see the same character in person.

Bedtime can be especially challenging because children may be afraid of the dark, being alone, or hearing strange sounds. Children's fears can be intensified by watching horror movies, violent TV shows, and news accounts of war and crime.

To find out what children already know about monsters, talk individually with their parents. Do children have trouble going to sleep and worry about monsters under the bed? How do parents respond?

Monsters on DVD

Monsters, Inc. 2001. Los Angeles: Pixar Animation Studios/Walt Disney Pictures. (92 minutes)

This computer-animated film follows the antics of two monsters (voices of Billy Crystal and John Goodman) who work in a factory where workers collect children's screams to power a monster city. The action moves fast, and the dialogue contains plenty of gags to entertain grownups.

This film is entertaining, but entertainment alone does not justify showing it in school. Instead you might show a five-minute excerpt to start a conversation or enlighten children on some point—that monsters are fiction and that everyone has feelings, for example. Be sure to watch the excerpt with the children and talk about what they saw and how they felt.

You can help children overcome their fears of monsters by asking questions, providing information, and showing how others react to monsters. Observe these guidelines:

- Show compassion for children's fears about monsters. Avoid putdowns such as "That's silly." Remember that fear is real to a child. The goal is to learn how to handle fear in a positive way.
- Model strength. Children rely on you to keep them safe. They learn to handle situations by imitating what you do. By watching Ms. Andrews, children learned they can ask for help and find out more about what's really going on. Sometimes courage is a matter of taking action.
- Review books, videos, websites, and other materials about monsters before sharing them with children. Consider whether the message is reassuring or may intensify fears.

Start conversations with books

Reading a book about monsters at circle time allows children to express their feelings in a safe environment. Sample questions for discussion:

- How does the monster look?
- Where is the monster?
- How does the monster sound?
- How does the child in the book feel about the monster?
- How do you feel about the monster? Is it strange, scary, and mean (or funny and cute)?
- What does the child do?
- What are some things you might do if you were in the same situation?

- Is this monster real? Could it be something the child imagines? Could this book be a story that someone made up?
- If you think a monster is nearby, what could you do?

Activities to tame the monsters

Help children explore monsters—real and imagined—while engaging in routine classroom activities.

Group time

When children share—and compare—their fears the scary world becomes smaller and more controllable.

Show me what you're feeling

Discuss a range of feelings—happy, sad, excited, frightened, and silly. Take time to explore each, encouraging children to describe how they feel and when they feel that way. Ask questions to further the exploration of feelings. For example, "How does your face look when you're ...? How do your hands show that you're ...? Can you show ... and ... feelings at the same time?"

Tension

Children feel stress just as adults do. Sometimes children's stress is expressed through challenging behaviors, aggression, tears, or withdrawal—just as it is in adults. Invite children to explore how their bodies react to tension—and how they feel when the tension is gone.

Describe typical scenarios that can frighten children—losing sight of their family in the grocery store, hearing a loud argument, seeing an injured animal, or learning to swim. Invite the children to



Books for children

Dear Big, Mean, Ugly Monster. Berglin, Ruth. 2005. Washington, D.C.: Child and Family Press.

Writing a letter is the key to dealing with this under-bed monster—and the monster writes back!

Go Away, Big Green Monster! Emberley, Ed. 1992. New York: Little Brown & Co.

Each page reveals a monster's facial feature or body part one by one. When it's fully depicted, the text reads "You don't scare me," and the features disappear in the same way they came.

Bye-Bye, Big Bad Bullybug! Emberley, Ed. 2007. New York: LB Kids.

Big Bad Bullybug likes to scare itty bitty baby bugs but in the end gets stomped by Big Foot.

There Was an Old Monster! Emberley, Rebecca; Adrian Emberley; and Ed Emberley. 2009. London: Orchard Books.

The old monster swallows a tick that made him sick, some ants that made him dance in his pants, and so forth in rhyme, building vocabulary with humor and fun. Scholastic.com offers a link to the words chanted by Adrian (Ed's granddaughter).

If You're a Monster and You Know It. Emberley, Rebecca and Ed Emberley. 2010. London: Orchard Books.

The text invites actions such as snort and growl, smack your claws, stomp your feet to the tune "If You're Happy and You Know It."

Everything I Know About Monsters. Lichtenheld, Tom. 2002. New York: Simon & Schuster.

School-age children will enjoy this encyclopedic treatment that includes Frankensteins, robots, movie monsters, aliens, and more.

My Monster Mama Loves Me So. Leuck, Laura. 2002. New York: HarperCollins.

Baby monster lists the many ways his monster mother loves him, providing reassurance in a funny, loving way.

There Are Monsters Everywhere. Mayer, Mercer. 2005. New York: Dial/Penguin.

A boy understands that his parents can't see the monsters everywhere in his room so he learns karate.

There's a Nightmare in My Closet. Mayer, Mercer. 1992. London: Puffin.

A boy who usually hides from the monster that resides in his closet decides to take action by wearing his soldier helmet and cocking his pop gun.

There's an Alligator Under My Bed. Mayer, Mercer. 1987. New York: Dial/Penguin.

A boy comes up with a simple plan to entice an alligator out of his bedroom and into the garage.

There's Something in My Attic. Mayer, Mercer. 1992. London: Puffin.

Because Mom and Dad don't believe there's a monster in the attic, their cowgirl daughter lassos the critter to show them it's real.

Good Night, Dear Monster. Morris, Terry N. 1980. New York: Random House.

A little girl and her teddy bear come to a friendly truce with an overly friendly nighttime monster.

I Need My Monster. Noll, Amanda. 2009. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Flashlight Press.

Ethan has formed an affectionate attachment to his monster and can't fall asleep without it. One night when the monster goes fishing, Ethan summons a series of silly and scary substitutes, but none of them will do.

Alligator Boy. Rylant, Cynthia and Diane Goode. 2007. San Diego: Harcourt.

A boy is tired of being a boy and an alligator suit offers a new, green life.

Where the Wild Things Are. Sendak, Maurice. 1988. New York: Harper Collins.

Max learns to control his own monster—anger.

My Mama Says There Aren't Any Zombies, Ghosts, Vampires, Demons, Monsters, Fiends, Goblins or Things. Viorst, Judith. 1987. New York: Atheneum.

How can Nick be sure his mother is right about monsters, when she's wrong about other things?

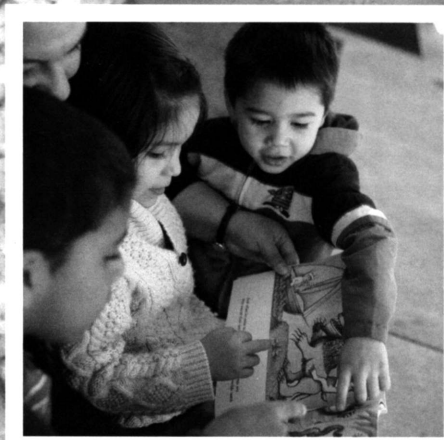
The Scariest Monster in the World. Weatherly, Lee. 2009. New York: Boxer Books/Sterling.

A monster that is always scaring the woodland animals comes down with the hiccups. It tries everything but ends up crying in frustration and learns to change his scary ways.

Leonardo, The Terrible Monster. Willems, Mo. 2005. New York: Hyperion.

Leonardo is a terrible monster—he can't scare anyone—but with considerable efforts he finds that being a friend is a better choice than scaring anyway.

E:



show stress—tightened muscles, shoulders raised, and clenched jaw—and then the opposite, relaxation—easy breathing, liquid muscles, and calm. Play a game that exaggerates the body's responses by calling out "Tense" or "Relax" at different times of the day. Encourage children to recognize their own body's responses to tension and the tricks they can use to relax.

Dramatic play

Invite children to make believe they are Mom and Dad tucking their child in bed to sleep. Pretend that the child is afraid of something under the bed. How can the parents help their child?

Show pictures of Carnival in Rio de Janeiro or Mardi Gras celebrations in New Orleans and other cities. Put on a costume and paint your face in front of the children. Ask: "How did I change how I look? Is this still me?" Talk about how actors in movies and TV shows sometimes wear costumes to look like someone or something else to tell an imaginary story.

Provide beads, hats, wigs, and scarves and invite children to dress up and stage a parade.

As children become comfortable with costumes, add masks. Face coverings are frequently frightening to children so proceed respectfully. The least scary mask is one that creates the illusion of disguise but allows full vision. Make one by bending a wire coat hanger into a large diamond shape. Curl the hook end into a circle and tape securely. Cover the diamond with old nylon stockings or knee-high socks. Look for colored or patterned nylons and add felt facial features as desired. Children can hold this mask away from their

faces—avoiding the claustrophobic feeling of traditional masks.

Music

What better way to smash out monsters than with a bit of song and dance. Encourage children to vividly describe their imaginary monsters before moving.

Monster dance

Obtain a recording of the 1960s dance hit “Monster Mash” through the Internet or your library. The lyrics are a takeoff of the Frankenstein story, and the dance uses the same squashing steps as the “Mashed Potatoes,” another 1960s hit.

Chant the refrain as you encourage children to dance, making faces and moving arms in creepy ways:

He did the mash.
He did the monster mash.
The monster mash
It was a graveyard smash.
He did the mash.
It caught on in a flash.
He did the mash.
He did the monster mash.

School-age children

Invite children to investigate legendary creatures such as Yeti, the Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas; the Golem, the protector of the Jews in 16th century Prague; and Nessie, the monster reputed to dwell in the Loch Ness in Scotland. Ask questions, such as:

- How did legends like these come about?
- Why are we interested in such stories?
- Do you think the strange creatures could be real or not?

Monster song

The book *If You're a Monster and You Know It* suggests singing the text to the tune “If You're Happy and You Know It.” Replace the words in the action lines from “clap your hands” to “snarl and growl” and other monster behavior.

Or use the same tune with different words such as “There’s a monster in the attic, and it growls. Grrrr Grrr.”

Art

Art activities can give children opportunities to explore their monster fears with curiosity and creativity. Encourage outrageous explorations that can help children master the monster.

Monster collage

Set out an assortment of construction paper scraps in varied colors along with scissors and paste. Encourage children to make a monster mask, poster, or collage.

Encourage children to create a monster of their own, not like one in a book or on TV. Ask: “How many eyes will it have?” “What color will it be?” “Will it have sharp teeth or claws?”

Monster sculpture

Make several batches of play dough and add food coloring to each to make varied colors. Encourage children to mold a monster of their own choosing.

Set out bits of aluminum foil, polystyrene packing chips, buttons or pebbles, ice cream sticks, pipe cleaners, yarn, and other craft items that children might use for monster eyes, hair, and claws.

Blocks

Where does the monster live? And what happens when we tear the house down?

Monster house

Invite children to build a monster house or cave. Encourage children to think about the size of the structure, openings such as doors and windows, and beds and other furnishings. Provide toy figures and vehicles as props.

Show children pictures of monster trucks (available through a quick search on the Internet). Point out the huge wheels and the trucks’ agility at driving over other vehicles. Suggest that the word *monster* often refers to a real object that is big and looks threatening.

Fearfulness—of monsters and of more realistic threats like bullies, barking dogs, and abandonment—is an expected and appropriate response to a world that is too big for a child to control. When you help children identify their fears and offer them techniques for taming scary monsters you provide vital tools for helping children regulate their emotional and social selves.

BUILDING A BUSINESS

Ten common bookkeeping mistakes of small businesses

Bookkeeping is a vital part of any business year-round, but it assumes added importance around income tax filing time. Preparing for tax filing sometimes reveals negligent habits and errors that can cost time and money.

Here's a list of 10 common errors that originally appeared online at www.AllBusiness.com, a subsidiary of Dun & Bradstreet. We've added suggestions for correcting these errors.

1 Forgetting to track reimbursable expenses.

Necessity often requires paying for items out of cash in one's wallet or by personal credit card. The mistake occurs in forgetting what's reimbursable, forgetting to get reimbursed, or waiting too long to request reimbursement.

Suggestion: Review with your bookkeeper what's reimbursable and what's not. Review credit card statements every month with an eye to business versus personal expenses. Make it a policy to reimburse yourself or staff every month for expenses

incurred during that month. Be aware that the IRS defines 60 days as a reasonable period for reimbursing expenses.

2 Not saving all receipts.

Receipts, even those for small amounts, provide backup documentation for the many deductions you can claim.

Suggestion: Make it a habit to retrieve receipts out of shopping bags when emptying them. Set aside an envelope for these receipts and file in a folder with other tax documents.

3 Not properly classifying employees.

Independent contractors and consultants are not regular employees, and different rules and regulations apply.

Suggestion: Have a separate category on the books for payments to non-employees. If you pay someone at least \$600 during the year for services, you must send the person IRS Form 1099-MISC.

4 Failing to communicate.

Bookkeepers are only as effective as the information they

receive. They need to know about all financial transactions, including occasional payouts for supplies, workshop fees, and bonuses.

Suggestion: Plan to communicate with your bookkeeper more often, not just at tax time.

5 Not reconciling the books with the bank statement every month.

Even though this is a fundamental part of sound bookkeeping practice, some small businesses neglect to do it or they do it improperly.

Suggestion: Make it a habit to reconcile the books with the statement when you receive it in the mail or online every month.

6 Not having backup.

Yes, we are moving toward the paperless office, but computer systems do sometimes develop glitches. In the event of an IRS audit, backup documentation is essential.

Suggestion: Store paper financial documents in a file cabinet or storage locker for at least three years. You may need to keep some documents longer; see www.irs.gov.

7 Not deducting sales taxes.

For child care facilities, this practice applies only if you sell products such as books and T-shirts. By not subtracting the sales tax from every sale, your total sales will be higher and you may pay more in income tax.

What your books can reveal

Remember that your books can reveal a great deal about your business. For example, they can show:

- How much is going out (expenses) compared with how much is coming in (parent fees and grants)
- Who is getting behind on their payments
- How much interest you're paying
- When you can raise salaries and by how much
- When you need to cut back on expenses
- When you can expect to buy new equipment or materials
- What trends are developing over time.

Suggestion: Provide receipts to buyers, and calculate the sales tax as the last item on the receipt. Save copies of the receipts and add up only the product amounts to determine the sales total.

8 Failing to record petty cash withdrawals. Petty cash can disappear quickly, and questions may arise about its spending.

Suggestion: Place blank petty cash withdrawal slips in the petty cash box, and set up a system in which every withdrawal requires a withdrawal slip. When the fund is used up, the slips should tally the original amount, and you can write a check to refill it.

9 Miscategorizing or over-categorizing expenses.

Often expenses are recorded in the wrong categories, or there are too many categories.

Suggestion: Use the categories established in general accounting standards. Ask your bookkeeper or accountant if you need assistance.

10 Doing it yourself.

Bookkeeping can be a simple process for a small business, but it does take time and focused attention.

Suggestion: Have a qualified accountant set up a bookkeeping system for you that's simple to maintain, or hire a competent, efficient bookkeeper.

For more information, see IRS Publication 535 *Business Expenses* and Publication 334 *Tax Guide for Small Business*.

Understanding immunizations

Child care programs and schools require children to have received certain immunizations on schedule. Staff and parents need to be informed about the importance of immunization and the basis for government regulation.

Be prepared to answer concerns by offering the following resources.

- American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org/immunization. AAP is the nation's professional organization of pediatricians.
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/vaccines. Its mission is to protect and promote the health of people and communities.
- Every Child By Two, www.ecbt.org and www.vaccinateyourbaby.org. Rosalynn Carter and Betty Bumpers founded this organization to encourage immunization of all children and educate the public.
- Immunization Action Coalition, www.immunize.org and www.vaccineinformation.org. This nonprofit organization collaborates with the CDC and receives financial support from it.
- National Network for Immunization Information, www.immunizationinfo.org. NNI is an affiliation of 10 professional health care organizations, including the American Medical Association.

Source: This list is taken from "Reliable Sources of Immunization Information: Where to go for answers!" published by the Immunization Action Coalition on its website.

Helping kinship caregivers

A growing number of grandparents and other non-parent relatives are raising children. The parents may not be able to care for their own children because of military service, unemployment, catastrophic illness, death, substance abuse, incarceration, teen pregnancy, family violence, or other reasons.

Kinship caregivers often need various kinds of support, from physical resources such as diapers and car safety seats to legal assistance on how to obtain medical care or whether to formally adopt a child. The issues can differ markedly from those faced when raising one's own children.

Besides providing child care, you can offer educational resources, help start a support group that meets in your facility, and collect toys, books, clothing, and equipment.

To learn more, visit these websites:

- Texas AgriLIFE Extension Service of Texas A&M University, <http://fcs.tamu.edu/families/aging/grg/leaders.php>. This program offers the downloadable 50-page *Kincare Primer*, which contains information on family law, school enrollment, and tax credits as well as tips on self-care and stress relief.
- The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), www.aarp.org/family/grandparenting. AARP offers information on gaining visitation privileges, bonding from a distance, and sharing a three-generation-household.

I DID IT ALL BY MYSELF

SCAFFOLDING TO DEVELOP PROBLEM-SOLVING AND SELF-HELP SKILLS IN YOUNG CHILDREN

by Tammy Lee

“Do you see a piece that might fit here?” the teacher asks the 2-year-old, pointing to an empty space.

The child looks at the pieces but doesn’t find the right one.

“Look over here,” the teacher says, indicating three pieces. “Can you find it now?”

The child chooses and correctly places the piece. She smiles with pride, “Look, I did it!”

Young children need assistance as they attempt new tasks and seek to master familiar ones. Teachers aid children in their efforts by scaffolding experiences, using a collection of strategies named for their resemblance to the temporary construction site structures (Wood, Bruner, and Ross 1976). By employing scaffolding techniques, educators help children achieve heights they otherwise could not reach, assisting in the construction of their understanding and the development of their abilities.

Adult scaffolding techniques have been shown to improve a child’s ability to complete a task (Morrissey and Brown 2009). The goal is to provide temporary support that will later be removed as the child acquires, and eventually masters, new skills.

This article will explore the concept of *scaffolding*, examining several scaffolding strategies commonly used with young children, and how early childhood professionals can use these techniques to help children develop problem-solving and self-help skills.

Scaffolding a child’s learning experiences

In his theory of child development, Lev Vygotsky proposed that learners have a zone of proximal development, a region where they acquire new skills more readily with the assistance of someone more knowledgeable than themselves (Berk 2001; Vygotsky 1962). Scaffolding techniques are the means by which the more knowledgeable other, a teacher, guides the learner within the learner’s own zone to reach a greater understanding and mastery of the task.

The skills are ones that adults and even peer tutors use constantly—and somewhat unconsciously—in the natural course of instruction. In certain ways, their implementation seems to be instinctive: Everyone from grandma to the babysitter uses scaffolding strategies to some degree when assisting young children.

Yet scaffolding strategies in the early childhood classroom must be intentional and well executed. To use such techniques effectively, teachers need to be aware of a child’s changing developmental status, knowing when and how to provide new tasks and structure, and helping the child learn new skills and abilities while still allowing a degree of autonomy (Berk and Winsler 1995; Kearn 2000).

Relevant research on scaffolding strategies includes several means that researchers and educators use to conceptualize the approaches (Anghileri 2006; Bodrova and Leong 2001; Lewis 2010). There are many ways to help children master their world, and the techniques often depend on the situation, subject

matter, and the ability level of the child in relation to the activity (Kearn 2000). Any one scaffolding strategy can be used to teach a number of skills pertaining to many different subjects and situations.

Developing problem-solving skills

As early childhood professionals, we spend our days teaching everything from hand washing to beginning math. Our goal is to help all children learn valuable life skills, such as dressing themselves and interacting with others, as well as skills necessary for success in elementary school, like reading comprehension and counting.

To prepare young children for later academic success, we focus on developing problem-solving skills, both in general and related to specific subjects, such as math. Three specific scaffolding strategies—organizing the environment, using appropriate cues to guide behaviors, and modeling—named by Lewis (2010) and Anghileri (2006) can help foster problem-solving skills.

Organize the environment. How we prepare our classroom helps promote student success by supporting their independent functioning. It encourages children to interact with their surroundings and the materials, allowing them to meet their own needs, solve their own problems, and make their own choices.

Having the environment ready for the children also decreases frustration levels as they work at their own pace, completing tasks independently. It is the teacher's job to limit and structure activities even before the children's arrival (Rogoff 1986).

Look around your classroom and ask yourself questions like these:

- Are scissors and paper available for artwork and cutting practice?
- Is the water table filled and sufficiently stocked with items for exploration?
- Have I provided the exact number of manipulatives needed to complete a self-correcting math activity?
- Are there enough books, puzzles, art materials, and other items to spark each child's interest and encourage self-directed learning?
- And the most important question: What am I doing in the classroom FOR the children that they can do on their own?

If the ultimate goal of scaffolding learning experiences is to allow children to achieve mastery, then we should be allowing young children to attempt and demonstrate such mastery as they interact within the prepared classroom environment.

Use appropriate verbal and visual cues. This scaffolding strategy may come in many forms, but the purpose is the same: Helping children come up with a correct answer or reach a specific conclusion. With this approach, the teacher is searching for the spark of recognition that will ignite and expand a child's understanding.

The teacher greets a child who was absent the day before. "We missed you yesterday," she says. "Where did you go?"

The child looks at her, but doesn't seem to understand.

"What did you do yesterday when you weren't at school?"

Again, there is no response.

"Did you go to see someone?"

"Yes," he says.

"Who did you go to see?"

"The doctor," he replies. "I got a sticker."

"Oh," says the teacher. "I see. You went to the doctor yesterday."

Here, the teacher is using verbal cues to help a child understand the concept of *yesterday*. She relates it to what he was doing when he was not in school the day before. In this situation, the teacher supplies most of the speech for the child. She takes a greater responsibility for the interaction. During their next interaction, she will expect more responsibility to be

**EVERYONE USES
SCAFFOLDING STRATEGIES
WHEN
ASSISTING YOUNG CHILDREN.**

shifted onto the child, as evidenced by his recall of events or understanding of *yesterday*.

In another example, the teacher uses verbal and visual cues to help the class represent place values and understand the concept of adding 1 to get the next number.

A teacher in a kindergarten classroom is helping students during calendar time. They are counting the days they've been in school.

"Yesterday was day 129. We used one group of 100, 2 tens, and 9 ones to make 129." The teacher holds each bundle of straws as she says the corresponding number. "What do we need to do to get the next number?"

A few children call out random numbers.

"We can't guess. There's something we need to DO. You need to MAKE the next number. We need to get..."

"One more straw," a child answers.

The teacher proceeds to add the straw representing that day, helping the children make another bundle of 10 to make 130.

SHOWING AND TELLING A CHILD ABOUT AN ACTIVITY IS NOT ENOUGH.

In both of the examples above, the teacher starts with an idea of what children already know and what they need to learn. As the learning experience unfolds, the teacher is constantly re-evaluating their knowledge, seeking to find the gaps that exist and trying to fill them. In this way, she helps children understand new concepts and reach their own conclusions about how to solve problems.

Model the thought process. Just as the young children in our care talk aloud to themselves to aid

learning, we can also be voicing our thoughts to help children learn to solve problems. Here, a teacher models the problem-solving process by verbalizing her own inner speech (Kearn 2000).

"Our recipe says that we need 1 cup of flour. I don't have a measuring cup that big. I have a half cup. What could I do with that? How many half cups would I need to make a whole cup?"

Several children give answers.

"I think 2 sounds right. When Matthew had the play dough earlier today, he gave Eli one-half. Then Matthew had 2 pieces: One for himself and one for his friend. So I think 2 half cups is the answer."

In this situation, the teacher provides an explanation and the answer. This represents a great degree of support. She can withdraw degrees of support as the children begin to comprehend and demonstrate the concept of *one-half* on their own. As the teacher voices her method of solving problems, she helps children think about thinking. She is teaching them how to state a problem, come up with probable solutions, weigh the choices, and come to a logical conclusion.

Developing self-help skills

In the early childhood classroom, children work to master life skills, such as proper hand washing, toileting, and dressing. Three scaffolding strategies listed by Lewis (2010) and Anghileri (2006) can be used to assist in the acquisition of self-help skills. These include supporting show-and-tell activities, simplifying the task, and giving feedback.

Show and tell. As children progress through school, they are increasingly able to complete activities based solely on verbal or written directions. This is not the case during early childhood, because young children need to have the desired activity demonstrated in order to facilitate their understanding. We can aid them in their acquisition of practical skills by modeling the activity.

A teacher helps a preschooler as he learns to tie his shoes. She talks about the task as she ties. "First, I take the shoestrings and cross them. Then, I wrap one around, put it through the hole, and pull. Next, I make bunny ears, leaving a long tail. Then I cross the loops, wrap one around, put it through the hole, and pull. All done!"

SCAFFOLDING KEEPS US FOCUSED ON THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF TEACHING.

Yet showing and telling a child about an activity is not enough. The teacher also relies upon feedback from the child. Scaffolding is a give-and-take process, a dance that takes place between the instructor and the learner. Simply showing and telling a young child about the task, while satisfying to the teacher, is static and often results in no true learning.

Teaching requires both awareness of the learner's needs and sensitivity to the learner's response to the instruction provided. For example, can the child in the vignette above now repeat what he has seen, verbally and physically? If not, then which parts does he struggle with? Such feedback is crucial to the learning process. It helps the teacher fill the gaps in the child's understanding.

Simplify the task. This occurs when we reduce the steps needed to complete an activity (Wood, et al. 1976). We can do this by either breaking the task into smaller parts or by reducing the choices available.

Like all toddlers, Peter is eager to help. He tries to clean up a group of scattered toys but gives up quickly because there are so many.

"May I help you?" asks the teacher, sitting down next to him on the floor. She hands him one toy at a time.

After a little help, he is able to remain focused, finishing on his own.

We also simplify the task when we verbally limit the choices for a child, such as by using multiple choice and yes-no questions. Often we begin with an open-ended or more difficult inquiry and then give options when the child is unable to understand or answer the question.

Additionally, teachers can use this scaffolding strategy to aid children in completing tasks that they would be completely unable to do on their own, such as baking a cake. In this case, we can break the task into smaller actions that a child can complete, perhaps measuring the flour or mixing the ingredients.

Give feedback. Responding to children's activities and behaviors is a staple of early childhood instruction. Yet the degree to which feedback is used often determines whether or not learning will occur.

The class is going outside. Maria puts her coat on the floor, pushes her arms through the sleeves, and flips it over her head. But once the coat is on, she realizes that it is upside down.

"Try again," the teacher says. "Make sure it's upside down on the floor. Touch the hood to your toes, like this."

Maria puts on her coat the right way.

"That worked!" the teacher responds. "You can put on your own coat now!"

Here the teacher neither puts the coat on for the child, nor helps too much. She uses the minimum amount of correction necessary to facilitate the child's success. The teacher allows the child to attempt the task, providing appropriate and helpful correction as she assists Maria in successfully putting on her own coat. The appropriate recognition of the child's success affirms the child's own abilities, encourages her to reflect on her accomplishment, and increases the probability that she will successfully attempt and complete the task again.

Implementing scaffolding strategies

While the strategies covered in this article are only a sampling of the scaffolding techniques available to educators, they provide a basis for understanding how to apply scaffolding in the early childhood setting. By examining our use of these approaches and their potential applications, we can improve our teaching and help young children gain understanding and mastery.

As we thoughtfully execute these strategies in our classrooms, we keep in mind three important aspects of effective scaffolding:

- Appropriate scaffolding takes into account the status of the learner, developmentally and in regard to their understanding of and ability to complete

the task. The teacher prompts and questions to find out what the child understands (Bedrova and Leong 1996).

- Explicit instruction is an essential element of any learning (Overall 2007). The use of scaffolding strategies is deliberate and well-planned, keeping the child's understanding and independent functioning as primary goals. The teacher times "the removal of the scaffolding to enhance the child's successful independent performance of the final behavior" (Bedrova and Leong 1996).
- Effective scaffolding keeps learners within their zone of proximal development (Bedrova and Leong 1996; Berk 1995). Teachers help children complete tasks that are only slightly above the level of those they can accomplish alone.

Stay focused on the goal

Scaffolding strategies are an integral part of instruction in the early childhood classroom. As educators, we need to be mindful of our implementation of these techniques, remaining attentive to feedback from the child, adjusting our teaching strategies accordingly. In this way, we can more effectively help children learn to problem solve and perform self-help skills, ushering them into greater understanding, increased mastery of tasks, and ultimately independent functioning.

Scaffolding keeps us focused on the ultimate goal of teaching: Hearing a child say, "Look! I did it all by myself."

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About the author

Tammy Utchek Lee, M.A., has earned degrees from Morehead State University, Illinois State University, and Wheaton College. She teaches kindergarten and preschool at Children's Christian Learning Center in Elk Grove Village, Ill. She networks with other teachers by presenting at various early childhood conferences in the Chicago area and offering her own, teacher-created classroom materials online.

STUDY GUIDE

In Texas, the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) regulates the training of people who work in home- and center-based facilities.

Must training meet criteria? DFPS recognizes clock hours or continuing education units (CEU) from various sources including 1) workshops offered by local school districts, colleges or universities, or child care licensing; 2) conferences; 3) self-instructional materials; and 4) planned learning opportunities. See minimum standards, §746.1317 for center-based care and §747.1315 for home-based care for further details.

All training must include specifically stated learning objectives; a curriculum, which includes experiential or applied activities; an assessment to determine whether the person has met the objectives; and a certificate of successful completion.

Does DFPS approve training resources or trainers for clock hours? No. It's your responsibility to obtain relevant training from reliable resources. DFPS does recommend, however, that you preview all training materials and ask trainers to verify their knowledge of the subject—both experience and education, and training qualifications.

What is instructor-led training? This is usually a class led by an instructor, who communicates and interacts with learners by answering questions, providing feedback, and offering guidance or information on resources. Advantages include getting a break from the isolation of your work, networking and support, sharing knowledge, and learning about different practices in early care and education.

What is self-instructional training? This is training in which an individual works alone, at her own pace, to complete lessons or modules without the direction, assistance, or feedback of an instructor. That is why CPR and first aid training cannot be obtained through self-instructional training.

DFPS limits the number of annual training hours you can obtain from self-instructional materials. Check your minimum standards for details on these limitations; for home-based care, see §747.1325. For center-based care, see §746.1327.

How do I verify training for DFPS? To be counted toward compliance with minimum standards, the trainer or training source should provide you with a certificate or letter showing: your name, date of the training, title or subject of the training, the trainer's name or the training source for self-instructional training, and the length of the training specified in clock hours, CEU's, or college credit hours.

Keep all documentation in a safe place like a file cabinet or personnel file. DFPS licensing representatives may ask to review self-instructional materials to ensure training criteria are met. Do not mail your documentation to child care licensing or to the *Texas Child Care Quarterly*.

Can I use Texas Child Care for self-instructional training?

Yes. DFPS will recognize two clock hours of self-instructional training credit from this issue, provided you do the following: 1. Review the checklist at right. 2. Study all articles that relate to your work with children. 3. Respond to the checklist with documented evidence (written descriptions, photographs, and charts, for example). Continue to study the article until you can provide documentation and answer "Yes" to each skill. 4. Attach a copy of the checklist or a cover page to your documentation. Be sure to include your name, the date you completed the documentation, and identify the issue and titles of the articles you studied.

Learning objectives and evaluation checklist

How to get more out of the outdoors (page 2)

- I can describe in writing at least three research findings that support outdoor play.
- I can describe in writing four guidelines for designing outdoor environments.
- I can document with lesson plans, photographs, and anecdotal records the ways in which I encourage active outdoor play.

Architectural monuments: Nine to know (page 10)

- I can describe in writing the ways in which I prepare, present, and evaluate activities I do with children.
- I can provide in writing a description of the history and significant facts about the construction of at least five of the monuments referenced in this article.
- I can document with lesson plans, portfolio entries, journals, and anecdotal records at least five activities designed to support *knowing* architectural monuments.

English language learners: Smoothing the transition (page 24)

- I can provide in writing at least three stories about how English language learners have impacted the social structure of my program.
- I can describe in writing the reasons behind the increase in the population of English language learners.
- I can provide in writing a description of the strategies for welcoming newcomers referenced in this article.

Talking with children about monsters (page 30)

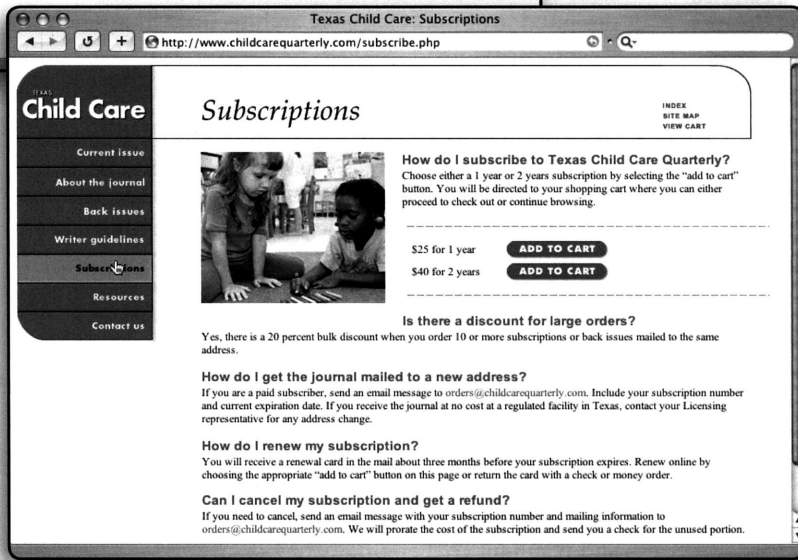
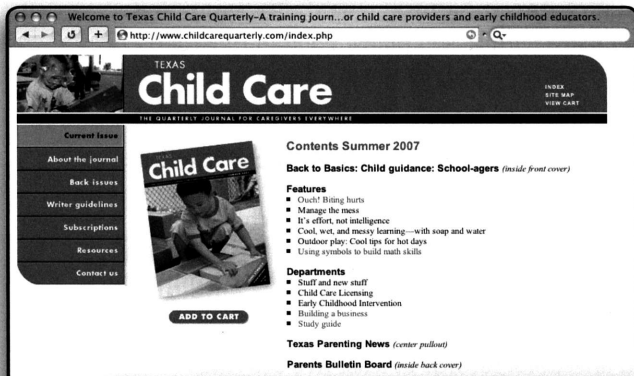
- I can describe in writing and give examples of at least three ways in which children are appropriately frightened and why this can happen.
- I can provide tip sheets and handouts I've used to help families understand how to minimize childhood fears and resultant challenging behaviors.
- I can document with photos, lesson plans, portfolio entries, journals, and anecdotal records children's participation in at least four activities described in this article.

I did it all by myself: Scaffolding to develop problem-solving and self-help skills in young children (page 38)

- I can provide in writing a definition, description, and three examples of *scaffolding*.
- I can list three strategic techniques for helping children develop problem-solving skills.
- I can document with photos, lesson plans, portfolio entries, journals, and anecdotal records the ways in which I promote children's independence by supporting the development of self-help skills.

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www.acei.org

Announcements

Google has just invited you to visit some of the world's premier art museums.

Art Project is a unique opportunity to visit—and help children visit—museums and thousands of online artworks. The system uses Street View technology so you can stroll through the museum galleries, select specific works of art, and explore the art through interactive features including custom zooming, information panels, and supportive YouTube videos. Further, the project allows you to save specific views of artworks and build a personalized collection—with your comments.

From your Google home page, type in Art Project to begin your discovery tour of color, line, and composition.

Special thanks

To the following for allowing us to take the photographs used in this issue.

University of Texas Child Development Center
Austin, Texas

A photograph of a young child with long hair, wearing a red t-shirt and dark pants, watering a garden. The child is holding a red watering can and pouring water into a raised garden bed. The garden bed contains various colorful flowers, including purple and pink ones. The background shows a paved area and some green foliage. The text 'SPRING GARDEN' is overlaid in large white letters across the middle of the image.

SPRING GARDEN

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