Every Child Learning Every Day

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READY TO LEARN

Books help talk about change

By Dr. Stan Steiner

Changes in young children's lives are worth talking about when they cause confusion, acting out or unsettled behavior. Here are some books to help the dialogue.

"Tall," by Jez Alborough, 2005, Candlewick Press. For little children feeling big or tall can change at a moment's notice depending on where you are standing. Bobo the little chimp learns about many ways he can be tall or small. A good book for learning about growth.

"Opposites," by Robert Crowther, 2005, Candlewick Press. This is a very clever interactive book to learn some basic opposites. The pleasing artwork combined with a well-planned format will even grab the attention of the adults.

"Dougal the Garbage Dump Bear," by Matt Dray, 2004/2005, Kane/Miller. This true adventure is about one bear found in a garbage dump that inspires a recycling project beyond your imagination.

"Things That Go: Baby Genius Series," 2005, DK Publishing. This series has great photos, simple text to read with children, and a sturdy format for solitary interaction by toddlers too.

"Leaf Man," Lois Ehlert, 2005, Harcourt. Fall brings on an array of leaf colors across the land. Somewhere in those piles of leaves is leaf man waiting to be discovered.

"Dear Baby: Letters from Your Big Brother," by Sarah Sullivan, 2005, Candlewick Press. Siblings have their good and bad moments, but that also is a matter of perspective. Big brother Mike puts his thoughts for the moment down in letters to his baby sister.

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Parents play important role in keeping preschoolers active

Dear Reader:

There is great concern in our state and nation about the physical well being of our children. Last month, we heard a robust discussion about whether physical education requirements in schools should be increased.

I believe that improving physical education is important and support this effort to ensure that children grow to be healthy adults.

Increasing expectations for schools does not diminish the roles families should play in encouraging physical activity in children.

And concerns are being raised about the activity level of preschoolers, too.

Two years ago, the National Association for Sports and Physical Fitness released guidelines for parents of toddlers and preschoolers. The guidelines encourage structured and nonstructured physical activity for young children. The guidelines advise parents to get the child moving if he or she has been sedentary, (not napping) for 60 minutes.

Dr. Marilyn Howard
Superintendent of Public Instruction

To help parents and early childhood education providers, we're including more information in this monthly newsletter.

Other steps families can take include:

Monitor time spent watching television and playing electronic games;

Walk around your neighborhood;

Do activities like housework or yard work together;

Consider signing your child up for a community sports, gym, or dance class.

More important, parents can be a good role model by turning off the television, getting off the couch, and joining in activities with children.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Get kids hopping with Jump the River activity

Physical Education (P.E.) Central is a website (www.pecentral.org) where educators share lesson plans for activities aimed at different age groups.

Name of activity — Jump the River

Purpose of activity —The purpose of this activity is to give children the opportunity to practice the skills of jumping and landing, while emphasizing swinging the arms when jumping, and landing in a balanced position without falling.

Materials needed — Something to jump over (jump rope, hoop, tape lines on the floor). Provide at least one object to jump over per child.

Description of activity— .

Conduct this activity in a large indoor or outdoor space with marked boundaries so that children know where they can and cannot move. Before beginning the activity, scatter the jump ropes or hoops throughout the space so they lie flat on the floor.

Explain to the children that they are taking a walk in the woods and may need to cross a stream or river. Ask children to walk throughout the space and when they come to a river (rope, hoop, or tape line on floor) they need to jump over the river without getting their feet wet.

Children should work independently of other children during this activity.

To assist children in learning the fundamentals of jumping, adults should initially ask children to take off on two feet and to swing their arms forward when they jump.

When landing, children should land on two feet spreading their feet about shoulder width apart so they have a wide base of support when they land. After landing children should proceed to and jump over the next river.

Emphasis should be placed on landing on both feet at the same time without falling over.

Give children plenty of time to move throughout the space and jump over all the rivers.

For safety reasons, suggest that children not get closer than two giant steps from each other, especially when they are swinging their arms to take off and when landing.

After 3 to 5 minutes of jumping, children may need a brief rest period (30 to 60 seconds) before continuing the activity.

SAFETY TIPS

Halloween tips for parents, kids

The National Safety Council has several tips to help parents ensure their children have a safe Halloween. For more tips visit: www.nsc.org.

Costume Design

Only fire-retardant materials should be used for costumes.

- Costumes should be loose so warm clothes can be worn underneath.
- Costumes should not be so long that they are a tripping hazard. (Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injuries on Halloween.)
- If children are allowed out after dark, outfits should be made with light-colored materials. Strips of retroreflective tape should be used to make children visible.

Face Design

- Masks can obstruct a child's vision. Use facial make-up instead.
- When buying special Halloween makeup, check for packages containing ingredients that are labeled "Made with U.S. Approved Color Additives," "Laboratory Tested," "Meets Federal Standards for Cosmetics," or "Non-Toxic."
- Follow manufacturer's instructions for application.
- If masks are worn, they should have nose and mouth openings and large eye holes.

Accessories

- Knives, swords and other accessories should be made from cardboard or flexible materials. Do not allow children to carry sharp objects.
- Bags or sacks carried by youngsters should be light-colored or trimmed with retroreflective tape if children are allowed out after dark.
- Carrying flashlights will help children see better and be seen more clearly.

NUTRITION

Try making these fun autumn snacks together

During this time of year when your older children go off to school you can encourage your young children to enjoy the cooler outside weather.

Playing in raked leaves and running and jumping in the crisp air is a fun way for them to get some healthy exercise and relaxation.

Suggest an afternoon walk in a nearby park or a scavenger hunt to look for leaves, branches, walnuts, or other natural treasures that are so plentiful in the fall.

For healthy snacks you can let your young children help prepare "Ants on a Penny" or "Fish in a Stream."

Ants on a Penny

To make "Ants on a Penny" slice apples to make five or six round slices from an apple leaving the peel on and seeds intact. Spread a tablespoon of peanut butter on one apple slice and then top with raisins. Young children can help spread the peanut butter and add the raisins.

Fish in a Stream

You can make "Fish in a Stream" by spreading cream cheese, or cheese spread, or peanut butter in a washed and dried stalk of celery.

Then let your young children press Goldfish crackers into the spread.

Let their imaginations guide their hands to make artwork that is fun to make and even better to eat.

Add a cold glass of milk and you have the perfect afternoon snack after a fun-filled playtime in the fall color of your yard or park.

SMART STARTS

Play matching exercises to help build reasoning skills

Studies show that when children play matching games, they are strengthening their reasoning skills.

Young children may subconsciously group similar items together, but it is difficult for them to explain why. You can play games with your child to help him develop his reasoning and communication skills.

Birth to 1 year

Show your baby different pictures. Your baby will be interested in new things, for example, a cat vs. a horse. He may not be as interested in a horse vs. a cow, because they may seem similar to him.

Talk to your baby about how the pictures are similar, and different; i.e., "The horse has four legs. The duck has wings and is yellow."

1 to 3 years old

Play matching games with your toddler. You can ask him to help you sort the clean laundry.

Separate the socks, show a striped or brightly colored sock, and ask your child if he can find the sock's mate. Sort the socks. Ask your child to explain why he thinks one pair belongs together, more than another.

If several pair are very similar, explain why you think they go together.

3 to 5 years old

Fold two pieces of paper in quarters. Give your child one sheet, and keep one for yourself.

Working on your own piece of paper, color in half of the page with imaginary flags, or other colorful drawings such as butterflies. Switch papers, and try to draw matching images. Have your child talk about his drawing with you.

Skills needed for kindergarten

Ability to recognize and group similar objects, and begin to explain how the group was made.

Books and other resources

"A Pair of Socks (Math Start Series, Matching, Level 1)", Stuart J. Murphy, HarperTrophy 1996; "All Mixed Up!: A Mixed-Up Matching Book", Julie Gukova, North-South Books, 2001.

RESOURCES

System supports children with emotional disturbances

Raising a child is not easy. If that child has a serious emotional disturbance (SED), every step toward adulthood can be an uphill climb. For a single parent or a family with little or no outside support, the climb can seem overwhelming. So it's not unusual for parents of children with SED to feel alone, helpless, and uncertain about which way to turn.

In communities throughout Idaho, caring people are coming together to help children with SED and their famlies make every step in life's journey a little easier.

This "system of care" is made up of individuals representing public and private organizations, such as mental health, education, business, juvenile justice, and parent-advocacy groups.

For more information about the Idaho System of Care and the services and support available in your area, call the Idaho Careline at 211 or 1 (800) 926-2588 or visit the new website at www.idahosystemofcare.org.

Parents also can contact the Idaho Federation of Families, an Idaho-based support organization for families with children affected by SED, on the web at www.idffcmh.org or by calling 1 (208) 433-8845.