

The Childhood Scene



A regional newsletter for early childhood professionals, parents and the community provided by Child Care Resource & Referral Region 16 serving Chatham, Harnett, Johnston, Lee and Wayne Counties

Autism – Early Diagnosis is Imperative!



“This year more children will be diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorder than AIDS, diabetes, and cancer combined”, stated Gerri Dawson, Ph.D. as she spoke on the topic “New Directions in Autism Research” in Chapel Hill. Dr. Dawson is Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Washington, Research Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the Chief Science Officer of the non-profit “Autism Speaks.” On April 22nd, professionals, families, and the general public were invited to attend a free lecture overview of the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder where they received the latest information on the causes, diagnosis, screening, and treatment approaches of the disorder.

Research shows that the prevalence of ASD is definitely increasing. In 2002, 1 in 150 children were being diagnosed with ASD. In 2009, two major studies showed that ASD affects 1 in 110 children of both sexes and 1 in 70 children if they are boys. That is a 57% increase in a short time period. Some suggestions have been made that more children are being diagnosed because the definition of the disorder has been broadened, but research suggests only 25% of the increase would be related to expanding the diagnostic criteria. Even though early diagnosis is important and the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends ASD screening for all children at eighteen and twenty-four months, it is often not being done; thus, the average age of diagnosis is 53 months or even later. It is critical that children are identified as early as possible. Some recent research (with children younger than 2 1/2) using the Early Start Denver Model, which combines applied behavioral analysis with relationship based approaches, has been shown to increase IQ up to 19 points. Children who are Black, Hispanic, or other non-White ethnicities are less likely to receive a diagnosis.

The exact cause of Autism Spectrum Disorder is still a mystery, but most scientists are convinced that ASD is multiple conditions with multiple causes and that people with ASD can have very mild symptoms to very severe symptoms. In 10-15% of diagnoses, there is an

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Region 16 Partners



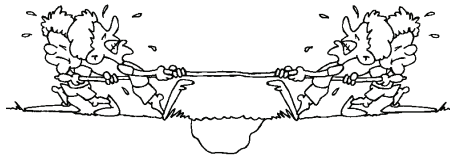
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Dear Miss Challenge:



Dear Miss Challenge,

I think modeling appropriate behavior is so important for children, but I see so many parents who don't seem to understand the significance of this. They are allowing their children to punch them with a closed fist or even bite them, and they do nothing about it. When their child says that a classmate hit them, some parents will boldly tell their child to hit them back or call their child a "weakling" because they did not hit back. Can you give me some parent-friendly information to share?

Sincerely,
Seeking True Models

Dear "Seeking True Models,"

I certainly do understand your concerns. The old motto, "do as I say, not as I do," doesn't mean much to children. Children are born prepared to form warm, healthy relationships, and these relationships form the basis for all other learning. Children, just minutes after birth, will turn their heads toward the familiar voice of their mother or father. Already they are listening for the rhythm and tone they have heard while in utero.

Children are born prepared to learn and they do learn a great deal in an incredibly short amount of time. They learn when it is appropriate to eat with fingers and when it is appropriate to use spoons; when it is appropriate to wear clothing and when it is

appropriate to wear pajamas. They learn all the rules of the family and culture in which they live. They learn that toys are shared, but not toothbrushes; it is acceptable to laugh at some things, but not at others; sometimes adults tease and sometimes they are serious. Infants and toddlers learn what behavior is expected of them through their relationships with family members and other caregivers.¹

Early experiences, including early relationships, can and do influence the physical architecture of the brain as they literally shape the neural connections in the infant's developing brain (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2005).

There is much literature that talks about the significance of warm, nurturing relationships in helping a child develop. There is also a lot of information that speaks to the importance of being a good role model for your child. "Show" me what to do is emphasized in teaching social emotional skills. Perhaps parents might find it helpful if you were to include one of the following articles in your program's newsletter: "Parents: Be Role Models for Your Children" (found at the National Mental Health Center website- <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/svp-0010/default.asp>) and another cute resource, the author of which I am unsure, entitled "When You Thought I Wasn't Looking" (<http://storiesinspirational.blogspot.com/2009/02/when-you-thought-i-wasnt-looking.html>). Also be certain to keep your parents informed about the problem solving skills on which you are working in class. That way if you have a good relationship with the parent and a statement like "did you hit him back?" comes out, you can say something like, "Dad, you know that in our classroom we stop, calm down, and think of a better solution than



hitting. (Share Tucker the Turtle with him). You should be proud of your son for being able to do this." Likewise if you see the child bite or hit the parent with his fist, you can step in and say to the child, "I know you are so excited to see Dad, but hitting (or biting) is not the best way to show that you love him. What would be a better way?" If these subtle reminders and hints do not work, then note the number of times you see it happen and schedule an appointment to talk to the parents.

I hope this information is helpful and that you find in your parents the "true" and effective role models you and your children need!

¹www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel, Research Synthesis Infant Mental Health and Early Care and Education Providers.

*Submitted by Pam Pace
Region 16 Behavior Specialist*

Why Do They Act That Way?

Some Autism/Learning and Behavior issues may be caused by toxicity in our environment.

Refer to the Regional training calendar for Chatham County's **Tox Free NC** training on **September 9, 2010!**

"Equipped with his five senses, man explores the universe around him and calls the adventure science."

Edwin Powell Hubble

"Young children spend their days exploring their environment with their five senses and we call this exploration PLAY."

Jacquelin Montgomery

Preparing Child Care Programs for Pandemic Influenza

, located at <http://www.aap.org/disasters/pandemic-flu-cc.cfm> is a web page created using the results from an AAP child care needs assessment and other resources.

The focus of this page is to offer training information and ideas for the child care community. The AAP is developing a more in-depth handout on the topic of pandemic preparedness and child care programs that will be released in the Fall of 2010.

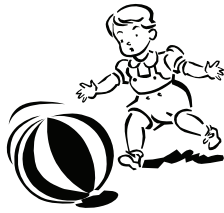
Just a reminder the AAP Children and Disasters Web site is a comprehensive source of information on AAP and other resources related to pediatric emergency preparedness. See <http://www.aap.org/disasters/index.cfm>.

Information provided by Laura Aird, MS, Manager, Disaster Preparedness, American Academy of Pediatrics.

NEWS FROM THE DCD

The rules now under consideration for adoption by the DCD will be reviewed by the Rules Review Committee in June and at the earliest will be effective July 1st. Once the rules are final, DCD will post the final rule text on the Division's web site at www.ncchildcare.net under What's New.

You can find a copy of the DCD's Summary of Rule Changes at www.Harnett.org/coop.



Infant and Toddler Time

Science Activities: Bubbles and then ... ?

Children love to watch iridescent soap bubbles magically float across the room or disappear as they drift away on a gentle breeze. This is a wonderful visual sensory experience. Without a doubt watching soap bubbles is the most popular science activity in infant-toddler rooms. When asked what other science/nature activities they do with children, most caregivers do not have a quick answer, but there are so many other simple science activities and ways to turn daily activities into science experiments that can provide meaningful sensory experiences for very young children.

Webster's defines science as "Knowledge, especially that gained through experience." Let's consider the word "knowledge." We use our senses to discover. Discovery is an initial step in the learning process. We must learn in order to build *knowledge*.

Everything is new and seems magical to children. Children begin to learn about the world around them through their senses. Discovery is one of a child's most important jobs. Being able to discover through personal exploration of the environment is one of the critical elements of social/emotional competence for infants and toddlers. When we provide sensory experiences along with words we are helping our young children learn about their environment and giving them the tools (words and ideas) to think, wonder about, and describe everything they see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. It is important to

remember that without words children cannot ask questions and asking questions is the key to understanding.

While on a stroller ride outside, infants will listen to their teachers talk about all they are actually seeing, hearing, and smelling. Walking on a cloudy day provides different objects and experiences to talk about than does taking a walk on a sunny morning. (Remember that a stroller walk is assessed on the ITERS-R as an opportunity to experience nature, but it is NOT considered active physical play outside.) Stroll slowly so children can focus on the world around them. Take time to pick up objects, let the children touch, "experience," and share words which describe the experience. For instance, leaves may feel fuzzy, rough, slick, slippery or crunchy. Use an appropriate word to describe the experience. (Hint: When infants are placed on a blanket outside providers can also share experiences.)

Even young infants observe movement. While indoors, mobiles catch their attention. Expand on outdoor experiences by bringing real objects or pictures of objects such as leaves, acorns, and flowers inside to be displayed on a mobile. Brightly colored windsocks, windmills, twirling sticks, and globes can be purchased at a dollar store and are sure to be noticed by little ones on a breezy day. Be sure to place one where children will see it while indoors. By standing with children at the window or in the play yard and talking about what you see, you are offering words to help them form descriptions of what they are observing. "What is happening outside? Our windmill is really moving today! It is spinning very fast. Do you think the wind is blowing hard outside?" Be sure with very young, non-verbal children that you ask the questions,

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 Infant and Toddler Time *Continued from Page 4*

pause, and then provide the answer for them.

For older children, allow time for them to look, think, and respond. If the object is not moving, it still provides an opportunity for learning. "Why isn't our windsock moving today? Do you think the wind is blowing outside? (Pause) I don't think the wind is blowing outside right now. If it was blowing the streamers on our sock would be moving. We will have to remember to look out later to see what is happening." In this way you can talk about clouds, leaves in the trees, rain, snow, birds, and even the squirrels. As children get older, they will be looking out the window to observe what is happening and they will have the words they need to share their discoveries with you.

"What is happening?" is an essential phrase to use when helping children to discover the world around them. There is always something happening and often that "something" is changing. While some changes take place quickly, others take place more slowly. We want children to notice the world around them. We need for them to become aware that things are happening and to understand exactly "what is happening?"

Planting a seed in a flower pot is a fun activity but if you place the pot in the sun and water the seed every day or so, you have a series of activities. If you look in the pot and ask, "Is anything happening?" every time you water the plant, you will encourage children to observe. When the first little green tip appears will the children notice it? Are they expecting to see something? If you ask, "What is happening?" you have changed an activity into a science/nature experience. It is important to keep bringing children back to the pot so that they see the many changes unfold day by day. Putting a sign in the pot which reads, "What is happening?" will help you remember that

you are not just growing a plant, but also helping children learn to watch for daily changes that occur as a plant grows (or the seasons change, etc.).

Stop and think about the ways and times you can ask children, "What is happening?" or "What happened?" You can turn a normal classroom activity into a moment of discovery just by asking such questions as: What happens when the blue paint mixes with the green paint? ... Does the same thing happen *every* time we mix those colors? What is happening when we spray water on the chalk drawings we made this morning on the sidewalk? What is happening when the chimes make a ringing sound? What is happening when we push the button on the toy? What is happening to the water we put in the freezer? What is happening when the ice cube sits outside on a sunny/snowy day? What happens when it rains outside?

Taste is also a sense — one that is often ignored. While we discourage activities using food, we can make interesting observations and teach many words during a meal. The other day I watched a teacher give her children a snack of saltine crackers, apple slices, and cheese. She did not quiz them about colors but she did talk to them about the sensory experiences they were having. She had everyone nibble the cracker like a mouse and chew, chew, chew. Then she said, "That cracker tastes *salty*. Do you know anything else that tastes salty?" She listened to the answers and then she had them nibble on the slice of apple. She had them chew and taste, chew and taste. She then said, "That apple tastes *sweet*. M-m-m. Does it taste sweet to you? (... *pause for answers* ...) What else tastes sweet to you?" Finally she had them nibble on their cheese. She had them chew and taste, chew and taste. "What does the cheese taste like to you?" Some said, "Sweet." Some said,

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The School Age Corner

An "Elastic" After School Program

Almost everyone has experienced being the last one chosen to be on a team, at least once in their lives, that sinking feeling of being left out of a group, the realization that you were the last choice; and that only by default did you become an addition to anyone's team. Now as adults and child care providers, there is something we can do to prevent children from suffering this same experience. What does your program do formally or informally to welcome all children, from all backgrounds and family situations? Do all your children feel supported, respected, *and* safe every day?

Kids Included Together (KIT) estimates that 11.9 % of children have some kind of disability, be it intellectual challenges, learning disabilities or behaviors that place them somewhere on the autism spectrum – or some other situation that may call for special consideration. As every child brings their unique set of traits, needs, interests, and abilities to the after school program, providers must take care to accommodate them.

A well-stocked program, with a reasonable schedule, which offers plenty of free choices will be well on its way towards accommodating a wide range of abilities and interests. But it takes more than materials and scheduling to create an atmosphere of true acceptance. Staff needs to step in to take an active role in helping to foster peer relationships between all children, no matter their differences.

Teaching tolerance is to also teach empathy and understanding. One of the

ways to help children relate to this ethic is to use the expression "elastic," something that can bend and expand to include everyone. For example, your list of "program rules or guidelines" can state that "all games are elastic" - that anyone who wants to play will be included. That would be an example of a formal mechanism to help children practice this ethic but sometimes real behavioral change within the group requires additional support from the teacher. The most powerful way to teach tolerance is for staff to model their own ability to accept diversity. As they say, children learn by what we do more than by what we say. Consider this description of "belonging":

"When inclusive practice is fully embraced, we abandon the idea that children have to become "normal" in order to contribute to the world. Instead we search for and nourish the gifts that are inherent in all people. We begin to look beyond typical ways of becoming valued members of the community, and in doing so begin to realize the achievable goal of providing all children with an authentic **sense of belonging.**"

(Norman Kunc 1992)

A check list for your program:

1. Are students with or without disabilities fully engaged in the activities?
2. Do students with disabilities have a role and are their contributions valued?
3. Are students with disabilities encouraged to participate to their maximum abilities?
4. Are provisions made to ensure that all children have high quality experiences?
5. Are peer relationships encouraged to develop naturally?

Some resources on inclusion:

- www.kitonline.org
- The National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities at www.nichcy.org
- National Organization on Disability at www.nod.org

*Submitted by Jan Waugh
Region 16 School Age Specialist*



Infant and Toddler Time

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“Salty.” Some said, “Cheesie.” Some said, “Mushy.” Some said, “Good.” The teacher smiled at all the answers. All the children were using words and thinking about this sensory experience. They were observing that different foods have different tastes and the teacher helped them observe the differences. This snack was a science activity. It was also nutritious and *fun!*

Children are born curious and spend every day exploring their environment with their senses. Thus we must provide (on a *daily basis*) sensory experiences, questions, and descriptive words that support and feed children’s natural curiosity—for curiosity is one of the building blocks for success in school.

What questions have you asked today? What questions are you planning to ask tomorrow so that your activities will become moments of discovery and science experiences for your little ones?

Some resources that might be helpful:

The Active Learning Series by D. Cryer, T. Harms, and B. Bourland from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, UNC at Chapel Hill, NC published by Dale Seymour Publications, Parsippany, New Jersey 1987 is a good series to use. These books, *Active Learning for Infants*, *Active Learning for Ones*, and *Active Learning for Twos* contain sections entitled, “Activities for Learning From the World Around Them.” Care should be taken not to use any activities that require food stuffs as materials, since that is now not encouraged.

*Submitted by Jacquelin Montgomery
Region 16 Infant Toddler Specialist*

Autism

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identifiable genetic link. Twenty-three autism risk genes have been identified. New genetic evidence is leading researchers to believe that Autism’s cause may reside in abnormalities at the synapse of the brain cells. Though it is not believed that one drug will produce a “cure,” experiments on animals with identified genes have shown great progress. But like most things even if the genetic link is present, contributing environmental factors also seem to play a role. Two major studies are in process to learn more — one is following siblings of autistic children and the other is following 100,000 children longitudinally from conception through adulthood. In these studies natural and man-made environmental factors, biological and chemical factors, physical surroundings and geographic locations, genetics, and social, cultural, and family influences are being studied.

What can we do as early childhood educators? The key is to build positive relationships with children and their parents from the time they enter our door. It is also important to discuss developmental milestones, observing children carefully and notifying their parents if you see “red flags.” Dr. Dawson encourages us to visit the autismspeaks.org website often and to let parents know about the site. There you will find “Red Flags for Autism,” “Developmental Milestones by Age,” “Talking to Parents about Autism” Action Kit, research information and much, much more.^{1,2}

¹Lecture notes Gerri Dawson, Ph.D., April 22, 2010, “New Directions in Autism Research.”

²2009 "Top Ten" List of Achievements in Autism Research, http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science_news/index.php.

*Submitted by Pam Pace
Region 16 Behavior Specialist*

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**Partnership for Children of Johnston County
Child Care Resource and Referral**

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**Coalition for Families
CCR&R Lee County**

507 N. Steele Street, Box 3
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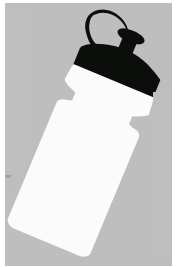


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Beat the Heat!



July: National Cell Phone Courtesy Month

National Anti-Boredom Month
National Ice Cream Month

- 3—Compliment Your Mirror Day
- 4—Independence Day
- Sidewalk Egg Frying Day
- 7—Chocolate Day
- 10—Teddy Bear Picnic Day
- 25—Parent's Day
- 30—Father-In-Law Day

August: Family Fun Month

National Picnic Month
National Smile Week (week 2)

- 3—National Watermelon Day
- 10—National S'mores Day
- 13—Left Handers' Day
- 16—National Tell a Joke Day
- 22—Be an Angel Day
- 30—National Marshmallow Toasting Day
- 31—National Trailmix Day

