

# The Childhood Scene



A regional newsletter for early childhood professionals, parents and the community provided by Child Care Resource & Referral Region 13 serving Chatham, Harnett, Johnston, Lee and Wayne Counties



## SLEEP: ARE THE CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE GETTING ENOUGH?



Soon daylight savings time will be coming to an end and the adults and children in your program will probably be feeling a bit “out of sync.” For some it will be only a minor thing, but for others it will take their body weeks to adjust to the new “clock time.”

Sleep is the power source that keeps your mind alert and calm. Every night and at every nap, sleep recharges the brain’s battery. Sleeping well increases brain power just as weight lifting builds stronger muscles, because sleeping well increases your attention span and allows you to be physically relaxed and mentally alert at the same time.<sup>1</sup>

So what defines “healthy sleep?” Dr. Michael Breus defines healthy sleep as:

a sufficient amount of sleep, uninterrupted (good quality) sleep, the proper number of age appropriate naps, and a sleep schedule that is in sync with the child’s natural biological rhythms.<sup>2</sup>

Even seemingly minor sleep deprivation causes fatigue in children. And for a child, simply being awake a certain amount of time is over-stimulating and fatiguing; even if the child is not engaged in any activity at all.<sup>3</sup>

Some children do not want to miss any of the action, so they “fight” sleep and try to remain awake and alert. Hormones like adrenaline are released and the child may become “hyper alert.” So the child appears “wide-awake” but is really exhausted.

Did you know that the average night time sleep need for ALL children between the ages of six months to five years is eleven hours? Think about the children that arrive at your

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### Region 13 Partners

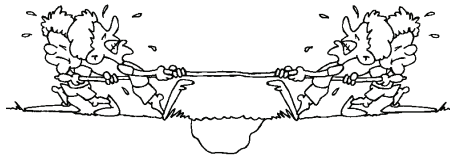


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## Dear Miss Challenge:



Dear Miss Challenge,

**I have a combined classroom of 3 to 5 year olds. Naptime is a very difficult time of the day for me. The children seem to get “revved up” just when it is time to lie down. Some are talking, some are trying to get off their cot, some begin to cry for their mother, and some never go to sleep. How can I make naptime go better in my classroom?**

Sincerely,  
Naptime struggler

Dear Naptime Struggler,

If you read the front page article on sleep, then you know how important nighttime sleep is, but naps are important also. If you look at the chart below, you can see “children’s average sleep needs” from the book, *The No-Cry Sleep Solution for Toddlers and Preschoolers: Gentle Ways to Stop Bedtime Battles and Improve Your Child’s Sleep* by Elizabeth Pantley. Three year olds typically need 1 to 1 1/2 hours of naptime; however, four and five year olds may need no nap or up to an hour of nap time. Of course, we know all children are unique, so there will be some variation. Moreover, the naptimes listed assume the children are getting at least 11 hours of sleep at night, which many are not. Thus having a mixture of ages and a mixture of children in your classroom who obtain different amounts of nighttime sleep may well lead to more struggles at naptime. Of course, sleep is not something that you as a teacher can control, but you can create an atmosphere more conducive to sleep or rest.

Here are some suggestions:

1. You may want to take your lunch after most of the children have settled down. Sometimes the teacher who rushes out of the classroom right at 12:00 noon leaves the children with someone they do not know as well. It is harder for children to relax when they are anxious.
2. Control your breathing. Speak in soft tones. Rub backs or stroke faces gently. If you are the only teacher in the room, go to the most difficult child first, then move to next. Ask for help from the director or another teacher.
3. Choose a good “naptime” book and read it every day. (I know one teacher who walks up and down the classroom among the cots reading a book.) Or choose an audio book and allow it to play for 15-20 minutes.
4. Have mom/dad/grandma or whoever puts the child to bed at night sleep in a t-shirt and let the child rest or nap while holding that shirt. Our body responds to smell on an emotional level.
5. Darken the room.
6. Select relaxing music. Classical music is great but some is very fast paced and not relaxing. Children’s songs work sometimes, but sometimes the children sing along with the music and it creates too much noise. Allow some children to listen to music through earphones, not just the regular CD player.
7. Practice relaxation techniques. For example, repeat to the children, “Close your eyes and remember this morning, your mommy, what she was wearing, your drive to school, your favorite activity this morning at



school, with your eyes closed draw a picture in the air.”

8. Have family pictures close by that the child can easily see or hold.

9. Have a puppet give special hugs and tuck in everyone.

10. Create shoe boxes or naptime bags filled with quiet activity items that non-sleepers or early risers can use. When you offer options but the child is constantly wanting a “new” option, set rules such as “you must keep one item until the big hand on the clock moves to the” whatever, or you can use a big sand timer (because it is quiet) if it lasts for at least 5 or 10 minutes.

I hope you find some of these suggestions helpful and that naptime becomes less of a struggle for you.

#### Children’s Average Sleep Needs as found in

*The No-Cry Sleep Solution for Toddlers and Preschoolers* by Elizabeth Pantley, 2005

Age	Number of Naps	Total Naptime Hours	Nighttime Sleep Hours	Total Sleep Per Day
6 months	2-3	3-4	10-11	14-15
12 months	1-2	2-3	11.5-12	13.5-14
18 months	1-2	2-3	11-12	13-14
2 years	1	1-2.5	11-12	13-13.5
2.5 years	1	1.5-2	11-11.5	13-13.5
3 years	1	1-1.5	11-11.5	12-13
4 years	0-1	0-1	11-11.5	11-12.5
5 years	0-1	0-1	11	11-12

*Submitted by Pam Pace  
Region 13 Behavior Specialist*

### **Reminder: Test Your Chemical Sanitizing Solutions!**

15A NCAC 18A .2812 (g): A testing method or equipment, used in accordance with the product manufacturer’s instructions, shall be made available, convenient, and regularly used to test the strengths of these chemical sanitizing solutions to ensure the prescribed concentrations are met.

Test strips are available from several vendors including:

Industrial Test Systems, Inc.

1875 Langston Street

Rock Hill, SC 29730

Toll Free: 800-861-9712

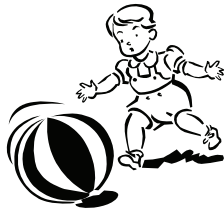
Local: 803-329-9712 Fax: 803-329-9743

Bailey’s Test Strips

Telephone: 888-685-8378

Email: sales@baileystst.com

<http://stores.baileysteststripsandthermometers.com/storeFront.bok>



## Infant and Toddler Time

What are children born knowing? We think nothing of the fact that we must teach children to throw balls, wash their hands, blow their noses and use spoons. Over and over again we patiently help them learn how to do these activities correctly.

Somehow we seem to forget that children are not born with the knowledge that he/she is supposed to sit in a chair. Often young children treat chairs as another toy in the room. Many enjoy pushing around chairs as if they were big cars or dump trucks. Saying "No" repeatedly can turn chair pushing into a favorite game. It is important that we teach children what we want them to do rather than focusing their attention on what we do not want them to do.

Once young children develop the muscle to sit up and support their bodies, it is time to help them begin to learn how to use chairs properly. Caregivers need to be prepared over and over again to take control and gently say, "Let's take the chair over to the table and find something interesting to do." This is the time to pull out an interesting activity that we know they will enjoy.

To help toddlers learn that they are supposed to sit in chairs, caregivers may set out interesting materials on a table each morning. Tabletop activities allow children to practice sitting in a chair and working at a table. Having a tabletop

activity ready each morning helps welcome children into the room and may support them through the difficult transition from parent care.

A large sheet of paper taped to the tabletop and a generous supply of crayons or markers can provide an opportunity for creating art one morning. If the caregiver draws streets and buildings, a piece of paper with a few cars and little people can engage children's imaginations at the beginning of another day. Puzzles, pop beads, Duplos, or flat pans containing sand and animals may capture attention as they arrive. A group of stacking toys or shape sorters can also be fun to explore.

Morning tabletop play is most effective when caregivers select materials that children can use on their own. Mornings are busy times, so inviting some children to play at the table may not only allow the caregiver to work with them, but also to talk with parents, get up to change a diaper, or help other children get involved in activities that they would enjoy.

Tabletop activities may be offered as one option to begin the day, but participation should not be required. Young children during these early years need to be allowed to make choices. Other activities need to be available. Free play with access to the toys in the room allows children to meet their own learning needs.

Some children may find it difficult to come in and sit at all while other children may find it difficult to sit for more than a few minutes. If children take part for only a brief period of time and then go on another activity, that is OK. Because it is



### Infant and Toddler Time *Cont'd from Page 4*

important to recognize how different children may behave, caregivers should allow those children who find it hard to sit in a chair to play, to stand at the table to play. The only time that children should be *required* to sit is when they are eating and drinking.

Allow children to request other materials to add to their tabletop play. Quality caregivers are always prepared to add materials to an activity to enhance the play for children. During the day a quality care provider might also set up different table top activities. These other activities will provide more choices and opportunities for children to practice sitting on chairs while working at a table.

Caregivers need to remember that chairs should not be stacked. Though stacking chairs is a wonderfully efficient way to clear a space for other activities, etc., a stack of chairs in the corner of the room can be attractive *and dangerous* to curious children. Children do not learn the correct way to use chairs when they are routinely stacked – they only learn when we provide them with appropriate opportunities.

The ITERS-R stresses the importance of having tables and chairs that “fit” the children in the classroom. The criteria for quality is that most children in the room should be able to sit with their backs against the back of the chairs and, at the same time, have their feet touch the floor. Children’s feet are not required to be flat on the floor to be considered a good “fit.” When children are well-balanced, they are better able to concentrate on what they are doing, and they are better coordinated.

Table size is also important. Most of the children should be able to sit without their knees touching the underside of the table while their elbows rest on the tabletop.

Toddlers who are able to support their trunks in an upright position should be seated in chairs that they are able to sit in and get out of on their own.

Harms, T. Cryer, D. and Clifford, R., *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition (Spiral)*, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, 2006., p. 13  
Notes of Clarification for items 5.2 and 7.2.

*Submitted by Jacquelin Montgomery  
Region 13 Infant Toddler Specialist*

### The “Summary of Rule Changes Effective July 1 and August 1, 2010 for Child Care Centers” is available online at [www.ncchildcare.net](http://www.ncchildcare.net).

These rules are “based on research reviewed on outdoor learning environments, quality activities for school-age care, and preventing obesity in young children.”

One new rule addresses “screen time”: “When screen time is provided it must be offered only as a free-choice activity, used to meet a developmental goal, and limited to no more than a total of 2 1/2 hours per week per child. Screen time includes, but is not limited to, television, videos, video games, and computer usage. Screen time usage periods may be extended for special events, projects, or occasions such as holiday or birthday celebrations. Screen time would be prohibited for children less than two years of age (Rules .0510, .0511 and .2508)”



## The School Age Corner

### Why Does After School Matter?

In the US, over half of the children of the 28 million working parents go home to an empty house. Imagine 14 million children going home alone ... no one to greet them, to offer them a snack or a friendly ear while they chat about their day ... no one is there to make sure they are not just watching TV or glued to the computer ... no one is there to guide them into positive pursuits like outdoor play and homework time.

Lucky are the families which have access to after school programs where parents can rest assured that their children are being kept safe and receiving the kind of support they need to do well socially, emotionally, academically, and physically.

A study done in 2007 by The McKnight Foundation showed that children who attend after school programs which are of high quality, are designed and staffed by professionals, and are based on youth development models, enjoy a wide variety of positive outcomes ranging from school success to better health. It further demonstrated that these programs have the greatest impact on those who need them the most, with a direct relationship between amount of time spent in after school programs and the benefit reaped. (The Harvard Family Research Project, 2006.) It would seem that any level of quality program is better than going home to an empty house, but there is a tipping point whereby the higher quality program produces higher outcomes for the child's overall wellbeing.

When starting a program, or improving the one you have, it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. There are many easily accessible web sites that have enormous amounts of information ranging from staffing, parental involvement, program environment, and many great activity ideas.

**For starting and funding a program** — and more — check out NCCAP (North Carolina Center for After school Programs.) They have many helpful ideas and define quality as including the following:

- Providing a balance of academic, recreation, arts, and enrichment activities
- Placing a priority on quality staff
- Engaging parents
- Respecting and responding to cultural and economic differences
- Being accessible to all
- Fostering school and community links
- Creating safe environments
- Evaluating program effectiveness
- Seeking and incorporating effective practices

**Two other very good places to find wide-ranging after school information** are [www.afterschool.gov](http://www.afterschool.gov), and [www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org).

**For creative activity ideas** ranging from art projects to outdoor play activities go to [www.familyeducation.com](http://www.familyeducation.com). This site contains seasonal and special themed project ideas that can be easily done without great expense.

In short, it is not particularly difficult to create an optimum after school environment. It does, however, require a lot of energy and a commitment towards school-agers that is akin to a philosophy or "mission" of wanting to give these children what may well be the best three hours of their day.

*Submitted by Jan Waugh  
Region 13 School Age Specialist*



## Sleep ...

*Continued from Page 1*

program at 6:00 a.m. and remain there until almost 6:00 p.m. In order to get eleven hours of sleep, they **should be asleep by 6:00 p.m.**, assuming they have to awaken at 5:00 a.m. to arrive that early at your place. Of course after they are picked up, there are typically lots of things that have to be done — errands to run, groceries to buy, dinner to make or pick up, sports or other extracurricular activities to attend, play time, and bath time. So what time do you think they are finally settling into bed and what time are they finally going to sleep?

Various studies have concluded that:

- “Children do not “outgrow” sleep problems: problems must be solved.
- Children who sleep longer during the day have longer attention spans.
- Babies who sleep less in the daytime appear more fitful and socially demanding, and they are less able to entertain or amuse themselves.
- Toddlers who sleep more are more fun to be around, more sociable, and less demanding. Children who sleep less can behave somewhat like hyperactive children.
- Small but constant deficits in sleep over time tend to have escalating and perhaps long term effects on brain function.
- Children with higher IQ’s in every age group studied were found to have slept longer.
- For ADHD children, improvements in sleep dramatically improved peer relations and classroom performance.
- Healthy sleep positively affects neurologic development and appears to be the right medicine for the prevention of many learning and behavioral problems.”<sup>4</sup>

Further evidence regarding the importance of sleep was just released June 2010. As part of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study the birth cohort assessed over 8,000 four

year old children. “Results indicated that among sleep habits, having a regular bedtime was the most consistent predictor of positive developmental outcomes at 4 years of age. Scores for receptive and expressive language, phonological awareness, literacy and early math abilities were higher in children whose parents reported having rules about what time their child goes to bed. Having an earlier bedtime also was predictive of higher scores for most developmental measures.”<sup>5</sup>

What can you do as a teacher? As always, first build relationships with parents. Help parents feel comfortable sharing information with you about the child’s bedtime routine. Offer suggestions if the parent says that they have a difficult time getting the child to sleep, and at an appropriate time, pass information from this article (and other helpful publications) along to parents. Make sure that naptime is a consistent and calming time. Besides the average eleven hours of sleep that children need at nighttime, naps are still needed by *most* children.

<sup>1</sup>Weissbluth, Marc., M.D. *Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child*. 3rd ed., Rev. New York: The Random House Publishing Group, 2003. Print.

<sup>2</sup>Breus, Ph.D, M.D., Michael. "Sleep Disorders Guide." *WebMD*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Aug 2010. <[www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/good-sound-sleep-for-children](http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/good-sound-sleep-for-children)>.

<sup>3</sup>same as above.

<sup>4</sup>Ezzo, Gary, and Robert Bucknam. “Sleep Disorders Guide.” *WebMD*. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Aug 2010. <<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/good-sound-sleep-for-children?page=3>>.

<sup>5</sup>"Study Links Regular Bedtimes to Better Language, Reading and Math Skills in Preschool Children." American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 5/18/2010. Web. 5 Aug 2010. <<http://www.aasmnet.org/Articles.aspx?id=1707>>.

*Submitted by Pam Pace  
Region 13 Behavior Specialist*

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Chatham County**

P.O. Box 1531  
Pittsboro, NC 27312  
(919) 542-6644



**Harnett County  
Child Care Resource & Referral**

P.O. Box 1089  
Lillington, NC 27546  
(910) 893-7597



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

1406-A S. Pollock Street  
Selma, NC 27576  
(919) 202-4893



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

507 N. Steele Street, Box 3  
Sanford, NC 27330  
(919) 776-7157



**Partnership for Children of Wayne County  
Child Care Resource & Referral**

800 N. William Street  
Goldsboro, NC 27530  
(919) 735-3371



# Jumping into Fall



**September:** Hispanic Heritage Month  
National Courtesy Month  
Baby Safety Month  
Self Improvement Month  
Better Breakfast Month

6—Labor Day  
12—Grandparents Day  
17—Constitution Day  
24—Native American Day

**October:** Computer Learning Month  
Cookie Month  
Domestic Violence Awareness Month  
National Pizza Month  
National Popcorn Popping Month

1—International Day for the Elderly  
11—Columbus Day *observed*  
16—Boss's Day  
31—Halloween

