

Preschool Programs

The Monthly Newsletter on Programs for Early Childhood Development

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SLANTS & TRENDS

Address Diversity, Promote Anti-Bias Behavior By Celebrating Differences

Why? It's never too early to tackle prejudice, experts claim

Young children aren't blind to people's differences, and you know from experience that they usually aren't shy about bluntly addressing differences either. Instead of shying away from sensitive topics like gender and cultural identity, prevent prejudice now by incorporating anti-bias lessons into your pre-school program.

The **A World of Difference Institute**, sponsored by the **Anti-Defamation League's** (ADL) Miller Early Childhood Initiative, is gaining momentum. Fourteen cities use the Institute to train teachers on diversity education, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Why now? Prejudice and bias are learned, and the pre-k years are when these lessons begin. Lasting impressions start to form after age two — and one study showed that half of children formed racial biases by age six, said **Linda A. Santora** of ADL in the *LA Times* article.

Goal: The Institute's curriculum teaches children acceptance of differences ranging from gender to race to physical attributes, respect for others and inclusion. "We know that biases and stereotyping are seeping in even at this [young] age, but this is meant to be a preventative approach, not as much countering negative messages as building positive ones," **Lindsay Friedman** of A World of Difference Institute told the *LA Times*.

Prejudice Ed Needs To Continue At Home

A child's family is just as influential as his or her preschool program's teachers. You should extend prejudice and anti-bias education to parents so they can reinforce your lessons at home.

Myth: You may be tempted to combat prejudice by focusing on similarities among people instead of discussing their differences, thinking that discussing differences actually reinforces prejudice.

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SLANTS & TRENDS

5 Tips To Create An Anti-Bias Pre-K Program Environment

Hint: Pass on these guidelines to parents, too

Despite your best efforts, you and your staff may be inadvertently encouraging stereotypes and prejudice in your preschool program. Use these tips from the **Anti-Defamation League (ADL)** to take a good look at what kind of environment you're creating — and then distribute the tips to parents so they can scrutinize children's home environments too.

- Use a variety of materials and diverse images when decorating your classroom.
- Play music with words in different languages.
- Introduce games from all parts of the world.
- Design art projects that touch on different cultural traditions.
- Use storytelling to introduce children to new cultures.

Source: These tips were compiled from the ADL website article titled "Talking to your Children about Hatred and Prejudice." Read more by going to: www.adl.org/issue_education/hateprejudice/print.asp. ■

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Fact: You shouldn't avoid discussing differences for fear of increasing prejudice.

Children start asking you to explain differences at the early by age three or four, according to an ADL article titled "Talking to your Child about Hatred and Prejudice." If you don't teach children about differences in expression, language and physical appearance, they may become uncomfortable or afraid of people they perceive as different.

Also, focusing solely on similarities can lead to an implied exclusion of anyone the child doesn't see as similar, explains ADL.

Caution: The most important part of reinforcing hate-free behavior in children is to encourage parents to look at themselves and their own actions. Their example should mimic their words, or children will receive mixed messages that may actually reinforce prejudice, warns ADL.

Resource: Read the ADL article "Talking to your Child about Hatred and Prejudice" online at www.adl.org/issue_education/hateprejudice/print.asp. You can also find anti-bias education information online on the **Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP)** website at www.cdrpc.com/educat_resources_curriculum.html. ■

Upcoming Live Audio Conference

September 27, 2007 at 1:00 p.m. ET

Speaker: Shelley Maberry

PROGRAM EVALUATION EXCELLENCE: HOW TO GET RESULTS — AND THE \$\$ TO SUPPORT THEM

What: Whatever goal you set for your school or facility, your best bet to reaching it is to perform an effective program evaluation upfront.

Why? Grant administrators weigh evaluation heavily in their decisions, which means your funding, not to mention administrative and logistical success, rests on starting with a strong vision for the future.

Who: This session is appropriate for both beginning and intermediate grant professionals, and will have relevance for both writers and administrators alike.

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TEACHING STRATEGIES

Playgrounds Are More Than Child's Play — Learn To Exercise Minds, Too

Your playground might be secure, but is it stimulating?

Most preschool programs and day care facilities include a certain amount of outdoor playtime in their curriculum. Here's how to make sure your playground is not just safe, but also promotes mental stimulation and creativity.

Rightly, your primary concern about children's outdoor environment is physical safety. Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat about 200,000 children for injuries that happen on the playground, according to the **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)**. (See inset, "Public Playground Safety Checklist," for more information on keeping kids safe outdoors). However, safe outdoor play can also boost children's learning — and that's a key priority, too.

Play Can Be Educational

Beyond safety concerns, you should take advantage of outdoor playtime as a chance to work on cognition, motor skills and social skills.

A panel of experts on child development, landscape architecture and health and safety, organized by **Karen DeBord**, a professor at **North Carolina State University**, put together a tool (The Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale, or POEMS) that helps schools assess the overall quality of their outdoor environments, including safety, creative stimulation and even the teacher's role in playtime, according to the **Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERnet)**. The researchers have identified high-quality playgrounds as ones that include constructive play that encourages building, exploring and hypothesizing.

Tip: Rather than seeing outdoor time as an escape from the classroom, try thinking of it as part of the curriculum. That way you can work playtime into the projects taking place in the classroom.

Example: A lesson about spring can easily be brought outdoors where teachers can offer children shovels, seeds and dirt, as well as magnifying glasses and collecting trays, to help them explore and participate in the season, suggests the **North Carolina Cooperative**

Extension Service guidebook "Making the Most of Outdoor Time with Preschool Children."

Resource: Download "Making the Most of Outdoor Time with Preschool Children" at www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/human/pubs/FCS507.pdf. You can order the POEMS assessment, published by **Kaplan Early Learning Company** in 2005, at www.kaplanco.com. The tool includes playground recommendations broken down into five categories: Physical Environment, Interactions, Play and Learning Settings, Program and Teacher/Caregiver Role. ■

Public Playground Safety Checklist

- ✓ Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel — or that there are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
- ✓ Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
- ✓ Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
- ✓ Check for dangerous hardware, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.
- ✓ Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- ✓ Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
- ✓ Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps and rocks.
- ✓ Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
- ✓ Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.
- ✓ Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they're safe.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission; www.cpsc.gov. ■

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Find A Treasure Trove Of Free Books In Online Swap

You can even direct donated funds to fill your shelves with traded books

Money is an obstacle for most literacy programs because there never seems to be enough to match the demand for lit services. Now you can ditch the bookstore and begin trading books with other online book junkies — for your students and for tutors who need classroom resources.

The newest online reading trend is book-swapping websites that allow users to offer up their own books to other members, and then request books they'd like to receive in return. Many of these services offer free membership. You only need to pay the shipping to send your books to other members (who in turn pay shipping to mail books you request from them).

How it works: Once you sign up, you post which books you're willing to give up. Then, the service emails you when a member requests one of your books, and you ship the book. For each book that you ship, you receive

one point that you can then redeem by requesting a book from another member.

Great idea: Many of these book-swapping sites encourage nonprofit organizations, public libraries and schools to register as charities. Once you register your lit program as a charity, website members can donate points to your account — which means free books!

Bonus: Many teachers like book swapping online because the sites often include community discussions. "It's a big community system with forums where people can trade ideas and discuss things they are teaching and thought about teaching," **Stephanie Hyatt**, ninth-grade English teacher, told *Teacher Magazine* about **PaperBackSwap**.

Popular services: There are several websites that offer book trading, and many of them offer the same service to trade CDs, DVDs, video games and more. A few popular exclusively book swapping websites include:

- PaperBackSwap (www.paperbackswap.com);
- BookMooch (www.bookmooch.com);
- FrugalReader (www.frugalreader.com); and
- BookIns (www.bookins.com).

Con: Because these websites rely on the postal service — and you're requesting books from people in all different locations — the trades can be slow, according to *Teacher Magazine*. ■

TIP

Share more than books: The book-swapping websites offer "a big community system with forums where people can trade ideas and discuss things they are teaching and thought about teaching."

— **Stephanie Hyatt, teacher**

CALENDAR

November 7- 10

The **National Association for the Education of Young Children** will hold its 2007 Annual Conference and Expo in Chicago. **Details:** This event offers professional development opportunities for early childhood educators and administrators, as well as those working in training programs for early childhood professionals.

Contact: www.annualconference.naeyc.org.

December 14 - 18

The **National Head Start Association** will hold its 24th Annual Parent Training Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Contact: www.nhsa.org/training/Parent/index.ht. ■

ESL CORNER

Arizona Causes Stir By Kicking Up ELL Instruction To 4 Hours A Day

Critics fear social isolation, lag in core subject areas

English language learners (ELLs) in the public school system deal with a difficult conundrum. They must learn English while also trying to keep up with other subjects, such as math and social sciences. Arizona thinks concentrated English instruction is the answer.

Starting this fall, ELLs in K-12 Arizona schools will get four hours a day of segregated English instruction that focus on grammar, phonetics, conversation, reading and writing — as opposed to the hour a day they've currently been receiving — according to a July 14 article in *The Arizona Republic*.

State involvement: The English instruction changes are a result of a state law passed last summer. Any school that takes on this change will receive state funding to reimburse the school for the costs of implementing the program, such as teacher training, curriculum changes and class scheduling, reports *The Arizona Republic*.

Pros: Officials who support the new instruction point to a structured, focused curriculum with a consistent language-learning model. They hope that the intense instruction will help students learn the language in only a year or two so they can quickly move on to master other subjects without language barriers, according to the article.

ELLs fall behind once they get past primary grades, and that reflects in their state test scores, Phoenix's Cartwright School District superintendent, **Mike Martinez**, told *The Arizona Republic*. Martinez hopes this approach will correct that negative trend.

Objections: Not everyone is thrilled about the switch to four-hour English instruction. Critics say that ELLs shouldn't be socially segregated and that their studies in other subjects will suffer. ■

RESOURCES

Handpick Safe Toys For Your Tots

Mattel recall spotlights potential playtime dangers

In light of the recent recalls by **Mattel Inc.**, you may be feeling extra cautious about stocking your playrooms with safe toys. Surely parents are hoping you are.

The news: Mattel is recalling 1.5 million products due to fear that they may contain "excessive levels" of lead, *Bloomberg News* recently reported. The potentially dangerous products include Dora the Explorer and Sesame Street toys made in China, as well as a number of **Fisher Price** products.

► Find details at <http://service.mattel.com>.

Tips: The **U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission** recommends checking toys for "sturdy construction" and avoiding those with small, easily detachable parts or sharp edges or points — especially for children under the age of eight.

► Read further federal guidance on selecting safe and age-appropriate toys at www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prhtml06/06041.html.

For more information on proper toy selection, check out the following resources:

► The "Learning Pages" at **LiveandLearn.com** offer links to toy recall news and a guide to choosing safe toys (www.liveandlearn.com/safetoy.html).

► **KidsHealth** offers tips in the article, "Choosing Safe Toys," at www.kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/safe_toys.html.

► The **Virginia Cooperative Extension** presents a series of toy selection guides based on age at www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/family/350-063/350-063.html. ■

FUNDING

\$8M Grant Goes To Autistic Students' Education

Researchers to compare TEACCH and LEAP program models

Autistic children and education professionals who work with them will benefit from a research project being launched by the **University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**.

The school has received an \$8 million grant to carry out two related projects: One will investigate the efficacy of two types of preschool education programs for children with autism spectrum disorders, and the other will “create a professional-development center that will produce more teachers prepared to teach students” with autism, reports *Education Week*.

Preschool programs: Over four years, the preschool programs investigation will assess 350 to 400 children across several states, focusing on two main types of programs. One type, known as Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children (TEACCH), uses highly predictable routines and minimized distractions to accommodate autistic children's needs, the article explains.

The other type of program, called Learning Experiences — An Alternative Program for Preschoolers and Parents (LEAP), takes more of an inclusion approach and focuses on regular early-childhood learning activities with help from non-autistic peers.

What's the urgency? Because of the increasing prevalence of autism spectrum disorders, “school systems are very much under pressure to show they're providing effective programs,” stated **Samuel L. Odom** in the article. Odom is executive director of the **Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute**, which will be conducting the research.

Teacher training: The second part of the university's research involves creation of a professional-development center to “provide targeted assistance to 12 states,” the article says. The center will invite districts to share effective teaching practices and will eventually create nationwide “teaching modules” and online teacher training resources. ■

HEALTH

Keep Parents In The Loop About Chickenpox Outbreaks

Watch out: Mild cases may go undetected, allowing the disease to spread

Thanks to the chickenpox (or varicella) vaccine, fewer children come down with the itchy, scratchy rash. However, those who do may unknowingly spread their germs to other kids if you don't include parents in your vigilant watch for telltale signs of the disease.

Good news: Although the chickenpox vaccine is not 100 percent effective in preventing the disease, about 8 to 9 out of every 10 people who are vaccinated are completely protected, according to the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** (CDC). Plus, “the vaccine almost always prevents against severe disease,” meaning that those who do get the chickenpox despite having been vaccinated usually experience mild cases that last only a few days and involve fewer “pox,” mild or no fever and few other symptoms, the CDC details.

The problem: The flipside of these positives, however, is that the mild symptoms may make it difficult for parents and your staff to detect a chickenpox occurrence and therefore more challenging for you to protect other children from a disease outbreak — unless you know what to look for.

Telltale signs of a common case of chickenpox in a vaccinated child, according to the CDC, include:

- often less than 50 pox, rather than hundreds, and
- pox that resemble bug bites, rather than what you might expect — fluid-filled blisters.

Children with chickenpox are contagious for one to two days before the rash even appears and until the skin lesions have formed scabs, the CDC details. Plus, it can

continued on next page

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

► ***Want some cash to support your students — and include their parents in their education?***

Lowe's Charitable and Educational Foundation (LCEF) is distributing grants to schools and parent groups that emphasize improving programs in which parents and teachers work together to benefit the community. Schools and parent programs are encouraged to submit any project proposal that will meet this goal.

Award: \$2,000-5,000

Eligibility: Any nonprofit public school or parent group with a 501c(3) tax status.

Deadline: October 12, 2007

Contact: LCEF, 1-800-644-3561 ext. 210, <http://toolboxforeducation.com>

► ***Are your low-income students in need of some new books?***

The **NEA Foundation's** "Books Across America Library Books Awards" offers a leg up to public schools serving economically disadvantaged students. Awards will go toward the purchase of books for school libraries.

Award: \$1,000

Eligibility: Pre-K-12 school librarians, teachers or education support professionals in a public school where at least 70 percent of students are eligible for the free/reduced-price lunch program.

Deadline: November 12, 2007

Contact: www.neafoundation.org/programs/BAA_2007.htm

► ***Looking to spread a little sunshine around your learning environment?***

The **Home Depot Youth Garden Grants** focus on providing students with life lessons from working in gardens and habitats. Child-centered garden programs seeking funds should emphasize one or more of the following elements in the grant application: educational focus and/or curricular ties; nutrition or plant-to-food connections; environmental awareness/education; entrepreneurship; and social aspects of gardening such as leadership development, team building, community support or service-learning.

Award: \$250-\$500

Eligibility: Schools, youth groups, community centers, camps and other similar groups throughout the U.S. Applicants must plan to garden with at least 15 children between the ages of three and 18 years.

Deadline: November 1, 2007

Contact: www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp ■

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take 10-20 days after exposure for a child to come down with the disease. Chickenpox spreads from child to child in the following ways:

- direct contact; or
- through the air (e.g., via a cough or sneeze).

Caution: While most chickenpox cases are mild for vaccinated children, make sure parents understand that there still exists a risk of serious illness. Approximately 25 to 30 percent of those who have had the vaccine and still get sick "will develop illness as serious as unvaccinated children," says the CDC. That's why it's important to take outbreaks of the disease seriously and focus on prevention even if all the children in your program have been vaccinated.

Take action: If you do spot a child with chickenpox in your school, be sure to alert all parents and inform them of the proper steps to take following exposure to the disease.

For instance, the CDC recommends that children exposed to chickenpox receive the vaccine as soon as possible. "There is evidence that the vaccine may prevent illness or reduce the seriousness of the disease, if given within 3 to 5 days following exposure," the agency notes.

Resource: For more chickenpox information you can use to educate your staff and parents, see the Q & A document created by the **Immunization Action Coalition** at: www.immunize.org/catg.d/p4202.pdf. ■

BRIEFLY NOTED

NCLB STEALING TIME FROM OTHER SUBJECTS, REPORT CHARGES

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) tests performance on math and reading. A recent report reveals that this focus might leave other important studies out in the cold.

Math and reading subjects are taking time away from the subjects NCLB doesn't test, such as science, social studies, music and art, claims a **Center on Education Policy** (CEP) report titled "Choices, Changes, and Challenges: Curriculum and Instruction in the NCLB Era." Out of the 350 school districts surveyed, 44 percent admitted reducing time spent on subjects and activities outside of math and reading at the elementary level — a difference of about 30 minutes a day, according to a July 25 CEP release.

More bad news: In addition to throwing curriculums off balance, many of the school districts surveyed said teaching was adjusted to better prepare for content on state tests.

Resource: Read the report at www.cep-dc.org.

STATS REVEAL LINK BETWEEN INCOME AND PRE-K SUCCESS

The connection between wealth, preschool attendance and academic success has once again been proven.

San Francisco children are performing better in school than other counties statewide, according to a recent report by **Children Now** (an Oakland, California-based nonprofit that provides statistics on health, education and economic status of the state's children), states the *San Francisco Examiner*. While wealth is the main determinant indicated in the report, experts say the statistics don't speak to the great disparity between "different income and racial subgroups," the article says.

Some compelling facts from the report are:

- Marin County, with the highest median income in the state (\$112,155), also had the highest preschool enrollment (72 percent) and highest percentage of elementary students proficient in math and English on standardized tests (68 percent), the article explains.
- 47 percent of San Francisco's children are in preschool, which is higher than the 42-percent statewide statistic. But only 24 percent of Hispanic families enroll their kids in preschool, whereas 63 percent of San Fran's Asian families are signing up their children. ■



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