Better Homes and Centers

Michigan Department of Social Services

Equipment

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FREE TOYS?

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Many of the common household objects found around your home are a ready source of learning equipment for the children in your care. Think for a few moments about some of these objects. Ask yourself, "What can I possibly teach with a plastic milk jug, a whipped topping container, clothes pins, empty plastic herb jars, and so on?" **Stop** here and **think** for a few moments . . .

Now, go a step further. Not only is "**What** can I teach?" an important question. The question of "**Why** teach it?" is probably even more important!

Since most of you have children of a variety of ages in your care, let's think about what skills they develop over their first five years. Considered in a very simple way, children learn to look, to grasp objects and control their hands with increasing precision, and to move around with increasing speed and in a variety of ways. In addition to these basic skills, children also learn to talk and to interact with others.

How do I help with the skill of looking?

The young baby first reaches out into the world with its eyes. To provide an opportunity to use this skill, give the baby colorful, patterned, and varied objects to view. The patterns can be found on your clothing, on towels, fabric pieces, old wrapping paper sections mounted on cardboard, scarves, and in pictures the other children draw.

As you look at books and read to the children, you are helping them to look for "the doggie," and so on, which helps them to begin to look for details. You can ask families to save copies of popular catalogues like one you have, and then cut identical pictures from each and paste them on cardboard squares. Children will enjoy matching the pictures that are the same and later may play a memory game, much like concentration, which helps them with visual memory and provides an enjoyable form of interaction among the children. Holiday stickers often provide a variety of similar pictures from which the children can

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Child advocates, as well as parents and child care providers, periodically take the Department of Social Services to task because the level of monitoring of child day care facilities does not always meet their expectations. There has also been a good deal of press over this Division's inability to meet all requests to be licensed or registered in a timely manner. Licensees express frustration with Division staff because we are unable to provide more in-depth training and consultation. Parents become frustrated when the facility they wish to use is not available because of a backlog of pending applications. I raise these issues because we, as Department of Social Services staff, are also concerned with our inability to respond to all the needs and interests related to regulated child care facilities. We struggle with balancing limited staff resources to meet the protection needs of children in proposed facilities and to reduce risks to children in existing licensed facilities. At the same time, we are acutely aware of the demand for our services. While we are unable to do all that is asked of us, I am personally proud of this Division's staff and their continued commitment to the protection of children in care. Consultants, supervisors and support staff have been carrying responsibilities beyond reasonable expectations.

In spite of it all, Michigan continues to be recognized as a state with a model child care licensing program and is frequently looked to by other states for direction and advice. We are proud of that reputation and plan to maintain it through innovation and vision for the future.

For example, Michigan was one of five states invited to participate at a conference in Atlanta, Georgia, sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund. The purpose of this conference was to provide states with an opportunity to analyze and do forward thinking in collaboration with public and private entities impacting on a quality child care system.

Credit for the quality of child care in Michigan, however, goes not only to those of us involved in the regulatory

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identify which look "alike" – a skill that will help them later tell the difference between "d" and "b."

How do I help children with "grasping?"

(Yes, I know some of you are saying "Why would I want to? I need to stop their getting into things!")

Children learn by doing. The first thing that a young baby will do, once it can reach and grasp an object, is put it in its mouth to explore. This is fine, as long as the object is safe and clean.

Circular cereal is an ideal early grasping material. The very young infant will grasp the cereal with the palm of the hand, while the same material may be carefully picked up and strung on a string or plastic laces. (One basic material, used for several skill ranges, permits more efficient use of your time in gathering materials and planning activities.) From the original whole hand grasp, children are working toward more skilled fine motor control that will enable them to lace shoes, hold and use pencils, and do other small motor tasks.

The whipped topping containers with old fashioned wooden clothespins standing around their edges can be used by young children to pull the clothespins off with their fist grasp, and can be used by the more skilled child to develop more fine motor skills in putting them back on the edge of the container. The empty plastic herb jar, empty panty hose envelopes, and empty pails or sand buckets all provide experiences with dumping and putting back. (NOTE: Dumping always precedes replacement!!) Place a collection of random objects like a small block, ball, toy, fabric piece, in a sand bucket. Let the smaller child dump and explore the objects. More experienced children may enjoy naming or recalling the objects in games with you or with each other. Either activity is helping the children recall objects and experience textures, colors and composition. Children enjoy placing playing cards, cotton balls, milk bottle lids and other flat objects in and out of the panty hose envelopes. Likewise, pingpong balls, cotton wads and such are fun to see inside the clear plastic jar. For some children, this provides an opportunity for problem solving — the object can't be reached even though it can be seen. The container must be turned over to get to the object.

Milk jugs, plastic ketchup bottles and the like provide another opportunity to place objects in a space. Notice we started with a wide-mouth container — sand bucket — and have worked down to a narrower opening, requiring more precise coordination by the child. Again, old fashioned wooden clothes pins (with no spring) are ideal for placing in these containers.

How do I provide opportunities for large motor development?

Children will learn to crawl, walk, run, jump, and move in many different ways. The most versatile equipment to assist in motor development is the ball. Balls come in many sizes, textures, and colors and provide endless opportunities for interaction. The early crawler will enjoy going after a colorful beach ball. Toddlers love to carry balls and other objects nearly as large as themselves. The joy of using beach balls is that they come in so many sizes and can be deflated for storage. Partly inflated beach balls can be used as seating for an infant not yet quite ready to sit alone. Larger beach balls can be used for rocking children on top of or for them to carry. Playground balls or bouncing balls develop good eye-hand and eye-foot coordination as children bounce, catch, kick, and run after them. Encouraging children to be active not only helps in the development of their bones and muscles, it also stimulates the cardiovascular system.

Permitting children to explore their environments — to manipulate and use the everyday things they see around them — will allow them to develop many of the skills referred to above. One need not purchase only "developmental" or "educational" toys, for children are always learning. It is our responsibility to provide opportunities for them to use the things around them and to share in their joys of discovery.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

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The right tools make any job easier and that includes the jobs that are accomplished in child care — your job of caring for children as well as the children's job of growing and developing into healthy, competent adults. People interested in opening day care homes or centers often express surprise when the licensing rules regarding equipment are explained to them. "Oh," said one caller, "You mean the toys!" Right. One of the nice things about the child care profession is that the tools of our trade are things that have such pleasant associations from our own childhoods.

How do you know when you have the right equipment and enough of it? Four key concepts are *appropriateness, variety, adequacy*, and *accessibility*. Paying attention to all four makes good sense not only because of licensing requirements, but because doing so will make your job easier and more pleasant. Children who are engrossed in constructive activities are much less likely to have time or inclination to get into mischief.

Appropriateness in general means equipment that is geared toward the ages of children in care — push-pull toys for toddlers and legos for older children, for example, and not vice-versa. It also means having equipment that reflects the particular interests or cultural background of children in your program. It might be as simple as providing a wok or taco-making kitchen equipment in your housekeeping area, or an old alarm clock to dismantle for the child who loves mechanical things. They will give you lots of hints if you watch and listen carefully.

A *variety* of equipment will challenge children to use their arms and legs, their eyes and ears, their minds and bodies, their social skills, and their creativity. Child care center rules require equipment for large- and small-muscle activity; sensory exploration; social interaction and dramatic play; discovery and exploration; structuring and restructuring; and creative experiences through art, music and literature. In other words, children need things they can do alone as well as in pairs or in groups, things that involve vigorous activity as well as more quiet concentration, and lots of things that they can take apart and put together in their own unique ways.

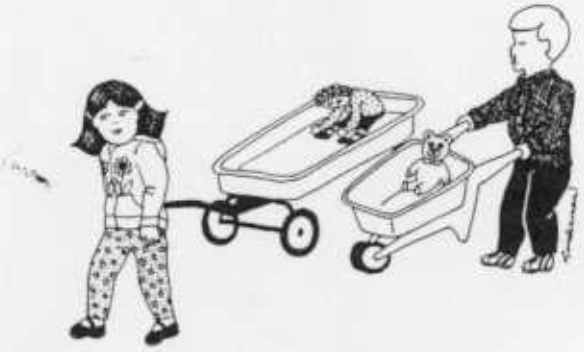
Adequacy and *accessibility* go hand in hand. You need enough equipment to occupy the children in your program and it will only occupy them if it is out where they can get at it and displayed so they can see it. Equipment in a heap is not much more accessible than equipment in a closet. Having enough equipment means that every child has a real choice of what to play with, and that when a child finishes playing with one item there are other choices readily available.

One way to decide whether your program has an adequate supply of equipment is to calculate the number of available *play spaces*. For example, a tricycle counts as one play space; a double sided easel as two; and a table with six chairs supplied with construction paper, scissors, paste, and old magazines for cutting can count as six. You can count a dress-up corner with enough furniture, dishes, and clothing, as four or five. Figure on at least a dozen large cardboard blocks to one play space, and even more of the smaller wooden blocks. By looking at your room, assigning a value to each item, and totalling the numbers, you can determine the total number of play spaces available.

Having at least two play spaces available per child on any given day will insure that children can find activities that truly interest them and make it less likely that bored children will interrupt each other. Having at least three play spaces per child in your licensed capacity will make it possible for you to rotate your equipment. The specific numbers are less important than the general principle: provide an adequate and varied number each day without having everything out all the time so that children tire of it and stop using it constructively.

For infants and toddlers, an adequate amount of equipment means having enough toys so you can remove items as children mouth them and replace them with fresh ones until you get a chance to wash the "used" toys, perhaps while children sleep. It also means having duplicates of popular items instead of expecting children to share before they are capable of doing so.

Several professional organizations and commercial vendors have devised lists of equipment which they recommend for groups of children at various ages. (See *resources* column.) Use those lists as a starting point to modify or embellish with your own creativity, ingenuity, and knowledge of the children in *your* care. Like a master carpenter or a famous chef, select the tools of your trade with care and use them with pleasure and pride.



LOW BUDGET - HIGH QUALITY

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Equipping a home or center can be a real challenge — especially when income is low and expenses are not so low. A resourceful provider who finds creative ways to adapt every day articles can meet the challenge. Here are some ideas to get you started. Only your imagination will stop you. The list has been divided into interest areas to help you organize. Have fun!

Block Area

Beginner set of wooden unit blocks; 2 sizes milk carton blocks (these can be made from quart or half-gallon cartons and painted or covered), storage unit for blocks (could be beer cases or cement blocks and boards until you can afford shelving), a rug (for noise control), large and small trucks and cars, cardboard tubes, styrofoam pieces.

Science Area

Goldfish and bowl, plants, rocks, seeds, science experiments (example: baking soda and vinegar), magnets, small magnifying glass, some smelling jars, touch-and -feel box (can be made with milk carton and old sock), children's own discoveries or contributions.

Housekeeping

A basic set of stove, refrigerator, and sink can be augmented by a small table and chairs; old plastic dishes, old pans and utensils; a telephone, even a real one; dress-up clothes and mirror; dolls and doll beds (can be homemade); individual boxes stocked for different role play such as a waiter in a restaurant, a doctor, a nurse, a fireman, etc.

Flannel Board

Make flannel stories available to the children during free play for additional play spaces.

Art Area

Paint; finger paint (use liquid starch or cornstarch); glue; paste; paper (old computer runs); pencils; crayons; markers; scissors; a junk box containing bits of ribbon, cardboard tubes, wrapping paper, lace fabric, buttons, plastic flowers; easel; glitter; food coloring; paper punch; old magazines or catalogues for collages.

Table Tops

Pegs and pegboards, sand-paper letters, dominoes, additional puzzles, rubber-band boards, shape, color or object-Lottos, jars and matching tops, tongs and cotton balls, nuts and bolts for matching. Many of these materials can be made by the caregiving staff. Place these in small plastic boxes or shoe boxes and label for each activity. Purchased toys might include Legos, Lincoln Logs, Tinker Toys and Shape Sorters.

Emergent Literacy Area

Books can be purchased and/or obtained from your local library. Books made by the children should also be included. Display on a shelf. Provide old pillows or a bean bag and decorate walls to make the area inviting. Include a writing area, preferably a small table with pencils, markers, paper and bookmaking materials. On an old typewriter is a real plus.

Large Muscle

Basic equipment might include a climber, but if the budget is limited other things can suffice until it is possible to purchase large equipment. This area can be skillfully utilized by a teacher doing body awareness or exercise activities with the children during free play. A balance beam can be easily made with scrap lumber. Other equipment might include inexpensive balls of various sizes, jump ropes, bean bags, a piece of carpet for tumbling.

Sensory Area

Only your imagination holds you back here. So many of these things can be made or scrounged. Playdough, water play, cornmeal play, shucked corn, a small plastic baby tub, cookie cutters, a variety of different sized cups, bottles, squeeze bottles; sifter, sieve, funnel, strainer, plastic knives, rolling pin. All can be donated or purchased at the discount store.

ASK THE KIDS!

CHOOSING SCHOOL-AGE EQUIPMENT

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Play is the normal activity of children. They learn when they are free to explore, plan, build, manipulate, cooperate, get involved and create. Just as adults need good tools to work and play, children need quality equipment to meet their developmental needs.

Play equipment should be attractive and interesting to the children. One way to insure this is to let the children help with the decisions on ordering new items. We asked the Flint Rainbow Exchange children, "What do school-age children like to do?" They told us:

GAMES: such as Wheel of Fortune; Sorry; Win, Lose, or Draw; Memory; Nintendo; Mouse Trap; Hands Down; Mad; Boggle; Scrabble; Trouble; Monopoly; Hungry Hippo; Clue; Pictionary; Mask; Old Main; Chinese Checkers; Battleship; Uno; Trivia; Bingo; Eureka; Marble Works; Midnight.

ART PROJECTS: Drawing, painting, collage, big-paper drawing, silly putty, play dough, fingerpaint, easel, water colors, and oil crayon.

MOVIES: Videos, cartoons, VCR, T.V., pillow, and sofas.

STORIES: Listening to stories, telling stories, making up stories, and telling scary stories.

PRETENDING: Telephones, restaurant, McDonalds, Wendys, Burger King, Talent shows, dolls and house, lip-sync contest, dress-up, fashion show, make-up, jewelry, microphone, puppet stage, Barbie and Ken dolls, cars, trucks, trains, and villages.

LANGUAGE ART: Typewriter, record player/tapes, puppets, Nancy Drew books, Ranger Rick, Boy's Life, Highlights, joke books, riddles, tongue-twister books, poetry books, encyclopedias, Jack and Jill Magazine.

BUILDING EQUIPMENT: Lego's, tinker toys, Lincoln Logs, unit blocks, large hollow blocks, boxes for dramatic play, waffle blocks, pipeworks, boards, snapwalls, small and jumbo building blocks.

CRAFT MATERIAL: Macrame, crochet, sewing, beads, models, bird feeders, wood craft, leather, jewelry making.

COOKING: Popcorn maker, electric fry pan, toaster, mixer, pans, storage containers, cookie cutter, bowls, and blender.

School-age children at times enjoy some of the same activities as the younger children. Adults affect children's play by providing the right equipment, explaining how to use and care for their tools, and being available to guide constructive use of the equipment.

Sensory materials such as water, sand, clay, or dough are open-ended and may be upgraded or simplified by varying accessories. Other sensory materials might be harmonicas, kazoos, guitars, and recorders. Try painting with different materials such as sand, buttermilk, condensed milk, sticks, or feathers.

Active play equipment is especially important for children kept in classrooms all day. The choice of gross motor equipment should be varied enough to motivate all the children to use it. Some of these are: jump ropes, hula hoops, trampoline, slide, climbers, roller skates, assorted balls and bats, frisbees, pool table, ping pong table, croquet, air hockey, parachute, and bean bags. Large hollow blocks and large waffle blocks allow for construction of hideouts and dramatic play.

Buy equipment of strong and safe construction matched to the children's abilities and useful in various ways. With appropriate quality equipment and materials available and the freedom of choice, with guidance the school age child will play and learn with pleasure and enthusiasm.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAYGROUNDS: SAFE, YET EXCITING OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

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If children learn by exploring the world with all of their senses, what better place to develop an environment for learning than the playground? Outside, sights are brighter, smells blow on the winds, grass tickles and bark scrapes. Another advantage is that teachers are often more tolerant of "active" learning in a place where running feet and outdoor voices are in order.

Playgrounds, however, seldom reflect a commitment to total programming for the whole child. Many address only physical development. The equipment which is available provides too few play stations, leaving children to fight over trikes and balls or turn on each other for entertainment. If mud is the principal ground cover — and it often is — children may be confined to limited blacktop areas much of the time.

A well-planned playground can extend the classroom to the out-of-doors in a stimulating and safe manner. Time spent planning how that equipment will be arranged into areas for interest, interaction, and safety and in preparing the site is an excellent investment.

A playground that is divided into clearly defined areas tells children what behaviors they can expect in each area. The direction of tricycle paths can serve as a warning that the activity is about to change. "Watch out for the swings!" for instance. Or they may protect a child's mud pies from running feet. In addition, tricycle paths provide transportation out to areas that may otherwise have been inaccessible due to wet ground.

Appropriate ground cover protects children when they fall and provides a drainage system to make the play-ground usable even during wet seasons. Eight to ten inches of construction sand serve this dual function well. Even this reasonable ground cover is a major investment, but it provides critical protection for you and your children.

Other safety guidelines to be considered are the height of the equipment, head entrapments, and traffic patterns. Four-feet heights are acceptable for preschoolers. Avoiding openings in railings and between parts on equipment of four to twelve inches will prevent head entrapments. Allowing space around equipment insures a safe fall zone or exit from the slide.

A completely safe playground without any challenges is a tremendously uninteresting place, however. A good playground balances the need for safety with the child's need to overcome challenges and conquer obstacles. Planning an environment of reasonable risks, based on the play interests of children, will create a stimulating and safe outdoor learning environment.

Outdoor areas may include swings; areas for climbing, dramatic play, sand and water play, art, construction; gardens; open grassy areas; and blacktop areas. Quieter and more active areas are grouped together. Some activities require more concentration than others. For instance, a child walking a balance beam will be easily distracted if the beam is located too close to climbing or swinging activity. Spaces for children to play alone, in small groups, or in class games validate various kinds of play.

A blacktop or cement area provides an inviting entrance to the play ground. Children often stand and make decisions about what they want to do from there. Colorful games and shapes add interest. The hard surface supports ball play. A funnel ball basket is something a preschooler can make. Asphalt areas and paths facilitate tricycle riding.

Swinging is often a solitary, day-dreamy occupation. The swinging area, placed on the edge of the playground, encourages imaginary flights and eliminates the need for children to run through swings to get to other equipment. Swinging can become a cooperative venture with the addition of tire swings. Knotted ropes provide dramatic play as well.

More popular climbers are multifaceted, providing a variety of ways to climb up and come down as well as dramatic play suggestions. A climber shaped like a fire truck with tires, platforms, ladders, sliding pole, steering wheels, and bells to ring interests children more than a horizontal ladder. It extends play which will be further enriched if fireman hats and hoses are added as accessories. Ship themes which include chain nets, gangplanks, and crows' nests are also popular. Tires are an inexpensive material to use to construct cradles, nets, cubes, mountains, and tunnels. Rope nets and walks also provide good psychomotor activity.

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Dramatic play areas may include a house, gas pumps, drive-in windows, and a variety of transportation vehicles. A house-type structure will be more versatile if it includes a counter window so that it could also be an ice cream parlor or a McDonalds. Boxes of accessory props can convert the house to a doctor's office, a pizza parlor, or a grocery store. The props in outdoor boxes do need to be sturdier. The smallest suggestion, a steering wheel or an enclosure, will stimulate a child's imagination; however, the more real the props, the richer the play will become.

A fleet of riding toys gives children an opportunity to move in their dramatic play from area to area and to carry "loose parts" from place to place. The tires, planks, and lumber that are materials in the construction area may be hauled to the house area for an "addition." A number of wagons hooked together may become a train hauling passengers on a trip.

Sand provides an excellent base for building with "loose parts," and therefore the construction area may be adjacent to or a part of the sand area. A sand play area or hill is preferable to a sand box. Its depth provides children with the opportunity to foot-shovel as well as hand-spade. A table situated in the sand serves as a surface for making mud pies. Very tasty! Accessories are important. Scoops, molds, and containers suggest cooking or castle making. Construction equipment, such as Tonka trucks or the child-sized steam shovel, invites civil engineering. Having buckets of water available extends play.

A larger grassy area may be a more appropriate location for water play, however. Portable pools, slides, tables, and sprinklers offer a variety of play options. A permanent water source in the area is a convenience, not only for sand and water play, but for a drinking fountain and for watering a garden.

An area especially devoted to art activities out-of-doors can encourage a freedom and level of messiness that is difficult to obtain in the classroom. A grove with picnic tables brings painting, gluing and three dimensional art, clay and wood into nature. Tables also provide a setting for outside snacks and meals. A 4' x 8' sheet of treated plywood which has been fiberglassed makes an easel large enough for some really large muscle-painting.

A large, grassy area invites children to participate in one of their favorite outside activities - running around. It also provides an area for group games and gatherings.

Hills and trees are wonderful additions to any playground. Berms alter an otherwise flat terrain and give children slopes to run or roll down. Trees provide much-needed shade in the summer and wind breaks in the winter for the year-round center. Shade is particularly welcome in the sand area.

Seasonal changes make play more interesting–rakes in the fall, shovels in the winter, planting in the spring and water play in summer. Adding extensions to existing areas stimulates new interest–a car wash and wax at the gas pumps, or a lemonade stand for snacks. Dryer boxes may be turned into a neighborhood of homes along one of the trike paths.

An existing playground need not cost thousands of dollars. Industrial discards such as conveyor belts for trike paths and barrels for tunnels, or domestic recyclables such as kitchen utensils and empty seed containers and margarine tubs need careful cleaning and checking for sharp edges as part of the preparation for including these items on your site.

Tires are versatile additions to a playground. Possibly they provide the most play potential if they are loose. They also may be used to buffer or pad the ends and edges of equipment, i.e., the ends of concrete culvert tile. If tires are used, holes drilled around their circumference will help to drain water that collects from rain. If tires are bolted together, exposed screw threads should be capped to prevent cuts. Steel belted tires should be checked for wear and exposed wire.

Other free "loose parts" include wooden cable spools, packing crates, lumber scraps, and stumps. Tents and cardboard boxes provide temporary housing.

Climbers constructed of natural materials add textures and dramatic play potential to more sterile commercial pieces. Large rocks, tree trunks with selected branches left attached, and hills and terraces invite children to climb up, be king of the mountain and then slide, jump or roll down.

Increasing the square footage of the learning environment of your center by including a playground that stimulates a child's social, cognitive, and physical growth requires thought and planning. The results will be a safe, yet exciting place for children to explore, experiment and enjoy.

BEYOND THE BUSY BOX

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Infants and toddlers are young scientists who eagerly explore their world with all their senses and with all the actions that have worked in the past: tasting, biting, sucking, shaking, banging, poking, throwing, turning, pushing, and smelling. After they have explored an object in all the familiar ways, they may explore in new ways, especially if you show them a new action. At first children will imitate only actions that they can observe in the present. Later they will be able to imitate actions that they have seen or felt in the past. This delayed imitation is an important step since it means that the child has a mental representation of an action. For example, a toddler might pick up a brush and run it over this hair while a younger child might try to suck on it, shake it, or bang it on the floor. The toddler may still bang it on the floor to check out the sound it makes, but he has associated the motion with the object: he has a concept of "brushing."

One of the ways we help children develop concepts is allowing them to explore and manipulate a variety of objects, not just store-bought toys but brushes, spoons, cups, and all the everyday objects we use. We can model new actions for them. We can help them to represent these objects and actions by giving them language: saying, "brush, brush, brush," as we brush their hair, or "put one arm in," as we put their jackets on.

In addition to involving young children as much as possible in daily activities such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, and laundry, caregivers can provide art activities to develop tactile and fine motor skills. Children can discover shapes and forms and develop a real understanding of these concepts. Long before they begin to appreciate shape and form, they enjoy art because it makes their mark on the world.

Finger painting is a good art activity to start with because it involves the use of touch directly on the materials involved. Painting on trays provides a boundary for the creation and makes cleanup easier; or you can paint on wax paper, on the refrigerator, or on the table itself. Painting on a mirror is a lot of fun for children as they slowly cover up their image with paint. For toddlers, the process of doing the painting is more important than the result. However, if you did want to keep a copy of a creation, you could gently press paper onto the painting and lift a copy. You can vary the textures of the finger paint by adding things like cornmeal, salt, sand, sawdust, or coffee grounds.

Children can finger paint with commercial or homemade finger paints, or with substances like gel or shaving cream with or without food coloring. Be careful that children do not get the shaving cream in their eyes. Some people like to allow children to finger paint with foods such as pudding. In considering this, you need to realize that the distinction between mealtime and art time is too fine for the young child, and you might find mashed potatoes smeared all over the dinner table. Whatever you decide, do help them to make the important distinction between food and non-edible things.

Crayons, markers, chalk, and paint brushes are all tools that the children learn to use through experimenting with them. They also enjoy painting with other articles such as feathers, combs, sponges, a small sponge held in a clip clothespin, and even toothbrushes. Children like using large paint brushes and water on sidewalks or the side of a building. I like children to experience the feeling of painting both on the horizontal plane (table top), and on the vertical plane (wall), refrigerator, or easel). A homemade easel can easily be constructed using a cardboard box. Remove the ends. Cut one side and fold into a triangular shape. Tape so it does not come apart. Use clothespins or clamps at the side to hold the paper on.

Pasting can be fun for a toddler, but you must realize that to him it is another form of finger paint. The idea of sticking something on the paste is often lost. Squeezing glue out of a bottle is fascinating for toddlers and strengthens the muscles in their hands. It is also an expensive way to use glue since they are not interested in sticking anything to the glue, although it does dry in ridges which feel neat after they dry. A less expensive way to provide a similar experience would be to make salt or sand dribbles: Mix equal parts of flour, salt, and water, and add liquid paint for color. Pour this mixture into plastic squeeze bottles and let the children squeeze this out onto pieces of cardboard.

Toddlers are wonderful recyclers. Stuffed grocery sacks, assorted boxes and cans become wonderful building blocks. Juice can lids are great fun to put through slots cut in the tops of coffee cans (they make a nice noise too). Spoons to bang on different-sized boxes and cans, as well as pots and pans, provide a cacophony that toddlers enjoy. Paper tubes are great for rolling things through, as well as banging and looking through. Zip Lock bags can be sewn together for books that can be changed and reused in much the way that picture albums are used. It helps to back with cardboard whatever pictures you are sliding in and out of the bags. Pictures and stories about themselves or familiar items are enjoyable for children.

Infants and toddlers are developing a sense of their own bodies. They need the opportunities to exercise the large muscles of their bodies. They enjoy rolling or crawling up and down inclines, over bolsters, chair cushions, and pillows of all shapes and sizes. I have found that toddlers like being gently rolled into and out of a sheet or blanket. They like carrying things from one room to another. Larger cardboard boxes or clothes baskets to crawl into and out of, or to fill with toys and push around the room are great fun. Balls suspended from a ceiling in net sacks encourage batting games and develop muscles and coordination.

The most important equipment in any home or center is a lap to sit on and arms that hug! Enjoy your time together!

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RECALLS RECALLS RECALLS RECALLS

Call the Consumer Product Safety Commission at 1-800-638-2772 for more information about these recalls.

- Childcraft Cribs with loose slats recalled. Model nos. 15811, 15821, 15961 & 15991 if they have loose or missing side slats.
- Batting Tee Games, Sportcraft and Wilson
- Motorized Zippers Airplanes, Model nos. 3135, 4635, 3137, 4637 and 4160, SLM Corporation of Gloversville, NY.
- Butterfly Bracelets, Model No. P4136, Western Novelty Company.
- Toy Nursing Bottles, Esco Imports of Texas, Inc.
- Disney Pacifiers, Evenflo Products Company. Sold between Dec. 1990 and July 1991.
- Wisdom Blocks Train Set, Model no. WP262, Ledereer Industries, N.Y.
- Toddler Shirt/Skirt Set, Good Lad Co. of Philadelpha, PA.
- Pacifier, Models nos: G24, P8, P24, P20, P20/2, P21, P22, P25, P26, P27, P42, P43, P45, P46, P47, and P52, Luv n' Care Ltd.
- Teething Wheel, Model no. SIL/893, Scenique Toys, Inc.
- Comic Zoo Animals and Magic Milk & Juice Bottles, Zoo animals, Item no. 31170 and Magic Milk and Juice Bottles, Item no. 1703, E. Fomil & Sons, Inc.
- Teddy Pet with Cassette, #3851, Star Sales Co.
- Funny Zig-Zag Copter and Wind-Up Circus Wagon, Copter Item no. 832X-12A) and Wagon, Item no. THK4766 (Model no. 9026W).
- Roll Back Wheel Toy, Model no. B356, Remco Baby, Inc.
- Stuffed Bunnies, "Best Friends", Associated Merchandising Corporation.
- Rescue Truck, Model 8115, Harco, Inc.
- Orthodontic Pacifier, Model G15, Tiny Treasures of Memphis.
- Musical Dolls with Rotating Head, Models 501A,B,C, 502A,B,C, 503A,B,C, 504A,B,C, 505A,C and 506A,B,C, Faratak, Inc.
- Ma and Baby Bunny with Easter Basket BK101, Bee International Dolls.
- Hippo Counter (#RO-1005), 9" Angel Doll (#MU69), Pull Along Activity Loco (HKT-7277), Tell By Touch (#CPX-48), US Toy Co., Inc.
- Happy Bird Action Copter, Model No. 7811B, Wanderer Action Land Cruiser, Model 7815B, Inventory Liquidators Corp.
- Toy Soldier Train Toys, #96774, Chadwick-Miller, Inc.

TOY SAFETY

Most toys are not dangerous by themselves. The way they are used or misused by a child can cause injury.

- Carefully examine toys for sharp, splintered, or jagged edges and small pieces that can be easily broken off. Tug at different parts to test for strength. Reject any with such hazards.
- Check toys frequently and do minor repairs whenever necessary.
- Cover hinges and joints to prevent fingers from being pinched or caught.
- Projectile toys, such as darts, are not appropriate for children younger than age 8 years.
- Bend plastic toys to test for brittleness. Cheap, hard plastic can break easily, leaving sharp edges.
- Test toys for weight and for noise level.
- Look for the nontoxic label on all painted toys and play equipment.
- Keep wooden toys smooth and free from splinters.
- Pull on the heads and limbs of dolls to make sure they won't come off and expose sharp wires.
- Look for the flame retardant label on cloth toys. Check seams regularly for tearing and weak threads.
- Teach children how to play correctly and safely and to put toys away immediately after playing
- Comment on children's safe play behavior.

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(Director's Corner Continued)

aspect. This quality is also a result of your responsiveness as providers to the needs of children in your care, to the needs of parents, and to the requirements of the state. In spite of our problems, we can all be proud of this state's licensing program because it signifies a collective effort of staff, providers and parents working toward meeting the needs of children in care. That is not to say, however, that we can rest on what is; we need to move on and be prepared for the rest of this decade and set the groundwork for child day care in the year 2000 and beyond.

Here in Michigan, in spite of the economy and fiscal belt tightening, the future looks brighter for child care programs and child day care licensing. This is due, in large part, to Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds that Michigan is eligible to receive. With it we anticipate being able to improve our monitoring of existing facilities, and improve our response to the public as well as to you as providers.

I am encouraged by the support for licensing within this Department. However, it will take time to get it where we want to be as we redesign and restructure Division activities, increase staff resources, and finalize the automation project for licensing transactions. I am convinced that once these improvements are realized, the Division of Child Day Care Licensing will be in a better position to meet the challenges of this decade and of those to come. In the interim I ask for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

Ted deWolf

Ted deWolf, Director
Division of Child Day Care Licensing

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Please send articles for consideration in future issues to:

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5303 S CEDAR ST
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PROVIDER'S CORNER

MICHIGAN COUNCIL OF COOPERATIVE NURSERIES, INC. (MCCN)

Are you interested in the well-being of children? Are you up-to-date on current legislation which may affect the children of Michigan? Are you concerned about the locations in which children's programs are held? Are you certain your preschool programs are the best they can be?

These are just a few of the areas that MCCN keeps its members informed about, providing them the support they may need. MCCN is interested in reaching all cooperative preschools, so that Michigan can offer all our children the best possible. MCCN is also interested in offering individual memberships to those people working with children throughout the state who wish to benefit from the resources we have to offer.

Why not give our organization a look. We may meet your needs.

*If interested, please contact MCCN Membership Chairperson, Pam Semlow, 2566 West 40th, Fremont, MI 49412/616-924-3054.

MYSTERY BAG

Janet Kraft, a teacher at Marlette Head Start Center has made a piece of equipment that turns her former "show-and-tell" time into a genuine language experience for children. She cut off the leg of an old pair of jeans, sewed it closed at one end and put a drawstring in the other end to make a bag. On the front she appliqued a question mark cut from colorful fabric. She printed brief instructions on a card, which she covered with clear contact and also stitched to the bag.

The instructions tell parents to help their child find some object from home to put in the mystery bag and think of three "clues" to help the other children guess what it might be. She provides a tiny "book", which she makes by stapling three small pieces of paper together, for the parent to write the clues. The directions also suggest that the parent might practice the game with the child at home.

Each day a different child has a turn to take the mystery bag home and bring it back the following day. That child then stands up at large group time and (with Janet's help) gives the clues to the children one at a time. The children all try to guess what's in the bag and the "holder of the bag" gets to tell them whether they are right or ask if they need another clue.

The smiles on their faces tell you how much they are enjoying the activity and all the children look forward to the day it is their turn to take the mystery bag home.

Janet says she got this idea in a class she took, but that she made some changes in it to make it work for her. You can do the same thing – with this or any other idea you encounter.

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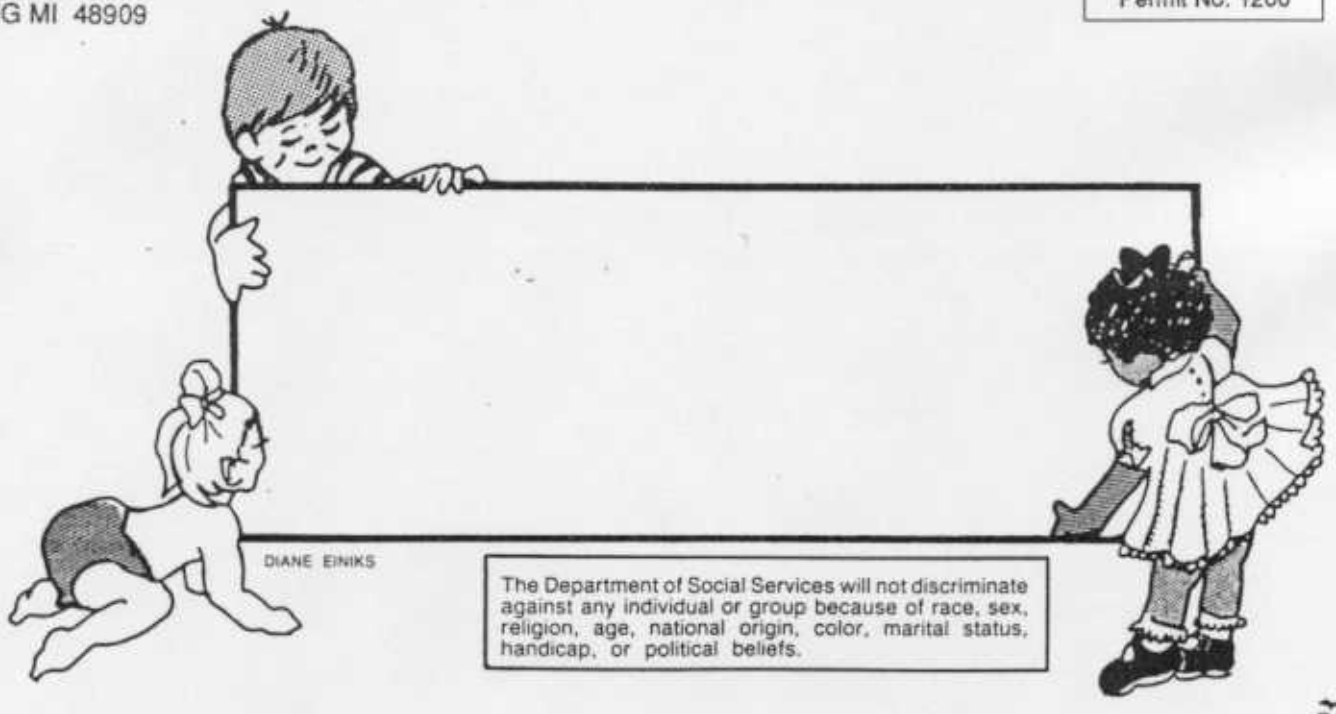

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