

Michigan Child Care Matters

The Best of Michigan Child Care Matters Issue 100

From the Division Director

The Child Care Licensing Division published its first newsletter more than 30 years ago, in 1983. It was something the Division Director, Ted deWolf, began as a way to share important information with child care providers. It was also designed to create and strengthen the partnership we have with licensees. Our newsletter has survived changes in departments, editorial staff, budget crunches, name and format.

The editorial staff of Michigan Child Care Matters, comprised of licensing consultants and area managers, has always done a great job in selecting topics relevant to provider needs and interests. The very first issue of what was then known as Better Homes and Centers focused on the topic of fire safety. Since then there have been numerous issues devoted to topics of interest to both providers and parents: programming, business practices, food and nutrition, and parent involvement, to name only a few.

In 1997 Issue 43 of Better Homes and Centers was posted on our website. Since then, every issue has been available both in print and electronic versions. We changed the name of our newsletter in 1999 from Better Homes and Centers to Michigan Child Care Matters to stress the importance of the child care profession.

We began offer training hour credit for providers reading Michigan Child Care Matters in 2013. To receive one clock hour of annual training, providers must read all of the home- or center-related articles in three different issues of MCCM and pass the tests associated with those issues during that calendar year.

There is another change coming to Michigan Child Care Matters. This is the last time I'll be writing to you as the Child Care Licensing director. In May I retired from the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing! It seems appropriate to close out my tenure as Child Care Licensing director in Issue 100 of Michigan Child Care Matters. Thank you for your support over the many years that I have been with this division. It's been a great experience!



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Michigan Child Care Matters - Summer 2014

Table of Contents

- 2** Teaching Children Not to Be—Or Be Victims of—Bullies
- 3** Balancing the Needs of Your Families with the Needs of Your Business
- 4** Alternatives to Television
- 6** Terrific Transitions
- 8** Why Do Children Bite and What Can We, As Providers, Do?
- 9** Looking Through the Eyes of Boys and Girls
- 10** Turn Off the Lights: Practical Tips for Saving Energy and Money
- 12** Unraveling the Mysteries of 6- to 12-Year-Olds
- 14** Physical Activity
- 16** Outdoor Play is a Must for Good Health
- 17** Lesson Planning
- 18** Safe Sleep Practices for Infants
- 20** CPSC Recalls

Teaching Children Not to Be—Or Be Victims of—Bullies
National Association for the Education of Young Children
Reprint from Issue 75



Parents and teachers are sometimes reluctant to intervene in conflicts between young children. They don't want to see children harm or ridicule one another, but they want to encourage children to learn how to work out problems for themselves. In such cases, adults have a responsibility to stop violence or aggression in the classroom or at home — both for children who demonstrate harmful behavior and for all other children. We can teach children not to take part in — or become victims of — bullying.

Children who demonstrate aggression or bully other children may be unable to initiate friendly interactions, express their feelings or ask for what they need. If these children do not improve their social skills, they will continue to have problems relating to peers throughout their lives. In addition, if other children see that aggressors get what they want through bullying, they are more likely to accept or imitate this undesirable behavior.

Young children who are unable to stand up for themselves are easy targets for aggressive playmates. These children inadvertently reward bullies by giving in to them and risk further victimization. Adults do not help by speaking for victims and solving their problems for them. Children must learn that they have the right to say no, not only when they are threatened, but in a wide range of everyday situations.

The key to promoting positive interactions among young children is teaching them to assert themselves effectively. Children who express their feelings and needs while respecting those of others will be neither victims nor aggressors. Adults must show children that they have the right to make choices — in which toys they play with, or (within boundaries) what they wear and what they eat. The more children trust and value their own feelings, the more likely they will be to resist peer pressure, to respect warm and caring adults and to be successful in achieving their personal goals. How to teach children assertiveness skills:

- Demonstrate assertive behavior (e.g., saying no to another child's unacceptable demands) and contrast aggressive or submissive responses through demonstrations. Let children role-play with puppets or dolls.

Continued on page 5

Balancing the Needs of Your Families with the Needs of Your Business

Katrice Sweet, Licensing Consultant, Ingham County
Reprint from Issue 87



If you are like most people in the child care industry, you have attended trainings regarding emotional development, discipline, physical development, health and safety, and many other child development topics. However, you probably have not had much, if any, training in business management. You have been trained on how to appropriately care for children, but how do you handle the situation when a parent is late picking up her children or arrives two hours early to drop her child off in order to run errands before work?

In these difficult economic times, many providers do not want to tell parents, “You cannot leave your child here today,” or “I need all of your paperwork before your child can attend.” Providers feel like they have to accommodate parents to avoid losing business. Because child care is a caring, understanding and helping profession, many providers find it difficult to enforce policies and set limits with parents. However, this is your business and your livelihood; there are rules and regulations that you must follow in order to keep your registration/license in good standing.

There is a balancing act between the needs of your business and the needs of your families. What can you do to keep that balance? One of the first things you should do is create clear, enforceable policies. Let your families know your expectations and what will happen if they are not met. Licensing regulations for centers require policies be distributed to parents. It is recommended that child care homes have similar policies. These policies include:

- Criteria for admission and withdrawal.
- Schedule of operation, denoting hours, days and holidays during which the facility will be open.
- Fee policy.
- Discipline policy.

- Food service policy.
- Program philosophy.
- Typical daily routine.
- Exclusion policy for child illnesses.

Once these policies are in place:

- Review them with every parent when they enroll their children.
- Ensure parents understand the policies and have the opportunity to ask questions.
- Have parents sign a statement acknowledging that they have read and understand all of the policies and agree to abide by them.

If the policies are not followed, then ensure that any penalties or fees that apply are enforced.

It is also important to know all of the licensing rules and regulations that apply to your business and ensure that they are followed by all staff. Everyone associated with the child care facility needs to know and understand the rules so that throughout the day they can make decisions that comply with these requirements. Consult the Technical Assistance and Consultation Manual on the department’s website (www.michigan.gov/michildcare) or contact your licensing consultant for rule clarification.

The program director or registrant/licensee is not always present to oversee the children and staff or to make decisions related to the child care facility. Proper training of all staff ensures that the licensing rules and the child care facility’s policies are followed. Provide your staff with troubleshooting tips they can use in a situation where a rule must be enforced. Once trained, make sure that staff feel comfortable enforcing the rules and policies with the parents

Continued on page 5

Alternatives to Television

Catherine Edgar, Licensing Consultant, Genesee County
Adapted from article in Issue 83 by Jessica Coates, Licensing Consultant



Research has shown that children who watch too much television are more likely to be obese, have poor grades, have sleep or behavior problems, and engage in risky behavior. Licensing rules prohibit more than two hours of television viewing per day in homes and prohibit more than two hours of non-interactive media **per week** in centers for children over the age of 2. Children in a child care center under age 2 are prohibited from any amount of media use. Both homes and centers are required to provide age-appropriate media based on the content and length.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children over the age of 2 watch only 1-2 hours of television per day and that children under the age of 2 not watch any television at all. Research has revealed that 51 percent of households have their television on most of the time. This makes it likely that children will far exceed the recommended amount of television exposure for their age group. It then becomes even more important to greatly reduce or eliminate the amount of time children watch television while at child care.

Child care providers can achieve this goal by planning a daily program that includes varied and developmentally appropriate activities. When daily activities are planned in advance, television viewing is less likely to occur.

Licensing rules require daily programming that is both child- and staff-initiated and includes active and quiet play, group and individual activities, indoor and outdoor time, and large and small muscle development. Daily activity programs must also include science, math, language, and literacy experiences and encourage imagination and creativity.

The first step to achieving this is creating a daily activity plan. Many resources exist to

aid child care providers in this task. There are numerous different curriculums that you could choose to use in your program. These include High/Scope and The Creative Curriculum, among others. A simple query online will result in any number of different early childhood curriculums to use.

The children in care will determine the type and length of selected activities. Things to consider are age, individual developmental level of each child and culture. Older children will generally spend more time on an activity than younger children. Several activities may need to be available at one time to allow those with a shorter attention span to move on to something else, while ensuring that those who are still interested in the activity can continue with it.

It is great to have a set theme on which to base activities. Themes should last at least a week but not so long that the children become bored. Once a theme is selected, use a webbed planning guide to choose the activities. To do this, write the theme in the middle of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it. Draw lines branching out from the circle. Each line represents a different learning concept. The areas to include are art, science, math, language, literacy, nutrition, etc. For each line drawn, brainstorm activities related to the theme that incorporate that specific learning concept. For more information, refer to the article "Plan Your Activities Around A Theme" from Issue 88 of Michigan Child Care Matters online at www.michigan.gov/mccmatters.

Many resources exist to help child care providers find activities to include in a daily program plan. These resources will address age-appropriate activities and activities based on themes. The Internet is an excellent resource for finding activity ideas.

Another great resource is craft stores. These stores sell craft kits which allow children to make something impressive without a lot of skill. Many of these stores have free sample project sheets which highlight ways to use the supplies sold at the store.

The bottom line is that most children watch too much television. Child care providers can take the first step towards limiting the amount of television exposure the children in care receive by having a planned daily activity program. ❖

Balancing Needs, from page 3

of children in care. Those staff members who don't should not be left in a position of authority. Registrants/licensees are responsible for rule compliance regardless of who made the decision not to follow the rule.

Liability should be considered when making decisions related to your child care business. Many decisions that providers make may impact how liable they may be if an accident occurs. Following the licensing rules not only helps keep your registration/license in good standing, it helps decrease your liability if there is an accident or injury.

Running a child care business is tough work. Providers need to be caring and understanding with children but also need to be firm with staff and parents. Registrants/licensees that can comfortably fill both of these roles will have a better chance at a successful child care business. ❖

- Intervene when interactions seem headed for trouble and suggest ways for children to compromise, or to express their feelings in a productive way.
- Teach children to seek help when confronted by the abuse of power (physical abuse, sexual abuse or other) by other children or adults.
- Remind children to ignore routine teasing by turning their heads or walking away. Not all provocative behavior must be acknowledged.
- Teach children to ask for things directly and respond directly to each other. Friendly suggestions are taken more readily than bossy demands. Teach children to ask nicely and to respond appropriately to polite requests.
- After a conflict between children, ask those involved to replay the scene. Show children how to resolve problems firmly and fairly.
- Show children how to tell bullies to stop hurtful acts and to stand up for themselves when they are being treated unfairly.
- Encourage children not to give up objects or territory to bullies (e.g., teach them to say, "I'm using this toy now"). Preventing bullies from getting what they want will discourage aggressive behavior.
- Identify acts of aggression, bossiness or discrimination for children and teach them not to accept them (e.g., teach them to say, "Girls are allowed to play that too.>").
- Show children the rewards of personal achievement through standing up for themselves, rather than depending solely on the approval of others. ❖

Terrific Transitions

Jessica Coates, Licensing Consultant
Reprint from Issue 96



Transitions happen throughout the day in every child care program. Transitions occur when changing from activity to activity and at arrival and departure. Sometimes they require a child to move between quiet, sedentary activities to loud, active ones. They are usually short in length, but unexpected delays can cause them to last longer than anticipated. It is important to prepare children for transitions and to plan them so that they keep the children's attention and prevent them from getting frustrated. Proper planning and execution of transitions will allow everyone to move seamlessly to and from activities throughout the day. This reduces behavior problems and helps provide a sense of security for the children in care.

The first way to approach transitions is to eliminate as many of them as you can. Sit down and review your daily schedule. Are there too many activities packed into one day? Can certain activities be combined so that they occur simultaneously? For example, having snacks available as an option during center choice time allows children to eat snacks when they are ready and eliminates the transition before and after snack time. The fewer transitions there are throughout the day, the easier it is for children and caregivers.

Proper planning also affects transition success. Plan a daily schedule and implement it every day. Children are more at ease when they know what to expect. It can be easier for them to transition from one activity to another if they know ahead of time that lunch always comes after outdoor play. This also reduces anxiety caused from children not knowing what to expect next. Having a picture of each activity in the schedule that is arranged in order and posted at the children's level allows them to follow along throughout the day. This helps

reduce anxiety and mentally prepares children for the next activity.

It is not critical to stick to the specific time frames established for each activity. If it is unseasonably warm outside and the children are really enjoying outdoor play, then it is a good idea to extend that activity and shorten another one in return. This will also prevent the children from getting upset when it is time to go inside and they are really enjoying their time outdoors. Use the children as a guide when planning the schedule. If you find yourself always having to change the schedule because of too much or not enough time allotted for an activity, then maybe it's time to reevaluate the schedule as a whole.

When planning a transition, consider whether the children can gradually transition into the next activity instead of everyone doing it at the same time. Instead of the entire class lining up to wash their hands at once, have the children go a few at a time. You can play a game that slowly eliminates children, such as Simon Says, to decide who gets to wash their hands, or have all the children who are wearing a blue shirt go, continuing to pick clothing items until all of the children have been picked. You can also call children by their birthday month, the first letter of their name, etc. This type of activity can also be used when children need to line up so that they don't all rush to the door at the same time.

Proper planning also includes having the materials ready for each activity. Don't transition into snack time until the tables are clean and the snack is ready to be served. Don't transition into the art activity until all the materials are out and ready to be used. This limits the length of transition between activities and allows you to assist during the transition

period. An extra set of hands and eyes can really help a transition run smoother.

It is important to let children know that a transition is approaching. Walk around the classroom and calmly let the children know that the activity will be ending soon and what the next activity will be. Some caregivers have the children take turns being the five minute warning helper. This child will walk around the room five minutes prior to the transition and let the children know that they have five more minutes of play left. Some children who have more difficulty with transitions may need several advanced warnings that a transition is coming soon. Having that child assist with a special task prior to the transition to the next activity, such as helping to hand out plates for a snack, can help them transition into the new activity easier. If children have a hard time leaving when their parents arrive, an advanced warning can allow them to mentally prepare themselves that they will be leaving soon.

There are many activities that you can implement to make a transition fun and help the activity run smoother. You can sing a special song during cleanup time, arrival or dismissal. Having the children hop, skip or walk like an animal keeps them focused while moving from one place to another. You can choose a new animal to walk like every day. It is a great idea to have a list of songs, games and other transition activities that you can refer to so that you have a lot of options from which to choose. A query online will yield a wealth of ideas.

Sometimes it may be necessary for the children to wait for a period of time during a transition. If this occurs, you can play group games, such as I Spy, Simon Says or 20 Questions. You can also play the number game. This involves a child choosing a number in his or her head and then having classmates try to choose the number. If a child chooses the wrong number, he or she is told if the secret number is higher or lower than the guess. The child who chooses correctly gets to lead the game next.

For programs in which children all arrive at the same time, you can have an activity waiting for the children to work on independently, such as a coloring page or worksheet, or have books available for them to look at until all children are in the room and parents have left. You can also have an arrival song that you sing as the children arrive in the room and meet you at the rug to begin large group time. Dismissal transitions can include trivia cards, flash cards, I Spy, or other turn-taking games. When a child's parent arrives, he or she gets to guess an answer before leaving. If all children are dismissed at the same time, make sure that you pick something that will end prior to dismissal or that can be stopped at any time.

Once you implement a transition plan, you need to evaluate its effectiveness and make adjustments as necessary. Be flexible and try different techniques when previously tried ones don't work. Ensure there is enough time during the transition to allow the children to work at their own pace. Once you find a plan that works, try to be consistent. When children know what to expect and know what is expected of them, they can take the lead and allow you to focus on children who need more help with the transition.

Transitions are a small, yet very important part of the day in child care. They can either cause anxiety, chaos and confusion or provide structure and promote self-management. With proper planning, implementation and evaluation, transitions can be a positive experience for everyone. ❖

Why Do Children Bite and What Can We, As Providers, Do?

Christina Jacobs, Child Care Provider - Wayne County
Reprint from Issue 75



When biting occurs, no one is happy. There is the frustrated biter who can't understand the social consequences, the victim who received the bite and the parents of both the biter and the victim.

When an incident occurs, it is important to step back and look at the possible causes for the biting. Then come up with a plan involving staff and parents to monitor situations that might give rise to biting again. This way, there is a chance that the caregivers can react proactively to the next incident, and perhaps redirect and channel the biter's actions in a more socially acceptable way.

Common causes of biting in toddlers include:

- Teething.
- Frustration, especially when fighting over toys.
- Anger.
- Tension.
- Anxiety.
- Excitement.
- Hunger.
- Tiredness.

Some methods to help prevent repeat occurrences are:

- Try to directly observe what happens before the next biting attempt to better understand why it's occurring. A log may be kept to help detect a pattern.
- Minimize waiting times for children as much as possible.
- Keep a caregiver close to the biter at all times to intervene and redirect when biting is about to occur.
- Try to avoid using the word "bite" around the children, as it may create conditions for another incident to occur. Instead, say to the child, "your mouth hurts the other child."

- Use puppets to role play situations and encourage communication.
- Talk to parents at enrollment about your methods and biting policy.
- If needed, hold a meeting with all parents to make them aware of biting behaviors and to reassure them that it is not an unusual situation.
- Try to keep a daily routine that is predictable for the children.
- Learn the best way to communicate with the biter.
- Provide teething children with teethingers, and also provide special baskets or cubbies with comfort items within reach for each child (favorite toy, picture of parent, etc.).

All children need to be able to communicate. This is especially true for children who tend to bite others. Teach children to express their feelings with words rather than biting (such as, telling others "no," "stop," "mine," "take turns"). Also, encourage children to come to a caregiver when they are upset. Under no circumstances should a child benefit from biting and have his or her needs met.

The book "No Biting" by Gretchen Kinnell is a remarkable resource for understanding and dealing with biters. It provides a guide to help caregivers assist repeat victims of biters, a section on appropriate first aid, strategies on dealing with biters, and ways to develop policies about biting.

By working together with staff and parents and by actively responding to each situation, it is possible to create an environment where children feel safe and know how to respond to each other by using their mouths for words, not bites. ❖

Looking Through the Eyes of Boys and Girls

Daniel Hodgins, Author of "Boys: Changing the Classroom, Not the Child"

Reprint from Issue 88



Are boys and girls really that different? Do the differences come from our cultural expectations or is there something biological going on?

Research about differences between boys and girls is emerging every year. Some of the findings are contradictory. As early childhood professionals, we can't wait for researchers to finish debating these questions. We must make changes **now**. We have boys and girls right now in our lives who demand and deserve our caring attention.

The purpose of this article is not to offer a comprehensive scientific theory about the genetic and culturally based differences between boys and girls, but rather a review of a few of my observations and practices that early childhood professionals may use to transform their relationship with boys and girls and to create environments that nurture them.

Boys and girls see details differently.

In a preschool classroom, a teacher was reading a story to a group of 3- to 5-year-olds. During the story, the teacher was showing the pictures in the book and asking questions of the children. When the teacher came to a picture of a cougar one boy yelled, "Grrr," then another boy got on all fours and also started to "Grrr" until soon all the boys were crawling and roaring like cougars. The boys responded immediately to the detail they saw by physically and verbally acting out the cougar. The girls were busily talking about the many details that were displayed in the picture—describing the whiskers, color of fur, sharp teeth, etc.

Boys often see the whole but not necessarily all the details. Girls often see the many details that

make up the whole. This difference is why it is so important not to layer instructions for boys. An example of a layered instruction is: "Boys and girls, pick up your toys and then wash your hands for snack. Because it is so nice today, we are going outside right after snack." Boys often are lined up to go outside and the girls are screaming, "Teacher, he didn't pick up." The girls heard all of the details and the boys only heard what was relevant to them – outside.

Boys and girls often have different connections between cognitive thought and feelings.

The corpus callosum is the part of the brain that allows for cross talk between the cognitive side and the feeling side. Most learning has to go through the corpus callosum. Many researchers are claiming that the corpus callosum of boys is often smaller than the corpus callosum of girls. This difference might explain why boys often don't demonstrate empathy in the same way that girls do. Teachers often report that boys don't talk about their feelings and hit more frequently. My observations reflect that boys do have empathy; it is just demonstrated differently than girls - usually in a physical way. He might push, shove, give high fives, and even roughhouse as a form of empathy. Remember boys don't often talk about their feelings but enjoy demonstrating them physically.

Boys and girls often are different when it comes to completing tasks.

Girls' brains are usually always on, thinking and analyzing. Boys' brains frequently go into a pause state after completing a task. What results from the differences in how boys and girls complete tasks? Girls often can do

Continued on page 11

Turn Off the Lights: Practical Tips for Saving Energy and Money

Toni Stagray, Licensing Consultant, Saginaw County
Reprint from Issue 90



In a home or center child care setting, many strategies can be utilized to lower operating costs and save energy. As we move into the era of going green, each of us are being encouraged to take a responsible role in this process. The tips listed are suggestions to help any individual become more energy-conscious and to teach children in child care settings to become energy-misers too!

In Any Weather

- Close the doors and registers in rooms infrequently used.
- Install a programmable thermostat to adjust temperatures automatically.
- Avoid rinsing dishes prior to putting them in the dishwasher. This practice could save up to \$70 a year.
- Keep the hot water temperature at 120 degrees or less.
- Wrap your electric hot water heater with an insulated blanket, as this can reduce heat loss by 18 percent.
- Adjust the water level on your washing machine to match the load size, especially if using hot water. Cold water wash and rinse is effective for most items.
- Clean the lint filter on your dryer each time you use it.
- Use compact fluorescent bulbs where possible. These funny looking bulbs produce the same amount of light by using a quarter less electricity.
- Turn off bathroom and kitchen fans when not in use.
- Make sure registers are not blocked by furniture or drapes.
- Don't peek in the oven. Cooking temperatures can drop as much as 50 degrees every time the oven door is opened.
- Buy things that can be used over and over instead of disposable items.
- Drive sensibly—rapid acceleration and

braking wastes gasoline. Keep tires properly inflated to save on gas.

In Warm Weather

- Clean or replace your air conditioner's filter every month to trim your cooling costs and help your unit run more efficiently.
- Turn off ceiling fans when you leave the room. A fan running constantly can cost up to \$7 a month, depending upon its size and age.
- Limit the time your pool pump runs to no more than six hours a day.
- If you have air conditioning, set your thermostat to 78 degrees. Raise the temperature to 82 degrees or warmer when you're away.
- Close curtains and blinds to keep the space cool and reduce the need to run fans and air conditioners.
- Shade exterior air conditioning units so they don't need to work as hard.
- Use ceiling fans to promote air movement and reduce the need for air conditioning.
- Close the fireplace damper—it can let cool air escape. It is like having a window open.
- Avoid leaving the refrigerator or freezer open for long periods of time.

In Cold Weather

- Set the thermostat to 68 degrees or lower in the evening, if possible.
- Replace or clean furnace filters monthly—dirty filters restrict air flow.
- Reduce drafts by partially closing drapes or blinds when possible. Open drapes or blinds when the sun is out.
- Seal leaks with caulk or weather stripping. Take a ribbon and hold it up to the edges of the doors and windows. If the ribbon blows, you've found a leak.
- Rearrange furniture so you are sitting near interior walls—exterior walls and windows are likely to be drafty.

- Wear warm clothing indoors.
- Close the fireplace damper when there is no fire burning. An open damper can let 8 percent of heat from your furnace escape through the chimney.
- Make sure your ceiling fan is on the proper setting for the best warm air circulation.

Ways Kids Can Help

- Turn off the water while doing dishes, brushing teeth, etc.
- Turn off lights when leaving the room.
- Decide what you are looking for before opening the refrigerator or freezer.
- Turn off toys and games that use batteries when not playing with them. Batteries will last longer.
- Turn off plug-in electronic devices when done using them.
- Brainstorm ways to save energy. Put up a board where kids can write down their ideas.

Office and Home Electronic Tips

- Buy rechargeable batteries and a charger.
- Select energy-efficient equipment whenever possible. An *ENERGY STAR* labeled computer uses 70 percent less electricity than computers without this designation.
- Turn off the television when no one is watching it. The same goes for computers, printers, radios, and appliances. It is even more efficient to unplug these items when they are not in use. It is a misconception that equipment lasts longer if it is left on.
- If you are not able to turn your computer off, setting your computer to automatically switch to sleep mode or manually turning off the monitor is always the best strategy. Screen savers do not reduce energy use.
- Laptops, in general, use much less energy than desktop computers.
- If using a laptop, unplug the power cord or plug it into a power strip that can be turned off.
- Unplug battery chargers when not in use.

Visit www.energysavers.gov for more energy-saving ideas. ❖

Looking Through the Eyes of Boys and Girls,
from page 9

multiple tasks. It sometimes takes boys much longer to complete a task. Boys often do not have a beginning, middle and end to a task. Girls often can talk while they are doing a task. I have noticed that the more physical the activity, the less likely a child's brain will go into a pause state. During a pause state, no learning is taking place. So when children are placed in a time out chair for misbehaving and told to think about why they shouldn't hit anymore, many times the boy is not thinking about what he did, but hoping someone comes close enough to him so he can attempt to trip him/her.

To prevent these pause states:

- Limit the number of transitions.
- Provide for lots of physical movement.
- Offer standing up options at meal time.
- Provide lots of hands-on activities – squeezing, pounding, rolling.

It is important that we revisit what we know about the differences between boys and girls by recognizing and respecting the reality that boys and girls are different and that each gender has distinct needs and distinct strengths. I have given you a few examples so we can work together to give boys and girls the strength and creativity they need to face the future. ❖

Unraveling the Mysteries of 6- to 12-Year-Olds

Toni Stagray, Licensing Consultant, Saginaw County
Reprint from Issue 91



The school-age period, often referred to as middle childhood, is a transition from fantasy and free-form play to group games and sports. Children in this age range are learning to relate to others and have relationships with family, friends and teachers. Over these middle years, the gradual development of a child's social skills and an increasing ability to relate to the outside world at school and with friends is apparent. In addition to the growing ability to form close relationships with other people, 6- to 12-year-olds are also learning to express and manage emotions and explore new environments.

Friendships are typically with members of the same sex and remain fairly stable over the middle childhood years. Friendship and peer acceptance becomes increasingly important and some children will exhibit certain behaviors in order to be part of the group. In some cases, this acceptance is essential for their self-esteem.



- Apt to have difficulty talking about feelings.
- Concerned with fairness and often see right and wrong as an absolute.
- Recognizing that they can experience more than one emotion at a time.
- Beginning to pay attention to cues – facial, social, situational – to interpret another's feelings.
- Becoming more responsible and independent but still seek adult support.
- Mastering physical skills.

As caregivers, it is important to remember that these children need adults who care about them, will talk to them and play with them. They need guidance, rules and limits and help with problem solving. Children may work out fears by acting out or withdrawing, so helping them express

feelings appropriately when upset or worried is important. They need more love, attention and approval than criticism.

What does the typical middle childhood look like?

6- to 8-year-olds are:

- Developing self-concept and personality traits.
- Comparing themselves to and placing value on the opinion of others.
- Beginning to feel the effects of peer pressure.
- Losing the sunny optimism of early childhood.
- Beginning to develop self-discipline.
- Interested in friends of the same gender.
- Less self-centered and more sensitive to the needs of others.

Allow time for individual and small and large group activities. Plan activities that focus on creative expression. Develop positive communication skills and discipline strategies, and model positive communication with adults and children.

Safety is important for school-age children, as they are highly active and need strenuous physical activity. They will begin to participate in more daring and adventurous behaviors, proving their competence. They should be taught to play sports in appropriate, safe, supervised areas with proper equipment and rules. Bicycles, in-line skates and other types of equipment should fit the child.

9- to 12-year-olds are:

- Maturing rapidly.
- Learning to be responsible.
- Less quarrelsome and demanding.
- Able to distinguish ability, effort and luck relative to success or failure.
- Learning to adapt strategies to regulate emotions.
- Experiencing rising self-esteem.
- Able to step into someone else's shoes and show empathy.
- Becoming part of emerging peer groups.
- Becoming more aware of gender stereotypes.
- Less concerned with sibling rivalry and it tends to decrease.
- Competitive.
- Transitioning from a child-view to an adult-view of the world.
- Developing friendships that are more selective and based upon mutual trust.

Between the ages of 7 and 12, children are working through issues of self-concept, acceptance from peers and competency in the learning environment. Relationships with peers are determined by their ability to socialize and fit in well. Family relationships are determined in part by the approval children gain from parents and siblings. Although many children tend to place a high value on the peer group, they still look primarily to parents for support and guidance. Siblings also serve as role models and as valuable supports.

A 10- or 11-year-old may have a best friend but will experience changing relationships at school. Relationships become more competitive. By 11, a child is much more interested in, and affected by, the norms of his friends. Independence is flourishing and children may begin to worry that their clothes aren't cool enough and may lose interest in attending some social functions that they adored a year ago. Although 11- and 12-year-olds are better at spreading their wings, they still need adult supervision and guidance. They are not as capable of dealing with the world

as some think they are. Puberty, or sexual maturing, will begin during the latter part of this phase for most children. The world is becoming a more complex place for the child who is beginning puberty.

What does all this mean for caregivers?

In the child care setting, children from 6 to 12 have many different needs and abilities. Each child needs a place to keep his or her belongings. Older children will need time and a place away from younger children; they should not be expected to enjoy all the same activities. They need a nutritious snack and a flexible schedule. They may need to rest. Free time is very important; therefore, a schedule that offers a balance of free time and structured activities is recommended.

Caregivers will need to make adjustments to the rules and responsibilities expected of school-age children. Sitting down with children to revise the rules and boundaries set is a good idea. During this discussion, consequences for breaking any rules should also be discussed. Involving children in setting rules and boundaries will help them remember the rules. They will still need reminders, but as they mature, they will become better at accepting and remembering rules. Give them opportunities to feel responsible.

There is no doubt that the ages of 6 to 12 are interesting years in a child's social and emotional development. Remember, while these are common guidelines, all children will develop individually and most will not fit into any one category completely. Children's behavior changes as they grow. Being knowledgeable about middle childhood can help you guide them, plan activities for them, understand them, and most of all, enjoy them! ❖

Physical Activity

Katrice Sweet, Licensing Consultant, Ingham County
Reprint from Issue 97



Unfortunately, obesity in young children is on the rise in the United States. Research indicates that children involved in physical and movement activities at young ages tend to stay active as adults. Regular physical activity helps children build and maintain healthy bones, strengthen muscles and joints and control weight. Physical activity also increases children's capacity for learning.



According to "Learning to Move and Moving to Learn," an article published by Head Start Smart Body, research has found motor abilities and play are related to important learning processes such as attention, memory, self-regulation, and overall

academic achievement throughout childhood. The article also indicates that there have been numerous studies linking physical play with a child's ability to focus. Children are much more able to focus their attention in the classroom after active motor play. This may be because the children expended energy and/or because during motor play, children learn to regulate their thinking and behavior through controlling their body movements. Another thought is that during active physical play, the brain releases serotonin and endorphins which may help children focus more attentively.

It is important that caregivers plan both an indoor and outdoor environment, as well as specific activities, to encourage active physical play that leads to increasing physical skills. "Learning to Move and Moving to Learn" suggests the following:

- **Ensure adequate active play:** Adults should make sure that children have an opportunity to spend at least 60 minutes engaged in active play outside every day.

This is also a recommendation from The National Association for Sport and Physical Education regarding the amount of physical activity for toddlers and preschoolers. If weather does not permit going outside, adults can plan indoor activities such as dancing to music, active games, motor challenges (for example, asking children, "How many times can you jump before I say stop?"), and indoor obstacle courses.

- **Strategically schedule outdoor time:** Scheduling outdoor play time just prior to group time or shared reading periods can help children pay attention. Many caregivers are wary of such a schedule because children seem wound up after coming inside. It can take several minutes for children to calm down and focus, but once the children regain their attention, they are often able to sustain it for much longer if they have just been outside. Stretching and breathing exercises when you come indoors will help calm and focus the children and prepare them for a structured cognitive activity.
- **Plan motor challenges:** Adults can challenge children to incorporate movement throughout the day by planning a daily movement theme, such as telling children, "Each time you get out of your seat today, touch your head, shoulders, knees and toes two times before you continue with what you got up to do." Such activities are also great for transitions throughout the day. In addition, planning play experiences that are both intellectually and physically challenging can further support children's self-regulation skills. For example, adults can pose problems that children must solve with their bodies. Ask the children, "How can we use our bodies to create a bridge that Jordan can go under?"

- **Schedule frequent movement breaks:** Encouraging children to get up and move frequently throughout the day provides additional opportunities for children to engage in motor activity and may help to facilitate transitions between activities. Quick breaks could include having children make two marching or skipping laps around the room before sitting down for snack, use their arms to fly like a bird to line up or swim like a fish to the circle time area. If children show signs of inattention during lessons or shared reading periods, adults can spontaneously incorporate a quick movement experience. For example, ask children, “Can everyone stand up and stretch like the tree in our story?”
- **Play self-regulation games involving movement:** Adults can use games such as Stop and Go and Red Light, Green Light freeze races or Simon Says to encourage children to learn to control and inhibit movements. These games should be adapted to ensure that all children can participate the entire time. Children should not be eliminated when they make a mistake so that they can remain active throughout the game.

Physical activity must also be added to the learning curriculum; planning purposeful daily activities will increase fundamental skills. Steven Sanders, author of “Active for Life,” states developmentally appropriate practice suggests that children be provided with a variety of learning experiences throughout the year emphasizing all areas of motor skill development. Children also need repeated practice of the same skill in order for mastery.

According to Sanders, the physical skills children develop can be divided into three categories or skill themes: locomotor skills such as walking, running, hopping, skipping, jumping, climbing, crawling, chasing, and fleeing; stability skills such as turning, twisting, bending, balancing, transferring

weight, stretching, swinging, and swaying; and manipulative skills such as throwing, catching, kicking, punting, dribbling, volleying, and striking with an instrument such as a bat or racket. These skill themes develop in sequence.

Children learn about movement as they practice these skill themes. It is important to know that skill themes do not always come naturally to children. The sequences to these actions must sometimes be taught. Teach children the skill by breaking down the specific movement to the child. Rolling, for example, requires the child to keep feet together and arms together, preferably close to the body. The child then twists his/her body to roll across the ground. Children must be given repeated practice in order to master the skill set and move on to the next level.

Intentional planning of daily physical activity is important for several reasons. Obesity among children is at the highest levels ever and seems to be growing every day. Children participating in daily physical activities are less likely to be obese and are more likely to continue regular physical activity through adolescence and adulthood. Planning both age- and developmentally-appropriate activities for both the indoor and outdoor environment allows children to continuously move and practice motor skills. Implementing a curriculum rich in intentional physical activities will stimulate brain function and increases a child’s ability to focus. ❖

Need More Information about Positive Methods of Discipline?

The publication “Positive Discipline - Including the Proper Use of Time Out (BCAL-Pub 787)” is now available on the licensing website at www.michigan.gov/michildcare.

Outdoor Play is a Must for Good Health!

Catherine Edgar, Child Care Licensing Consultant, Genesee County
Reprint from Issue 97



In years past, outdoor play and childhood went hand-in-hand. Children played outside all day long or after school until dark. Television viewing was a rarity and computers, video games and cell phones were someone's vision for the future.

In today's world, children spend less time outdoors and more time inside watching television, playing computer or video games and texting their friends. At many schools, morning and afternoon recess times have been eliminated so children have limited time for outdoor play during the school day.

The lack of outdoor play is a big part of the current obesity epidemic plaguing our country. Childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years, with more than one third of children and adolescents meeting the criteria to be considered overweight or obese. These children are more at risk for adult health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, osteoarthritis, and several types of cancer.

The Centers for Disease Control recommends that children ages 2 and older get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Daily physical activity for children should include aerobic, as well as muscle- and bone-strengthening activity. This can be achieved through running, climbing and jumping.

Children should have equipment available to them during outdoor play in both the summer and winter months, such as balls, hula hoops and sleds. Make sure that parents supply children with proper clothing and footwear for outdoor play during the summer and winter months. Child care providers might want to start a collection of extra boots, hats and mittens for children to use in case a parent forgets to dress them for outdoor play. Make

sure parents supply sunscreen, insect repellent and proper footwear as well.

Not only does outdoor play make children more physically fit, it also allows for exploration, risk taking, conflict resolution, social interaction, and the development of fine and gross motor skills. This makes outdoor play critical to a child's overall development. Daily outdoor play can:

- Relieve/reduce stress and anxiety.
- Increase coordination.
- Build muscles, strength and endurance.
- Promote leadership skills.
- Increase self-confidence.
- Enhance language and social skills.
- Promote exploration of the environment.

We know that colds, flu and illness are caused by viruses and bacteria, not by outdoor play in the winter. Children who remain inside a warm, stuffy room all winter have a greater chance of exposure to the germs and illness trapped in there. Daily outdoor play allows for the viruses and bacteria to be dispersed into a larger air space, thus decreasing the risk of illness. Frequent exposure to daily fresh air and exercise improves a child's general health and increases his or her resistance to illness and infection.

Daily outdoor play for children of all ages is a licensing requirement for child care homes. For child care centers, children in attendance for more than three continuous hours must have an opportunity for daily outdoor play. A child's age and health play into the decision for outdoor time. An infant or a child with health issues will spend less time outside than a healthy, older child. However, all children, including infants, must be taken outside daily,

Continued on page 19

Lesson Planning

Katrice Sweet, Licensing Consultant, Ingham County
Reprint from Issue 96



Some providers find it hard to complete lesson plans and some do not see the value of planning specific daily activities. Research explains that the first years of life are critical to brain development. As a provider, you have the opportunity to help lay the foundation for the emotional, physical, cognitive, and social development of the children in your program. You have a very important role to play in the development of young children, and this task must be taken seriously.

According to licensing regulations for both centers and homes, a provider must plan activities that promote physical development of both large and small muscles, social and emotional development, including group projects, cooperation and self-help skills and cognitive development, including language and early math and science skills. Increasing development in all domains is done through a variety of adult- and child-initiated activities that allow children to feel successful, develop independence, learn new skills and encourage creativity. Providers should plan a balance of active and quiet, group and individual, and indoor and outdoor activities.

Completing a lesson plan is not simply filling out a chart and hanging it on the wall. Lesson planning involves setting goals for the group as a whole and for each child, then providing the activities to accomplish the goals. The abilities and interests of each child must be taken into consideration when planning activities. The provider should consider keeping an observation log of the developmental milestones of each child. A strong knowledge of child development is needed to understand what children are able to accomplish in each stage and at each age. The provider must choose activities that build on the knowledge, interests and abilities of each child.

Providers should use a balance of child-guided and adult-guided activities when completing a lesson plan. Child-guided activities allow children to learn through their own exploration and interaction with their peers. Adults are still important in child-guided activities because adults need to ask questions to extend learning. Adult-guided activities allow children to learn from adults introducing concepts and modeling skills. Adult-guided activities typically involve concepts introduced to the entire group. Though each learning experience is different, teachers must use their judgment to determine how learning activities will be carried out and how to support each child.

Though children learn through their own exploration, simply providing a container of blocks is not enough to increase children's skills. It is important to think about learning goals for each individual child when planning activities to be sure there is a specific purpose. There is a huge difference when children are playing with a random selection of blocks and the provider is there to encourage cognitive development by talking with the children regarding the color, shape, size number, and balancing properties of blocks compared to when the provider is not interacting with the children at all to extend learning. Though we know that children learn skills through their own exploration, providers still have the responsibility to set the stage and ask open-ended questions to expand critical thinking skills.

Being prepared with a lesson plan designed with specific goals will help eliminate stress. You will not have to worry about what to do with the children for the next hour before lunch; you will be prepared with activities relating to the children's individual interests. Complete lesson

Continued on page 19

Safe Sleep Practices for Infants

Colleen Nelson, Child Care Program Consultant, Ingham County
Reprint (with update) from Issue 85



Governor Rick Snyder declared September 2013 Infant Safe Sleep Month. In his proclamation, Governor Snyder declared, “During this month, we join...to raise awareness of the important steps parents can take to ensure the safety of their infant children while sleeping.”

Child care providers must follow the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations on safe sleep practices for infants per child care licensing rules 400.1912, 400.1916, 400.8176, and 400.8188. When the AAP’s recommendations are followed, tragic infant deaths due to accidental suffocation are prevented.

In 2013, approximately 140 Michigan babies died in sleep-related deaths due to unsafe sleep practices. Eight of those deaths occurred in child care facilities.

The following pictures are doll reenactments of how infants have died when placed in unsafe sleeping environments. These pictures demonstrate the rationale for the AAP’s recommendations on safe sleep practices for infants and why Michigan’s licensing rules require that these practices be followed.



This infant died when his head got entangled in a blanket that was placed in the crib.



This infant died when her face became pressed against a soft bumper pad and she was unable to move away.



When placed on a pillow to sleep, this infant died when he was unable to move his face away from the soft material of the pillow.

Child care licensing rules require that the following safe infant sleep practices are followed:

- Infants must rest or sleep in an approved crib or porta-crib. All cribs or porta-cribs must have all of the following:
 1. A firm, tight-fitting mattress.
 2. No loose, missing or broken hardware or slats.
 3. A tightly fitted bottom sheet that covers a firm mattress with no additional padding placed between the sheet and mattress.
- Soft objects, bumper pads, stuffed toys, blankets, pillows, etc. must not be in crib or porta-crib. An infant may be swaddled while being held by the caregiver. If an infant falls asleep while swaddled, the infant must be un-swaddled before he is placed in the crib or porta-crib.
- An infant’s head must remain uncovered during sleep.
- Blankets must not be draped over cribs or porta-cribs.
- If an infant falls asleep in a car seat, infant seat, swing, highchair, etc., the infant must be moved to a crib or porta-crib.

- Infants must be placed on their backs for resting and sleeping.
 - Infants unable to roll from their stomachs to their backs and from their backs to their stomachs, when found facedown, must be placed on their backs.
 - When infants can easily turn over from their backs to their stomachs and from their stomachs to their backs, they must be initially placed on their backs, but allowed to adopt whatever position they prefer for sleep.

Additional information on safe sleep practices for infants can be found at the Infant Safe Sleep website at www.michigan.gov/safesleep. ❖

Outdoor Play, from page 16

weather permitting. Investing in a stroller is a great way to get infants and toddlers outside for fresh air, even if for a short period of time.

Outdoor play promotes happy, healthy children who rest better and have fewer disagreements with others. It gives children an opportunity to explore the environment while developing new skills. Children who learn to enjoy the outdoors have a much higher chance of doing the same as adults. Take those children outside daily and make it a regular part of your program. ❖

Lesson Planning, from page 17

plans also help to eliminate disruptive behaviors. Planned activities based on the children’s interests geared toward specific learning objectives will help eliminate boredom that often leads to disruptive behaviors. Providers have obligations to the children and families they serve to provide positive learning environments. This is best done by being prepared and completing lesson plans based on learning goals and developing skills of individual children. ❖

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Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Infant/Child Product Recalls (not including toys)

These recalls have been added since Issue 99 (Spring 2014):

- Summer Infant expands recall to replace video monitor rechargeable batteries due to burn hazard.
- Bedz King recalls bunk beds with side ladder due to entrapment hazard.

Details on these product recalls may be obtained on the CPSC's website (www.cpsc.gov). Post this page in your facility to be in compliance with the Children's Product Safety Act (2000 PA 219).

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