



HAPPY

homeroom

A Newsletter for the Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters
Parent Edition

March 2016 Volume 1, Issue 28

Upcoming Family Events: March

Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival: Wye Mountain UMC Daffodil Field-Wye	1-31st
Home Depot Kids Workshops (FREE) : Home Depot stores statewide	5th
Kids' Programs at Michael's stores statewide (\$2-\$15)	Dates Vary
Arkansas Arts Center Children's Theatre-School House Rock: Little Rock	4-25th
Go, Dog. Go!: Arts Center of the Ozarks-Springdale	5-6th
Peter Rabbit Tales: East Arkansas Community College Fine Arts Center-Forrest City	6th
Eagle Watch Tour: Cane Creek State Park Visitor Center-Star City	6th, 13th,
Camden Daffodil Festival: Downtown Camden	11-12th
Eureka Springs St. Patrick's Day Parade: Downtown Eureka Springs	12th
Daylight Savings Time Begins-Spring Forward 1 hour	13th
World's Shortest St. Patrick's Day Parade: Downtown Hot Springs	17th
Spring Break Days @ Heifer Ranch-Perryville	21-26th
31st Annual Governor Conway Days Festival: Downtown Park-Bradley	25-26th
26th Annual Kite Festival: Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge-Eureka Springs	26th
For more events in your area: http://www.arkansas.com/events/	



State Manager Spotlight –Tyra Greenwood

We've been fortunate to have a very mild winter and so far, an easy transition to spring. Hopefully, you have taken advantage of the mild weather and found some time to get outside with your child to play or enjoy nature.

Being outside has been shown to have many benefits for adults and kids, including reducing stress and increasing focus and attention. In our busy and hectic worlds, we can all use less stress and more focus.

When children have the

opportunity to explore the outdoors, they are developing many important skills and building essential connections in their brains. While it might not initially seem as though learning is taking place when your child wants to play in the mud or jump in a puddle, they are actually exploring different textures, properties of water, science, engineering, problem solving, and using fine and gross motor skills. Wow!

Since we know that most brain development happens in the

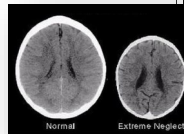
first five years of life and, coincidentally this is when children are most curious, we need to be seizing the opportunity to encourage our children's desire to explore and have new experiences while it can have the most positive impact on the development of their brains.

In addition to helping little brains develop, playing outside is fun and helps us remember what it was like to be a kid. Who couldn't use a little more fun in their lives?

In The Mind of a Child

Did you know...

- The fastest period of human brain development happens from birth to three years of age.
- Babies are born with all the brain cells they will ever have (100 billion neurons). They will develop some of them, make them stronger and build connections, and eliminate the ones that they do not use.
- If babies' bodies grew at the same rapid speed as their brains, they would weight 170lbs by one month old.
- By the time children are 3, the average child's brain will have formed 100 trillion connections between neurons.
- 90% of a child's brain develops in the first 5 years of life.
- Loving interactions with caregivers strongly stimulate the brain, causing synapses to grow and connections to get stronger. Children receiving little attention or stimulation have fewer developed synapses and fewer connections.



(See image of average 3 year old brain (left) and one of a neglected 3 year old child (right))

March 14-20th, 2016 is Brain Awareness Week. Even before children are born, parents start having an impact on brain development; parental nutrition, health, and stress levels have an impact on the brain development of a developing child.

What can you do to promote optimal brain development and growth? Below are some helpful tips/reminders to ensure you have the information to successfully support the brain development of your child(ren).

- Parents are the best tool for brain development.** By talking to, interacting with, and responding to infants

and young children, brain connections are strengthened and developed. No fancy toys necessary!

- Hug it out.** Physical interaction with your child, such as hugging, cuddling, holding, rocking, sitting together, etc. all help encourage brain development.
- Give children opportunities and experiences.** These chances to see, hear, feel, taste, touch, and smell new things provide constant stimulation for the brain, which encourages its development.
- Kids need exercise.** When exercising, there is increased blood flow to the brain which is what the brain needs for alertness and mental focus. So go outside and take a walk, play tag, or kick a ball around. Even young babies benefit from exercise, tummy time, rolling a ball around, etc.
- Establish routines.** Routines help children feel safe and secure, which limits the potential stress of not knowing what to expect during their day. Stress can limit brain development or help the brain develop unhealthy responses to certain stimulation.
- If you don't use it, you lose it.** When brain connections are not used, they will eventually be eliminated, so it is very important to continue talking, reading, and singing to your child as well as encouraging new experiences to keep brain connections active.
- Take turns.** By taking turns when talking with your baby or young child, you are teaching important social and self-regulation skills.
- Make music together.** Whether it's listening to music on the radio or banging a spoon against a pot, children are using eye-hand skills, listening skills, rhythm and more.

(Sources: extension.purdue.edu, umaine.edu, firstscalifornia.com, raisesmartkid.com)



Spring In Bloom Activities



Grow Your Name

(Science, Language, Fine Motor Skills)

Materials:

- Small box (smaller than a shoe box)
- Grass seed
- Potting soil
- Water
- Plastic bag or plastic wrap



Directions:

1. Line the box with plastic (bag or wrap) and then fill it with potting soil.
2. Have your child press the letters of his/her name into the soil.
3. Sprinkle grass seeds into the pressed out letters of their name in the soil.
4. Gently cover the seeds with soil.
5. Lightly water the box. Soon your child's name will be growing in their own name garden.

Egg Carton Flowers

(Fine motor, creativity skills)

Materials:

- Cardboard egg carton
- Scissors
- Paint
- Glue
- Beads or other decorative items
- Blank paper
- Pipe cleaners (optional)
- Paper plate (optional)



Directions:

1. Cut the egg cartons into individual sections; these will be the flowers.
2. Have your child paint the individual egg cups.
3. When the paint dries, cut 4 slits in each corner of the individual egg cups to make the flower petals.
4. Your child can add beads or other decorative items to the center of the egg cup for the middle of the flower.
5. Glue the flowers to a piece of paper and hang up for a spring decoration.

Alternative A: Poke a pipe cleaner through the flowers and twist it so the pipe cleaner does not fall out. This will be the stem. Make a bouquet of these flower and put in a vase.

Alternative B: Take a white paper plate and cut out the center to form a circle/wreath. Glue the flowers around the circle to make a floral spring wreath.



Flower Petal Math

(Math skills)

Materials:

- Colored paper
- Marker
- Scissors

Directions:

1. Cut out several small paper circles for the centers of the flowers.
2. Cut out 10-15 paper flower petals.
3. On the flower centers, write different numbers 1-10.
4. Have your child count out the number of flower petals to match the numbers on the flower centers.
5. Cut out more petals and add higher numbers to the flower centers as your child improves his/her counting and 1 to 1 correspondence skills.



Plant A Garden Song

(Language, gross motor skills)

To the tune of "Oh My Darling Clementine"
Plant a garden, plant a garden,
Plant a garden in the spring.
Dig a hole and add some seeds (*make digging motion and sprinkle seeds*)
Cover them up gently now, please. (*make a patting motion*)

They will need lots and lots of sunshine (*make an arc with arms overhead-sun*)
A little wind, a little rain. (*move fingers like rain*)
Soon those little seeds will sprout—
You'll see green leaves, have no doubt. (*hold arms out to sides-leaves*)

Day by day, they'll grow taller (*squat and stand up slowly*)
And their roots will deeper go. (*point downward*)
Big strong plants will bud and bloom. (*make a muscle*)
Yielding veggies to consume. (*pretend to eat*)

Color Changing Plants

(Scientific skills)

Materials:

- 3 cups of water
- Food coloring
- 3 white flowers with stems attached or 3 celery stalks
- Sharp knife (adult use only)

Directions:

1. Fill 3 cups with water.
2. Add several drops of food coloring to two of the cups.
3. Place a carnation/celery stalk in one of the food coloring cups and one in the cup of water.
4. Ask your child to predict what will happen to each of the flowers. Write down the prediction.
5. Then, have an adult slice the stem of the carnation/celery carefully in half, straight up the middle, until an inch below the flower part of the plant.
6. Place one part of the stem in one food coloring cup and one in another. Ask your



child to predict what will happen to the flower.

7. Have your child observe the flowers every few hours to see what happens in each of the cups. It may take up to 24 hours to see the final results.

What happens: The colored water will be carried up the plant through tubes in the plant that pull the water up to the flowers. In the plant that has a split stem, both colors should travel up the stem to the petals.

Scratch and Sniff Garden

(Fine motor, science, language skills)

Materials:

- Variety of different herb seeds or plants
- Potting soil
- Water
- Small pots, clean milk jugs or 2 liter bottles (with the top 1/2 cut off)



Directions:

1. Select a variety of different herbs seeds or plants (mint, ginger, cilantro, basil, etc.)
2. Have your child help you fill your planting container with potting soil.
3. Let your child use his/her finger or hands to make small holes for the seeds/plants.
4. Cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil and gently water.
5. Have your child observe the growth of the plants daily and talk about what he/she sees.
6. When the plants begin to bloom, have your child smell the different herbs and describe the smell.
7. Try to use the herbs in your cooking and see if your child can recognize the type of herb used.

Let's Play Gardener

(Fine and gross motor, language, dramatic play, science skills)

Materials:

- Small plastic shovels, rakes
- Gardening or other gloves
- Watering cans, buckets, pots
- Fake/real flowers, seeds, toy vegetables, etc.
- If outdoors, real soil/dirt

Directions:

1. Provide whatever gardening materials that you have, in a specific part of your house or outdoors.
2. Explain to your child that he/she will get to play gardener/farmer, etc.
3. Let your child lead as he/she plants a garden.



(Sources: everythingpreschool.com, buggyandbuddy.com, 123child.com, theholidayzone.com,



Raising All Weather Kids



With the increase of technology and concerns about the safety of our children in the world today, more children than ever are spending more time indoors, instead of playing outside. This time spent indoors is having some unfortunate consequences for our kids today, such as:

- Higher childhood obesity rates and related diseases
- Increased attention disorder diagnoses
- Higher rates of stress
- Greater disconnect from nature and importance of taking care of the Earth.

When kids have a chance to play outdoors, they are likely to reap numerous benefits, both academic/cognitive as well as social. Some of these benefits include:

- ✿ Increased activity level and lower rates of obesity
- ✿ Lower levels of stress
- ✿ Greater focus and attention
- ✿ Increased scientific skills, such as observation, prediction, understanding of nature, etc.
- ✿ Greater physical fitness, eye-hand coordination, balance, and fine and gross motor skills
- ✿ Reduced symptoms of ADD/ADHD

Below are some fun ways to give your children their daily dose of outdoor time, no matter the weather.

Rainy Weather: (no thunder or lightning)



Jump in puddles



Take a walk in the rain-

talk about the sound of the rain on your raincoat or umbrellas, the smells during the rain, the difference in what you see when it's raining, etc.



Play in the mud— build mud bricks or mud castles with sticks and stones for decoration.



Go on a rainbow hunt— when the rain lets up, go looking for a rainbow



Sunny Weather:

Play on the playground

Take a walk, hike, or bike ride

Go on a nature scavenger hunt—look for certain items or collect interesting looking sticks, rocks, leaves, flowers, etc. for later use.

Go birdwatching— see what birds are native to your area. See if you can spot bird nests in the trees (**do not touch the**

bird's nest).

- ✿ **Go fishing**
- ✿ **Dig in the dirt**—look for worms, make a castle, explore the texture and things your child finds.
- ✿ **Go on a bug hunt**—look in the ground, on trees, under rocks, or in the center of flowers and see what insects are in your neighborhood
- ✿ **Grow a garden**—plant vegetables, fruit, herbs, or flowers
- ✿ **Make an obstacle course**— at the park or in your yard, set up a path for your child to run, jump, and climb or let your child design the course.
- ✿ **Outdoor building**— if you have leftover scraps of wood, sticks, large rocks, etc. let your child design a structure
- ✿ **Fly a kite**
- ✿ **Watch the clouds**—talk about the shapes you and your child see, the direction of the clouds' movement, the color, etc.
- ✿ **Pick flowers**— use them to make a crown or bracelet, an art project, or put in a vase



(Sources: *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, *Green Hearts Institute for Nature in Childhood*)



Poison Prevention Week



Each year, Poison Control Centers receive nearly half a million calls regarding children who have gotten into their parents or grandparents medicine. In addition, while the number of poisoning deaths for children have been cut in half since the 1970s, the number of poisoning deaths due to medications has doubled from 36% to 64%.

Medicine poisonings are not the only cause of poisoning that parents need to be aware of. Household cleaners, gardening fertilizers and pesticides, batteries, carbon monoxide and lead are all other common causes of child poisonings that can be prevented by taking a few simple safety precautions.

Keep Cleaners and Chemicals Out of Reach

- ✿ Store cleaners out of children's view and reach. (Children are often eye-level with items under the sinks). Find them a new location on upper shelves, if possible.
- ✿ Install child locks on cabinets that have poisonous items. If child locks are not available, simply using a rubber band to tie two cabinet

door knobs together will work in a pinch. Make sure the rubber band is wound a few times around to ensure little hands cannot sneak inside the cabinet.

Every 8 minutes, a child goes to an emergency room for medicine poisoning.

—Safe Kids Worldwide

✿ Do not leave hazardous products unattended while you are using them. It only takes a second for a child to drink or spill a chemical, causing serious harm.

✿ Keep cleaning products and other chemicals in their original containers to avoid mistaking them for something else.

✿ Detergent pods look like candy to children. Never leave them in sight or reach of children.

Keep Medicines Up and Away

✿ Make sure all medications, including vitamins and adult and children's medicines, are stored out of reach and out of sight of your child.

✿ Childproof packaging is not enough to keep determined little hands from opening most containers.

✿ Put medicine away after every use, even if

you need to take another dose in a few hours. It only takes a second for medicine poisoning to occur.

In Case of Emergency

✿ Keep the poison control number in your cell phone and near your home phone: 1800-222-1222. They offer fast, free help in English and Spanish and most poisonings can be resolved over the phone.

✿ If your child collapses, is not breathing, or has a seizure, call 911.

✿ Do not make a child vomit or give him/her anything unless directed by a professional.

Sing the "Stay Away" Song and teach your child to stay away from potential poisons.

If you don't know what it is,
Stay away! (clap, clap)

If you don't know what it is,
Stay away! (clap, clap)

If you don't know what it is,
Find a grownup right away.

If you don't know what it is,
Stay away! (clap, clap)

(Sources: *Safekids.org*, *American Association of Poison Control Centers*)



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Cooking with Kids



Cooking with your kids is a great way to spend more time together, encourage them to try new foods, and help

them build important thinking and motor skills. While things in the kitchen may get a bit messier with your child as your assistant chef, they may also get a bit more fun!!!

Here are some age-appropriate cooking skills for 3-5 year olds:

-  Spreading
-  Stacking and assembling
-  Tearing
-  Pouring
-  Measuring
-  Stirring and mixing
-  Sprinkling
-  Cutting (with a plastic or butter knife)

Being in the kitchen can be a great bonding and learning experience for your children, but there are few important reminders to keep cooking fun and safe:

1. **Safety First:**
 - Help children learn that **knives cut**, food and fingers. Set some ground rules about which knives are for kids and which are for adults only.
 - **Fire burns**-make sure kids keep a safe distance from the stove or oven when it is in use.
 - **Model and explain hand washing.** Explain the importance of washing hands before and after touching certain foods.
 - **Eating uncooked foods can make you sick.** Make sure children know to ask before eating any uncooked foods and let them know which foods are never safe to eat unless cooked.
2. **Recipes go in order:** Recipes are a great way to teach logical reasoning and sequencing skills. Certain parts of the recipe have to be completed first before others in order for the food to turn out correctly. This may be tough for your child, but with time and patience cooking will help them

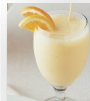
become better direction followers and logical thinkers.
(If possible, do some of the prep work before hand, so your child spends less time waiting around for the next step to occur.)

3. **Keep wait time in check:** Kids have limited patience and lots of excitement; choose recipes that do not take a long time to cook so kids can see the results quicker.
4. **Let it go:** Cooking with kids means there will be more of a mess than usual, but don't let that spoil the fun. When finished, involve your child in the clean up so that he/she knows that when you make a mess, you have to clean it up.

Kid Friendly Recipes Orange Banana Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 1 large banana, peeled, sliced (frozen-optional)
- 1 cup chilled orange juice
- 1/2 cup plain non-fat yogurt
- 4 ice cubes
- 1 tablespoon honey



Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in blender. Blend until smooth. Serve.

Safety Reminders: *Let children know that they can turn the blender on and off, but can never put their hands into it. Also, do not plug the blender in until ready to blend.*

PB and J Layered Sandwiches

Ingredients:

- 6 slices of white or whole wheat bread
- Peanut butter/almond butter
- Jelly flavor of your choosing
- Optional: banana slices, strawberries slices



Directions:

1. Have your child use a plastic or butter knife and take 1 slice of bread and spread it with nut butter and top with another slice of bread.
2. Spread the top of that slice with jelly. Place another slice of bread on top.

Optional: Have your child slice bananas or strawberries and add to one of the sandwich layers.

Black Bean Quesadillas

Ingredients:

- 1 can black beans (rinsed and drained)
- 1-8oz bag mixed, grated "taco cheese"
- 3/4 cup chopped cilantro (Adult job)
- 1/2 cup white onion, chopped (Adult job)
- 8-10 inch flour tortillas
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil



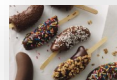
Directions:

1. Heat a grilling pan over medium heat.
2. Have your child mix together the beans, cheese, cilantro, and onion.
3. Have your child spoon the mixture evenly over each tortilla and then fold each tortilla in half.
4. ADULT JOB: Brush 1/2 tbsp oil on the grill pan. Then, place the folded quesadillas on the pan (as many as will fit), turning over once until golden and the cheese is melted.
5. Repeat with remaining quesadillas.

Frozen Chocolate Bananas

Ingredients:

- 2 ripe, but firm bananas
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- Other toppings: chopped nuts, sprinkles, coconut, etc.



Directions:

1. Line a baking sheet with non-stick foil or wax paper.
2. Cut the bananas in half and insert a popsicle stick into each half. Place them on baking sheet and freeze for 15 minutes.
3. Melt the chocolate and the oil in a microwave safe bowl in the microwave (check every 30 seconds). Stir until smooth.
4. Roll each banana in chocolate and then sprinkle any other toppings.
5. Freeze until the chocolate sets. Enjoy!

(Source: epicurious.com)

Spring Books-

Plants and Gardens

- *A Rainbow of My Own* by Don Freeman
- *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert
- *The Little Gardener* by Jan Gerardi
- *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle
- *How a Seed Grows* by Helene J. Jordan
- *Oh Say Can You Seed?: All About Flowering Plants* by Bonnie Worth
- *The Magic School Bus Plants Seeds* by Joanna Cole
- *Jack's Garden* by Henry Cole
- *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown
- *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart
- *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner
- *My Garden* by Kevin Henkes
- *Flower Garden* by Eve Bunting
- *Sunflower House* by Eve Bunting
- *Tops and Bottoms* by Janet Stevens
- *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss

