

## E-Newsletter -- July 2007

### Hello Newsletter Subscribers!

Welcome to this month's issue of the **Better Kid Care E-Newsletter** - *A newsletter for those caring for children.*

**Notable Quote:** "There is no way that we can help children to learn to love and preserve this planet, if we don't give them direct experiences with the miracles and blessings of nature" ~*Anita Olds*

### In this issue:

- **Tips for Early Educators and Practitioners:** [Summer Memories](#)
- **Feature Article:** [Rock on! Creating Rock Gardens with Young Children](#)
- **Distance Education Highlights:** [Kitchen Science](#)
- **Health and Safety:** [Green Hour](#)
- **Turn the Page:** [Rocks, Pebbles, and Stones](#)
- **For Your Families:** [Family Time / Work Time - Stone Artist](#)
- **Satellite Workshops:** [New Dates for 2007-08](#)
- [Professional Development Highlights](#)
- New! [Announcements of Interest](#)

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## Tips for Early Educators and Practitioners

### Summer Memories

When children from my program go on vacations, have special weekend trips, or experience a special summer event, I send home a little note for the family asking them to share their special memories. I like adding questions such as these:

- Where did you go?
- Who did you go with?
- How did you get there?
- Where did you stay?
- What did you do?
- What did you enjoy about your trip?
- What else would you like to tell us about?

I also encourage the families to bring something to share when they return, like a seashell or picture. We have a display area to put all the summer treasures and photographs for all the children to see. If families go away, we ask them to consider sending us a post card.

We put all the note pages in a notebook binder (with protective page covers) and leave it out in our book area. I usually copy some of the photographs or ask parents if they have an extra copy. Our Summer Memories book is a favorite and has led to many new experiences and valuable conversations. It also is a great way to keep all of us connected in each other's lives.

Where do you find the best ideas on caring for children? From early educators and practitioners, of course! Do you have a *great tip* or *good thing*? Send us your best tips in writing and your tip may end up in our newsletter! Email Christine at [crb16@psu.edu](mailto:crb16@psu.edu) or contact the Better Kid Care Program at 814-865-7894 or 800-452-9108 (within PA).

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## Feature Article

### Rock on! Creating Rock Gardens with Young Children

by Christine Belinda

While observing outside play time, Wendy, a child care provider, noticed an ongoing interest for her children: rocks. Her garden and outside play area had several types of rocks: rocks bordering gardens, smooth stones in pathways, and several "loose" rocks bordering her wooded property.

The children surprised her with endless ways in which they used rocks. At first Wendy often told the children to put the rocks down, but eventually she saw the need to let the children explore. Rocks were carried, lifted, lined up, stacked, balanced, and talked to. Seeing how interested the children were in the rocks encouraged an "Aha!" moment for Wendy. She realized what a valuable component the rocks were to her early childhood environment and to the children's natural curiosity and play. Wendy asked herself, how could she extend this interest in rocks? How could she bring support and focus to the safe, creative use of rocks?



It's not surprising that children have an interest in rocks and are immediately drawn to them. Children are natural explorers of their environments, and nature provides some the most exciting materials to explore. Rocks are intriguing, beautiful materials that have multiple options for use; rocks can become anything!

Too often children are presented with toys and materials that have only one use or that limit creativity. Rocks are found naturally, with no specific directions attached. This freedom stirs children's imaginations.

**The power of Imagination:** Author Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, inspired by her work in the Peace Corps, has written stories for young children. One such story, set in a Tanzanian village, shares how a young girl desperately wanted a doll so she could be just like her mother, and care for an infant. The girl searched for something that could be a "baby doll." Elizabeti chose a perfectly shaped **rock** to be her baby. Naming her baby Eva, she cared for her by bathing, feeding, dressing, and kissing her. Children have the capability to play with such wonderful imagination, such as Elizabeti did by creating a doll out of a rock. Now that's the power of imagination!

*\*Elizabeti's Doll, by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, ISBN 1584300817, published by Lee & Low Books*

## A sense of place

When we offer meaningful experiences and materials that are a part of children's everyday life, we are providing a natural connection to learning. Experimenting with these materials makes sense to children because it is a part of the world they know and something they can revisit often. Children most likely have some knowledge or form of reference when they think about the material or experience. This concept is often termed as *place conscious* (Broader *place conscious* ideas show ties with the geography, community, culture, diversity, and generational relationships of the place). Rocks are a perfect example of *place consciousness* as they are a part of almost all children's lives and environments and have meaning in their everyday world.

## Rock on!

With all this interest in rocks, Wendy decided to create a safe, comfortable area to build, explore, and play with rocks: a rock garden. Her rock garden started small and eventually grew larger with the help of some of the parents. Wendy was careful to locate the rock garden near shady trees. She bordered a flat area with medium-sized river rock and added small piles of rock samples.



By spreading the word with her families, she received many donated rocks (as well as physical help) and expanded the space. Some rock choices Wendy used were *river and creek rock, ocean rocks, granite, marble scraps, small pavers, sandstone, and a variety of polished and unpolished stones.* (Visit local building supply stores or garden centers. Landscaping centers might donate some materials or offer their "scrap" pieces. Parents also may know of rock resources. Craft stores often carry polished rocks.)

## Introducing the rock garden

Wendy's plan was to start simple, adding no other items until children requested them or showed a need. Safety rules were clearly talked about, as well as community ideas for working together. ***\*All rock play is supervised by an adult***

## Children's ideas for working with rocks:

- Rocks can be built up, stacked, lined up, but not thrown or smashed
- Ask friends if they want help or if you need some of their rocks
- Show kindness to other's work; Please don't knock down or ruin anyone's rock sculpture, design, or construction
- Rock workers need good space to work; watch where you are walking

- When you are done, you can save your work or put the rocks back in their piles
- Wear shoes (Wendy liked to have an extra collection of boots on hand for the rock garden)
- Rocks should be easy to pick up; not too heavy or too big

Wendy also came up with ideas for herself as a provider in the rock garden:

1. Be open to the children's ideas (such as wanting to bring piles of rocks inside or add water to their play)
2. Always ask "why" she was saying or doing something. Wendy realized she said and did certain things when she really hadn't thought about the "why" such as telling the children to put the rocks down and to not play with them. Asking the "why" helps you reflect on the importance and understanding of your ideas.

## Rock parts



Wendy eventually added other materials to the rock garden. Some materials were requested or needed for the children's work. Other materials were added just to spark interests. Examples of other materials were sticks, twigs, water, buckets, trucks, wagons, shovels, paper, pencils, logs, stumps, pinecones, seashells, leaves, fabric, plastic animals and people, containers, tubes, plastic gutters, and a variety of wood pieces and gemstones.

## Learning from rock gardens

The rock garden became a permanent fixture in the outdoor play space for Wendy's home child care program and has even trickled to the inside. Wendy felt happy that the children were engaged, stimulated, and able to feel competent and happy in their choice of play. Through the rock garden explorations, Wendy and the children explored geology, art, nature, science, math, and a variety of developmental skills:

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| ✓ Counting                     | ✓ Planning                                |
| ✓ One-to-one correspondence    | ✓ Exploring size, shape, weight, and mass |
| ✓ Patterns                     | ✓ Problem solving                         |
| ✓ Classification               | ✓ Large and small motor skills            |
| ✓ Sorting                      | ✓ Social skills                           |
| ✓ Construction/building skills |   |

More rock garden ideas:

- Brainstorm ideas on what might make a good rock garden. What might you need? How can you make it safe?
- Inspire ideas by looking at pictures of rock sculptures and natural rock monuments. Check your local library for books such as *Stone*, by Andy Goldsworthy, or *On My Beach There Are Many Pebbles*, by Leo Lionni.
- If you do not have outdoor space, consider using clean rocks inside, such as you would blocks or other manipulative materials.
- Listen and watch the children's ideas. How can you support or extend their ideas? Can you add any other materials? What are they learning? What are they saying?
- Photograph their work and share the experience with families. Write conversations you hear children having or ideas expressed to share with the photographs.
- Make a sign for your rock garden.



The photographs used for **Rock on! Creating Rock Gardens with Young Children** were generously shared by artist and teacher, Nancy Jones, from Atlanta, Georgia. Nancy has created many wonderful rock gardens with children, believing they are wonderful option for art and learning.

## Distance Education Highlights

Enjoy the following highlights from one of the many Better Kid Care Distance Education Lessons.



### Kitchen Science

Professional Development Code K2C1 CDA8

You can explore kitchen science with children even if you don't know much about science. The two most important abilities are sharing your sense of curiosity and fun, and asking the children good questions such as "What do you think will happen" and "Why do you think it happened?" This can make a great conversation happen among the children as they compare their ideas. When you encourage the children to talk to one another, they learn from each other's ideas.

Read this unit and learn fun ways to explore science right in your own kitchen. Preview and order the distance education lesson, [Kitchen Science](#).

To view a complete listing of all Distance Education Lessons and additional information and resources, visit the [Better Kid Care Distance Education](#) page.

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## Health and Safety Tips

### Green Hour

The National Wildlife Federation recommends that parents give their kids a "Green Hour" every day, a time for unstructured play and interaction with the natural world. This can take place in a garden, a backyard, the park down the street, or any place that provides safe and accessible green spaces where children can learn and play.

To give parents and caregivers information, tools, and inspiration to get their kids – and themselves – outside, NWF has created [www.Greenhour.org](http://www.Greenhour.org), a Web site rich in family-friendly content and which hosts a supportive virtual community where families can learn, explore, and share their outdoor experiences and backyard adventures.



## Turn the Page

### Great Books to Read with Children

Enjoy the following stories about rocks, stones, and pebbles!

*Everybody Needs a Rock*, by Byrd Baylor, published by Aladdin, ISBN 0689710518. Read this story to find out how you can find just the right rock – everyone needs a rock!

*If You Find a Rock*, by Peggy Christian, published by Harcourt Children's Books, ISBN 0152303390. A bookstore mouse explores a variety of rocks that children might use: a skipping rock, a wishing rock, and so on. Hand-tinted black and white photos add beauty and intrigue to the story.

*Make your Own Inuksuk*, by (Wow! Canada! Collection), published by Maple Tree Press, ISBN 1897066147. Look at rocks in a different way—learn the wonder, beauty, and connectedness that comes from building an Inuksuk: a carefully balanced stone sculpture that is built by the Inuit to communicate knowledge or a message from one person to another.

*On My Beach There Are Many Pebbles*, by Leo Lionni, published by HarperTrophy, ISBN 0688132847. A beautiful look at ordinary pebbles you see lying on the beach. Take a look and another look!

*Stone Crazy*, by Tracy Gallup, published by Mackinac Island Press, Inc., ISBN1934133132. Learn about how these treasures from earth (stones) delight us with their profound beauty and intrigue.

*Malinda Martha and Her Skipping Stones*, by Marcia Trimble, published by Images Press, ISBN 1891577735. A pocketful of stones and a day at the beach: Malinda Martha learns a lot, including how to skip stones.

**Keep readin' and rockin' with more rock stories:**

*Beach Stones*, by Josie Iseling, published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., ISBN 0810955334

*Stone*, by Andy Goldsworthy, published by Harry N. Abrams, ISBN 0810938472

*The Nature and Science of Rocks*, by Jane Burton, published by Gareth Stevens Publishing, ISBN 0836819454

*An Extraordinary Egg*, by Leo Lionni, published by Dragonfly Books, ISBN 0679893857

## For Your Families: Family Time / Work Time

Are you looking for articles to share with your families? Do you need information for your parent/family bulletin board? [Family Time / Work Time](#) shares easy-to-read articles for busy parents and caretakers with a focus on ***Building Strong Families***.

*You are welcome to print and share these publications with your friends, family, and other child care providers.*



### Stone Artist by Nancy Wilson

Small stones and rocks can be collected to make a fun outdoor art project for your kids this summer. Add some washable, non-toxic tempera paints and paint brushes. Your child can have fun decorating his stones and rocks. Display his works of art in a special “rock garden” area in a part of your yard. Read the entire text by clicking on the image to your left.

*To read more about family fitness and view the entire Family Time/Work Time article, click on the picture icon.*

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## Better Kid Care Resources

### Better Kid Care Satellite Season 2007-08: **New Dates!**

The dates are in for the 2007-08 Satellite Season! Satellite workshops offer opportunities for child care providers to learn from experts and to share their experiences with other child care providers nationwide. Professional development hours are available. Mark your calendars now with the following dates:

\*Satellite professional development topics are coming soon!

**October 11, 2007**

**December 13, 2007**

**March 13, 2008**

**May 15, 2008**

Visit the [Satellite Workshop](#) link for more information.

Missed a show? Visit the [Past Satellite Workshop](#) page to view video online. If you live in Pennsylvania, contact your [local extension educator](#) for information to attend a workshop in your area. Outside Pennsylvania view [Out-of-State Information](#) link.

## CDA News! (Child Development Associate credential)

### **New Guidelines for PA Keys to Professional Development Refund Voucher Program – effective July 1, 2007 -**

The professional development refund voucher program provides the opportunity for reimbursement for child care staff for courses that earn college credits (including Child Development Associate Professional Development Programs) and payment for the CDA assessment fee.

New Requirements - The following guidelines are effective 7/1/07:

#### **Requirement for payment of the CDA assessment fee (\$325)**

- Students must be currently employed in OCDEL Keystone STARS program designated STAR 1 or higher

Download the [CDA Assessment Fee Voucher Application](#) to apply for CDA Assessment fee payment.

View all the new PA Key professional development refund voucher program guidelines on Better Kid Care's [CDA page](#)

#### **How Can Better Kid Care Help?**

- Better Kid Care offers professional development training through one- and two- hour Distance Education lessons. These one- and two-hour lessons help the CDA candidate meet the eligibility requirement of 120 hours of formal early childhood education to obtain a CDA credential.
- Visit the Better Kid Care [Distance Education](#) link to see a complete listing of professional development information. All one- and two-hour lessons are coded according to the CDA content areas.

#### **Get CDA Support!**

Call Better Kid Care today at 800-452-9108. Talk with someone who can help you get started in the CDA credential process.

E-mail your CDA questions to Christine at [crb16@psu.edu](mailto:crb16@psu.edu)

Visit the Better Kid Care [“What is the CDA?”](#) link for more information

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## **Better Kid Care Mentoring Telephone Help Line for Child Care Providers in Pennsylvania**

Do you have questions about caring for other people's children, such as:

- How do I get a child to eat?
- Why won't a child share?
- How do I stop a child from biting other children?
- What should I do when a parent doesn't pay on time?



Call the **Better Kid Care Mentoring Line** at 800-859-8340 or e-mail your questions to [betterkidcare@psu.edu](mailto:betterkidcare@psu.edu) for information about child care and children's issues.

## Better Kid Care Kit

Need ideas in your work caring for children? When you enroll in the Better Kid Care Program and sign up for the Better Kid Care Kit, family child care providers will receive several free publications in the mail. Family home child care providers will also receive [The Basics of Caring for Children in your Home](#) notebook to organize and store your Better Kid Care publications. Have you signed up to receive a Better Kid Care Kit yet? Complete our [online registration form](#) or call **800-452-9108** to order.

Notebook Contains: [Tip Sheets](#), [Activities Pages](#) & [Lunch and Snack Ideas](#)

All publications are available online to print and share with your friends, family, and other childcare providers. *Select issues are also available in Spanish.*

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[New Staff Orientation](#) curriculum is specifically designed for new staff members in child care centers. *Meets the Keystone STARS Performance Standards.* Order at no cost by calling 800-452-9108. Prepayment for review of each Orientation is \$5.00. If you received materials before November 1, 2006, please download new [Instructions and REQUIRED Forms](#).

[Home-Based Caregiver Orientation](#) - *Meets the Keystone STARS Core Series Training Requirements.* Order at no cost by calling 800-452-9108. Prepayment for review of each Orientation is \$5.00. If you received materials before November 1, 2006, please download new [Instructions & REQUIRED Forms](#).

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## Professional Development Highlights

Interested in professional development opportunities? Take a look at the following professional development training available for early childhood practitioners:

- **July 30 - August 3, 2007** - National Autism Conference , sponsored by The Pennsylvania Department of Education and Bureau of Special Education, State College, PA [www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/autism](http://www.outreach.psu.edu/C&I/autism)
- **August 2, 2007** - Marketing Concepts and Strategies for the Child Care Provider, YMCA of Pittsburgh - Early Childhood Training 412-323-1922 x30
- **August 14, 2007** - Developing Oral Language for Young Learners, [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#), Harrisburg PaTTan, contact [Carolyn Gallo](#)
- **October 6, 2007**- Together We're Better: Partnering with Families and the Community, York AEYC <http://www.yaaeyc.org/>
- **October 10 - 12, 2007** - Early Learning: Creating a Foundation for the Future, PACCA 2007 conference, The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College, PA

For more professional development opportunities, visit the [PA Keys](#) online calendar.

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## Announcements of Interest:

**PA child abuse regulations updated** - In May 2007, the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services regulations changed. Now, the child does not have to "come before" the mandated reporter. A mandated reporter is a person who comes in contact with children in a professional or work role. If the person has sufficient information about the child that creates a "reasonable cause to suspect" that the child is a victim of abuse, a report must be made. Another change is that in family child care homes, all individuals over 18 years of age who reside in the home at least 30 days in a calendar year are subject to background checks. For more information contact the [Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance](#)

**PA Early Learning Standards** - The Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards were developed as a joint project of the Departments of Education and Public Welfare as part of Governor Rendell's commitment to early childhood education and care to guide the development of pre-kindergarten programs and infant and toddler programs. Pennsylvania's Early Learning Standards are available for downloading: [Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards](#)

**Family child care in the United States** - A review of research studies examining regulated family child care in the United States, including survey, observation, demonstration, and evaluation research. This resource is part of the [Child Care & Early Education Research Connections Reviews of Research](#) series.

**Check out the NEW Smithsonian Web site** - [SmithsonianEducation.org](#) now aligns more than 1,200 free educational resources to standards of learning in every state. Simply by entering the name of the state into the search engine, teachers can find lesson plans, virtual exhibitions, photographs and artwork, and databases of research information that apply to their curriculum. The state standards are correlated to all subjects, from language arts and social studies to mathematics and technology. Visit today!

**Healthy Schools Campaign** - The mission of the [Healthy Schools Campaign](#) is to advocate for policies and model programs that allow students and staff members to learn and work in a healthy school environment.

**Federal Resources for Teacher Excellence** for free – Find teaching and learning resources from federal agencies at <http://www.free.ed.gov/index.cfm>

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View archived [Better Kid Care E-Newsletters](#)

**Upcoming July E-Newsletter:  
Intentional Early Educators; tell me more**

## Reflections...

We would love to hear from you! **E-mail your ideas to [crb16@psu.edu](mailto:crb16@psu.edu) or call 814-865-7894.**

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