

BETTER KID CARE E-NEWSLETTER

JUNE/JULY 2009

Hello Newsletter Subscribers!

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

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PLEASE NOTE:

Unfortunately, future issues of the Better Kid Care E-Newsletter will be suspended because the state has not passed the budget for next year. Comments may be shared at: betterkidcare@psu.edu.

TIPS FOR EARLY EDUCATORS AND PRACTITIONERS:

Summer's Here!

Plan Now!

Hot Topics for you - Distance Education

Cool Ideas for Kids!

Visit Summer Resources

FEATURE ARTICLE

What Makes for a Beautiful Day?

by Christine Belinda

While cleaning up at the end of the day, an early learning professional shared the comment, "That was a beautiful day!" You could see on his face the expression of happiness. And considering that it was raining for the fifth day in a row, it wasn't the weather he was talking about. In the professional field of early education, "beautiful day" can be a mysterious phrase. Even with well-researched curricula in place, fantastic environments, terrific materials, and really great co-workers, many early educators are still eagerly searching for the "beautiful day." What makes a beautiful day?

Early learning professionals have a lot to think about: Curriculum, child development, assessment, observation, documentation, standards, benchmarks, milestones, regulations, parents, licensing, professional development, lesson plans, and accreditation (and the list could go on!). They must also think about snack time, lunch time,

materials, schedules, activities, supplies, visitors, diapers, hand washing, allergies, clean-up, story time, injuries, illness, substitutes, checklists, and tomorrow (and this list could go on, too!).

Stepping back from our many responsibilities for a moment invites us to remember what we enjoy about our work. Thinking about what makes for a beautiful day might seem impractical, but exploring the idea is worthwhile. It provides the opportunity to think simply, which can be a welcome direction with the often overwhelming tasks at hand. A positive feeling about our day and our work will carry over into all we do.

When asked what made a beautiful day, the teacher (quoted above) replied:

"Today was one of those days where we all seemed in sync and each of us really connected well with the children. We have grown to know the children's needs and are able to instinctively respond. Today felt calm, no chaos. We made muffins, watched the rain, and read a lot of books. What was neat was that I had time to listen. Some days are so busy that we miss a lot of what the children say and do. I had time today to look around and see what was going on; and there was a lot going on! The children were engaged and were well cared for by very nurturing adults. It just felt like a great day. Before I filled out my daily documentation forms, checklists, and reports that needed done, I felt like I had time to be totally available to the children and totally available to the moment - that's a beautiful day!"

Think about it: What if you were asked to simply describe what makes a beautiful day? Think about what makes an enjoyable day for you.

Without over-thinking, write down your thoughts.

The National Institute of Child Health and Development states that “Positive caregiving is the strongest predictor of quality for young children in child care settings.” Positive caregiving requires positive caregivers. Thinking about what makes a beautiful day can help us recognize what we find positive, how we are positive, and see how this affects our work.

Each of us values individual aspects of our profession, but in stressful, busy times, these can be difficult to recognize. Feeling good about the work that we do is important. Reflecting on what makes for a beautiful day provides the opportunity to be grateful, recognize positive program elements, and bring attention to what we value and are proud of. This helps us recognize the events and occurrences that support joy and avoid stress. If we focus on the good parts of our day, we learn not only how to recognize and celebrate these, but how to continue and expand on them.

Learning the Joy of Others

Working as a team is important. Quality programs work hard to create well defined job descriptions so that everyone knows what is required of them and how they are expected to work together. But there is a lot more involved than a job description in beginning to understand one another. When programs and teams take time to share and communicate, they build understanding. We find that each of us has something unique and valuable to offer.

As a team or program of any kind, it's important to share our joys. Be sure that your team makes time to share what they enjoyed about the day. What makes it a beautiful day for you? What makes it a beautiful

day for your co-workers, director, bus driver, and others in your program?

Plan time to discuss not only the positive parts of your day but why they matter and how you were able to accomplish these. By discussing the day's positive elements, we can review the plans that worked well and find out each other's unique ideas. This allows us to step outside of ourselves and begin to understand our co-workers' feelings, talents, knowledge, and opinions.

Joys of the Children, Joys of the Families

Early educators spend a lot of time getting to know children and their families. But do we really know what makes for a beautiful day for each of them? When we know children well, we can understand what is needed of us; we can connect our knowledge and expertise to plan for children's likes and joys. If we know what makes for a great day, we are able to offer these things and celebrate them.

We know that warm and nurturing interactions with adults are directly linked to children's positive growth and development. Embracing the role of understanding what makes a beautiful day for each child helps us understand their unique ideas, development, interests, and may even give insight into understanding their temperament. When we understand children, we can better respond in nurturing, supportive roles and celebrate children for who they are.

Think about it: In small groups or individually, talk with children about what makes for a beautiful, great day. Be sure to document their ideas. Your questions will need to fit their age and need to be open-ended. Think of questions that can accompany “What makes for a beautiful, great

day?” such as “What makes school a fun place to be? What are some things you really enjoy doing? Who do you enjoy playing with? How do you make it a great day at school?” It can be interesting to explore thinking about others' ideas as well, such as, “What do you think your friends like about school? What do you think I like about my day or what do you think Mr. Mike likes about his day? What makes a great day for our whole class?” Explore the types of questions you would like to ask. Plan another time where the ideas can be shared with the group. Encourage the children to draw, paint, or write about the experiences they enjoy. You can look through your photos with children to spark ideas of what they were doing.

By sharing what makes a beautiful day, children begin to see that the adults truly are interested in what they have to say and feel valued. In turn, the children begin to learn about self awareness; recognizing and reflecting on the competent, successful things they did and enjoyed. Also, when children are aware of joy it can make the more difficult times seem tolerable. They can begin to remember joy and its feelings, which can promote a sense of optimism. This can support confident and hopeful children.

When children know what they enjoy about their day, they can start recognizing and planning what they would like to do. Hearing the joys of their friends may help further social connections. If children enjoy what they are doing, they are more apt to feel safe and happy. Positive emotional and social experiences help build quality relationships. Quality relationships support quality learning experiences.

Research shows that families are the strongest influence on a child's development. When we can partner with families the support to the child is doubled. Finding out what makes a beautiful day for the children's families gives us glimpses into their needs, wants, and personal stories. We can become sensitive to their needs or even begin to see what they may appreciate about our work. We also can share what we have discovered about our own joys and those of the children and reinforce their importance with families.

Beautiful Moments to Fill Up on

Caring for children is hard work. If we take the time to look at the moments of our day and acknowledge the good things that happen, we begin to see there are many. We need to know the simple gestures and joys of our day and why they are important to us. When we put all the moments together and reflect on the positive, we can see how the day was good; how it was a beautiful day.

RESEARCH-BASED EARLY CHILDHOOD INFORMATION

A new Child Trends brief, [Exploring The Links Between Family Strengths and Adolescent Outcomes](#), finds that family strengths are associated with significantly better outcomes for adolescents in both lower-income and higher-income families. Family strengths include emotional/subjective strengths (such as close and caring parents); behavioral/concrete strengths (for example, parental monitoring and parent involvement); and passive parenting strengths (for instance, positive parental role modeling).

State of the World's Mothers 2009: Investing in the Early Years

This report provides the tenth annual mother's index from Save the

Children. The index compares the well-being of mothers and children in 158 countries. Sweden, Norway, and Australia are at the top of this year's rankings. The U.S. ranks twenty-seventh. Seven of the bottom ten countries are in sub-Saharan Africa. The report provides a number of recommendations to increase early care and education.

DISTANCE EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

Are you aware that Better Kid Care provides comprehensive curricula in early childhood development? The Better Kid Care curriculum follows the PA Core Body of Knowledge and offers multiple course titles to choose from. Each course offers numerous Distance Education lessons, providing a well-rounded approach to obtaining your professional development. View the entire Better Kid Care Distance Education curriculum on line at www.betterkidcare.psu.edu and choose your course of study today! Register for a lesson or try an entire course!

Featured Course: Science Exploration Course

Try the entire course or simply choose your favorite lesson!

Backyard Discoveries - You can teach kids how to stop, look, and listen to the world around them. You will be teaching the children how to act like scientists, how to observe, and how to ask questions. This is far more valuable than always having the right answers. Exploring the natural world just outside your door is fun and a great way to turn children ages three through five on to science.

Gardening with Young Children:

Dig In! - Gardening with young children doesn't have to be overwhelming. Start by inviting the children to become curious about gardening. Through simple gardening

activities we can encourage curiosity and discovery. Young children learn by experiencing "hands-on" and by having opportunities to think about, re-visit, and question their experiences.

Kitchen Science - You don't have to be a scientist to explore science with preschool-age children. It's far more important that you make it fun and show the children your curiosity. More important than having the answers is having the questions. You can explore kitchen science with children even if you don't know much about science.

Think about Science - Give children real things to investigate. Investigations give children a chance to use their senses: watching carefully for changes, touching, tasting, and smelling. They also give you a chance to ask open-ended questions that get children to share their ideas. Learn about hands-on active science learning and discover how you can support children's natural curiosity and build scientific thinking skills.

For more information please call 1-800-452-9108

You Care...We Care!

Health and Safety Tips

PLAYGROUND PROTECTIVE SURFACE UPDATE

Playground Protective Surface Covering Update - The Class II Bulletin, Playground Protective Surface Covering, was published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and is effective immediately. The bulletin includes the references to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) documents that provide information regarding the depth and type of surfacing under equipment as required by the amendment to 55 Pa. Code §§3270.102(c), 3280.102(c) and

3290.102(c), relating to condition of play equipment, which states:

Outdoor equipment that requires embedded mounting must be mounted over a loose-fill or unitary playground protective surface covering that meets the recommendations of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. The equipment must be anchored firmly and be in good repair.

The intent of the bulletin is to provide direction to child care providers so that they can directly access the CPSC recommendations and have information regarding how the Department will apply the regulation. Please note the following:

Different requirements for facilities based on type of location: The bulletin differentiates between surfacing requirements in 1) a child care center or group child care home not located in residence and 2) a family child care home or group child care home located in a residence. The CPSC recommendations for playground surfacing differ on whether the child care facility is located in a residence or in a non-residence.

Grandfathering provisions in regulations: The child care facility regulations include grandfathering provisions relating to protective surfacing for child care facilities that were operating legally prior to September 22, 2008 (see 55 Pa. Code §§3270.233(a), 3280.215(a) and 3290.212(a), relating to play surfaces). The regulations allow those facilities two years to comply with the new playground surfacing requirement, specifically until September 22, 2010. The grandfathering provision is applicable to the playground surfacing in place on September 22, 2008. If a facility installs a new playground with

embedded equipment after September 22, 2008, the surfacing must comply with the new requirement.

For additional information, please contact your Regional Office of Child Development and Early Learning:

Central: 1-800-222-2117, Northeast: 1-800-222-2108, Southeast: 1-800-346-2929, Western: 1-800-222-2149

TURN THE PAGE: GREAT BOOKS TO READ WITH CHILDREN -

Sounds Fishy to Me

The Little Fish that Got Away, by Bernadine Cook, published by HarperCollins, ISBN 0060557133. A little boy goes fishing every day, but he never catches anything—no, not a single fish. So he waits and waits and waits, until one special day when a fish comes swimming by....find out what happens!

Wishing I Was Fishing, by Eva Wells, published by Beaver's Pond Press, ISBN 1592981682. Take a trip across the lake on a young boy's first spring fishing trip with his dad. As the winter melts into spring, the two prepare the boat, gather their gear, and reel in their first fish. This beautifully illustrated story captures a child's joyous anticipation and the thrill of the first catch.

Trout of the World, by James Prosek, published by Stewart, Tabori and Chang, ISBN 1584791527. From the Oxus trout of eastern Afghanistan to the small golden brown trout of British chalk streams, James Prosek has dedicated his unique painting talent to bringing to life trout from around the world, several of which are the few remaining of their type. A collection of nearly 100 gorgeous watercolors.

More fish stories:

Fish Eyes: A Book You Can Count on, by Lois Ehlert, published by Voyager Books, ISBN 0152280510

Fish Is Fish, by Leo Leonna, published by Knopf Books for Young Readers, ISBN 0394804406

Swimmy, by Leo Leonna, published by Dragonfly, ISBN 0394826205

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.

Summer Safety

by Nancy Wilson
Early Childhood Program Specialist

Safety experts consider summer to be "trauma season" because many of children's serious injuries increase at this time of year. Most injuries can be prevented when parents realize their child's stage of development and take the right steps to help prevent injuries. When parents understand their child's cognitive, behavioral, physical abilities, and limitations at various stages of development they know what to look for to prevent serious injuries. Read more in this month's issue of Family Time Work Time.

Read the rest online at <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/FTWT/FTWT0906Jun.pdf>

2008-2009 SATELLITE SEASON

Thank You!

Better Kid Care would like to thank all those who participated in the 2008-2009 satellite season! The satellite season brought exciting information on time, consumer issues, art appreciation, and building curiosity with young children. Stay tuned to Better Kid Care to find out the 2009-2010 satellite topics and dates!

Satellite workshops offer opportunities for child care providers to learn from experts and to share their experiences with other child care professionals nationwide. Professional development hours are available. To learn more visit <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/page05.html#Topics>

Share your ideas from past satellite sessions or ideas for future satellite sessions! Contact Better Kid Care by e-mailing us at betterkidcare@psu.edu or by phoning 800-452-9108 to share your comments.

Missed a show? Visit the Past Satellite Workshop page to view video online.

CDA NEWS!

Need CDA help? Visit Better Kid Care's CDA Information link and get answers to your CDA questions! Call Christine at 800-452-9108 or email your CDA questions to Christine at crb16@psu.edu.

From the Council for Professional Recognition...

Family Child Care CDAs Develop Support Network - Isolation is a problem for many family child care professionals. MaryBeth Bush, a CDA from Trumbell County, Ohio, relates her personal experience about a network of family child providers who were able to study together, receive their CDAs together, and

then unite together for emotional and professional support. Check out the news from the Council at their Council Link newsletter at http://www.cdacouncil.org/ab_new.htm.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

The following information highlights upcoming professional development opportunities available for early childhood practitioners:

In Pennsylvania:

June 26-27 - STARS Leadership Institute for Directors of STAR 3&4 Programs, http://paprom.convio.net/site/DocServer/FINAL_200809_STARS_LeadershipInstitute_Directors_Invita.pdf?docID=1321

June 28-July 3 - PA Early Childhood Governors Institute, St. Vincent College, Latrobe, PA, view http://www.pde.state.pa.us/early_childhood/lib/early_childhood/ECE_flyerPDE.pdf

July 13-17 - PA Early Childhood Governors Institute, Juniata, Huntingdon, PA, view http://www.pde.state.pa.us/early_childhood/lib/early_childhood/ECE_flyerPDE.pdf

July 26-31 - PA Early Childhood Governors Institute, Keystone College, La Plume, PA, view http://www.pde.state.pa.us/early_childhood/lib/early_childhood/ECE_flyerPDE.pdf

October 10 - York Annual YAAEYC conference, visit www.yaaeyc.org

October 26 - Early Childhood Summit, State College, PA, <http://www.earlychildhoodsummit.org/>

Other:

June 28-30: The Values of the Reggio Emilia Approach, North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, Boulder, CO, visit <http://www.reggioalliance.org/>

[narea/annual_conference/current.php](http://www.reggioalliance.org/narea/annual_conference/current.php).

Outside of Pennsylvania:

June 28-30: The Values of the Reggio Emilia Approach, North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, Boulder, CO, visit http://www.reggioalliance.org/narea/annual_conference/current.php

June 30-July 2: Advanced Study, North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, Boulder, CO, visit http://www.reggioalliance.org/narea/annual_conference/current.php

June 28-July 2: Comprehensive Experience, North American Reggio Emilia Alliance, Boulder, CO, visit http://www.reggioalliance.org/narea/annual_conference/current.php

July 12-15 - CAYL Institute, Summer Principals Conference, Cambridge, MA, visit <http://www.cayl.org/PrincipalConference2009>

July 16-17 - National Research Conference on Child and Family Programs and Policy, Bridgewater, Massachusetts, visit <http://webhost.bridgew.edu/edouglas/Website/BSC-Emily/nrccfpp09.htm>

July 20-23 - Summer Institute, technology use with young children, Wayne State University, Michigan. Contact Ann Miller at amiller@wayne.edu.

July 20-25 - International Family Day Care Organization Conference, University College, Cork Ireland, visit <http://www.ifdco.com/>

July 21 - Current Issues for Child Care Professionals, Cape May, N.J., contact (215) 785-3400 to register or go to www.childproviderlaw.com, event listed at http://www.pakeys.org/private/profdev/prof_dev_event_details.asp?eventid=41003

July 23-25: The American Horticultural Society's 2009

National Children & Youth Garden Symposium, Common Ground: Gardens for a Greener Tomorrow, Cleveland, Ohio, visit http://www.ahs.org/youth_gardening/national_youth_garden_symposium.htm

October 3 - Canton Ohio CAAEYC's annual conference "Early Childhood: Experience the Possibilities", contact 330-829-1234

October 7-10 - The North American Association for Environmental Education's 38th Annual Conference, Portland, Oregon <http://www.naae.org/conference>

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF INTEREST

EARLY EDUCATION

New from NAEYC! <http://www.naeyc.org/dap/videocast/default.asp> - Listen to six video casts, conversations between Carol Copple, Sue Bredekamp, and Peter Pizzolongo on five questions about DAP submitted by viewers. Go to www.naeyc.org/dap.

Building Blocks for Literacy - This successful (and free) 12-hour program uses play to develop sound awareness, shared book reading, and speech-to-print understanding. After a decade in Vermont, the program is going nationwide.

The Center for Literacy Studies at the University of Tennessee created a wonderful literacy resource kit designed for teachers to share with parents. The kit has sections on reading development, activities for building reading skills, information on ways to improve home-school communication, and a section for parents of children with special needs.

GRANTS and FUNDING

2009 Healthy Sprouts Award ~ Deadline: October 17, 2009- To encourage the growth of health-focused youth gardens, NGA

(National Gardening Association) recognizes outstanding programs through the Healthy Sprouts Awards, sponsored by Gardener's Supply Company. Click here for details.

2010 Youth Garden Grant ~ Deadline: November 2, 2009 - NGA (National Gardening Association) is delighted to announce that The Home Depot returned as our Youth Garden Grants sponsor for 2010. Youth Garden Grants to schools and community organizations with child-centered garden programs. For the 2010 grant cycle, 100 grants are available. Download an application.

Build-A-Bear Workshop® Giving Programs - April, July, and October - Champ-A Champion Fur Kids grants for children's health and wellness are awarded twice each year to programs with measurable outcomes that make the world a healthier and happier place for kids. Click here for more details.

Annie's Grants for Gardens - Deadline: Rolling - Annie's offers a limited number of small grants to community gardens, school gardens, and other educational programs that connect children directly to gardening. These funds may be used to buy gardening tools, seeds, or other gardening supplies. Click here for application details.

NATURE RELATED

Project Budburst, a national citizen science campaign, collects everyday observations to study a changing climate. Visit Project Budburst online for more information and to report your findings.

The Live Monarch Foundation is offering free milkweed seeds to classes, groups, and individuals in the migration path of the Monarch butterfly to help rehabilitate the natural habitat of the Monarch in

North America. In recent years, over 75 percent of the wintering Monarchs butterflies from North America have frozen to death in Mexico as a result rain and sub-freezing conditions, and a nationwide shortage of milkweed, which Monarchs need to procreate, has further decimated their population. Please plant milkweed seeds to ensure Monarch survival. A milkweed in every yard! Maximum award: 15+ butterfly garden seeds, including milkweed seeds. Eligibility: anyone in the Monarch migration path who will plant seeds. Click here for more details.

FAMILIES

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren - Visit Cooperative's Extension Family Caregiving site for information on grandparents raising grandchildren: <http://www.extension.org/category/family%20caregiving%20grandparents%20raising%20grandchildren>

Money Wise - A new Penn State Extension Web site has been developed that compiles information across our college and extension Web sites to help individuals and families easily locate information to address and stretch their financial resources. Visit <http://extension.psu.edu/moneywise/> for more information.

Summer Reading - Reading Rockets has packed up a "beach bag" of activities and resources to help students and families get ready for a fun, enriching summer. Start a neighborhood book club (or sign up for a reading club online), take a virtual field trip, find a pen pal, volunteer at your local animal shelter or community center, research a family trip, or curl up with an iPod full of audiobooks. Go to <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/23428>

HEALTH

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) can help fill the summer meal gap for low-income children. Faith-based, community, and private non-profit organizations can make a difference in the lives of hungry children by serving meals with SFSP, a federally funded program administered by states that reimburses organizations for meals served to children during the summer. Additional information, resources about hosting a site and providing reimbursable meals, as well as SFSP contacts by state are available by clicking here.

Better Hearing and Speech: Helping People Communicate – The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the professional, scientific, and credentialing association for audiologists, speech-language pathologists, and speech, language, and hearing scientists. Learn about better hearing and speech and about communication disorders. Promote treatment that can improve the quality of life for those who experience problems with speaking, understanding, or hearing. Go to <http://www.asha.org/bhsm/>

VISIT THE BETTER KID CARE WEB SITE FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

www.betterkidcare.psu.edu

BETTER KID CARE MENTORING TELEPHONE HELP LINE

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 for information about child care and children's issues.

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Reflections...

We would love to hear from you! E-mail your ideas to crb16@psu.edu or call 814-865-7894.

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