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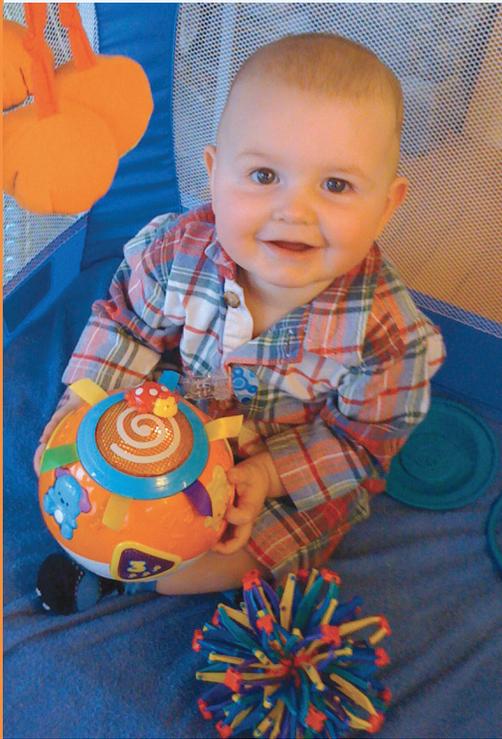
BIRTH through 5 news

• *Working together for children with disabilities*

• INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS
WINTER 2013, VOL. 13, NO 2

Play is How a Child Learns Best

By The PlayBright Team,
Children's Home Society of Washington,
Seattle, Washington



*This article is translated into Spanish on
page 2. Ver la versión en español de este
artículo en la página 2.*

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Success: Strategies for Maximizing Early
Development" which appeared in "Children and
Families" The Magazine of the National Head
Start Association Vol. XXIII No. 3 Fall 2009
website: www.nhsa.org*

From the minute they're born, children love to play! And decades of research suggest that the best way young children learn is through play, when they make important connections to people, places, and the outside world. Play is perhaps the single most important thing a child can do to promote healthy development. An engaged relationship with an adult is the important part of playful learning.

When you play with children, they learn much more, and much more quickly. You are actually helping them build new connections in their brain by playing together with toys, reading books, listening to music, exploring outdoors, singing, and dancing together. In addition to providing plenty of fun, these activities reinforce the meaningful relationships that nurture development. So, your everyday play experiences with a child can create a powerful foundation for her healthy growth and future success.

The Power of Child's Play

Researchers have discovered essential developmental benefits of play for babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Through play, children...

- Develop intellectual, motor, and social skills
- Explore how the world works and the fundamentals of cause and effect
- Learn language, conceptual thinking, and problem-solving skills
- Start to recognize and manage their feelings and emotional responses
- Develop competence, creativity, and responsibility
- Form strong bonds to their favorite playmates: family, teachers, and caregivers.

Children are naturally excited and curious about the world – these happen to be the two most important states of mind for learning. Encourage their natural enthusiasm by talking, singing, moving around, and exploring interesting environments together. Parks, playgrounds, museums, and libraries will all spark the imagination and promote creativity and learning. Use your imagination to encourage theirs!

Provide Toys That Encourage Learning

Toys and books help children learn by doing, and are some of the best learning tools for engaging a child in interactive play. But which toys should you choose? After first considering safety, select toys and books that match each child's age, developmental state, and interests. Remember the following when choosing toys:

First ask, What can a child do with this toy? The best toys encourage children to play with them in a variety of ways to develop several skills over time (examples include balls, blocks, dolls, cars).

If a toy does too many things by itself or is too complicated for a child to use, it may not be the best play-to-learn toy.

Consider how different toys can help children's development. Some help develop the senses or support small and large muscle development. Other toys help children learn to listen, talk, think, and remember. Ideally, children will have access to a variety of toys that encourage a wide range of developmental skills and activities.

Most important – remember that you will always be a child's favorite toy!



Jugar es la mejor manera en que aprenden los niños

Por The Playbright Team,
Sociedad de la Casa del Niño de
Washington, Seattle, Washington.

Reproducido de "Cinco Claves para el Éxito de Aprendizaje a Temprana Edad: Estrategias para Maximizar el Desarrollo Temprano" artículo en inglés publicado en "Children and Families" La Revista de la Asociación Nacional Head Start Vol. XXIII No.3 Fall 2009 website: www.nhsa.org

Desde el primer minuto que nacen ¡a los niños les encanta jugar! Y décadas de investigación sugieren que la mejor manera en que aprenden los niños es a través del juego y cuando hacen importantes conexiones con la gente, lugares, y el mundo exterior. Jugar es posiblemente la única cosa más importante que un niño

puede hacer para promover su desarrollo saludable. Y una relación íntima con un adulto es la parte más importante del ¡aprendizaje divertido!

Cuando usted juega con sus niños, ellos aprenden mucho más y ¡más rápido! De hecho usted les está ayudando a crear nuevas conexiones en su cerebro al jugar juntos con juguetes, leerles libros, escuchar música, explorar el campo, cantar o bailar juntos. Además de proveer mucha diversión, estas actividades refuerzan las relaciones importantes que alimentan el desarrollo de los niños. Así que, sus experiencias diarias de juegos con un niño pueden crear una poderosa base para el crecimiento saludable y un futuro exitoso.

El poder del juego de los niños

Investigadores han descubierto beneficios esenciales para el desarrollo al jugar con bebés, infantes, y niños de edad preescolar. A través del juego los niños...

- Desarrollan habilidades intelectuales, motoras y sociales
- Exploran cómo funciona el mundo y las bases fundamentales de causa y efecto
- Aprenden lenguaje, pensamiento conceptual, y habilidades para resolver problemas
- Empiezan a reconocer y manejar sus sentimientos y respuestas emocionales

- Desarrollan competencia, creatividad y responsabilidad
- Forman lazos fuertes con sus compañeros de juego preferidos: familia, maestros de escuela, y cuidadores de niños.

Los niños están naturalmente emocionados y curiosos de descubrir el mundo – estos son los dos estados mentales más importantes para aprender. Motive su entusiasmo natural al hablar, cantar, moverse, y explorar juntos ambientes interesantes. Los parques, lugares recreativos, museos, y bibliotecas encenderán la motivación y promoverán creatividad y aprendizaje. Use su imaginación para promover la de sus niños.

Provea juguetes que promuevan aprendizaje

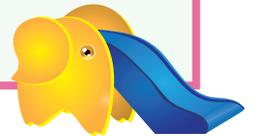
Los juguetes y libros ayudan a los niños a aprender haciendo y son algunas de las mejores herramientas para involucrar a los niños en juegos interactivos. Pero, ¿Qué juguetes debe escoger? Después de primero considerar la seguridad, seleccione juguetes y libros que sean apropiados a la edad de sus niños, etapa de desarrollo, e intereses. Recuerde lo siguiente cuando escoja juguetes:

Primero pregunte, ¿Qué puede hacer un niño con este juguete? Los mejores juguetes motivan a los niños a jugar con ellos en una variedad de formas para desarrollar sus habilidades con el tiempo (ejemplos incluyen pelotas, blocks, muñecas, carros).

Si un juguete hace muchas cosas por sí mismo o es muy complicado para que un niño lo use, puede no ser el mejor juguete para aprender jugando.

Considere la forma en que diferentes juguetes pueden ayudar al desarrollo de los niños. Algunos juguetes ayudan a desarrollar los sentidos o ayudan al desarrollo de músculos pequeños o grandes. Otros juguetes ayudan a los niños a escuchar, hablar, pensar, y recordar. Idealmente, los niños tendrán una variedad de juguetes que les permitan desarrollar muchas habilidades y actividades.

Lo más importante es que recuerde que ¡usted siempre será el juguete favorito de sus niños!



Early Childhood Special Education Update

Maria Synodi, Coordinator ECSE

“Is all you’re doing play?” Have you heard that before? Play as a vehicle for children to develop their developmental, functional and behavioral skills is often unrecognized to those who do not work with young children. The increased national attention on rigorous standards and data that demonstrate positive outcomes drives some to believe that an early education is direct instruction on early academic skills. Yet, the field of early childhood education recognizes the importance of play in developing important skills and facilitating learning and growth in the early years.

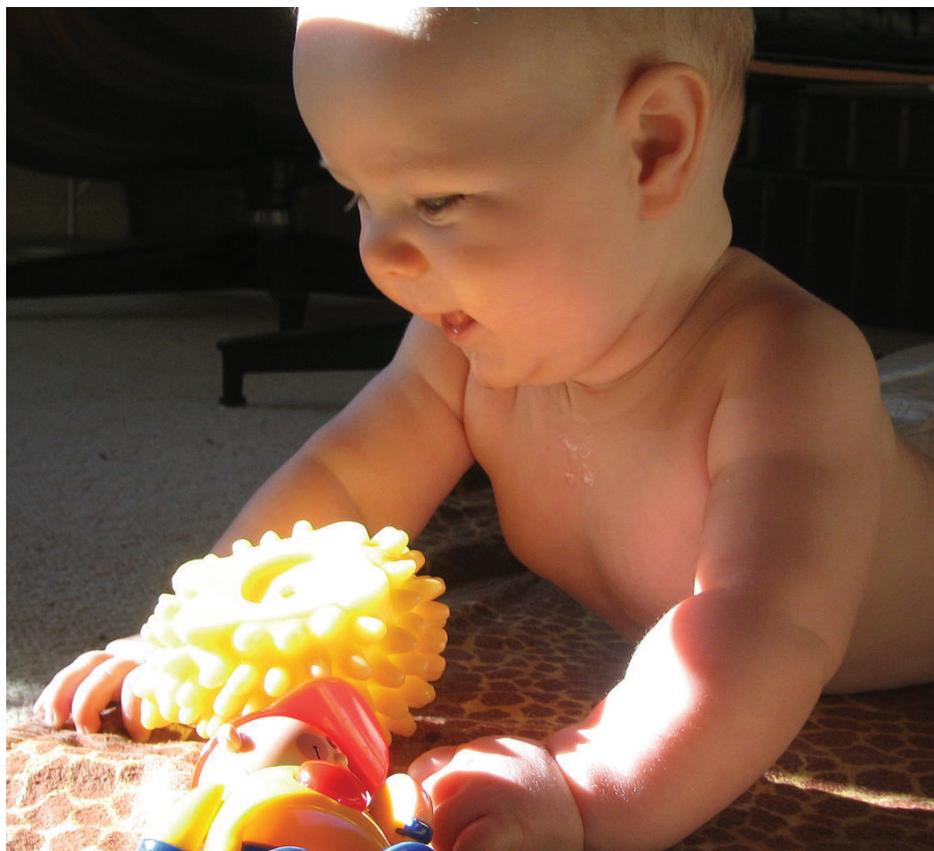
The work of young children is play. And the work of adults is to support children’s play. Children learn through play. It helps them develop an understanding of themselves and others, and makes the social connections that are critical in a child’s development of positive social emotional skills and relationships. Play provides wonderful opportunities for young children to be creative, use their imagination, develop thinking and problem solving skills and develop a disposition for life-long learning. And play is not only cheap, but you can play anywhere. And when you’re all grown up – You can still play to learn and learn to play.



Play: a Wonderful Word and Place to Start

By Dr. Mark Greenstein, ICC Chair/Developmental Pediatrician

Take a walk with me, please. This issue is dedicated to play, a wonderful word and place to start. The image that comes to mind is of toys and smiles and along with that, the sound of laughter. When I look up play in the dictionary, I find that it often relates to children (which seems a bit unfair, no?) and that it includes recreation, (another lovely word, to create oneself over again), enjoyment and a lack of toil. As best I can tell, Jean Piaget, whose observations were based mostly on his own son and, has helped develop our ideas about child development, is believed to have said “Play is the work of childhood.” Similar are the thoughts coming from Maria Montessori, who founded her famous educational system (we call them Montessori Schools) to help the poor children of Rome and also from Bob Keeshan, who folks of my age remember as Captain Kangaroo. The work of childhood, not that it was meant to denote toil and stress, but rather, as adults, we were generally expected to have work to do; children were expected and needed to play. Play and work stretches both muscles and minds, creates new experiences, and helps to bring joy. For many of the children who are involved with early intervention, both parents and providers seek to weave play and enjoyment into children’s lives. We all seek to use what they enjoy, maybe it’s the comforting feeling of something soft, seeing a



smiling face or hearing a voice or the laugh of a loved one. We try to tie these joys to the child’s ability to make them happen, be that by his or her own smile or laugh, or by urging them to do something, like reaching for, patting or touching something. And, for those of you who see or do this, you know that it IS work. But it is happy work, on both sides. Perhaps, you know that this is why we strive to have these things happen at home or in other natural environments and generally not in clinics or offices although, children do seem to like toy shops or playgrounds. So, remember that play for children IS what they are supposed to do, and that it gives them (and those of us with them) joy as well as other benefits. It is well worth the effort. Thanks for coming along! If you have been reading these for a while, you know how I will end this; I will note that

play is often done with others (I know, not all the time.) Similarly, for those of us who work with children, who play with children, we find joys and benefits in stretching our minds, in learning new things about children and in seeing them learn and grow. Would you consider helping us help others? For parents, the ICC, the state’s Interagency Coordinating Council, is always looking for parents to join us, teach us, work with us in helping children to get more play, do more learning, and to grow. If you would like to find out more, please contact me at MGreens@ccmckids.org or at 860-714-5319 or one of our support staff (Anna Hollister) at 860-418-6134. I look forward to hearing from you.



Making the Most Out of Play with Young children

Anita Deschenes-Desmond
Speech-Language Pathologist/Early
Childhood Specialist
Capitol Region Education Council

Understanding that young children learn best through play is one thing. Trying to make the best use of the teaching opportunity afforded through play is quite another when you are talking about young children! Using a few simple strategies can help you get started making the most out of play with young children.

In order to capture children's interests, it is important to take

the time to observe them in play. High interest activities such as water table, motor play or favorite toys make it possible for you to observe a small group of children engaged in the same area. Getting on their level, face to face will help you find out what interests them. It also lets them know that you want to be a part of their play. Once you know what kinds of toys and activities engage your children, you can begin to take part in play by imitating what a child is doing. If a child is banging a drum, you bang a drum too! Doing things their way lets children know what they are doing is important to you and that you are willing to do things their way in order to keep the game going. Eventually, you can move to imitating what a child

does and adding one more new step or new word to the game, helping to expand their play and teach new ideas.

Keep these simple strategies in mind

- find out what interests the children by observing and getting on their level
 - imitate what they are doing and be willing to do things **their way**
 - add one new step or idea to the play
- and you will have opened the door to playful learning and exploration.



Governor Announces New Office of Early Childhood

In February, Governor Malloy announced that he is proposing a new agency, to be attached for administrative support only, to the Department of Education. The new agency will seek to integrate various early childhood programs that are currently under five state agencies. Those programs include school readiness, Care4Kids, Nurturing Family Network, Help Me Grow, childcare licensing, Charts a Course, Birth to Three, and Early Childhood Special Education. The timetable for Birth to Three and Early Childhood Special Education will be July 2014. For families receiving services from any of these programs, the goal will be a seamless reorganization with no disruption in anyone's services or supports.



Malloy with Kids, Pictured, kneeling in front (L to R):Madeline Hess, Jillienne Lee Seated (L to R):Sands Pascucilla ,Conor Spaulding, Michael Steinman, Caroline Spaulding, Samantha Lee
http://www.branfordseven.com/news/state/article_f9c5051a-6ef6-11e2-973e-001a4bcf6878.html?mode=image&photo=0



Parents' Perspective

Playing Around

By Amy McCoy – Parent

The word “Play” has such a positive tone to it. Childhood memories of playing with games, toys and friends are brought to mind with a smile. But, when I think about “playtime” for my own child with special needs, it is much more difficult. He has trouble playing and doesn't really know how to play. I see him just staring at the toys and not even reaching for them. How can I get him to really play – with his toys and with other children?

First of all, I learned from my Birth to Three providers that I had to get on the floor with him, get down to his level physically and find out what he wanted to play. Just because I bought a new flashy toy that I like, doesn't mean that he will be interested in playing with it. To find out what he wants to play, I was taught to put two choices in front of him and allow him to choose.

I learned that playing isn't just about toys. It's also about games like peek-a-boo and singing songs with fun hand motions. These are beginning social interactions

that are so meaningful for child development. Children's books with vibrant pictures can also be used during playtime. Making animal sounds as you point out the corresponding animal, or making noises like the trucks on the page is all fun and games (play)!

Because of my son's developmental and physical delays, he has different abilities for playing than other children his age. Thanks to my Birth to Three providers at the time, I learned that play is not all about flashing toys, but about interacting at my child's level both physically and developmentally.

Birth to Three Update

By Linda Goodman, Director, Birth to Three System

The latest version of the Birth to Three System's Annual Data Report, called “Taking First Steps Together”, is posted on the website (www.birth23.org) under “About Birth to Three.” And although the phrase “data report” sure sounds boring, our reports each year are illustrated by a particular child and family. This year's cover child is Tommy, along with his parents

Melanie and Todd. Tommy started life as a baby in foster care who was enrolled in Birth to Three from the age of two months. And since we are focused on increasing the number of children who are enrolled prior to their first birthday, we thought that showing Tommy and his progress would help prove the point that earlier is better. And if, while you're looking at the pictures, you want some numbers and other data about Birth to Three – it's all there.



Some of the data in the annual report is about how much families think they've learned from Birth to Three including how to help their children develop and learn, whether they're able to talk about their children's needs clearly, and whether they know their rights under the federal law that governs Birth to Three and special education. Families whose children have been receiving services for at least six months as of the first day of February, 2013 should expect to have a survey delivered to them by their service coordinator in the spring. If you'd like to learn more about the survey, please see our video on the YouTube channel at: www.YouTube.com/CTBirth23



BIRTH through 5 news

Birth through 5 News is published periodically by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System in collaboration with the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Newsletter Advisory Board. We welcome readers' comments and contributions related to the special needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Please mail correspondence to the editor at 67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801.

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Resources

Websites:

Quality Toys

<http://www.qualitytoys.com/playtherapy.html>

This website provides an extensive list of therapy toys for children with special needs. The list is broken down by specific areas or type of therapy the toys should be used for.

The Special Needs Child

<http://www.the-special-needs-child.com/Special-needs-activities.html>

This website is a compilation of articles focusing on children with special needs. The section, Fun Stuff comes with activities by type of skills they help to develop.

Bright Hub Education

<http://www.brighthubeducation.com/special-ed-inclusion-strategies/72725-ideas-for-non-competitive-games-for-special-needs-children-inclusive-classroom/>

This site offers a list of practical non-competitive games for everyone that can be modified based on a child's age.

Books

Play for Children with Special Needs. Supporting children with learning differences, 3-9, 2nd Edition. Christine Macintyre (2009). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415558839/>
ISBN: 978-0-415-55883-9

This book is recommended for 3-9 year olds. It addresses the importance of creating an environment where children become confident, independent learners, increasingly able to use their imaginations, care for others and to take safe risks.

Achieving Learning Goals Through Play: Teaching Young Children with Special Needs: 2nd Edition. Anne H. Widerstrom (2004)
ISBN-13: 9781557666987

<http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Achieving-Learning-Goals-through-Play/Anne-H-Widerstrom/e/9781557666987>

This book is recommended for early childhood educators, teachers or service provider professionals working with children with special needs. It offers guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice, resources for including children with disabilities, and planning matrices.



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This newsletter is available in English and Spanish. Visit the Birth to Three website at www.birth23.org and click on Publications, or the Department of Education website at www.sde.ct.gov, then click on the Early Childhood link.

Este boletín está disponible en inglés y español. Visite el sitio del Sistema para Infantes de Tres Años en www.birth23.org y pulse en Publicaciones o el sitio del Departamento de Educación en www.sde.ct.gov Luego pulse en Early Education (Educación Temprana en español).

CHILDREN'S ARTWORK WANTED!

You are invited to send pictures or other artwork that your child has done. We would like to start an "art collection" for possible inclusion in future Birth through 5 News newsletters. Please mark the artwork with the artist's first name and age then mail to:

Dr. German Cutz, Editor, UCONN CES
67 Stony Hill Rd.
Bethel, CT 06801-3056

Or send by e-mail to: german.cutz@uconn.edu

No artwork will be returned.

We look forward to receiving your child's works of art!

