

January, 2005

Calendar

March 12 - 10th Annual Resource and Summer Camp Fair

March 25 – April 3 Spring Break

April 4 Classes resume

April 19, 21 & 22 Coffee Morning for Early Learning and ECS Parents

Feature Article #1

Basic Concepts

Basic concepts are foundation skills children need to be successful at engaging in classroom routines, following directions, and providing descriptions. Basic concepts are usually taught outright during the early childhood years and are learned through activities such as listening, following directions and story time. Knowledge and use of basic concepts help children become more effective communicators.

What are Basic Concepts?

The vocabulary of basic concepts is how we describe our world. From how many cookies to eat, to the size, shape and colour, descriptive words are all around us. These adjectives and adverbs can include:

- Location (i.e., in/on),
- Number (i.e., more/less),
- Description (i.e., big/little)
- Time (i.e. day/night)
- Feelings (i.e. happy/sad)

Basic concepts help develop pre-reading and early math skills. An understanding of concepts can help to strengthen the student's vocabulary. They are related to academic success and are building blocks for early childhood learning.

How can I teach my child basic concepts?

When children are learning basic concepts it is easier to teach the concepts in pairs or opposites (i.e. big/little) wherever possible. Generally, children learn the concept with more distinctive features first. For example the concept thick has more size than thin, so 'thick' would be learned first. The concepts of colours and shapes are not taught or learned in pairs since they don't have distinct opposites. With these concepts, teach children through "matching" games and "show me" games (for example "show me the red one"). Remember, children must have a firm grasp of the concept receptively (understanding) before using them expressively (production).

Young children learn by doing! Therefore, teaching opportunities where children learn through touch, smell, movement and other sensory experiences are essential. For children who have difficulty understanding and using basic concepts, the use of real

objects is a concrete way of explicitly teaching concepts. Do “silly” things with the objects. For example, ask your child to “put the banana **under** the chair”. Make sure to use out of the ordinary directions. This way you are ensuring that your child is actually learning the concept and is not just following a routine. Once your child demonstrates an understanding of a few concepts play hide and seek games where your child needs to tell you where the object is hidden.

Act out opposites during daily routines. For example:

- **Bath Time** – talk about *hot vs. cold* water. Touch your skin when it is *wet*, and then use a towel to make it *dry*.
- **Lunch Time** – talk about having a *dirty* face after eating. Then wipe it so it is *clean*. Show your child his *full* glass of juice. Then point out when it is *empty*.
- **Play-time** – hide objects around the room. For example, “put the truck *on* the chair; take the truck *off of* the chair”.

When you see it, feel it, do it, and/or act it out – the multi-sensory experiences reinforce what is seen in books or photo cards or on T.V. Reading books together, watching Barney and looking at pictures only reinforces what your child has learned by doing. Have fun learning and practicing concepts together!

Tanya Nermerich

Feature Article #2

Physio Fun for Little ‘Uns
By Linette Lahey & Anita Wamsley

Winter Play

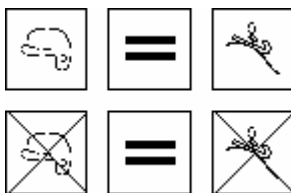
Let it Snow, Let it Snow, Let it Snow...

Just because Calgary spends ten months of the year blanketed in snow doesn’t mean winter activities must be restricted to the indoors. Bundle up and take advantage of that fluffy white stuff. Outdoor activities in the snow are an excellent opportunity to help your child work on strength and balance.

- Going for walks through the snow is one activity that enhances leg strength and promotes development of core muscles (which leads to greater balance)
- Work together to build a snowman. First create small snowballs, encouraging your child to pack the snow firmly between their hands (this helps develop bilateral hand skills). Promote the development of arm and shoulder strength by pushing larger snowballs to form the body of your snowman
- Lay down in the snow and make snow-angels (not only are these an all-time-favorite but they provide sensory stimulation and work on upper and lower body coordination)
- Tobogganing is also a great way to work on strengthening the trunk muscles

- Encourage your child to pull his own toboggan up a gentle rise with you only assisting as needed. It is a good muscle coordination activity and he can have a short rest at the top!
- Have smaller kids sit on the toboggan while you pull them along (not only does mom or dad get a bit of a workout, but kids work on balancing without even knowing it!).
- If your child's seated balance is already good, use a toboggan that provides less postural support and zigzag the toboggan back and forth as you walk. This makes it more difficult to maintain an erect position and forces your child to work harder to stay seated on the toboggan.

SAFETY FIRST: Don't forget to wear a helmet! Teach your child from the start, Wear helmet, Go on toboggan, No helmet, No toboggan ride.



Oh the Weather Outside is Frightful...

When Jack Frost comes calling and outdoor play isn't an option, set up a play area within your home. If possible, provide ample space to run and jump. Open, carpeted areas with few obstacles are ideal. Provide your child with a variety of inexpensive play objects to aid in gross motor development

- Old pillows of different shapes and sizes to jump from
- Balls to kick
- Cardboard boxes for climbing in or crawling through
- Old sheets for parachute play
- A mini plastic hockey stick (or two!) and soft sponge balls for pucks

Low hanging disk swings or trapeze bars (while more costly) also provide a great opportunity to develop upper body musculature and strength.

SAFETY FIRST: Bars should be installed properly. Unhook and store safely away when play is unsupervised. Children should not be left unsupervised during these activities.

Tricycle Update

I Want to Ride My Bicycle...

PREP now has a tricycle fully equipped with footplates. Feet are secured to the plates using Velcro straps allowing children to be more successful in keeping their feet in place. Students in ECS have been working on pedaling and riding skills for the past month. Not all children are ready to begin riding a bike at the same age. Your child is ready to be introduced to bike skills when he/she shows an interest in the bike, willingly sits in the seat, and has demonstrated postural stability and leg strength.

Home Riding Hints

- Footplates are beneficial during the early stages of riding (and are available for \$20 by calling Marc at Braceworks (240-9100) and arranging to fax an outline of your child's shoe)
- Stand over your child and lightly put pressure through his/her knees encouraging them to "push with your knees!"
- Use a slight downward incline if available (ie: garage pad is often on an incline)
- One step at time: master pedaling and then move on to steering

Tips for Parents

- Use a skipping rope to pull from the front of the bike or a broomstick to push from behind (your back will thank you!)

SAFETY FIRST: Remember those helmets! Teach your child from the start, Wear helmet, Ride bike, No helmet, No bike.

10th Annual Resource and Summer Camp Fair

Saturday March 12th

10:00 – 3:00

Rotary Challenger Park – 3688 48th Avenue NE

Check it out!

Knowledge, resources and inspiration are at your finger tips in our library to browse through or sign out for the 2 week loan period. There are books on diverse topics including child development, speech, sensory integration, reading, math and curriculum adaptation. All books and materials (2 per family) can be signed out for a two week loan period. Please ensure that materials are returned on time so they can be utilized and enjoyed by all.

Picks of the Month

Fine Motor Skills in Children with Down Syndrome (1998)

As a parent of a child with Down syndrome and through her career as an Occupational Therapist, author Maryanne Bruni understands all aspects of fine motor skills and conveys her insights and knowledge in this guide for parents and professionals. Five appendixes give practical ideas, enhanced by photographs, for equipment and exercises to help children improve their fine motor skills.

Early Communication Skills for Children with Down Syndrome (2003)

This highly-recommended guide by Dr. Libby Kumin discusses the phases of communication from “before the first word” to communication needs in school and the community, and the role of the entire “communication team”.

Correction to Phone List - Extension for Tanya Nermerich SLP should be 101

Coffee Mornings April 19, 21 and 22 – 9:45 – 10:45 – Finding Balance – Take time for yourself and come join other parents from Early Learning and ECS to discuss ways of simplifying your life and taking care of yourself. Staff from the Eckert Centre for Learning and Wellness will be here to facilitate this parent focused coffee morning.

Thank you to Hamilton and Rosenthal Chartered Accountants for their generous donation to the PREP Program. The donation will be used to further enhance programming and materials for the children in Early Learning and ECS.