

Calendar

June

- 3 – last class for Learning Through Play
- 12, 13 – last Language Group classes
- 12 – ECS Field Trip to Butterfield Acres
- 12- Coffee Morning with Danette Rowley 9:30-10:30
- 13 - no ECS classes
- 19, 20 – last day of classes for ECS
- 19, 20 parent interviews for Language Group

Feature Article

Through the “Puddles” of the Battle Field: Tips on Successful Toileting

All parents look forward to the time when their children will be toilet trained. The process moves slowly, sometimes with performance plateaus and even some regression, depending on a variety of factors. Here are some ideas to ponder and consider as you head down the toileting path to success.

Muscle Strength

The process of controlling elimination requires coordinated use of muscles. When a child has Down syndrome, hypotonia (low muscle tone) results in the child experiencing difficulty sensing when his or her bladder is full. Also, the child may not have the muscle strength to voluntarily control (start and stop) urination and bowel movements. Regardless of these delayed functions, a child with Down syndrome will often exhibit the same signs of ‘training readiness’ as a typical child.

Signs of the Times

What are some of the signs indicating that your child may be ready for toilet training?

1. Does your child understand what is expected? Is he interested in what other people are doing?
2. Is your child willing to go into the bathroom with you?
3. Does he or she show signs of discomfort when soiled or wet?
4. Is your child dry for at least an hour or two at a time?

If the answer is “yes” to all of these questions, your child is probably ready for toilet training. If the answer is “no” to even one of these questions, you probably want to hold off a bit longer for the ‘training to begin’.

The reality is that children will use the toilet when they are developmentally ready to do so. You can cheer, beg and threaten, but hang on to your diapers. Each child has his or her own unique schedule – and wants to be in control.

All the signs are there, now what?

When helping your child through a toilet training program, it is critical to focus on positives and not get into a negative, attention-seeking power struggle.

Important Factors and Attitudes

Physical Readiness

Physical factors can influence a child's ability to use the toilet. He must have a bladder large enough to allow him to wait for increasing long periods of time before urinating, especially for overnight control. Some children, especially children with Down syndrome, simply don't develop bladder control as soon as others do.

Ease of Wakefulness

Many children who remain bed wetter's, even past their preschool years, have difficulty waking up. When parents try getting their heavy sleepers up in the night to take them to the toilet, they are like limp rags that cannot stand or sit. All children should always be treated with dignity and respect, but it is especially discouraging to use punishment with children who don't have the physical capacity to do what is expected of them. An understanding of readiness may inspire more patience.

Understanding your Child's Perspective

Imagine for a moment that you are a small child. You know Mom and Dad are eager for you to use the potty, to be a "big boy (or girl)" and wear "big boy pants". So you head to the bathroom when you feel the tingly feeling and are aware that there may not be a lot of time. You know you have to get your pants down, but the buckles on the overalls are stiff and your fingers are so small (and weak). Then you glance at the toilet, which looks huge from your point of view. Maybe, you think, a little assistance is called for. But by the time you alert Mom, Dad or the teacher, it's too late. No wonder children often find that it's easier to just stay in diapers! Create a 'toilet friendly' environment with easy to remove clothing and modified seating.

Inviting Cooperation

Potty training is just that, training. The most important area for a parent to focus on is their attitude. Knowing your child's temperament and abilities will help you keep your expectations reasonable. If you are relaxed and comfortable, your child is likely to feel the same way. Pressure to 'succeed' will only frustrate both the child and the parent. If accidents happen – and they will – be patient. If your child is wet, change her. If she is old enough, buy pull up diapers so she can change herself (which often encourages a child to be more aware of her body signals). Be sure, however, that you never humiliate or shame a child about toileting setbacks. Dry pants aren't worth damaged self-esteem.

Detach, Relax and Enjoy!

Perhaps the best advice is simply this: Relax. Using the toilet on his own is a very significant thing for a child to do. When he's ready, he'll do it; and probably not a moment sooner. You will be amazed at how quickly time passes when you detach from the potty training issue. Your detachment will eliminate power struggles and may actually speed up the process.

Having a Setback?

Setbacks may be a result of a child experiencing new things – a new pre-school, a new house, a new sibling. All these events represent major adjustments in a child's life, and toileting issues often take second place to coping with change. Your attitude as a parent or caregiver will make all the difference in how confused a child might feel when she not only loses control of her body but faces a parent's anger and disappointment as well.

Let's Wrap It Up

When it comes to toileting, we can't make 'em' do it! Following these guidelines should bring success to your young toilet trainee. Still, it may be wise to keep a change of clothing nearby when your child is learning to use the toilet. It is also immeasurably helpful to be patient and to offer your child unconditional love and acceptance. Once you have taken into account your child's personal time clock, provided him with appropriate clothing and accessible facilities, and the time he needs to be trained in the skills he needs, it is time to relax, celebrate his successes and sympathize with his disappointments. Be patient. When he's ready, it will happen!

Tips to Train By

1. Concentrate on one toilet habit at a time (bladder or bowel).
2. Keep the child's outside clothing simple. Trousers or slacks with elastic waistbands can be pulled down quickly.
3. Use cloth training pants instead of diapers. These can be removed quickly and help the child feel grown up. The cloth fabric will give more feedback than a disposable pull-up when it is wet.
4. Modify seating so the child has proper balance and can focus on the task at hand. Lower and smaller toilets, a handle bar and even a footrest help your child feel safe and comfortable. Even older children will benefit from these modifications. Footstools with no skid grips are available at Ikea for about \$5.00. Toilet seats are available with handles to offer your child more stability.
5. Don't flush the toilet when the child is seated on it. It may frighten the child. Instead, let the child flush it when he or she gets off the seat and pulls up their pants.
6. Do not leave children unattended on the toilet. Go into the bathroom with them and stay with them. Five or ten minutes usually are sufficient. If the child doesn't eliminate at this time, remove him or her from the toilet without emotion.
7. Do not react with anger or punishment to a child's playing with genitals or a bowel movement. This is normal behavior. Rather, respond with a firm but gentle "no" and substitute an appropriate task.
8. Remain calm when accidents happen and don't give up.
9. Reward the child for progress. The child will respond to praises, a smile, caress, or handclap. Don't overdo it.
10. If the child shows signs that a bowel movement is in the process, don't rush them to the toilet as if the house is burning down. Rushing makes the child tense and may delay elimination or stop it altogether.
11. Most important, establish an individualized schedule for your child and stick to it.

For a more detailed overview, refer to:

1. Jane Nelson, Cheryl Erwin, Roslyn Duffy, "Positive Discipline for Preschoolers", p 245-256.
2. John E Rynder / J. Margaret Horrobin, "Down syndrome, giving families an Edge", p 106-107.

ECS

The classroom teams would like to thank all the parents for the support you have given us this year through volunteering time in the classroom and welcoming us into your homes. We appreciate your commitment and dedication and look forward to your continued support.

Farm and zoo animals are being studied in our last theme for this year. Enter the classroom with caution! Animals, new songs, books, puzzles, sand, carpet toys and activities are everywhere for the children to explore. The classes are identifying farm and zoo animals, building muscle strength while moving around the circle doing animal actions, and enjoying new animal songs.

The sand box is a great hit as the children hide animals in the sand, practice digging and pouring into pails, filling the sand wheel to make it turn, all the while building up hand and wrist strength.

Trips to the park to play group games, play with the parachute, have running relays, kick balls, and play on the new playground equipment have been fun for all of us. It's great to see the children tackling the climbing wall, figuring out the mazes, and choosing which slide to go down. You can only imagine all the fine and gross motor strength and language the children are developing while they are having fun at the park. *Don't forget to apply sunscreen and send a hat on warm days, because we will likely be going to the park!*

Welcome to Tara Nysetvold a new staff member at PREP who is joining our classroom on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

On June 12th both classes will travel to Butterfield Acres to experience first hand, some of the animals that we have been studying. Children will meet with their parents in the parking lot at 9:15 in readiness for the 9:30 to 11:30 program. **We welcome all Dads to join us at the farm. What a wonderful way to spend the morning with your children!** A reminder, there will be no class on Friday, June 13th.

Our last classes for this year will be on June 19th and 20th. Parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, please join us at 10:30 for fun and snacks in the park as we say "goodbye" and "good luck" to our friends going on to kindergarten and other programs.

Off to Kindergarten!

Nine children from our ECS class are graduating this year and are registered for kindergarten in September. "Well done!" and best wishes to : Megan August, Amanda Bartell, Marissa Bradich, James Colborne, Jacob Gulley, Hannah Kiazuk, Jennifer Kurschat, Kai Smeland, and Siobhan Zobatar.

Special Thanks

Thank you to Sandra Johnston, volunteer coordinator for the Pet Access League Society (PALS) of Calgary for arranging to have Tubby Miller, Dugan Miller, Michelle Simpson and Millie Langell visit the ECS classes with their dogs. The children enjoyed patting, hugging, watching and walking the dogs in the classroom. We value the time, effort and patience the volunteers provided and look forward to welcoming them again next year!

Thank you to Armella Gulley and Carolyn Weaver for their conscientious jobs as parent volunteer coordinators for the ECS classes. Children and staff benefit so much from having daily volunteer helpers in the classroom. Armella and Carolyn were diligent in keeping our volunteer schedule filled. We appreciate your efforts!

Thank you to Lindsay Simper, a graduate student from the U of C who has been volunteering in our Tuesday/Thursday class. The children have enjoyed playing with her at the mats, working on crafts, sharing books, and practicing printing their names with her. Lindsay has been a welcome contributor to our class and we appreciate her time and genuine enthusiasm working and playing with the ECS students.

Thank you to Barb Colborne for donating a selection of valuable toys we are using in ECS and Early Learning classes. The children are enjoying playing with and exploring the new toys.

Learning Through Play

The summer sun is shining and so are the children. They enjoy clapping along to familiar songs and are anticipating actions to songs such as “Twinkle Twinkle”, “Itsy Bitsy Spider” and “Mr. Sun”. During the parent’s discussion group all of the children are busy playing in the sand box, rolling balls, exploring messy play with bath foam and finger painting. A favorite activity is learning about snack time.

Parents are encouraged to plan a daily outside play time. At this age your little one needs adult supervision, not only for safety, but for learning. Mom’s or Dad’s caring hands provide the gentle assistance needed to:

- bravely walk barefoot on the grass
- touch that “yucky” dirt and sand
- splash in the paddling pool
- explore the great outdoors

So, Mom and Dad get down and get dirty with your kids!

During the parent panel the following inspirational books and web site were recommended for summer reading and research:

“Mitten Strings for God” and “Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff” (authors unknown) and “Captain Chaos Lives Here” by Carol Johnson. You can check out Traci Lyn Moland’s website @ www.mommanagement.com.

Many parents have already enrolled their child for the 2003/2004 school year. If you have not already done so and have questions or concerns, please speak with Annamarie or Cindy. Registration guidelines are based on age and individual circumstances: age as of September 1 - under 2 years register for Learning

Through Play.

- 2 years and over register for
Language Group.

Thank you to all of the parents and children for making this year such a success in Learning Through Play. Your dedication has paid off and this is evident in your child's progress over the past months. Have a great summer!!!!

A special Thank you to our volunteers: Dana, Jody Lynn, Jenny and Dianne. Without your help the children would not have had as much fun and would not have made the wonderful gains they achieved in Learning Through Play.

Congratulations to Annamarie as she moves into the role of Family Support Liaison. Although her presence in the classroom will be decreased, she will still be part of the Early Learning team. If you have questions or concerns regarding respite, transportation, recreation, individual therapy sessions etc. please feel free to contact her at ext. 125 or in person at PREP.

Welcome to Tara Nysetvold. She will be the new therapy assistant in Learning Through Play. Tara comes to us with a wealth of knowledge. She has a Bachelors degree in Community Rehabilitation and a Masters degree in Education. If your child will be absent from class, you can direct your call to Tara at ext. 120.

Important Dates to Remember

Tuesday June 3 – Last class for Learning Through Play

Language Group

With summer around the corner (we hope), the children will have a chance to explore the many adventures of a Zoo. Activities will include:

- Animals at the Zoo (sung to Farmer in the Dell) – Children pick a picture of an animal and do the animal actions
- Singing “Going to the Zoo” as the children each take a turn to pick out an animal from the mystery bag.
- Sorting activity with the animals from the mystery bag. Children learn to take turns and cheer their friends on when each one has a turn to match a toy to a picture.
- Identifying body parts. Put your (felt animal) on your head. The children will be encouraged to offer ideas as to where to put their animal.

Centers continue to be a hit and moms are now seeing the benefits that come from their little one watching and learning from his or her friends. At puzzles, on the slide or at the craft table you can see the children trying things just because the buddy next to them did it first.

Sensory centres can be overwhelming to some of the kids but with repeated practice they too will soon love to squish the play dough and the bath foam between their fingers. New this session is the water table for splashing and squeezing water toys as well as playing with shovels and animals in the modeling sand. These activities are great for strengthening fingers and hands as well as coping with weird and wonderful textures and sensations. .

It is great to see the children's attention span increasing while they play at puzzles or with the nesting cups. The children are **staying with each activity longer** and are **more independent**. Most importantly they are **more accepting of adult assistance** to put things in and of adult prompts to “do one more” or “all done, put away”.

The last class of Language Group will be a PARTY in the PARK (weather permitting). Siblings, grandparents, dads, aunts and uncles are invited to join us to help celebrate the accomplishments and graduation of the students. Next fall will begin a new stage of growth for the children and their parents. We would like to wish them all the very best.

Congratulations to Annamarie as she begins her new role as Family Support Liaison. She will still be involved with the families from Language group but her presence in the classroom will be less. Parents can still contact her by phone (at ext. 125) or in person with concerns regarding PUF, transportation, recreation, respite services, individual therapy etc.

We welcome Tara Nysetsold. She will be the new classroom assistant for Language group for the remainder of this year. She comes to us with a wealth of knowledge. Tara has her Undergrad in Community Rehabilitation and a Masters Degree in Education. In the event that your child will be absent you can direct your calls to Tara at ext. 120.

Have a great summer and most of all, remember to have FUN!!!!!!

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Thursday June 12 – Last class for Language Group

Friday June 13 – Last class for Language Group

Thursday June 19 – Parent Interviews

Friday June 20 –Parent Interviews

Bits and Pieces

Summer Bingo

Included with this month's newsletter is "Summer BINGO", a fun way to incorporate sensory, motor, speech and language, and school readiness activities into your summer days! After you try an activity, let your child put a sticker on the square. Have fun together, and if you have any questions about the activities, let us know!

Summer Therapy Sessions

Families interested in accessing additional *individual* speech-language therapy or occupational therapy can now book sessions during the summer months. Sessions are available based on fee-for-service at \$45/45-minute session or \$60/60-minute session. Parent participation is mandatory. Families are encouraged to check if their health plan covers therapy services. If you feel that summer sessions would boost your child's language and/or motor skills, please talk to your child's therapist(s) for more information or to book session times.

Check Out the PREP Library

New to the PREP Library!

The Down Syndrome Nutrition Handbook by Joan E. Guthrie Medlen, R.D.,L.D.

This much-needed book is the first to look at all aspects of nutrition and healthy living for children with Down syndrome, from birth through young adulthood. It's never too early or too late to start teaching healthy habits.

Living with Down Syndrome by Jenny Bryan This book, written in an easy to understand format, includes information about: what causes Down syndrome in some children, how people with Down syndrome learn to do things independently and useful addresses and organizations to contact for support.

The PREP resource library, located in the ECS office on the main floor, is open to parents to browse around and take out a book or two, for a week or two.