

June, 2005

Calendar

June 23, 24 Last days of classes

June 25: Summer Picnic at Edworthy Park 10:00 – 12:30

Play Dates: July 15, 22, 29 and August 12, 19, 26 call Laura for more details

Printing Boot Camp: July 12-14, 19-21 or August 16-18, 23-25

September 8, 9 Welcome Back to ECS – Parent and Child Morning – information to follow

September 24 – Let's Talk Hockey

October 21- PREP Annual Fall Conference

Feature Article

Summer Fun in the Sun

There is no better opportunity to develop motor and language skills than during the joyful and exuberant time of summer. Summer provides great opportunities to continue to develop skills worked on throughout the year at school through regular everyday summer play. Remember your favorite summer activities? Running through the sprinkler, building sandcastles, walking barefoot? These kinds of simple, fun, summer activities are working on more than your tan! They target building muscles in little legs, develop coordination, and teach children new words. After all, the excitement of summer fun activities can be a huge motivator to 'use your words'. The following suggestions are starting points for activities and attractions around the city that can facilitate the development of skills without even knowing it! Remember summer is fun, freeing, and a time to try new things.

Pools, water parks and lakes are a great way to cool down on hot summer days and provide a great environment for working on strength, balance and stability. Playing in small waves and chasing toys in the water improve strength and promotes cardiovascular health and self-confidence. Visit sandy beaches and encourage your child to walk barefoot to experience extra sensory feedback and strength development in the smaller muscles in the foot and calf. Carrying buckets of water, digging holes and building sandcastles, with two hands, are also great activities that facilitate the development of upper body strength. Glenmore South, Prairie Winds and Riley Park all have great wading pools or water parks that are suitable for young children and Sikomi Lake has a large sandy beach, 2 great parks and lifeguards on duty.

The pool environment can also allow for natural vocabulary development while still having fun and not seeming like 'speech therapy'. Talking is way more fun when

immersed in sand or water; and new vocabulary (such as 'wet', 'dry', 'splash', 'dig' etc.) are words that will emerge naturally.

Visiting parks during the warm weather provides an opportunity to expand on PT, OT and Speech goals started throughout the year. Encourage lots of climbing and walking through natural playgrounds, such as long grass, areas with logs and rocks (to climb and jump over) and textured grounds like pavement, pea-gravel or rubber (Fish Creek is a wonderful 'natural' playground). These types of activities promote leg strength. Park activities such as hanging from playground equipment and swings helps to develop upper body strength, hand strength, and joint stability. Encourage your child to be adventurous and try new activities at the playground, while your assuring hand is close by.

Take the opportunity to follow your child's lead at the park. Observe where they like to play and mimic their play, what great fun it is to be the one in control! If your child wanders away from the playground equipment, follow them and see where they explore; take a step out of 'the box' – be silly and creative with natural toys such leaves, twigs, and grass.

Feeding the ducks, a great summer activity, can be an opportunity to work on fine motor skills and not even know it. Encourage your child to pick off pieces of bread with their index finger and thumb to feed the ducks; make it even more fun by making a 'quacking' sound with the movement of pinching off the bread. Or, perhaps feed yourselves! Bring along snacks that your child has to use hands and fingers to open (such as yogurt tubes, cheese strings, or pudding). Set your child up for success by simply pulling a little corner of the wrapper down and then encouraging them to finish opening the package.

Parks provide a natural opportunity to work on basic concepts as well. While playing, comment on what you child is doing, prepositions like in, on, and under are learned best by doing. Playing 'I spy' games is also a great way to encourage action vocabulary. Say 'I spy a girl kicking ball' and then ask 'Do you see a girl kicking ball?' Have your child find the girl and then repeat what you have 'spied'. Prince's Island Park and Riley Park have great playgrounds (and wading pools too) and are always 'hopping' on hot summer days. Don't go alone; invite another family to join you as the socialization opportunities encourage your child to be more active.

The city has many attractions to take advantage of during the summer months. The Calgary Zoo and Butterfield Acres are fun filled days; provide a break from the everyday and great places to encourage vocabulary development without making it seem like work. You and your child can label the different animals, distinguish between large and small animals as well as talk about what noises each animal makes.

The Calgary Stampede comes to town July 8th – 17th and boasts a special kids area that includes midway rides for smaller children, a kids tent with hands-on activities (puzzles, coloring, magic tricks), and the opportunity to get up close and personal with some small animals at a petting zoo. Callaway Park can also be a fun filled day that again provides exposure to new movement activities and vocabulary. There are many

rides for smaller children (check their website for height restrictions <http://www.calawaypark.com>), as well as a haunted mansion, playground, live entertainment, and games that can all be used to encourage speech development, coordination, strength and stamina and most importantly, fun! Take along a babysitter (they would probably love the opportunity to go out for a special day) and relieve some stress of supervising siblings who are drawn in different directions. A little extra TLC is all your child might need from you to brave a new ride.

Of course you don't always need to leave home to have fun in the summer weather. There are many activities at home that can promote the development of PT, OT, and Speech skills. However, take the kids outside where children can feel freer to get wet, dirty and be silly.

Some ideas include:

- Have a picnic and bringing some of your child's favorite toys outside on the grass.
- Make an extra large batch of jell-o or pudding and put it in a bucket or kiddie pool to let your child explore these fun 'sensory substances'. Simply use the sprinkler or hose to wash off!
- You can also blow up balloons and use them practice catching and kicking. Balloons move slower than regular balls and allow kids the opportunity to work on hand/eye coordination.
- Another great hand/eye coordination activity is catching bubbles. Practice pre-writing skills by having your child use different mediums, such as sidewalk chalk or a stick in the sand, to work on lines 'up', 'down', 'across' and 'around'.
- Practice animal walks in the grass and up hills to increase shoulder stability then roll down for fun!
- Play 'Hide and Seek' and practice location words such as 'Erika is behind the tree'

Learning and development doesn't always need to be guided. Is your backyard child friendly? Take a walk through your yard and remove any dangerous objects or equipment (such as tools or rocks in the grass). Set out a few toys, set up a lawn chair and sit back and relax! Watch your child explore, run, roll and discover with the comfort of knowing they are safe while learning (and you get a much needed break!) The golden rule for summer: The dirtier your child is at the end of the day, the more fun they had!

Did you know that...

- *Boredom is a big trigger for behaviours. Keep the activities coming, use a variety of activities (crafts, toys, music, etc.) and use old toys in new ways.
- *Seeing new faces and visiting new places stimulates the development of social skills. Visit new attractions in the city, walk a different route, or explore a different park.
- *Your child learns more play skills from other kids than from you. Don't be your child's only playmate!
- *Teaching your child that safety is rule number one on the playground is a positive step towards making friends (nobody likes to be pushed or shoved).
- *Regular physical exercise will improve your child's eating, digestion, and sleep habits. Don't let a gentle rain stop you from enjoying a walk!

Bits and Pieces

Thank you to PALS

Sandra Johnston, volunteer coordinator for The Pet Access League Society of Calgary sent us four volunteers and their dogs on June 9th and 10th. The room was full of chatter as the children talked and played with the dogs. Many thanks to the PALS volunteers!

Thank you to Parents

We'd like to thank all the parents for their support of their child's learning at PREP. It helps tremendously when skills taught in the classroom and therapy sessions are reinforced at home. A special thanks for all the time spent volunteering in the classroom, we truly appreciate it.

Fond Farewell

We say a fond farewell to two ECS families moving out of the Calgary region. Rylen Simms and his family are returning to Fort McMurray. Heewon Yoon and his family are moving to Swann Hills. We will miss them and wish them all much luck in their new adventures. Hopefully they will pop into PREP for a visit whenever they are in Calgary. Enjoy your new schools Rylen and Heewon!

Off to Kindergarten!

Seven students from the ECS class graduate this year and are registered for Kindergarten in September. "Well done!" and best wishes to: James, Julia, Mackenzie, Rylen, Kristen, Sam and Heewon.

15th Annual Conference: Effective Teaching Strategies for Successful Inclusion
Friday October 21, 2005

University of Calgary

Fees for one parent and one preschool teacher of children in PREP 2 ECS are covered by the PUF grant. Come out and join your child's education assistant for an exciting day of information, sharing and demonstrations. For more information check out the conference flyer sent home with your child or go online at www.prepprog.org. Contact Laura at 282-5011 (123) for registration details.

Check it out!

Knowledge, resources and inspiration are at your finger tips in our library to browse through or borrow. 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

Sleep Better by V. Mark Durand This guide to improving sleep for children with special needs offers step-by-step, "how to" instructions for addressing a variety of problems and implementing widely tested, largely drug-free techniques that have already helped hundreds of children with special needs. Suggestions are included for resolving bedtime tantrums, night waking, bed wetting, insomnia and other sleep problems.

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.

