



Family and Consumer Sciences

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Ann Arnold
Extension Educator

better Kid Care

Better Kid Care Program Changes

Child care trainings in the state of Michigan are currently being restructured. This restructuring will be completed by October 1, 2009.

To ensure that all providers receive credit for their training hours under the current training structure the state Better Kid Care Program is implementing the following procedures:

- Independent learning kits will be discontinued on September 1, 2009
- All outstanding kits MUST be returned to MSU Extension Bay County with all paperwork NO LATER than September 15, 2009, to receive training credit and a completion certificate.
- All CEU requests need to be completed and returned to MSU Extension Bay County NO LATER than September 15, 2009.
- CEU requests that are received by MSU Extension - Bay County after September 15, 2009, will not be processed.

We apologize for any inconvenience this change in policy may cause you, but the MSU Extension BKC state office has implemented deadlines to

meet the October 1 restructuring deadline. If you have further questions or would like information regarding upcoming workshops, please contact MSU Extension Bay County at (989) 895-4026 or to find a list of staff or trainings by visiting the "Contact Us" on the BKC Website: www.bkc.fcs.msue.msu.edu

Online training offered:

- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and Safe Sleep
- Preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome
- Lead in Your Home
- A Providers Guide to Early Literacy

Better Kid Care Program Changes at the Local Level

At this time MSU Extension - Bay County is trying to obtain future funding to provide training for child care providers. For more information contact Ann Arnold, Extension educator, at (989) 895-4026, arnolda6@msu.edu.

What Children Need to Know to Start School

When you ask almost anyone what children need to be successful in school, they will tell you that they must know their ABC's, colors, and numbers. Surprisingly, if you ask a kindergarten teacher you'll hear a very different answer.

Kindergarten teachers say it is the social and emotional skills that

children need to be a success in school, and that more and more children are entering school without these critical skills. States across the nation report that between 20 and 49 percent of children entering school are not ready to learn.

Kindergarten teachers tell us that it is hard to teach children who are not interested in learning, lack confidence in their own abilities, and have trouble cooperating and controlling themselves.

Intellectual skills are less of a problem, they say, because they are more easily solved. One teacher sums up the problem: "The kids are sad, mad and bad, it's not that they can't add" (Ross A. Thompson, 2002, "Set for Success: Building a Strong Foundation for School Readiness based on the Social-Emotional Development of Young Children." Kaufman Early Education Exchange, North Kansas City, MO).

To succeed in school, children need a sense of personal well-being that is created from stable, caring relationships at home and in child care in the early years. Quality child care can make a difference. Studies of school achievement have consistently shown that high quality child care can get children off to the right start. Kindergarten teachers say that pre-school children need to develop these skills to be ready for school:

- Ability to follow directions
- Ability to focus attention
- Ability to take turns
- Ability to control themselves
- Ability to solve problems with words rather than through aggression
- Ability to work independently

- Ability to work in a group
- Age-appropriate social skills and ability to make friends
- Skills communicating with other children
- Skills communicating with adults

The best way to help children develop these skills is to offer them a balance of "child choice time" (like free play) and time to be in small groups when they're asked to work together. Children learn important social and emotional skills when they have to solve problems that arise in play with others. With the guidance and support of their caregivers, children can face these problems and learn the skills needed to be successful in school and in life. While you should give some time to large group activities that you lead, keep this time active and short.

Laying the Foundation for Reading and Math

What are good early childhood programs doing to prepare children for success in reading and math? So much more than drilling children in letters and numbers. The goal is to provide awareness and exploration during the pre-school years. You can foster children's learning by understanding what they can learn during these important years.

Children can explore reading and writing in these ways:

- Enjoying listening to and discussing storybooks
- Forming their own reading and writing attempts
- Participating in rhyming games

- Identifying some letters and make some letter-sound matches
- Using letters or their versions of letters to create their own written products

Children can explore math in these ways:

- Using number to count in real situations (counting cookies for snacks)
- Solving real math problems that come up regularly (how many blocks do I need to finish this wall)
- Exploring ways to measure
- Learning math vocabulary

What you can do encourage reading:

- Share books with children, and model reading behavior
- Talk about letters by name and sounds
- Establish a literary-rich room
- Encourage children to write during play by offering writing tools while they play
- Give children time daily to look at books on their own
- Give children ample time for free play - 30 to 45 minutes or more daily

What you can do to encourage math:

- Give children opportunities to use counting in real-life situations (Do we have enough cars for everyone to have one?)
- Teach children math vocabulary: more, less, equal, etc.
- Let children discover measurement in real-life problems (How much taller is Sam than Tyler?)

- Give children games that use numbers in a pleasant, enjoyable way
- Give children ample time for free play - 30 to 45 minutes or more daily

Drilling children in their ABCs and numbers is boring for both you and the child. Instead, give the children a literacy-rich environment and real-life math problems. Play is one of the best ways to help children gain the mental skills they will need for school success. Children learn to use symbols through play: a block can stand for a car. This is the same ability they'll use later when they are learning that C-A-T stands for cat and that a plus sign means adding.

Make play a cornerstone of your child care program. Encourage children to explore reading and writing by practicing being readers and writers. Help them be aware of math by using it in real problems from daily life. By doing these things you will give the children a strong intellectual foundation for school.

Developing Writing Muscles

“Fine motor skills” is another name for the ability to use your hand and finger muscles. Young children need to build these muscles to be able to learn how to write. There are so many enjoyable ways for young children to strengthen these muscles and improve their coordination. You don't need to use worksheets. Here are some activities you can try in your child care program to give children the motor skills they will need as they enter school.

Create a writing area for the children. Give children different writing materials to try: crayons, triangular-shaped crayons, colored pencils, fine markers, pens, gel pens, and pencils.

Give children the incentive to write for themselves. Setting up mailboxes for each child in the group can encourage children to write to each other. Let children write in their own way. This is called “invented spelling” and over time will lead children to more conventional writing.

Cutting—Fill a tub with old magazines. Keep scissors nearby and let children cut pictures to their hearts' content. Children can also cut clay with blunt or plastic scissors and cut paper snowflakes.

Taping—Give children masking tape or clear tape and let them tape paper and cardboard. Children love to tape, and the practice tearing and positioning it will build fine motor skills.

Tracing—Tracing involves steady hand control and gives children plenty of practice making rounded and pointed shapes. This gives them just the practice they need for writing curved and angular parts of letters.

Rubbings—Give children objects to place under paper, such as coins. As they rub with a pencil or crayon over the coin, they'll get practice in exerting pressure, making those muscles strong.

Dot-to-Dot and Maze Books—Give children practice writing that is so fun they don't notice that they are building muscles!

As children grow in their interest in letters, you can give them a chance to try making letters in all sorts of wonderful ways. These activities can build fine motor control and can help children learn their letters:

- Bread dough (then bake and eat!)
- Play dough or wikki stick
- Water paint letters on a chalkboard
- Finger paint letters
- Shaving cream
- Trace letters in rice or beans
- Draw letters on a bumpy surface



Making a Writing Box

A writing box will invite your child to experiment and explore with written language. Children learn best by pretending to write--scribbling or even making up their own letters. A writing box is easy to put together. Save an old shirt box and include writing tools of all kinds: fine and thick markers, crayons, pencils, and pens. Each one of these will feel different when they are used and will give your child practice using his or her writing muscles. Put recycled pieces of paper in the box as well as cardboard from cereal boxes and any other paper you have on hand. Suggest that your child write letters or notes to friends and family. Pretending to be a writer is an important step to becoming a real writer.

Licking your Letters and Nibbling your Numbers

There are so many wonderful ways to teach your child letters and numbers that aren't drilling or

quizzing. How about asking your child to bake and eat their numbers and letters?

Use this simple recipe to make homemade letter and number pretzels. Makes 6 large or 12 small pretzels.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup water (120°F) fairly warm, but not hot
- 1 tsp. dry yeast, dissolved in water
- 4 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 2 tsp. salt (sea salt preferably)
- 3 1/4 cups flour
- 1 Tbsp. baking soda mixed with 1 cup boiling water
- 1 egg beaten with 1 tsp. water

Directions:

Mix water, yeast, brown sugar, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Add flour and mix until dough is smooth. Add more flour if sticky. (If possible let the dough sit overnight in a plastic container in the fridge.) Now divide the dough into 4, 6, or 12 pieces. Teach children to roll it into a rope, and then ask them to make a letter or number. Place on a greased cookie sheet. Now let the pretzels rise for 30 minutes or until about double in size. Brush with the water/soda solution. For a chewier crust, dissolve 2 tablespoons baking soda mixed in 4 cups boiling water. Drop the pretzel in for about the count of 10, and then lift out with a strainer or pancake turner. Brush with beaten egg and water solution. Sprinkle with coarse salt, garlic, Parmesan cheese, cinnamon sugar, or sesame seeds. Bake in a hot oven 400 to 450 degrees F for 12 - 15 minutes or until well browned.

Play A Board Game Together

Children have fun and get great practice with counting skills when they play board games. Learning about numbers can be so much more fun when you are counting the spaces as you move your game piece. Get out your board games and take some time to play with your child. Even more fun is to make your own board games. The best games are ones where a team must work together rather than the games in which people need to beat each other. Competition can bring out cheating in many children, especially around the age of five and six. You can help reduce cheating by not stressing the winning, and concentrating instead on the fun. Sometimes it helps to change the rules to make the game more cooperative. Try to have everyone work together to win. Children grow out of this stage and later on are better able to accept losing. Until then, discuss cheating and use it as a gentle lesson while changing the games to make them more cooperative. The goal is to have fun and build number skills.

Are the Schools Ready for the Children?

The problem of school readiness is complicated by changes in demands on kindergarten children. In many areas, today's kindergarten classroom looks nothing like the kindergarten classroom of the past. The kindergarten curriculum has moved from play with an introduction to letters and numbers to a curriculum that demands that children learn much more reading, writing, and math.

Kindergarten in the past was seen as an important year to help children develop social skills and to begin to even out the great diversity of experience. Today the curriculum is so demanding in some schools that teachers are using teaching methods that have been found to work poorly with this age group (like worksheets) just so they can cover the large amount of required material. Children of this age learn best with hands-on learning, but this takes time that teachers feel they don't have.

This time crunch means that in some schools recess has been cut so more time can be spent on reading, writing, and arithmetic. The loss of this exercise and play time makes it all the more difficult for children to sit still and pay attention. Because of these changes, more and more children are unable to function well in these demanding schools. They get off to a rocky start in school right from the beginning.

The "push-down curriculum" (as it is sometimes called) often results in children being labeled with problems. These children would not have been labeled in this way had they been in kindergarten programs that were more age-appropriate. Find out about the type of kindergarten programs offered by the public school in your area. This can be one step towards helping the children in your care make as smooth a transition as possible.

Material presented is an excerpt from *What Children Need to Know to Start School* Michigan Better Kid Care Satellite Training Packet , Developed by Penn State Better Kid Care Program.

Let's Talk About Common Canning Mistakes

Potentially deadly mistakes when canning:

- **Making up your own canning recipe**—without scientific testing, you will not know how long the product needs to be processed to be safe.
- **Adding extra starch, flour, or other thickener to your recipes**—this will change the rate of heat penetration into the product and can result in under processing, thus the product might be unsafe to eat.
- **Adding extra onions, chili, bell peppers, or other vegetables to salsa**—the extra vegetables dilute the acidity and can result in botulism poisoning because the product will not be properly acidified.
- **Using your oven instead of a boiling water bath or process high-acids foods**—the product will be under processed because air is not as good a heat conductor as water or steam are. The jar also might blow up.
- **Not making altitude adjustments**—because boiling temperatures are lower at higher altitudes, the products will be under processed and the product might be unsafe to eat.
- **Not venting the pressure cooker before processing**—lack of venting can result in air pockets that will not reach as high a temperature as is needed to properly process low-acid foods.
- **Not having your gauge pressure canner tested each year**—if the gauge is inaccurate, the food might be under

processed and the product might be unsafe to eat.

- **Failure to acidify canned tomatoes**—not all tomatoes have an adequate acid level, especially if the vine is dead. Not acidifying the tomatoes will result in a product that could support the growth of *C. botulinum*, a deadly microorganism associated with improperly home canned foods.
- **Letting food cool before processing in recipes that call for a hot pack**—the heat curves for processing are based on the food being hot at the beginning of the processing time. Therefore, the product might be under processed and unsafe to eat.



Mistakes that could cause economic loss, but that are not hazardous or deadly:

- **Use of mayonnaise jars**—the jar might blow up, especially if used in a pressure canner, and it might be more difficult to obtain a good seal. However, if it seals, it is safe to use.
- **Use of paraffin on jams and preserves**—small air holes in the paraffin might allow mold to grow. Also, paraffin can catch on fire if overheated. If you detect mold growth, throw out the entire contents.
- **Storing food longer than is recommended**—lengthy or overly hot storage will decrease quality and some nutrients, but the product will still be safe to eat.
- **Cooling too slowly after removing jars from the canner**—there is a group of

harmless microorganisms called thermophiles which can survive the canning process. If the jars are held hot for long periods, they can produce acid. This results in the defect known as “flat sour.” This condition is harmless, but results in a very undesirable flavor.

General canning rules:

- Always follow a research-based recipe exactly.
- Make altitude adjustments by adding more time to the boiling water process for high-acid foods or by increasing the pressure for processing low-acid foods.
- Unless you are sure that everything was perfect during processing, boil the product for ten minutes before eating it.

Exceptions to the rule of never changing a canning recipe:

- You can change the salt level in canned food except pickles.
- You can change sugar level in syrup used for canning fruit.
- You can decrease the amount of any vegetables in a research-based salsa recipe, except for tomatoes.
- You can substitute bell peppers, long green peppers, or jalapeno peppers for each other in salsa recipes, as long as you do not increase the total amount.

Adapted from: *Major Canning Sins*, Charlotte P. Bernard, Utah State University, by Angela Fraser Ph.D., Extension Food Safety Specialist North Carolina State University

Other Online Canning Resources:

USDA Food Safety Online - Ask Karen your food safety questions at:

www.fsis.usda.gov/Food_Safety_Education/Ask_Karen

USDA Canning Guide available from Utah State University Cooperative Extension:

www.extension.usu.edu/coop/food/foodpubs
National Center for Food Preservation at the University of Georgia: www.uga.edu/nchfp

MSU Extension - Bay County Office will be closed Labor Day, Monday, September 7.