

August
25 - Liberty, TX
Gimmie a Break

October
6 - Beaumont, TX
Play is Learning



When: Kick-off reception (limited to first 250 registrants) on the evening of July 16, 2012; full day sessions on July 17 - 18, 2012; half day sessions on July 19, 2012.

What: The 2nd Annual Texas School Ready! Early Childhood Summer Institute will bring together early childhood leaders from different sectors (public school, Head Start, community-based settings, and child care) to discuss innovations as well as research-based best practices in early childhood care and education.

Where:
1300 Houston Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76102
Phone: 817-535-6664

Extension Email List Update!!!!

We are in the process of updating our email list to link you with current child care education topics and training opportunities.

Please send:
Name, Center (optional), Address, and Email Address to alexis.cordova@agnet.tamu.edu
Or
Call at (936) 334- 3230.

2nd Annual
Texas School Ready!
Early Childhood Summer Institute
July 17th – 19th, Omni Hotel – Fort Worth, Texas

The 2012 Institute will feature many workshops for specific audiences, including:

1. Early Childhood Teachers (based upon experience level)
2. Early Childhood Administrators (community-based, non-profit, public school superintendents, school board members, child care directors, Head Start directors, and others)
3. Early Childhood Coaches & Mentors

[Click Here to Register Now!](#)

<http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e5xb5ki41a0a06d1&llr=rxohqmcab>

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Resources that address the child care needs of Liberty County

Child Care Connection



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The Importance of Play in Early Childhood

A common question/complaint that child care providers often hear is, "What is my child learning? He/she is just playing all day!" Parents are concerned that their children will not be ready for the academic challenges of Kindergarten and Elementary school if they spend their preschool days merely playing. It is our responsibility as early childhood educators to enlighten parents as to how much they are, in fact, learning through play and how their play is readying them for future academic success.

Research has shown that strong social-emotional skills are a better predictor of success and happiness in life than is IQ. Because of this, all of the fun games we play with infants, toddlers and preschoolers, where they learn to take turns, learn that games have rules, and learn to read social cues, are far more valuable than flash cards, dittos and educational videos.

Children learn language by being spoken to and having someone respond when they speak. So all the silly songs, where children can make up their own lyrics and have someone laugh and join in response not only enhance their vocabulary, but their social skills as well.

Starting in infancy, the stage is set for gaining the benefits of play. When you play, "Peek-A-Boo" with a baby he is developing object permanence, the knowledge that an object or person still exists even if you can't see it. They are learning how to take turns and they are gaining the joy of playful interaction with another person.

Our role as early childhood educators is to give the children access to a wide variety of materials as well as the space and time to use them. Most of a young child's day should be spent in free exploration of the environment and very little, if any spent teacher-directed paper and pencil activities. The materials within the environment must be planned and intentional. We don't just fill a basket or two haphazardly with disassociated trinkets. We should know what children will learn through the materials we provide and trust in their ability to learn those concepts with minimal adult intervention. We do not have to teach children how to play. However, this does not mean that we don't participate. We stay close to support, encourage, give words to their actions, ask meaningful questions and expand their experience, without directing it.

Inside this issue:

- Child Abuse
- Cooperation
- Promote Healthy Attitudes for Food
- Art Activities for Multi-Age Groups
- Enroll a Child with Special Needs
- Talking with Babies
- Reading Aloud
- Training Opportunities



Keep our Children Safe!

In 2010 the Child Protective Services Agency in Texas confirmed that 288, 075 reports of child abuse or neglect were investigated with the conclusion that 66, 897 children had been abused or neglected. In 2010, there were 280 child abuse/neglect related fatalities. Daily national statistics show that 4 children die from child abuse every day and every 11 seconds a child is reported abused or neglected.

What are the signs of Child Abuse?

There are four types of abuse: physical, emotional, sexual, and neglect. Signs of physical abuse include but are not limited to: bruises, welts, black eyes, burns, and frequent injuries that can't be explained reasonably. Children who are reluctant to sit down, don't want to change clothes for physical education class, who wear long sleeves even in hot weather or who complain of pain when no injury is obvious may be experiencing abuse. Emotional abuse is more difficult to identify than physical abuse. Signs of emotional abuse can be confused with disabilities that occur for other reasons. Still, adults should consider emotional abuse when they see a child who has

- A speech disorder
 - Delinquent behavior
 - Inappropriate adult or infantile behavior
 - Habit disorders such as sucking a thumb or rocking
 - Conduct disorders such as being destructive or being withdrawn
 - Developmental lag
 - Substance abuse
- Neglect includes physical, medical and supervisory neglect, plus abandonment of the child. Children may be neglected who
- Are frequently truant from school
 - Inappropriate clothing for weather
 - Dirty hair, offensive body odor
 - Show obvious malnourishment
 - Torn, dirty clothing

- Uncorrected medical/dental problems
- Fatigue, listlessness, "failure to thrive"

Children are vulnerable people who need the help of caring adults so that they can grow into healthy productive adults. Some abuse is the result of ignorance while other abuse seems purposeful. Determining what is and what is not abuse is the responsibility of trained professionals. Caring adults who are willing to risk calling and reporting abuse are needed to help professionals do their job and for children to

Child abuse is defined as an injury or pattern of injuries to a child that is not accidental.

be safe.

Prevent Child Abuse Texas!

Prevent Child Abuse Texas (PCATX) is a statewide non-profit organization working to prevent child abuse and neglect in all its forms throughout Texas. The work of the organization depends solely on private grants and contributions. They are led by a statewide Board of Directors who represent their regions through community agencies and organizations dealing with social issues affecting children.

What's the Law

Anyone "having cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect" must report the case to any state or local law enforcement agency and to the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is punishable by imprisonment of up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$1,000. (Texas Family Code, Chapter 34) An oral report must be made immediately to the nearest Child Protective Service Office, to the 24-hour Child Abuse hotline (800-252-5400), or to the local law enforcement officials. Anyone who files a report is immune from civil or criminal liability -

if the report is made in "good faith" and "without malice."

Turning Choices Into Change

CHANGE the way society values and supports the well-being of children and families.

CHANGE society's expectations regarding what are and are not acceptable attitudes and behaviors towards children.

CHANGE the cultural attitude to ensure that healthy, safe and nurturing experiences are supported by the actions of every individual and every community.

CHANGE the meaning of the word "parent" so that it becomes more than just a *title*, defining the role of a particular individual; and instead, becomes an *action*, describing the behaviors to be embraced by all individuals.

Change these things, and "preventing child abuse" no longer describes simply the "cause" we each support; but rather, it begins to describe the "effect" of all that we do together.

Change these things, and we begin to CHANGE the "social norm" and the "public will" regarding the way children are valued; and the ways in which we treat and raise our children.

Succeed with these CHANGES, and we will succeed in our efforts to prevent child abuse.

For more information on how you can help please visit www.preventchildabusetexas.org.



Child Care Providers Training

"Gimmie a Break"

August 25th, 2012

Church of Christ
3201 N. Main Street
Liberty, TX

7 Clock Hours

Lunch will be on your own!

\$15.00 per person

If you need CEUs + \$25.00 per person.

\$5.00 Late fee for registrations received after deadline. No money collected at the door.

Registration Deadline - August 3rd, 2012

**Note: No Participant will be allowed to leave during the training for any reason excluding lunch. This training is for adults only; there will not be child care available during training.*



Improving Lives. Improving Texas.



8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Registration begins at 7:30 a.m.

Topics will include:

"Parent Communication in the 21st Century"

"Add the Splash Back into Learning"

"You Sure You're the Teacher? Keep Control"

"Refresh & Rejuvenate"

"Breaking the Silence: Music"



Getting Your Kids to Cooperate by Elizabeth Pantley

“How can I get my kids to cooperate with me?” It is the number one question, complaint and frustration in parenting. It’s a common problem from parents who must nag, beg and yell to get their children to cooperate. It often starts in the morning getting them up, fed and dressed and doesn’t end until they are finally in their pajamas and tucked into bed.

Cooperation is a titanic-sized issue because there are so many things we must get our kids to do (or not do!). If you’re waiting for your child to start cooperating of his own free will— you’ll need to change your view. Things won’t change on their own. It takes consistent, effective parenting skills to change your children’s behavior and to encourage your children to cooperate, willingly, on a regular basis. It will take practice, patience and persistence on your part. Once you’ve made a few changes in your approach, you’ll find that you’re no longer wishing for bedtime, but actually enjoying the days more with your children.

Be specific: Don’t make general comments that hint at what you would like done, such as, “It would be nice if somebody helped me clean up.” Don’t make it sound as if compliance is optional by starting your sentence with “Will you? Could you? Would you?” or ending your sentence with, “Okay?” Make your request clear, short and specific, “please put your dishes in the sink and wash the table.” or “It’s six o’clock. Gather your homework and come to the table.” Practice making clear statements that clearly identify what you need or that describe the problem without elaboration and lecturing.

Set Priorities: Use the “When/Then” technique, also known as Grandma’s Rule. This method simply lets your child know the sequence of his priorities. Work first/Play second. This also prevents the battles that occur when you specify the Work first part, without including the Play second part! So change the directive, “No! You can’t play on the computer, you have homework to do!” to the more pleasant: “When you have finished your homework, then you may play your new computer game.” Instead of “Put that book down and go put on your pajamas!” to: “As soon as your pajamas are on, it will be time to read your book.” Avoid saying, “Where are you going? Get in here and do these dishes!” to “The minute the dishes are done, you can go out and ride your bike.”

Give more choices: Offer your child a choice, “Would you like to sweep the floor or put away the dishes?” You can also use sequence choice, such as, “What would you like to do first, put on your pajamas or brush your teeth?” Another way to use choice is the time-focused choice, “Would you like to start at 8:00 or 8:15?” If a child creates his own third option, simply say, “That wasn’t one of the choices” and re-state your original question. If a child refuses to choose, you choose for him. It’s important that when you give your child a choice that he learn to live with the consequences of his decision. So if your little one is running amok in the grocery store, you can say, “You have a choice. You can walk beside me or ride in the cart.” The minute he takes off you can pick him up, put him in the cart and say, “I see you’ve decided to ride in the cart.”

Lighten up: Use humor to gain cooperation. A bit of silliness can often diffuse the tension and get your child to cooperate willingly. It also can help you feel better about your day. And even more, it helps you keep your perspective. Many of the daily issues between parent and child don’t warrant a major battle, many can be handled in a more cheerful way with better results.

Stay calm: Avoid letting your emotions take control. Don’t yell, threaten, criticize or belittle. Instead, ask yourself a question, “What is the problem?” Then, make a statement of fact to your child, such as, “There are dirty dishes and snack wrappers in the TV room.” Pause. Be silent. And stare at your children. It’s amazing that kids will know exactly what you’re thinking. Most often, they’ll respond by cleaning up, if not, back up your approach with one of the other solutions.

Playing to Win: Cooperation Games

Children see life as one big game - so why not take advantage of that? Nearly any task can be turned into a game with very little effort. Some games can be a one-time fix; others can become part of your routine. Look at these situations - first the standard serious parent approach (that often leads to fussing and tantrums), and then the Game approach. Imagine your child’s response to both:

Serious: “Pick up your toys and put them in the toy box.”

Game: “I bet I can pick up all the blue cars before you pick up the red ones!”

Serious: “Put your pajamas on - now!”

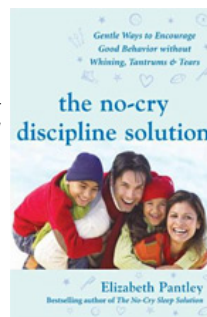
Game: “I’m going to set the timer for ten minutes. I wonder if you can beat the bell and get your pajamas on before it rings?”

Sing a Song

Even if you can’t carry a tune, putting anything to music makes you easier to listen to and fun, too. You can wash your child’s hands while singing “This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands.” One mom of five that I know discovered a great way to keep her children content during car rides. She loved to sing, so she made up opera tunes about the scenes she saw as she drove along the road. Her kids would often chime in with their own versions.

Use knowledge and skills: Read parenting books and learn new skills. Raising children is a complicated job and ever-changing. There are times when every parent and caregiver can use some help. There are many books available to parents to help get through the day-to-day issues you face with your children. In the vast assortment of books and articles about parenting, you should be able to find ideas for just about any problem or issue you are currently dealing with. Every child is different, and every parent is different. Because of this, there are no cookie-cutter solutions that will work for everyone. I suggest that you review all solutions you discover and take a few quiet minutes to think about them. Modify the suggestions to best suit your family, and don’t be afraid to try out more than one until you discover your best answer.

By Elizabeth Pantley <http://www.pantley.com/elizabeth>
The No-Cry Discipline Solution (McGraw-Hill 2007)



Importance of Play Continued from Page 1...

In child-initiated play, children learn the invaluable skill of making good choices and develop the important traits of resilience and flexibility when things do not go according to plan.



Through dramatic play, children learn to negotiate roles and rules. They are able to engage in both physical and emotional problem-solving. They develop sympathy and empathy as they pretend to be someone else. They learn to nurture as they play with dolls and stuffed animals.

Through block play, children build a solid foundation (pun intended) in almost all areas of development: math, physics, creativity, social-emotional, language and more. Allow children to bring toys from other areas into the block area as they expand their own play. Although a good set of unit blocks is a great investment, remember that blocks can also be free. Boxes of all shapes and sizes make fantastic blocks.

The sand and water table will help children learn a multitude of math and science concepts such as sink and float, heavy and light, cause and effect, weights and measures and more. Again, understanding these concepts will be dependent on your providing the materials through which the children will learn them. Measuring spoons and cups, dishes, a waterwheel, funnels, clear tubing, corks, Lego, including the people, will all help facilitate learning as well as their fine motor skills. Fill the table with colorful scraps of paper, fabric, ribbon and beads to see what creative ideas the children come up with. All of the skills above are also enhanced through the creative use of play dough.

This leads to the value of open-ended art. Open ended art has no goal for a finished product. The emphasis is on the process of creating, not the product itself. It allows children the opportunity to experiment with the materials you provide. This enhances creativity and cognitive development as children learn what they can and cannot do with certain materials. They learn so much more from the exploration and manipulation of open-ended materials than can ever happen with a coloring book page or a pre-cut shape of a duck on which they have to glue the beak and an eye.

Table top toys enhance fine motor development as well as cognitive development as children figure out how to work the puzzle, sort multi-colored bears or match, stack or line up dominoes.

A large motor area is critical in an early childhood setting. Along with being a great release for the children’s massive amount of energy, the use of their large muscles teaches them the many ways they can use their bodies. They develop strength, balance, coordination, self-confidence. Give children the opportunity to throw, catch, climb, ride a bike, slide, crawl, jump, run, skip, and hop. It is important that children have large motor experiences even when the weather keeps us indoors. Rather than establishing rules like, “No running inside” or “No throwing the ball inside”, provide the space and the boundaries where such play is acceptable indoors.

The world is not made of hard plastic! As much as possible, include “real” items in the environment rather than plastic replications. These, together with items found in nature, inspire play on a different, higher level as children learn the properties of the things they encounter in their lives.



So go ahead and let kids *just* play! They are learning, through their play, the skills they will need for a successful and happy future.

Robin Willner, M.A., IMH-E III
Early Childhood Consultant
Office for Young Children

TIPS FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS TO PROMOTE HEALTHY ATTITUDES ABOUT FOOD



As children grow and experience new foods, child care providers may notice changes in eating habits or attitudes about certain foods. The following are important tips for child care providers to prevent unhealthy attitudes about food.

Accept different levels of food intake. Never force a child to eat. It is

normal for children to eat a lot one day and almost nothing the next. If you offer choices from each of the food groups every day, children will adjust and eat appropriate amounts over several days. Deciding how much to eat at a given meal or snack is the child's job. Your job is to serve a variety of nutritious, tasty foods.

Know that food jags are normal.

Preschoolers are especially likely to insist on eating the same food every day. Continue offering a variety of foods even if a child eats only one thing. With time and patience, children will start to eat a wider variety of foods.

Expect some waste. It is good for children to naturally stop eating when they are full. Serving child-size por-

tions will help cut down on leftover food.

Avoid bribing or rewarding children for trying new foods. These techniques make children believe that new foods are undesirable.

Never use food as a punishment or reward. Withholding food can make children anxious that they will not get enough food, thus causing overeating. Using foods like sweets or special treats as a reward teaches children that some foods are better or more valuable than others.

Respect and value cultural eating differences. Introduce children to foods from different cultures. Encourage children and families to share stories about their various cultures.

Extension.org

Get children excited about eating smart and moving more!



Need assistance with bringing healthy messages to the children in your center? Call Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Liberty County and speak with Mrs. Grace! She will bring fun circle time lessons to your classroom! Some of the lessons include a short food demo and snack!

Cost: FREE

Monthly Lessons Available!

For more information call (936)334-3230

Free nutrition classes to help adults learn the basics can be coordinated for parents & staff too!

Enrolling a Child with Special Needs Continued...

Include: 1) important places, such as the bathroom and the place where lunch is served; 2) important people that the child will see every day; and 3) the most common toys, equipment, and activities, especially those that parents indicate are favorites.

Give the child “practice” in the new environment. Encourage the family to visit the school at least twice, first when there are fewer children present and play is unstructured and again when the day is in “full swing.”

Preparing the parents

- Be sure to let parents know that you have an open-door policy and that they are welcome to visit any time. Make sure they have copies of the daily schedule, the parent policy handbook, and any other documents that will help them know what to expect. If at all possible, give these to the parents far enough in advance that they will have time to discuss any concerns, questions, or issues with you before the child starts.

Negotiate with parents ahead of time a strategy for easing

the child into the new environment. Depending on the needs of the child and the availability of a parent, encourage a “graduated” entry. One option is to start the child with a shorter day and gradually increase to the full time. Another option is to start with the parent staying for the entire day and then gradually decreasing the amount of time the parent spends there.

Preparing the other



children

- If the child has a disability that children will readily notice, consider asking one of the parents to come to the school *without* the child to “introduce” her to the other children with photos or videos. When children see this new child in photos or videos, they will see not only the ways that her disability or delay makes her different but also the many ways that she is

similar to them. Give the children the opportunity to ask any questions about the new child without her there.

If the parents are not able to come talk to the children, ask if they would provide a photo album or share a list of some of the child's favorites (favorite food, song, color, toy, etc.) that you can use in [talking to the children](#). Ask parents to share with you anything that they would like the children and staff to know about their child.

- You can also share a children's book or two about starting a new school and encourage them to think about how the new child might feel and what they could do to help the child feel welcome. Children love to be given the opportunity to help and will usually step up to the challenge when we communicate the message that we believe they are capable of it.

In addition to preparing the *people* involved, you'll also need to think about ways that you may need to adapt the [environment and activities](#) for this child. All this preparation will go a long way toward lowering the fear and anxiety for everyone. Including children with special needs can be challenging at times but can also provide the most amazing, joyful experiences for everyone!

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Ways Child Care Providers Can Prepare for Enrolling a Child with Special Needs

Starting a new school is a BIG event, and not just for the child! Especially for very young children, starting a new child care program is both exciting and worrisome for children and parents, and even child care providers! And this is especially true for children who have been identified as having a disability or special learning need.

If you are a family child care provider, an early childhood teacher, or a child care program administrator, here are some suggestions for specific, practical things that you can do to prepare the family and yourself for enrollment of a child who has special needs. With preparation, you can help the transition into your program go more smoothly for everyone.

Preparing yourself

Learn as much as you can about the child's specific special need and about his ability to manage everyday tasks or situations that are common in your child care program. Parents will be your most important source of information, but you'll also want to take the time to learn more about the special need from trustworthy information sources, such as the "[Learn the signs. Act early.](#)" site of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- If you are part of a child care center, have honest dialogue among staff about concerns and needs. Seek

out resources, professional development opportunities, and support services in the community to increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence in working with this child and family.

- Make every effort to visit the family's home at least once before the child starts. Meeting him in his own comfortable, familiar space will give you a much better picture of him at his best. You'll be more likely to hear open, honest communication from parents when they are in their own home as well.



Be sure that you obtain a copy of the child's [IFSP or IEP](#), if the family has one. If you are not familiar with the IFSP/IEP requirements or processes or with your role and responsibility as the child's teacher/caregiver, be sure that you learn from the family, a previous program, or an early intervention or special

education service provider in your area. For more information, see [What Do Child Care Providers Need to Know about IEPs and IFSPs?](#)

Preparing the child

The following suggestions would be most appropriate for children who are developmentally within the preschool age range, but they can be adapted.

- Encourage parents to talk *positively* about starting a new child care program but also to allow the child to talk openly about *fears or worries*. Children's books about starting a new school can be a big help for parents in getting a conversation started.
- Suggest to parents that they count down with the child by creating a paper chain with just enough "links" to equal the days until start day. Make it part of the daily routine to have the child tear off the link for that day, then count how many days/links are left. This concrete representation of time will help many children feel less anxious and more excited.
- Create a photo album or video featuring the child care environment and give it to the family a few weeks in advance of starting.

Gardening App taps kids interest in Technology!

A new electronic game from UNC-TV and North Carolina Cooperative Extension is designed to get kids interested in spending time outdoors growing their own fruits & vegetables.

It's the first-ever mobile gaming application for kids released by UNC-TV, North Carolina's statewide public television network.

"Roo's Fabulous Edible Garden" encourages kids to learn more about what it takes to grow a garden.

Made for the iPhone and iPad, "Read-a-Roo's Fabulous Edible Garden" allows kids to grow their own virtual gardens and, along the way, learn how to grow, harvest and cook a variety of real plants and vegetables.



Using the app, kids start creating their virtual gardens by raking out the soil to prepare for planting, then they plant seeds, water and weed their gardens and remove harmful bugs. Later, game players can harvest their virtual crops and find easy recipes to make tasty snacks out of fresh fruits and vegetables

The game, geared for kids in grades 1 to 3, is available for free download at <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/id516395967>.

Planning Creative Art Activities for Multi-age Groups

Many child care providers work with mixed-age groups that include children of many different ages. Planning your child care curriculum to include creative art activities that are appropriate (and safe) for infants through school-agers can be challenging. Here are some tips for child care providers to choose creative art activities for multi-age groups.

- **Choose materials that appeal to different ages.** Activities such as painting, drawing, and working with play dough are art activities that children of all ages can enjoy. Try using materials such as safe, non-toxic play dough; finger paint and large pieces of paper; large crayons and large sheets of paper; soap bubbles; chalk on different kinds of paper; and markers on aluminum foil.
- **Encourage age-appropriate exploration.** Children of different ages may enjoy using certain art materials in very different ways. Infants and young toddlers may simply scribble with a crayon on a large sheet of paper. Preschoolers may use that same crayon and paper to practice drawing shapes or draw simple objects. Older children may create an elaborate picture.

- **Choose materials that are safe for all ages.** Young children are likely to put things in their mouths, so make sure all art materials are non-toxic and safe for different ages.
- **Supervise well.** Remember that young children are not good at sharing materials. The child care provider may need to sit at the table with children to ensure that the activity is well-supervised.
- **Create time or space for "big kid" art.** Preschoolers and school-age children need changes to work with more complex materials that are not appropriate for infants and toddlers. Set aside a special area for older children to create art, or plan art activities for older children while younger ones are eating or napping.



Talking with Babies in Child Care

Child care providers sometime feel shy about talking with babies, because they think the babies don't understand what you are saying. But brain research tells us that talking with babies is important. Talking with babies helps them to learn a great deal about language and communication, even before they are old enough to understand the meaning of the words you say.

One of the easiest ways to talk with babies in child care is to build conversation with babies into your child care routines. Talk with babies while changing their diapers, while feeding with them, and while settling them down for a nap. Use language to encourage them during playtime. Make conversations warm and pleasant.

YOU'RE TEACHING THE BABY THE PLEASURE OF INTERACTING WITH OTHERS.



Here are some ways that infant caregivers can make the most of conversations with infants in your child care program.

- **Talk about actions as children are doing them.** Use words to describe what the baby is doing, such as climbing, crawling, pushing, sliding, filling, dumping, throwing, catching, kicking, bouncing, sliding. "You are pushing the wagon. It's hard. The wagon is heavy."
- **Put feelings into words.** When children cry, fight, become frustrated, or jump with joy, these are great times to teach them. By describing their feelings with words, you help children make sense of their feelings and learn how to talk about their feelings.
- **Help babies do what they want to do safely.** Watch what a baby wants to do. Help the baby to do it for herself if it is safe. You can say, "You want the ball that is under the crib. You can get it all by yourself. Try reaching with your arm."
- **Build secure relationships with each child in your care.** The best way to do this is to respond to the child's cues. Even though they can't talk yet, babies have many ways of telling you what they need. Children feel safer and more secure when caregivers learn to read these signals and respond quickly to the messages sent by the children.



Connect with Experts from Universities across the country! Visit extension.org!

Why Read to Infants Before They Can Talk

It may seem that very young children don't understand what you're saying, but in important ways they do. Talking, singing, and reading to your child are not only important for brain development but a wonderful opportunity for bonding with your child. When babies hear you say words over and over, more speech and language connections develop.

You can read picture books and stories to very young children, even to infants. By about six months, infants show their excitement by widening their eyes and moving their arms and legs when looking at a book with pictures of babies or other familiar objects. Read stories in a way that encourages older babies and toddlers to participate—by answering your questions, pointing out what they see in a picture book, telling you what they think will happen next in the story, and repeating rhymes and refrains. Telling the same stories and singing the same songs over and over may feel boring to you but not to children.



Reading with Babies and Toddlers

For infants and toddlers, sharing a book is a wonderful way to build a warm, secure relationship between child and teacher. Snuggling together while reading a good book is a wonderful way to share one-on-one time. Here are some ways to make sure your reading time fits the needs and abilities of very young children.

- Find a quiet place to snuggle up and read to infants and toddlers.
 - Expect babies to touch, feel and taste books while reading; this is how they learn.
 - Let babies and toddlers try to turn the pages with your help.
 - Clean books often, especially when children place them in their mouths.
 - Talk about the pictures in the book. Name objects, colors and actions.
 - Encourage children to repeat the words you say when you are reading aloud.
 - Read for a few minutes, several times during the day. Have books available and they will want you to read many times.
 - Follow the child's interest. Don't be surprised if babies and toddlers do not sit still for a whole book.
 - Calm babies with nursery rhymes and songs.
- Read books before rest or nap time to help children relax and go to sleep.