

Families Matter

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STEM APPS



FOR THE CLASSROOM

Digital Divide & Conquer

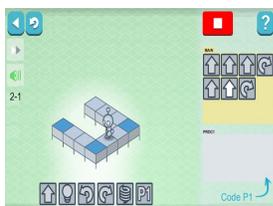
STEM is everywhere these days...YES! If you're looking (and I hope you are) to add more STEM activities to your classroom, check out some of my favorite apps to use in the classroom.

Monster Physics lets the user build and design working machines of all shapes and sizes, then test out their designs. "Inventing" is the key word and it gives you lots of items to build with. There's also missions to go on with hands-on feel while learning and following tutorials. This is a must have for kids that like to build.



Project Noah allows you to capture nature in your surroundings and share it with others around the world. Users become scientists as they take photos of plants and animals, which can then be uploaded to the app for others to see and identify. Think of it as a Pinterest for nature. It's simple to use and great for individual users or an entire classroom. Besides the photos (known as spotting), there are missions and field guides for users to use and participate in.

Lightbot Hour is all about coding that plays as a game, giving students an introduction into programming. The game pushes kids to think procedurally and logically when solving each stage. This game can be rigorous, but it's effective in teaching kids to think differently.



Google Earth is a classic, but it cannot be overlooked. As years have passed, I kind of get the feeling that map skills and geography are lacking in school. Part of the reason is because our technology has made it so easy for us to travel from place to place without really knowing where we're going (and this is not a complaint). Google Earth changes all that. The students need to use it and dig into it. In fact, we all need to use it.

Your kids might be addicted, but you still can't go wrong with **Minecraft**. I'm not talking absolute free reign (in school), but give kids parameters. Tell them they must perform tasks like building a house, designing a railroad, or even building a zoo. If you have multiple devices you can ask students to work collaboratively on projects. I sound like a broken record, but with Minecraft—there are endless possibilities. Just watch out for the zombies.

Angry Birds is another game that fits nicely into STEM. I know, you might not want your students playing games, but use Angry Birds as an opportunity to take the game skills (problem solving and building/design) and create their own versions in real life. Allow the students to turn their game into real world puzzles by designing levels, focusing on architecture and engineering.

This is just a small sampling of apps that can be used to promote a STEM environment in your classroom or with you kids (student).

-Matt

<http://digitaldivideandconquer.blogspot.com/2016/06/stem-apps-for-classroom.html>

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Upcoming Events Inside

I am an
**EARLY
CHILDHOOD
PROFESSIONAL,
not a
babysitter.
I NEVER
once sat
on a baby!**

NCaeyc
All Approved by the
Education of Young Children

Alexis Cordova, M.S.

County Extension Agent

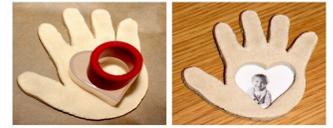
Family & Consumer Sciences

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**FAMILY &
CONSUMER
SCIENCES**
Creating Healthy & Sustainable Families

CRAFT CORNER

February



Handprint Frames



March



beaded shamrocks

April



How to Help Your Children Understand Fairness

1. Fairness is based on need



Talk to your children about people's varying needs. Since everyone's needs are different, fairness doesn't always mean "the same."

2. Fairness is based on desire

Everyone likes different activities, foods, games, colors and books. So you might say, "Imagine that you love to jump rope. Your brother, on the other hand, doesn't care for jumping rope. To make everything fair, should I make sure you have the same amount of time and opportunity to jump rope each day?" Fairness is partly based on desire.



3. Fairness is based on merit

Everyone puts in various amounts of effort. Some people work hard and others don't work very hard at all. Since everyone puts in varying amount of work, fairness does not always mean "the same."



4. Fairness is based on appropriateness

Depending on age, experience and ability, what's fair may change. You might say, "If you know how to ride your bike and your baby sister is too little to ride, should both be given a bike for your birthday?" Or, "If your little brother gets scared easily and you love scary stories, should you both be given the same books to read?" That wouldn't be appropriate. Fairness does not always mean the same!

For more powerful parenting tips, visit DrRobynSilverman.com

Children are great imitators. So give them something great to imitate.

Parenting Secret Mission

Wait 17 seconds.

Today when your child is facing a difficulty and you're tempted to jump in and save them, wait.

Give them time to work through the frustration and build resiliency.

Allow them the possibility of their own victory.

TOP SECRET
creativewithkids.com

Successful Sharing at Child Care

This may be a familiar scenario at your childcare center:

A child brings in his favorite toy on a day when everyone can bring a favorite toy; however, he does not want to share his toy with the other children. What should have been a treat turns into a very unpleasant situation. How could the unhappiness and disruption caused by this situation have been prevented?

A recent interview with Laura Calvin, director of the St. Thomas Early Learning Center (ELC) in College Station, Texas, which serves children ages 3 through first grade, offers a developmental approach to "sharing" in the classroom that is easily adaptable to other types of childcare settings. Mrs. Calvin notes that although sharing can be difficult in the preschool years, she considers it an essential part of the curriculum and sees sharing as an important part of the child developing a sense of ownership of the classroom. This center's protocol for handling "sharing" is described below.

St. Thomas ELC's handbook outlines its sharing policy—"no toys at school." However, Mrs. Calvin notes, "You are always going to have toys brought in anyway!" Many preschoolers find leaving a treasured toy at home extremely difficult. Rather than seeing this as a policy failure, this process can be viewed as a learning curve for a difficult task. By honoring an unusual rock, a beautiful fall leaf, or a bird feather, aesthetic values are encouraged.

"Three year olds have the most difficulty with sharing." According to Mrs. Calvin, the child's age determines his ability to share possessions with others without feeling distress. Sharing in the three-year-old classroom is a daily routine that includes the following steps:

- The item stays in the child's backpack until sharing time, which is at the end of day.
- The child brings the item to the circle and holds it for an entire time they are sharing.
- The children are dismissed without ever having to surrender the item.

"By pre-kindergarten, children are ready for a sharing basket." A sharing basket is placed by the front door, and children add their items to

the basket as they enter. The sharing circle is conducted in the following way:

- The items stay in sharing basket until circle.
- The teacher removes items from basket and asks the child to tell about it.
- The item is passed around (if not too fragile) or held by the teacher for children to touch.
- The item then goes into the child's backpack or cubby for the remainder of the day.

Kindergarteners are assigned a sharing day, which teaches children to remember when they are responsible to bring in their items for sharing. During sharing time:

- Kindergarteners build communication skills.
- Shy children learn to respond to questions in a group.
- Group members are asked, "Do you have any questions or comments?" The other children are allowed up to three questions or comments, which center around the child who has shared—not their own related (or unrelated!) experiences. This way, they learn to sharpen their abilities to gain relevant information when listening to others.

"First graders are usually able to share items freely for classroom use." Sharing can be incorporated into the school day in the following ways:

- Items such as books, foreign coins, and other cultural objects add to the learning experience.
- A special shelf is provided for items to be looked at and handled.
- Items can be incorporated into the curriculum. For example, when the curriculum centers on bears, the first graders bring in a teddy bear for a teddy bear's picnic! What a photo opportunity!

"Sharing is a developmental process that is highly individualized, and each child will learn to share at his own pace," Mrs. Calvin notes. This type of developmental approach to sharing allows teachers to include sharing time in a way that is most beneficial to the child and the class. When sharing is approached in such a way as to not overly challenge the child, it can become a pleasant and productive portion of the school routine.

By Laura Strawn, MA, RN

Laura Strawn is a Master's Level Psychologist and Extension Associate at Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.



Reducing Contagious Illness in the Child Care Setting

Young children get sick. It's that simple. "A child's immunity improves with time. School-age children gradually become less prone to common illnesses and recover more quickly from the diseases they do catch" (Mayo Clinic, 2006). "Infants and young children who spend time in group child care settings generally have a higher number of illnesses than children kept at home. Frequently, those caring for young children experience increased illnesses as well" (ARCH National Respite Network, 1996).

Childhood illness may not affect a family until a child starts child care or school. After that, it may seem to the family that the child is sick all the time. "The pattern is normal as [the] child builds a robust immune system. Resistance to infection develops only after exposure to a multitude of germs. Young children in large groups are breeding grounds for the organisms that cause illness. Little hands rub drippy noses and then transfer infectious agents to other children or to shared toys" (Mayo Clinic, 2006). Children cough and sneeze, releasing infectious agents into the air and onto other children and shared items that may be mouthed or touched and transferred to the mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth, genitals) of another child. Not only can these infectious agents spread from child to child but from child to provider, among providers, and from provider to child (e.g., when changing a diaper of one child and then diapering or wiping the nose of another child without taking appropriate precautions).

All child care providers should learn and use health precautions to prevent or reduce illness. Since some illnesses are contagious even before symptoms appear, care providers need to be aware of how diseases are communicated among children and between children and providers. "By always observing caution, providers can do much to prevent the spread of disease" (ARCH National Respite Network, 1996).



Since some illnesses are contagious even before symptoms appear, care providers need to be aware of how diseases are communicated among children and between children and providers.

Common Types of Communicable Diseases

The terms communicable disease and infectious illness are used interchangeably and sometimes misunderstood. These terms simply mean that the illness is contagious or "catchable." "A communicable disease is any bacterial, viral, or parasitic infection in the body that can be spread from one individual to another" (ARCH National Respite Network, 1996). Communicable or infectious diseases can vary from the common cold and flu to more uncommon diseases like meningitis and hepatitis.

Currently, the top five infectious illnesses that keep children home from child care or school are:

1. **Colds**—More than 200 different viruses are known to cause the symptoms of the common cold. Some seldom produce serious illnesses. Others produce mild infections in adults but can precipitate severe lower respiratory infections in young children. Children have about 6-10 colds per year, while adults average about 2-4 per year (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, 2006).
2. **Gastroenteritis**— Commonly called "stomach flu," though not akin to the flu for which we can be vaccinated, gastroenteritis is characterized by vomiting and diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration, particularly in young children. Gastroenteritis can be caused by viral, bacterial, or parasitic infections; however, viral gastroenteritis is highly contagious and is responsible for the majority of outbreaks in developed countries (Cleveland Clinic Health Information Center, 2006).
3. **Ear Infection (otitis media)** - Respiratory illnesses, such as colds and allergies,

cause congestion, which may squeeze shut a child's eustachian tube—the tiny drainage pipe for the middle ear. Fluid trapped in the middle ear can become a breeding ground for viruses or bacteria (i.e., viral or bacterial ear infection, respectively) (Mayo Clinic, 2006).



4. **Pink eye (conjunctivitis)**—Pink eye can be a viral or bacterial infection that results

in inflammation of the clear membrane that covers the white part of the eye and lines the inner surface of the eyelids (Mayo Clinic, 2006).

5. **Sore throat**—Most sore throats are caused by viruses, but about 15 percent of children's sore throats are caused by streptococci—bacteria that cause strep throat. Fevers above 101 degrees F are common in strep throat, and swallowing can be so painful that the child may have difficulty eating (Mayo Clinic, 2006).

Other common illnesses in children are:

- **Chicken pox**—Itchy, fluid-filled blisters caused by a virus.
- **Ringworm**—Skin infection caused by a fungus (not by a worm).
- **Head lice**—Tiny insects that infest the hair of the scalp and sometimes eyebrows and eyelashes, resulting in intense itching and sometimes red bumps that become crusty and ooze.
- **Impetigo**—Skin disorder caused by bacterial infection and characterized by crusty skin lesions. Typically, the infection begins as a cluster of tiny blisters, followed by oozing and the formation of a thick, honey or brown-colored crust that is firmly stuck to the skin (U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health, 2006).



Source: Rice, C.A., and Pollard, J.M. (2006). Reducing Contagious Illness in the Child Care Setting: Taking Action for Yourself and Your Kids. *HealthHints*, Volume 10, Number 10.

Eating Your A, B, C's...

You don't need much of them, but you can't live without them. Vitamins are a group of 13 substances that the body needs. For the most part, you get vitamins and minerals from the food you eat.



Vitamin A is also called retinol. It is necessary for healthy vision and also helps create strong bones and teeth, as well as a strong immune system.



Vitamin B

is a group of vitamins that help the body turn food into energy. They are also needed to make red blood cells and the genetic materials DNA and RNA.



The vitamin B group includes:



- *B1 (thiamin)
- *B2 (riboflavin)
- *B3 (niacin)
- *B5 (pantothenic acid)
- *B6 (pyridoxine)
- *B9 (folic acid)
- *B12 (cobalamin)
- *BIOTIN

Vitamin D

is made by the body when it is exposed to the sun. The vitamin is also found in certain foods. Vitamin D helps the body absorb the mineral calcium. It also helps build strong bones and teeth.



Vitamin C

, also called ascorbic acid, is necessary for making collagen, which holds body cells together. It also aids in the healing of wounds and burns and helps build strong teeth and bones.



Vitamin E

helps maintain healthy red blood cells and muscle tissue.



Vitamin K

is necessary for blood to clot when you get a cut. Half of the vitamin comes from the food you eat; the other half is manufactured by bacteria in your intestines.



Making a Move on Movement

We know that getting children moving is important, but where do we begin? How often/long/hard should they exercise? What types of exercise should they do? How can children be motivated to want to exercise?

How often/long/hard should children exercise?



The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity recommends that adults get at least 30 minutes of moderate physical

activity on most days of the week, while children should aim for at least 60 minutes. The 60 minutes can be accumulated throughout the day (e.g., six 10-minute sessions, four 15-minute sessions, two 30-minute sessions, etc.). Physical activity should be built into regular routines and playtime for children. Additionally, physical activity should be done at an intensity that causes the child to breathe hard (mild discomfort), but not to the point of pain. Physical activity should be started gradually among normal, sedentary children. It is a good idea, however, to consult a doctor before beginning physical activity to rule out any medical condition or modification that should be considered.

What types of exercise should children do?

The answer to this question is three-fold...

1. Children should do any type of activity that causes their body to be in motion.
2. Children should do activities that are age appropriate.
3. Children should do activities they enjoy.

Activities that make the body move...

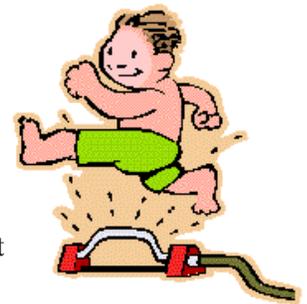
Children should be involved in a variety of activities that make their bodies move. In fact, a recent study suggests that variety may be a helpful tool in keeping kids motivated. Children can get physical activity through active play, leisure time activities, and even household chores.



Age-appropriate activities... Always consider the age-appropriateness of an activity. For instance, competitive sports are usually considered appropriate beginning between ages 8–12. Different children will be ready for new activities at different ages. Decisions should be based on the developmental level of each individual child. This is true for all age groups because children develop and mature at different rates.

Activities for enjoyment... We can spend so much time taking children to organized events that we forget that “active play” and free play can be some of the most beneficial ways to simply enjoy the goodness of feeling the body move while encouraging fitness. Whether guided or free, active play can keep children just as fit as organized programs and has the added advantage of disguising itself as play/fun rather than athletics/exercise for those who don't have a desire or readiness to participate in organized activities.

Additionally, active play is not limited to any age group or developmental level—even adults can participate. Choosing activities that include adults and children can provide you with an opportunity to model a physically active lifestyle, support behavior through action among children who are overweight, and increase chances that children will continue to maintain a physically active lifestyle. Children who see parents and adult caregivers who are physically active are more likely to be physically active.



When helping children make choices about enjoyable activities, also consider each child's personal needs and feelings. Fun, success, variety, freedom, family involvement, peer support, and enthusiastic leadership encourage and maintain participation. Failure, embarrassment, competition, boredom, regimentation, and injuries can discourage further participation.

Adapted from Rice, C.A., & Pollard, J.M. (Eds.) (September/October, 2003). Childhood Overweight: An Epidemic on the Rise. Part I: Physical Activity for Families. *HealthHints*, Vol. 7., No. 7. Available at http://fcs.tamu.edu/health/Health_Education_Rural_Outreach/index.php.

Creating a Child Care Environment that Fosters a Love for Reading

A child's potential for success in school begins long before he or she walks into a formal classroom. An easy activity that can be done with children, which is consistently linked with better school performance, is reading. Children who are read to frequently tend to become superior readers and also end up doing better in school than children who are read to infrequently.

Why is reading so beneficial to children? Educators have discovered that reading and storytelling stimulate the imagination, enhance children's vocabularies, introduce them to components of stories (e.g., characters, plot, action, and sequence), and provide them with information about the world surrounding them. Reading also tends to be an activity that is very child-centered and allows for warm and positive interaction between adult caregivers and children (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

What Can Be Done to Develop a Child's Interest in Reading?

A child's environment has a strong influence on his or her desire to learn.

Children who are exposed to books and reading from a very young age are more likely to express an interest in reading at a later stage. Obviously, parents are one of the primary influences on a child's desire to read; however, you can help in this process by creating a child care environment that fosters a love for books and reading. Following are some ideas for creating a "literacy-rich" environment and some practical tips for reading aloud to children.

Build up a large collection of children's books. Children will show more interest in reading if books are readily available. Begin collecting a variety of children's books, and keep them in a convenient place. Make sure the books you collect are developmentally appropriate for the children in your care. There are a

number of good resources to help you decide on which books to purchase or check out from the library, including your local librarian.

Set aside a special time for reading each day. Children will come to expect and look forward to the daily reading time if you follow a consistent schedule. For infants and toddlers, this may mean reading to them just prior to their naptime.

Make reading time a fun experience for you and the children. Reading can be fun, exciting, and educational. Select books that interest you and the children. The American Library Association (www.ala.org) maintains a list of award-winning children's books, including Caldecott (most distinguished American picture book for children) and Newbery (most distinguished contribution to American literature for children) Award winners.

Talk about books and reading with the children in your care. Children pick up on the things that are important to you. Talk about exciting children's books you think they would enjoy. Your enthusiasm for books and reading just might become contagious.

Visit the library. Public libraries are a great resource for children's print materials. Take children on a tour of the library. Check out some books, and allow children to explore this new and exciting place. Many libraries also have a designated "reading hour" in which children are invited to listen to a librarian or volunteer read selected children's books.

Make time for other non-reading activities that promote language and literacy development. Language and literacy development occurs not only through reading but also through activities such as singing, dramatic play, reciting nursery rhymes, storytelling, writing, and adult-child conversations.



Practical Tips for Reading Aloud to Children*

Infants

- Focus on the 3 R's: Rhythm, Rhyme, and Repetition.
- While reading a book, draw their attention to the picture on the left first, then to the right. Tap it as you say, "look."
- Name the objects in the picture, and wait for a reaction (e.g., laughing, gurgling, touching, etc.).

Toddlers

- Point occasionally to words. This helps toddlers begin to recognize letters and words.
- Have toddlers turn the pages and name the pictures.
- Ask "what" and "where" questions about details in the pictures (e.g., "What color is the ball?" or "Where is the square?").
- With favorite stories, pause and omit a word or phrase occasionally for toddlers to fill in. For example, "I'll huff and I'll puff..."

Preschoolers

- Move your finger under the words as you read aloud. This helps children connect printed words to spoken words.
- Point out the similarities in words when you can: *tri*-cycle, *tri*-angle, *tri*-pod. Can your preschoolers notice what these words have in common?
- Ask open-ended questions, such as "What do you think is going to happen next?"
- Use different voices for different characters.

Years of research have demonstrated that reading is critical to a child's language development... critical to a child's academic success... and critical to success in life. Take steps to create an environment that fosters a love for reading, and you will equip the children in your care with tools that will set the stage for life-long learning.

By Stephen Green, Ph.D.

* Adapted from Bower, D. (2001). *Tips for Parents: Creating Reading Readiness*. The University of Georgia, Cooperative Extension Service.

Keep Me Home If...



Seattle King County Department of Public Health

When Your Child is Sick:

1. Have plans for back up child care.
2. Tell your caregiver what is wrong with your child, even if your child stays home.



CLEAN UP SONG

Sung to: "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star"

★ Twinkle, twinkle little star, ★
time to clean up where you are.
Put the toys back in their place.
Keep a smile upon your face.
Twinkle, twinkle little star,
time to clean up where you are.

