



THE EARLY BIRD

A Newsletter for Families with Young Children

Getting Ready for Kindergarten

So, you can't believe it! Time has flown! It feels like your child was just born and now s/he is ready for Kindergarten! But are you?

You probably have lots of questions. Maybe you have lots of opinions. You wonder what choices there are? You might feel nervous and excited and you want to share all this with your child. Don't.

Although adults handle thinking and planning for events months ahead, our children can't. All these questions, concerns, and thoughts are for adults only. Save talking about Kindergarten with your child until the late spring.

By then most of your questions are answered, your concerns are quieted, and you also know where your child is going. But more importantly, your child can grasp the transition in store for them.

Going to Kindergarten is wonderful but it is a time of change and all change has its ups and downs. You are not alone in this transition. It is a collaboration between you and your community.

People who can help :

- Your child's preschool teacher
- The Early Childhood Coordinator
- Other parents, families, and friends
- Members of your local Parent's Center
- The school registrar of your district
- Local elementary schools

Remember to continue to cuddle, read, and play with your transitioning kindergarten. That is the best for everyone!



What Did You Do at Preschool Today?

It is difficult for young children to recall and describe what they did during the day. Children are active and busy for the entire time, but they sometimes lack the words to tell others about their activities—

or by the time you pick them up they have moved onto other things.

Parents of course, want to know about their child's day. Here are a few ideas to keep in mind when asking your child about his or her

activities.

- With most children, avoid general questions like "What happened at preschool today?"

(cont'd on page 2)

Northampton Early Childhood Office

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Welcome to...

Our seasonal newsletter geared toward parents, guardians and anyone who loves and cares for children

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Cooking with Kids

Each issue will have a fun cooking activity for you to try with your child. Cooking activities provide many learning opportunities.

What concepts to children learn by doing?

1. **Math examples:** add a teaspoon, choose 3 apples, or set out 4 plates.
2. **Science examples:** observe what happens when yeast rises or watch an avocado grow.
3. **Language & Literacy examples:** learn new words, "read" a recipe,

or listen to a story about cooking.

4. **Social & emotional development** examples: feel good about making a fruit salad, taking turns or spending time with a parent or friend.

Most of all...Cooking is FUN!!!

Grandma's Apple Sauce

Shopping List:

- apples
- cinnamon
- sugar or honey
- cup cake liners or muffin pan

* **For young children provide plastic knife or have adult do the cutting.**

Directions

1. Get one apple.
2. Cut it in half.
3. Cut out the seeds and core.
4. Chop into little pieces.
5. Count the pieces as you drop them into the cupcake liners or muffin tin.
6. Sprinkle with 1/2 teaspoon sugar or honey and 3 shakes of cinnamon.

Cont'd: What Did You Do at Preschool Today?

- Avoid questions that produce one-word responses. Ask specific questions such as:
 - "Who did you play with today?"
 - "What was in the art center today?"
 - "Tell me about this drawing in your backpack?"
- Try to keep informed about pre-

school events so you can ask specific questions. For example: "Did you get to go on a nature walk today, or was it too rainy?"



Play Help: Support For Play-Based Learning: More to Children's Block Play Than Meets the Eye

Here's the scene. Five of the child care children and I are on the floor in the block area. It's a carpeted area with lots of wooden blocks that are different sizes and shapes. And there are play accessory items, like plastic cars and animals. Jessica is the first to put an idea into action. She says she's building a farm. The others join

in, no formal invitation needed. As Jessica builds a house for the farm, the other children casually share suggestions: "We'll need a fence for the animals." And so Derek starts on the fence. I ask, "Where can we keep the animals when it's really cold weather?" Dickie grabs onto that idea and starts on a barn, complete with a

ramp, "So it will be easier for the animals to walk into." My cold weather question sparks an idea for Joanie, too. She suggests we have sheep on the farm so the farmers can make their own clothes from sheep's wool. Joanie sorts the plastic farm animals and puts the sheep in the fenced area Derek is building.

Cont'd Play Help: Block Play

I comment that I've always wanted to have a pond near my house, so I begin to build a

pond for ducks. As I build the pond Staley asks me how I'm going to make it look like real water. Then with an enthusiastic sparkle in her eye Staley solves the challenge herself, "Let's use a pie tin from the art area!" And the play goes on and on.

To a bystander, the children and I were just playing with blocks. But looking deeper

reveals a secret early childhood teachers have known a long time.

Blocks are much more than just fun; they're great teaching and learning tools, too. During the block play

experience I described above, the children learned:

- to be creative and put abstract ideas into action (a farm can be represented with blocks);
- to make logical connections (farm animals need fences and barns);
- to apply previously learned knowledge (a character in a story made

yarn from sheep's wool);

- to problem solve and be inventive (farm animals need a ramp to get into a barn more easily);
- to capitalize and build upon each other's work (my pond was better because Staley thought of symbolizing water with a pie tin);
- to be proud of industrious accomplishment; and
- to enjoy the process of learning — (of course, THEY thought they were just having

Play Help: A few more thoughts on blocks...

Providing opportunities for block play is a great way to build skills that we ordinarily think of as academic or school-related.

Blocks are especially beneficial when children are allowed to freely explore and manipulate the blocks in a variety of engaging ways.

- Math: shape, size, length, weight, and symmetry.
- Science : gravity, balance, stabil-
- Children's confidence: expands decision making, choices and self expression .
- Coordination: eyes and hands and small and large muscles work together, which in turn prepares kids for success in reading and writing.
- Language: vocabulary, and symbolic thought develops and increases.



Art: Making Music

Kids love music. Infants coo at lullabies, toddlers bang on pots and pans, and preschoolers sing and dance.

Children learn skill from making music. They experience the emotional effects of music by listening to and creating different kinds of music: soothing, exciting, and funny.

No need to buy instruments. You can

No need to buy instruments. You can make simple ones at home.

Tambourine: Take two sturdy paper plates. Put a small amount of dried beans or rice in one plate, then glue the plates together. Then



Music promotes brain development

Kazoo: Decorate a toilet paper tube with colored paper and crayon. Place a square of wax paper on one end and secure with a rubber band. Now blow through the open end while humming a tune!

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Early Childhood/CFCE Office: What We Do:

- Kindergarten Questions
- The Northampton Public School Preschool
- Information & Referrals for Childcare, Preschool Programs & Subsidies
- Developmental Screenings for Preschoolers
- Parent Workshops
- Information for Family Support Services, Referrals & Activities
- PCHP: A Toddler Home Visit Program

Family Centers

Northampton Parents Center

297 Main Street
Lower Level
Northampton, MA 01060
413.582.2636

Director: Swansea Benham
Bleicher

Open: Mon-Thurs. 9:30-11:30
www.northamptonparentscenter.org

Hadley Playgroup

Whole Children Inc.
41 Russell St.
Hadley, MA 01035

Open: Fridays 9:30-11:00
**For more information
please call: 413.587.1471**

Department of Early Educa- tion and Care (EEC)

Whether you are a parent, pro-
vider, educator or community
leader, you will find resources to
help you give the next generation
the strong foundation they will
need to thrive.

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