

Is Your Child Hooked on Praise?

December 2009

DEAR FAMILIES,

We all want children to feel good about themselves and to that end, parents often praise their offspring for everything from getting out of the bed in the morning to eating all of their peas. “Good job” can be heard in classrooms and homes alike as we seek to give children a healthy dose of self-esteem.

In a recent article in *Work & Family Life*, Richard Weissbourd cautions that too much of the wrong kind of praise can backfire and have negative impacts on children. When too much praise is given without much thought it can lead to children with an over-inflated sense of ego with fewer pro-social skills, who are overly competitive or self-conscious, or even children that become hooked on praise.

If a parent wants to help a child feel good about their accomplishments, there are a few things to remember about how to praise:

- Make sure that the child has actually done something that merits attention. Children tend to know when they have really done something special and when they are being “snowed” with false praise.
- Be specific in acknowledging a child’s accomplishment. “Wow Ashley, you worked really hard to get those shoes on your feet and you did it. You even got them on the right feet.” When it is non-specific, praise can lead to confusion and a sense of “everything I do must be awesome.”
- Be sincere in your praise. Nothing cuts more than a cursory glance and an “uh-huh, good job” as an adult shoves a piece of art into a backpack. If you do not have time, state that along with a promise. “We are in a hurry, so I can’t look at this now. I cannot wait for you to show it to me after karate.”

- Use comments to help children reflect on their own accomplishments. “The teacher said that you wrote a really nice story in your journal. What did you like best about it?” This sort of acknowledgement helps children learn to look inward for affirmation instead of always depending on other people.

Helping children feel good about themselves is a worthy family goal. When adults are more conscious about how and when they praise the children in their lives, they are more likely to raise children with a healthy and balanced sense of self.

Respectfully,
The Education Team



If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you’d like to see explored in future issues of this monthly newsletter, please email us at education@childtime.com. We would love to hear from you!

WONDERFUL MOMENTS OF UNINHIBITED MOVEMENT

When it’s cold outside children inevitably spend more time indoors and are less likely to be physically active. Want to get them moving again? Help them burn off a little energy by just using some imagination!

You have likely seen your child spontaneously dance around the living room or run from place to place. Cooler weather seems to bring out these strong movement impulses in children if they are stuck inside during the winter. Why not take these opportunities to direct and enhance your child’s motor skills and creativity?

Here are a couple of fun suggestions for you to do at home as a family. Just remember, use your imagination and let your children help:

1. Children love to be timed at everything, so why not time them as they do chores or help you out with something? All you need is a wristwatch with a second hand. With expression in your voice, say something like, “How long will it take you to run out to the mailbox, pick up the mail and come back? Ready, get set, go!”
2. If your child has been playing with toys and it is time to clean up say, “How long will it take you to pick up the toys and put them back where they belong? Ready, get set, go!” This is a fun way to teach children responsibility about picking up after

themselves. You might even choose to “race” your child to see how many toys each of you can pick up in a certain amount of time. Not only are you playing a collaborative game, but you are also teaching math skills as you count the items being put away.

3. Make a tambourine with your child.
 - Take a walk with your child outside and gather pebbles or anything else that will make noise when shaken.
 - Come back inside and get two paper plates. Invite your child to decorate the outside of the plates any way he wants.
 - Put your findings between the plates and staple all around the edges.
 - Invite your child to shake a body part and then stop when he hears the word “freeze!” Shake the tambourine while singing, “Shake, shake, shake Shake, shake, shake ... Freeze!” Repeat several times asking him to shake other parts of his body or his whole body.
 - Trade and let your child shake the tambourine and sing while you move.
4. Bring out an imaginary box and tell your child that there are elves inside. Explain that since the elves have never seen your house, you will have to take them on a tour. Each of you should reach inside the box and bring out an elf and place it on your bent elbow in front of your bodies. Walk through the house

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CHILDTIME’S THE EMPOWERED CHILD™ CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

The Empowered Child™ curriculum supports your child by developing the critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed to succeed in kindergarten, throughout elementary education and across a lifetime of learning. Childtime teachers plan lessons in many important academic disciplines, including:

READING & WRITING

Your child learns to love and understand the written word by journal-writing, experiencing wonderful books, storytelling and participating in regular large and small group activities that focus on letter shapes and sounds.

MATHEMATICS

By counting, patterning, sorting, classifying, estimating and predicting, your child develops foundational math skills and an appreciation for the world of numbers.

SCIENCE

Performing experiments, investigating properties and observing cause and effect help your child build scientific thinking skills and a connection with the natural world.

Through The Empowered Child curriculum, children feel valued for who they are. Students leave our program well-prepared for their future education, empowered to acquire the skills they will need to become responsible members of their community, creative problem solvers and life-long learners.

If you have questions about the Childtime classroom experience, please speak with your director or contact us at info@childtime.com.



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moving the elf to different parts of your body while you give your tour. Try putting your elf on your nose, your hip, and then one of your shoulders. Can you balance your elf on your knee while you walk and talk? When you are done with the tour, dance around the house with your elf on various body parts!

5. Teach your child about healthful foods and activities. The next time you hear "Mom, I'm hungry," ask your daughter to go to the refrigerator and make a healthy choice. Try saying, "You make the decision and I will time you. Ready, set, go!" She will love racing to the refrigerator, peering inside and seeing what choices she has. On days where she breaks her current record, do something special like adding dashes of cinnamon to her apple choice. This treat is fabulous for young children because cinnamon helps to boost the immune system and the apple is full of vitamins and fiber.

Now come up with some of your own ideas. Remember to enjoy these wonderful moments of uninhibited movements with your children.

EXTEND THE CHILDTIME EXPERIENCE INTO YOUR HOME

There are many ways to support your child's development at home. Here are some activities you can do together that will support your child's growth.

Infant – Sit on the floor facing your child. Take a favorite toy and drop it so it lands behind you, to the side of you or next to your child. Is your child able to find the toy?

Beginning Steps/Exploration Station – Gather some of your child's favorite stuffed animals. Hold one up and encourage her to move like that animal or make the animal's sound. Join in the fun.

Early Learners – Play some music and encourage your child to move only one body part (like his leg, arm or head) to the music.

Skill Builders/Kindergarten Connection – Roll up a pair of socks to make a ball. Toss the ball back and forth to your child and count how many times you can do this before dropping the ball. Move back two steps and continue tossing the ball back and forth. Does the number change at all?

Discovery Club – Have your child make a pose using their whole body. Count to 10 while they hold the pose. Now have them change their pose by moving only one body part. Continue changing body parts.



FOCUS ON LEARNING AT CHILDTIME®


When you pick up your child at the end of a long day, you may reflect on all of the events that have occurred since you last saw him. You had an important meeting which led to your plan getting approved, you caught up on your co-workers lives over lunch and you finished a stack of paperwork. As you realize everything you did, you may wonder what your child was up to all this time. To support you in understanding the various educational experiences your child has been involved with, your teacher displays children's work, provides you with a daily recap, and if your child is in Preschool or Pre-K, gives you a Documentation of Learning sheet on a regular basis.

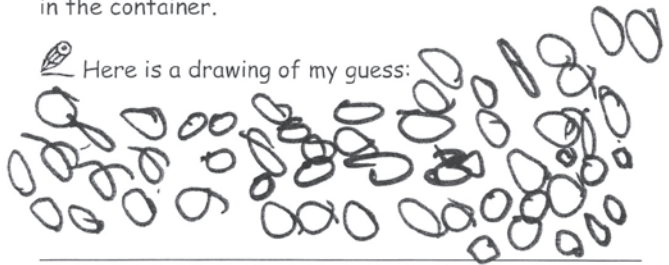
Documentation of Learning sheets are unique to The Empowered Child™ curriculum. They are different than worksheets because they ask your child to use higher levels of thinking to complete them. They also document an enriched educational experience where your child used a variety of different senses to learn about science, math, literacy, art or music. The Documentation of Learning sheets have a descriptive paragraph for you to understand what your child did and learned at the very top. The next time your teacher provides you with a Documentation of Learning sheet ask your child to tell you about the experience she participated in while completing it.



Documentation of Learning:
"How Many Pennies?"


Note to families:
In this activity your child used critical thinking to predict how many pennies were in an opaque container. After guessing, they counted how many pennies were actually inside the tub, to strengthen developing math skills. By tracing the pennies, they worked on one-to-one correspondence and fine motor skills.


Prediction: I guess that there are 100   in the container.

 Here is a drawing of my guess:



Result: There were actually 36   in the container.

 Here is a drawing of the result:



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4/23/08