

Adventure Mixed with Learning

May 2010

DEAR FAMILIES,

It finally appears that summer is almost here, so (hopefully) you are looking forward to many family adventures. While it is important to make time for fun for your child (especially unstructured fun), it is also important not to lose focus of their learning needs over the next two or three months.

Did you know that most children lose the equivalent of more than two months of learning during the summer? Experts attribute this loss to a lack of formalized learning activities, improper nutrition over the summer, and less structure (which often leads to less sleep). This “summer loss” can result in children being behind when they re-enter school.

There are a few things that you can do to lessen the impact of “summer loss” on your child:

- Read the article on critical thinking inside this newsletter. As you incorporate those ideas, you are giving your child the gift of higher-level thinking skills.
- Make sure that your child is eating regular and nutritious meals and that s/he is getting enough sleep during the summer. Both of these things are critical to brain development.

- Be physically active outdoors. Both exercise and regular contact with nature have been shown to improve children’s focus and thinking skills.
- Finally, enroll your child in programs that focus on mind, body and fun – like the ones we offer at Childtime. Our summer programs keep your child “empowered” while they explore all of the fun and excitement that summer has to offer.

Summer should be about lazy days of nothingness mixed with fun adventures of togetherness. However, while school may seem to be a distant thought, make sure that learning is still an integral part of your child’s summer pursuits.

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!

I WONDER WHY?

Do you want to improve your child’s performance in school and in life? Help her learn how to think critically. Children who think critically know “how” to think instead of “what” to think. The result? They can solve problems and make smart decisions. And they are able to figure out what they believe and how they should act. These are great tools for resisting peer pressure as they get older.

What is critical thinking? Critical thinking is the process of thinking clearly and logically. Children who think critically can see the whole picture and explore different viewpoints, alternatives and consequences. These skills allow them to carefully make a decision or solve a problem, and to understand why they reached a certain conclusion.

Here are some ways to help your child sharpen his or her critical thinking skills:

1. BE CURIOUS:

Encourage your child to ask lots of questions. Remember there is no such thing as a silly question. Thank your child for asking the question, and tell her about a time when you asked a question and found a new and surprising answer. Try this technique: when your child asks you a question, don’t be too quick to answer. Instead, take the time to ask her what she thinks. Letting your

child share her opinions gives her a chance to practice what she knows. And her ideas may just spark a wonderfully interesting conversation between the two of you.

2. KEEP AN OPEN MIND:

You can set a real life example by how you handle disagreements between your children or between your child and his friends. If you listen calmly to both sides of the story before taking action, you will show them the importance of hearing all the facts before reacting.

3. THINK THINGS THROUGH:

Help your child explore a problem carefully before deciding what to do. Also model this behavior for your child with your own choices. Example: your child wants to watch a movie on TV, but she is very tired. Suggest that she think about how she could see the movie and get the rest she so badly needs. Has this situation ever come up before? What did she do in the past? Did it work out well? Encourage your youngster to brainstorm some options. Have her consider the pluses and the minuses of her options. If she needs suggestions, throw out some of your own ideas like recording the movie and watching it the next morning.

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We make kids **summerSTRONG**.

Join us for our fresh, new *E.C.O. Force* Summer Camp — with up to 13 one-week sessions, where we’ll teach kids to enjoy the outdoors while protecting it, too.



- H2OMy Swimming Camp
- Incredible Bodies Sports Camp
- Again³ Nature Camp
- Join The Count Music Camp
- and environmentally friendly fun that will keep your child’s mind and body **summerSTRONG**

IT ONLY TAKES ONE GREAT EXPERIENCE TO INSPIRE YOUR CHILD FOR LIFE.



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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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Encourage your child to:

- Analyze situations and ask “I wonder why” questions. For example: on a walk, you both notice a patch of flowers growing in the middle of someone’s lawn. Have a discussion about how you think they got there. Ask, “I wonder why they are growing there?”
- Draw conclusions. For example: your child hears from someone that his best friend doesn’t like him anymore. Suggest that your child think about who told him this. Is that person a good friend? Is the best friend still being nice to him? If nothing has changed between them, the news may not be true.
- Make decisions. One way you can help your child boost his critical thinking skills is to let him make day-to-day decisions – about what to wear, which snacks to eat, or when to walk the dog that day with you.
- Provide reasons. Help your child think about reasons for doing, or not doing something before she expresses her opinion. As your child grows older, it will become even more important for her to be able to communicate her ideas so others will listen and understand. Thinking for herself will help her stick to her convictions or opinions and resist the temptation to “go along with the crowd.”

FOCUS ON LEARNING AT CHILDTIME®

When you walk into your child’s classroom, you may see a group of children busy creating or building block structures. At Childtime, we know that children learn best through hands-on experiences. Playing an active role in any learning process is truly the best way for all of us to learn. Not only does block play help teach children new skills, it also offers an almost infinite variety of opportunities for self-expression. You may see children creating amazing block patterns on the floor or engaging in unbelievable engineering feats while building a bridge.

Here are just some of the concepts your child is developing while playing with blocks:

- Generalizations about balance, gravity and space
- Observation skills, such as noticing similarities and differences while exploring the different shapes, sizes and colors of blocks
- Math and science concepts, such as one-to-one correspondence, geometry, invention and discovery
- Creativity as she uses her imagination
- Problem-solving skills and new vocabulary as she describes, builds and pretends
- Social and literacy skills like negotiation and compromise as she works with others to build and change collaborative inventions

The next time you are in a Childtime classroom, notice the pleasure that block play brings. It involves the whole person – muscle and senses, intellect and emotion, individual growth and social interaction.

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 – Get down on the floor on your hands and knees in front of your infant and start crawling. Turn around and call her name. Did she start to follow you?

Beginning Steps/Exploration Station – Place various sizes of canned food on the floor. Encourage your child to build with them.

Early Learners – Bring several of your child’s favorites toys outside along with a blanket. Let him decide where he wants to put the blanket and join him in playing with his toys in a different environment.

Skill Builders/Kindergarten Connection – Place several coins onto a paper plate. Encourage your child to flip them onto another plate using their thumb and first finger. Increase the distance between the paper plates on each try.

Discovery Club – Choose a starting point and an ending point somewhere in your house (or choose an area outside) and measure the distance by using different scales: your feet going heel to toe, hopping, leaping, etc. Then choose a different method and measure that way. Are they different? Ask your child to figure out which method was faster.

