

THE **CHILDTIME** CONNECTION

March 2011

Make Music a Part of Your Child's Life

The Benefits of Storytelling

Age-Appropriate Learning Activities for Your Family



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Bring the Learning Experience Home

Childtime® is committed to providing an enriching learning experience to every child in our care. But we also know how important it is for families to incorporate educational activities into their home as well. Here are some great things to do with children of all ages!

Infants

Play this fun hiding game anytime your baby is awake and active. Partially hide yourself behind a door or piece of furniture. Make sure part of your body is showing. Say the following poem to your baby, "Where am I? Where am I? Can you find me, can you find me? Where am I? Where am I? Oops, here I am." When you say the last line, if your baby has not found you, show yourself and laugh together.

Toddlers

Sit on the floor across from your child. Place a stuffed animal that has hands and feet on the floor between you. Show your child how to take the animal's arms and shake them up and down. Let your child do it. Name some different actions and encourage your child to do them using the animal's arms or feet. Some ideas include waving, clapping, moving the legs up and down, blowing a kiss, etc. Ask your child to come up with some ideas too.

Preschoolers/Pre-K

Place some chairs in a line in the middle of a room. Make sure there are no other items around the chairs to get in your way. Name an action and encourage your child to go around the chairs that way. Examples include walking, tip-toeing, hopping, skating, galloping, skipping, etc. Play some music and join your child as you move around the chairs together.

School-Agers

Ask your child to see how many times he can toss a coin into the air and catch it before it drops. Remind him that the coin needs to spin in the air without touching anything and he must catch it in the palm of his hand. Count along as your child tosses the coin in the air. Now it's your turn to toss it and see how many times you catch it before it drops. Play again and see if you can beat your own scores.

Storytelling is More Valuable Than Meets The Ear

Did you know that taking time to read and tell stories is extremely important for your child's cognitive development?

Benefits of Story Telling

- Children learn valuable social skills when adults take time to tell them stories. They learn how to listen as well as how to express questions. These are valuable tools that can be used throughout their time in school.
- Telling stories to children helps them make sense of the world around them. Lessons can be taught about right and wrong, or valuable skills can be learned from how a character resolved a conflict or took responsibility for something.
- Sharing stories with your child is time you get to spend together. Sharing knowledge, laughter, lessons and fun is always a memory building occasion.

How Should We Tell Stories?

- Include your child's name in the story. If you are remembering a happy family event, make sure you substitute your child's name in place of the real person who may have performed the great feat, or won the race for example.

- Remember children love to move, so have them act out the story after you tell it. For example, if you and your brother were in a dance contest, and your brother lost a shoe when he was twirling you around, encourage your child to act this out.
- Tell your child how your experience in the "good old days" relates to and has influenced their present circumstances. Is their neighborhood or life better, easier or safer now because of something you learned or helped to change? Keep it simple and succinct when you tell these kinds of stories.
- Finally, remember how you tell a story is almost as important as the story itself! Be animated. Vary your tone and volume. Above all, enjoy yourself and have fun!"

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 the monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at educationteam@learningcaregroup.com. We would love to hear from you.

Thinking with Sounds

Hundreds of years ago, French music historian Jules Combarieu said, "Music is the art of thinking with sounds." While this at one time just sounded like a beautiful sentiment, today many people are looking at music as a way to support children's emotional, language and cognitive development. There is still debate about the ability of music to directly impact IQ, but modern research and technology is showing a strong connection between music and learning.

In your child's classroom, we are committed to the exploration of music. Our teachers create an environment where children experience music, not only as a means to development, but simply for pure enjoyment. They also plan small and large group activities so children have opportunities to sing, hear different types of music, create and explore rhythms, and try on the role of music maker.

Here are some ways that you can make the world of music an integral part of your child's daily life.

- **Sing with your child:** Music has a calming effect on young children, especially when sung by the voice of a loved one. Calmer children are able to take in more about the world and better attend to tasks. Besides just being fun, singing with your child can have a positive impact on their mood and ability to focus.

Singing can also make the "uncomfortable" bearable, and even enjoyable. Take time to sing some favorite songs while waiting in line, sitting in the doctor's exam room, or during a long car ride home.

- **Explore different types of music:** For many adults, we are comfortable with the familiar. However, science shows that there are great benefits in exposing children to a variety of musical genres. Different types of music create diverse patterns of brain activity in young children. For example, the complexity of classical music can prime the brain for spatial reasoning. Music with strong beats can support children in making sense of patterns and other math concepts. Songs from cultures different from your own can help your child appreciate the ways that human beings are the same and different.

Do not limit yourself to one type of music, there is a whole world out there to explore; enter it together.

- **Play with music and sounds:** When specific information is associated with simple music, it appears that a learner is more likely to recall the information later. So have fun with the world of music. Set instructions to a beat to help children remember what they were supposed to do. Make up a song about your address or phone number so that it is easier to memorize. Create new ways to sing old songs and find ways to make sounds to go along with your singing. All of these simple tasks can make learning fun and easier for your child.

- **Investigate rhythms:** Research shows that recognizing, following and creating steady beats supports children in both math and literacy. Create clapping rhythms for your child to follow. Then, give your child the chance to create one for you to follow. Turn a song on the radio, stop and pat your knees to the beat. Use spoons, pans, or other household items to create your own rhythms. Once you are aware of it, you will find all sorts of ways to explore rhythms and beats.
- **Start instrument lessons:** Formal instruction in music has numerous benefits for young children. Music instruction appears to be correlated to advances in memory, as well as reading and math ability.

Take advantage of your school's partnership with TakeLessons™ to begin instrument lessons for your child. Simply schedule lessons online at www.takelessons.com/childtime or ask your director for the toll free number to speak with a TakeLessons' student counselor.

Along with the enjoyment and a sense of emotional well-being that comes from mastery of a complex skill, your child will benefit from the other developmental boosts music instruction provides.



TakeLessons



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*Available at participating locations only. Rules and restrictions apply. See school for 0-5-year-old and 6-12-year-old summer details and restrictions. Sessions, programs, field trips, and hours vary by school.



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Tell us what you like and what you don't, what you would like to see featured and how we can make it better. Just send your feedback to newsletter@childtime.com.

We value your feedback and thank you for your input!

Tax Savings for YOU!

Did you know that you may be eligible to reduce your tax bill by thousands of dollars this year? You can save up to:

- \$2,100 with the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit
- \$5,666 with the Earned Income Tax Credit
- \$800 with the Making Work Pay Credit
- \$1,000 for each of your children with the Child Tax Credit

Many states also have their own tax credits, helping you save even more money. To figure out which options are available to you, visit <http://www.nwlc.org/resource/state-tax-materials-english> and click the link to your state.

Need help completing your tax forms or figuring out which tax credits you can claim? Just call **1-800-TAX-1040** and the IRS will give you information on where you can get free assistance.