



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Nurturing Young Children's Curiosity and Creativity

Young children are naturally curious, self-motivated, sensory learners. They learn through exploration and discovery, using their five senses (seeing, hearing, tasting, touching and smelling) to make connections to the world.

Many young children are visual learners who like to observe and imitate those around them, especially their parents and other caregivers. They will mimic your movements, gestures, body language, tone of voice, and choice of words.

As they get older, children not only continue to be curious, observant learners, but they also grow into creative, expressive learners. They use their prior knowledge and are more able to express themselves through their words and actions. This is especially evident as they start to engage in pretend play or dramatic play, acting out different roles by pretending to be someone or something else. For example, mommy, daddy, or even a fire fighter!



Both curiosity and creativity are traits that play an important role in children's learning. This newsletter will talk about ways that you can encourage and support your child's curiosity and creativity. In addition, age-appropriate activities for your infant, toddler, and preschooler are given.

In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

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Infants

Babies are born learners and naturally curious about their surroundings. They may show this interest by following sounds, faces and interesting objects with their eyes and later reaching for and handling objects to figure out what they are and how they work. This eagerness to explore and discover is one of the foundations of early learning. Paying attention to and nurturing your child's curiosity is one of the most important ways you can support his learning.

As you interact with your baby, look for response cues such as cooing, gazing or babbling. These cues indicate that he is interested in his surroundings. Communicate back to him by



responding to him. Let him spend time with an item until he's no longer interested in it. You can prolong his interest by helping him interact with the item. You can encourage your child's curiosity by:

- ♥ Giving him a variety of items to play with (e.g., toys that make noise or items with different colors, shapes, or textures),
- ♥ Putting him in different positions (e.g., on his back, tummy, or sitting up), and talking to him about objects, sounds, and places.



Activity for Infants: *Body Instruments*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Show your infant that some of his body parts can be instruments—arms, hands, and feet. Demonstrate possible ways of producing sounds with his body: clapping hands and thighs with both hands; knocking on a table or on the floor with his fists; or kicking a mobile with his feet.
2. Interact with your child by sitting in front of him. Begin to clap your hands and say “Clap, clap, clap your hands.” Create your own rhythm or rhyme following his lead. Ask him to “Kick, kick, kick now, move your feet, kick...kick...kick.” As the both of you create sounds with your body instruments, vary it by saying, “Noisy claps or quiet claps.”

***Variation:** Create your own song and repeat it so he hears it over and over again. As you sing to your child, hold him in your arms and dance or sway.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

Toddlers are like little scientists. Their curiosity, combined with their increased mobility, leads them to “experiment” with (want to touch) just about everything they see to figure out what they are and how they work. When a toddler picks up a toy, pulls, pushes, turns it, or bangs it on the floor, he is conducting one of these experiments to see what will happen. As part of this experimenting and learning, he may use the knowledge gained and apply it to something different.

For example, when he sees that a ball moves when thrown, he may try to experiment with throwing other objects.



You can encourage your child’s curiosity and learning by providing a variety of exploration opportunities. The following are some activities that you can do together.

- ♥ Provide an assortment of toys and objects that work in different ways, such as ones that shake, pop-up, open and close, come apart, or nest/stack by size. Provide some initial guidance on how they work and then encourage him to try in his own way.
- ♥ Call his attention to how things change. For example, talk about the change that occurs when your child bathes: before he gets into the water his hair is dry, but when he puts his head under the water it becomes wet.

Activity for Toddlers: *Jello Paint*

Adapted from: <http://theimaginationtree.com/2013/07/edible-jello-finger-paints-recipe-babies.html>

Materials:

- Newspaper or sheeting to protect work surface
- Hot water
- Jello Boxes in a variety of colors/flavors
- Small open containers such as cupcake trays, baby food jars, or disposable cups
- Painting tool such as brushes, sponges, cotton balls, or Q-tips*



Since you will not use the entire packet of Jello, save the rest in a zip lock bag for the next paint session.

What to Do:

1. Line a low table or the floor with an old sheet or newspaper before you begin.
2. Fill several containers (depending on how many colors/flavors you are using) half way to the top with hot water (not boiling)
3. Add enough Jello to each container so that the consistency is like finger paint when stirred with a spoon.
4. When the paint cools, help your child use the tools to paint different shapes and lines onto his paper. Let him explore with his fingers to feel the texture if he wants to.
5. Stir the paint on occasion so that the mixture doesn’t harden.

***Note:** Be sure that the brushes or sponges being used for this exploration activity are new, as your child may put them in his mouth.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Preschoolers

The preschool years are a time when children start to use their imagination more. Their increasing ability to think in a more complex way, leads them to exciting new discoveries. With creativity, they show you who they are, how they feel, and how they think as they try to figure out things on their own. They pretend and act out different roles as a way of practicing and understanding what they have observed.

Creativity is not a finished product but a process of thinking and doing. If your child becomes frustrated with his first efforts, let him know that we all make mistakes and he will get better with practice. You can help keep your child's creative spirit alive by encouraging him to try different alternatives, opening his mind to new and different situations. Expose him to many experiences outside of the home such as museums, zoos, aquariums, specialty shops,

farms, live shows, etc. Encountering new sights, sounds, sensations, experiences, and people opens his mind to a bigger world.



Activities for Preschoolers: *Pantomime (Charades) For Kids*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Create a list of simple movement activities your child could act out. When making your list, be sure to include things that he likes as well as new things he can explore such as throwing a baseball, brushing your teeth, or eating a hotdog.
2. Sit in front of your child, facing him. Explain to your child that pantomiming or charades means that one person acts out a situation without using words and the other person has to guess what the other is doing.
3. Do a few practice rounds with your child so that he will understand how to do the activity. First, read the movement on this list to your child. Next, show him how to pantomime the movement. Have him copy what you did. Give him praise by clapping for him.
4. When he feels comfortable, read to him other movements and have him act them out. This will give him the opportunity to use his creativity. If your toddler gets the hang of it, have him create movements for you to follow.

***Variation:** You can make this a fun game and involve the entire family. Have your child perform for the family and have the rest of the family members guess what your child is pantomiming.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Learn through his senses
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Feel important and good about himself
- ♥ Develop a close bond with you

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language
- ♥ Learn to ask and answer questions

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination
- ♥ Develop his curiosity about how things work.

Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you do this recipe with your child, show him how to safely handle the items and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing any food.

Cheese Chip Salad in a Bag

Created by Kili, Aina, and Hanu Racoma

Ingredients:

- 1 head lettuce
- 1 bunch Romaine lettuce
- 1 tomato, chopped into cubes
- 1 bag cheese, Mexican blend
- ½ bottle Italian Lite Dressing
- ½ can of olives *optional
- ½ bag of cheese flavored tortilla chips
- 2 large gallon size re-sealable bags



Instructions:

1. Together, wash and tear the lettuce into small pieces (shreds).
2. Have your child put the lettuce, cheese, and olive in one of the large re-sealable bags to mix the ingredients together.
3. Pour the chips into the other re-sealable bag. Squeeze out the air and seal the bag shut.
4. Have your child crush the bag with his hands and shake 10 times, counting out loud. (Be careful not to let your child crush the chips too much or they will be too small.)
5. Just before you are ready to serve, combine the chips with the other ingredients into one bag. Have your child shake the bag 10 times, counting out loud.
6. Place half of the bottle of dressing into a small pitcher with a pouring spout and have your child pour that into the salad. Have your child toss ingredients and count to 10 once more, counting out loud.
7. Spoon out the salad into bowls and serve.

Community Resources

UNICEF Early Childhood Development

http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/PDFs/Activity_Guide_EnglishFINAL.pdf

This website provides a treasure box full of activities for your children. The emphasis is on times of stress and how important play is during this time. However, these activities can be used with children on a daily basis to foster developmental growth.

Bright Hub Education

<http://www.brighthouseeducation.com/infant-development-learning/53866-creative-activities-for-infants-four-ideas/>

This page has fun creative activities for infants through preschool age children. There are a lot of multisensory activities to engage your kinesthetic and visual learners through music, play, and crafts.



Suggested Books

Recommended by **Hawaii State Public Library** www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

Gallop!, Swing!, And Waddle! By Rufus Butler Seder

These books are a series of interactive books which will help your child's imagination come to life. Children will be engaged in the movement of animals as they flip through the pages. They will see dogs run, cats spring, eagles soar, and butterflies flutter.

Preschoolers

What Do You Do With an Idea by Kobi Yamada

This is an inspiring children's book of a young man who has an idea. At first it seems too big, odd, and difficult but something great happens throughout the story. It encourages children to dream big and welcome new ideas. You can use this book to teach resilience and creativity. Refer back to this story each time you start a new project together and together watch their ideas grow into wonderful masterpieces.

***Book Activity Extension:** Plant a flower together from a seed and watch it grow. Share with your child that it is like their idea, it starts off small but eventually comes into a beautiful creation.



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