



# Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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## 10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

## This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Individualize Care and Learning Activities

### The Building Blocks of Fine Motor Skills

How many times do you use your hands during the day? Easily more times than you can count on your ten fingers. Fine motor skills are used in many activities of daily living such as eating, dressing and playing. Fine motor skills involve the coordination of small muscle movements of the hands and fingers. These skills are one of the most important developmental activities that children learn as they support how children learn higher-level thinking skills.

Before fine motor skills develop, children need strong torso neck and shoulder muscles. They need good proximal (torso) stability for distal (arm & hand) mobility. In other words, if a child cannot maintain an upright standing or sitting position, she will struggle with using her hands (e.g., standing at an easel and painting, or sitting at a table and playing with manipulatives). Control of arm and hand movements develop from the shoulders out to the fingers, and from large, inaccurate movements to small, precise movements.

The development of fine motor skills is like building a house with blocks. The foundation consists of the following building blocks:

- stability
- sensation
- bilateral coordination

The next level supports the roof (self-care, play and school readiness) and consists of the following building blocks:

- dexterity
- visual-motor

In this newsletter, we will discuss four of the building blocks of fine motor skills as well as share activities that support their development at each age level- infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



# Stability

This refers to holding parts of the body steady as a base for movement to occur. It's the combination of strength and balance. A child's stability develops from top to bottom and from proximal to distal. Here are some activities that help children develop stability:

- **Infants** - Play on the floor together to help the infant develop her head, trunk and shoulder stability. During tummy time, place a baby safe mirror or bright toy directly in front of the infant to entice her to lift her head and trunk up while weightbearing through her arms and hands.
- **Toddlers** – Create opportunities for picking up, carrying and placing items at different heights. This helps to develop the toddler's body and shoulder stability while using both hands. Have the toddler help you with picking up and putting the toys or books back onto the shelf or up on a table.
- **Preschoolers** – Provide tools and objects to push and pull (e.g., a child-sized broom or rake). When sweeping or raking, the child's body and legs remain stable while the arms work. You could also allow the preschooler to use a carpet sweeper or cordless stick vacuum to help clean the floors after mealtime.



## Bilateral Coordination

This refers to using both hands or sides of the body together in an activity. It leads to the development of a dominant hand (e.g., becoming right or left-handed). A child's hand dominance can be seen as early as age 3, although it may not be firmly established until age 6 or 7. The dominant hand performs the task (e.g., using a pencil) while the non-dominant hand acts as the "stabilizer" (e.g., holding down the paper).

Here are some activities to support children's bilateral coordination:

- **Infants** – Provide objects that an infant can grasp in her hand and transfer to the other hand (e.g., a rattle). When an infant holds a block in each hand and bangs them together, or plays clapping games with you, this helps her learn to coordinate both sides of her body.
- **Toddlers** – Provide opportunities for the toddler to use one hand to hold while the other hand manipulates. For example, preparing a snack or meal together creates the opportunity for her to use one hand for scooping, pouring and stirring while her other hand holds the bowl steady.
- **Preschoolers** – Offer simple lacing and stringing activities. This allows the preschooler to experiment with her hand dominance. Usually, the dominant hand will hold the lace or string, while the other hand holds the lacing card or bead. As the child develops better control, she will become more consistent with which hand is the "doer" and which one is the "helper."

# Dexterity

This refers to making skillful, precise and efficient hand movements. Children's development of grasp and release, pinch and thumb control, finger coordination, and wrist movement contribute to dexterity. Here are some activities for helping children develop their dexterity:

- **Infants** – While in a supported sitting position (e.g., in a highchair with tray), provide the infant with toys and objects to dump, take-out and put in (e.g., a small plastic bowl and blocks).
- **Toddlers** – Snack time and meal time provide many opportunities for toddlers to practice their pinch and thumb control. Serve finger foods (e.g., pieces of fruit) and offer child-sized tongs for the toddler to use for serving herself.
- **Preschoolers** – Placing play materials in different containers with lids (e.g., snap or screw on) or bags with fasteners (e.g., zippers or buttons) will provide opportunities to practice opening/closing them as they play.

# Visual-Motor

This refers to using vision to guide hand movements. It's the coordination of the small muscle movements of the fingers and hand with eye movement and focus. Visual motor activities are usually in reference to paper related activities (e.g., drawing, writing, painting and cutting). Here are some activities

for helping children develop their visual motor skills:

- **Infants** – While lying on her back with her head in midline (the imaginary line in the middle of a person's body that divides left side from right side), encourage the infant to follow, grasp and reach for a bright colored toy suspended above her. While in supported sitting, place a rolling toy in front of the infant and encourage her to move it back and forth across her midline.
- **Toddlers** – Have a designated place where toddlers can experiment with drawing and painting materials to encourage their pre-printing skills (e.g., making random marks and strokes on the paper). Place paper at child's eye level on an easel or taped on the wall as it will require the hands to come up in front of the eyes which is beneficial when first learning how to direct a tool.
- **Preschoolers** – Model writing and drawing simple shapes. Seeing you write and draw is very motivating for preschoolers. Encourage the child to trace or copy the letters of her name or simple shapes using a variety of writing and drawing implements. As the child learns to hold a writing implement with her thumb and first two fingers (tripod grasp), introduce golf pencils or half-sized pencils which are easier for little fingers to grip and control versus jumbo pencils.



## Training Opportunity

### *Building Fine Motor Skills: A Whole Child Approach*

In this webinar, learn about fine motor development including the sub-skills of pencil grasp, efficient and inefficient pencil grasp types, scissor skill development as well as strategies and activities to be integrated across the curriculum. This online training offers a certificate for training hours.

<http://home.edweb.net/webinar/building-fine-motor-skills/>



## Featured Activity

### Whole Wheat Letter Pretzels

Adapted from: *Teaching Young Children/Preschool*



#### Ingredients:

- 1 tsp. instant yeast
- 1 Tb. honey
- 2½ – 3 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 cup milk, warmed
- 1 egg, whisked
- Kosher (coarse) salt

#### Directions

1. Combine first 5 ingredients in a large bowl. Stir with a wooden spoon until ingredients form a ball.
2. Sprinkle flour on a clean surface (e.g., large tray). Remove dough from bowl, place on tray, and knead for 5 minutes until dough has a smooth, satin-like texture.
3. Divide dough into 10 pieces and use hands to roll pieces into short logs. Cover the logs with a clean kitchen towel and let the dough rest for about 10 minutes.
- 4) Using both hands, gently pull each short log until it stretches to longer, thinner strips.
- 5) Help your child make the initials to her name on a non-stick cookie sheet. The strips will double in width while baking so allow enough space between the letters.
- 6) Use a pastry brush to brush the pretzel letters with the whisked egg. Then sprinkle tops with Kosher salt.
- 7) Bake in preheated 425 degrees oven for 15 minutes or until golden brown.

## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org)

### Infants and Toddlers

#### *Hand, Hand, Fingers, Thumb*

by Al Perkins

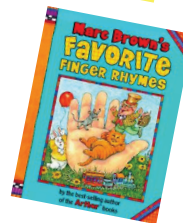
Fun illustrations and rhyming text describe what can be done on a drum with a hand, fingers and a thumb.



#### *Marc Brown's Favorite Finger Rhymes*

by Marc Brown

Marc Brown illustrates eight of his favorite finger rhymes including, "I'm a Little Teapot" and "Two Little Monkeys." Follow along the playful illustrations and diagrams.

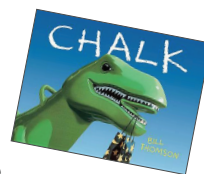


### Preschoolers

#### *Chalk*

by Bill Thomson

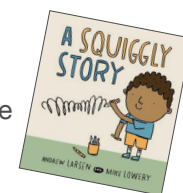
A wordless picture book story of three children who go to the park on a rainy day, find some chalk and draw pictures that come alive.



#### *A Squiggly Story*

by Andrew Larsen and Mike Lowery

With the help of his big sister, a young boy learns to write a story. He starts with a single letter then adds some lines and his story grows. He discovers that we all have what we need to write a perfect story with a beginning, middle and an end.



## Citations

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Zero to Three. (2017). *Learning to write and draw*. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/learning-to-write-and-draw/>



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