

HILLSBOROUGH PROVIDER'S

FALL 2014

FOCUS

a quarterly publication for Hillsborough early childhood care and education professionals

The Importance of
PLAY

**EVERYDAY
SCIENCE**

Not in the activity, but the
approach!

MINDFULNESS

How do we model this behavior to our
early learners?



**EARLY
LEARNING
COALITION**
OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

BUILDING OUR NATION'S FUTURE





WE ARE MOVING

After many wonderful years in historic Ybor City, we've outgrown our space! We're packing our boxes and moving our administrative offices to a new location. We will be closed to the public from Monday, August 25, 2014 to Friday, August 29, 2014. Our website, phones and staff email will be down from August 28 - September 1. But we'll return to full operations and regular business hours on:

SEPTEMBER 2, 2014

Our phone numbers and emails will remain the same but our new address will be

6800 N. Dale Mabry Highway, Suite 158

Tampa, FL 33614

PH (813) 515-2340 FAX (813) 435-2299

www.elchc.org



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The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County

The **Provider's Focus** is a quarterly publication of the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County. It is printed in limited quantities and distributed to readers at no charge. It is also available online at www.elchc.org under the Downloads tab.

SUBMITTING AN ARTICLE

If you would like to submit an article to be included in the Provider's Focus, listed below are the submission deadlines for the 2014-2015 publication year.

Articles should be typed, double spaced in 11 or 12 point Arial, Calibra or Times Roman font. Any accompanying photos or artwork should be in high resolution JPEG format (300 dpi) and sent as a separate attachment along with the article (*not inserted in the article*). Photo releases should accompany any photo submissions. Submit all to twhite@elchc.org by noted deadlines. Please note that submission does not guarantee publication.

Submission Deadline	For Issue	Will hit mailboxes:
October 8, 2014	Winter 2014 (Oct/Nov/Dec)	Mid November 2014
January 14, 2015	Spring 2015 (Jan/Feb/Mar)	Mid February 2015
April 8, 2015	Summer 2015 (Apr/May/Jun)	Mid May 2015
July 8, 2015	Fall 2015 (Jul/Aug/Sept)	Mid August 2015



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TEACHING MINDFULNESS



"...how do we become *mindful* so as to model this behavior to our early learners?"

LESSONS FROM PETE THE CAT & WISE OLD OWL

Pete the Cat, the lovable main character in *Pete the Cat and His Magic Sunglasses*, as told by authors Kimberly and James Dean, has the "blue cat blues" until his friend Toad gives him cool, blue, magic sunglasses with which to view the world. When Pete puts on the sunglasses, his world changes; suddenly, "the birds are singing; the sky is bright; the sun is shining and he is feeling ALRIGHT!" Crash; just as abruptly, the glasses fall off, crack, and Pete doesn't know what to do. He feels lost without his "magic" sunglasses as a crutch. Wise Old Owl tells Pete he can rely on himself to see the good in every day without his special sunglasses. When Pete looks around and finds that he can trust himself to see the world positively, and in a whole new way, he goes on his merry way and the world is right.

But this is an oversimplified view of a very important and difficult process in children's lives. While "looking on the bright side," as Wise Old Owl suggests, certainly helps to frame a more positive outlook on life, as parents and professionals, we have to help our growing children learn to center themselves, manage their emotions, develop perspective taking and trust themselves to keep balanced in a stressful and unsettling world.

This is a tall order and these are learned behaviors that are harder to master than just telling children to find the good in everyday situations. We have to give them real life tools, not just hand them rose, blue or other tinted spectacles. This seems overwhelming; how do we do this on top of our regular curriculum? The charming Pete the Cat book series provides a good discussion starter among professionals and with the

'Mindful' continued on page 8

The Importance of

*By Shabel Hastings
Early Childhood Council - Inclusion Support Services*

I'm sure it's happened a couple of times, a family is visiting and considering your center or family childcare home as a place of care for their child and they comment, "It looks like they are just playing?" It's at this moment, that you have a wonderful opportunity to share with families what play really is and the importance of it.

"**Play**" is actually a difficult word to simply define. In looking at the Webster's dictionary, you will find multiple definitions for this one word. While the word and its action may appear simple, play in the early childhood world is very complex. There are stages of play and different types of play that take place.

'Play' continued on page 12





EVERYDAY SCIENCE

By Karen Perkins, M.Ed.
COO, ELC of Hillsborough



Quick...take out a pencil and write down your favorite classroom activities. Let's see, if I were sharing my list you'd see dress-up and painting and dancing and singing and reading books, lots and lots of books. But I bet if I ask you what all my favorite classroom activities have to do with science there would probably be a long, long, long silence. Why...because most of us don't connect those activities to "science".

When reframing our thinking about science it's hard to beat this quote from Kathleen Conezio, and Lucia French:

"Many adults think of science as a discrete body of knowledge, for young children science is finding out about the everyday world that surrounds them. This is exactly what they are interested in doing, all day, every day. In the preschool classroom or in the university research laboratory, science is an active and open-ended search for new knowledge. It involves people working together in building theories, testing those theories, and then evaluating what worked, what didn't, and why."

(And here's the best part...)

"Science itself is not an activity, but an approach to doing an activity. This approach involves a process of inquiry – theorizing, hands-on investigation, and discussion."



So science isn't the activity. It isn't the textbook. It isn't the supplies. It's an approach. Science happens every day in every corner of a preschool classroom and in every inch of a preschooler's home. It's more about curiosity and discovery than about a set of facts to be learned. Science is the foundation of learning to learn.

So where's the Science?

Science can be found in everyday activities in homes and classrooms everywhere. Science is in the experience. It's in the connections. It can be found in a spirited classroom or home where we question and wonder aloud. Science lives in places where we observe, and discuss, and experiment, and apply. It's in the mindset, the approach to the world.

Science is found when a child practically empties the liquid soap dispenser when she washes her hands because she is fascinated by the way the soap feels or the way the pump works. It's at the easel when a child watches one color streaking across the page and then wonders what will happen when

another color is added.

It's in the block area when a teacher asks the children to tell her about what they've built, and then wonders aloud about what would happen if another block was added on top of the teetering tower. It's definitely there when we add that last block and observe the results.

It's in circle time when children ask what words mean, and when teachers take the time not just to explain but to have the children act it out. It's there when teachers read stories and ask what might happen next.

Science is in the kitchen when we make muffins with our kids and give them experience using measuring tools and wondering about the process of turning soggy batter into wonderful bread deliciousness.

It's in the backyard or park when we look closely at a roly-poly or earthworm with our children. Science is there when we wonder how they move.

Science offers an open invitation to each of us every single day...an invitation to wonder. When we incorporate a mindset of inquiry — asking, theorizing, experiencing, experimenting, observing, discussing — every aspect of every day can be filled with the magical wonder of science.

References and Resources

Ansberry, K. R., & Morgan, E. (2005). *Picture-perfect science lessons: Using children's books to guide inquiry*. Arlington, VA: NSTA Press.

Ashbrook, P. (2003). *Science is simple: over 250 activities for preschoolers*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

Conezio, K., & French, L. (2002). *Science in the preschool classroom: Capitalizing on children's fascination with the everyday world to foster language and literacy development*. *Young Children*, 57(5), 12–18. http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200209/PrinterFriendly_ScienceInThePreschoolClassroom.pdf

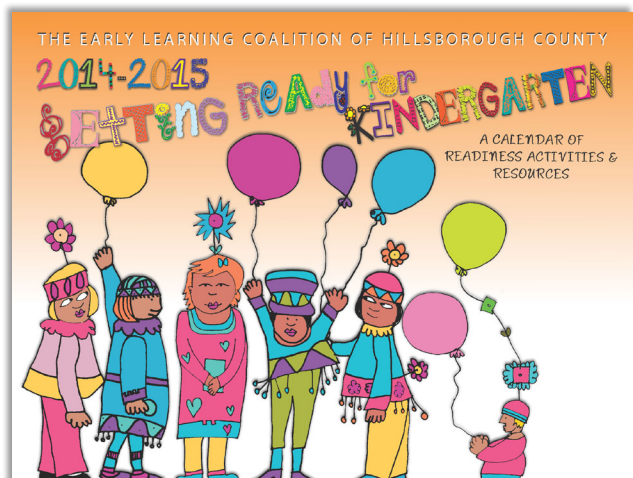
Worth, K., & Grollman, S. (2003). *Worms, shadows, and whirlpools: Science in the early childhood classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann



2014-2015 Kindergarten Readiness Calendar Available

It's finally here! Most of you wait all year for the Kindergarten Readiness Calendar and we're happy to say that it is now available for distribution. Many parents enrolled online this year and did not receive a calendar yet, so we'll be counting on providers to get this wonderful tool into the hands of our VPK and School Readiness parents.

You may pick them up at the Tampa Bay Institute for Early Childhood Professionals (IECP) and the ELCHC administrative office which is now located at 6800 N. Dale Mabry Hwy., Suite 158, Tampa, FL 33614.



Welcome Jennifer Nizer, New IECP Manager



We invite you all to stop by the Institute and meet Jennifer Nizer, the new manager of the IECP. Jennifer has 20 plus years of early childhood experience and prior to joining the IECP team was the Director of John Hopkins Bayview Child Development Center in Baltimore, Maryland. During her tenure as President of the Maryland State Child Care Association she was appointed by the governor of Maryland to the P20 Leadership Council and the State Early Childhood Advisory Council.

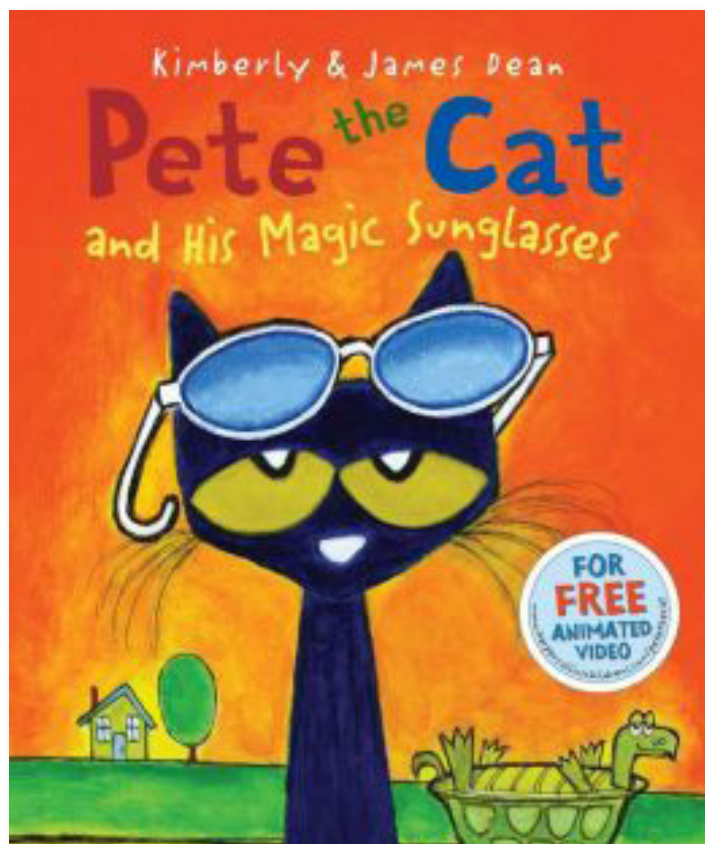
Jennifer will be taking over the day-to-day operations of the Institute and we're excited to have her! Stop in and talk with her about the IECP. She'd love to hear from you as she is in the process of planning big things for the Institute and its membership! You can reach her at (813) 280-0795 or by email at jnizer@iecptampa.com.

children we serve in our classrooms and their parents. We have to present the lessons of Pete the Cat daily in our classrooms by taking things one step further: being mindful ourselves and teaching mindfulness to our students. Like the detached and watchful Wise Old Owl, being mindful means being present, being still and aware of ourselves—our breathing, thoughts and body movements; being non-judgmental; patient. Mindfulness is embodied in Eastern culture, particularly Buddhism, and some of us already practice this idea through yoga and meditation. Mindfulness approaches have sprung up in preschools and elementary schools across the country. It is a movement. Why not try it at home in our classrooms?

So how do we become mindful so as to model this behavior to our early learners? There are several key elements which are familiar to all of us and if practiced daily, will help us begin to develop the ideal community of learners: organization of our lessons, classroom and classroom materials; leaving our own emotional baggage outside the classroom; taking a few minutes before the start of each day to center ourselves by breathing deeply and reflecting on our own emotions so we can control our reactions; and by visualizing different behavioral scenarios and practicing how we will cope with them. Additionally, there is no harm in giving ourselves a “time out” during the day so we can get centered again. Clearly, no one will learn in our classrooms if we are out of control and our students are out of control. Building a community of learners requires mutual respect, kindness, compassion, perspective taking and empathy from all members of the community. Practicing these strategies daily will encourage us to be present, like Wise Old Owl, in our classrooms.

Being an organized early childhood teacher is critical. How often are we thrown off guard when we breeze into the classroom unprepared for the day? Like Pete the Cat cracking his glasses, any shift in behavior or circumstances can upset everything. If we are prepared and have prepared our directors, assistants and volunteers, then there is one less problem with which to deal and routines can run smoothly despite a behavioral bump in the road. We are teaching our preschoolers to be citizens of their classroom even before we are engaging them with our curriculum so it is a given that we will have to step out of our classroom routines periodically to address behavioral situations which arise. Handling these situations while the rest of the students remain engaged with another professional, is key to maintaining a calm and appropriate classroom culture. Likewise, maintaining a neat, well labeled classroom with many “self-help” areas and materials of interest and teaching the children how to use these materials, will be instrumental in building the appropriate culture as well.

Many directors ask their staff to leave their emotional baggage at the door of the center and with good reason. As early childhood professionals, our emotional states can impair our good judgment and endanger children physically and emotionally. We can lash out at our children and we can fail to supervise and protect them when it's critical. Like Wise Old Owl in Pete the Cat



and His Magic Sunglasses, a certain amount of distance, patience and perspective taking is important for being able to see things “in a new way and to look for the good in every day.” Being able to focus on what we are experiencing emotionally and identify our feelings can help us control our reactions during the day. So aside from checking our “emotional baggage” at the front door, it’s also important to center ourselves and be aware of what emotional triggers might set us off that day. We have to take a few minutes before the start of the day to breathe, experience our emotions and put them in check. We are continuously modeling what we want our young citizens to emulate and as we know, they can pick up on our emotional state and mirror it right back to us with unpleasant consequences.

Another part of our mental preparation as teachers is to anticipate what might happen in the classroom among students or between particular students and us and visualize how we will take a calm, centered, non-judgmental, compassionate approach to these situations that will inevitably arise. Preparing strategies for handling these situations ahead of time will minimize our frustration, keep our own emotional responses at bay and allow us to function with a compassionate, kind and solid plan of action. We can spend more classroom time in the present, observing, listening and interacting with our students—like Wise Old Owl who helped Pete.

Lastly, get permission to take a “time out.” This technique can help you regroup if you’ve come unglued or give you an opportunity to gain perspective on a situation or behavior that is bothering you. You will have a quiet moment to consult yourself or others for greater perspective taking on a variety of situations.

As members of society and as early childhood educators, we may have been familiar with these Wise Old Owl strategies for promoting classroom organization and harmony but now there is growing evidence that if practiced every day, mindfulness promotes calmness, community and an ability to focus on learning. According to Megan Cowen, co-founder of the Oakland-based Mindful Schools Program, teaching mindfulness to young children involves teaching a life skill so applying the concept of mindfulness correctly is important. She defines it as creating awareness, which is the ability to pay attention to experiences through the senses and the mind. For example, having the children gently touch a classroom pet, first with eyes open and then with eyes closed, allows for a deep connection to that experience which is sensory, emotional and imaginative. It can promote a deep awareness of animals, what they are like and how we treat them. And since we know that children learn through their senses, we can get them to isolate and concentrate their senses on a variety of topics, including kindness and empathy for others in our classroom community.

Ms. Cowen also defines mindfulness as the skill of developing a neutral attitude while observing. Children can be taught to step back and refrain from labeling situations as good or bad. While struggling over a toy, teachers can ask the children to refrain from talking about who was in the right or in the wrong. Instead, we can move the discussion to a neutral, emotion-free, problem solving mode after students are calm.

Lastly, mindfulness according to Ms. Cowen, is described as a stillness of heart and mind, even if the body is moving. It is the idea of just being—breathing, body and mind. Mindfulness skills are hard to describe to children, so we as early childhood teachers can continue to do what we do best while developing a mindfulness framework within which to work every day.

Introducing these skills and practicing them daily can help our

children be fully present and focused learners. Teachers can begin each day with appropriate yoga stretches to help them and their children calm down, become aware of their bodies and breathing, focus on the task at hand and listen for directions. It can be a way to center everyone and set the tone for the day. Teachers can also encourage mindfulness at other transitional times like from active to quiet activities. It can also be a tool for getting children to focus on and talk about their emotions—what is it they are feeling and what are others feeling? While re-reading a familiar story, teachers can ask students to focus on what the characters are doing and feeling. They can use ideas from the story for guided imagery during a mindfulness session and peak the children's senses by having them smell or taste something from the story. By becoming more aware, children can begin to perspective take and feel empathy for others in the classroom.

Asking children to take a time out for a period of time that they choose can be an opportunity for them to get centered and focused. Teachers can help students view it as an opportunity to breathe and listen to their bodies, not a punishment. Once calm, they are ready to focus on the task of constructive problem solving.

So when Wise Old Owl told Pete the Cat he had the ability to see the day in a positive light, Wise Old Owl was right; Pete could rely on himself. It's up to us, as teachers, to help our students develop mindfulness by being mindful ourselves and offering mindfulness as an approach and framework in our classrooms. If we come to class prepared, centered and with a plan for helping our children to become self-aware, non-judgmental and good observers of themselves and others, then we have begun to create a caring community of learners who will become self-possessed and focused on the task of learning. They will also learn, like Pete, that they have control over their feelings and how they perceive the world at any moment in time.



A stuffed Pete the Cat.

Article by Lynn Mendelsohn, MA
Early Literacy Specialist, Hillsborough Community College
Early Literacy Matters (ELM)

RESOURCES:

Megan Cowen (May 13, 2010). *Tips for Teaching Mindfulness to Kids*. Greater Good The Science of a Meaningful Life. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/tips_for_teaching_mindfulness_to_kids

"Pete the Cat and His Magic Sunglasses" is available for check out at the Tampa Bay Institute for Early Childhood Professionals (IECP).

THE MORE WE GET TOGETHER

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INFANT TODDLER CIRCLE TIME

Article by **Elizabeth Appleton & Anne Wimmer**
Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support
Department of Child and Family Studies - College of Behavioral and Community Sciences
Florida Mental Health Institute - University of South Florida

are always on group time with children from 6 months through 2 years of age. Preparing ahead of time for circle is critical to its success. There are three key strategies that early educators can do prior to gathering to increase the likelihood of a smooth circle time. First, there should be a well thought out transition to circle time. Consider what has to be done before children make their way to the gathering area. Do they need to clean-up? Wash hands? Get their bottom buttons to sit on? If so, are the expectations clearly stated and reviewed prior to the transition? Pairing the transition steps with a visual or a verbal aid will help clarify the transition expectations. Children also need to

'Circle' continued on page 14



Once circle starts, the next critical task is to keep children engaged.



According to Mildred Parten (1932) there are 5 common stages of play that include solitary, spectator/onlooker, parallel, associative, and cooperative play. The stages of play vary according to where the child is developmentally. The chart below provides more detail on the age and stages of play young children go through in early childhood.

AGE	STAGE OF PLAY	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
0 - 2 Years	Solitary	Plays alone and does not interact with peers.
2 - 2 ½ Years	Spectator/Onlooker	Observes peers playing around him/her but does not join play.
2 ½ - 3 Years	Parallel	Plays next to other peers but does not interact in play. Play may be unrelated.
3 - 4 Years	Associative	Begins to mix in play with peers including similar materials and activities. A child in this stage may copy what the child next to them is doing. May have a preference for a play partner.
4 - 6 Years	Cooperative	Plays and interacts with other peers developing themes and goals in play. Role playing is designated in this stage.

Throughout the stages of play, there are different types of play a child can engage in at home and/or childcare environment. Functional, symbolic, constructive, and games with rules are different types of play that children engage in during early childhood. Functional play takes place during infancy in which an infant/toddler engages in repetitive behavior for cause and effect purposes. For example, shaking a rattle, splashing water, clapping, and dumping are play for enjoyment but also to see what will happen. Symbolic play also known as pretend play involves a child transforming an object or self into something else. Symbolic play also includes sociodramatic play. Sociodramatic play, also known as dramatic play is seen when children are playing "dress up" or other role playing games. Constructive play involves the use of objects or materials such as blocks or art to create or construct from their imagination. Finally, games with rules is a higher level of play in which rules are established and play is planned to achieve a goal.

While it is important to understand the stages and types of play, most importantly, is the understanding of **play as a tool to support child development**. It is imperative that children have an opportunity to play to develop language, fine motor, gross motor, cognitive, and social emotional skills. During block play a child has the opportunity to use critical thinking to design and plan a building as well as create patterns for development of early math skills. In the art center, children have the opportunity to use paintbrushes to hold and develop the muscles in their hands, needed to eventually support writing utensils for school. A glance in the house area can show multiple children using social emotional and problem solving skills to interact with their peers while engaging in a pretend meal. Outside on the playground or park a child is able to run, hop, balance, and have an awareness of their body in space to develop their large muscles and sensory skills. Throughout the various activities of play there are multiple opportunities for the use of language and expansion of vocabulary. Children in play are able to listen to conversations and participate in verbal interactions to label



Photo courtesy of D. McGerard

the things around them, talk about their feelings, wants, and needs.

Reviewing the stages of play, types of play, and development in play with families is very helpful to them in expanding their perception of play. Play is a young child's work and it is through this that they learn skills that will help them from Kindergarten to the workplace. Let us not forget that play is also fun and so is learning!

For more information about play see these references and resources:

Heidemann, Sandra & Hewitt, Deborah; 1992; Pathways to Play: Developing Play Skills in Young Children

<http://www.child-development-guide.com/stages-of-play-during-child-development.html>

There's a **BUZZ** About a NEW Creative Space for..... **EVERYONE!**



Have you ever wanted to experiment with 3D printing or Arduinos? Do you have a great idea for a video, but lack the camera, green screen or software to edit it? Interested in test driving a sewing machine? How about learning more about robotics or just want to meet up with like-minded DIY enthusiasts?

Well **THE HIVE**, at John F. Germany Public Library, will soon be the place to do all of those things and more! Billed as *'a place where your idea can come to life,'* THE HIVE will offer visitors an array of new and exciting equipment and resources that will get and keep your creative juices flowing.

Although not yet open to the public, there is a brewing excitement about this new and innovate space. THE HIVE has held some 'sneak peek' events throughout the summer and new equipment is arriving each day. Staff is working toward a grand opening event this fall with more information coming. So get your library cards ready so you can take advantage of this exciting new offering!

For more information about THE HIVE and its grand opening, contact the John F. Germany Public Library, 900 N. Ashley Drive, Tampa, FL 33602, (813) 273-3652.

A sample of what the 3D printer at THE HIVE can do! It took 8 hours to produce, in pieces, but imagine the possibilities! Wow!



know what is expected of them when they arrive to circle. This includes having clear expectations on where to sit and what to do while waiting for others to arrive. Clear expectations are also needed during circle time. One way to do this is by having a limited number of positively stated circle time rules, in a child-friendly manner (*see photo, top right*). The second strategy is to think through the materials needed during circle and to make sure all the materials are within reach prior to transitioning to circle. Hanging organizers, storage containers, or binders can be used to help store circle time materials. The last key strategy focuses on the relationships that early educators form with children. By incorporating what children like and need, while understanding how they react to different stimulus, will aid in conducting a circle time that engages infants and toddlers. Favorite songs with movement and repetition, fun materials, and age-appropriate activities can be used to capture the engagement of the majority of the class.

Once circle starts, the next critical task is to keep children engaged. The more engaged they are the less likely challenging behavior will occur. The first step to maintaining engagement is being aware of time and conducting a 3 to 10 minute circle. With such little time, early educators have to be intentional in how circle time is conducted. A large part of child engagement relies on the early educator's ability to encourage children to participate. There are a variety of ways this can be accomplished. The first is to give positive and descriptive praise to children who are participating. Make it a point to acknowledge children for actions that are more in depth than the typical comments associated with looking, listening, and sitting. For instance, instead of commenting on how well everyone is sitting; comment on how well a child sang the song, successfully named all the colors, or on their ability to match up feeling faces. For instance, the early educator could say, "Jordan, did a wonderful job matching all the feeling faces!". One of the best practices to ensure children will continue to use the desired skill is to give specific feedback linked to the desired behavior the early educator wants to see again. This type of acknowledgment requires early educators to create activities that will entice the class and then to publicly notice those who are engaged. One way to create

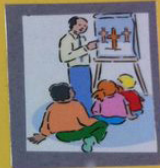
such enticement is by making circle time entertaining by using visuals, props, and age appropriate activities.

Consider finding new and exciting ways to do common circle time activities. Switch it up! One example could be to use visual cues and props while singing circle time songs. This could be as simple as finding items from around the classroom to bring into circle. Find a toy monkey for singing the "Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed" or use a picture of a frog for the song "Five Little Speckled Frogs". Another way to promote engagement is to give children choices in how or when to do an activity. Choice can be very powerful in the promotion of engagement. Early educators can encourage children to choose how they want to be greeted, what songs to sing, or even in what order to do the planned activities. When giving choices use visuals, photographs, or actual objects so that children clearly understand what they are choosing from. The use of visuals, props, praise, and choice set the stage for having a successful circle. When early educators take the time to plan their circle routine and incorporate fun age appropriate activities, they are better equipped to introduce and teach important cognitive and social-emotional skills.

We are social by nature; teaching social-emotional skills promotes infants and toddlers to become aware of others around them and how to regulate their own emotions. These skills start at an early age, in fact, as early as 14 months toddlers can react to others by providing help when needed. Furthermore, by age two children can respond to others in distress, help adults, assist with tasks, and cooperate instrumentally with both peers and adults (*Hyson & Taylor, 2011*). Although parents are children's first teachers, early educators play a significant role in children learning the social-emotional skills needed to be ready for school. These skills can be taught in fun and engaging ways by using materials most early educators currently use during circle time. For example, many classrooms are equipped with color matching games, items, or toys because color recognition is often a cognitive skill introduced during a toddler circle time routine. These items can also be used to teach social-emotional skills such as sharing, turn taking, helping and emotional literacy. For example, using the popsicle color match game (*see photo, middle right*), early educators can scaffold children's interaction with each other and adults to teach social-emotional skills. Below is an example of how the popsicle color match game can develop both cognitive and social-emotional skills by modeling, labeling, scaffolding, and encouraging the skills during circle time.

Circle Time Rules

Eyes On Teacher



Quiet Mouth



Listening Ears

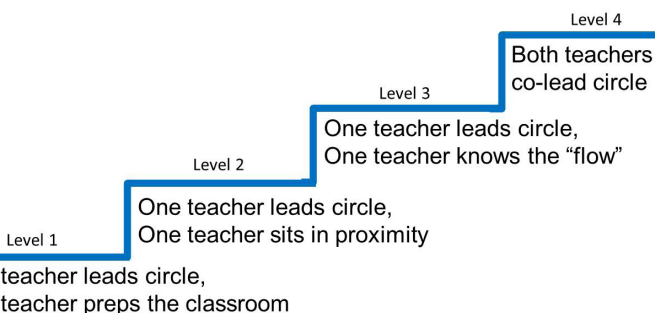


- "I am going to **help** Ms. Anne find the stick for her popsicle."
- "Joey can you **share** one of those popsicles with your friend Xavier?"
- "Look, when I give the yellow popsicle to Madison to hold she gets a **turn**."
- "Yum, when I eat a green popsicle it makes me **feel happy**" (help the children recognize the matching facial expression).
- "If the popsicle melted how would you feel?" (pair with a visual)

Some infant/toddler classrooms are fortunate enough to have two early educators. If this is the case, preferably the early educators should team together during the circle routine in order to support children's cognitive and social-emotional development. Often, for children at this age, participation in a group setting is a new experience. Children move from one-on-one time with adults to having to participate in a group and share the adult's time. All the skills needed to participate in a group time, such as waiting, turn taking, sharing, and compromising, may take multiple opportunities to practice in order to be successful. Early educators co-leading circle is the optimal support needed for learning the skills introduced during circle (see photo, bottom left). The first level leaves little opportunities for the one early educator conducting circle to scaffold interactions, offer multiple practices for skills, and prevent challenging behavior while keeping all children engaged. In the next level, the early educator not leading circle is sitting nearby to regulate children's behavior but is not involved in the circle time activities. The third level, again, has one early educator-leading circle while the other adult helps to manage materials and children's interactions. Although the two middle levels do promote children's participation in circle, the authors recommend the practice of early educators co-leading circle, as seen in the fourth level. This allows teachers to use a variety of strategies such as modeling, re-enacting social skills, puppets, and using multiple visuals for individual children. Co-leading a circle is like dancing the Waltz. Each person has a role, and when each person does their part, the "dance" of an infant/toddler circle will be an engaging and successful circle for all children.



Steps to a Successful Circle: TEAMWORK



Creating an engaging circle time for infants and toddlers is no small task. Knowing how to arrive at circle, what activities to do, what skills to introduce and teach, and how to maintain engagement, requires intentional and thoughtful planning. Taking the time to plan such steps allows children to build the skills they need for future learning. A successful circle gives children the experiences they need for relationship building and social-emotional skill development. By following these quick and easy tips, early educators can look forward to having an enjoyable and successful circle time with their infants and toddlers.

Resources

Hyson, M. & Taylor J. (2011). *Caring about caring: What adults can do to promote young children's prosocial skills. Young Children. (66), 74-83*

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New Provider Benefit Platform

Access to professional business services at an affordable rate

The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County is very excited to announce the launch of a new 'benefit platform' that is available to all child care providers in Hillsborough County. Seven companies have joined together to offer access to a menu of professional services such as insurance, investment and investment planning, payroll and timekeeping, and accounting. Each of the companies involved are knowledgeable and will provide you personalized services for your business. This effort gives you, and your small business, the pricing power of our collective group while you retain the decision making for your business. Think of it as an 'a la carte' approach to finding and securing professional services for your business and employees.

To the right is a photo of the list of companies, but you can access and download the full list, with contact information, from the ELCHC website. Simply go to the main Provider tab and click to download. We'll also be mailing the information to all centers and family child care homes. So keep an eye on your mailbox as well.

