

PROVIDER'S

SPECIAL ISSUE 2016

FOCUS MAGAZINE

a quarterly publication for Hillsborough early childhood care and education professionals

SPECIAL BACK TO SCHOOL ISSUE



A publication of the Early Learning
Coalition of Hillsborough County

PROVIDER'S FOCUS MAGAZINE

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CONTRIBUTORS FOR THIS ISSUE

Hannah Goble	Twyla Hartz
Theon Salley	Elizabeth Appleton
Shabel Santiago	Tracy Knight

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 2015-2016 publication year.

Articles should be typed, double spaced in 11 or 12 point Arial, Calibri or Times Roman font. Any accompanying photos or artwork should be in high resolution JPEG format (at least 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 article submission does not guarantee publication.

Submission Deadline	For Issue	Will hit mailboxes:
October 14, 2015	Winter 2015 (Oct/Nov/Dec)	Mid November 2015
January 13, 2016	Spring 2016 (Jan/Feb/Mar)	Mid February 2016
April 13, 2016	Summer 2016 (Apr/May/June)	Mid May 2016
July 13, 2016	Fall 2016 (Jul/Aug/Sept)	Mid August 2016

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In this Special
Issue...



THEY'RE COMING... ARE YOU READY?

We didn't want you to leave your upcoming program year to simple luck! This special *Back to School* issue of *The Provider's Focus* magazine contains what we hope are some fun and unique ideas to help you inspire the children in your care, engage their parents and energize your staff!

Feel free to copy the items within and share them with your staff and colleagues (in case they somehow miss the issue). Modify them to meet the needs of your program and let us know how you've implemented these ideas in your program! Maybe you'll be featured in the next issue of *The Provider's Focus Magazine*!

CONTENTS



Questions to Extend a Preschoolers Thinking

06

06 **6 Questions to Ask Preschool Children to Extend Their Thinking**
Use these questions to promote thinking skills in your classroom

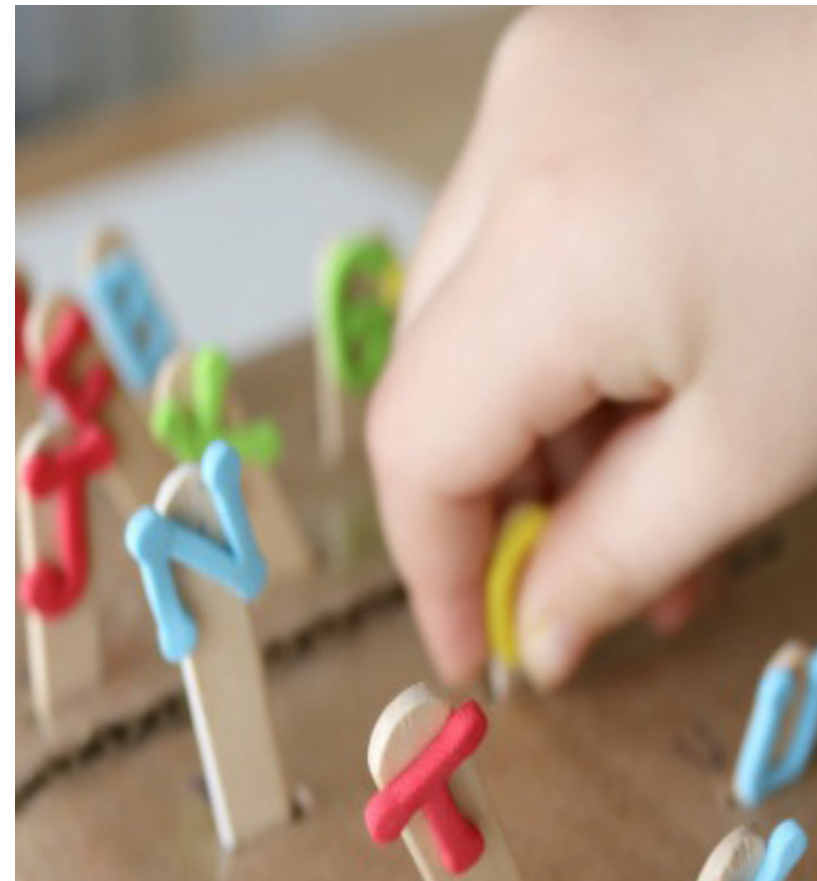
08 **The Cardboard Box: A Perfect Project for Starting the School Year**
Understand how this every day item is a perfect learning material to have in your classroom

10 **Increasing Children's Interest & Creativity Using Art**
Some simple tips on how to get the children in your classroom back to the art center.

The Cardboard Box

A perfect project for the start of the school year

08




10 Fun Fine Motor Activities to Prepare for Kindergarten

12

Is Your Classroom Set Up to Enhance Learning?

20

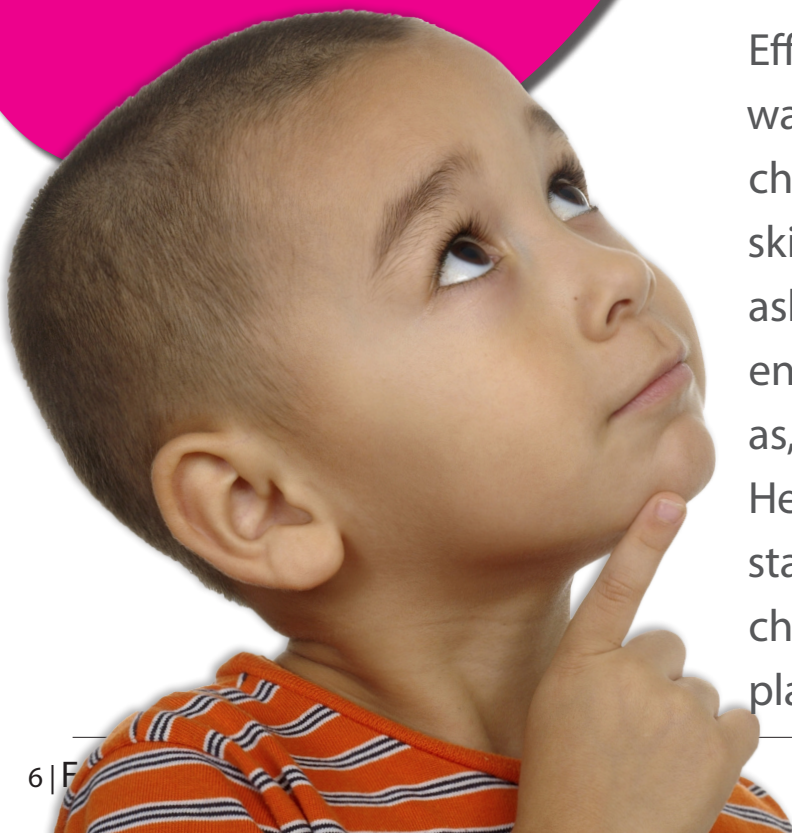
- 12 **10 Fun Fine Motor Activities to Prepare for Kindergarten**
Using every day and found items you can create endless fine motor activities for the children in your classroom. This article shows you a quick 10 you can use now.
- 16 **Using Daily Visual Schedules to Prevent Challenging Behavior**
A fun and easy way for children to learn routines that you can share with parents too!
- 20 **Make Sure Your Classroom is Set Up to Enhance Learning**
This year when you set up your classroom, be sure to use these tips to ensure that your classroom environment encourages learning!



QUESTIONS TO ASK PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO EXTEND THEIR THINKING

*By Hannah Goble, Professional Development Specialist
Tampa Bay Institute for Early Childhood Professionals (IECP)*

Effective questioning can be a great way for teachers to interact with children, while also promoting thinking skills within children. Teachers should ask questions to increase a child's engagement in a particular topic, as well as, assess the child's thought processes. Here are examples of questions and statements teachers can use to help children extend their thinking during play.





“Tell me what is happening?”

This question will prompt children to describe situations. Children will begin to articulate what they are observing in their environment. This can be highly effective when asking children to observe changes.



“Why do you think...?”

Asking a child “*why do you think?*” will encourage the child to make predictions about a particular topic.



“How can we...?”

This statement promotes extended thinking through design and connects previous experiences to newer situations.



“Why was it better that...?”

Asking children to identify certain processes that were more successful than others will help children analyze their own work along with comparing certain properties of a successful process.



“What might happen if...?”

This prompts children to think about what could happen before actually performing the process.



“How is ... related to...?”

Asking children to relate concepts and topics requires the child to have a good understanding of what is being asked. This does promote recognizing certain attributes of a concept or items and then relating them to something new.

The Cardboard

A Perfect Project for Starting the School Year

The first weeks of preschool can be overwhelming to children and teachers, especially to those who are new to a school setting. At the beginning of the year, when building relationships and learning classroom routines and procedures is the focus of all activities, themes, formal lessons and learning how to use a classroom full of toys has the potential to be stressful and overstimulating. That's why boxes – many boxes of all shapes and sizes — are the perfect learning material for the first weeks of preschool. Boxes are easy to gather, allow for child-directed, open-ended play both indoors and outdoors, address all areas of development and learning, offer infinite challenges to engage any child, and are stress-free because they're disposable and easily replaced.

A large cardboard box can offer relief from an unfamiliar, overstimulating environment. The brown color suggests nothing in particular. The smooth sides infer little. The cube structure defines empty space and lacks distraction. The sound of the cardboard folding is muted and music-less. This neutrality is a welcome contrast to the powerful sensory stimulation of the typical classroom, and may be why kids find the confines of a cardboard box so appealing. There's also an emotional component to seeking out small spaces; just like a cuddle or an embrace, being swaddled in a box can be comforting or soothing to a child. It's a place for privacy; a safe 'hiding' place; a place to be in control and "get away from it all"; a subconscious return to the comfort of the womb.

Preschool children are getting to know their own bodies in relation to other objects. They are exploring the question "how big am I?" and as they grow, the answer changes. When encountering a large box, kids will typically try to sit in, crawl on, and climb over, through, around, and under it. Boxes are often the perfect size for this kind of spatial exploration. Box play is empowering – instead of being in a room where everything is sized for big people, boxes allow children to be the biggest thing in a small space. And imagine the power of being able to move, stack and manipulate an object that is bigger than you!

Teachers can encourage young children to think about the concept of reusing things (in this case a box) for other

purposes. Discussing, for instance, the purpose of packaging: the box was designed to protect or carry something so that it wouldn't get damaged. This is an opportunity to expose children to new vocabulary words.

The box is a blank-slate upon which children can easily explore, expand and imprint their imaginations. Boxes provide a vehicle for continued exploration of an interesting topic, such as building a road, living in a castle, taming a lion, camping in the woods, or painting the inside a cave long ago somewhere in France! A basic box, without alteration, stimulates a child's mind to imagine or create what isn't physically there. Providing additional materials, props and tools – such as tape, paper towel tubes, paint, crayons or markers – allows children to define and label their ideas, make creative changes and assign multiple possibilities to their box play. To maximize learning and development, adult involvement should be limited to prompting children's thought process and assistance with tools (such as cutting openings or shapes).

Teachers need only prompt creativity and problem-solving by wondering aloud ... "I wonder what we could do with this big box? What do you think would happen if ...? What do you need to ...? How can you make ...?" With a few open-ended questions, a child's natural curiosity and imagination should take over.

See 'Box Play' continued on page 15

Board Box

*By Twyla Hartz, Professional Development Specialist
Tampa Bay Institute for Early Childhood Professionals (IECP)*



Increasing Children's Interest & Creativity Using



*By Theon Salley, Professional Development Specialist
Tampa Bay Institute for Early Childhood Professionals (IECP)*

Today's young children are part of a digital generation that has grown up surrounded by technology and the Internet, and they are using mobile phones, tablets, e-readers and computers on a daily basis for educational activities as well as creative pursuits. Although technological advances have brought art forms to exciting new levels, many early childhood experts worry that the individual creative potential of our young children is being compromised, and in some cases, replaced by technology.

We all know the value of supporting creativity and imagination in the early years of a child's life. But how do we encourage children to be as excited about tempera paint and glue as they are about the latest toddler app on their parent's tablet?! How do we spark their interest and get them back in the art center of your classroom?



Try setting up small group activities around painting murals. This way children can take turns adding to the shared art project, as well as, extend the project over several days. This may spark an interest in the art center.



Introduce famous artists to the children and share their painting styles and/or techniques. Ask the children how the artwork makes them feel and let them express those feelings with the art materials. Vincent Van Gogh's, *Starry Night* or splashing paint of a canvas like Jackson Pollack are some examples.



Set up an easel and paints outdoors and suggest that the children paint pictures based on the colors they see in nature, the landscape, cars in the parking lot, or what they envision the clouds (shapes, animals) are in the sky. It should be their interpretation of how they see the world around them.

Teachers are accustomed to using sponges, stencils and feathers as alternatives to paint brushes. Consider using collections of items found in nature as substitutes for paint brushes such as: a) different sized sticks gathered by the children (check them for safety to make sure they do not have sharp points or jagged edges), or b) bundles of straw from pine trees or large palm tree branches for large murals. The use of natural materials can be used to spark children's interest in painting and exploring art materials. If the children do not want to use the materials as painting tools, encourage them to come up with other creative (open-ended questions and brainstorming) to use the materials.



10 FUN FINE MOTOR PREPARE FOR KINDER



< PICK UP OBJECTS >

Using clothespins or tweezers, children can pick up pom-poms and sort by color or place strips of paper with numbers so they can practice counting.



SHOE TYING ACTIVITY >

Cut a square of cardboard and place your shoes down on it. Trace around the sole of the shoe. Draw 10 dots on each shoe outline for the lace holes. Carefully, use a screwdriver to punch out the holes. Place long shoelaces through the holes and have fun tying.



^ PLAY DOUGH

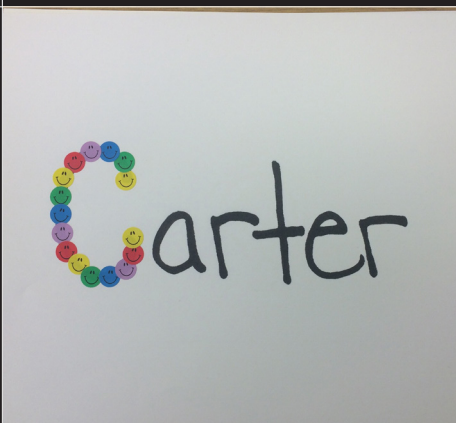
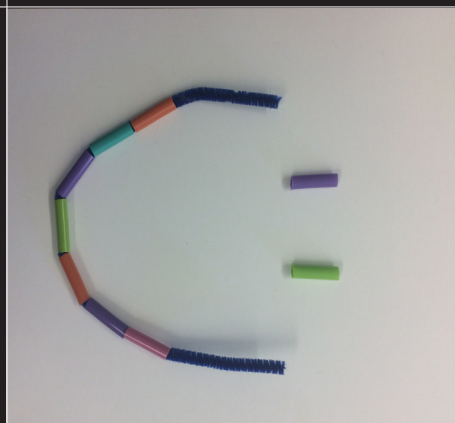
Roll play dough into snakes – form letters, name, shapes, etc. Child can use plastic knife or pizza cutter to cut “snakes”. You can also use toothpicks to “write” letters, numbers or name.

ACTIVITIES TO HELP KINDERGARTEN

By Shabel Santiago, M.S. - Inclusion Support Services
The Early Childhood Council of Hillsborough County

LACING ACTIVITY >

Use pipe cleaners and plastic beads. Children can color sort beads onto same color pipe cleaner, or stick a number to the top of the pipe cleaner and children can practice number recognition.



< STAR NAME/ SHAPES

Write child's name or draw shapes on paper. The child will then place star stickers on line to "write" their name in stars or "draw" star shapes.



< EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES >

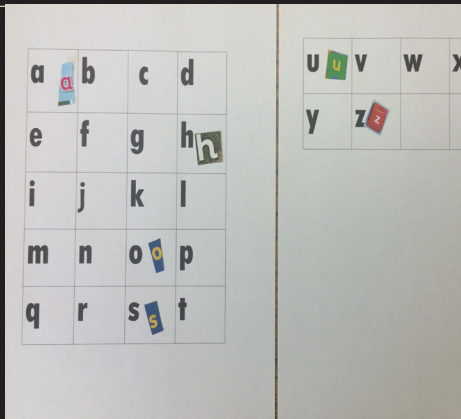
Everyday activities should include blocks, legos, puzzles, finger painting, watercolors, connect the dots, tracing around stencils, and drawing.



See 'Fine Motor' continued on page 14

FOAM NUMBERS CLOTHES PINS >

Cut numbers out of foam sheets, using stencil. Child then attaches correct number of clothespins to edge of foam number.



Draw 26 boxes or more on a sheet of paper, and write capital or lowercase letters in boxes. Using newspapers or magazines, child can cut letter to match letter on paper and glue in box next to that letter.

< CUTTING/ LETTER MATCHING



< ALPHABET ACTIVITY

You will need a cardboard box, craft sticks and capital foam letter stickers. Attach the foam letter to end of craft stick. Cut slits in top of cardboard box and label with a lowercase letter. Child will then place the matching capital letter into the slit.

^ Q-TIPS STRAWS >

Use food color to color ends of Q-tip the same color as straws that you find. While Q-tips are drying, cut straws a little shorter than Q-tips. The child can insert Q-tip in correct color straw. These can be also be used for counting, adding and subtracting.



Skills developed through box play:

- ❑ **Science and Social Studies** – investigation, experimentation, building, construction, engineering, containers, transport, road systems, physical properties of objects, community workers, recycling, the environment
- ❑ **Literacy** – language and vocabulary development, labeling objects, writing, environmental print, communication, storytelling
- ❑ **Math** – solid shapes, quantifying, counting, spatial awareness, size, weight, measurement, sorting, classification, matching
- ❑ **Physical** – fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, gross motor skills, stacking and balancing, manipulating objects
- ❑ **Creativity** – imaginative play, curiosity, experimenting with materials, planning, producing, representation of ideas, self-expression
- ❑ **Cognitive** – curiosity, persistence, inventiveness, critical thinking, problem-solving, evaluation, application of knowledge, organization of learning, connecting concepts
- ❑ **Social/emotional** – sustained concentration, independent play, social play, risk-taking, confidence, cooperation, conflict resolution, self-regulation



Using Daily Visual Schedules to Prevent Challenging Behavior

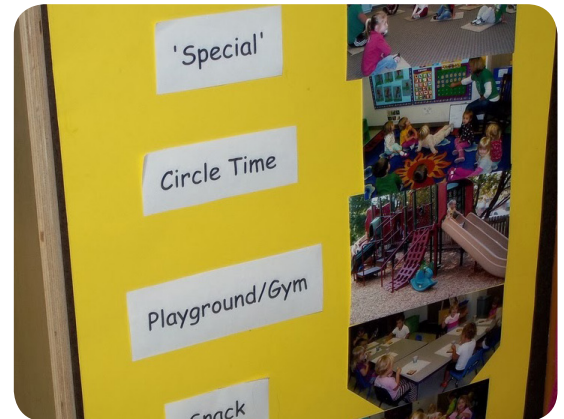
By Elizabeth Appleton, M.Ed.
Program-Wide Positive Behavior Support Specialist

Those lazy days of summer are soon coming to an end. It's back-to-school time and sometimes it's hard to get into a routine. Using a visual schedule is an effective way for all children to learn routines. Why not try starting the new school year out with putting your routines into visual steps. What do visual schedules do for children? They:

- Communicate a clear beginning, middle and end
- Empower independence
- Provide predictability
- Give clear expectations of routines
- Build skills such sequencing and pre-reading (left to right)
- Encourage participation/working together
- Reduce power struggles
- Build confidence and a sense of control
- Greatly limits over correction and lots of "no" statements
- Promotes self-regulation

How do you display and use visual schedules?

- Simply put the pictures in order of your routine
(See image to the right)
- Use real objects or real pictures of the children doing each step of the routine. (See next page)
- Hang the pictures at the children's eye level.
- Make the schedule moveable with either velcro, magnets, arrows on clothes pins or pocket charts.



Refer to the visual schedule throughout the day either during large group or between transitions. Remember to provide extra individualized cues to children who need extra support.

Help children see the next upcoming activity by using "first and then statements". Strengthen understanding by bringing the picture to them or having them hold the picture.

Share the importance of visuals and routines with families by helping families develop a morning visual schedule.

All of us use some type of system to remind or help us remember what is happening throughout our day such as; watches, phones, tablets, calendars and even sticky notes. Children need help remembering, too. Visuals help them understand the many changes that occur during the day. This school year, reduce challenging behavior by using a daily visual schedule in your classroom.



Remove or color copy page 17. Cut out the images, laminate them, and use them to help your families develop a visual schedule that matches their needs for their morning routine at home.

Morning Routines



Get Out of Bed



Go Potty & Wash Hands



Wash Up



Get Dressed



Brush Hair



Put on Spray



Eat Breakfast



Put Dishes in the Sink



Take Medicine



Brush Teeth



Make Bed



Play with Toys



Play Electronics



Watch TV



Clean Up



Take Care of Pet



Grab School Stuff



Get in Car



Go to School



Make Sure Your Classroom is Setup to Enhance Learning

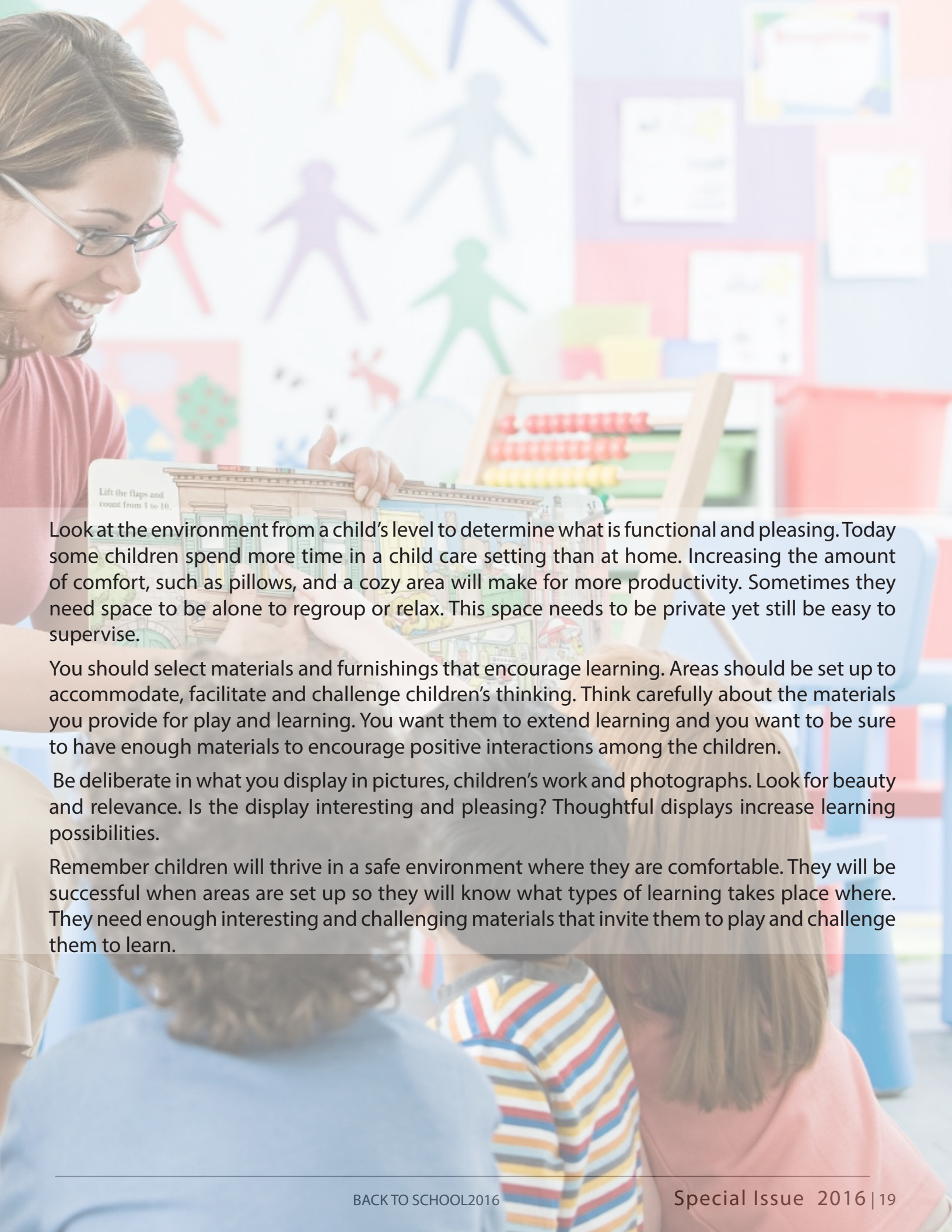
*By Tracy Knight, Professional Development Coordinator
Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County*

Both children and adults function better in a thoughtfully designed space. The better the environment is set up, the less time the teacher needs to focus on maintaining order and keeping children safe. Just imagine all the extra time the teacher would save from having to explain rules and address problems if the environment assisted in the responsibility.

When designing the spaces be sure that they accommodate and encourage appropriate play and learning. Think about how much room you should devote for large group activities, small group activities and for one on one time to work with one child on a specific skill.

One major key in developing centers is the organization of the space. It is best if areas where active play occurs is separated from more quiet play. Think about the block and dramatic play areas. These are typically very active centers that need a lot of room to carry out playful learning. What about messy play? These types of activities should be in an area that is close to water for cleanup and on an easy to clean floor.

The space for large group time is important. If you have to move furniture to accommodate then time is lost in productivity and children will lose interest. Comfort is also essential in group time. Avoid having things that will cause the children to be restless and fidget.



Look at the environment from a child's level to determine what is functional and pleasing. Today some children spend more time in a child care setting than at home. Increasing the amount of comfort, such as pillows, and a cozy area will make for more productivity. Sometimes they need space to be alone to regroup or relax. This space needs to be private yet still be easy to supervise.

You should select materials and furnishings that encourage learning. Areas should be set up to accommodate, facilitate and challenge children's thinking. Think carefully about the materials you provide for play and learning. You want them to extend learning and you want to be sure to have enough materials to encourage positive interactions among the children.

Be deliberate in what you display in pictures, children's work and photographs. Look for beauty and relevance. Is the display interesting and pleasing? Thoughtful displays increase learning possibilities.

Remember children will thrive in a safe environment where they are comfortable. They will be successful when areas are set up so they will know what types of learning takes place where. They need enough interesting and challenging materials that invite them to play and challenge them to learn.

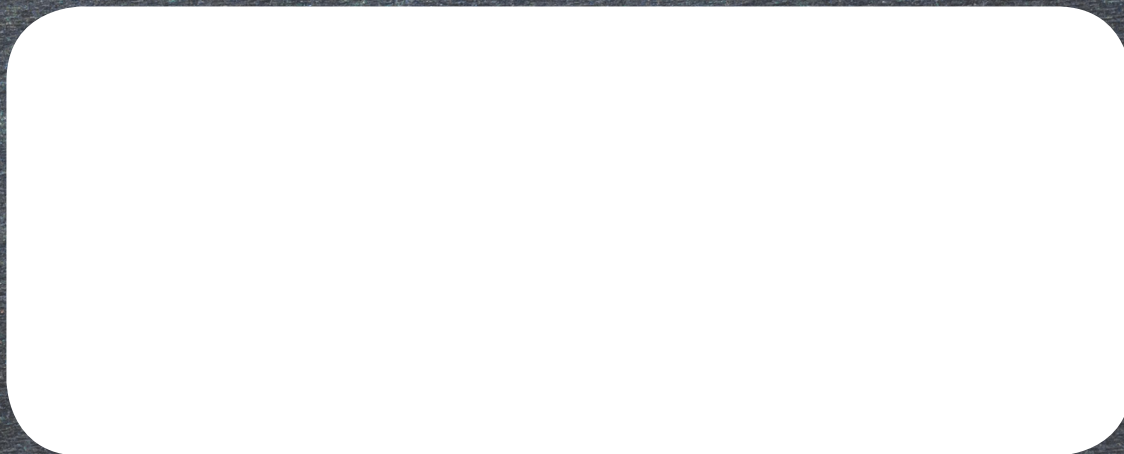


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