

**May/June 2017**

 ***Parent Services Web Blast/Newsletter***

***Tip for parents & teachers by Sam Blanco, MSED, BCBA:***

**When teaching language, Focus on the stage, Not the age**

Teaching language skills is one of the most frequent needs for children, especially children with autism, but also one of the most misunderstood skillsets among both parents and practitioners. The desire to hear your learner speak in full sentences can be overwhelming, making it especially difficult to take a step back and consider what it means to communicate and how communication skills develop. Many times we get hung up on what a child *should be* capable of communicating at a certain age, rather than focusing on *what they are* capable of communicating at their current stage of development.

Research has suggested that teaching beyond the child’s current stage results in errors, lack of comprehension, and difficulty with retention.

 ***Quotes for Adults, Children, & Youth:***

Today’s young children are controlled by the expectations, schedules, whims, and rules of adults. Play is the only time they can take control of their world.--Sheila G. Flaxman

Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning....They have to play with what they know to be true in order to find out more, and then they can use what they learn in new forms of play. - Fred Rogers

A lack of play should be treated like malnutrition; it’s a health risk to your body and mind. Stuart Brown, psychiatrist

**Activities to Share with Parents:**

**10 Awesome Reading Activities to Celebrate Get Caught Reading Month** by Cara Stevens

***May is Get Caught Reading Month!*** Share the joy of getting lost in a good book with your children. It's a gift that will last a lifetime!

Get Caught Reading is a nationwide campaign that was started in 1999 by the [American Association of Publishers](http://www.getcaughtreading.org/) (<http://www.getcaughtreading.org/>) . Its goal is to remind people of all ages how much fun it is to read. Teachers, librarians and parents across the country plan reading activities online and in many communities to celebrate. Famous personalities including movie and TV stars, sports heroes, and even kids' cartoon characters are getting in on the fun with [posters](http://getcaughtreading.org/celebrity-posters.php) (<http://getcaughtreading.org/celebrity-posters.php>) that show them getting "caught" reading.

"Reading is exploring the world without ever leaving your chair!" says Tina Jordan, Vice President of the Association of American Publishers. "And the earlier you start, the smarter you'll be while having fun at the same time."

Here are some fun reading activities you can do with your kids to celebrate and cultivate a life-long love of reading.

**Host a Book Swap Party**

Clean out your kids' bookshelves and make way for new favorites. Invite friends to bring books they want to swap. Each person gets to take home as many new books as they brought. Donate the ones that aren't selected to your local library, preschool, day care center, or donation center.

**Hold a Community Book Drive**

Have kids create fliers to post around the neighborhood asking people to drop off their used books by a certain date. Contact local charities to see who is taking donations.

**Create Free Libraries**

[Little Free Library](https://littlefreelibrary.org/build/) (<https://littlefreelibrary.org/build/>) spots are popping up everywhere! Create an official or unofficial free library on your front lawn, at a storefront, or someplace else in your neighborhood. You may need permission, so check local rules and restrictions.

**Get Caught Reading by Your Kids**

The best way to raise an avid reader is to be an avid reader. Next time your kids are reading for school or for pleasure, put down your phone and pick up a book. Talk to your kids about the books you read and make talking about books part of your go-to conversation topics.

**Have Regular Library Dates**

"Make a weekly visit to the library part of your family routine starting when your children are very young." advises Kathy Jarombek, Director of Youth Services at Perrot Library in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. "Most libraries offer story times for babies, toddlers and preschoolers but make visiting a priority even when there are no story times. Have a special bag at home set aside just for library books and be sure to make time at the library to read to your child – no cellphones allowed!"

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***Things for Parents & Teachers to Think About:***

**The Benefits of Outdoor Play**

by [**Parenting Today Staff**](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/authors/parenting-today-staff/) | on March 23, 2016 | in [**Activities for Kids**](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/child-activities/), [**Child Development**](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/development/), [**Parenting**](https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/category/parenting/)

In the modern world of games consoles and interactive toys, it’s easy to overlook the importance of outdoor play. It’s a big world outside of the classroom/home, and playing outdoors has a lot to offer. With the current trend of rising obesity rates in children, it has never been more important to teach young children the value of being active outside. Playing in sandboxes, collecting leaves, and painting outdoors will teach children practical life skills while offering a tremendous amount of fun.

There are numerous health benefits to outdoor play, too. Studies have consistently shown that playing in an outdoor environment reduces stress while increasing vitamin D levels, promoting social skills, and even increasing attention spans. One study showed that outdoor play significantly reduced the symptoms of ADHD, a condition that now affects 11% of all school children. On top of this, playing outdoors promotes self-confidence, fine motor skills, and balance. It promotes self-reliance, increases flexibility, and improves overall coordination.

The list of activities that your child can undertake outdoors is limited only by your/their imagination. You can make a map, build a bird feeder, plant a flower garden, or even go on a hike. One of the best activities for promoting an interactive mind is a nature journal. Have your child explore a safe outdoor area, and document everything that they find in a blank book. Collect leaves, twigs and branches, and stick them onto the pages. The child can even make drawings of any insects that they find. Make it a competition among children to see who can fill up their journal fastest. The possibilities really are endless.

Please let us know if there is anything you need us to assist you with.

Sincerely,

 Jennifer Adams, Ph.D. Beth Johnson, MA. Ed.

 Consultant Consultant

 FDLRS/Parent Services FDLRS/Parent Services