

The Provider's Exchange


A newsletter for Plainville Family Child Care Providers

Published by Plainville Family Resource Network

May/June 2005

C. Brennan (860) 793-6304 brennanc@plainvilleschools.org



With  spring finally here, and summer following closely on its heels, being outdoors with children can be a delightful place to be! This newsletter will focus on ideas for outdoor learning and fun, as well as ways to help prepare your environment and your children for these experiences.

Burton White, noted Early Childhood author and educator recommended, "If children learn best through play, make all their work their play."

Someone might ask, "What can you do outdoors with children?" Perhaps a better question might be, "*What CAN'T I do outdoors with children?*" Outdoor time is vital for both children's physical health and emotional well-being. This time can be beneficial to *you* as a provider too.

With preparation and some imagination new experiences await you. Give us a call at 793-6304

if you would like a copy of a safety checklist, list of things to do with children in Connecticut, or would like to borrow any of our resources.

Gardening with children can provide them with physical exercise, the chance to plan and work with others, and the aesthetic beauty of what is grown. From a simple sunflower seed project to "Planting a Rainbow", gardening will be memorable. Growing vegetables may encourage a picky eater...it's hard to resist something you've helped to grow! Another idea is to create a "Beanstalk Hide-A-way" (call us)...

We always love to hear from you, too and appreciate the ideas you share.

Think about what you loved to do as child during spring and summer. Chances are the children in your care will love to do them, too.

IDEAS FOR CREATING AN OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT...PLACES AND SPACES TO MAKE YOUR WORK EASIER WHILE PROVIDING MANY HOURS OF ENJOYMENT TO THE CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE... (Please turn over)



Dramatic Play: How about a “Car Wash” where riding toys can be scrubbed and polished, stringing a clothesline where doll clothes can be hung, or hosting a “Teddy Bear Picnic”? A backyard “tent” structure (where children can still be visible to you) can be a setting for pretend camping play. Add flashlight, play cookware and fishing poles, paper “logs”, map and compass, etc. With lots of room to move around outside, why not try acting out the additional verses of “The Itsy Bitsy Spider” as told in the Iza Trapani version of this classic song/story? Toddlers may enjoy acting out butterflies, with beautiful wings they help create.

The sandbox can become a bakery and your toy animals can be part of a homemade zoo... Summertime can be a great time to provide your school-age friends with materials and opportunities to create plays or puppet shows. There’s nothing like a backyard theater!

Reading Area/Literacy: A quiet spot under a shady tree can provide an invitation to young readers. Outdoor cushions and buckets of books and magazines make a quiet statement that reading is not just for the indoors. Paper, pads and writing materials are easily transportable in covered plastic containers. A quiet time activity for the older ones is to have time each day to record the day’s events in journals. Summer can also provide a chance to browse through reading material that gets passed by during the busy school year. Sports magazines, crossword puzzle books and word searches...fun to do while lying on a blanket in the yard. And don’t forget the classic game “Scrabble”.

Science Experiments: Although these are fun and interesting all year long, the warm weather months make them even easier to do outside...How about shining pennies? Have you made a “rubber egg”? Sink or float experiments? We have books with ideas for nature and science projects here -you are welcome to borrow them. Check out the Children’s Department at The Plainville Library for other ideas on this topic. How about an “Ant Picnic”? Something simple you can do is to have the children help you put out 2 different types of foods on little plates in different corners of the yard- talk about it with them. Which do they think will attract ants to a “picnic”? Why? Watch and see.

Music and Movement: Large muscles can get their workout through dancing and moving in the more expansive outdoor spaces of yards and parks. Colorful scarves or tubes (made from painted or covered paper towel tubes) with streamers can encourage arm movement.

Camouflage Scavenger Hunt: Safe objects hidden in outdoor spots blend in with the colors...see what sharp eyes can find.

Windsocks and Mobiles: Your older children can create these beauties, and hung from tree branches, they will aid an infant’s eye development.

Whatever you do...have safe and happy days with your precious little ones!

