

Center News



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A Newsletter for Federal Child Care Centers

Fall 2002

The GSA nationwide network of child Care coordinators

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Syracuse Center Participates in 9/11 and CFC Events

The children at the Clinton Street Child Care Center located at the James M. Hanley Federal Building in Syracuse, NY participated in the Hanley Federal Building 9/11 Patriot Ceremony by leading federal employees and honored guests in the Pledge of Allegiance and singing of the National Anthem.

The children also participated in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) kickoff ceremony by singing songs played on their new piano. The piano was received through a grant from the Up-downtowners, a local organization which promotes downtown business, social and cultural activities in the downtown Syracuse area.



Centers Make Strides in Staff Development

Lindi Budd, Executive Director, EAA/SSA Secur-A-Kiddie Center, Inc. wrote a winning proposal for a \$50,000 grant for upgrading teacher educational levels. The grant is from the Judy Hoyer Early Care Enhancement Funds administered by the Maryland State Department of Education. Twenty one lead teachers from the SSA Woodlawn center and SSA Metro West center, Baltimore, MD are participating. Staff are attending college working toward an AA degree in Early Childhood Education or working toward the CDA Credential. The grant is in its second year. The grant pays for college courses, cash bonuses, and professional training for lead teachers.

Little Acorns Child Development Center employee Dinah Poole recently completed the Department of Labor's (DOL) apprenticeship program for child care providers. Ms. Poole was the first participant to complete this program in the state of Mississippi. The certification is awarded by the U.S. DOL, Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training. Ms. Poole is pictured with center owner, Kathy Rayborn, staff colleague Catherine Guy and children of their pre-K room.

Little Acorns Child Development Center is located in the Dr. A.H. McCoy Building in Jackson, Mississippi





Kevin's Corner

I recently made a presentation for a new, highly energy efficient design for a new, stand-alone child care center in Richland, Washington for the Department of Energy. It was enthusiastically received particularly because at this point, the project is planned as a straw bale building. Straw, you say? The technology has been around since 1890, and can provide an R value of 50! (R-value measures resistance to heat flow.)

Just as a reference, I would be highly surprised if many readers had R values exceeding 19 in their own homes. Bales are stacked and "skewered" together (think vertical shish kebab) and then sprayed with special plaster on both sides. This has been checked out with the local building officials, and they are fine with it. On the way to the airport, I almost ran the car off the road. I was so excited! In front of me was a stack of straw in a field, a stack about 30 feet high and a hundred feet long! Not two miles from the center, there was the raw material!

At the 2002 U.S. Green Building Council Convention which I attended in (truly) lovely downtown, Austin, Texas. I noted that one of the "Top Ten" Winners this year is a camp for kids in Livermore, California. The Construction? Straw bale. From the programmatic point of view, it promotes a particularly home-like environment.

Since the majority of you will not be building new straw bale buildings there are more typical "Green" things you can do in your centers every day. Make friends with the GSA Regional Environmental Coordinator or the Recycle Coordinator. They can work with you on recycling efforts in your center and projects that could be accomplished with the children as well as provide information on appropriate materials to use in the center. We are especially looking at all our playground projects to ensure the required amount of recycled content in the fall zone materials and climbing structures.

Improved Parent Communication through use of Listserv Technology



The FTC center in Washington, DC has implemented a parent communication tool called Listserv.

With a Listserv, you send a message to a single e-mail address, and it automatically goes out to the entire mailing list (with recipient addresses hidden from everyone except the moderator, to protect privacy). As parents come and go, the single e-mail address stays the same, and all the additions/deletions/changes happen behind the scenes - so people don't have to keep updating their individual e-mail address books, and there's no risk of sending sensitive information to un-enrolled/graduated parents. Another big benefit is catching parents via e-mail at their work desks, while they have their calendars and day planners, but NOT their children nearby. This tends to be more effective than inundating parents with paper notes that get

stuffed into pockets during hectic pickup/drop-off times.

For those of you who may not be familiar with the many possibilities of Listserv, here are some examples of how the FTC has been using theirs.

The director sends out a weekly e-newsletter every Friday, which keeps all updated about Center happenings. If a contagious illness is passing through, she lets parents know what symptoms to look out for. If their nap watch coordinator needs a last-minute volunteer, s/he can send out a plea for help. One parent routinely posts recall notices for toys and baby products. If someone comes across an interesting article about an issue relating to child development, s/he can send around an e-mail with a URL link.

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An opening ceremony for a new, long awaited play yard was held at the Healthy Environment Child Development Center in San Francisco, CA on October 10, 2002. The efforts of GSA, EPA and the City were required to make the play yard a reality. *Pictured above: Michael Fong, Nora McGee, Pacific Rim Regional Administrator Peter Stamison, Easter Seals representative Mike Pelfini, Board President Pat Ekland and Karen Goldberg.*

Play initiated by children most beneficial, educators say

By Karen MacPherson
Pittsburgh Post- Gazette

Unstructured child's play - the kind with no rules, few gizmos and little or no adult direction - packs a powerful developmental wallop.

Jane Healy, a psychologist, educator and author of "Failure to Connect: How Computers Affect Our Children's Minds and What We Can Do About It," says too many parents and policy-makers just don't understand the importance of play in children's development.

"Learning the multiplication tables and the alphabet are very important. But those skills need to reside inside a mind that has been expanded by the imaginative and joyous exploration of our environment and the possibility that it offers for fun," Healy says.

Play can be hard to define because it takes many shapes, from physical play to mental play to imaginative play.

But most experts agree that it can be divided into two main categories: child-initiated unstructured play and adult-led play.

Most children do lots of adult-led play. This includes organized sports, physical education classes and extra-curricular activities, where rules must be followed. Even the most preferred play things such as computers, video games and other electronic toys are generally scripted by adults.

"I feel as if we are creating a culture where we are giving children all the content that we think they need for their imagination, without realizing that in the process we are stifling their imagination," said Joan Almon, an educator who heads the U.S. Alliance for Childhood.

With such a lack of child-initiated play, "we are short-circuiting a lot of their development," Healy says. "That's because play is the way that children work out their emotional issues, their fears, their anxieties. It's the way they develop a self, a way they develop a sense that they are im-

portant people who have ideas to share and who can get along with other people."

It was the 20th century work of Jean Piaget that underlined the importance of play in children's development. Seymour Papert, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor who created the LOGO computer language, writes that Piaget showed us "children are not empty vessels to be filled with knowledge but active builders of knowledge - little scientists who are constantly creating and testing their own theories of the world".

Diane Levin, the Wheelock College professor and author of "Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture," gives an example of Piaget's theory. She describes watching a kindergartner named Tanaka carefully draw lines of various colors to create boxes of different sizes and shapes on pieces of scrap paper.

Inadvertently, Levin said, Tanaka dropped paint into the middle of one box. Dismayed, she stared at the drip for a minute. Then she smiled and began making dot patterns in her other boxes.

Levin notes that Tanaka began her playtime with something she found interesting - painting. As she painted, Tanaka tried out new colors and different sizes of boxes. Suddenly, she was presented with an unexpected challenge: a paint drip in the middle of a carefully wrought painting. Tanaka had to figure out what to do and gained a sense of "mastery" by solving the problem.

"We might even conjecture," Levin said, "that she would probably not have become as skillful at the tasks and concept she is working on without this rich play process."

Listserv Technology

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Board members post various reminders about upcoming events, policy changes, teacher gift collections around the holidays, etc. And the calendar feature sends day-before and day-of e-mail reminders for most of the Center events (as well as "tuition due" e-mails every Monday morning). This notification system can also be used as part of the emergency communication plan for the center.

There must be a moderator/manager for the groups Listserv. There is a free service called Yahoo Groups (for more information, go to



<http://groups.yahoo.com>

Other free services may be available, but the FTC reports good experiences with Yahoo. They report that the interface is a bit cumbersome if you try to take advantage of all of the features available - such as setting up a website for your organization. It is strongly recommended that you ignore any links to the website, and promise parents that all relevant info will be distributed via e-mail. But if you use Yahoo Groups just for the basic Listserv features, it's very, very easy for everyone.

Here are just a couple of tips if you do decide to use Yahoo:

- Designate your site as "unlisted" so it won't show up in the Yahoo Groups directory.
- Set your site up as "closed" so that people need to be invited to join, and can't sign themselves up. This helps you maintain tight control over the membership.
- Do not allow members to hide their e-mail addresses. As the moderator, you'll want (and need) to be able to see all of the addresses.
- Select moderation type "unmoderated" so that the moderator won't need to screen all messages.

Good Luck!

Of the GSA centers eligible for NAEYC Accreditation, 83% are now accredited.

Congratulations to the following centers on their recent reaccreditation:

- FTC Child Care Center, Washington DC - managed by FTCccc, Inc.
- Little Explorers Child Development Center, NOAA, Silver Spring, MD - managed by Bright Horizons
- Zorinsky Child Care Center, Omaha, NE - managed by Children’s Center



Congratulations to the following center on their recent accreditation:

- ◆ USDA Child Development Center, Washington DC - managed by Knowledge Beginnings

New Quality Rating System

Treasure House Child Development Center, located at the IRS Service Center in Covington, KY, recently received three stars in the new voluntary quality childcare rating system recently implemented in Kentucky. The new program rates childcare facilities based on child-to-staff ratios, training levels, programming and staff benefits. In addition to inspecting and rating childcare programs, the star rating program also provides scholarships for childcare workers, technical assistance and cash awards. The highest rating is four stars. For information on the stars rating system, contact the Northern Kentucky Child Care Resource Center, (859) 781-3511.

Public Says States Should Pay for Good Preschools

In a national survey conducted by the National Institute for Early Education Research, a large majority (87 percent) of respondents felt state governments should provide sufficient funding so that all families can afford high quality preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds. While half (51 percent) say these programs should be funded from the existing state budget, one-third said they would be willing to pay higher state taxes to fund universal access to quality programs. The full report can be found at <http://nieer.org/>

Information courtesy of Connect for Kids (www.connectforkids.org).

Child Care Sector Makes Substantial Contributions to the National Economy

The National Child Care Association just released the results of its study, “The National Economic Impacts of the Child Care Sector”. The child care sector contributes to the national economic well-being in the following critical ways.

- ◆ In 2001 Americans spent approximately \$38 billion a year on licensed child care programs, excluding care provided at unlicensed and informal facilities.

Expenditures on licensed care will be even higher in 2002 - likely exceeding \$41 billion. As a result, this sector creates enough income to support approximately 2.8 million direct, indirect, and induced jobs, of which about one-third are in the child care industry itself. In addition, the sector generates almost \$9 billion in tax revenues.

- ◆ The licensed child care industry directly employs more Americans than public secondary schools and is directly responsible for twice as many jobs as the farming sector.

In this respect, the nation’s economy, famous for its agricultural products, should rightly be as well known for economic contributions associated with “growing children”.

- ◆ Child care provides an essential infrastructure which enables mothers and fathers to be employed outside the home, and earn necessary income. By making it possible for parents to work, the formal child care sector enables Americans to earn more than \$100 billion annually.

By the year 2010 the U.S. is expected to add another 1.2 million children aged four and under. Unless the formal child care sector likewise adds sufficient, affordable capacity parents will not be able to fully participate in the U.S. economy.

The full report can be viewed and printed at www.NCCAnet.org.

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*Contributions and Comments on
Center News are welcome and
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