



Wright Field North CDC

February 2012

Highlights

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MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

The program's mission is to assist military and civilian families in balancing the competing demands of family life and the accomplishment of the military mission. Our philosophical approach is grounded on current research and knowledge of early childhood education.

Children are valued as individuals, as well as part of a group. Likewise, our program respects and supports the ideals, cultures and values of families in their task of nurturing children. We advocate for children, families and early childhood professionals within our programs.

TAKE-AWAY TIP

Ever find yourself clicking a pen or doodling on paper while talking on the phone or sitting in a meeting because you're in need of something to redirect your energy? Children have this same need, but what usually happens is that it's directed in the form of fussiness, a temper tantrum, etc.

"Fidget bags" are a great tool for moms and dads to help redirect children from challenging behaviors and aid during daily transitions. It is something small enough to fit in your purse or throw in the car that includes various items such as crayons and paper, a book, sunglasses, playdough, trinket toys, juice box, crackers, etc. that your child enjoys.

Friendship Day

1. Child can bring in cards for teachers and classmates, but they must be home-made. Home-made cards encourage and facilitate a learning process for the children.
2. Please do not bring in candy of any kind, flavor, size, etc. This is a safety concern for the children with severe allergies.

Factors That Contribute to Challenging Behavior

To better understand what a child may be communicating through challenging behavior, it is important for adults to play detective and gather information. Think about when, where and with whom the challenging behavior occurs. Notice any patterns that occur. Think carefully about your child's day at school, home and other places you tend to see challenging behavior. See if you can find any patterns to your child's behavior by asking:

- Is my child avoiding something, some place, or someone?
- Does my child like the way this behavior (for example hand flapping or spinning) feels?
- Is my child uncomfortable, hungry, tired, or not feeling well?
- Is my child having a reaction to medication or food?
- Is my child angry, sad, anxious, or scared?
- Is my child confused, bored, or frustrated?
- Does my child want to get away from something or someone?
- Does my child want something?
- Does my child need more time or help to finish what she started?

Many adults find it helpful to take note of what happens directly before and directly after the challenging behavior occurs. For example: Does your child get easily frustrated, even when she's working on something she likes to do, like playing a game or playing with the family pet? If so, maybe she's not understanding the instructions or the steps that you have provided. Or maybe the expectations are not clear (Gently petting the family dog, Alex, is ok, but tightly hugging her is not.). Are you paying attention to your child only after her challenging behavior occurs? If so, maybe a few minutes of "together time" before your child begins the activity or event could prevent future challenging behavior. Start thinking about whether the circumstances before and after the challenging behavior support the child in a positive way.

Nine Ways to Reduce Challenging Behavior

After you have identified what triggers challenging behavior in your child, you can use that information to respond more positively to your child's needs. Here are some tips for how to get started:

1. **Change the setting.**
Change the room, activity, or people involved, so your child feels supported. For example, if your child becomes over-stimulated when playing games with her friends, you might recommend she limit the number of activities going on at one time ("Why don't you turn off the TV while you're playing your game?") or try a different activity (such as painting or playing outside).
2. **Respond calmly.**
Respond to the situation calmly and without your own anger — adults may need quiet time too. If your child's behavior has made you angry, take a few minutes to calm down before deciding how to respond.
3. **Teach alternate behaviors.**
Teach your child alternate and more socially appropriate ways of expressing what he wants or needs. For example, if your child fights over sharing toys with friends or siblings, teach him how to ask to borrow ("Can I play with your puzzle for a little while?") and trade ("If I loan you my book, can I play with your puzzle?")
4. **Offer choices.**
Offer choices and opportunities for your child to have more control over her environment. For example, if your child is a fussy eater, ask her what she'd like to eat, provide her with one or two options ("Would you like a peanut-butter or tuna-fish sandwich?"), or make her part of the planning("Why don't you help me cook dinner/pick out groceries?").

5. **Notice the positive.**
Notice positive behavior when it occurs and provide genuine praise. For example, "That was very nice of you to let your brother play with your toy." Noticing your child when she is using positive behavior lets her know that you respect her.
6. **Be consistent.**
Make sure there are consistent and predictable routines. "We wash our face, brush our teeth, and put on our pajamas every night before we go to bed." Make sure that you are consistent in what you ask and that you follow through on what you say. If you say "you can watch TV after you finish cleaning up" make sure there is enough time for this to happen.
7. **Avoid surprises.**
When there is a change in a routine or schedule, prepare your child ahead of time so he knows what to expect. For example, "Mommy and Daddy are going out tonight, so we won't be able to read you your bedtime story. But why don't we pick out a book together for us to read before we go out?"
8. **Have fun.**
Make sure there is joy and fun in your child's life every day. Many parents find it helpful to play with their children before they have to do housework or errands. Think of what brings a smile to your child's face and make time each day to smile together.
9. **Practice yoga.**
Yoga has many wonderful benefits for kids (and adults!). Some of these include feeling more relaxed, focused and energized.

What We Know About Early Language and Literacy Development

Early language and literacy (reading and writing) development begins in the first three years of life and is closely linked to a child's earliest experiences with books and stories. The interactions that young children have with such literacy materials as books, paper, and crayons, and with the adults in their lives are the building blocks for language, reading and writing development. This relatively new understanding of early literacy development complements the current research supporting the critical role of early experiences in shaping brain development. Recent research supports an interactive and experiential process of learning spoken and written language skills that begins in early infancy. We now know that children gain significant knowledge of language, reading, and writing long before they enter school. Children learn to talk, read, and write through such social literacy experiences as adults or older children interacting with them using books and other literacy materials, including magazines, markers, and paper.

Simply put, early literacy research states that:

- Language, reading, and writing skills develop at the same time and are intimately linked.
- Early literacy development is a continuous developmental process that begins in the first years of life.
- Early literacy skills develop in real life settings through positive interactions with literacy materials and other people.

Early Literacy Does Not Mean Early Reading

Our current understanding of early language and literacy development has provided new ways of helping children learn to talk, read, and write. But it does not advocate "the teaching of reading" to younger and younger children. Formal instruction which pushes infants and toddlers to achieve adult models of literacy (i.e., the actual reading and writing of words) is not developmentally appropriate. Early literacy theory emphasizes the more natural unfolding of skills through the enjoyment of books, the importance of positive interactions between young children and adults, and the critical role of literacy-rich experiences. Formal instruction to require young children who are not developmentally ready to read is counter productive and potentially damaging to children, who may begin to associate reading and books with failure.

What Infants and Toddlers Can Do – Early Literacy Behaviors

Early literacy recognizes that language, reading, and writing evolve from a number of earlier skills. Judith Shickedanz first described categories of early literacy behaviors in her book, *Much More Than The ABCs*. Her categories, listed in the box below, can be used to understand the book behaviors of very young children. They help us to see the meaning of these book behaviors and see the progression children make along the path to literacy. Early literacy skills are essential to literacy development and should be the focus of early language and literacy programs. By focusing on the importance of the first years of life, we give new meaning to the interactions young children have with books and stories. Looking at early literacy development as a dynamic developmental process, we can see the connection (and meaning) between an infant mouthing a book, the book handling behavior of a two year old, and the page turning of a five year old. We can see that the first three years of exploring and playing with books, singing nursery rhymes, listening to stories, recognizing words, and scribbling are truly the building blocks for language and literacy development.

Book Handling Behaviors

Behaviors related to a child's physical manipulation or handling of books, such as page turning and chewing.

Looking and Recognizing

Behaviors related to how children pay attention to and interact with pictures in books, such as gazing at pictures or laughing at a favorite picture. Behaviors that show recognition of and a beginning understanding of pictures in books, such as pointing to pictures of familiar objects.

Picture and Story Comprehension

Behaviors that show a child's understanding of pictures and events in a book, such as imitating an action seen in a picture or talking about the events in a story.

Story-Reading Behaviors

Behaviors that include children's verbal interactions with books and their increasing understanding of print in books, such as babbling in imitation of reading or running fingers along printed words.

Infants 0-6 months

- Books with simple, large pictures or designs with bright colors.
- Stiff cardboard, "chunky" books, or fold out books that can be propped up in the crib.
- Cloth and soft vinyl books with simple pictures of people or familiar objects that can go in the bath or get washed.

Infants 6-12 months

- Board books with photos of other babies.
- Brightly colored "chunky" board books to touch and taste!
- Books with photos of familiar objects like balls and bottles.
- Books with sturdy pages that can be propped up or spread out in the crib or on a blanket.
- Plastic/vinyl books for bath time.
- Washable cloth books to cuddle and mouth.
- Small plastic photo albums of family and friends.

Young Toddlers 12-24 months

- Sturdy board books that they can carry.
- Books with photos of children doing familiar things like sleeping or playing.
- Goodnight books for bed time.
- Books about saying hello and good-bye.
- Books with only a few words on each page.
- Books with simple rhymes or predictable text.

- Animal books of all sizes and shapes.

Toddlers 2-3 years

- Books that tell simple stories.
- Simple rhyming books that they can memorize.
- Bed time books.
- Books about counting, the alphabet, shapes, or sizes.
- Animal books, vehicle books, books about playtime.
- Books with their favorite TV characters inside.
- Books about saying hello and good-bye.

Make Sharing Books Part Of Every Day

Read or share stories at bedtime or on the bus.

Have Fun

Children can learn from you that books are fun, which is an important ingredient in learning to read.

A Few Minutes is OK—Don't Worry if You Don't Finish the Story

Young children can only sit for a few minutes for a story, but as they grow, they will be able to sit longer.

Talk or Sing About the Pictures

You do not have to read the words to tell a story.

Let Children Turn the Pages

Babies need board books and help turning pages, but a three-year-old can do it alone. Remember, it's OK to skip pages!

Show Children the Cover Page

Explain what the story is about.

Show Children the Words

Run your finger along the words as you read them, from left to right.

Make the Story Come Alive

Create voices for the story characters and use your body to tell the story.

Make It Personal

Talk about your own family, pets, or community when you are reading about others in a story.

Ask Questions About the Story, and Let Children Ask Questions Too!

Use the story to engage in conversation and to talk about familiar activities and objects.

Let Children Tell the Story

Children as young as three years old can memorize a story, and many children love to be creative through storytelling.

**This newsletter can be found at: <http://www.88thservices.com/>
under the heading: Child and Youth; Wright Field North CDC**