



# Parents as Teachers

## Columbia Public Schools

### A Newsletter for Parents of Preschoolers

September, October, November 2011  
555 Vandiver Drive, Columbia, MO 65202  
[www.columbia.k12.mo.us/pat](http://www.columbia.k12.mo.us/pat)  
(573) 214-3955

#### Dear Parents,

This issue expands on topics found in Dr. Gerald Newmark's book, "How to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children". Dr. Newmark contends that children and adults have five critical needs for emotional health. They are the need to feel respected, important, accepted, included and secure. Last time I shared ideas on how parents can help their children feel respected. Today I'd like to cover the areas of feeling **important and accepted**.

Dr. Newmark says, "*Feeling **important** refers to a child's need to feel: "I have value. I am useful. I have power. I am somebody."* This need is evident at a very early age. Pressing the button in an elevator – me, me! Children want to do things for themselves and so often we get in their way. Involve your children and ask their opinion. If children do not feel important, if they don't develop a sense of value in constructive ways, they frequently seek negative ways to get attention, to feel that "I am somebody". As a parent of very young children you can make your child feel important from the time they are infants. Hugs, kisses, smiles and comforting all tell babies that they are special. In fact children whose parents are affectionate have higher self-esteem. Acknowledging your child's feelings and showing her how to express them appropriately helps her know that she is okay. Involving your preschooler in the simplest household chores lets them know that they are an important part of your family.

He also says, "*Children have a need to feel **accepted** as individuals in their own right, with their own uniqueness and not treated as mere reflections of their parents, as objects to be shaped in the image of what parents believe their ideal child should look like. Trivializing, ignoring or ridiculing a child's feelings or opinions is a rejection which weakens the relationship. Paying attention to and discussing them, even when you do not like or disagree with what you are hearing, strengthens the relationship.*" Parents need to understand that their child's feelings are neither right nor wrong. Certainly all adults have had plenty of times when they got angry, frustrated or were just plain cranky. Making sure our little ones know that we understand them can be achieved easily with words like, "I can see that you're mad when your sister takes away your favorite doll. Let's go talk to her about sharing with you".

Remember that raising emotionally healthy children is an ongoing process. "Life" will bring us many opportunities to help our kids feel **important and accepted**. [www.emotionallyhealthychildren.org](http://www.emotionallyhealthychildren.org)

Belinda Masters  
Coordinator, Parents as Teachers

#### Upcoming Hearing & Vision Screenings

For children ages 6 months to 5 years – PAT Office, 555 Vandiver

- Upcoming Dates:
  - Wednesday, Sept. 14, 9:30 to 11:30 AM
  - Thursday, Oct. 13, 4:30 to 6:30 PM
  - Wednesday, Nov. 9, 9:30 to 11:30 AM

No appointment is necessary. Please sign in upon arrival, as screening slots are available on a first come--first served basis. We appreciate your patience. The wait time varies depending on the number of families participating. This service is offered to our families at no charge. The vision screening for *amblyopia* and other eye conditions does not serve as the eye exam mandated for incoming Kindergartners. Please consult your health care provider for information about this eye exam.

- Hearing Screenings courtesy of the MU School of Health Professions
- Vision Screenings courtesy of the MO Lions Eye Research Foundation

# General Parenting Information

## Spending time together...

Most parents value spending time with their children. But all too often our lifestyle doesn't lend itself to "togetherness." Even when we plan special time with our children, things don't always go smoothly.

Here are some tips for helping make the time spent together happy and productive for all:

- If you spend time at work during the week and your child spends the majority of time in school or at childcare, staying home and having an unstructured day during the weekend might be a better way to nurture a relationship than going to see a movie or visiting the zoo.
- A relaxing time doing what you all enjoy – which may be as simple as fixing pancakes for breakfast or going on a hike – may be the best use of your time.
- Do something with your children that you like to do. If you do something you enjoy, the pleasure is often contagious. What about a game of miniature golf? Go swimming together. Play croquet.
- Consider the basics: hunger and sleep. It's difficult to have fun with a tired or hungry child (or adult, for that matter). Try to keep naps on schedule. Eat an early lunch if you're going out for the afternoon, or take along a simple lunch.
- Sometimes let children join in your projects. The adult world is appealing to children. After all, children want more than anything to be "big". They also want to spend time with their parents. For example, while you're making dinner, put a plastic tablecloth on the floor. Give your youngster a pan of water (not very deep) and some potatoes to wash with a vegetable scrub brush.
- Make a short list of four or five activities you can all participate in. Then let the kids choose the one they'd like the most. This helps them feel like they are part of the family, and that their preferences are considered.

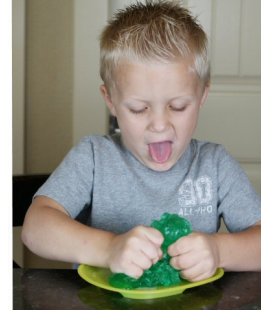
We need to manage ourselves to make time for what's important to us. But that isn't always easy. Kids are kids for only a short time. Building a strong relationship with them now means you can enjoy the rewards for a lifetime.

~Growing Together, 2011

## Kids love 'slime'...

Of course, parents think that 'slime' is gross, and that's probably the truth!

But kids love to mess around with it, and sometimes play like they're "sculpting."



Here's how to make your own slime:

- Start with a quantity of water, and slowly add cornstarch, mixing with your hand (or your child's hand).
- Add enough cornstarch so that the slime feels wet when you're pouring it, but feels dry when touched.
- Color can be used but do it first by adding powdered tempera to cornstarch before mixing or add food coloring to the water before mixing.



Is this really art? Who knows, but the kids enjoy it enormously!

~ Growing Together,  
February 2011



## Good News!

Because we have seen slight increase in funding, we are expanding enrollment to include any "first-time" parent who is expecting or has had a child born since January 1, 2011. Please share this wonderful news with your friends, families and neighbors! Interested parents should call 214.3955 to enroll in the PAT program.

# General Parenting Information

## Cheap Eats for Good Health?

Yes! Nutrition expert Johnny Bowden, Ph.D., C.N.S., author of *The 150 Healthiest Foods on Earth*, suggests these four affordables to please young palates and nourish growing bodies.

- Bananas: Full of potassium, a vitally important mineral that balances out sodium intake and helps to build strong bones
- Grapes: A sweet low-calorie snack (try freezing them) that contains potassium, fiber and vitamin C
- Plain yogurt: A good source of calcium and probiotics, the “good” bacteria that gives a boost to kids’ immune systems (sweeten with fresh berries).
- Sweet potatoes: Packing beta carotene and a slew of other carotenoids, plus vitamin A, lutein, and zeaxanthin – three nutrients that promote healthy vision.



~ Health & Wellness

## Building confidence...

Parents can encourage their child to demonstrate confidence in herself. How? By helping her learn to reflect positively on her own accomplishments and good qualities.

Self-pride is essential to self-confidence. If she’s doing a good job at something, make a point of asking her how she feels about what she’s doing.

Let her know that you think she should feel proud of herself “for working so hard”, “for helping out her little sister”, “for sticking with such a hard job”, and so on. Be specific in your feedback.

Think about having a time every day, perhaps at dinner, when each of your children can report on something that they did or that happened to them that they feel good about.

~Growing Together, November 2010

## Ways to Say “No”...

- That’s not an option right now.
- Say it in a funny way, i.e. “Never in a million trillion years!”
- That’s not appropriate.
- I am not ready for you to do that yet. (Great for teens).
- For a younger child, use a distraction.
- For a youngster that has something you don’t want him to have say, “That’s not a toy.”
- No, but I would be willing to ...
- Walls are not for coloring. Here is a piece of paper.
- Tell them what to do instead i.e., “Water needs to stay in the tub.”
- This is not negotiable.
- Later (but honor this).
- “After you pick up your toys”.
- Explain why. Process.
- Establish a learning and play environment where there are minimal “no’s”.

~Mack/Vitto, MAISD 2004



## Baby Exercise

Your tiny tot can benefit from a gentle physical “workout”

By Alice Sterling Honig, Ph.D.

With their wiggly, squiggly enthusiasm and Gumby-like flexibility, babies are born to exercise and stretch. Their fresh bodies are primed to become stronger and more able; taking advantage of this opportunity with some gentle physical activities benefits not only their muscles, but their minds, too.



As with adults, exercise can boost your baby's mood because it releases endorphins that block pain and reduce tension. Physical movement also helps develop strong brain-to-muscle connections that improve gross motor skills. You might even consider joining her in a “workout.” It's a great way to bond while both of you work off some energy.

### Lift That Infant

The most natural way to promote exercise in your baby is simply to give him time to roll and kick on his own on a soft surface, such as a blanket on the floor. When he's on his back, let him grasp your fingers firmly and then offer gentle guidance as he sits up. Move carefully and be sure to support him as needed; in early months, babies don't yet have good control of their neck muscles.

To include your baby in your own exercise routine, try:

**Lifting** him over your stomach while you lay on the floor; do several sets of reps.

**Carrying** him in a baby sling on your chest while you do squats or take a brisk walk around the neighborhood.

**Dancing** with him to your favorite tunes.



### Tote That Toddler

The action ramps up when your little one starts to crawl and walk. Following her as she explores the yard is a simple way to exercise at this stage. Spending time together playing gentle games like tag, doing yoga, or practicing going up and down the stairs (stand behind her as she pulls herself up and teach her to safely descend “tush first”) are also low-key ways to work more movement into the day.

## Crib Notes

A recent study found that an average of 26 children under age 2 arrive at the ER with a crib-related injury every day. Here's how to reduce the risk.

**Avoid using outdated** baby furniture. In particular, do not use cribs with drop-down sides, with railings that are more than 2 3/8 inches apart, with decorative cutouts in the headboard or footboard, or that have been modified at home in any way.

**Check and repair** any loose, missing, or incorrectly installed screws or other hardware or fittings on the crib or the mattress support.

**Use a firm mattress** that fits snugly into the base of the crib, bassinet, or playpen. Avoid adding pillows, blankets, quilts, stuffed animals, or bumper pads if your baby is younger than 1 year old.



**Inspect the mesh** sidings and coverings, if your crib has them, to ensure that they are properly secured with no tears, holes, or loose threads hanging.

**Make sure your crib** has not been recalled. Go to [recalls.gov](http://recalls.gov) to check on all baby furniture and accessories.

~Scholastic Parent & Child

## Did You Know...

When parents and caregivers notice and respond sensitively to their babies' signals, they are helping their children develop stronger thinking and social-emotional skills.

What it Means for You:

Responding to your baby's cries and meeting his needs is not spoiling him – it's being a great parent. The following three steps can help you understand what your baby is telling you before he can talk:

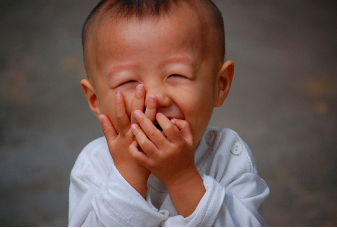
1. **Watch and listen:** Look for patterns in his cries, sounds, facial expressions, and body movements. For example, does your baby suck her fingers when she's hungry?
2. **Understand:** Use your child's signals to figure out what he needs or wants. For example, your baby may rub his eyes when he is sleepy.
3. **Respond:** You might take a break from playing when she arches her back and looks away. Keep in mind that you may need to try several different responses before you figure out exactly what he needs or is trying to communicate.

~Zero the Three

## Got the Giggles?

Simple games help nurture your baby's developing sense of humor. By Alice Sterling Honig, Ph.D.

A baby's laughter may be the sweetest sound in the world.



It's so infectious! When you get to giggling together, the moment is even more rewarding – in more ways than one. Sharing laughter not only makes you both feel good, it builds trust between you while

reinforcing your baby's feelings of approval. There are many ways to interact with her that will get the giggles going and in turn help develop her sense of humor.

**Mismatching.** Babies love when something unfamiliar to them is paired with something familiar – for example, when Daddy takes a wash cloth in his teeth and wags his head back and forth like a dog.

**Funny Sounds.** At around 8 months, fricatives – those sounds you make by pushing air forcefully through your teeth such as “foo foo” or “physicist” – get a big response.

**Body games.** You can evoke laughter with a little surprise hug or gentle tickle when you play This Little Piggy with your baby's fingers. As you get to the pinky and chant, “And this little piggy goes, ‘Wee wee wee all the way home,’” gently creep up your baby's arm and tickle her lightly under the chin.



## Laughing and Learning

Other sources of laughter and joy for babies are less about acting silly and more about skill development and what babies are learning about the world around them, such as:

**Mastery experience.** A toddler who's been struggling with a puzzle may laugh as he turns his wrist just right so the piece fits. Success is a source of joy for little ones.

**Connecting intellectually.** As toddlers begin to understand more about their environment, they express more humor. A 2-year-old may thrust her toes into the armhole of her nightgown and shout, “Shoe!” as she giggles. Because she also thrusts her foot into a sneaker, she makes the connection to shoes by pushing her toes into the armhole.

You can help to encourage your child's developing sense of humor by being silly with her and being open to opportunities to find laughter in everyday activities.

~Scholastic Parent & Child, April 2011

## Toddler Biting

Biting is common for many toddlers. Sometimes they bite because it feels good on their teething gums and sometimes it's because they enjoy the strong reaction they get from adults. Most biting occurs between the ages of 13 months and 30 months and should stop around age three.

How to help your child stop biting:

- **Give children enough toys.** Provide enough toys and activities to curb fighting between children over the toys.
- **Have more than one “favorite” toy.** Keep more than one of the most popular toys on hand so that very young children will not have to wait long to play with it.
- **Watch out for predictors.** Be on the look out for frustrating situations when child might lose control. If necessary, decrease the number of children your child plays near or shorten the playtime.
- **Use timeouts.** Tell your child biting is unacceptable and take him to a designated timeout area for a minute or two. Remember longer timeouts are not effective for toddlers.
- **Teach alternatives to biting.** Teach your child to say “no” if another child is doing something he does not like. Also try offering your toddler a teething ring if he looks like he might bite another child.
- **Keep your child in sight.** Stay very close to your child and if he bites, immediately remove him from the situation. When he is playing well with others, compliment him to help him realize that you value this kind of behavior. This will also help build self-esteem.
- **Be consistent.** Explain that biting hurts others and is not allowed. Consistently remove the child when he bites. This will help him learn that he must stop biting if he wants to play with others.



~Children's Trust Fund, Positive Parenting

## When Your Child is Afraid...

All of us have experienced fear. And as caring parents, we want to protect our children from fearful situations. But we cannot always protect our children, nor can we keep them from being afraid. We can, however, reduce children's fears by:



- Helping them express their fears.
- Distinguish real from imaginary dangers, and
- Become increasingly independent and confident about handling frightening situations they encounter as they mature.

Here are some ideas that will help you help your child deal with fear:

- Talk with your child about a frightening situation. Let him know that he can talk with you about anything – even sensitive subjects. Don't create an atmosphere in which he feels guilty or ashamed if he brings up a touchy subject.
- Allow your child plenty of time to talk over fears. Don't push her into a scary situation. Forcing her to stay in a dark room, for example, will only intensify her fear of the dark.
- Accept your child's fears, feelings, and reactions. Don't deny what your child is fearing, these fears are very real to her. Ridiculing, or shaming her will make her hide her feelings from you.
- Tell your child the truth about frightening events. "Yes, it may hurt when you get a shot. So, it's okay to yell and make faces, but you need to hold still." Don't deceive your child about stressful or frightening events. Providing information about the hospital (or death or divorce) isn't harmful to a child; deceiving him is.
- Involve your child in decision-making and problem solving about frightening situations to enhance his feelings of power and competence. Ask, "What do you think would help a child who is afraid?"
- Provide books with stories about other children experiencing fear. And let your child use art and puppet play to express feelings and rehearse solutions to frightening situations.



- Suggest ways your child can cope with fears: "Some people who are afraid of the dark carry a flashlight or use a nightlight. What would make you feel better?"

Don't limit your child's options for adaptive behaviors by emphasizing the negatives: "Don't cry!" "Don't act like a baby!" Instead, suggest what the child **can** do.

*~Growing Together*

## Will it float?

Children are natural scavengers, so why not make them collectors for a purpose?

Suggest that children look around for things that are expendable – twigs, leaves, stones, egg shells, pencils, straws, Popsicle sticks, aluminum plates, ping pong ball, napkin, comb, and so on.

The objective is to predict whether or not these objects will float. To test the prediction, use a large container with water and check floating vs. sinking.

In addition to the actual experience, kids will learn about the words that describe water. For example, you can discuss the different sounds made by water – splashing, bubbling, dropping, roaring, and trickling.

How about the way water feels? Hot, cold, lukewarm, icy, fast running, slow running.

What are the various uses of water? To drink, play in, wash clothes, cook with, water gardens, clean windows and take a bath.

And finally, how many places can you name where water is found? Lakes, oceans, streams, inside plumbing, puddles, dams, ditches, ponds, fountains, and so on.

*~Growing Together*

## Good manners start early - at home

The basics of good manners for children are:

- Respecting other people's property and privacy;
- Behaving well at the dining table;
- Not being rowdy in public;
- Not interrupting or contradicting;
- Not demanding one's way all the time.

Choose the manners that are most important to you and your family and concentrate on those.

If you start teaching manners consistently and with purpose in the preschool years, they should be a habit by the time a child enters school.

*~Growing Together*

## Literacy Links with Sarah Howard



Children & Youth Services  
Coordinator  
Daniel Boone Regional Library

Learning to read begins before children start school. Help your children develop early literacy skills now; this makes it easier for children to learn to read once they begin school.

Five of the best ways to help your child get ready to read are:

### Talking, Singing, Reading, Writing and Playing.

**Writing tip:** Many activities that young children enjoy are terrific for developing the fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, which they need for writing. Encourage your child to cut paper with child-friendly scissors, place beads on a string (or pasta shapes on a shoelace), play with blocks, and do simple jigsaw puzzles. Punch a basic design – a letter, a boat, a flower – in a piece of cardboard. Your child can lace a shoelace or string through the holes in the design. Even pinching spring-loaded clothespins can help build the muscles your child will use for writing.

## Special Guests at the Library

### Tickles and Tunes with Kathy Reid-Naiman

Wednesday, September 7  
9:30-10:00 AM or 6:30-7:15 PM  
Children's Program Room

Songs, fingerplays, tickles and tunes, to delight and entertain even the smallest child. We will reach for the stars, zoom to the moon and hop like bunnies. We may even dance and sing. We will identify the colors of our clothes, tell a story with our hands and sing a few of our very favorite songs. Canadian musician Kathy Reid-Naiman is a full time children's performer with 11 award winning recordings. Ages 5 and younger with adult.

### Get in the Game, Read!

Tuesday, October 4  
6:30-7:15 PM  
Children's Program Room

Join Mike Alden, Director of Athletics for MU, and Spencer Kane, co-host of "The Closers" on KFRU, as they read some favorite preschool story time books to help highlight the importance of men reading to children. Library staff will also be on hand with songs and activities. Families.

### Dino O'Dell Concert

Thursday, November 3  
9:30-10 AM or 6:30-7:15 PM  
Children's Program Room

Dino O'Dell, the musical alter ego of Kevin Dolan, entertains children with his lively original tunes. Come tap your toes and sing along with some of Dino's silly songs, including selections from his newest recording "Itty Bitty Monsters." Recommended for ages 2-8.

For story time information and other programs visit the Daniel Boone Regional Library website at:

[www.dbri.org](http://www.dbri.org)



## Thank You!

We so appreciate donors who have provided books, supplies & materials – either "in kind" or through gift cards or monetary donations! Your gifts truly make a difference.

- Chamber of Commerce Early Childhood Subcommittee
- Booneslick Kiwanis
- Adrienne Bringham
- Laura Muhlenbrock
- Meredith & Norah Stone
- Robin Hogan

## Free Screening Service

### Why have your child screened?

Screening is a quick and effective way to look at a child in comparison with other children his age. It can determine whether or not a child is developing within the normal range for his age.

### Who can be screened?

**Infant/Toddlers: (6 months to 34 months of age).** Call **214-3955** to schedule an appointment for your child. Screenings are held at the Parents as Teachers office, 555 Vandiver Drive Columbia, MO. This service is for any infant/toddler who is **NOT** receiving home visits from Parents as Teachers. PAT families have screenings conducted in their homes during personal visits.

**Preschoolers: (36 months to Kindergarten entry).** Call **214-3585** to schedule an appointment for your child. Screenings for this age child are held at the Field Building, 1010 Rangeline Columbia, MO. This service is for all children who reside in the Columbia Public School District. Screening results for this age group can be used to determine eligibility for Title I Preschool admission and Early Childhood Special Education services.