



December 2009

NEW DIRECTIONS

Early Childhood Direction Center

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ECDC is a regional clearinghouse that provides free information, referral, technical assistance and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with children birth to five with suspected or diagnosed delays or disabilities.

We provide ongoing community training programs for both parents and professionals.

ECDC is funded by New York State Education Department and hosted by Women and Children's Hospital.

If you would like to be included on our list serve to receive the latest federal, state and local updates, please send an email to vrubin@kaleidahealth.org and indicate whether you are a parent or a professional.

Selecting Toys for Children with Special Needs



Play is what children do; it is how they grow and learn. The importance of play in a young child's life cannot be over-stated; it impacts all areas of development. Toys are the tools for play. They become favorites when your child successfully uses them in a variety of ways. Making sure this is possible is critical when selecting toys. Toys can be found in specialty catalogs or "off-the-shelf" in local stores.

There are specialized toys designed specifically for children with disabilities. Most of these toys are designed for children with significant disabilities and combine easy access with multi-sensory feedback.

Most recently, commercial toys include features that make them easier to use by more children than ever before. Features include volume controls, large, raised buttons, and intuitive design and encourage flexibility, creativity and usability in play. Look for toys with such features.

Toys with universal design characteristics (products that can be used by all people) combine multiple features to offer flexible, adjustable, and accessible toys for more children to use. These toys benefit both children with and without disabilities by providing opportunities for all children to play together side-by-side.

When children play, they...

- play because they WANT to.
- control what they play with and how they play.
- decide when to play with a different toy or object.
- choose when to start and when to stop.
- are active and have FUN!

Information for this article can be found on the Let's Play! Website.

More information can be found at <http://letsplay.buffalo.edu/toys/toys.htm>.

There are also toy catalogs for children with special needs at the following websites:

http://www.fisher-price.com/US/special_needs/

and

<http://trus.imageg.net/graphics/corp/diff-abled-guide-2009.pdf>



Ask ECDC

Dear ECDC,

I have a 3 year old son with language delays and a 2 year old daughter. I am hearing a lot about “reading readiness.” I even see commercials for programs to teach your baby to read. My children won’t be going to school for a few years. Should I be teaching my children to read?

Melissa G.

Dear Melissa,

Children are learning from the moment they enter the world. Children are eager to connect with the adults in their lives, and it is through these relationships that they gain the confidence they need to learn. The relationships and experiences that children have during their first years are the foundation for their growth and development, including literacy skills.



Because children learn best through relationships and play, flashcards and worksheets are not the most appropriate way to develop reading readiness skills. However, there are many everyday activities that you can do with your children that will help them develop the foundation for reading,

- Talk to your children to help them learn to speak and understand the meaning of words. Point to objects and describe them as you plan and do daily activities together.
- Read to your children (even babies) every day. This is a wonderful way to spend special time with them and for them to hear new words and ideas. Reading to your children is one of the best ways to help them learn.
- Use sounds, songs, gestures and words that rhyme to help children learn about language and its many uses.
- Take children’s books and writing materials with you whenever you leave home.
- Point out printed words in your home and other places you take your children such as the grocery store.

- Spend as much time listening to your children as you do talking to them.
- Help your children see that reading is important. Set a good example for your child by reading books, newspapers and magazines.
- Limit the amount and type of television you and your children watch. Better yet, turn off the TV and spend more time cuddling and reading books with your child. The time and attention you give your child has many benefits beyond helping your children be ready for school.

These everyday activities and the time you spend with your children will provide a good foundation for early literacy skills.

Tracey Banks

Child Development/Inclusion Specialist

The above tips are adapted from:

<http://www.osepideasthatwork.org/ParentKit/rdngtipsParents.asp>



Coming in the Spring at Niagara County Community College

It has been brought to our attention that community members and others could benefit from educational non-credit courses on the topic of people with special needs. A group of professionals, parents and others are working to create a series which will meet this need. For more information about these up-coming courses

please check out the website at
www.niagaracc.suny.edu/wfcd/lp