

December 2010

Dear Families,

Lilian Katz, a well known leader in teaching, parenting, and the social development of young children, shares her thoughts about the goals of education: "...To me, it is about developing in the young certain dispositions. These dispositions should include being reflective, inquisitive, inventive, resourceful, full of wonder (wonder-full), and perhaps puzzlement too. These dispositions should also include the habits of searching for evidence; dispositions to be tender, courageous, caring, compassionate, and include some humor as well."

A great way to develop such dispositions (or character) is to spend quality time with your child, especially reading with them. Books can provide hours of fun, wonderment, learning and reflection. Books can characterize tenderness, courage, compassion and caring. So when should you start this experience? What makes sense developmentally? We know the steps ... babies learn to speak first, and then later they learn to read, but what happens between these two great accomplishments?

1. The initial wiring for hearing is connected during the fifth month in utero. Babies begin to hear sounds at that time. So literally, when we start talking and reading to our belly, we know that we are contributing to an infant's auditory development.
2. An infant's sense of hearing matures around the fifth month. So, talking and reading to infants and toddlers will contribute to the development of their vocabulary and syntax (rules of language).
3. Between the ages of 2 and 6 years, a child's vision matures. Small muscle coordination develops and critical thinking skills emerge. So letting your children turn pages and read a story back to you allows them to improve their listening skills, as well as express feelings and ideas in words.

Reading to children of any age is crucial ... and fun! The more opportunities children have to explore language, the better. Reading books with children

of any age helps them to share adventures, practice rhyming, singing, looking for patterns and matching sounds with symbols.

But how do you choose books for children of various ages? A basic suggestion is to have children choose their own books as soon as they start showing a preference for one over another. EzineArticles.com suggests you:

- Find the children's section of your local library. Get to know the librarian, who can be a great resource.
- Find out what your child is interested in and help choose books that are related to his or her interests.
- Ask friends, family, and teachers what books their children have enjoyed; try a book swap.
- If your child does not like a book you are reading together, put it away. Reading is a fun time to share, not a time to fight.
- Again, again, again! Children may want to read the same book many times, even if you think they have outgrown it.
- Use book lists generated by various literacy organizations; they usually have good suggestions. For example: American Library Association, International Reading Association and Children's Book Guild.
- Look for books that you will like reading aloud. Your enjoyment will shine through and become contagious.
- Try out different kinds of books to see what appeals to your children.

Providing rich experiences for brain development and then leaving children to their own unique timetable is still the best practice. Above all, have fun! Show your children the joy of reading and how it can open up a brand new world.

Respectfully,
The Education Team

Magic in the Air

With the onset of December, there is a sense of magic in the air – the twinkling light reflected in the eyes of a child, the crackle of a fire spreading coziness, the warmth that comes from a gathering of friends and family. Whatever you believe or celebrate, there is a hint of magic as we breathlessly await the arrival of a brand new year.

You hold the power to create moments full of wonder and magic for your child. Through the month of December, or any time of the year, use one (or all) of the five ideas below to create memories for the young ones in your life.

- Turn off the overhead lights and eat to the twinkle of holiday lights. Even if holiday decorations are not a part of your family's traditions, you can plug in some lights, throw a blanket on the floor and picnic among the wonderful blinking colors.
- Put on some favorite music (seasonal or not), cut a colorful sheet, towel or piece of paper into strips, and dance with reckless abandon. When you have both collapsed into tired heaps, you can laugh while remembering the stellar moves you displayed.
- Even if it is cold, bundle up and take a walk around the neighborhood to view the lights. Vote on the houses that are your favorites. Find the houses with the most lights. Discuss any house you think went overboard. Stand quietly in awe and take in the house you most admire.
- Make giant mugs of lukewarm chocolate, pull the furniture cushions on to the floor and make a date to cuddle and watch a favorite program. Share a blanket as you laugh together at the funny parts, cry a little at the sad parts, and cling to each other during the scary parts.
- Take advantage of the early dusks to sit at a window and wonder at the stars with your child. Make wishes on the first stars you see (write them down so you can keep track of them). Count how many stars you can find. Look for pictures in the star formations. Discuss what it might be like to travel to a space.

What is Tutor Time® LifeSmart™?

Tutor Time® LifeSmart™ was designed by early childhood specialists and national experts to prepare children for kindergarten, elementary school and beyond. Because we know that our society places a strong emphasis on particular academic disciplines, the Tutor Time LifeSmart curriculum gives children particularly strong foundations in:

Reading & Writing

Our WordSmart™ and Phonics Express programs support and guide emerging writing skills in large and small group activities. The Book Center provides children with a quiet place to explore quality literature. The Language Center provides them with the tools and materials they need to explore the written word. Journaling and interactive activities extend learning at home.

Mathematics

Our MathSmart™ program means that counting, numbers and mathematical concepts play an important role in Tutor Time classrooms. The Math Center gives children daily opportunities to join in number games, sort and investigate patterns. During MathSmart Circle Times, teachers lead activities that allow children to actively explore important math concepts.

Science

Our NatureSmart™ Circle Times give children the chance to perform experiments, investigate properties and observe cause and effect. The Nature Center provides children with a rich array of natural materials and tools, encouraging them to explore their understanding of the natural world and actively build scientific thinking skills.

If you have questions about the Tutor Time® classroom experience, please speak with your director or contact us at ttinfo@tutortime.com.

TUTOR TIME
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While it is easy to focus on magic during the month of December, look for ways to weave in these special moments throughout the year. Make a “Special Time” jar. Use colorful paper to decorate a clean and empty jar. On slips of paper, write things that you can do together. These might include; reading a story, visiting a library, eating breakfast for dinner, getting ice cream, playing a game, going for a walk, etc. Fold the slips and put them in a jar. Once a week, your child can pick one of the strips. During that week, you and your child will find the time to complete the activity that s/he drew.

For the young child, it is these moments of silliness and togetherness, as opposed to grand gestures, that create the magic of childhood. Embrace and revel in your role as the one who can make them happen.



Bring the Learning Experience Home

Tutor Time® is committed to providing an enriching learning experience to every child in our care. But we also know how important it is for families to incorporate educational activities into their home as well. Here are some great things to do with children of all ages!

Infants

The next time you give your child a bath, try this fun activity. Fill a spray bottle with warm water and set it to the mist setting. Spray your child gently on her fingers with the misty water. Does she seem to like it? Change the setting, and spray your child on her toes. Which does she like best?

Young Toddlers

Find some empty containers around your house like a laundry basket, a shoe box, large pots or bowls. Bring out some of your child’s stuffed animals and encourage them to give a ride to their toy. Choose an animal and a container and follow them in their travels.

Older Toddlers

The next time you receive junk mail at your house, don’t throw it away; let your child have fun tearing it into pieces for you instead. Place a box or recyclable container next to them and let them rip into it. What a great way to shred your unwanted mail. When your child is finished, simply throw the container away.

Preschoolers

Place some of your child’s favorite toys in front of you. Ask your child different questions about the toys such as, “Can you find the biggest toy? Guess which toy you think is the heaviest. Which toy is the most recent one you received? Pick out the toy that has the most blue in it. Which toy is the loudest or quietest?” Have fun coming up with different ways of describing the toys.

School-Agers

You will need two pieces of paper and a pencil. Write the word Spring on one piece of paper and Winter on the other piece of paper. Ask your child to think about things common to each of the seasons. Some ideas could be the weather outside where you live, certain activities you do in the spring or winter, clothing you wear, foods you eat, or any holidays or special occasions. Write down the different ideas your child comes up with.



Knowing Me

Have you walked into your child’s class and seen a child all by himself? If your answer is “Yes” you may have wondered why that child was all alone. You probably wondered if the teacher even noticed. The truth is that many children find time alone refreshing. This child is developing his MeSmarts™.

Tutor Time teachers foster the development of MeSmart children in many different ways. Children spend time in large groups picking out their favorite things and organizing them on a chart. Classrooms have the Me Cube for children to relax in a quiet area and think about what matters to them. In the Movement Center, children develop their MeSmart skills by learning the different ways their bodies

can move. In small groups, children talk about their feelings, what causes them, and the different things they do when they feel different ways. Through these experiences, and many more, Tutor Time classrooms support children in their MeSmart development.

The next time you walk into a Tutor Time classroom and see a child working alone, it is not because they haven’t been invited to join other children or teachers. This child has chosen to spend time alone engaged in an experience that interests her. In a few moments, the child will move to another area, joining a group where she will work on developing her PeopleSmarts™!

Creating Character

One of the books we will use this year is *Ira Sleeps Over* by Bernard Waber. In this story, a little boy is going on his first sleepover. While excited, he also struggles with the idea of taking his sleeping companion, his teddy bear. Will his friend laugh at him? Children will be able to relate to this character as he struggles with being himself in the face of possible teasing.