

November 2009

Dear Families,

With the days getting shorter and the air getting crisper, families may find themselves spending more time indoors. As a result, there may also be an increase in children's screen time, or the amount of time that children spend in front of some type of electronic media. This can include television, computers, electronic games, and/or DVD's or other movie formats.

While these forms of media are often marketed toward children, research has shown that all of them can have a negative impact on children's social interactions, health and fitness, and ability to think creatively. Recent research into the subject has led the American Academy of Pediatrics to recommend that children under the age of two have no access to electronic entertainment, and that those over that age be limited to one or two hours daily.

Beyond limiting a child's screen time, there are other things you can try. The website www.commonsemmedia.com offers the following suggestions to help improve the media and entertainment lives of kids and families.

- Share the movie, program and/or game as a family. Talk about what you are experiencing. After viewing, discuss the characters and storylines.
- Make sure that you are countering the images that they see with your own values and beliefs. What would your child have done if they were in the pictured situation? How do you feel about the advertised toy?
- Practice what you preach. Limit the time that you spend in front of a screen (including time on the phone) while children are awake.

- Avoid having any television on during mealtimes. Dedicate this time to talking about your day and other important topics.

Sometimes it is difficult to limit screen time because these forms of media can serve as electronic babysitters. Adults can get things done and know that their children are safe and engaged. Consider the following alternatives that will occupy children's time and minds in a more productive way:

- Keep a box of special toys (nothing with a battery) that you only provide to your child on those occasions when you need some time.
- A glob of playdough and plastic silverware at the kitchen table will keep a child occupied for hours.
- Create a box of dress-up clothes and keep it in the room where you are working. Provide a mirror so your child can see what he looks like with the new clothes.
- Collect junk mail and provide it to your child with pencils and stickers.

Like so many other things in life, using electronic media in moderation will provide your family with a healthy balance. By turning screens off, you could be turning on your child's creativity, critical thinking and so much more.

Respectfully,
The Education Team

If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you'd like to see explored in future issues of this monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at education@tutortime.com. We would love to hear from you!

How to Teach Your Child to Live a Purposeful Life

Often our busy lives seem full of many distractions. With the hustle and bustle of everyday, do you feel like you don't have time to do what you need to or that your skills as a parent could be improved? Here are some thoughts for being a more purposeful parent. None of these are new ideas, but it is often a great idea to review what we already know.

Use everyday tasks as moments to educate:

Your children are watching you all the time and looking to you for guidance in everything. While you are driving the car, shopping, doing the laundry, or going to the doctor's office – they are watching you. How you do things, what you say and the choices you make are opportunities for educable moments. Use time with your little one to enjoy conversations, make plans for the week or teach them how to do something new (like sort the laundry or pick the lowest-priced item).

Turn off your technology:

While certain products make our lives easier, others provide distractions that pull us away from our children's attention. If you are constantly checking your emails at home, using a handheld device or talking on the cell phone, break this habit. Do not let technology pull you away from time with your family.

Turn off your child's technology:

While movies in the car for long distance trips can be a blessing, using them for around the town trips may not be necessary. Think about what messages you are giving your children. Can they learn to be entertained in the car in ways other than using technology? How about singing songs together, playing fun guessing games, making up silly stories, or simply watching a whole world of wonderful creatures, colors, shapes, etc. outside the window?

Make time with your child a priority:

We often hear the phrase "quality over quantity." However when it comes to our children, the better phrase is "quality AND quantity." Children need and yearn not only for positive time with us, but also for more time with us! In fact, sometimes it feels like they want all of our time. It is up to us to find a balance that puts our children first.

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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
CHILD CARE / LEARNING CENTERS

www.tutortime.com



Extend the Tutor Time® Experience Into Your Home

There are many ways to support your child's growth and development at home. Here are some activities you can do together that will build all of your child's Smarts.

Infants – Sit on the floor facing your child. Take a favorite toy and drop it so it lands behind you, to the side of you or next to your child. Is your child able to find the toy?

Toddlers/Twaddlers – Gather some of your child's favorite stuffed animals. Hold one up and encourage her to move like that animal or make the animal's sound. Join in the fun.

Preppers – Play some music and encourage your child to move only one body part (like his leg, arm or head) to the music.

Preschool/Pre-K – Roll up a pair of socks to make a ball. Toss the ball back and forth to your child and count how many times you can do this before dropping the ball. Move back two steps and continue tossing the ball back and forth. Does the number change at all?

Kindergarten/Adventure Club – Have your child make a pose using their whole body. Count to 10 while they hold the pose. Now have them change their pose by moving only one body part. Continue changing body parts.

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Plan for the Future:

Think about what you want for your child over the next several years. What character traits are important? What values do you want your child to have? What dreams do you have for your child? Write these down. Then think of what you need to do to make these things come true. Keep this list handy to review on those days when the hustle and bustle of everyday life gets you down.

Remember to be “present” with your children at all times. This is how they will learn to live purposeful lives themselves.

Knowing me

Have you walked into your child's class and saw a child 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 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 him. In a few moments, the child will move to another area where he will join a group and work on developing his PeopleSmarts™!

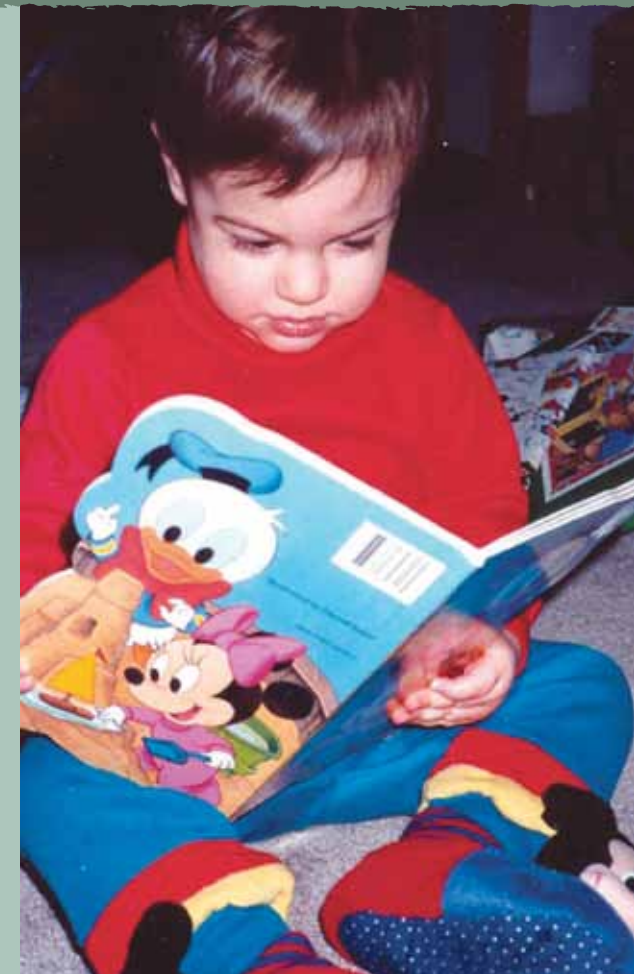
Focus on Learning

At Tutor Time, children feel safe and secure as they are introduced to reading by exploring books in a variety of ways. Research tells us that children are more likely to learn something when it is presented in a meaningful context and in a relaxed environment where children feel comfortable making mistakes.

When our teachers read with children, they learn to:

- Distinguish language used in books from conversational language.
- Anticipate what will happen next.
- Build comprehension of what they are hearing and later can read themselves.
- Put together the relation of characters, especially when they hear a story read again and again.
- Guess the sequence of events that will occur.
- Use social and cognitive skills.
- Have confidence in themselves as learners.
- Be comfortable with making mistakes.

The next time you are in your child's classroom, take a moment to look at the evidence of rich literacy experiences your child is offered, including a class library, labeled shelves and stories posted on the walls.



Creating Character

This program invites children to explore what it means to be a person of character. This month's book is *Otis* by Janie Bynum. This story explores the life of a pig who doesn't like mud, making it difficult for him to make friends. Ask your child what words and actions can be used to make friends.