

## What Does Your Life Say About You

# The Tutor Times

March 2010

### Dear Families,

As 2009 ended, Newsweek Magazine (www.newsweek.com) looked through the biggest media hits (books, movies, television shows and songs) to glean information about what interests us as people.

Unfortunately, but probably not surprisingly, the top five American obsessions were violence, money, sex, youth and vampires. Now, if you were to ask the average person about their priorities, they might not mention these five items, but that is what our choices reflect. If someone were to visit our planet and view our lives from an outside perspective, they would leave with the impression that those five things are the most important to us.

Imagine that someone were to come from another planet and peer into your life. What do your choices say about you? In some ways, your child is like that extra-terrestrial visitor. S/he has been on this planet for just a few years and is learning about it and you by watching every move you make.

Take a minute, look around and reflect on what your life says about you:

- Is your home a place of comfort and togetherness, or money and prestige?
- Are you centered on life as a family, or does your life dictate how your family lives?
- Is your home one of acceptance and joy, or expectations and structure (or a mixture of both)?
- Are your children viewed as their own people, or as extensions of who you want them to be?
- Do the choices you make (how you spend your time) reflect the world in which you want your child to live?

There is no inherent value judgment in the above questions. As human beings, we can set our priorities and live our lives. The important thing is that your choices truly reflect (especially to your child) who you are and what you value.

As Eloise Greenfield said, "People are part of their time. They are affected by the things that happen in their world." As we help our children make sense of this world in which they were born, we can show them that we can shape it by our choices instead of letting it shape who we are to become.

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](mailto:education@tutortime.com). We would love to hear from you!*

### Wonderful Players Become People Who Can Solve Problems

Think back to the happiest moments of your childhood. Chances are they were times of carefree play and moments with little to do besides thinking your own thoughts. Remember sitting on the grass watching ants scurry about? How about rounding up friends for a game of Red Rover or basketball? Do you remember curling up with a comic book or testing out a new paper airplane design?

To adults, it may seem that these activities weren't particularly important. However, child development specialists say they're imperative for cultivating creativity and imagination, as well as expanding intellectual, emotional and social skills. In other words, unstructured child's play, the kind with no rules, few gadgets or equipment, and little or no adult direction, packs a powerful developmental punch.

Jane Healy, a psychologist, educator and author says too many parents and policy-makers just don't understand the importance of play in children's development. "Learning the multiplication tables and the alphabet are very important. But those skills need to reside inside a mind that has been expanded by the imaginative and joyous exploration of our environment and the possibility that it offers for fun," Healy says.

At Tutor Time, we encourage social, emotional and intellectual development in our safe, comfortable environments. We have cozy areas like the inviting Me Cube where children can be alone to read a book, color or play with a stuffed animal while protected from intrusion by others. Family photos and children's art are displayed in our classrooms so children can talk about themselves, and their likes and dislikes. Learning centers like the Pretend Center are filled with dress up clothes; the Language and Art Centers have paper, scissors, and all kinds of writing and painting

### 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](mailto:ttinfo@tutortime.com).

**TUTOR TIME**  
CHILD CARE / LEARNING CENTERS

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## Creating Character

This program invites children to explore what it means to be a person of character. This month's book is Nothing by Jon Agee. It demonstrates how sometimes it's better to have nothing, than something. Work with your child to pick something that belongs to your child that you can donate so another child can enjoy it.

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tools. You will see journals for your child to write, draw or share their thoughts and feelings in (with or without the help of their teacher).

All kinds of open-ended creations (with no directions from adults of "this way" or "that way") can be made when simple materials like these are shared with children. Notice children sitting on the floor in the Block Center building skyscrapers or taking a trip in the train they just built. And in the Nature Center you may see children staring at the workings of an ant farm the teacher brought in or a caterpillar that is making a chrysalis.

What kind of play is your child doing at home or on the weekends? Think about it. Is most of it organized play led by adults like sports, classes and extracurricular activities where rules must be followed? Even the most preferred play things, such as computers and video games are generally scripted by adults. Healy believes that with such a lack of child-initiated play, "We are short-circuiting a lot of their development. That's because play is the way that children work out their emotional issues, their fears, their anxieties. It's the way they develop a self, a way they develop a sense that they are important people who have ideas to share and who can get along with other people."

We would like to leave you with these thoughts from Rhonda Clements, a Hofstra University professor and head of the American Association for the Child's Right to Play. She states that no one knows exactly what academic or life skills are going to be necessary 20 years down the road. "But one thing we can bet on is that we will still need people who can solve problems, which is one benefit of play. The people who brought us the technology of today were obviously wonderful players."

## 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** – Turn off the lights or lower the blinds so the room is dark. Turn on a flashlight and shine it around the room. When it lands on an item, pause and then name it for your infant. Continue shining the light on different items in the room.

**Toddlers/Twaddlers** – Hand your child a wash cloth or bath puff. Name different body parts and encourage your child to pretend they are washing that body part. Don't forget to name uncommon parts (behind your knee, shins, back of your calves).

**Preppers** – Name two body parts and see if your child can touch them at the same time. Switch roles and let your child name two different body parts for you to touch. Be prepared for a work out.

**Preschool/Pre-K** – Make sure you have a piece of paper and a pencil. Take a walk around the house with your child and write down all the numbers you find. Which rooms have the most numbers in them?

**Kindergarten/Adventure Club** – Have a scavenger hunt with your child. Write down different items you want your child to find either inside (a sock, book, piece of paper, shoe, food container, etc.) or outside (various nature items such as a rock, stick, leaf, etc.). Ask your child for some things they would like to find also. Hand over the list and a bag and see how fast your child can find the different items.

## 100 Languages

Painting, molding clay, drawing, walking, writing, dancing and acting are just some of the languages people use to communicate. An internationally accepted philosophy of early childhood education, called Reggio, describes the variety of ways people express themselves as 100 languages. This is not to limit the number of ways communication occurs, but to express how communication is limitless.

Many adults know that people do not just communicate through speaking and hearing. In fact, when people communicate, what is spoken and heard accounts for a small percentage of the message. A person uses their tone, facial expressions, distance and gestures with their body to express a message as well. The same is true with children.

At Tutor Time, we support your child in expressing herself in a variety of ways. She learns different ways to communicate, becoming a WordSmart™ kid, during a variety of experiences. As your child makes a collage, acts out a journal story, or joins others in exploring a Big Book she learns that pictures and words are tools used to communicate.

Through the Tutor Time Phonics Express program your child is invited to write and draw about meaningful experiences in his personal journal, supporting the development of his comprehension skills. He is also encouraged to sign-in, developing

scribbles into his written name. He works with other children to write a family newsletter, exposing him to different formats of the written language. He learns about the structure of letters, words and sentences as he participates in Word of the Month activities, building a sentence all school year long.

Tutor Time also provides learning centers for your child to develop his WordSmarts. In the Book Center your child is provided with a variety of books that are chosen due to his interests. Your child can spend time in this center learning from books that have poetry, representations of other cultures, fantasy and facts. There may be puppets in this center as well, inviting your child to learn about spoken language through play.

The Language Center is another area where your child is provided with tools to develop his WordSmarts. When your child uses the stamps and stamp pads, stencils, and letter charts or placemats, he becomes familiar with the shape and sounds of letters. Listening to recorded stories and songs supports your child in learning the structure of language as well!

Tutor Time offers your child many opportunities to become a WordSmart kid. This is one of the many reasons why your child will be prepared for Kindergarten and learning beyond!

## Focus on Learning

At Tutor Time, you may see children exploring how to take care of their teeth, moving like different forms of transportation, or doing three sets of different exercises. Why is this an important part of the day? These activities build an understanding of a healthy lifestyle.

Studies show that if positive habits in the areas of health, fitness and nutrition are formed in early childhood they are more likely to last a lifetime. These types of activities give children the encouragement they need to begin making good choices in these areas.

The next time you are in your child's classroom, notice the fun props kids use to move in creative ways. You may see scarves, streamers, hula hoops, ribbon sticks, or shapes and paths marked on the carpet with tape. Children's ability to think and focus is directly connected with their ability to move their bodies. So, the more they move, the more deeply they will be able to understand the world around them.

