

## OUR MISSION

Established in 1986, Little Beginnings Child Development Center is a non-profit, year-round, full-day childcare center based in Arlington, Virginia.

At Little Beginnings we believe each child is entitled to responsive and respectful care, attuned to his or her developmental abilities, individual temperament, and interests.

Through a collaborative framework, parents and teachers work together to create an inclusive, safe, and nurturing environment where all children will grow and thrive.

In keeping with NAEYC standards, well-trained teachers implement the daily classroom program, guided by the High/Scope® approach to early learning and Conscious Discipline®.

As members of a cooperative, parents and teachers have both the right and the responsibility to participate in the operation of the organization.

We are a learning community where personal and professional growth is encouraged, and where everyone's perspective—children, parents, and teachers—is valued.

## CONTACT US

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## Director's Corner

### Dear Parents,

Thanksgiving is just two days away as I write this *Small Talk* article, so I am going to take this opportunity to tell you a few of the reasons I am thankful for our school family at Little Beginnings.

- Children come first, and teachers are valued professionals. As a nonprofit organization, we are fortunate that all of the money from tuition goes directly into program costs. While we are mindful of the escalating costs of child care and we budget carefully, the main factor driving our budget process is what is in the best interest of children. Since research shows that educated and trained early childhood professionals provide more developmentally appropriate, nurturing, responsive, and generally better care and educational experiences,<sup>1</sup> more than 80 percent of our budget goes to personnel expenses. We want the best care for our children, which starts with hiring and retaining the best teachers. We acknowledge their professionalism with competitive wages and benefits (including paid time off) and provide a variety of onsite professional development opportunities.
- We have a wonderful outdoor classroom/playground and give children opportunities to play and explore outside daily. Children need to play outside. According to *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*, by Carol Gestwicki, "Outdoor play is not thought of as just a time for children (and adults) to blow off steam, a sort of recess before going back indoors to get down to the serious business of learning. Rather, it is recognized that qualitatively different kinds of play experiences can be had outdoors, different in scale and scope and decibels." As a personal preference, I don't enjoy the great outdoors. I'd rather sit inside and cozy up with a good book. My daughter inherited her father's love of being outdoors, so I appreciate that she has the chance to play outside every day. I will gladly bring in clean, dry clothes as often as needed. I will continue to provide her with a warm coat, too, even though she doesn't think she needs it!
- Parenting is a shared experience. I have definitely had mornings that I gladly hand over my daughter to another set of caring hands because I need a break from my role as mommy. Marceline Cox said, "Parents are often so busy with the physical rearing of children that they miss the glory of parenthood, just as the grandeur of the trees is lost when raking leaves."<sup>2</sup> Little Beginnings was founded as a cooperative by parents who wanted to be actively involved in their child's early education experience. The program we've created

<sup>1</sup> A Guide to the NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standard: Teaching, Relationships

<sup>2</sup> [www.allgreatquotes.com/parents\\_quotes.shtml](http://www.allgreatquotes.com/parents_quotes.shtml)

## Director's Corner (cont.)

provides an enriched learning environment for children AND their parents. The HighScope curriculum provides teachers and families with a child assessment tool that enables them to observe children's strengths and scaffold their learning for continuous growth and development. Parents enjoy regular communication with teachers, whether it's a brief anecdote shared at drop-off or pick-up times, or a detailed journal entry with pictures of their child's classroom adventures.

As we wrap up another calendar year and reflect on all that has happened since January, I encourage you to take a moment and share with your loved ones the specific reasons you appreciate them. From my heart to yours, I wish you well.

*\*In case you did not read the October Board meeting minutes, I am pleased to share the news that Steve and I are expecting our second baby. Hannah will become a big sister in late April. I plan to continue working at LB and enroll the baby in the infant room at the end of next summer.*

## What Your Child Wants You to Know

Excerpted from child development specialist Dr. Jerri Wolfe's book *I'm Two Years Old! Everything Your Two-Year-Old Wants You to Know About Parenting*.

### "Holiday Stress"

Why are we always hurrying to go somewhere? I don't want to go shopping and look at the pretty decorations! Why are you so grumpy? Even finding a place to park makes you angry. I want to be home, where it is quiet and I can take my nap in my own bed with my bear and my blanket. I don't want to go to Aunt JoAnn's for dinner! And I don't want to wear these clothes, they make me feel itchy. There are too many new things for me. I get tired and scared. I like ordinary days. I understand them.

Please try not to disrupt my routine. When I am rested I have the energy for new things. So, please plan outings during my good times, not during nap times. I have real trouble when I don't get to eat and sleep at the right time. And don't try to force me to eat food I don't know. Having food that I like tastes good and makes me feel good, too!



Some people are strangers to me. No, I won't give a hug to Uncle Tom. I want only my parents close to me. Hugs are only for you. You don't hug strangers, do you? Why do people I don't know want to kiss and hug me? I don't like it! And please don't make me sit on Santa's lap, he is really scary.

I need you to spend lots of time with me. When we are home, you tell me you are busy. When we go visiting you talk only to the other grown-ups. Don't you love me anymore? I need you to be with me. I can help you put up decorations, and I love to bake cookies. But most of all, I need quiet time where we can sit and talk and rock.

*Recommend reading with your child: Llama Llama Holiday Drama by Anna Dewdney*

*If there's one thing Llama Llama doesn't like, it's waiting. He and Mama Llama rush around, shopping for presents, baking cookies, decorating the tree ... but how long is it until Christmas? Will it ever come? Finally, Llama Llama just can't wait any more! It takes a cuddle from Mama Llama to remind him that "Gifts are nice, but there's another: The true gift is, we have each other."*

## Curriculum Corner

### Adult-Child Interaction

In the HighScope approach, teachers and children are active partners in the learning process. This balanced approach to adult-child interaction — also called “intentional teaching” — is critical to the effectiveness of the program. It includes techniques for encouraging learning in specific content areas, as well as strategies for helping children resolve conflict. Research indicates that the way adults interact with children plays a very important role in children’s learning and development. These studies demonstrate that in classrooms where teachers are responsive, guiding, and nurturing, children take more initiative and are more likely to be actively involved and persistent in their work.

### Sharing Control: Adults and Children as Partners

In the HighScope curriculum, shared control is central to how adults and children interact. Even when activities are planned by adults around specific concepts, adults encourage children’s initiatives and choices. In play situations, adults follow children’s lead. While teachers may look for opportunities to gently challenge children by introducing a new idea or appropriate vocabulary, they stay within the context of the children’s play goals. HighScope is neither a directive nor an “anything-goes” atmosphere. Instead, it promotes a supportive climate in which adults and children are partners throughout the day.

### Interaction Strategies that Promote Active Learning

- **Adults participate in children’s play.** Adults look for natural openings in children’s play and then join the child or children at their physical level. As pretend play partners, adults take roles assigned by children and stay within the play scenario the children have created.

- **Adults converse as partners with children.** Adults look for opportunities for conversations with children about the activities children are engaged in. Adults make comments about the child’s activities that allow the conversation to continue without pressuring the child for a response.
- **Adults use encouragement instead of praise.** Rather than statements that evaluate or judge, adults make objective, specific comments that encourage children to expand their descriptive language and think about what they are doing.
- **Adults encourage children’s problem solving.** Whenever possible, adults encourage children to solve problems for themselves. While adults could often solve the problem more easily by taking over, the goal is for children to develop their own problem-solving abilities through trial and error.

When children have social conflicts, adults stay nearby to be ready to offer support as needed (but intervene immediately to stop hurtful words or actions). When necessary, adults use the six steps in conflict resolution to help children find a solution to their problem.



## In the Infant Room

With December approaching, the Infant Room has been experiencing lots of new growth and change. First, we would like to welcome Julia to our class. She is a great addition, and both the staff and babies are happy working with her. Also the babies have continued to encounter new experiences, from trying solid foods to crawling.

This month we have encouraged another new experience: sensory play. We have incorporated many different textures, including sand, water, fabric, and even paint! This has allowed the babies to use their hands and feet to feel, explore, and enjoy their new experiences.

We have also continued encouraging the babies to use their large gross motor skills, using tools such as tummy time, baby yoga, and various movement games.

“Tummy time” is a daily 30-minute period for babies on their tummies that promotes upper body strength. Another tool we use is baby yoga, with different positions that encourage the babies to use their gross motor skills at any age or stage in their development. We also play games that encourage reaching and pulling for different objects and toys. Each of these tools is designed to stimulate the muscles and promote rolling over, crawling, and eventually walking.

As the months continue to fly by and the babies continue to grow, there are many different stages that we encounter on a daily basis. We look forward to continuing to assist in their development and updating you on their growth and activities in the infant room!

— Rashawn



## In the Tiny Tot Room

Hello from the Tiny Tots!

The school year is going by so quickly — it's hard to believe the holidays are just around the corner. The Tiny Tots are growing quickly, too, it seems.

As they are getting older, they're becoming quite the social butterflies. They are doing everything from saying "hello" (and "goodbye") to their friends, to playing side by side with them. Sometimes they even join in a game their friends are playing because the Tiny Tots are reaching that age when they begin to actually seek out the company of other children. They most often do parallel play, that is, playing side by side and mimicking each others' actions.

Children instinctively relate to other children, so we are providing them with a good foundation for these budding social relationships. We have a very affectionate group right now, and they love to spontaneously give hugs (and kisses) to their friends and teachers. Sometimes, someone may not want hugs, so we use that moment to help them learn to respect their friends' boundaries. We help them turn that hug into a high-five or maybe just a wave. The Tots often show affection to their friends who seem sad and/or hurt. They are learning how to give gentle touches to these friends, which reflect their growing understanding of emotions.

We've also found meal and snack times to be perfect opportunities to foster social growth. All of our meals and snacks are served "family style." At least one teacher sits with the children to talk with them and support the interaction among them. With no music or toys to distract them, the Tots love to "talk" about what they're eating or what happened that day, or they just like to clink their cups together and giggle. We are really looking forward to more meal time (or anytime) conversations as their vocabularies and social interactions continue to grow.

Think snow! And stay warm. : )

— Anne



## In the Engineer Room

Greetings Engineers parents,

Now that fall has arrived and we are feeling the nice windy days, our Engineers are ready to play and play and play. We are also seeing them be willing to interact more and more among themselves and learning how to do it, and this is the beginning of a journey for our terrific 2s. The article that follows, by Carol Gestwicki, may help us understand a little bit what they are experiencing, their reactions, and the way they think.

### "The Hardest Thing"

By Carol Gestwicki

A couple of months ago, I wrote a column about what children under the age of three can't yet do. Many readers responded with questions about sharing, since I had said that young children just couldn't share.

One mother commented that she has five children and had always "made" them share. She went on, "I agree it hasn't worked at all. In fact, I find that my oldest is especially possessive, even at 13. I'd love to hear how you would suggest approaching the idea of sharing."

Here are some thoughts. It is important to understand how young children develop psychologically. As infants, they are involved in close, warm relationships with parents, and from those relationships come secure attachments.

For the infant, the world consists mostly within the circle of that first relationship, and the accompanying feelings of trust in others.

In toddlerhood, the newly independent individual begins to explore the concept of him/herself as a separate being. For the toddler, that means seeing "what I can do, what I can express, and what I can own." In that exploration, the toddler is wholly focused on *mine*.

You may have seen the toddler's creed:

- If I want it, it's mine.
- If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine.
- If I can take it away from you, it's mine.

- If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
- If it's mine, it will never belong to anybody else, no matter what.
- If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.
- If it looks just like mine, it's mine.

Now all this possessiveness grates on adults who know that peaceful coexistence involves developing a sense of others' rights.

But for the purpose of developing a sense of self, it is a necessary step in the process. As such, parents do well not to teach too soon the lessons of sharing, or even expect such ability until about age three or so.

In the meantime, adults take on the role of arbitrator, helping each child get a turn in some semblance of fairness, but not talking too much beyond "Ginny needs a turn with this," or "You can use this while you wait for a turn." No expectations and no preaching.

Toddlers can enjoy brief sharing experiences when we provide big, stationary things too heavy to be dragged away by one child, and large enough so both children can act on the material at the same time, such as large boxes with two openings or climbing structures.

They also do better when there are sufficient numbers and kinds of toys to avoid possession squabbles.

Around age three, we see that children are moving to an interest in other children. Learning friendly behaviors means learning that the individual must occasionally control one's wishes to please others. This is an appropriate time to begin talking about sharing behaviors.

Parents model sharing — "Let me share some of my cookie with you." They praise first evidences of giving in to others. "Thanks for getting off the swing when Ricky asked you for a turn."

Parents remind children of friendly behaviors such as letting others have a turn with their toys before social encounters.

## In the Engineer Room (cont.)

First sharing experiences are easier when they are not expected with favorite possessions. Children should be allowed to put away a favorite toy or two that they might have trouble sharing with a visiting friend.

Even in families, children should be able to safeguard a special item from use by others. After all, I'll bet you would feel some reluctance in being expected to share your favorite book, CD, or sweater, wouldn't you?

All of this is perhaps the hardest thing we have asked children to do so far in their short lives — to care more about others' feelings and wishes than their own.

So sharing is just not possible until children have first achieved a sense of self and autonomy. Rushing the process only makes children anxious about possessions. Better to wait a while for this important lesson.

*Carol Gestwicki has worked with children and families in schools in the United States and Canada and taught in an early childhood program in Charlotte, NC, for more than 25 years. A wife, mother, and grandmother, she currently works as an early childhood consultant and writes for parents and teachers.*



## In the Preschool Room

Hello Parents!

It's been a very active environment in the classroom over the past few months. We are at that stage of the year where the questions about potty training have begun to surface, and we have been working on some different strategies that help the children get used to trying the potty, even if they aren't wearing underpants already.

In the Preschool classroom, the rule is that all the children will try sitting on the potty, even if they are still in pull-ups/diapers. This has been a helpful strategy because even if the children are not peeing in the potty, they are getting used to the idea of sitting on the potty and trying. Usually, we have the children sit and we help them count to 10, and if nothing comes out that is fine but at least they are trying the potty and seeing what it feels like to sit on the toilet.

We always reward the children with positive reinforcement by telling the children, "You did it! You sat on the potty!" We will even put up a notice on the celebration station in our classroom. We have seen that the more we encourage and help the children try the potty, the easier it becomes for the child to go from the classroom to the bathroom to try the potty.

At home, parents can continue to encourage their children to use the potty and have them put a sticker/star on a board every time that they do use the potty

or simply sit on the toilet. The biggest thing we, the teachers, have seen is that if we simply have the child get into the routine of using the toilet and not making a big fuss about it, the more willing the children will be to try the potty. If they really don't want to use the potty, we don't make a big deal out of it and simply help them change their diaper, and then they can wash their hands and go back in the classroom.

At this age, children will let us know when they are ready, and they will see their friends using the toilet and a little light bulb will go off in their heads telling them "OK, I am ready to start using the toilet and wearing underpants."

The most important thing that we can do as teachers and parents is to simply support the children and encourage them to try the potty but not make a big deal out of it if they don't want to. A saying that we heard a few months ago and have found to be very true is that "Parents/teachers don't potty train children. Children potty train themselves."

We wish you all well and hope you have a terrific holiday.

— The Preschool Team

Here is a helpful web page that might give you some tips on how to start a potty training plan at home:  
[www.startpottytraining.com](http://www.startpottytraining.com)



## In the Explorer Room

When thinking of school readiness, many people think of letters and numbers. Counting is also one of the first things that comes to mind. And while rote counting is important to be able to do, there is really much more involved in mathematics understanding for young children. HighScope has developed a curriculum specifically for developing math understanding called Numbers Plus, which we will be using in the Explorer classroom. Many of the activities align with the Mathematics Foundations Blocks in Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning.

One basic numbers principle that is stressed in both Numbers Plus and Virginia's Mathematics Foundation Blocks is being able to count in one-to-one correspondence. This is when a child is able to count objects by pointing to just one object at a time and giving it one number. Then, once they are able to do that, being able to use the last number counted to say how many objects they have. This is the beginning of concrete thinking in early childhood and is an important step in developing "concrete operations."

Another basic ability is to be able to recognize and make patterns with objects — drawn or observed in books, etc. This is seen as the beginning of algebraic thinking and allows young children to make generalizations and predictions beyond information readily available.

Measurement is another basic foundation block that is recognized both by HighScope and Virginia's Foundation Blocks. This involves making comparisons of length, height, or volume. They may use standard tools of measurement or nonstandard tools, such as unifix cubes, blocks, or anything that has a basic unit. Children will also begin to describe duration of time using appropriate vocabulary (hour, day, month) and use vocabulary such as "hot" and "cold" when talking about temperature.



While geometry is often thought of simply as shapes, other aspects that are also important for developing a sense of space include using and understanding terms that describe objects and their relationships to other things, such as "beside," "above," "under," "over," etc.

Data collection and analysis are also important for children to understand to be able to collect information about things of interest to them and make sense of the world around them. Children will start to learn how to make tally marks to keep track of information and then report back what they have learned. Questionnaires about things of interest may be tallied and then reported back in the form of a simple bar graph.

Computation, or understanding of "more" or "less," is the beginning of adding and subtracting and is also an important foundation block in both HighScope and Virginia's Standards.

Hopefully this gives you a deeper understanding of what we are doing in the classroom regarding numbers and mathematics. Please feel free to discuss or ask questions about the math curriculum with any of the teachers in the classroom.

— Grace

## We All Learn from Each Other

Young children learn in many different ways. They learn through talking, listening, observing, touching, and experiencing. Children also learn from each other. This is true for children both with and without special needs. When children share space together in an integrated classroom, they have hundreds of natural opportunities to learn from each other throughout the day. The child with a speech delay learns how to talk about his plan for work time from his peers who are communicating at an age-appropriate level. The child with a social skills delay learns how to take turns by building a house in the block area with a new friend. The child with attention difficulties learns how to sit in large group and participate in activities with her friends. On the flip side, the child who does not have a special need learns how to help his friend who walks with crutches. Or he learns that not everyone understands how to play safely together — some children need to be reminded with pictures. The children help each other learn.

They can't do it alone, though. Young children often need to be guided through this process. They will need some facilitation to help their play scenarios include those who can't follow along as easily. They will need reminders that it is helpful to slow down and wait for their friends who move a bit differently. This is where the skilled, observant, and kind teachers come in.

As a special education teacher in an integrated program, it is my job to work with all of the children, not just the children with special needs. The general education teachers and I work closely together to make sure none



of the children “fall through the cracks.” That is, we observe the children throughout the day to see where their strengths and weaknesses lie.

Then we tailor our interactions and instruction to meet their developmental needs. We almost always discover that the children with special needs are working on skills very similar to what the children without special needs are working on. For example, most preschool children are learning how to communicate more effectively or how to play appropriately with their friends. Frequently, the children in our integrated classroom are working on the exact same skills, just at varying developmental levels.

This is why integration is so very important ... children learn how to strengthen their skills right alongside their peers, not tucked away in a separate classroom. All children deserve to play and learn in a loving setting staffed by teachers who are watching and learning, too.

— Allison



## Creative Movement and Music

One of the easiest and most effective ways to add music to your child's life is at bedtime. Music listening can be a wonderful addition to their bedtime ritual and soft, quiet sounds can be very relaxing for children. You may even want to listen with your child.

I'm sure that many of you have a collection of children's lullabies and soothing music to choose from. Plus, the libraries have a wonderful assortment of CDs and tapes. There are lullabies from all over the world, and although the children may not understand a different language, music is a universal language we can all relate to. It might be fun to try new and different music each night. Also it would be fun to see what your child's favorite CDs are. Think about playing some music after a bedtime story. Doesn't it sound wonderful to go to sleep with calming, comforting, and peaceful sounds in the background?

— Nancy



## Kid-Friendly Foods

### Pizza on English Muffins

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Cut English muffins in half and place on cookie sheet (cut side up). Spoon on your favorite pizza sauce, or you can even use your favorite tomato sauce. Sprinkle on cheese. Then add your favorite toppings. This is where you can be creative. You can add diced onions and some pepperoni (turkey pepperoni is good). You can even add pineapple and bacon or turkey bacon. Have fun with this. Bake 12-15 minutes or until the cheese is nice and bubbly. Adding fresh basil to the top adds an extra layer of flavor! Children really like having their own pizza.

As always, I am enjoying your little darlings and really like telling you about kid-friendly food.

— Betsy  
Food Service Manager



## Conscious Corner

While at the NAEYC conference in November, I attended a workshop presented by Dr. Becky Bailey titled "Aggression, Tantrums, and Defiance: Significantly Reduce All Three with the Skill of Self-Regulation."

Here are excerpts from the handouts (© 2011 Loving Guidance, Inc.) that I thought parents may find helpful. I welcome you to stop by to talk or email me if you have specific questions about teaching your child(ren) the essential skill of self-regulation.

### The Five Steps to Self-Regulation

#### Step 1: I AM

Child is triggered into a state of upset. Emotions biochemically overtake us and we become them. "I am angry."



#### Step 2: I CALM

Children need assistance in turning off the stress response in their body and calming down their physiology. Begin to move from "I am angry" to "I feel angry."



#### Step 3: I FEEL

Children need assistance in naming and taming the feelings that have overwhelmed them. Once you can name a feeling and become conscious of it, you are automatically better able to manage it.



#### Step 4: I CHOOSE

Children need assistance in choosing strategies that will help them move from the lower centers of their brain to the higher centers of their brain to get back to play or routine activities.



#### Step 5: I SOLVE

Something triggered the child into a state of upset before entering the Safe Place. Whatever happened needs some type of solution.



Self-regulation is the cornerstone skill for all development. It refers to both the conscious and unconscious processes that allow us to regulate our thoughts, feelings, and actions to achieve a goal. Without the ability to self-regulate our emotions become out of control, our thoughts become unyielding, and our behaviors sabotage life goals as we become hurtful to others and ourselves.

### Feelings Are Good Guys, Not Bad Guys

- Feelings are the bridge between problems and solutions. All conflict starts with upset. If you cannot manage the upset, solutions are not possible.



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## Conscious Corner (cont.)

- Feelings integrate the body and readies if for action.
- Feelings provide signals to others communication system.
- Feelings give us messages so we can return to a higher state of adaptability.

### The DNA Process: Coaching Children

D = **Describe** the face, voice, and body signals.

"Your face is going like this." (*Demonstrate*)

N = **Name** the feeling in a questioning tone.

"You seem/sound angry?"

A = **Acknowledge** the child's positive intent, desire, and feeling message.

"You wanted (*name desire*)" or

"You were hoping (*name desire*)."

### Message of Feelings



Angry DNA = Offer a new perspective or skill

Scared DNA = "I will keep you safe. You're safe. I'm here."

Sad DNA = "We will get through this together. You can handle this."

Happy DNA = "All is well. It's a beautiful thing."

### The Safe Place

The Safe Place is the self-regulation center where children practice changing their internal state from upset to calm to maximize their learning potential.

#### Safe Place Teaching Steps:

- **I AM:** Teach children to take themselves to the Safe Place when triggered.
- **I CALM:** Choose one of the four [breathing] strategies.
- **I FEEL:** Name the feeling. "Your eyes are like this. Your mouth is going like this. You seem (*name the feeling*). Breathe with me. You can handle this."
- **I CHOOSE:** Choose additional strategies to embrace the feeling and return to an optimal brain state [relaxed alertness].
- **I SOLVE:** Revisit the trigger that caused the upset and teach additional skills.

Learn more about teaching self-regulation by reading Dr. Bailey's new book, *Managing Emotional Mayhem*, available through the website [www.consciousdiscipline.com](http://www.consciousdiscipline.com).

There are three sessions left in the Conscious Discipline workshop series at LB this school year: January 12, February 9, and March 8. Mark your calendars now! Hope you can join us! I wish you well!

— Mandy  
Certified Conscious Discipline Instructor

Parenting Exchange



**20 Ways to Encourage Children's Resourcefulness and Creativity**

by Karen Stephens, excerpted from Parenting Exchange, August 2004 Issue #22.

1. Encourage curiosity and seeking answers. One of the best ways parents can respond to a child's questions is by saying, "I don't know. How could we find the answer?"
2. Don't stifle and numb creativity with too many manufactured toys. Resist buying kids every accessory marketed with the latest movie or cartoon character so resourcefulness will have room to grow. Dolls are nifty, but kids don't stretch their imagination when we supply every dress and play prop. Pre-assembled kits rob kids of chances to think on their own.
3. Value varying ideas and opinions. Encourage brainstorming by saying: "Well, that sure is one way of looking at it," or "What a GOOD idea, I've never thought of that before. Let's try it!"
4. Encourage exploration. Make specific, motivating comments, such as: "How interesting; you created a secret passage-way with the blocks," or "The way you mixed different greens for leaves makes your tree look very real."
5. Avoid shaming or embarrassing children who experiment through trial and error. Don't say: "What in the WORLD were you thinking of?" Instead offer support, "If that didn't work, try something else; you'll get it." Encourage reasonable risk taking that fuels creativity.
6. Stimulate imaginative, independent thought by posing questions. In projects, avoid telling kids exactly what to do. For instance, when making a birdfeeder say, "I wonder what would hold the cracked corn and sunflower seeds. What would you suggest?"
7. Resist perfectionism. Don't take over a child's project because you can do it better or faster. (Of course, you can!) Likewise, resist putting finishing touches on a child's project to make it perfect. Respect the learning that takes place while a project is made. That process is more important than the final product. With practice, products improve.
8. Avoid discouraging phrases and negativity. Judgmental comments penalize creative experimentation. Resist phrases such as: "No, that's not how you do it; here, let me do it for you," "That would never work," or "Can't you ever do anything right?"
9. Show respect for creative effort. Display children's stories or artwork on refrigerators and bulletin boards. Kids love to see their labors of love at their parents' workplaces, too.
10. Avoid making unflattering comparisons between siblings' work and talent. Please don't say things like: "You sure can't tell a story as good as your brother." Or, "Why can't you paint a pretty picture like your sister; you use all those dark muddy colors."
11. Encourage ingenious humor. Humor helps kids take joy in their creative intelligence. Laugh together often, and don't be shy about saying: "You tickled my funny bone with that one!"
12. Facilitate play; don't dictate it. Kids get a big boost from parents' getting on the floor and really playing with them. During play follow your child's lead. Play should be a dance between you, not a concert with you as sole conductor.
13. Play games that could have different answers. Include "What if" questions in play. "What if we want to build a sand castle? How can we make the sand stick together better?" "What if we made designs on our castle, what could we use to make them?"
14. Play imaginative word games. For instance, devise ways to build a house if you landed on the moon. Or make lists of all the different and imaginative ways you could use a simple household item, like a leaf rake, or a hand mixer. Enjoy wacky answers!
15. Play make-believe games. You know, pretend that you're a monkey. Or pretend to be machines like lawn mowers, popcorn poppers, or leaf blowers!
16. Provide a safe messable place where kids can explore a variety of art materials. Offer recyclables such as

## Parenting Exchange (cont.)

paper and cardboard with crayons, chalk, markers, glue, stickers, finger-paint, clay, etc.

17. Make homemade instruments and put on a concert. Be accepting of all compositions. Make room for movement so spirited kids can show off their grace to the max.
18. Make up cumulative family stories. One person starts a storyline, and then the next has to add to it, then the next. The zanier the plot, the more fun!
19. Change the endings of well-known stories. "What's another way 'The Three Little Pigs' could end?"

20. Play mental gymnastics games with school-agers. These can be knock-knock jokes or puns. Making the brain stretch to establish analogies is also fun. For instance, creative thought percolates when kids state ways a clock and an owl are alike. Or they list all the things a cat and a computer have in common.

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