

A Message From the State Office



Spring is such a magical time of year as the

world begins to awaken and bless us with the wonders of spring time. Sunshine, longer days, budding trees, and soon to be blooming flowers seem to stir up a new found energy.

I would like to thank all of you who supported Parents as Teachers and Early Childhood Education through your advocacy efforts during this past

legislative session. It is comforting to know that early childhood is a priority for so many. Your voice is so important in making positive change. Your letters, testimonials and phone calls to your legislative offices really do have a positive impact.

In this newsletter you will find several upcoming conferences that may interest you and speaks to the needs of our young children and the families that nurture them. Helping our children develop positive self esteem and making them feel secure in such

uncertain times is crucial to their growth as well as the growth of the whole family.

Take some time also for you, as parent educators, early childhood professionals, parents, or as advocates to reflect on your own social and emotional needs. Remember that the work you do is so important. In order to nurture others you must be sure to nurture yourselves. Take time this summer to STOP and "smell the roses".

Enjoy and Celebrate you!!

Inside this issue:

<i>Secure attachments</i>	2
<i>Children and Stress</i>	2
<i>Fairbanks Native Association PAT—Infant Massage</i>	3
<i>AKPIRC</i>	3
<i>Home Visitor Corner</i>	4

Early Childhood Mental Health Institute



May 25, 26 & 27, 2010
Sheraton Anchorage Hotel

This conference will deliver the most up-to-date and innovative approaches to supporting early childhood mental health. Please take a moment to review the conference agenda and workshops being offered, as well as the rich selection of keynote presentations that will be provided throughout the conference.

To register go to: www.ECMHI.com

Any day
is sunny
that is
brightened
by a smile

Children and Signs of Stress

Children become more resilient, or are able to bounce back from stress, when they live in a supportive environment that they can trust. This means that adults play an important role in reducing stress and creating a stress-free environment. Elements of a stress-free environment include having people who listen, having the ability to find hope and finding ways to anticipate stress and learn ways to avoid it.

Here are some ways that adults can help:

- Show how they cope in healthy ways-like staying calm, controlling anger and thinking through a plan.
- Be proactive—tell children about changes in schedules -plan activities where children can show their feelings-like books, art, or puppets.
- Let children know it is OK to feel angry, alone, scared , or sad. Give names for children's feelings and words to help express them.
- Provide ways for children to contribute to the family in meaningful ways
- Teach deep breathing. Ask children to close their eyes and think about a quiet or happy place.
- Help to develop special interests. Children will then feel proud.
- Show caring and warmth

Research shows that children learn how to cope with stress and life changes when they are supported.

Factors that help to support children during stressful times include:

- A healthy relationship with at least one parent or close adult
- Well-developed social skills
- Well-developed problem-solving skills
- Ability to act independently
- A sense of purpose and future
- At least one coping strategy
- A sense of positive self-esteem and personal responsibility
- Religious commitment
- Ability to focus attention
- Special interests and hobbies

Alaska Families: Weaving a Better Future



May 25, 26 & 27, 2010
Sheraton Anchorage Hotel & Spa
Anchorage, AK

The goal for Alaska Families: Weaving a Better Future is for participants to return to their communities better equipped to care for, nurture, and support the young people in their care and their families of origin.

For more information go to www.acrf.org/alaskafamiliesconference.php



Fairbanks Native Association PAT - Infant Massage

The importance of *infant massage* has been the highlight for the past several months at FNA Parents as Teachers program. FNA PAT is offering infant massage classes to parents who are prenatal or have an infant between the ages of 0-6 months. Parents enjoy the special times with their little ones while learning the importance and benefits of

loving touch infant massage. Classes are offered individually or in group sessions to meet the needs of all enrolled PAT families.

The infant massage class covers the following information.

- Easy to follow step by step massage instructions
- History, theory, and practice of infant massage
- Bonding and attach-

ment

- Learning how to read your infants cues
- Benefits of behavioral states
- Relaxation techniques for babies & parents
- Customized instruction: prenatal, prematurity, at risk, disabilities, sleep issues, colic and intestinal difficulties (gas & constipation)

A knock on the front door can bring parents the support they need to nurture their young child's healthy development. Home visiting reaches families where they live by delivering parent support and child development services directly to the home environment.



AKPIRC

Alaska Parent Information and Resource Center

Students and Schools Benefit When Parents Volunteer!

April 18 - 24th was "National Parent Volunteers in our Public Schools Week." In its 14th year, this celebration is an opportunity to say "thank you" for all of the great work parents are doing in our schools. When parents volunteer, students achieve more, stay in school, and continue on to higher education and training!

Interested in becoming a parent volunteer? Consider this... You might offer your

time to support the school by helping teachers with clerical duties, field trips, and assisting in the library. In the classroom, you can share your cultural or local history, or share a skill or information about your career. Tutoring, reading to, or listening to individual students read pays off in higher academic success, enhanced self-esteem and positive behaviors.

If you are interested in learning about more ways to volunteer in your local school, go to www.akpirc.org

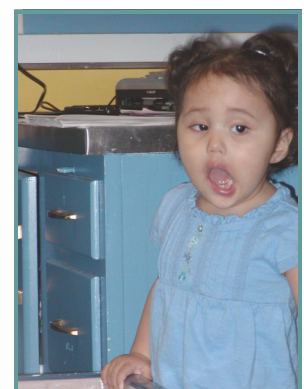
to find our resource, "38 Ways to Volunteer in Schools." Then contact your school and share your ideas for volunteering. You can join other parent volunteers in making a big difference for Alaskan children and schools!

We provide high quality, free resources and training to enhance meaningful partnerships between educators and parents across Alaska.

-From the staff at the Alaska Parent Information and Resource Center

"Of all the things you wear —your expression is the most important."

Janet Lane





Social and Emotional Development Activity for Birth to 6 Months

Love and Trust Building

Children develop trust when their needs are met on a consistent basis.

Materials: None

What to do:

1. Respond to the infant's crying as soon as possible the first few months. Pick up the infant and hold her in a well-supported position so that she will feel secure. Rock the infant gently or bounce her if she responds to this.
2. Lightly swaddle the baby by wrapping her in a blanket with arms and legs securely against her body. (Some infants may calm easier this way.)
3. Try different positions to find the one that relaxes the infant the most. Some infants prefer to be held very firmly, while others feel too restricted if held tightly. Try gently swaying, rocking, or bouncing the infant.

Social and Emotional Development Activity for 18 to 24 Months

Playing with Peers

These activities lend themselves to children playing cooperatively together.

Materials: Large box, Digging utensils, Toys

What to do:

1. Help the child interact with other children in "Row, Row, Row, Your Boat" or "Choochoo" games. Two children can sit facing each other holding hands and rocking together back and forth. The children also can hang on to one another at the waist and pretend to be a train, either sitting on stools or standing and moving on a "track" around the room.
2. Supply props that can help encourage two children to play together: blocks, dolls, a toy broom, dust cloths, phones, dress-up items, doctor set, play kitchen, play dough, sand, crayons, and toy cars and trucks. If the children need encouragement to interact with each other, suggest a script for them to play from everyday life: "Do you want to make cookies (play dough) for the dolls?" "Is it Elmo's (stuffed animal) birthday? Make a party!"
3. Suggest how two children can take their individual activities and make it a shared play activity: "Try pushing your car on Helen's line of blocks," or, "See if Sam wants to give your doll a ride in the truck."

Be sure to check out the Best Beginnings website at www.bestbeginnings.org for more Early Learning Activities.

Many of these fun, brain-building activities appear in the Best Beginnings' Early Learning Activity Guides, available in English, Spanish, and Yupik. Order forms for the free guides are also on the website.

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