Learning positive friendship skills

Friendships can help people feel secure, confident, and likeable. “Making Friends” and “getting along with others” are goals most parents set for their children upon entering preschool. But the foundation for building friendships is laid well before preschool. Learning how to simply establish relationships with others is primary in social-emotional development. Learning how to build relationships begins early as infants establish bonds with their parents and primary caregivers.

Even before children can communicate verbally, infants establish connections with attentive adults by smiling, cooing, and crying. They notice and learn to interpret their caregiver’s facial expressions, gestures, and overtures. With secure attachments to primary caregivers, infants learn that people are social beings who communicate with one another, and who trust and rely on one another. Positive social interactions with parents and caregivers give children the expectation that social interactions are enjoyable and rewarding. As they move through infancy to toddlerhood, children broaden their interest to the actions and interactions of others in their environment.

Infants as young as two months old will turn toward other infants, and by six months they vocalize to get the attention of other children. By the age of nine months to twelve months, they begin to imitate their peers (Epstein, 2009). As their interest in others increases, toddlers approach and begin to play alongside their peers. For these young children, the potential for building friendships is somewhat dependent on where they are and who is close by. Again, adults must take initiative to introduce children to these social opportunities. By the age of two years, toddlers begin to show preferences for specific playmates and may refer to one another as friends. At first these “friendships” begin and end within the context of specific incidents. These early interactions accumulate and are the building blocks for more permanent relationships. For example, the more children play together, the more compatible their play becomes. Toddlers will even adjust their style of play for different playmates. By preschool, children’s relationships with their peers become more skilled in social interactions and seek out playmates with whom they share interests. Older preschool children are able to identify and express the reasons for liking or disliking their peers. Preschoolers’ relationships with peers also become more exclusive, and children often grapple with the idea of having more than one friend at a time.

The adults in early childhood programs have the important role of structuring the learning environment and daily routine, and modeling interactions strategies that promote positive interactions among children. Adults in and out of the classroom can label children’s emotions as well as the emotions of other children and adults. Caring adults can also interpret social and emotional cues in both individual child’s and others’ body language and facial expressions (e.g., looking down, pursing lips, moving over to make room at the table) and can focus on positive as well as negative emotions (e.g., saying “You’re so excited that grandma is picking you up today!” or “You feel frustrated when you have trouble with the scissors”). Books and story times are great times and resources to help children acquire emotional knowledge. Look for opportunities to talk about the characters’ behaviors and possible emotions. Ask children what a character might be thinking, wanting, or feeling. Then ask children how they know.

Again, adults play an active role in helping children learn these skills by facilitating interactions, modeling social language and actions, coaching children as they practice the interactions themselves, and supporting the relationships children build with one another.

Source: High Scope Extensions, www.highscope.org

February Important Dates

*Feb 9th: Early Childhood Community Screening at Marlatt Elementary School, 4-6 pm. 785-776-6363

*Feb. 9th: Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) meeting at noon in Conference room

Family Fun

*Feb. 17th – 20th: The Great Backyard Bird Count. See how many and what kind of birds you can see in 15 minutes each day. (Parents.com)

Love and Logic

*Feb. 25th: Parenting with Love and Logic with Jim Fay & Dr. Charles Fay in Lenexa, KS, $30 per person/session

9 to 12 (A.M.) session: Love and Logic for Toddlers and Preschoolers

1 to 4 (P.M.) session: Putting the Fun Back into Parenting

[www.loveandlogic.com]
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Mouth-Friendly, Three Ingredient Healthy Cookies

Ingredients:
- 2 ripe bananas, mashed
- 1 cup uncooked quick oats
- ¼ cup crushed walnuts or pecans

Directions: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper or spray with cooking spray. Combine the mashed bananas and oats in a bowl. Fold in the nuts. Drop a spoonful of batter onto the cookie sheet for each cookie and bake for 15 minutes. Let cool before enjoying these healthy, no-sugar-added treats!

Source: Delta Dental

PTO Points of Interest:

Hello Parents,

My kids recently asked: “When will there be a lot of snow?” It is hard to know if/when we will receive “a lot” of snow this winter, but learning and discovery continues as we move through the seasons. As we move forward with the spring semester, below are some items that I encourage you to consider attending.

Mark your calendars for our annual Spring BBQ! Families, teachers and staff are invited to eat a picnic lunch, play outdoor games and enjoy fellowship at our Spring BBQ on Saturday, April 29 from 11:30-1:00 p.m. at Keats Park, 4 miles west of Manhattan, on Anderson Avenue. RSVP details will be shared during the month of April.

We are in the process of finalizing some details associated with several spring fundraising initiatives to include greeting cards and parent support. Additional details will be shared as these items are finalized.

A spring playground renewal date is on Saturday, April 8 from 9-11 a.m. Details will be shared as this date draws closer.

Interested in sharing your ideas, or having a hand in the activities we plan? Consider attending the next PTO meeting, scheduled for Thursday, February 9, Noon, CCD Conference Room. My email inbox is always open at afeld@ksu.edu. I look forward to hearing from you!

Andrea Feldkamp
PTO President

“A single rose can be my garden... a single friend, my world.”
Leo Buscaglia