



Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten Readiness



Mission: Every child in Pottstown will enter Kindergarten ready to learn and achieve

PEAK Classroom Connections

PEAK Classroom Connections: Creating a professional learning community for the early learning teachers in Pottstown to share ideas, improve instructional practices and implement researched-based best practices in the delivery of quality early learning experiences



Congratulations PEAK Mini Grant Recipients

December 2008

Five PEAK community teachers will receive mini-grants of \$500 each for classroom projects designed to improve instruction. The PEAK Mini-Grant Program was made possible through funding from United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania and was open to any teacher in the PEAK partner programs. The teachers had to develop a project, create a budget and obtain a recommendation. The submitted applications were reviewed by a panel of experts and decisions were made in late November. The winners of the mini-grants are:

Jamie Roshon- KinderCare Learning Center

Learning through Science

Barbara Ward- KinderCare Learning Center

Learning Math Can be Fun

Jennifer Martin- Tot Spot Preschool

Sensory Integration

Nichole Kucharek- Tot Spot Preschool

Gross Motor Skill Development

Theresa Randle- Pottstown YMCA

Outdoor Play Yard

Upcoming PEAK Professional Development

December: Blueprint for Early Literacy

January: Color Me Healthy

Register on the PEAK web site to receive notices concerning upcoming training or new resources

Contact the PEAK Coach for more information on training opportunities.

Contact Information:

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PEAK Web Site

www.peakonline.org



Parents as Partners

A strong connection between home and school is essential to the success of young children. It is important to make families feel relaxed and welcome in your environment. Consider the following tips to help initiate and maintain positive relationships with parents:

- During drop off/pick-up, greet each parent by name - take time to really get to know about the family
- By getting to know the family better and creating a bond you will have an easier time working with parents to find solutions if problems do arise
- Recognize that teachers and the school environment can be intimidating to parents - work to build trust by treating parents as equals
- Remember that parents are the expert on their own child and they are their children's first and most important teacher
- Encourage parents to share information about their children and home life - this is especially crucial during any crisis or period of change
- Send positive notes home - too often parents only hear bad news with regards to their child's behavior
- Realize that parents can be great advocates for you and your classroom - treat them as valuable resources
- If time permits, take a few moments at the end of the day to update parents on their child's progress (be specific!)

Problems with attendance? Do your families need assistance with referrals or resources?

Remember to call Whitney Tyng, PEAK Family Engagement Specialist, at 610-326-1610.

For other resources for families visit the PEAK website at www.peakonline.org

Remember:

Keep track of your family's involvement in your room in the PEAK notebook.

Family Take-Home Activity Bags

Would you like to create more take-home activity bags for your families? Contact Mary or Whitney for more tote bags.



Health News

By Kathy Perry

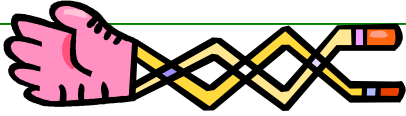
Is it a Cold or the Flu?

Cold symptoms may include a sore throat, sneezing, runny nose and mild cough. Fever is mild, but may run higher with infants and young children.

Flu symptoms include headache, cough, muscle aches, fatigue and high fever. Most people feel better in a few days, but cough and fatigue can last up to two weeks.

How Can I Prevent Germs from Spreading?

- Practice good hand washing.
- Teach children to cough into their elbow and away from people.
- Wipe noses with clean tissues, dispose of them and wash your hands.
- Don't share food, bottles, cups, toothbrushes or toys that can be put in the mouth.
- Play outdoors often. Let fresh air into your program/home daily.



Extending Centers

You can introduce new items into centers to add extensions, stimulate children's creativity or enhance learning. These ideas don't need to be necessarily used as small group learning activities. These are especially helpful for those children who are getting bored with the classroom and need additional stimulation.

Blocks:

Pictures of different buildings to introduce children to architecture styles and ideas for structures to build.

Use clipboards and pencils in the center so that children can draw a copy of their structure, count how many blocks they used in their structure or make signs to add to their structures.

Add recycled materials to the center such as toilet paper roles, paper towel rolls, cardboard boxes, tissue boxes, etc. And encourage children to build with these items.

Use a digital camera to help children document their creations, then hang them on the wall to inspire other builders.

Add rulers, tape measures, hammers, screwdrivers, real bolts and PVC piping and other materials from hardware

stores. Add tool belts or worker aprons to allow children a place to store their tools.

Writing Center:

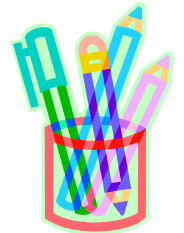
Writing center is often one of the most underused centers in the classroom. Materials need to be added to entice children to play and write. Some include:

Old typewriters and keyboards, telephones, file folders,

Lots of colorful paper and post it notes

Use writing in functional ways and encourage children and parents to do so as well. Have parents send in notes in children's lunch or have note writing materials available for parents to write a note to their child before they leave. If something exciting happens during the day, encourage children to write a note home or draw a picture for their parents.

Have items with functional print available: telephone books, travel brochures, brochures from places related to the topic of study, take out menus, coupons, newspapers, catalogs, magazines. Children can work with these items, copy words from them, write lists from them as well as read them.



QUICK WINTER MATH IDEAS

Tree Floor Puzzle

Cut a large piece of green poster-board into a tree shape. Decorate the tree shape by drawing on simple red and yellow ornaments. Cut the tree into several pieces to make a floor puzzle. Give each of your children a piece and help them work the puzzle together. When the puzzle is together, help your children count the number of red ornaments, the number of yellow ornaments and the total number of ornaments.

Greeting Card Puzzles

Laminate or cover large seasonal greeting cards with clear contact paper and cut into three or four puzzle pieces. Have the children put the puzzles together. Younger children may need a background paper to use in fitting the cards together.

Pine Cone Sort

Use a box of pine cones for sorting, putting in order by size, and counting.

Snowball Counting

Use large index cards to make a set of five counting cards. Draw one dot on the first card, two dots on the second card, etc. Lay the cards on a table and set out 15 cotton ball "snowballs." Let your children count the snowballs as they place them on the dots on the cards.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year



Mary, Emily, Whitney and Kathy



December Songs and Fingerplays



Where is Santa

Tune: Where is Thumbkin

Where is Santa? Where is Santa?
Here I am! Here I am!
Merry, merry Christmas
Merry, merry Christmas
HO HO HO! HO HO HO!

The Lights on the Tree

Tune: The Wheels on the Bus

The lights on the tree go blink, blink, blink,
Blink, blink, blink, blink, blink, blink.
The lights on the tree go blink, blink, blink
All Christmas Day.

Other verses:

The presents at the house go rattle, rattle, rattle,
etc.

The mom at the house goes bake, bake, bake, etc.

The dad at the house goes snore, snore, snore, etc.

The grandma at the house goes hug, hug, hug, etc.

The grandpa at the house goes kiss, kiss, kiss, etc.

Sparkly Peppermint Playdough

2 cups water

2 cups flour

1 cup salt

4 teaspoons cream of tartar

4 tablespoons oil

4 tablespoons peppermint extract

glitter

Mix all ingredients in a heavy saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until mixture thickens and pulls away from the sides of the pan.

Form dough into a ball, sprinkle with glitter, place on waxed paper, and cool completely. Store in Zip-lock bags.



Two Little Candy Canes

Way up high on the Christmas tree
Two little candy canes winked at me
So I shook that tree as hard as I could
And down came the candy canes
Mmm, Mmm, Good!

Santa's Coming

Tune: Are You Sleeping

Santa's coming, Santa's coming
Yes he is, yes he is
Hear his bells a ringing, hear his bells a ringing
Ding Ding dong, ding ding dong.
Santa's coming, Santa's coming
Hear him laughing, hear him laughing
Ho ho ho ho ho ho
I don't know. Do you know?

Gingerbread Playdough

1 cup flour

1/2 cup salt

2 tsp. cream of tartar

1 cup water

1 tsp. vegetable oil

Spices--Cinnamon, Allspice, Ginger, Nutmeg

*Green and red food coloring to make brown (optional--the spices usually give the dough a good brown color.)

DIRECTIONS--

1. Mix the dry ingredients. Experiment with the spices until you get a scent and color that you like.
2. Mix water and oil together and then add them to the dry ingredients and stir.
3. In a pot, cook the mixture for three to five minutes on low/medium, stirring constantly. The dough will start to pull away from the sides of the pot and stick together in a large ball. Take it out of the pan when you see a VERY faint brown skin on the dough one each side.
5. Take the dough out of the pan, and knead the dough until it becomes soft and smooth.
6. Allow the dough to cool and then store it in an airtight container.

Total time to make dough: 10 minutes. This is a very quick and easy recipe and the dough turns out great! One batch makes about the same amount as you would find in one small tub of store bought playdough.

