



Fall 2010

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From the Playroom

Practicing Patience

Fall arrives and school adjustment begins. Most children settle easily into the new routines of classrooms. Some struggle a bit. The first weeks of school are very important as they provide a strong foundation for the year of learning ahead.

For the Primary Project team, many supportive tasks should take place during those early weeks of the school year. We shouldn't rush to screen children for our program; instead we should allow children and their teachers time to adjust to one another. In a society of instant food, microwaves, accelerated programs, and fast speeds, patience is something not readily practiced.

The fall edition of *From the Playroom* is about patience. We need patience to work on alternate tasks as children are busy adjusting to their new surroundings. We need patience to observe the children around us in various settings and to educate adults about our program.

Along with an article on patience, please read about the successful Primary Project collaboration efforts in the Washington D.C. area and a new section entitled, "From the Field" with wonderful contributions from those closest to the children.

**"Patience is not passive; on the contrary,
it is active; it is concentrated strength."**

-Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton

Patience During the First Weeks of School

The first weeks of school are critical to early school adjustment. Children learn routines, behavioral expectations, and what it means to be a member of the new classroom. The first weeks of school lay the groundwork for a productive year of learning.

Many child associates arrive to work the first day of school eager to jump right in! We want to capture that enthusiasm and direct it to purposeful Primary Project activities that honor and respect the complete picture of waiting for positive school adjustment to unfold.

The Primary Project team needs to practice patience during the first weeks and realize that the goal of Primary Project is to support early school adjustment.

Primary Project consultants are often asked for ideas about how to spend time during the first few weeks of school before the screening process begins (typically 4-6 weeks into the school year). Here are a few thoughts:

Observations

Observations in the classroom are a way for the child associate to learn about children. Their presence in the classroom, cafeteria, and playground sends a message to children that they are a supportive adult in the larger school environment. By watching students, child associates can deepen their understanding of children who need help making friends or who struggle on certain academic or behavioral tasks. Child associates can notice children with certain talents and gifts. Observant child associates apply what they have noticed to the early identification and selection process.

Playroom

The playroom has likely been sitting untouched over summer vacation. This is an opportune time to organize the playroom. Take an inventory of materials and toys and discard items that are infrequently used or broken. Give the entire area a good cleaning prior to seeing children again.

Training for child associates

Supervisors can use this time to offer training for child associates as it will not interfere with student sessions. If child associates from neighboring schools can meet, connections can be made, fostering a supportive network for all involved.

Reconnecting with “graduates”

Child associates may also decide to visit former Primary Project students, schedule a booster session or two, or arrange a special lunch time date with a child. This helps to reinforce the relationship that was shared last year and is a good way to stay connected.

Communication and education

Primary Project teams can use the early weeks of school to educate and promote understanding of the program. New teachers will need to understand how Primary Project supports the goals of their classroom teaching. Simultaneously, the Primary Project teams can continue building rapport with other school staff. Supervisors may determine that communication is best conducted on a case by case basis, or by collaboratively presenting information at a staff meeting.

Getting prepared

As the weeks continue and screening time approaches, preparing teachers for their role in the screening and identification process is extremely beneficial. Reminding staff how invaluable their input is, and what the typical Primary Project candidate might look like, will all help to increase the likelihood that the most appropriate students will be selected. Those sites completing electronic measures on Children’s Institute’s COMET web-based system will have the benefit of the screening data returned immediately, so the scheduling of child selection conferences can begin.

Scheduling selection conferences can be challenging and time intensive. Determining the best time for all key players is important. The child associate can work to find a schedule that accommodates all core team members.

The first weeks of school are important and Primary Project has a critical role in supporting every child’s adjustment in those early weeks of school.

Spotlight on Primary Project Initiative in Washington, D.C.

Prevention, interagency collaboration, and play combine together to make a formula of success for the Primary Project schools in Washington D.C. During the 2008-2009 school year, Primary Project was funded by the Deputy Mayor's Office of Education Interagency Collaborative Services Integration Commission (ICSIC), in the District of Columbia and implemented in 12 District of Columbia Public Schools: 11 Public Schools and 1 Public Charter School by the Department of Mental Health-School Mental Health Program.

The schools included Aiton Elementary, Garrison Elementary, Miner Elementary, Turner at Green Elementary, M.C. Terrell Elementary, Tubman Elementary, Webb/Wheatley Elementary, Browne Educational Center, Thurgood Marshall Elementary School, Burrville Elementary School, and Meridian Public Charter School.

During the following school year, the Department of Mental Health-School Mental Health Program added an additional Charter School, Eagle Academy and with the Department of Health also received a grant through SAMHSA Project Launch to fund 3 additional Primary Project sites in Wards 7 and 8. These additional schools are Simon Elementary, Randle-Highlands Elementary, and Moten at Wilkerson Elementary.

Since its implementation into the 16 various schools in the District of Columbia, Primary Project has made a tremendous improvement in the social and emotional lives of students involved in the play sessions. This has been noted by teachers, administrators, and even nurses at the schools. The collaboration of many makes this success story possible.

Enjoy the following stories "from the field" at Washington D.C. school sites:

Yvonne Trent Hunter, Child Associate: Washington, D.C.

One day during the second week of play sessions, I saw one of my new kindergarten students standing in the hallway. I stopped and asked him, "Why are you in the hallway?" He told me that he was sent to the hallway because he was playing with something he brought from home and hadn't returned it to his backpack when asked. Since he was one of my Primary Project students, I asked the teacher if I could take him for our play session and she told me yes.

I proceeded to walk him to the playroom and asked him if he remembered the rules of the play session. He told me no, he didn't remember, so I reviewed the rules with him. Since I was just learning all the new names of my children, I asked him to remind me of his name. "John" he said. I quickly looked at my files, and thought maybe I had misplaced his file and would locate it later. We began to play. During the session, he kept repeating, "It's all about me, right?" I re-assured him that this play session was all about him and no one else. I also explained to him at the end of the session that I would get him next week.

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The Cardinal Sings

Patience...

...The state of endurance under difficult circumstances. "All in good time." "Trust the process." "It's a journey." "Good things come to those who wait." I even checked scripture in seeking the definition of patience – patience is considered a virtue. They say patience makes one a better person. But there are only 24 hours in a day, and I wonder if I will ever get everything done. Sound familiar?

The other afternoon, I met with an individual who moves at a much slower pace than I. Often in the moments before one of these meetings, "dread" starts to creep in. This is going to be slow. Then one day, I decided that thinking this way wasn't helpful. Before the next meeting, I decided that I would take a deep breath and not rush the process.

Here's what I learned. The meeting lasted the same amount of time. It didn't go any faster or take any longer. Everyone left knowing what to do next. Even better, each of us left relaxed, knowing we were working together and proceeding with common goals in mind.

Patience. It really doesn't take that much more time. But the pay back is wonderful.

So as you start working with children this year, be patient. Everyone feels the pressures of academic standards. Certainly, these concerns filter down to children. Too often, children grow up too fast. Be patient. Let them be young. Let them play. Let them be. Trust the process.

**—Deborah Johnson
Primary Project, National Director**

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After taking him back to his class, I went to pick up my next student in the other kindergarten classroom. When I entered the second classroom, the little boy I just finished playing with must have followed me into the classroom. He asked me, "Am I next?" I reminded him that we just had our play session and that we play together just once a week. He became very frustrated, almost angry. He indicated to me that he hadn't just had a play session. I reflected back to him that it was hard not to have more time together, but that I would see him next week.

He continued to insist that he hadn't just played with me. His teacher began laughing and said that I hadn't played with this child, whose name was Jim, but his twin brother, John, from the other kindergarten class. They looked exactly alike and dressed identically. She also indicated to me that if you didn't know the twins, they would do a switch. That was the reason their mother wanted to put them in separate classrooms.

John wanted to experience the special play that Jim had told him about during that first week! You see Jim was in Primary Project and John was not. That's why I didn't have his file! And yes, Jim had definitely shared the experience with John. And more importantly, Jim had felt what we as child associates try to instill in children that time in Primary Project is all about the child.

Catrina Smith, Child Associate: Washington D.C.

I had gone to pick up my student, a first grader. We were standing at the door and her teacher was mouthing to me, and giving me the thumbs up sign. She indicated that her student had been talking more in the classroom and for me to please keep up the good work. I was excited to hear this news.

This student may have spoken ten words to me the whole time I had been playing with her. We entered the playroom just like the other times and she was still quiet at first. Then she began to talk to me telling me about special plans that were going to happen the following day. I was so overjoyed with enthusiasm that she was actually talking to me, that I was the one who was speechless!

She and I had great conversations through the whole play session. I made sure that my body and my verbal language matched. I wanted her to know that she had my full attention. I was excited beyond belief, not only did we have the best conversation ever, but she actually asked to play with certain toys. This was important because she would usually just go stand beside something and I would have to ask, do you want to play with that? This student made great progress. This day would forever be marked as one of my favorites. This student was talking and engaged in her play. What more could I ask for?

Anthony McCree-Child Associate: Washington D.C.

This week, two of the students that I have been building a relationship with through Primary Project told me something similar. One student, paused during a session and said, "You are my best friend ever." Then, I saw another student during a lunch period. That student announced to classmates and friends, "This is my best friend everybody." I feel honored to be thought of so highly by these young people. I know that they truly value the time we have together during our play sessions.

Primary Project Certified Sites 2010

Apple Glen Elementary School
Bentonville, Arkansas

Harp Elementary School
Springdale, Arkansas

Aiea Elementary School
Aiea, Hawaii

Wheeler Elementary School
Wahiawa, Hawaii

Dailey Elementary School
Mount Morris, Michigan

South Bendle Elementary School
Burton, Michigan

John A Johnson Elementary School
St. Paul, Minnesota

Franklin Magnet Elementary School
Syracuse, New York

MacArthur Elementary School
Binghamton, New York

Salem Hyde Elementary School
Syracuse, New York

Bringing the Lessons Home

Parental patience

Our role as parents requires patience. We patiently wait for the next developmental milestone, or for our dawdling child who is intrigued by the slightest thing in his or her path, or for our child (no matter the age) who is testing our limits. Yes, parenting and patience go hand in hand.

Sometimes, as parents, the hurriedness of life takes over and we lose our patience. Because of our many adult responsibilities, we often think we don't have time for our children to explore, to be extra curious, or to be creative. If we practice patience, children will help us in their innate way to enjoy the simple things in life. It may be smelling flowers in a garden, playing catch, or a quiet activity together such as reading a favorite book for the hundredth time.

Fall is here, one of the busiest times of the year for school age children and parents. Let's try extra hard to practice parental patience. Remember, it's okay to delay the next task and to simply delight in the treasures that your child shares with you.

Is the saying, "Practice makes perfect" or "Patience takes practice?"

Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.



If we practice patience, children will help us in their innate way to enjoy the simple things in life.

Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

La paciencia de los padres

Nuestro papel como padres requiere paciencia. Esperamos con paciencia el próximo jalón de desarrollo o por nuestro niño(a) que se entretiene al estar intrigado con la cosita más pequeña en su camino o por nuestro hijo(a) [no importa su edad] que está poniendo a prueba nuestros límites. Sí, la crianza de los hijos y la paciencia van de la mano.

A veces, como padres, lo apurado de la vida toma el control y perdemos nuestra paciencia. Debido a nuestras múltiples responsabilidades como adultos, pensamos a menudo que no tenemos tiempo para nuestros hijos para explorar, para tener curiosidad extra, para ser creativos. Si practicamos la paciencia, los hijos nos ayudarán en su manera innata a disfrutar las cosas simples de la vida. Puede ser oler las flores en un jardín, jugar con una pelota o una actividad tranquila como leer juntos un libro favorito por la tantísima vez.

El otoño ha llegado, una de las épocas más ocupadas del año para los niños de edad escolar y sus padres. Sería bueno tratar de practicar la paciencia como padres de una manera muy especial. Recuerde, está bien posponer la próxima tarea para un poco más tarde y disfrutar sencillamente los tesoros que su niño(a) comparte con usted.

¿Es el refrán, “La práctica hace lo perfecto” o “La paciencia requiere práctica?”

Siéntase en libertad de copiar esta página y compartirla con los padres del Primary Project.



Si practicamos la paciencia, los hijos nos ayudarán en su manera innata a disfrutar las cosas simples de la vida.



Blogger

www.primaryproject.blogspot.com

Follow the Primary Project blog and share your thoughts and experiences regarding the program and the wonderful things happening for children around the world.

New York State Fall Training Save the Date!

November Nibbles
Bite-Size Lessons in Resiliency
Just for Primary Project

November 16, Batavia, New York
November 17, Syracuse, New York

More information coming soon.

“Have patience with all things,
but chiefly have patience
with yourself.”

–Saint Francis de Sales

children's
institute



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Children's Institute is affiliated with the University of Rochester



A PUBLICATION OF CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE, INC.
A NOT-FOR-PROFIT AGENCY

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