



From the Playroom



Taking Time

As we end an amazing 50th anniversary celebratory school year of Primary Project, we are reflective of all that has been accomplished on behalf of children. The passion and commitment from so many people has made the 50th anniversary a milestone event.

Along with sustained passion and commitment comes the need to replenish ourselves. Adults who work daily with young children must find ways to care for themselves. While a strong Primary Project team can give us much needed support, sometimes the need to take care of ourselves can only come from ourselves. While we are often advocating parents and caregivers of children to take time to be “with children,” we are devoting this spring edition of *From the Playroom* to taking time “for ourselves.”

Start right now, take a deep breath, and find a quiet place to enjoy your newsletter. Go outside, or find your favorite chair. Make it a priority during the summer months to enjoy and cherish the different pace that taking a temporary break from school can give. We say to children in the playroom, “This is your special time”...so let’s remember to create **our own special time for quiet**...just for ourselves.

Quiet time

Quiet time allows a person to process their thoughts and feelings of the day. It gives our heads clearing room for amazing ideas to be born. It’s a time for reflection, relaxation and preparation for the hours and tasks still yet to come. If we relish moments of solitude, why shouldn’t children?

Children need quiet time to sort out what is happening in their lives. As adults, we tend to see the world from an adult view and often forget that a child is under enormous stress at school to work,

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Nationally Certified Schools

Golden Grove Elementary
West Palm Beach, FL

Jupiter Elementary
Jupiter, FL

South Olive Elementary
West Palm Beach, FL

Lantana Elementary
Lantana, FL



Quiet time

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perform, pay attention and behave. They may also experience stress related to after school care, homework, chores, siblings or other family relationships. Having some quiet time each day allows children to reflect on their day and not be expected to do anything, except relax.

As very young children, this concept is easily accepted and understood as “nap time.” But older children, teens and yes, we as adults also benefit from a little down time. Whether its journal writing, a quick snooze, a little reading or swinging on a swing set, a break is a wonderful necessity.

I remember one child, who told me he liked coming to the playroom, because my voice was “so nice and quiet.” His statement made me think about the hurried life he lead, the busy classroom we had just left with twenty plus children, and the bustling cafeteria we passed on our way to our special time together. While school is full of exciting experiences, it can also be a place of over stimulation for some children.

“Quiet play time” with an attentive adult was something of a gift for this boy. It became a time where his inner most thoughts, feelings and dreams could surface and make themselves heard. Everyone needs some quiet time, even children...even us.

***Sometimes children just need some quiet time.
Time to reflect and “do nothing.”
Renewed, they can be ready to move on.***

—Fred Rogers

Self growth...time...reflection

Along the lines of this edition’s theme, National Services Director, Deborah Johnson will be taking a wonderful temporary break from her typical position. Starting in late spring 2008 and continuing into late fall, Children’s Institute is thrilled (and frankly, scared) that she has been granted this wonderful opportunity to “practice what she preaches.” Thrilled, in that this is indeed a testament to her passion for children’s social and emotional well-being and for taking time for renewal. Scared, as she is the “rock” for many of us. A special focused project awaits her while she takes time to renew, rejuvenate and professionally deepen and grow.

Every change creates new opportunities for growth. Our National Services team will be offered the chance to try on new roles, take risks, be challenged and supported in growing in different ways. On behalf of children and our extended Primary Project family across the country, we are excited to support her in this well deserved opportunity to focus on a very special child-centered project.



Staff at Peru Primary School in New York (one of five model schools in New York State), welcome Assemblywoman Janet L. Duprey, 114th Assembly District, to learn about Primary Project and its impact on children.



Bringing the Lessons Home

Time for me...helps with time for us

Parenting is the most rewarding experience known to any of us and yet at times it can also be the most challenging, tiring and stressful experience of our lives. When was the last time you stepped away and had some "ME" time?

I am not talking about a fancy vacation away from everyone, but rather slowing down and taking in the everyday things that you enjoy. Your favorite dessert, a book, a hot bath when everyone is finally asleep...these are but a few examples of simple, favorite things. In fact, if we had more purposeful "me time" we would become better at replenishing ourselves...which in turn makes us more effective parents.

We know that play is healthy for young children, but play is also helpful for adults in reducing stress. Think about adult forms of play as a way to slow down and enjoy something fun....all helpful as parental stress reducers.

Some examples might include:


Playing with our pets: Having a pet can help combine play and exercise. Most pet owners take time to enjoy their pets through walking, rough housing or simply curling up beside them as a way to relax.

Playing with a hobby or sport: An artistic or musical hobby can be a favorite way to spend your spare time. If your hobby is a sport or group league you get the added bonus of being surrounded by people and exercise, all contributing to fun and relaxation.

Playing with your family: Family games don't need to be a thing of the past. Don't wait for the electricity to go out to enjoy a good game of checkers, cards or dominoes. Dust off the Monopoly game and remember how playing can reduce your stress and add to your family fun level.

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



Trayendo las Lecciones a la Casa

Tiempo para mi...ayuda para tener tiempo para nosotros

La crianza de los hijos es la experiencia más gratificante que nosotros conocemos y sin embargo a veces puede ser la experiencia más retadora, agobiante y estresante de nuestras vidas. ¿Cuándo fue la última vez que usted tuvo algún tiempo "PARA MÍ"?

No estoy hablando de unas vacaciones lujosas lejos de todos, sino más bien de reducir su ajetreo y disfrutar de las cosas que le gustan. Su postre favorito, un libro, un baño tibio cuando todos duermen...estos son solamente unos ejemplos de cosas simples, favoritas. De hecho, si tuviéramos más "tiempo para mí" a propósito, tendríamos más éxito renovándonos a nosotros mismos...lo cual nos haría padres más efectivos.

Sabemos que el juego es saludable para los niños jóvenes, pero el juego también es de ayuda para los adultos reducir el estrés. Piense acerca de las formas de juego para adultos como una manera de reducir el ajetreo y disfrutar de algo divertido...todo lo cual ayuda a reducir el estrés de los padres.

Algunos ejemplos pueden incluir:

Jugar con sus mascotas: El tener una mascota puede ayudar a combinar el juego con el ejercicio. La mayoría de los dueños de mascotas toman tiempo para disfrutar de su mascota a través de caminar, jugar o acurrucarse junto a las mascotas como un medio para relajarse.

Jugar con un pasatiempo o deporte: Un pasatiempo artístico o musical puede ser una manera favorita de pasar su tiempo libre. Si su pasatiempo es un deporte o una liga de grupo usted recibe el beneficio adicional de estar rodeado por gente y del ejercicio, todo lo cual contribuye a la diversión y la relajación.

Jugar con su familia: Los juegos en familia no tienen que ser algo del pasado. No espere a que la electricidad falle para disfrutar un buen juego de damas, cartas o dominós. Sacuda el polvo del juego de Monopolio y recuerde cómo el jugar puede reducir su estrés y añadir al nivel de diversión de su familia.

Sabemos que el juego es saludable para los niños jóvenes, pero el juego también es de ayuda para los adultos reducir el estrés.

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

Meet a Fellow Primary Project Team Leader...

We asked *Carla Crouch Tate, Supervisor of Apple Glen Elementary, a nationally certified Primary Project school in Bentonville, Arkansas* to answer a few questions...

How did you learn to play?

I learned to play by necessity for entertainment! I am an only child so I spent my elementary years roaming the neighborhood on my bike (it was the 70's so it was safe at that time). My neighborhood gang spent hours building "forts" by day and playing "flashlight tag" by night. It seems interesting to me now that I was the "organizer and rule maker" of our group. Being an only child, I also played alone a lot. Barbies were my big thing, lots of drama and interesting storylines! The biggest disappointment of my life was never getting the Barbie Dreamhouse made of pressboard and plastic. We should include one of those in the Primary Project playroom!

How do you take care of yourself?

I take care of me by trying to spend some time alone everyday. Sometimes I read, or walk or swing in the porch swing but I need some time to be quiet with myself everyday. I don't always get it but I try really hard! My family is usually accommodating to this request because I tend to get a little cranky without time alone occasionally.

Do you have any advice for a new supervisor?

My advice to a new Primary Project supervisor would be to trust the process and to relax. It takes time to get a project up and functioning and there is nothing you can do to rush the process. As teachers and staff begin to see the results, appropriate referrals become easier.

What is your favorite Primary Project story?

My favorite Primary Project story is about a little boy who was home-schooled until the 2nd grade and was brought to public school for 3rd grade. He qualified for Primary Project and his teacher thought it would serve as a positive connection to the school and would also help him cope with the stress of the transition to public school. I spoke with the family several times to get their permission, the father was very reluctant and did not see the connection between play and stress relief for his son. "We are not sending him to public school so he can play with puppets." The father finally conceded to try the project for a few weeks and reevaluate. The child attended four sessions before I met with the family again, in each session the child painted and played with the sand table. The child associate reported that he seemed to be enjoying the sessions and was comfortable in the playroom. When I met with the family they could not compliment the program enough! Before we met they had talked to their son about Primary Project and he told them that it was the only time all week that he felt like he could breathe! That was very powerful to me!

The Cardinal Sings

Relaxation, self-care, taking a break.....re-focusing.



In the new Children's Institute video, "The Possibilities of Play," Sarah Gheen of Arkansas talks about playing with Jack, her 7-month-old son. She tells that when he plays, he is really engaged, laughing and smiling, then scrunches his shoulders, balls his hands and looks away! Then he comes back, plays, engages and laughs, then balls up his hands and looks away. She has discovered that this is how he disengages. He needs a minute to relax and breathe, then he can come back and engage and be a part of the play again.

Amazing...even the youngest in our midst know how important it is to occasionally disengage, relax and breathe! Think about it...as a baby becomes over stimulated and then needs to withdraw, albeit momentarily, even the most observant parent may not notice!

Fast forward to the children we see in schools. The pressure they experience in schools to achieve and do well, over scheduling, social relationships and having the "latest and greatest." Add to this less time for recess and less unstructured play.

Is it no wonder that these are the lives of our children? Sometimes we only need to look internally to see how we have allowed ourselves to be over scheduled, making lists to make sure we get everything done (I found one I wrote for a Saturday that included, "get up!").

By now, you are probably stressed just reading this!

So, perhaps we should think more like Jack and be more responsive to our need to disengage when that which is around us becomes a bit too much. The word sabbatical is often used, however, many think of it only in terms of those who work in academia having a sabbatical. Sabbatical is also often thought of in terms of the "Sabbath" or a day of rest.

Might I be so bold as to suggest that each of us take many mini-sabbaticals. It might be a time to sit and read, enjoy a fresh cup of coffee and the morning paper, five minutes alone in the bathroom, or better yet, put on walking shoes, grab the ipod and walk a mile!

Have a fantastic summer!

—Deborah Johnson
Primary Project, National Director

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Supervisors and Other Mental Health Professionals: Play Therapy Training

Join us at Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, June 9-10, for two days focused on play-based approaches.

Day one: Sand play therapy: Learning the technique through experience by Dr. Jodi Mullen

Day two: What do I do now? Challenges in play therapy by Dr. Stephen Demanick and Mary Anne Peabody

Registration materials available at
www.childrensinstitute.net

Paperless possibilities

Children's Institute, along with many school districts and other organizations, is always looking for ways to go paperless. We are in the process of making many resources available on-line. This ultimately saves money and trees!

From the Playroom

We will be moving from a mailing distribution to electronic distribution over the next school year. Currently, you can download *From the Playroom* from our website and distribute it to your staff, parents or other individuals who may be interested.

Transition timeline:

- Fall edition: September 2008, mailed.
- Winter edition: January 2009, email sent as reminder to download newsletter from our website.
- Make sure we have your current email address by notifying cwalker@childrensinstitute.net.
- Spring edition: May 2009, transmitted electronically only.

Electronic measures/forms

Completion of the T-CRS on-line is being explored. We are hoping to have a transition timeline available as we move forward. Stay tuned for how this will work for your site and district.

Springtime/end of school year reminder

All data due by June 30, 2008.