



Happy St. Patrick's Day!

Play, Children's Primary Occupation

At young ages, children learn through the interactions with the world around them. The ability for them to explore these various things is what allows them to cognitively develop, and allows them to develop important mental processes. As they explore their surroundings with all their senses, they learn problem solving skills, cause and effect relationships, and build a foundation for executive functioning skills.

Tips to Nurture Play Exploration:

- If a child drops an object and the teacher picks it up for them, they have just learned a cause and effect relationship. "If I drop this ball, somebody will pick it up."
- Giving toddlers objects that they can break apart, rip, and band helps them understand how things work.
- Although it may be difficult, resisting from assisting a child that is struggling may be the best thing to allow them to build problem solving skills. The adult should always stay close, but should not instantly jump in to assist if they see the child having difficulty.
- Part of cognitive development is the concept of imagination and abstract thinking. Give the child an old box and have them pretend it is a space ship so that they can start to build symbolic thinking.

Effective Strategies to Increase Positive and Productive Behavior in the Classroom

1. Behaviorism

- Behaviorism is a psychological theory which looks at conditioned stimulus–response behaviors. Developmentally, the behavior would cause a reaction from the environment, which over time comes to be a learned effect pattern. Behaviorism involves strategic use of positive and negative reward and punishment in the classroom to react to a behavior to reinforce or discourage it.

2. Involve the Parents

- Positive behavior must be consistently reinforced throughout the child’s natural environments. When thinking about children’s weekly routines, they are at school during the weekday, but may spend most of their time at home after school and on the weekends. It is important to educate and involve parents on behavioral techniques being taught in school so that they may continue them at home. In doing so, the child has a clear view of expectations from all environments and can practice these skills daily.

3. Constant Positive Regard

- Many times, students that require the most behavioral attention have other situations they are dealing with, and use negative behavior as an outlet. By recognizing these students for their strengths and recognizing their importance as members of the class and community, they can start to develop self-worth and respect. In a sense, you are separating their importance as a human from their behavior so that the two are not linked, allowing them to realize their teachers are there to help them with whatever they can.

4. Know and Refer to Outside Resources

- There are situations that may arise in which a teacher may need a little extra help dealing with an issue involving a broader spectrum of factors. Knowing where to look for specialists that can help, such as counselors or therapists, is another huge way to help the students achieve behavioral goals.

5. Educating on Education

- Frequently, students who later show apathy for school or may even drop out do not understand the power of the knowledge they have the potential to obtain. Students demonstrating aggressive behaviors may see the school system as an enemy trying to hold them back instead of an ally to push them forward.

Helping these children to understand the opportunities that can be obtained from education instead of the consequences that lead to unwanted trajectories.





Make Shamrocks with Cookie Cutters

Like using stencils or sponge painting, a cookie cutter can help your toddler create something he recognizes when he doesn't know how to draw the object. This activity is also a good starting point for any child who is reluctant about art activities. This may be because he doesn't want to get messy or doesn't like the way more tactile activities like finger painting or sponge painting feel.

For a young toddler, put the paint and cutters inside a newspaper-lined pan. This will keep him from making too big of a mess as he scoots the cutters around while loading them with paint. Older toddlers with a bit more practice can just use a paper plate. Both clean up easy.

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/st-patricks-day-toddler-activities-290045>



The Many Benefits of Nature

With the weather starting to warm up, and the beauty of spring blooms upon us, it is important to take time out of the day and enjoy nature mindfully. The Japanese regard nature so highly, they even have a term “shinrin-yoku,” which means to literally means forest bathing, to absorb nature internally. Spending time outdoors and exploring nature can:

- Improve immune systems
- Decrease blood pressure
- Decrease stress
- Improve mood
- Increase cognitive abilities
- Increase attention and focus
- Improve healing time
- Increase energy
- Improve sleep



Cited by: Department of Environmental Conservation
<https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/90720.html>

A few pointers when doing crafts with little ones (one and two-year-olds):

- Do the crafts with them, either alongside them on your own, or helping them along.
- Don't expect it to turn out exactly how you have it pictured in your head (or on Pinterest!).
- Let them get up and leave and come back, expect them to only want to craft for 5-10 minutes at a time.
- Before doing them, realize what they're able to do and what you could do for them. Not all crafts are completed by toddlers 100%.
- Be encouraging and use positive words. The learning is in the exploring of the materials and not necessarily the product!

