

Arkansas School-Age "LINKS"

May/June 2008

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School-Age
"LINKS"
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ASU Childhood
Services

The Console, the Couch, and the Potato

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Those of us concerned with epidemic obesity in America- among children and adults alike- have long inveighed against excessive "screen time," meaning time spent in front of both computers and television sets. Both intuition, and some science, suggest that television viewing, and other screen time, can contribute to obesity in four ways.

First, time spent in front of a screen, TV or otherwise, is generally sedentary time. Second, the use of television and computers for recreation is often at the expense of alternative, physically active recreation, so screen time bumps physical activity out of a child's day. Third, while watching TV, and increasingly while on-line, children are bombarded with advertisements for the very foods

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The Console, the Couch, and the Potato

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and snacks in any given year.

Fourth, and finally, TV viewing invites munching of the most absent-minded variety. While portion control tends to be a problem any way in the case of “betcha’ can’t eat just one” type snack foods, that is even more the case when eating occurs in a distracted state. Both quality and quantity of food choices is apt to be overlooked while in that trance-like state only TV can induce. I once heard a colleague put it very aptly: it is much easier to eat while watching football on TV than while actually playing yourself!

All of which suggests that reducing television/screen time should help combat childhood obesity. In fact, if TV can contribute to obesity in four or more ways, then reducing TV time would seem potentially to be a uniquely important and powerful approach.

There is some vintage evidence to suggest that is so. In the late 1990s, both Dr. Steven Gortmaker at Harvard University, and Dr. Tom Robinson at Stanford University, published separate studies suggesting that reducing TV viewing time in children had favorable effects on the body mass index. The Harvard study was noteworthy for being school based, hinting at something that deserves more attention: school-based and home-based approaches to combating childhood obesity and promoting the health of children should be linked. More on that later.

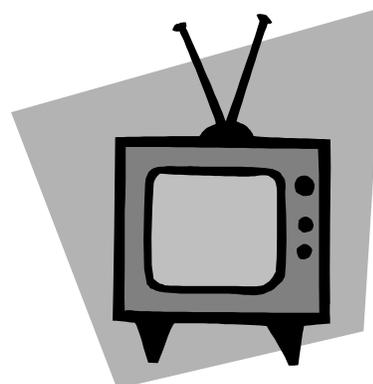
Now we have some new evidence, courtesy of Dr. Len Epstein and colleagues at the University of Buffalo, to support the utility of restricting screen time. As reported in a

March, 2008 issue of the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine, these investigators randomly assigned a group of children at risk for overweight, between the ages of 4 and 7, to an intervention that restricted screen time, or a control group.

The intervention reduced sedentary time, calorie intake, and body mass index- all good results, and none too surprising. The surprise was that the effect of reducing TV viewing time on BMI was correlated not with a change in energy expenditure (i.e., physical activity) with but with a change in energy intake (i.e., eating). Restricting screen time resulted in kids eating less.

In other words, the problem with kids turning into the proverbial couch potato may have as much or more to do with the potato chips consumed while lounging on the couch, as with the lounging! The findings encourage us all to get ourselves, and our kids, both off the couch... and away from the potato chips.

In my view, this study confirms what we suspected about the multiple, adverse influences of excess screen time on weight in children, and demonstrates gratifyingly that the flip side is also true: reduce screen time, and get multiple benefits of limiting screen time.



ABC's of Professional, Purposeful, and Powerful Programming Practices!

These ABC's are philosophical foundations. They are new and powerful paradigms. Paradigms are like mental models that we all have about the way things should be done in afterschool programs. These ABC's might challenge the paradigms or mental models that you might carry in your own mind. We challenge you to consider these shifts and the way you may think about how afterschool programs should be.

Autonomy

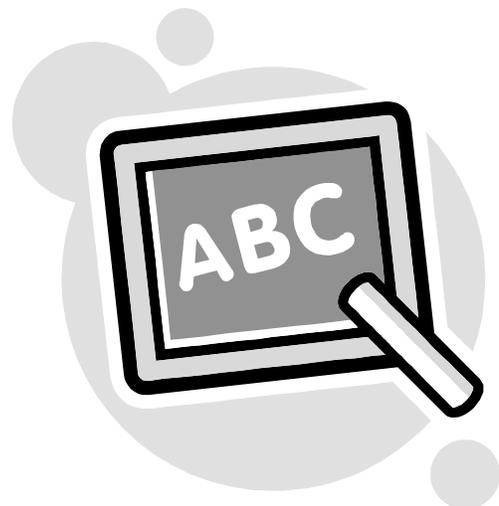
Autonomy is the ability to act independently, to be self-governing. Autonomy is a paradigm shift away from "herding." Many in the afterschool profession view themselves as herders of children. After school, they herd children into an area where they take attendance, then they herd children into an area in which to "graze" on graham crackers and juice, then they herd them into an area where they all sit quietly and work on their homework, then they herd them into an adult-controlled activity or onto the playground for free play until their parents arrive.

In order for kids to build a sense of autonomy, they must feel that the program community values and appreciates them. They must be given useful roles in the program. They must be involved in service to others. Children plan and follow through with activity choices that have meaning for them. Children with autonomy have a strong sense of identity, sense of purpose and personal power. Adults see themselves as

facilitators of children's dreams and ideas. Children with autonomy are not controlled by adults – they are "self disciplined."

Autonomy is a paradigm shift away from an "adult-controlled" philosophy. When we try to control children through power and punishment, children learn only to avoid our penalties. They become good at being sneaky and avoiding getting caught. The long-term consequences of over-supervision are children who cannot think and make decisions for themselves.

Children must learn to control their own behavior. To develop self-discipline, children must be given the opportunity to take risks without the fear of failure, and they must learn to try things repeatedly in order to succeed. If we do not give children the autonomy to solve their own problems, we cannot expect them to become independent problem solvers. Self-discipline has a positive effect on self-esteem, teaching children that they are significant and have autonomy and control over their own lives.



Belonging

In the past decade children have lost 16 hours per week of unstructured free time. It is no wonder children are suffering from the same stress-related illnesses as busy adults. Children are being forced to perform well on tests and to grow up too fast, and this pressure makes it difficult for children to build strong relationships. To become happy and successful adults, children need a sense of belonging and membership.

Play fosters belonging. Playfulness is a paradigm shift away from "busy-ness." Play is the essence of childhood learning. When children play and have fun in afterschool programs they remember what they learn better. What we learn with pleasure, we never forget. When children and staff play together they develop a strong sense of belonging and a strong sense of community.

Belonging is a paradigm shift away from "activity-led" programming. Activity-led philosophies create a curriculum that is centered on the activities without attention to purpose, to the ethical dimension of community building, thus missing an opportunity to facilitate the social development of the child. Community building must be built into intentional programming in the environment, relationships, and experiences. It involves leadership sharing, teaching caring behaviors, teaching altruism, and teaching empathy. Every decision that children make is filtered through the understanding of who they are and how they fit in to the group. Giving children in our programs useful roles, meaningful work and tasks to accomplish builds a strong sense of community and belonging and membership to the group.

Competencies

To succeed in life, children must acquire adequate behaviors, and skills = competencies. Skills such as planning, decision-making, resistance skills, health skills, social, emotional, intellectual, and physical competencies are crucial. Poor social skills are linked to a number of problems in adolescence and adulthood including delinquency, school suspensions, truancy, dropout rates, and mental health problems.

Afterschool programs have a unique opportunity to facilitate the development of crucial competencies. Building competencies is a paradigm shift away from "sophistication." People often exclaim how children are "so much more mature now than in the past." What they actually mean is that children are more sophisticated or precocious. They know so much more about sex, drugs, and the dark side of human behavior or "street smarts." This is sophistication, not maturity. This sophistication comes from the rapid bombardment of adult information freely accessed through television, the Internet, and developing technology. Adults must help children to develop the skills needed to process adult information and formulate ethical questions. Children develop competencies through interactions with others under the guidance of mature adults.

The ABC's

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Social competencies can be taught formally and informally. Staff can sit kids down and describe the skill and provide opportunities to practice the skill through activities, skits, or role plays. Staff can also teach skills informally using the teachable moment in a natural setting – teaching conflict resolution when a conflict occurs, or teaching patience skills when a lack of patience occurs. Be intentional – design the environment, relationships, and experiences of your program in a way that strategically targets specific developmental outcomes for children and staff.

Think about the competencies your children need to learn at their unique stage of development, and design your activities around teaching that skill, OR think about what skills are needed or can be taught through an activity you already enjoy and incorporate specific skill building into the activity. Make the continual development of skills a powerful part of the culture of the entire afterschool organization. Ensure all of your activities have a purpose – building autonomy, belonging, and competencies.

For more information visit:

www.childrens-choice.org/training.html

About the Author

Mike Ashcraft, Co-Founder and CEO of Children's Choice, holds a Master of Arts Degree in Education with an Emphasis in School-Age Care from Concordia University. He is a doctoral of education candidate with Nova Southeastern University. He has more than 18 years of experience in child care and

education. He is an Accreditation Endorser for the National Afterschool Association. He served as a training and technical service contractor and a professional writing contractor for the New Mexico State Department of Education. He served as a guest professor on the faculty of Concordia University, teaching college courses in school-age care programming. He is the current President of the New Mexico School-Age Care Alliance and the President Elect of the New Mexico Association for the Education of Young Children. He is the author of *Best Practices: Guidelines for School-Age Programs*, and the *Best Practices Workbook*, published by Sparrow Media Group.



“Arkansas Has It All”: A Professional Development Workshop for Teachers

The “Arkansas Has It All” Conference for educators brings hands-on experiences to education. It is sponsored by the Arkansas Fish and Game Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Participants may choose from several classes which include information about:

- (HOFNOD) Hooked on Fishing – Not on Drugs K-12
- Boating Education 5-12
- Watchable Wildlife K-12
- Shooting Sports and Hunter Education 5-12
- National Archery in the Schools Program 5-12
- Stream Team 5-12
- Project WILD (Wildlife in Learning Design) K-12
- Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) K-12
- Project Learning Tree K-12
- Schoolyard Habitat Program K-12
- Underwater Arkansas 5-12
- Outdoor Photography (Technology)

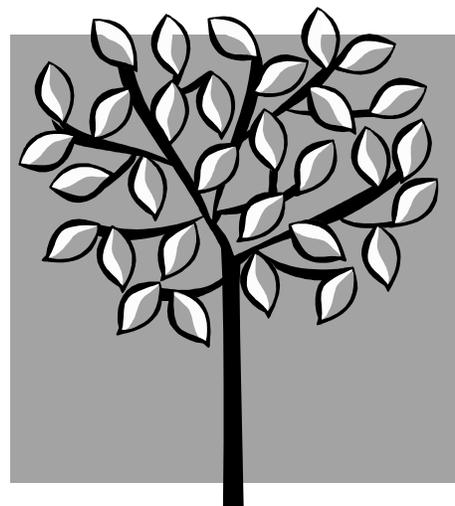
Teachers will be amazed by the benefits of learning in an outdoor classroom. There are 2 training dates and locations to choose from. The first one is on **Thursday, June 26**, Rick Evans Grandview Prairie Conservation Education Center, in **Columbus**, and the second one on **Wednesday, July 30**, at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in **Ferndale**, just west of Little Rock.

The registration deadline for the June 26th workshop is May 23rd and the deadline for the July 30th workshop is July 7th.

Registration is limited to 70 participants in Columbus and 500 in Ferndale and will be accepted on a first-come, first registered basis. The cost of this professional development is \$20 and that includes lunch. To obtain registration information visit:

<http://www.agfc.com/education-class/workshop.aspx>

**or call
(501) 223-6375**



Professional Development

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**Course schedule for next session begins
June 2, 2008 runs through August 29, 2008.**

Contact Woodie Sue Herlein, at
wherlein@astate.edu to enroll in the course!

Everything needed to complete the training will be provided through ASU's online learning tool, "Blackboard Online," through www.astate.edu at no additional cost.

This training may be taken as an introduction for the provider new to the school-age field, or as a refresher course for those who have been working in the field for some time.

The five modules address the following topics:

- Growth & Development
- Planning a Safe and Healthy Environment
- Activities & Program Planning
- Guiding Children's Behavior
- Building Relationships



A journey for those who care for and educate children, youth, and families

**A New LOOK....
New DIRECTION.... and
New JOURNEY for those who care for
and educate children, youth, and families
in Arkansas!**

Traveling Arkansas' Professional Pathways (TAPP) is the flagship professional development system for professionals who care for and educate children, youth, and families in Arkansas. Formerly known as the Arkansas Early Childhood Professional Development System (AECPDS), TAPP is a coordinated system based upon research and best practices that ensures the delivery of high quality professional development opportunities as a part of the development of career pathways that meet the diverse needs of the professionals that the system serves. In the upcoming months, a re-branding of the system, to include the launching of a new logo, will continue to be implemented. TAPP will also be unveiling new changes in the three main components of the system: the Registry, SPECTRUM, and Training. Stay tuned for more information regarding these future changes that will help professional "TAPP" into their fullest potential in order to best serve the children, youth, and families of Arkansas.

Activity Ideas

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Flag Day



June 14th is Flag Day. This holiday falls on a Saturday. You can do activities in your program to celebrate the American Flag and learn about flags from other countries around the world. Have the children plan and organize a special program.

Many Americans do not realize that there are rules surrounding how the flag is displayed. Have the children in your program learn about “flag etiquette” and share this information with their parents and neighbors. This way, the flag can be celebrated by displaying it proudly and correctly.

Some examples of “flag etiquette”

When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union (the blue square where the stars are located) should be uppermost and to the flag’s own right, that is, to the observer’s left. When displayed in a window, the flag should be displayed in the same way, with the union to the left of the observer in the street.

- The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.
- The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water, or merchandise.
- When a flag is worn it is no longer fit to serve as a symbol of our country, it should be destroyed by burning in a dignified manner.

- Ask a local Boy Scout or Girl Scout troop to demonstrate the proper way to fold a flag after it has been lowered.

To learn more about flags from other countries, go to the website for “Flags of the World” at www.fotw.us. There you can view other flags and print out black and white outlines suitable for coloring.

Father’s Day

Father’s Day 2008 is June 15th. This is a great time to acknowledge men who are positive figures in the lives of children today- fathers, grandfathers, uncles, brothers, coaches, teachers, firefighters, police officers, etc. Children can make card or gifts for all the men who have contributed to their lives in a positive way.

My Family

- Post baby photos of all the kids and staff on a bulletin board. See who can make the most matches.
- Using crayons, markers or pencils draw a picture of your family. Remember to add in family pets.
- Write or tell a story about something special you did with a member of your family.
- Design a crest to represent your family name. Talk about why you chose your design.
- Make a family tree. Talk with parents and grandparents to see how far back you can go.

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Bicycles

- Find pictures of bikes. See how they have changed throughout the years.
- Design the bike of your dreams and write a short story about it on the back of the picture.
- Make bicycle wheels from paper plates and hang about the program room.
- Chart the different parts on a bike.
- Invite a policeman or someone who knows about bicycle safety to talk to the group.
- Draw a map showing a bike course around your neighborhood.
- Decorate your bikes and have a bike parade.

Juggle!

June 13th is National Juggling Day. Make your own juggling balls using colorful, helium quality balloons. To fill the balloons, make a funnel out of the top half of a plastic soda bottle. Use this to fill the balloon with rice or small pasta. When the round part of the balloon is full, fold over the “neck” of the balloon securing it closed so the rice won’t fall out. Using additional balloon pieces (use only the round part), add several layers for a stronger juggling ball. Alternate balloon placement to cover each opening. Make three balls and practice, practice, practice!



Happy Birthday!

June 12 is the birthday of Anne Frank. Older school-agers can read her diary as a summer reading project. Ask them to start writing their own diaries. The “Happy Birthday” song was written on June 28, 1859. Can anyone sing it in a language other than English? Have a birthday party just because! Take a poll of the kids and find out which month of the year has the most birthdays. Check the internet to see if they can find national averages on monthly birthdays. Fill a muffin tin with plaster of Paris. Right before it hardens, insert a birthday candle into each cupcake. Pop out the plaster when dry and use bright paints to decorate. Learn about the Chinese calendar and the Zodiac. Do the descriptions of the signs for your birth year and month fit your personality. Dress depicting the month you were born.

Smiles

- Talk about things that make you smile.
- Have a “smile off”. See who can smile the longest without laughing.
- Think of something nice to do for someone else. Report tomorrow how many smiles you collected.
- Make a collage using pictures of smiles out of magazines.
- Make a smile face mask using yellow paint and paper plates.
- Tell about thing that make you laugh.

Activity Ideas

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Movies

- Write a review about the last movie you saw. Take turns being a TV announcer presenting your movie review.
- Take a vote on the best actress or actor of the year. Also vote for the Movie of the Year.
- Invite a local actor from community theater to talk about jobs on a movie set. Which job would you choose and why?
- In groups of 3-5 act out a scene from a movie for the others to guess which movie.
- Use newsprint, tape and crayons or markers to create a costume of your favorite movie character. Model your costumes.

Cereal Box Car Track

The next time rainy weather keeps children indoors in your part of the world, they may enjoy spending an afternoon making an elaborate highway using recycled materials such as empty cereal and tea boxes. This craft, from the Family Fun website (<http://familyfun.go.com/arts-and-crafts/>) requires only empty cereal and tea boxes (other boxes can also be used as desired), cardboard, a ruler, pencil, scissors, and tape.

Cut sections of straight track from each box by drawing a line all the way around the box 1/2 inch up from the bottom. Cut along the line, then cut off the 1/2-inch walls on the narrowest ends. Cut additional road track from the sides of the box. Encourage children to use the scraps to cut out corners and guardrails. Children can make a curved track by cutting out a pie-slice-shaped piece of cardboard and a narrow guardrail. A tea

box can be used to create an overpass by cutting an archway through the box.

Children can set up the track, tape the sections together and start playing!



Me, Myself, and I Collage

The children in your program may enjoy making a "Me, Myself and I" collage, a fun activity that uses some recycled materials to create a full-sized collage that can be hung on a child's door at home or on the wall at your program. This activity is adapted from (www.kinderart.com/recycle/body)

In preparation for this activity, ask families to save and send in brown paper grocery sacks (if they do not use canvas grocery totes). Some other supplies such as fabric scraps, yarn and buttons may be donated by fabric/craft stores. You will also need old magazines, crayons, pencils, fabric, buttons, yarn, glue and scissors.

Ask children to cut open two large paper bags and tape them together until they are a size that is a little longer and a little wider than the child. Ask each child to lie on the paper and have a friend trace around the child's outline. Have each child cut out his or her outline. Children can then look in magazines and cut out pictures of things and places that they enjoy. Do they like animals, nature, music, certain colors, the city or the country, etc.? Ask children to draw their faces, hands and shoes and to embellish their collage with some fabric, buttons and yarn.

Websites to Check Out

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<http://www.learner.org/interactives/parkphysics/>

If the children and/or youth in your program have Internet access, they may enjoy creating a conceptual roller coaster and learning about other amusement park rides on the interactive Amusement Park Physics by Annenberg Media. Children can find out how the laws of physics affect the design of a roller coaster ride by determining the height and slope of hills and the proper shape of the loops. Their roller coaster is then given a rating for safety and fun. Children can find out the solution or continue working on their roller coaster design.

www.kidsgardening.org

This website is full of great resources that are guaranteed to make every child in your program have a green thumb! Some of the features of this site include tips on how to garden safely with youth, how to plan and design a garden, and various indoor growing options. Thematic options involving gardening are also available for staff to explore when developing lesson plans. Check out the “**Grants**” section of the website that highlights the role that the National Gardening Association plays in working with sponsoring companies and organizations to provide in-kind grants to projects that actively engage kids in the garden and improve the quality of life for their communities.

<http://www.kidsacookin.ksu.edu/>

Follow Host (and Mom) Karen Arnold, as she leads school-age children step-by-step in preparing nutritious, delicious, but most of all, fun recipes. Each week, pint-sized chefs will help prepare a different recipe that can easily be made at home. These recipes are not only simple to prepare and affordable, but are an excellent way to share the joys of cooking with youth. Preparing quality food together also can provide quality time with youth. Kids a Cookin' is produced for K-State Research and Extension's Family Nutrition Program (FNP) by the Department of Communications and the Kansas Regents Educational Communications Center (ECC).

<http://www.disciplinehelp.com/>

Are you seeking assistance in how to address behaviors in your program such as a pouting, bullying, disruption, fighting, gossiping, swearing, arrogance, immaturity and more? Free online assistance is available from the Discipline Help website created by The MASTER Teacher. This reference offers assistance in how to address over 117 behaviors. Discipline Help presents a step-by-step approach to changing inappropriate behavior to appropriate behavior. While the website is written in student/teacher language, the guidance should prove very useful for school-age programs.

Summer Food Service Program

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Just as learning does not end when school lets out, neither does a child's need for good nutrition. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to help children in low-income areas get the nutrition they need to learn, play, and grow, throughout the summer months when they are out of school.

The Food and Nutrition Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, administers SFSP at the Federal level. In Arkansas, this program is administered by the Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Special Nutrition Program.

Locally, SFSP is run by approved sponsors, including school districts, local government agencies, camps, or private nonprofit organizations. Sponsors provide free meals to a group of children at a central site, such as a school or a community center. They receive payments from USDA, through their State agencies, for the meals they serve.

Due to recent eligibility requirements even more children and youth might be eligible to receive free meals and snacks through SFSP. Meals and snacks are also available to persons with disabilities, over age 18, who participate in school programs for people who are mentally or physically disabled. To learn more about SFSP in Arkansas visit <http://www.arkansas.gov/childcare/snp/index.html>. The Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Special Nutrition Program (SNP) provides reimbursement for well-

balanced, nutritious meals served to individuals enrolled in the Child Care and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), Special Milk Program (SMP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). Their website provides information about eligibility requirements, reimbursement rates, sponsoring organizations, and more. A link to the on-line application is also available. If you do not have on-line access you can get more information by calling SNP at 501-682-8869. Help do your part to see that children do not go hungry during the summer months.

Other Resources to Check Out!

Team Nutrition is an initiative of the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to support the Child Nutrition Programs through training and technical assistance for foodservice, nutrition education for children and their caregivers, and school and community support for healthy eating and physical activity. This website contains valuable information about ways to improve children's lifelong eating and physical activity habits through nutrition education based on the principles of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and *MyPyramid*.

To gain access to these resources visit

<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov>

