

Curiosity: The Fuel of Development

"Whas'at? Whas'at?"

- A question from a 3-year-old boy asked of his mother over and over as they walked through the zoo.

Children are such curious creatures. They explore, question, and wonder, and by doing so, learn. From the moment of birth, likely even before, humans are drawn to new things. When we are curious about something new, we want to explore it. And while exploring we discover. By turning the light switch on and off over and over again, the toddler is learning about cause and effect. By pouring water into a dozen different-shaped containers and on the floor and over clothes, the 4-year-old is learning pre-concepts of mass and volume. A child discovers the sweetness of chocolate, the bitterness of lemon, the heat of the radiator, and the cold of ice.

The Cycle of Learning

If a child stays curious, he will continue to explore and discover. The 5-year-old finds tadpoles in a tiny pool of mud on the playground. This discovery gives him pleasure. When he experiences the joy of discovery, he will want to repeat his exploration of the pond. (Pleasure leads to repetition.) Each day, he and his classmates return. The tadpoles grow legs. (Repetition leads to mastery.) The children learn that tadpoles become frogs - a concrete example of a complex biological process. Mastery - in this case, understanding that tadpoles become frogs - leads to confidence. Confidence increases a willingness to act on curiosity- to explore, discover, and learn. "Can we bring tadpoles into the class? How do other baby animals grow up? Why don't dog babies lose their tails?" This positive cycle of learning is fueled by curiosity and the pleasure that comes from discovery and mastery.

Shared Discovery

What is most pleasurable about discovery and mastery is sharing it with someone else. ("Teacher, come look! Tadpoles!") We are social creatures. The most positive reinforcement - the greatest reward

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and the greatest pleasure - comes from the adoring and admiring gaze, comments and support from someone we love and respect. The teacher smiles, claps, and comments, "You are great. Look at all these tadpoles! You are our science expert!" This rewarding approval causes a surge of pleasure and pride that can sustain the child through new challenges and frustrations. Approval can generalize and help build confidence and self-esteem. So later in the day, when this boy is struggling with the introduction of simple math concepts, rather than eroding his esteem by thinking, "I'm stupid, I don't understand," he can think, "I don't get this, but I'm the one who knows about tadpoles."

Constrained Curiosity

For too many children, curiosity dimmed is a future denied. Our potential - emotional, social, and cognitive - is expressed through the quantity of our experiences. And the less-curious child will make fewer new friends, join fewer social groups, read fewer books, and take fewer hikes. The less-curious child is harder to teach because he is harder to inspire, enthuse, and motivate.

There are three common ways adults constrain or even crush the enthusiastic exploration of the curious child:

- 1. Fear:** Fear kills curiosity. When the child's world is chaotic or when he is afraid, he will not like novelty. He will seek the familiar, staying in his comfort zone, unwilling to leave and explore new things. Children impacted by war, natural disasters, family distress, or violence all have their curiosity crushed.
- 2. Disapproval:** "Don't touch. Don't climb. Don't yell. Don't take that apart. Don't get dirty. Don't. Don't. Don't." Children sense and respond to our fears, biases, and attitudes. If we convey a sense of disgust at the mud on their shoes and the slime on their hands, their discovery of tadpoles will be diminished.
- 3. Absence:** The presence of a caring, invested adult provides two things essential for optimal exploration: 1) a sense of safety from which to set out to discover new things and 2) the capacity to share the discovery and, thereby, get the pleasure and reinforcement from that discovery.

Teacher Tips

- Recognize individual differences in children's styles of curiosity. Some want to explore with only their minds, others in more physical ways - touching, smelling, tasting, and climbing. To some degree these differences are related to temperamental differences in the exploratory drive. Some children are more timid; others are more comfortable with novelty and physical exploration. Yet even the timid child will be very curious; he may require more encouragement and reinforcement to leave safe and familiar situations.
- Try to redefine "failure." In truth, curiosity often leads to more mess than mastery, but it is how we handle the mess that helps encourage further exploration, and thereby, development. Redefine failure. When the 5-year-old is learning to jump rope and he trips a thousand times, this is not a thousand failures - it is determination.
- Use your attention and approval to reinforce the exploring child. When exploration in the classroom is disruptive or inappropriate, contain it by teaching the child when and where to do that kind of exploration: "Tommy, lets play with water outside."

If we let them children can reintroduce us to the world. When we truly allow a child to share his discoveries with us, we experience the joys of rediscovery - and in doing so, learn ourselves.

Curiosity	Results in	Exploration
Exploration	Results in	Discovery
Discovery	Results in	Pleasure
Pleasure	Results in	Repetition
Repetition	Results in	Mastery
Mastery	Results in	New Skills
New Skills	Results in	Confidence
Confidence	Results in	Self esteem
Self esteem	Results in	Sense of Security
Security	Results in	More Exploration

Visit <http://www.childtrauma.org> for more information.

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Resources that address the child care needs of Liberty County



Child Care Connection



Improving Lives. Improving Texas.

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Does Your New Year's Resolution Include Getting Fit?

What is your real fitness goal and how can your "little followers" get involved? Have you ever thought what physical activity is doing for you? You probably are active all the time without even thinking about it, especially working with mobile children. Just by playing you are getting stronger, increasing your endurance and improving your flexibility. Being active keeps you fit and helps you stay healthy.



Get Smart!

How do you measure up when it comes to flexibility, strength, and endurance? What can you find out? Take these tests with your "little followers" during play-time and record your results.

Identify Strengths & Limitations

Flexibility is being able to move, stretch, and bend easily. Measure your flexibility:

- Sit on the floor with your legs out straight in front of you.
- Bend forward and reach towards your toes. Hold that position for 5 seconds; try not to bounce. Have your friends measure how far past your toes you can reach.

Strength is how much work your muscles can do. Measure your strength:

- Draw a line in the dirt, or put a stick down to mark a starting line.
- Stand with both feet behind the line. Put your arms out behind you and swing them forward as you leap.
- Jump as far as you can. Measure from the start line to the spot where your heels touch down.

**Hint: A distance equal to your height is excellent. Record your height and the height of your friends.*

Endurance is being able to keep going without tiring quickly. Measure your endurance:

- Find your pulse on the underside of your wrist. Count the number of beats for 30 seconds. Record "Before" Pulse.
- Step up onto one stair with one foot then the other foot, staying on that same step. Then step down one

- foot at a time. Count aloud, "up, up, down, down." This is one set. Try to complete two of these every 5 seconds. Record "After" Pulse.
- Record the "Difference" between "Before" Pulse and "After" Pulse.

**Hint: For younger children try calculating the "FUN" rating on a scale of 1 to 10.*

What Does It Mean?

If the difference is:	Your heart is:
The same or less	In excellent shape
One or two beats faster	In fair shape
Five or six beats faster	In poor shape
Seven or more beats faster	In need of work

More Challenges

Repeat these tests each week and track the changes in your results as you add exercise and activities to try: walking, jogging, push-ups, pull-ups, tug of war, rowing, running. Stretch your "rubberbands" for good flexibility including tumbling and gymnastics, yoga, dancing and martial arts.

Make a commitment to your own flexibility, strength, and endurance and be an important fit role model.

Extension program serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. Individuals with disabilities who require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in an event are encouraged to contact the Liberty County Extension Office at 936-336-4558, ext. 221 as soon as possible to advise us of the auxiliary aid or service that you will require.

Circle Time

Make circle time fun and educational with these easy to learn songs set to familiar children's tunes.

Circle Time is a pivotal part of the day with pre-schoolers. It's a time to settle down, focus, and learn about the calendar, the weather, the theme for the month or week, and other important things you feel the need to focus on for the day. It's an organized time, a time for reflection and a time for planning with your preschoolers on the days events. But more importantly, it's a time of learning.

If you're able, create a poster board for each song with large block letters to reinforce Reading and Phonics Skills, pointing to the words as the song is sung.



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Teaching the Days of the Week

Days of the Week Song
(to the tune of "The Adam's Family")
Days of the week (snap, snap)
Days of the week (snap, snap)
Read on

Night Time Preschool Lesson Plan
Halloween Preschool Lesson Plan
Singing Advantages for Preschool Teachers

Days of the week, days of the week, days of the week (snap, snap)

There's Sunday then there's Monday
Tuesday then there's Wednesday
Thursday then there's Friday
And then there's Saturday
Days of the week (snap, snap)
Days of the week (snap, snap)
Days of the week, days of the week, days of the week (snap, snap)

Teaching Months of the Year

Months of the Year Song

(to the tune of "Brother John"/"Ferra Jacque")



January, February
March, April, May
June and July
August and
September
October and
November
Then there's
December

Twelve months in the year

Teaching Days and Sequencing

Today's Day
(to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")
Yesterday was _____ day, _____ day,
Yesterday was _____ day all day long.
But today's day is _____ day, _____ day,
Today's day is _____ day all day long.
Tomorrow will be _____ day, _____ day,
Tomorrow will be _____ day all day long.
But today's day is _____ day, _____ day,
Today's day is _____ day all day long.

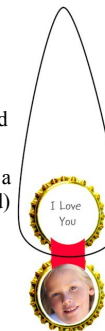
Preschooler's love to sing and dance. Because of this, songs are a great way to reinforce what you're teaching. Use your creativity and make up your own to a familiar, popular children's tune that will be easy for them to remember. Be amazed at how quickly they learn these educational songs!

Arts & Crafts

Bottle Cap Locket

What You Need:

- 2 mottle bottle caps
- 1- 6 to 8 inch piece of 1/2" wide ribbon per child
- 1 tiny paper circle (to fit inside cap) per child
- Red stamp pad
- White flat spray paint
- Clear spray paint
- Tiny photo of child
- Thin ribbon about 1/16" wide (about a yard for each child)
- Beads with large holes



What to Do:

1. Spray paint bottle caps white.
2. Have child make a heart on one bottle cap using the red stamp pad and printing a finger print two times to make the heart shape. Spray with clear spray to protect.
3. Fold the 1/2" wide ribbon in half and tie in a knot. Use a glue gun to glue the ends of the ribbon inside the two bottle caps.
4. On bottom half of "locket" glue the picture. On top half glue the message.
5. Have students string completed locket onto long narrow ribbon. Then have them string beads on either side.

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Living Leprechauns

Need:

Styrofoam cups, markers, paper, cotton balls, dirt, grass seeds.

Directions:

1. Give each child a Styrofoam cup.
2. Have them draw or paste facial features on the cup.
3. Use cotton balls for beard.
4. The next day (after the glue dries) fill the cup with dirt.
5. Plant grass seeds.

Each Leprechaun should have a green head of hair soon!



Easter Bunny Puppet

What you Need:

- Bunny pattern (attached)
- Scissors
- Pencils
- Oaktag (or any thick paper)
- Crayons
- Hole puncher
- Brass paper fasteners



What to Do:

1. Print and cut out wiggly bunny pattern.
2. Trace the pattern on oaktag and cut out. Make sure to cut out two arms and two legs. Turn over one arm piece and one leg piece so both arms and legs are aligned properly.
3. Use crayons to draw eyes, nose, mouths and inner-ear sections of the bunny.
4. Punch holes where indicated on the patterns. Use brass paper fasteners to attach the ears to the top of the head and to attach head, arms and legs to the body, as shown.

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Handprint Dishcloth

What You Need:

- A solid color dishcloth.
- Fabric paint
- Trays for holding paint.
- Paintbrushes or sponges.
- A covered work area.
- Hands

What to Do:

1. Children paint their hands using a sponge or a paintbrush and make a handprint on the washcloth. (If you have a dark colored dishcloth, then use a light colored paint and visa versa.)
2. Use a paintbrush to write the date on the corner of the dishcloth.

Here is a poem to go along with the dishcloth:

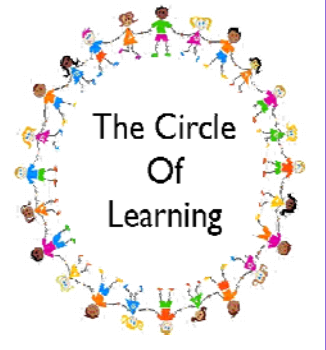
Sometimes I might upset you
Just because I'm small
By leaving fingerprints of mine
On a table, chair or wall.
On a table, chair or wall.
But everyday I grow a bit
And I'll be big one day
When all my tiny fingerprints
Have long been cleaned away
So keep these prints of my two hands
To help you to recall
Just how big my fingers were
That time when I was small.



*Make sure you follow the directions for setting the fabric paint (the directions will be on the paint container). That way the washing machine will deliver mom back the same wonderful handprints wash after wash.
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Child Care Providers Training

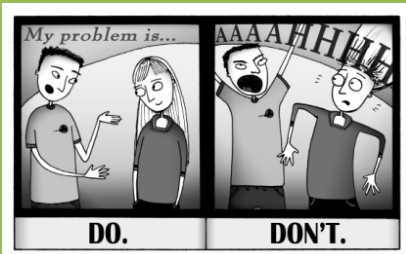
February 12, 2011



Church of Christ
3201 N. Main
Liberty, TX 77575

8:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Registration begins at 8:00 a.m.



7 Clock Hours

Lunch Provided!

\$10.00 per person

If you need CEUs - \$25.00 per person.

Topics include:

- *Germs 101*
- *Rainy Day Games*
- *Passenger Safety*
- *Closeness with Communication*
- *Emotional Triggers*
- *Destructive Behaviors*
- *Pest Prevention*

Registration Deadline – February 4th

**Note: No Participant will be allowed to leave during the training for any reason including lunch. This training is for adults only; there will not be child care available during training.*

Registration Form

Child Care Provider
Training
February 12, 2011

Name

Address

Phone

Email Address

Center/Organization Name



Return ONE Registration Entry per person to the address below:

Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Liberty County
Attn: Alexis Cordova
2103 Cos Street
Liberty, TX 77575

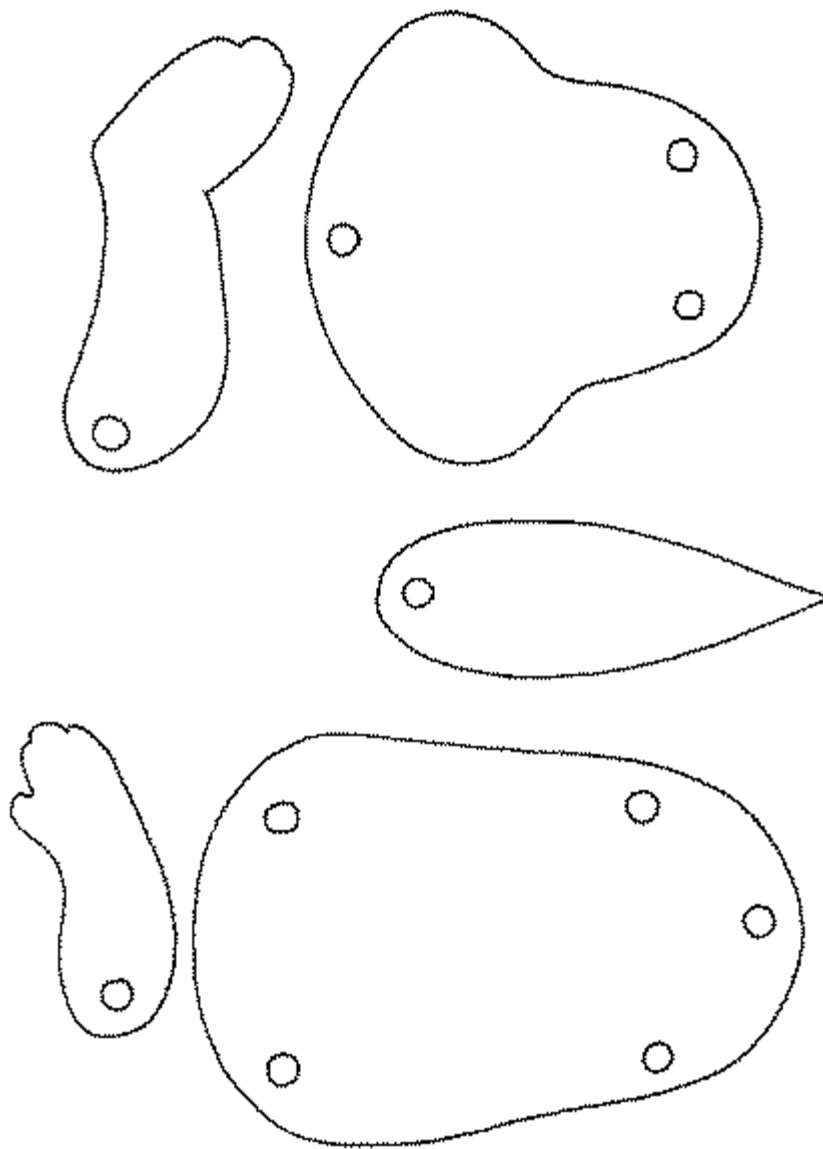
Registration Deadline
February 4th

Questions?
936-336-4558, ext. 221

(Checks and money orders can be made out to FCS Advisory Board; receipts will be provided at the time of training; no money will be accepted the day of event)

Please select the following as they apply:

- General Registration (7 clock hours) — \$10.00
- General Registration + CEU fee — \$25.00
- I would like to be added to the child care mailing list.
- I require an auxiliary aid, service or accommodation in order to participate in this meeting. If you checked this box, please indicate the aid required so appropriate accommodations can be arranged.



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