



## Early Childhood Child Advocate Support Group – October 27, 2007 Sandy Greenberg, M.S.W., Child Advocate - November 2002-January 2006

[Note: this presentation is from 2007 but was recently reformatted for readability; no content was changed]

### 1. Outdoor Activities

Treasure Hunt walk – bring hand cleaner, bags to collect “treasures” in, paper towels & water bottle to wash them off. Great learning experience for what’s safe (shiny paper, twigs, rocks, discarded toy parts), and what’s not (broken glass, sharp metal objects, pointy sticks, stinging insects). With older children, decorate a “treasure chest” – shoebox, plastic storage container (with or without sections), egg carton for small treasures for storing the treasures.

Critter walk – walk in any park & see how many different “critters” you can observe, and how they move: birds, squirrels, dogs, snails, ants, spiders, butterflies. Colors, counting, even pre-reading skills can be exercised – e.g. “What letter (sound) starts “butterfly”? Also, great for exercising young & old imaginations: “What would you do if you were an ant/ squirrel/ bird”?

Hide & Seek: this is hugely security-building & fear-overcoming for all ages of young kids. With babies, just putting your hat or sunglasses over your eyes, then removing them & making a surprised face/ vocalization is enough. As kids get older, they’ll want to take turns hiding or having you hide & having the seeker count with eyes closed. Set out the safe perimeter with him/her in advance. Another version that’s easier to closely supervise is to hide objects (crayons, Go Fish cards, matchbox cars, aluminum foil balls etc.) within a given perimeter (great on a playground, requiring the seeker to climb, crawl, look from different angles, etc.) – count how many you/he/she hide to begin with & count them as they are found.

Picnic! Kids love the real old fashioned kind – bring a vinyl tablecloth or old blanket/ sheet, a variety of snacky, healthy foods (grapes, baby carrots, cheese crackers, rice cakes, strawberries, plain or colored cooked pasta rotelli, wheels & tomato sauce for dipping, juice & water, cherry tomatoes, gummy bears, dry cereal, peanut butter & plastic knife for spreading, sliced cheese cut in triangles & squares); plain white paper plates, tippy cups work best to avoid spills – make faces on your plate with food before eating it, or combine in novel ways (we put grapes on pretzel sticks to make “lollipops”). If you bring something small to do (crayons & paper, ball & cup, a few matchbox cars, toddler legos) you can easily spend a few hours of kick-back relaxed time this way.

Public Playgrounds: (just some recommendations – check out online maps & sources for parks near where your child/ren lives)

>John D. Morgan Park (Campbell, off Winchester) – water play, sand play, climbing, bouncing – 2 playgrounds plus large fields, frequent weekend birthday & corporate parties for observing & sometimes joining activities.

>Overfelt Gardens & Chinese Cultural Park – great tree-lined paths for walking, riding, scooting, chasing after a high-bouncing ball or beach ball.

>Santa Clara Community Park – opposite Kaiser Permanente hospital. Free concerts on Sunday afternoons through the summer, a pond with ducks, lots of open space, playgrounds.

Cleaning up – kids love to clean things – sweeping, a dust pan & dust broom, feather duster, soapy water in a bucket and large watering can for washing down a favorite riding toy, truck, ball or play equipment. Great for a hot day – getting wet no problem – use sun screen!

Take the Light Rail! No charge for children under 6, 2 hour pass lets you go and come on same line – downtown, Milpitas-to-Mountain View. Let child put money in ticket dispenser, play “I Spy” while waiting, look at onboard map with preschoolers & kindergarteners, let them climb on seats & look out windows.



Rain Walk – Optional: bring plastic 16oz tub lids & tubs, small ziploc bags, small inexpensive magnifying glass, spoon or small trowel or shovel, sturdy plastic spoons and forks, leave a couple of absorbent large towels in your car. Both you and the child wear rain gear – raincoat or waterproof windbreaker, boots or shoes that can be thrown in the wash after – umbrellas optional.

Save the walk for towards the end of your outing, so you and the child won't be sitting around in wet clothing.

Find an uncrowded place to walk – it can be around where the child lives, or a park (with paved walkways – grass can get pretty mushy & waterlogged). Explain that you're going "exploring" to see what happens to "nature" in the rain.

Walk around looking at how things change in the rain – what critters come out (collect worms in the tub or on the lid – put a bit of mud & grass in, watch what they do – or watch them in their own habitat). Collect wet leaves and see how they stick together. Shake water out of pinecones, watch for birds & squirrels, etc. For pretend play – make "stone soup" in the tub – ask child to collect "food" to put in the "soup" - pretend stones are potatoes (or whatever), dirt is "sauce", grass is "vegetables" - stir it up til it looks soupy, and pretend to eat it! Let child use imagination, and try to follow the child's lead – if he/she wants it to be a magic potion, find out what magic it will do, and what ingredients it needs. Use this as a springboard to talking about foods they/ you like or dislike.

## 2. Fingerplays & Songs

- >This Little Light of Mine
- >Five Little Monkeys
- >The Wheels on the Bus
- >The Ants Go Marching
- >Five Little Green Speckled Frogs
- >What does the Traffic Light Say to You?
- >The Eensy, Weensy Spider
- >Old MacDonald
- >There Were Five in the Bed
- >And the Green Grass Grew All Around
- >You Are My Sunshine
- >Rain, Rain Go Away
- >The Name Game

## 3. Using Recycled Junk for Toys & Crafts

- > Assortment of paper tubes & bands – toilet paper, paper towels, inside of tape roll, large shipping tubes – for free play (rolling, binoculars, putting rocks & marbles through), with masking tape & assorted colors of tissue paper – make animals, bracelets, constructions.
- > Heat-molded plastic from packaging materials – to paint, glue pieces of tissue paper inside & hold to light, self-adhesive sticker decorations, scotch tape together for "inventions"
- > Egg cartons – cut apart & decorate for caterpillars, glue paper or paint insides for textured wall décor, tape into a rectangle as a picture frame
- >colorful used wrapping paper, wallpaper sample books, old pattern books – cut out pages ahead of time (Xacto knife works well) – use for simple folding "magic" – fans, airplanes, puppet faces, boats.
- > Odd socks – make terrific hand puppets if you glue/sew/fabric paint on eyes, yarn hair, scrap fabric tongue. Fill with sand or dry beans/rice & tie up securely for a bean bag/ hackey sack.
- > Cardboard boxes - with a large hole cut out of one side as a "target" – use crayons/paint/chalk to decorate the box (e.g. make the hole the "mouth" of a hungry lion or silly clown). Really big (appliance) boxes are great for climbing in/out/through – just check that there are no sharp staples inside, or duct tape over them first. Can cut an inverted "L" shape and bend to make a "door". A box with different shaped "windows", inverted over a pull wagon, makes a great mobile home!



Note: some inexpensive items to keep on hand are colored pipe cleaners & large-holed beads (depending on age-appropriateness for child), water color paints & brushes & cup for water, self-adhesive magnet stripping for making just about anything into a refrigerator magnet, washable school glue, stickers (can use the free ones you get in the mail – just cut off the pictures & throw away the name&address part), high-bouncing small balls & inflatable large beach ball, blunt-end scissors, used Parenting or other kid-friendly magazines.

- Lakeshore Learning Center in Campbell has crafts activities for free every Saturday, suitable for 2.5-8 year olds. Lots of different materials.

Helpful Websites [Note: some of these may be out of date but are included for context]:

[http://activities.wildernet.com/pages/area.cfm?areaname=Santa%20Clara%20County%20Parks&CU\\_ID=1](http://activities.wildernet.com/pages/area.cfm?areaname=Santa%20Clara%20County%20Parks&CU_ID=1)  
Information on Santa Clara County parks & hiking trails.

<http://www.bahiker.com/preserve.html> Bay Area Preserves, parks & trailheads

<http://www.grpg.org/> Guadalupe River Park & Gardens – NEW! Downtown 3-mile path along river

<http://www.sjlibrary.org/about/events/> All info about San Jose libraries and events like story hours & puppet shows.

<http://www.sanjose.com/family/business-directory/childrens-museums> Scroll past the paid ads, to a listing of local museums with info & links for each.

<http://www.sanjose.com/family/business-directory/parks-open-spaces> Scroll past the paid ads, to a listing of San Jose parks and open spaces, with info & links for each.

<http://www.centerofweb.com/kids/games/default.htm> Listing & links to “how to” play numerous old & new street games for kids (also jump rope & handclapping games lyrics)

<http://www.earlychildhoodlinks.com/teachers/fingerplays.htm> This page has loads of words to fingerplays, but also excellent links to other educational information for toddlers & preschoolers!

---

Thanks to: <http://www.perpetualpreschool.com/movement.html>

Note: finding a suitable play space... In summer, any large grassy, or asphalt-, rubber mat- or mulch-covered area is great. In winter months, if it's rainy or cold, many community centers have open multipurpose rooms, some parks have sheltered (roofed) picnic areas, libraries can work for quieter activities. Try to find a convenient sheltered space to return often, during inclement weather – breathing the outdoor air, having large muscle activity space, is a welcome change from being cooped up indoors.

-----  
Shaking a shaker gently sing: "Go To Sleep. Put on your pajamas. Get under the covers. Good night." (child acts out the named activities).

Then, keeping a lively beat on two rhythm sticks, chant: "I'm gonna jump with my toes, jump with my feet, jump with my nose, jump with knees, jump with my bones, jump with my muscles, jump with my heart, beat, beat beat!"

Then switch to the shaker and start again. The kids feign sleep, then jump.

This is off my CD/tape, MOVING TO THE BEAT. You can listen to it free at [www.RobertTheGuitarGuy.com](http://www.RobertTheGuitarGuy.com)



You need a large sheet of newspaper print to cover a table, and any music from CD or tape. Allow the children to walk around the table with marker or crayon in hand, making movements on the paper to the beat of the music. Vary types of music, or play a stop and go "freeze" game. Combines art, music and movement together. Ask children to draw what the music sounds like!

Teaching tempo and beat to 3 year olds. In order for the students to learn the definitions of tempo and beat, taking turns put a child on your lap as you recite a poem with a definite beat and bounce the child on your knees varying the tempos and beats. The children watching may either choose the tempo or guess whether the tempo you used was fast, medium, or slow. This activity allows the child on your lap to feel the beat and produces lots of giggles. Fun and learning combined! That's why I love pre-school!!!!

### Jack and the Bean Stalk

This is a great creative movement play for using various parts of the body.  
Concepts: forward and backward walking, light and heavy feet, stretching and lifting

Twist paper bags, and staple them together to form a bean stalk. Staple green leaves onto the stalk and hang from a high place (outdoors, from a tree limb or swing set).

Make a "magic line" with some masking tape, and have child(ren) sit on the line.

Have the child(ren) individually pretend to be Jack, tip toeing quietly towards the bean stalk. At the beanstalk, the child then pretends to climb up. Encourage the child to lift their knees and use their arms while climbing. Then you and the other child say, "The Giant is Coming!"

The child now becomes the giant, walking backwards, with large heavy giant steps until they are safely back on their magic line.

### Learning Left from Right

When playing a game or singing a song that deals with left/right recognition (such as Hokey Pokey or Looby Loo) - put a sticker on the child's right hand (or left, if child is lefthanded). This encourages the child to look and remember which side is their right side and which side is their left side. This is great for in the backseat of the car: "If You're Happy and You Know It" – "Wave your RIGHT hand", etc.

### Feather Dance

We take a bag of colored feathers to an empty room or outdoor play space.  
Give the child one (their choice) feather to "feather dance" with.

Play music (boom box) or sing a song - child tries to keep the feather in the air by blowing it. If it lands on the ground, leave it there, and you give the child another. After awhile, when the child tires of keeping individual feathers afloat, toss the whole bag of feathers in the air, and see who can gather up the most feathers. You can follow up with an art project of gluing feathers onto a headband, or sheet of paper, augment with markers or crayon.

### Careful listening & large muscle skills

All you need is a bell and a set of blocks (sanded wood scraps) for a fun movement activity (And it really fine tunes Listening Skills!)



"Click" a slow beat on the sticks. Call this "walking music".

Then "click" out a faster beat with the sticks. Call this "jogging music".

Now, ask the child to listen to the sticks' rhythm. When he/she hears the "walking music", she should walk around the room. When he hears the "jogging music", jog.

Now ring the bell. This means "stop and drop". Now, have fun with the slow and fast beats of the sticks ("walking music" and "jogging music") and ring the bell. Now you've got the power and your kid has a great physical and auditory workout! If your child needs extra motivating, make it a contest, and a certain number of correct listening/moving actions "wins" the child the blocks and/or the bell!

Might work best with girls?

Make some very inexpensive streamers for dancing by taking lids from yogurt containers, cutting the centers out to make plastic rings. Then cut an old light plastic tablecloth and/or garbage bag into strips - 2 colors works well. Loop the plastic strips in a knot through the rings. They are easy for small hands to hold. Children love them. You can sing, or put on disco music, and march and dance around the space, waving our streamers up and down and all around. Fun!

All weather "swimming"

Child sits down on floor, legs in straddle position. Fingers on both hands represent two swimmers who want to jump off the diving board. They take their fingers on each hand and walk them down their legs to their toes and when they reach their toes they bounce their fingers on the tips of their toes and they jump in the water. They swim using their arms, and then climb out of the water and start over again until they are stretched out and then they can grab a towel and dry off.

---

#### BALLOON CATCH

Tape a large paper plate to the end of a wooden paint stirrer. Give to each child, along with a blown up balloon. They throw the balloons up in the air, but then have to keep them up in the air, using the plates. This is great for eye-hand coordination, and they love it!

(Note: Make sure you do this with older preschool children who are not apt to bite into the balloons :)

---

This is fun for physical bonding with preschoolers & older kids who like being "babied":

Sit the child on your lap, singing the tune, and mimicking the food's movement with your knees & legs & arms under & around the child:

Jello in the Bowl (tune: "The Farmer in the Dell")

Jello in the bowl, jello in the bowl,  
Weeble, wobble, weeble, wooble,  
Jello in the bowl!

Try with "Spaghetti in the Bowl" (Slippy, slide-y, slippy, slide-y), "Popcorn in the Bowl", (poppety-poppy, poppety-poppy), Crackers in the Bowl (crunchy-munchy, crunchy-munchy), oatmeal in the bowl (mushy, gushy, mushy, gushy), etc.

---

Hands-free bubblewrap popping



Materials: large sized bubble wrap & music

Give each child his own sheet of bubble wrap to place on the floor in front of him. Explain to the child that he is going to pop the bubbles, but cannot use hands to pop them. (Optional) Turn on the music and let him pop his bubbles using any body part except hands. Elbows, knees, toes, bottoms etc. are used. Let him stomp the bubbles with shoes on and with bare feet. Have fun and pop some bubble wrap along with the kids

---

#### Paper Plate Dancing

Give each child a paper plate (or aluminum pie pan). Play different types of music and have the children keep the beat by:

Tapping the plate on their head/ Tapping the plate on their tummy/ Tapping the plate on their foot/

Tapping the plate on their knee, etc.....

Once the child is used to tapping the paper plate on different body parts, ask her where she should tap the plate next.

---



## 10 Tips for Growing Creative, Capable Kids

### Say "Yes!" to children in as many ways as you can.

Children need abundant opportunities to express and be themselves. Too many rules, "should's" and "have-to's" break a child's spirit, and children lose their inner knowing and sense of self.

### Play with them. It's good for you and them.

Play is essential to a child's development. It allows them to explore and experience the world in their unique way. Your relationship will blossom. You will become less stuffy, and you might even become a happier person.

### Be authentically yourself. Tell them how you feel.

It's not only okay, but essential, that your child know you for the human being you are. There is no such thing as a perfect parent / educator no matter how hard you try. It confuses a child's sense of reality when you try to be something you're not.

### Pay attention to what they are feeling. Our first reaction is usually to our feelings, not theirs.

We all know children have feelings, but we too often become so aware of our own that we aren't aware of theirs. A healthy balance between the two brings you closer to your child / student and makes you a more compassionate, effective parent / educator.

### Go on fun adventures together!

This is a corollary of "Play with them." Adventures mean doing something new, and allows both of you to experience new realities and perspectives. Having new experiences gives children a broader experience of themselves in the world as well as coping skills for handling the new situations in life.

### Become more fully yourself. Discover yourself. Grow.

Most of us live within a small framework compared to who we truly are. Be willing to stretch and expand your perspective of yourself and of children. As you become more aware and more fully yourself, you create more loving, connected relationships with children.

### Listen to children. They need it, and you will learn much.

We often believe we're listening to children, when we're really trying to get them to listen to us. Learn to be a question-asker who truly wants to discover and understand. Be willing to accept a child's truth without needing to change it to fit your perspective.

### Be clear when you need to say "No".

Only say "No" to a child when it is very important to you, then mean what you say. Threats, bribes, and lectures have little long-term impact. Be strong and brave enough to be true to yourself.

### Open your heart to loving them. It will nurture both of you.

You can never love children too much, and you can never be loved too much by a child. Breathe into your heart and expand your capacity for love.

### Enjoy them as fully as you can. Life and time do not stand still.

No matter how many times you hear it, you don't really "get it" until they're grown and walking out the door. Children will grow up and become adults whether we enjoy them or not.

---

### Some Suggested Do's and Don'ts for Engaging with Young Children

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wait until the child approaches you for</li> </ul>	4. Move in on the child suddenly and/or



<p>physical touch – and let her/him know what is appropriate (holding hands, patting, hugging, stroking hair) and what isn't (tugging, pulling, touching private parts – including your breasts, slapping, biting).</p>	<p>unexpectedly, unless she/he is in danger. Many foster children have experienced physical or sexual abuse or inappropriate advances (i.e. threatening) of some kind, and they are likely to be hyper-alert to sudden movements, even once</p>
<p>2. Use a moderate, calm tone of voice, whether cheering a child on, requesting a change in behavior, or consoling the child.</p> <p>If the child isn't paying attention, get down to their eye level &amp; look them in the eye as you speak.</p>	<p>5. Yell, plead, pretend to cry, talk "down" to, scream (even in praise), imitate their voice as a way of correcting them.</p> <p>Kids are pretty sensitive to verbal cues from adults, and model their own verbal behavior based on how they are talked to.</p>
<p>3. Use "I" messages that are specific &amp; understandable in the child's. Example: It hurts my ears when you yell (whine) like that. Could you use a softer voice that doesn't hurt my ears? Otherwise, I'll have to move away (or cover my ears, or turn on music...)</p>	<p>3. Blame, label the CHILD – you're lazy, silly, slow, etc.</p> <p>Better to point at and describe an unwelcome behavior or choice, and a logical consequence: You didn't want to hold my hand crossing the street, so if you don't hold my hand, I'm going to hold on to your wrist pretty tightly, to keep you safe.</p>
<p>4. Always ask the caregiving parent/s for permission – about feeding the child (and what you intend to feed him/her), getting wet and/or dirty (or activities that wear out shoes, jeans – like crawling, walking on a dry river bed, etc.), seeing a movie.</p>	<p>4. I've gotten in trouble for letting the boys get dirty, when they were leaving directly to a birthday party or grandparents' house after our visit. Some parents are very particular about the clothes issue (ask parent to dress child in knock-about old clothes if you intend to do something that can stain/wear/ tear ).</p>
<p>5. Ask open-ended questions (w/o a "Yes" or "No" or "Fine" possible answer: "What did you do on your visit with your mom?" "What did you like best about ...X...?" "What are your favorite foods?" "...Colors?" "Why do you like that X best?"</p> <p>Wait a while before asking the next question – or add: "And what else?"</p>	<p>5. Ask close-ended questions like "Did you have a good time?" "Do you like pizza?"</p>
<p>6. Give kids access to materials with which to create "projects", without instruction, showing them how you make something, coaching. If you want, you can keep up a factual running commentary: "Oh, now you're using the green crayon" or "looks like you're building an invention".</p> <p>Kids can be very inventive when they aren't pressured into doing things one certain way, or feel they have to do just like the example. someone else sets.</p>	<p>6. Do FOR the child, show them how YOU use the materials before they get a chance to use them creatively, or criticize the way the child is doing something (that's too much glue! Color INSIDE the lines, like this!)</p> <p>Remember that toddler and young preschoolers are much more into PROCESS than PRODUCT most of the time – let them play freely with materials, without making anything to take home, put on the fridge, etc.</p>