

# KEEPING IN TOUCH

SUMMER 2017

## PARTICIPATING AGENCIES:

Aisling Discoveries Child & Family Centre, Child Care Consultation

Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough, Special Needs Services

The Etobicoke Children's Centre, Special Needs Consultation

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital, Community Outreach Service

Humber College, Child Care Consultation Services

Toronto Children's Services, Special Services Unit

WoodGreen Community Services

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## PLANNING FOR A FUN FILLED SUMMER PROGRAM

Welcome to another edition of Keeping In Touch. Summer is a busy and exciting time within programs. It is especially important at this time of year to keep in mind the needs of all the children to insure everyone is safe and happy throughout the season. These needs include everything from engaging programming for the very busy child to remembering sun and heat safety for the child who is unable to consider this on their own.

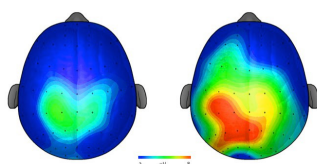
With all that extra outdoor time summer can be an excellent opportunity to work on gross motor skills. And children who might not typically engage one another during indoor experiences may be more likely to connect while running, jumping, and climbing. Try out a few ideas and pass some on to your families.

*Shondel Shaw, RECE, Special Needs Consultant ~ Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough*

## LET'S GET MOVING!!!

There is growing and compelling evidence that regular and planned physical activity for all children has not only physical benefits, but benefits for academic and social success as well.

"Regulation of arousal, development of a sense of mastery, enhanced social cognitions (negotiation, hierarchy and emotional awareness) and gains in spatial cognition are all potential mechanisms through which physical play (exercise and rough and tumble) may influence cognitive outcomes."<sup>1</sup>



Even basic physical activity can enhance attention and memory. As a matter of fact just 20 minutes of walking at a moderate pace can enhance children's neural activity compared to those that have been sitting for 20 minutes.

Just take a look at the brain images where blue shows lower neural activity and the red shows higher brain activity. The images clearly demonstrate the contrast of levels of neural activity between a sedentary body (on the left) and an active body (on the right).<sup>2</sup> So let's get outside and get moving!!! Not sure where to start? Keeping In Touch contains lots of new and interesting ideas throughout.

<sup>1</sup>Krakow, E., *Physical Activity in Early Childhood: Setting the Stage for Lifelong Healthy Habits*. Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development; April 2011. Retrieved June 20, 2017 from [http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/documents/Parenting\\_2011-04.pdf](http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/documents/Parenting_2011-04.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>Active Living Research. *Active Education: Growing Evidence on Physical Activity and Academic Performance*. Active Living Research; January 2015. Retrieved June 20, 2017 from [http://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/ALR\\_Brief\\_ActiveEducation\\_Jan2015.pdf](http://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/ALR_Brief_ActiveEducation_Jan2015.pdf).

## SUMMER PROGRAMMING & CHANGES IN ROUTINES ~ SUPPORTING BEST OUTCOMES

As summer approaches child care programs are busy organizing their summer programs. Although it is exciting, the multiple changes and additions to the program, the environment, and the staff can be challenging for the children. Over the past five years, some research has been completed to look at practices to insure the “best outcomes” for children when changes in routines within group care occur. Some strategies and tips from these studies may support a seamless shift in your program and ensure everyone really enjoys all that summer has to offer.

A study out of the American University looked at stability issues in childcare and their implications for child outcomes. Here are the top five things to consider when planning your summer program to ensure “best outcomes”.

### 1. Predictability & Intentionality

Change should be predictable. Ensure that children and their families are aware of all changes in routine. Provide and post schedules and events ahead of time.

Change should be intentional; proactive rather than reactive. Make sure there is a purpose to any changes or additions that are made to your program and that they are well thought through.



### 2. Consistency in Relationships

Ensure that when staff changes occur, the child continues to have at least one staff that they have a relationship with. New staff should be introduced to team members, and the children, ahead of their scheduled shifts. And some information should be available to families in regards to summer support staff and or students.



### 3. Number of Changes

Ensure the number of changes in the program is manageable and developmentally appropriate. An exciting and stimulating summer program should not be overwhelming. The younger the age group the fewer adaptations to the program there should be. For older children attempt to have at least one centre-based program day per week so they can regroup.

### 4. Patterns of Stability

Within the changes ensure that there continues to be some stability. Ensure that some of the children's favourite toys continue to be offered, they spend some time in familiar environments and classrooms, and they eat and sleep in consistent spaces as much as possible.

### 5. Peer Supportive Change

Combining groups is a wonderful way for children to engage with different peers and access new role models. But ensure that the children continue to have opportunities to interact with their core group of friends. Having a buddy to visit new classrooms can be reassuring and reduce stress levels.

Source: Adams, G., Rohacek, M., & Danziger, A. (2010). *Child Care and Early Education Research Connections*.

Retrieved March 31, 2017 from <http://www.researchconnections.org/>

Submitted by Denise Palermo, RECE, Special Needs Consultant ~ The Etobicoke Children's Centre



## SUMMER SAFETY TIPS

Summer has us getting ready for fun in the sun and a change in our regular programming routines. Being sure that we are not only equipped with fresh and interesting ideas for our children, but prepared to ensure that our children remain safe is key to having a fun, safe and relaxing summer.

Summer programming usually involves outings and a lot of outdoor activities. With the upcoming change in routines, it is a perfect time to review the rules of summer and to highlight some tips to remain safe.

### Stay hydrated

As temperatures rise, heat exhaustion becomes a concern. Symptoms include fatigue, extreme thirst, and muscle cramping. If a person doesn't cool down and rehydrate, heat exhaustion can lead to heatstroke. Signs of heatstroke are headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and lack of sweat, which is potentially fatal.

Source: <http://www.parents.com/baby/safety/outdoor/child-summer-safety-rules/>



### Use sunscreen and re-apply frequently

Use sunscreen with an SPF recommended by Toronto Public Health and one that offers both UVA and UVB protection. Always apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside. And remember to reapply sunscreen every two hours. Sunscreen should be used even on cloudy and cool days; so remind your parents to keep their sunscreen at the centre.

Source: <http://www.parents.com/baby/safety/outdoor/child-summer-safety-rules/>

### Complete regular head counts of your group

During outings or while at the child care centre the summer months usually creates a buzz of excitement. With this excitement, preoccupied and wandering children go hand-in-hand, so check in and count your group regularly.

### Ensure that your emergency contact list is up to date for outings

Make note of what each child is wearing and take pictures if possible. In case a child is unaccounted for and a missing person report is required, a correct and up to date description for the authorities will be very useful.

### Do a sports equipment safety check

Helmets aren't the only thing; all sports equipment should be well maintained and the right size for the child.

Source: <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/family-health-12/summer-safety-children>

### Watch your group around water

Children need constant supervision around water - whether the water is in a wading pool, a swimming pool or a splash pad, children are especially at risk - they can drown in less than 2 inches (5 centimetres) of water.

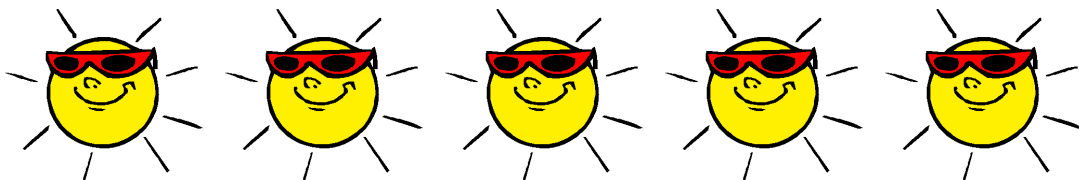
Source: <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/water-safety.html>

### Keep your group busy and occupied

One of the best ways to keep the children safe is to keep them busy and occupied with fun and interactive activities that are different from programming done throughout the year. Find some great options at

<https://blogs.brighthorizons.com/familyroom/water-play-activities-kids/>

*Submitted by Nicole Livingstone, Child Care Consultant ~ Aisling Discoveries Child & Family Centre*



## HOP, SKIP, JUMP AND PLAY!

### GROSS MOTOR PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR ALL AGES

Summer offers many opportunities to have fun and engage with children in active movement. Gross motor play creates memories that can be reflected upon through group discussion and photo documentation. Active play strengthens and uses the large muscles in legs, arms and trunk which is important for healthy physical and brain development. Gross motor play is fun and gets your creative juices flowing. Here are some interesting and easy activities to implement with children during outdoor play this summer. As with any activity in child care, please be advised that the following activities should be implemented with adult supervision at all times.

#### INFANTS

##### Cave of Wonders

Fill a large, sturdy box with materials of various textures, and let the children wander through this Cave of Wonders using their senses to explore. Ensure the box is large enough for the infants to crawl through. And be sure to supervise the area so the box is not squished by another infant while someone is crawling through it. The Cave of Wonders encourages children to crawl, which will strengthen muscles required for cruising and eventual walking.

**Materials:** Large, sturdy box, objects of various textures and shapes, tape. Be sure all materials are safe for infants i.e. no choking or suffocation hazards, non-toxic materials.

##### Variations:

- Poke holes in the sides and top to allow for light to stream through
- Poke holes and attach materials that could dangle from the top, similar to a mobile

Source: Cherry, M. (2013). *Cardboard sensory boxes for toddlers and babies.*

Retrieved June 12, 2017 from

<http://www.mericherry.com/2013/09/28/cardboard-sensory-boxes-for-toddlers-and-babies/>



#### TODDLERS

##### Painting with Rolling Balls

Tape paper to the inside bottom of a large shallow box. Have the children dip medium size balls into paint and then roll them on their paper. This will be messy so try this on days when the toddlers are going to engage in water play during outdoor time as well. It will make it easier to clean up both the balls and the toddlers before going inside. This activity will support sensory exploration and motor manipulation.

**Materials:** Large box base, tape, assortment of paints, assortment of medium sized balls

##### Variations:

- Use balls of varying textures to create interesting prints
- Tape different textures under the paper to add an extra sensory element to the experience

Source: Reimer, J. (2017). *Painting with Eggs & Rolling Balls.*

Retrieved June 12, 2017 from

<http://handsonaswegrow.com/rolling-eggs-balls-painting/>

*Continued on Page 5*



## PRESCHOOLERS

### Balance Beam

Using electrical tape/chalk, tape/draw fun lines across the ground; straight lines, curved lines, zigzag lines! Have the children walk along the lines of tape/chalk one foot in front of the other. Great practice for balance and coordination!

**Materials:** Electrical tape or chalk

**Variations:**

- Have the children walk sideways along the tape, or even backwards!
- Have the lines intertwine or intersect

Source: Reimer, J. (2017). *2 Simple Tape Activities: What to Do with Lines of Tape*.

Retrieved June 12, 2017 from <http://handsonaswegrow.com/fun-kid-activity-lines-of-colored-tape/>



### Going on a Bear Hunt

Using the lyrics to the song “We’re Going on a Bear Hunt” go on a bear hunt through the playground while singing the song. Have the children sing along and act out traveling through the tall grass, the river, the mud, the forest, and the cave! Use the outdoor play space to move around and role play the actions to the song lyrics by creating props using craft materials i.e. binoculars, hats, etc. This is a great way to promote expression and rhythm through music and movement, as well as support the development of representational skills.

**Materials:** We’re Going on a Bear Hunt lyrics, stuffed bears, binocular, hats, long strips of green paper for grass, bins of water for the river, bin of mud, pictures of trees on the wall for the forest, small pom poms for snowstorm, blankets for the cave

**Variations:**

- Hunt different animals
- Have the children come up with other “obstacles” to the hunt and add them in

Source: Rosen, Michael. (1989). *We’re Going on a Bear Hunt*. London, England: Walker Books.

## KINDERGARTENS

### Animal Dice

Each child takes a turn and rolls the die. The child or group of children have to then imitate the actions of the animal that appears on the top of the die rolled. This activity supports the development of representational skills as the children use their imagination to pretend to be various animals. It also supports their ability to match a sound to the corresponding animal. Children can also help to make the animal dice which is likely to increase their interest and participation once outside playing the game.

**Materials:** A paper die with an image of a different animal on each side (i.e. lion, frog, monkey, etc.)

**Variations:**

- Incorporate another die with images of animals different to the first die. On top of each animal write, “sound like”. Have the children act out the actions of the animal of the first die, but sound like the animal rolled on the second die i.e. “act like a kangaroo, sound like a cat”.
- Have the children guess what animals are represented through actions and sound without seeing the die



Source: Burnett, C. (2012). *Find your Inner Animal*. Retrieved June 12, 2017 from <http://childhood101.com/>

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## SCHOOLAGERS



### Noodle Toss

Who said pool noodles can only be used for swimming? Cut up noodles in four equal lengths and hang hula hoops at different heights. Ready, aim, toss! The object of this game is to be able to throw the noodles through the hula hoop. The children will have a great time while developing their eye-hand coordination. And they will be practicing healthy competition while gaining a sense of accomplishment.

**Materials:** Noodles, hula hoops, string

### Variations:

- Place the hula-hoops at different heights and different distances; use items that are heavier or lighter.
- By changing the weight of the noodle the child will have to adjust the force they use to throw in order to achieve their goal.

Source: Therapy Fun Zone. (2012). *Pool Noodle Javelin Throw*. Retrieved June 12, 2017 from <http://therapyfunzone.net/blog/pool-noodle-javelin-throw/>.

*Submitted by Josie Iannaccio, Early Childhood Consultant ~ Humber Child Care Consultation Services*

## HOT FUN IN THE SUMMERTIME!!!

Summer can be one of the most challenging times to program for children with special needs. Here are a few points to keep in mind when planning for inclusion within your group this summer:



- Many children with special needs require the consistent structure a childcare program offers, even in the summer. So remember that the daily routines need to be consistent.
- When there are special events help the children to adjust by planning with the children and rehearsing the skills necessary for them to be successful. The chance to practice will give the anxious child a sense of familiarity when the actual event happens.
- Try to build up to large events or trips rather than starting off with them in July. This may allow the child with special needs to build their skills throughout the summer.
- Staff should visualize field trips beforehand to anticipate, and plan responses for, potential “problem times”. This preparation will give the staff a sense of calm and create a consistent team approach.
- When preparing for trips consider the children in your groups that are challenged by transitions. Plan ahead of time how this will be handled so all the staff are consistent.
- When pairing up small groups of children with a staff for trips remember to consider the dynamics of these small groups. Will they complement one another or feed off each other?
- Summer is often a time staff take their holidays. Remember that this change in staffing may effect children’s behaviour. Prepare the children for these changes.
- When extending outdoor play staff also need to consider the interests and developmental levels of all the children. Have you provided many learning opportunities outside besides just sand and tricycles? Are there books, puzzles and colouring stations available or options to play indoors? Are there specific places for children to rest when they get tired and/or hot?

*Robin Lister, RECE, AECEO.C, B.A., R.T., Special Needs Consultant ~ Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough*

## THE PROS & CONS OF PROGRAMMING WITH TECHNOLOGY

How young is too young for children to benefit from technology? Exposure is literally unavoidable as many people today have technology in their homes. Our children's generation will use technology far more than we can ever imagine. Daily, we see small children in strollers handed smart phones or iPads and marvel at how well they manipulate these devices. Research has not yet produced any conclusive findings regarding the impact of multi-media devices on the development of young children but with the greater introduction of technology it is time we explore some pros and cons of using technology with young children.

The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend the use of technology for children under the age of two. With that in mind here are some potential benefits and downfalls:

### Pros

1. **Teaching cause and effect.** Children quickly learn that they can impact their environment and be in control of a response. Fisher Price does have several apps for infants and toddlers that focus on animals, body parts, shapes, colours, counting and music.
2. **Versatility of the device.** Technology allows children to be engaged in a multitude of skill building tools at any time of the day, thus maximizing opportunities for learning.
3. **Equity for children with special needs.** iPad/tablet technology is being used in many therapy sessions as well as allowing children to interact in the community using a socially acceptable device. There are apps that have been developed to increase receptive language, build vocabulary and enhance overall communication.
4. **Innovation provides empowerment.** Innovation provides children the tools needed to solve problems, this empowers them to figure out solutions independently and find the information they seek.
5. **A teaching tool.** Many programs can be used to learn and nurture creativity. They are great at teaching collaboration, team building and turn taking. Children can learn privately and at their own pace.
6. **Prepares for the future.** Technology is essential in building a child's tech expertise. Children that don't learn technology today will find themselves far behind before they reach middle school.

### Cons

1. **Lack of movement.** It is a fear that in a society of growing obesity, technology can lead to a sedentary lifestyle.
2. **Time consuming.** Hours can fly by before anyone realizes that they have been on the computer for too long.
3. **Encourages instant gratification.** With technology enabling things to be delivered instantly or to have constant access, kids today may become easily impatient if they don't get what they want right away. This also leads to social issues.
4. **Potential addiction.** It has been suggested that social media sites and social networking are not only time consuming but addictive. Many children today spend half their day texting, emailing and posting on social media sites.
5. **Loss of social skills.** Smart phones, iPads and computers are interactive but only between the child and the device. Children need the opportunity to interact with actual people to learn about language and develop social skills.
6. **Loss of fine motor skills.** Young children need time to manipulate their environment through hands-on toys and real life experiences such as stacking toys, building blocks, nesting cups, scribbling with crayons and stirring pots. These are all real skills that lead to later success.

*Continued on Page 8*

7. **Gray matter atrophy.** Multiple studies have shown atrophy (shrinkage or loss of tissue volume) in gray matter areas (where “processing” occurs) in internet/gaming addiction (Zhou 2011, Yuan 2011, Weng 2013, and Weng 2012). Areas affected included the important frontal lobe, which governs executive functions, such as planning, prioritizing, organizing, and impulse control (“getting stuff done”). Volume loss was also seen in the striatum, which is involved in reward pathways and the suppression of socially unacceptable impulses. A finding of particular concern was damage to an area known as the insula, which is involved in our capacity to develop empathy and compassion for others and our ability to integrate physical signals with emotion. Aside from the obvious link to violent behaviour, these skills dictate the depth and quality of personal relationships.
8. **Compromised white matter integrity.** Research has also demonstrated a loss of integrity to the brain’s white matter (Lin 2012, Yuan 2011, Hong 2013 and Weng 2013). “Spotty” white matter translates into loss of communication within the brain, including connections to and from various lobes of the same hemisphere, links between the right and left hemispheres, and paths between higher (cognitive) and lower (emotional and survival) brain centers. White matter also connects networks from the brain to the body and vice versa. Interrupted connections may slow down signals, “short-circuit” them, or cause them to be erratic (“misfire”).



In closing it is not whether we should or should not expose our children to technology, rather the issue is how the adult can foster an enthusiasm for learning and balance the role small screens have in this process. The key to balancing the effects of technology on children is to practice moderation. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that screen time is limited to a total of two hours per day. This would include computers, tablets, iPads and smartphones. This should be balanced with physical movement and exercise. By supporting children to develop a balance of skills in all areas of development they will be better equipped to succeed in the future.

Sources:

Brown, Ari & Christakis, Dimitri. (2012). *Media Use and Early Brain Development*. Retrieved June 12, 2017 from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Media-Use-and-Early-Brain-Development-Audio.aspx>

Dunckley, Victoria. (2014, February 27). *Gray Matters, Too Much Screen Time Damages the Brain*. Psychology Today.

*Submitted by Pemola Pereira Daponte, RECE, Resource Educator ~ City Of Toronto, Children's Services, Special Services Unit*

## WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE!

It's summertime and that means water - everywhere. Water play activities can be simple, clever and are great for a group. They are cost effective and can be done using materials already found at your childcare centre.

Try some water relay races. To increase the challenge add an obstacle course.

Have the children use items such as plastic bottles, funnels, pool noodles, basins and plastic tie wraps to create a water wonderland.

Use recycled bottles and funnels with water of different colours to create a fascinating science potions lab.



*Nicole Livingstone, Child Care Consultant  
~ Aisling Discoveries Child & Family Centre*



## FREE / INEXPENSIVE FAMILY FUN IN TORONTO

As the summer arrives and the kids are off on vacation it is always a challenge to find things to do as a family that won't break the budget. We, as Torontonians, are very fortunate to live in a city with loads of possibilities and options for family fun. Here are some ideas to help with your planning;

- Harbourfront Centre – Offers free programming year round as well as plenty of green space with Lake Ontario as a backdrop. Try out the Island Soul French/Caribbean Festival, July 29-Aug1, Hot and Spicy Food Festival, Aug 19-21 and Ashkenaz Jewish Music and Art Festival, Sep 3-5, just to name a few. <http://www.harbourfrontcentre.com/whatson/today.cfm>
- Graffiti Alley – Over 1 kilometre of street art and murals located between Queen Street West and Richmond Street West from Spadina Avenue to Portland Street. Rick Mercer often films his famous weekly TV on air commentary while walking through Graffiti Alley using the murals as his backdrop. [https://localwiki.org/toronto/Graffiti\\_Alley](https://localwiki.org/toronto/Graffiti_Alley)
- Evergreen Brick Works – Home to Don Valley Brick works (1889-1984), which made bricks for some of the most famous buildings in Toronto. It now boasts The Children's Garden Centre on Chimney Court and is open at 550 Bayview Avenue on weekends and holidays for a suggested donation of \$5. <https://www.evergreen.ca/get-involved/evergreen-brick-works/>
- Art Gallery of Ontario – Wednesday is free after 6:00 p.m. There are always family activities available at 317 Dundas Street West. <https://ago.ca/>
- CBC Museum – Houses interactive exhibits and Canadian Broadcasting history. Admission is free. It is open at the Toronto Broadcasting Centre, 250 Front Street, Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. <http://www.cbc.ca/museum/index.html>
- Fort York – This historic battleground has the largest collection of War of 1812 buildings. Visit at 250 Fort York Boulevard for \$9 for adults, \$5.50 for ages 13-18 and \$4.25 for ages 6-12. Children under 5 are free. <http://www.fortyork.ca/>
- Allan Gardens Conservatory – A 100 year old greenhouse filled with tropical plants boasts free admission 365 days a year, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., at 19 Horticulture Avenue. <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=b2a9dada600f0410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>
- Yonge-Dundas Square – Just across from the Eaton's Centre there is always a variety of free performances and events going on during the summer. <http://www.ydsquare.ca/>
- Bata Shoe Museum – Pay what you can on Thursdays from 5:00-8:00 p.m. to visit this collection of over 1000 shoes and related artifacts at 327 Bloor Street West. <http://www.batashoemuseum.ca/>
- Outdoor Movies in Toronto – Check out the listings of outdoor movies (weather permitting) at a variety of parks across the city at <http://www.toronto.com/things-to-do/free-outdoor-movies-in-toronto-this-summer/>.

Don't forget the multitude of parks and beach fronts in Toronto that only require a picnic basket and some imagination. Just minutes from downtown are more than 3 kilometres of sandy beach along Lake Ontario. Remember to use sunscreen for yourself and the children and have a safe and fun summer filled with wonderful family memories. Enjoy!

*Pemola Pereira DaPonte, RECE, Resource Educator ~ City Of Toronto, Children's Services, Special Services Unit*



## RESOURCES & IDEAS FOR SUMMER OUTDOOR PROGRAMMING

Creating activities to engage children on the playground can pose a challenge. Sometimes the challenge is finding ways to provide activities that the children already enjoy inside on your playground without bringing all your indoor toys and equipment outside. Consider these inexpensive methods to meet the goal of bringing the indoors outdoors.

### Racing Fun Using Pool Noodles

Cut a pool noodle lengthwise down the middle while maintaining one piece i.e. don't cut in half. When laid flat, or on an incline, a two car ramp will be created for racing. It can also be used with small balls.



### Laundry Basket Skeet Ball

Create a skeet ball "course" using a cardboard box remodeled into a ramp and two laundry baskets placed one after the other at the end of the ramp. A ball can be rolled along the ramp with the goal of landing in the laundry baskets for the assigned point values.

### Ball Target Toss

Cut target holes of different shapes and sizes in a tarp. Reinforce the cut holes with colourful duct tape. Each hole can be assigned a specific point value. Once hung up the children can then toss different types of balls through the holes to accumulate points.



### Crepe Paper Tent

A tent made from crepe paper?!? This would be a fun alternative to forts made from blankets and sheets.

### Scavenger Hunt

Find lots of interesting scavenger hunt ideas at <http://www.mykidsadventures.com/>

### The Book Nook

Some children will want a break from active play while on the playground. Make sure you have a variety of interesting books for those that are avid readers. Try using The Hanen Centre's Book Nook at <http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/Book-Nook.aspx> to choose books. The Book Nook highlights a new book each month and includes fun and simple ways to use the book to build children's emergent literacy skills.

Sources:

Pinterest; [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)

My Kids Adventures; [www.mykidsadventures.com](http://www.mykidsadventures.com)

The Hanen Centre; [www.hanen.org](http://www.hanen.org)



*Submitted by Janet Scott, Resource Consultant  
~ WoodGreen Community Services*

## REVVING UP THE SCHOOL AGE PLAYGROUND



During the summer months, a great deal of the school age program occurs outside. Often, the same games are played and the same activities are done. There are however, so many different activities that you can implement to rev up your school age program. In my experience, when planning activities for outdoor fun, the BIGGER the better! Simple and familiar games become new again when they are adapted for the playground. Try Tic-Tac-Toe with a bed sheet and Frisbees; adding a new element to the game - tossing the Frisbee on to the appropriate square. Pool noodles can provide multiple games and activities such as hurdles, ring toss, and obstacle courses (you can anchor the noodles to the ground using wooden dowels). Using bristle board you can create a large memory/match game that can be played on the ground. Holding a “graffiti contest” using chalk can encourage the children to work together to create some unique designs which can be photographed and displayed inside too.

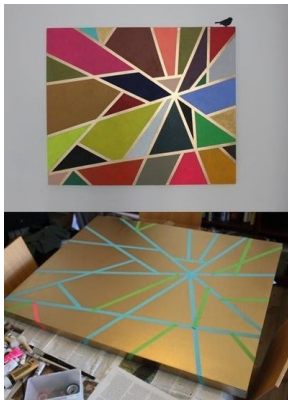


What is also great about the outdoors is that we can create many different types of environments. A hula hoop and a bed sheet can create a quiet area outdoors to spend some time alone or with a friend. Outdoor environments also allow the children to participate in interesting science experiments that are way too messy to conduct inside. Science activities peak children’s curiosity about how things work. Through these types of activities, children can test theories, predict outcomes, and expand their knowledge. Science activities encourage attention, focus, and sustained experimentation.



*Continued on Page 12*





Art and craft activities are another area of high interest for children. Once children reach the school age level, RECEs need to start looking at new and innovative activities. It doesn't always have to be a completely new activity. Often, adapting, tweaking, or changing an element in a familiar activity makes it brand new again! Try some of the activities pictured showing BIG art ideas such as; a large papier mache elephant; painting using a plunger; creating a painting using a large piece of wood, tape, and some paint. Creative experiences that explore nature also provides a type of learning that promotes curiosity and adventure. Through this exploration, children's minds are opened to the wonders of the natural world which can expand their creativity and imagination. Remember that this is a great time for projects that can carry on throughout the entire summer.



Children that usually shy away from more social interactions may engage with you and their peers when the interaction is "disguised" as a physical activity. Try making a game cube that can prompt brief discussions (i.e., "What is your favourite sport?") with peers. While the children are playing an action game of rolling the cube they are practicing their social interaction and conversational skills. To achieve similar results you can also use a question ball. The ball is tossed between children, once they catch the ball the child answers the question on the ball underneath their right thumb. This also encourages children to share personal stories and get to know each other better.



*Continued on Page 13*



Music and movement is a big part of any school age program. Many children enjoy the different experiences created through music. A music wall for the playground provides a wide variety of sensory effects that influence our mood and creativity. Holding a drumming circle is a great way to use rhythm and sound to engage each other in a group; you don't need to have store bought drums, homemade drums work just fine! Summertime is all about having fun and expressing yourself in different ways. That's why activities such as theatrical shows and music concerts are great ways for school agers to work together towards a common goal and show off their skills! The more you can do to create a "professional" atmosphere during these types of activities supports not only the hard work and dedication of the performers, but elevates the level of programming and lets everyone know that they are valued and appreciated for their participation.



There are also lots of school age games that don't require any props or materials so they can be started up very quickly. Just make sure the playground safety check has been completed and you're ready to go;

**Shoe Relay Race** - Everyone takes off one shoe and they are mixed up in a big pile. In teams, each child (one by one) races to the pile, finds their shoe, puts it on, and runs back for the next person to go.

**Shoe Kick** - Who can kick their shoe the farthest?

**Human Shapes** - A shape or letter is called out by the adult. In teams, the group must create the shape or letter using their bodies. As an added idea, take photos of the children's creations. These will serve as good pieces for the children to create their own documentation.

**Observation Game** - Children sit in a circle. One child stands in the middle of the circle and the other children observe what he/she is wearing. Then the child from the middle of the circle goes away and changes something about their appearance and comes back to the circle where the others have to guess what was changed.

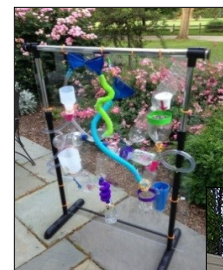
**Sharks and Minnows** - One person is the shark, and everyone else is a minnow. The minnows walk slowly to the shark, who at any point can yell "shark attack!" and try to catch a minnow before they reach "base". If caught, the minnow becomes the next shark.

Finally, water play and summertime go hand-in-hand. The majority of programming in the summer involves water in some way. As educators, we are constantly looking for new ways to provide water activities in a fun and structured manner. My personal favourite is constructing a water wall as this is something that you can change and experiment with throughout the summer. Giant bubbles using a hula hoop also gets quite the attention. Some games that you can create are "races" using spray bottles or other water spraying toys to push objects along to the finish line. Using similar water spraying toys you can have activities involving a target; to knock something down.

When those water days occur, there are many options to play with water in fun ways. Try a simple homemade sprinkler that the children can help make and then try out. Or try something a bit more sophisticated that uses PVC piping with holes drilled in. This could also be an activity where the school agers can help build and construct before testing it out on the playground. When children are involved in the process, they are more likely to be active participants.

The key is to create fun and have fun!

*Alison Pettigrew, RECE, Resource Consultant  
~ Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital*



## WEBSITES

The following websites have lots of interesting ideas and resources:

City Wide Training Calendar ~

[www.citywidetraining.ca](http://www.citywidetraining.ca)

Connectability ~

[www.connectability.ca](http://www.connectability.ca)

College of ECE ~

[www.college-ece.ca](http://www.college-ece.ca)

Earlychildhood News ~

[www.earlychildhoodnews.com](http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com)

How Does Learning Happen? ~

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/EducatorsEn.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/EducatorsEn.pdf)

Gerrard Resource Centre -

Ryerson University ~

[www.ryerson.ca/ecs/grc/](http://www.ryerson.ca/ecs/grc/)

<http://>

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Early Childhood Consultant  
Humber Child Care Consultation Services

Pemola Pereira DaPonte

Resource Educator  
Toronto Children's Services

Janet Scott

Resource Consultant  
WoodGreen Community Services



## RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

Here are a few suggested books that will assist you when planning for outdoor summer programming for different age groups.

Hass-Foletta, Cogley & Ottolini Geno. (2005). *School-Age Ideas for After School Programs*. School-Age NOTES.

Isbell, R. & Isbell, C. (2003). *The Complete Learning Spaces Books for Infants and Toddlers*. Gryphon House.

Koralek, D. ed. (2004). *Spotlight on Young Children and Play*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

McNairn & Shiolen. (1994). *Quick Tech: Readable, Repeatable Stories and Activities*. Mayer-Johnson.

Scofield, R. ed. (2001). *Summer Program Tips, Strategies & Activities for School-Agers 5-14 Years-Old*. School-Age NOTES.

Sander, Stephen. (2002). *Active for Life: Developmentally Appropriate Movement Programs for Young Children*. National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Chalufour & Worth. (2004). *Building Structures with Young Children*. Redleaf Press.

Greenman, Jim. (1998). *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments That Work*. Exchange Press.

All the suggested Resources for Educators in this edition of Keeping In Touch are available in the Special Needs Resource Library at the Boys & Girls Club of East Scarborough.

To make an appointment to check out the library contact the Special Needs Services team at 416-281-0262 x 203/204. Or to view a complete library inventory go to <http://www.esbgc.org/special-needs-services/>.

## ATTENTION REGISTERED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS!!!

The College of ECE has released a new Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

It comes into effect on July 1, 2017. Are you ready?

Make sure you read the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice and know what it means for your professional practice.

Download your copy from

[https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Documents/Code\\_and\\_Standards\\_2017.pdf](https://www.college-ece.ca/en/Documents/Code_and_Standards_2017.pdf)