



Best Start NEWS

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More fun and learning

Parents are their child's first teacher. They can provide many wonderful and stimulating experiences for their children to learn about the world around them. Puppets and everyday maths are just two of the play activities that children would enjoy.

Play with puppets

Children of all ages enjoy using puppets. They can be as simple as those made from paper bags or ones commercially made. Puppets are a wonderful way for parents and their children to play and interact with each other. Some benefits of puppets include:

- Allows the child to interact with others when they don't have the words to use.
- To release their feelings and emotions through the puppet in an appropriate way.
- For some children who are reluctant to speak they can use the puppet to be a medium for speech.
- Encourages interaction with other children and to practice their sharing and turn taking skills.
- It helps to develop children's spoken language.



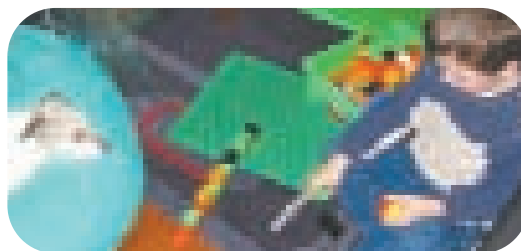
Simple puppets to make at home:

- Decorate a paper plate and attach a wooden icy stick to the back with tape.
- Draw or decorate a paper bag and stuff with pieces of newspaper. Attach an icy pole stick by scrunching the opening of the paper bag around the stick and secure with tape.

Everyday maths

Children of all ages are surrounded by maths in their everyday life. Parents can provide their children with many opportunities to learn basic maths concepts, for example:

- Sorting: when they are helping to pack up they could sort their toys into hard and soft toys or by colour.
- Counting: how many forks are on the table? Can you find three red apples?
- Measurement: children love to help with the cooking and this can be a wonderful way to learn measurement by weighing ingredients or measuring amounts using cups and spoons.



- Volume: water play is the best way for children to learn about this concept, for example, while they are in the bath, helping to wash up or playing outside.
- Shape: chatting with your child about different shapes around the house when they are building with blocks or while reading stories to them.

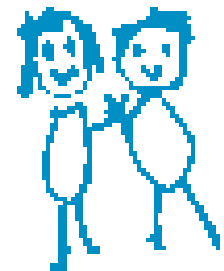
Learning maths concepts begins at birth. Make the most of every opportunity to interact with your child and you will be amazed with their capability to learn.

Your say



We are keen to ensure that this newsletter carries current and interesting information for parents.

If you wish to see information on a particular topic, please phone Best Start Community Facilitator Jane Spencer, on 9784 1751 or e-mail Jane.Spencer@frankston.vic.gov.au.



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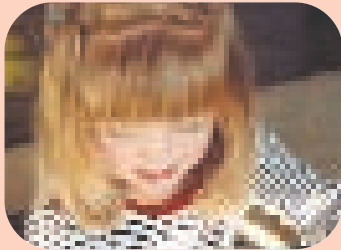


The value of play: indoor/outdoor programs

Frequently asked questions

Q. How will my child cope at school if they have been at a preschool that has an indoor/outdoor program?

A. Due to this type of program the children have been able to develop problem solving and negotiation skills and confidence in their ability to think and develop ideas. This can all be transferred to the school setting and can give children a strong base from which to begin their more formal learning.



Q. What if my child spends all their time outdoors?

A. Initially teachers find that children will tend to go outside for longer periods when the indoor/outdoor program is introduced. As time progresses the children become more aware of managing their time and do have a balance in both settings.

If your child does spend more time in the outdoor environment don't forget that just as much valuable learning can happen outdoors than if they were indoors.

"Young children must play to learn. Play for a child is serving just as serious a purpose as a day in the library for a research assistant." (Milne.R, *Marketing Play*, 1997, p130).

"Loving and caring for children is not about fast-tracking them to adult success; it's about supporting and encouraging them to understand and enjoy the world they live in now." (Women's Weekly, June 2006, p150).



Early childhood programs are planned around providing children with open ended play based programs to ensure the children develop at their own rate with the correct amount of stimulation and extension of their skills and knowledge. Planning for the program is based on detailed individual observations.

Children need uninterrupted time to play and explore their environment and as a result of this many teachers are now using an indoor/outdoor program. This method of planning allows the children to choose where they want to play at any time during the session. Research has shown that by providing children with many opportunities to play and use their imagination they have fewer problems with creative problem solving in their teenage years.

It is important to remember that the outdoor environment provides the children with as much learning as the indoor environment. Henniger states "children deserve the same diversity and richness in their outdoor environments

as they have indoors." (Childhood Education, 1994,p.89).

It is felt by some, that the stop-start program offering set times for indoors and then outdoors can put limits on a child's learning. "Where practitioners encourage children to link indoor and outdoor themes and experiences, levels of cognitive challenge may be increased." (Garrick.R, *Playing Outdoors in the Early Years*, 2004, p40).

An indoor/outdoor program allows for smaller numbers of children in both environments, which can lead to a more peaceful atmosphere. There also is less demand on resources which in turn can mean fewer behavioural issues.

Please remember that play is important for all children. Parents are the ones who can advocate for this vital part of their child's development. Our children only have one chance at being young so let's make it count. By providing them with many opportunities to play we are ensuring they are developing the skills and attitudes to move into the adult years.

Family Day Care: A carer's story

My name is Lisa Begg and I am a carer with the Frankston Family Day Care scheme. Until recently I worked outside the home and my daughters, aged seven, nine and 11, were in family day care.

As a result, they are familiar with the family day care setting and have a very interactive relationship with the children in care. They are always welcoming and interested in them; it is this element that distinguishes family day care from a crèche environment.

I observe this occurring in the little hands they hold while walking, the stories they read to the children and the complex, imaginative games I watch them play with each other.

I am proud to see my kids behave this way as it contributes to a child's overall experience here and I see it as an extension of the care I provide.

Prospective parents often ask me what I do with the children during the day. Generally our day is a combination of indoor and outdoor play.



Depending on the child's age, activities are classified into groups – gross motor, fine motor, science and nature, dramatic/imaginative, art/sensory, language/ literacy, music and movement.

I include at least one element of each when planning activities each day, however, there are plenty of opportunities for free play at the park, in the sandpit, the backyard and just fun, imaginative play between themselves. We take walks

to the library and also meet other carers for playgroups with other children.

When it comes to children I find inspiration everywhere and there is literally no end to the amount of learning whether it be planned or incidental.

If a child shows interest in something I will use it as a jumping board for further learning. Besides parenting, this is the best job I have ever had.

Tips to help children become fit and healthy

Fit, healthy children are happy. Children enjoy being physically active and it is important that physical activity becomes a part of their everyday life. It is best if there is a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.

Daily movement will help to develop a child's understanding of the world around them and become confident moving within it. Movement activities also help children develop their sensory and motor systems.

Some activities children of all ages can enjoy are:

- Riding a bike/tricycle
- Going to the park and playing with a ball or using the playground equipment
- Taking the dog for a walk
- Totem tennis
- Swimming
- Hide and seek
- Skipping
- Hop scotch

Please remember that children must be supervised by an adult at all times when involved in physical activities.



Dive into Reading

(News from the library)

Reading tips and hints:
2-5 year olds



- Choose a comfortable cosy place and snuggle up together.
- Turn off the TV.
- Choose books with bright pictures and few words.
- Choose a story that you enjoy too – your enthusiasm can be contagious.
- Move your finger under the words as you read.
- Encourage your child to ask questions.
- Show your child lots of different types of books.
- If your child is tired or restless, don't force them to sit with you – try again another time!



For more information please contact the Frankston Library on 9784 1020 or email:

libraryenquiries@frankston.vic.gov.au

and the Web site is:

<http://library.frankston.vic.gov.au>

Shopping can be fun

Shopping can be fun for adults and children. However, shopping with children can also be difficult at times; here are some tips that may help:

- *Children love using calculators. Ask them to add up the items you are buying. This will help them learn about money and simple maths. Don't worry if they make a mistake, they will be enjoying the responsibility of doing a 'grown up task'.*
- *Perhaps they could look at the specials catalogue before you leave and find some of them on the shelves when you get there.*
- *With younger children you could ask them to find the container with the picture of a yellow pineapple on it. This will help develop their colour knowledge and visual skills.*



Children and pets

Perhaps you are thinking of having a pet join your family. Pets can often become a child's best friend that can provide the child with unconditional love and also teach them about loyalty, friendship, responsibility and kindness.

Some tips to consider when thinking of choosing a pet for your family:

- The pet you choose will become a lifelong member of your family and will depend on everyone for its care.
- Before you choose a pet it can be a good idea to introduce your children to a friend's pet and observe your child's reactions to the animal.
- Children must be supervised by an adult at all times when they are with pets.
- Your pet will need time to adjust to its new surroundings and will need a quiet place to go and have an uninterrupted rest.
- Allow your children to take the responsibility for feeding and perhaps grooming the pet. If your child is too young for this they could help choose a toy or an accessory for the pet.
- It is important that we provide our children with appropriate role models around pets showing them how to be caring, gentle and considerate of their animal friend.



Dinosaurs

Children of all ages love dinosaurs. So much learning can be gained from these extinct creatures. Below are some interesting Web sites:

- **Dinosaurs Alive:** This Web site is suitable for preschool to Grade 6 children.
- **Zoom Dinosaurs:** This site has links that will interest children of all ages.
- **National Geographic:** Lots of interesting information including The Great Dinosaur Egg Hunt.
- **Dino Russ's Lair:** An informative site for preschool to secondary school age children. It has links to publications and information about other vertebrates.
- **BiblioCat:** This page will provide you with many great dinosaur resources.
- **Discoveryzone:** This is a fantastic site from which children can enjoy watching the video clips to see how dinosaurs moved.



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