

Eco-Note

A Newsletter for Early Childhood Professionals
Fall 2009

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Preschoolers are at the perfect age to learn about recycling and taking care of our environment. They are constantly learning about the world around them; and this is the time when the stage is set for future learning. It is a time to begin modeling these practices to them. However, how can we make an abstract concept like "conserving the earth" concrete enough for the young child to understand? Hopefully, this newsletter will help you and your program, whether a center or in your home, right here in northeast Missouri become more ecologically aware in your practices.



Why is this important?

The three R's – reduce, reuse, and recycle – all help to cut down on the amount of waste throw away. They conserve natural resources, landfill space, and energy. Plus, the three R's save land and money communities must use to dispose of waste in landfills. Missouri has a goal of reducing the amount of waste going into landfills by 40 percent. Everyone can help meet this goal, and early childhood settings are no exception!

Reduce

Large amounts of waste are created in early childhood settings simply because there are a lot of people in one space for extended periods of time. Here are some tips:

- Avoid using disposable plates, cups, silverware, etc.
- Buy in bulk and store in smaller reusable containers.

Reuse

Budgets are always tight in early childhood. Many recyclable items can be reused in projects for young children. Invite families to bring items such as paper towel tubes, juice and soda containers, and cardboard boxes to school. Talk with the kids about how we can reuse these items instead of throwing them away. They adopt a "habit of mind" and begin

seeing their world differently, and this also fosters creativity!

- Offer "recycled art" as a center. Set out the items from home and some tape, paint, glue and scissors. This open-ended creating also helps kids experience problem solving, self-initiation, and divergent thinking.
- Get a plastic frozen juice container. Take a screw and push it into the bottom. Turn the screw a few times to create a hole. You can vary the number and sizes of holes. This is ideal for the water table. The kids come to understand water flow (physics) and can experiment with how fast/slow the water runs out with the variations in size and number of holes.
- My kids have loved to take a facial tissue box (square works best) and add a rope handle to make purses. They also added stickers and their names (writing experience). We have box purses being used weeks after they were created.
- We also read the book "Alice the Fairy" by David Shannon. We cut stars out of cereal boxes for the kids to decorate with glitter, shapes, and ribbon. These were attached to popsicle sticks (real sticks would be even more environmentally friendly) for wands. These, too, have been around a long time!
- Kids can paint on just about anything – wood scraps (untreated), product boxes, lids, furniture boxes, etc. This also gives them experience with 3-dimensional objects.

Recycle

- Contact your local trash service to see what recycling services they have. Begin recycling the containers/boxes used for the things you buy for your program.

Ideas to pass along to your parents to decrease the amount of waste that goes to our landfills:

REDUCE

- Buy grocery items in bulk, such as a large bag of your child's favorite snack instead of individual packages. Then have reusable containers for snack time.
- Walk as much as you can while trick or treating instead of driving.

REUSE

- The juice container sieve is great for the bathtub!
- Donate used items to charitable organizations.
- Buy used items when you can.
- Take a reusable container for trick or treating instead of disposable bags.
- Let your child use the backs of paper for art and writing projects.

RECYCLE

- Show your child the recycle symbol on packaging. Start recycling at home. It only takes a few minutes to sort (a math skill) items into different containers or clear bags.
- Visit www.kirksvillemo.gov to learn more about how to recycle in Kirksville.

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REMINDER: Giving kids frequent experiences with nature is a necessary step in helping them care about the Earth. Kids must develop a relationship with the natural in their environments. This can happen both by bringing nature indoors as well as spending time outside. Have a center that explores the changes in the seasons. Reduce the number of plastic toys you have and replace them with wood and other natural materials. Take a trip to 1000 Hills or the Conservation Department. Model enjoyment of the outdoors to the kids!!



Please contact the Kirksville Child Development Center at 660-665-0487 or at www.kirksvillemo.gov or contact the Missouri Department of Natural Resources at www.dnr.mo.gov for more information.