

Eco-Note

A Newsletter for Early Childhood Professionals
Fall 2010

Sent to you by the Kirksville Child Development Center with funding from
Missouri's Department of Natural Resources and Solid Waste Management District C

REMEMBER, 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. It is our responsibility as we care for young children to model and therefore instill values of conservation and respect for ecology. Here are some more ideas for developmentally appropriate projects that are environmentally friendly.



REDUCE

- How is your compost pile coming along? One way to reduce the amount of solid waste that goes into Missouri's landfills is to put yard and food waste into a compost pile. Leaves decompose faster if they are shredded – or played in! Set up a slide or low platform that invites kids to slide or jump into a large pile of leaves. Then add the leaves to your compost pile to balance the food waste added.

REUSE

- **FOOD CONTAINERS/BOXES!!!** Set up a grocery store using food boxes your families supply. They can be stuffed with newspaper and taped closed to make them last longer. Talk about where food comes from and food you can buy locally. Get out a world map and look at where our food comes from.
- **SMALL BOXES!!!** Some of our older boys recently asked for a real motor to put into the space ship they were building. Not being able to give them a real motor, they settled for using cracker boxes, tape, and thin craft wire to

create their own motor, complete with sound effects.

- **BIG BOXES!!!** Ask the kids to draw doors and windows for you to cut. Offer wallpaper scraps and paint rollers to decorate. Use cloth scraps to make curtains, or fire fighter hats and short hoses for rescue play. Several boxes can be used to create different community buildings (library, post office, grocery store). Then recycle the boxes when you are done. Read a book such as "Not a Box" by Antoinette Portis. Open-ended projects foster the development of creativity, problem solving, and social skills.
- **BUCKETS!!!** Ice cream buckets can be used by kids outside to carry water to a sand project, dirt to a pile, or leaves collected outside. Kitty litter and similar buckets can be used for storing sensory table materials like colored rice or beans.
- **NEWSPAPERS!!!** Use newspapers to stuff a scarecrow for Halloween or to cover tables when kids are painting. Clothespin them to the fence outside for outdoor painting. Offer nature colors and invite kids to paint what they see outside.

RECYCLE

- Continue to have your kids help sort recyclable materials before setting them on the curb for pick-up or taking them to a local recycling location like Truman State University's recycling center.

EDUCATE

- Submit an article based on your classroom waste management experiences to DNR's *Missouri Resources* magazine. It has a regular feature titled "Teacher's Notebook." See www.dnr.mo.gov for more information. See back issues on the website, as well.

Why is this important?

The three R's – reduce, reuse, and recycle – all help to cut down on the amount of waste thrown 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!

ATTENTION!!

Giving kids frequent experiences with nature is a necessary step in helping them care about the Earth. Try to spend LOTS of time outside as we transition into fall and winter. Point out changes like migrating animals, cocoons, changing leaf color, and temperature changes.



Incorporate a "habit of mind" of science exploration by weekly encouraging kids to use their five senses to explore something in nature (rocks, leaves, seeds, animal furs, etc.).

Go on a nature walk around the neighborhood looking for signs of fall and, later, winter.

Have a camping theme by setting up a tent and talking about the kids' camping experiences. This can be done indoors or outdoors. Purchase a tent at a secondhand store or see if anyone you know has an old one.

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

- As you are transitioning to fall clothes donate unneeded items to a secondhand store instead of throwing them away.
- When cleaning out your fish tank, use the waste water to water your plants or garden instead of pouring it down the drain.
- Don't forget to consider purchasing secondhand Halloween costumes, trading costumes with friends, or renting a costume.

Please contact the Kirksville Child Development Center at 660-665-5232 or at www.kirksvillecdc.org or contact the Missouri Department of Natural Resources at www.dnr.mo.gov for more information.