

THE CHILD CARE PROFESSIONAL

The Newsletter of the Child Care Resource & Referral at WKU

Western Kentucky University 151 Jones-Jaggers Hall 1 Big Red Way Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101-3576

The Environment Rating Scale: Program Structure

Taylor Tucker, CCR&R Quality Coordinator

The sixth sub-scale in the Environment Rating Scale is **Program Structure**. This sub-scale covers the daily schedule, provisions for children with disabilities, and the supervision of infants and toddlers. (Please refer to the February 2003 edition of *The Child Care Professional* for the article on supervision of preschool-aged children, listed under the sub-scale **Interactions**.)

All programs should have a basic daily schedule that is familiar to the children. This schedule needs to be posted in each classroom. Because infants do not all eat and sleep at the same time, several different activities may occur simultaneously. Even though the schedule may not reflect precisely what every infant is doing at a given time, the schedule should still be posted.

The **Daily Schedule** should provide a balance of structure and flexibility. Child-initiated, as well as teacher-directed, activities should both be reflected in the schedule. A substantial portion (one-third) of the day must be reserved for play activities. To score *excellent* on your daily schedule, you must have smooth transitions between activities and daily events; there should be no long waiting periods between activities.

Keep in mind that most transitions are handled a few children at a time rather than with the whole group. Materials for

the next activity should be ready before the current activity ends. For infants and toddlers, appropriate

learning activities must be planned and carried out with each child daily - alone or in very small groups. For preschool-aged children, variations must be made to the schedule to meet individual needs.

For example, a shorter story time may be provided for children with short attention spans. Allowances can also be made for children taking longer than the allotted time to complete a given activity. For example, a child working on a project is allowed to continue working past the scheduled time so that child may finish.

Free Play and **Group Time** are also covered in this sub-scale. Group time of any kind is inappropriate for infants and toddlers. Activities and routine daily events for infants and toddlers should be done individually or in *very* small groups. Infants and toddlers should spend most of their day engaged in play activities. For preschool-aged children, free play must occur for one-third of the day, including both indoor and outdoor play, and supervision should be provided to facilitate children's play. Toys, games, and equipment of ample numbers and of varied types should be provided to facilitate free play.

To score *excellent* in the area of **Free Play** for preschool-aged children, supervision must occur by means of educational



There should be no long waits between activities.



Accommodate shorter attention spans.



Allow a little extra time for finishing a project.

interactions with the children. For example, staff routinely help children think through solutions to conflicts, encourage children to talk about activities, or introduce concepts in relation to play.

Group time for preschool-aged children should be limited to short periods, suited to the children's age and individual needs. Some routines should occur in small groups or individually. To score *excellent* in the area of group time, different groupings must be provided to allow for a change of pace for the child throughout the day. Staff must engage in educational interactions with small groups and individual children as well as with the whole group. There must also be many opportunities for children to self-select into small groups.



Allow children to "self-select" small groups.

Supervision of Daily Activities and Staff Cooperation for infants and toddlers are also included in this sub-scale. The caregiver should maintain supervision of the entire group while working with one child or a small group of children. During supervision, the caregiver should observe closely and intervene to avoid problems; play with, and show appreciation for, the children; and react quickly to solve problems in a comforting and supportive way.



Balance intervention and independent exploration.

To score *excellent* in this area, supervision must occur with the learning needs of each child in mind. For example, the caregiver moves a non-mobile infant to prevent boredom, or conducts planned activities with a small group while others are sleeping. Balance must be maintained between caregiver intervention and the child's need for independent exploration.

Staff cooperation may be demonstrated by communicating daily with one another about the children. For example, information about routines, each child's mood, and play activities should be shared between staff. Time should be designated for this important staff communication to take place. Responsibilities should be divided so that both care and play activities are handled smoothly. To score *excellent* in the area of staff cooperation, caregivers working with the same group or in the same room must have planning time together at least twice weekly. Caregiving responsibilities of each staff member must also be clearly defined.

Provisions for Children with Disabilities is scored only if you have a child in the group with a diagnosed disability. For this item, modifications should be made in the environment, program, and schedule so that the differently-abled child can participate in many activities with others. Staff should follow through with activities and interactions recommended by other professionals. The caregiver should interact with the exceptional child as much as with the other children. Parents should be frequently

Child Care Resource & Referral

The staff of the CCR&R at Western Kentucky University includes:

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involved in sharing information with staff, setting goals and giving feedback about how the program is impacting their child.

To score *excellent* in this area, most of the professional intervention needs to be carried out within the regular activities of the classroom. Children with disabilities must be integrated into the group and participate in most activities. In addition, the caregiver must follow the program developed by, or with, trained professionals.

If you would like more information on the Environment Rating Scale or need a representative from the Child Care Resource and Referral to come to your facility and provide technical assistance based on the Environment Rating Scale, contact Taylor Tucker, Quality Coordinator at 1-800-621-5908, or e-mail taylor.tucker@wku.edu.



Caregivers in the same class must have planning time together at least twice weekly.

Heather Alms Appointed CCR&R Office Coordinator

The CCCR&R extends a warm welcome to Heather Alms, the new Office Coordinator. Please welcome her when you call our office. We are very excited to have her join our team and know you will enjoy working with her as well. Please feel free to call Heather and introduce yourself!

Exhibit of Children's Book Illustrations

The Kentucky Museum on Western Kentucky University's campus will be hosting the "Children's Book Illustrations" exhibit, featuring original artwork from a selection of late 20th century children's books. Supplemented by a display of 19th century books, this exhibit features the work of well-known children's book illustrators including Eric Carle, Robert Quackenbush, and Ernest Shepard.

A highlight of the exhibition is the entire run of illustrations by Simeon Shimin from Mary Jarrell's *The Knee-Baby*. The show promises to delight visitors as much as the books have delighted children through the years.



Integra Bank and the Dorothy Grider Art Exhibit Fund are co-sponsoring this exhibition, which can be featured at the Kentucky Museum from **March 15 to October 31, 2003**.

The Museum's hours of operation are Tuesday through Saturday, 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.; the Museum is closed on Mondays.

Admission to the Museum Tuesday through Saturday is only \$2 for adults, \$1 for children ages five and over, or \$5 for families. Children under five, Museum associates, and WKU students and staff are admitted free of charge. There is no admission fee on Sundays.

If you would like more information, please call the Kentucky Museum at (270) 745-2592, or visit:



Kentucky Building
online

www.wku.edu/Library/museum/

The Foundations of Child Caregiving Relationships

1st in a Series of Articles Based on the *Growing Great Kids* Curriculum

Jill Norris, CCR&R Early Childhood Health Coordinator

Building the foundations of child caregiving relationships is a continual process that begins with the choices we make, progresses through carrying out our responsibilities and culminates with managing our stress to maintain our competency. We all make choices every day of our lives. Some of these choices are routine, while others are life changing. Choosing to care for children professionally is certainly a life changing choice. Not only does *your* life change as a result of being a child caregiver, but the lives of the children in your care change, as well as the lives of those children's parents. Working to make these changes positive for everyone involved is one of your greatest concerns as you carry out your daily tasks.

You made the choice to care for children because something about it was attractive to you. Understanding your role as a child caregiver and what motivates you to take on that role helps to ensure that you are a positive influence on the children in your care as well as their parents.

Take a moment to think about the reasons you decided to care for children professionally. Is it a means of fulfilling your spiritual obligation? Is it a way to earn money? Are you motivated by being able to stay home with your own children? Does giving children the love and care they deserve motivate you?



There are any number of motivations for each of you; see if you can make an exhaustive list of your motivations. The motivations on your list are the foundation of your commitment to providing the best care possible for children. Formalizing that commitment is the first step to improving caregiving practices and acknowledging the sometimes difficult, yet rewarding and important work you do. Take some time to formally think about, or even write down your commitment to the children in your care. Some examples, which may feel comfortable to you, include:

- ◆ *My commitment is to provide a safe and stimulating home away from home filled with love for the children in my care.*
- ◆ *My commitment is to provide love and activities that will prepare the children in my care for their lives as adults.*

You may come up with a very different commitment statement. Once you have a formal commitment statement, you can begin to put those values into practice on a daily basis through your roles and responsibilities as a caregiver. You do many important things every day that demonstrate your commitment to children. Providing good nutrition, ensuring safety, playing with, reading and talking to children are all examples of daily activities that significantly impact the children in your care.

Spend some time thinking about the messages these everyday tasks send to children. How do these things make them feel about themselves and about you? What do you feel about your caregiving when you do these things? Are there things that get in the way of your caregiving responsibilities from time to time?

It is important to seek out support when you are feeling overwhelmed either by the children, their parents, or personal stresses. Below is a list of some things, produced by *Growing Great Kids*[™], that have helped other child caregivers reduce their stress:



- Call someone on the telephone and ask them to let you vent your frustrations.
- Discuss your concerns with parents.
- Get together with other caregivers.
- Take the children outside to play or go for a walk.
- Pray.
- Eat chocolate.
- Learn about child development and child caregiving practices that work.
- Tell yourself “this will pass” and breathe deeply.
- Pull your hair out.

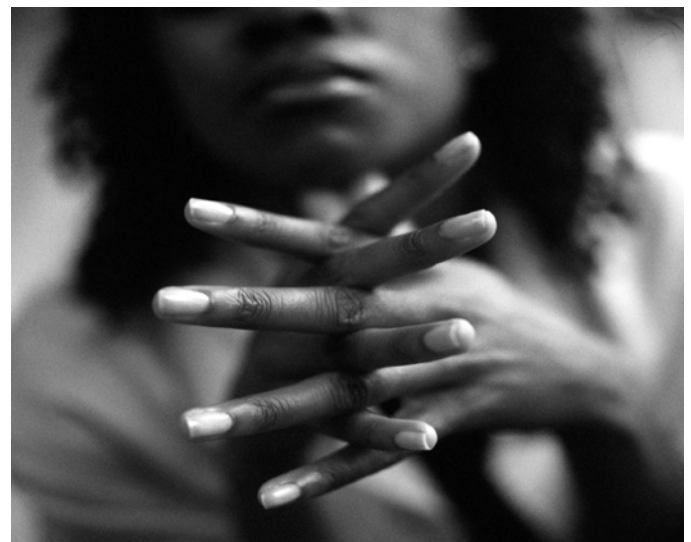
Think about additional things you have done to reduce the stress you encounter and ways you can share your knowledge with other child caregivers. We usually feel less stressed by our work when we feel confident in our knowledge and skills. *Growing Great Kids™* has also identified nine competency areas of knowledge and skills as listed below.

1. Understand the importance of a secure attachment for all children and respond in ways that support healthy development.
2. Relate to children with respect, empathy and compassion.
3. Possess the basic knowledge of child developmental stages and provide stimulation and care practices, which support healthy growth and development.
4. Understand the temperamental characteristics of children and adapt care practices to enhance each child’s potential and strengths.

5. Understand the difference between discipline and punishment and provide limit setting and child guidance.
6. Provide caregiving that supports child health, nutrition and safety. Obtain outside support when necessary.
7. Honor and respect each child’s cultural heritage and adapt caregiving practices to reflect the family’s expression of their heritage.
8. Understand one’s own needs as a caregiver and reach out for support and guidance.
9. Work cooperatively with parents to provide consistent and responsive care.

Do these core competency areas fit with your motivations and commitment to caring for children? Examining your motivation, commitment, and roles, enables you to maintain your values while experiencing less stress with your child care responsibilities. If you would like to learn more about using your motivation and commitment to provide the best possible care for children, give Jill Norris a call at 800-621-5908 or email her at jill.norris@wku.edu. Jill would love to talk with you about your commitment to the children in your care.

(For more information on *Growing Great Kids™: An Interactive Parenting and Child Development Curriculum*, contact Great Kids, Inc., 1200 New Church Court, Ambler, PA 19002 or visit the website at www.greatkidsinc.org.)



Resources for Enhancing the Staff-Parent Relationship

Amy Anderson, CCR&R Professional Development Coordinator

Have you been thinking about how to improve your relationship with the parents you serve? Do you need ideas on how to involve parents in your program? The Child Care Resource & Referral Resource Library can help! Our selection of books and videotapes may be just what you're looking for.

Protective Urges: Working with the Feelings of Parents and Caregivers is an excellent videotape that helps caregivers explore parents' fears and concerns regarding their child's care. Caregivers are interviewed individually and in a group setting to discuss issues related to interacting with program parents. One aspect of this tape I appreciated was the fact that real parents and caregivers - as opposed to actors - were interviewed in the childcare setting about their feelings and frustrations. The video presents the following three simple suggestions for caregivers to help put parents' fears to rest:

- Invite the parents to observe in the classroom;
- Take time to meet with the parent one-on-one to discuss any concerns; and
- Provide regular feedback on how the child is doing in the program.

Another videotape that addresses parent-staff concerns is *The CDA Professional Preparation Program: Partnerships with Parents*. This half-hour video depicts situations that childcare providers frequently encounter, including dealing with an habitually late parent, handling a parent's request to bend program rules, and welcoming a new child into the program. What I especially liked about this video was that it demonstrated a specific example of how to empower a parent to find her own solution to a problem.

Another resource you may find helpful is *Prime Times: A Handbook for Excellence in Infant and Toddler Programs*, by Greenman & Stonehouse. This book devotes an entire section to "Partnerships with Parents." In this section are sub-units addressing, among other issues, the following:

- Accepting that parental insecurity is normal;
- Establishing relationships with new parents;
- The importance of maintaining regular feedback on the child's progress; and
- Giving advice to parents.

This section also contains some very helpful sample form pages, including a parent's information sheet, a parent/staff conference report form, and a brief parent questionnaire.

Other library resources you may wish to consult on this important topic include:

- ◆ *Teacher-Parent Partnerships to Enhance School Success in Early Childhood Education*, by Swick
- ◆ *How Does It Feel? Child Care from a Parent's Perspective*, by Stonehouse
- ◆ *Teacher-Parent Relationships*, by Galambos Stone
- ◆ *Parent Involvement in Early Childhood Education*, by Honig

To check out these or other materials from the library, or to learn more about the wealth of resources available in other topic areas, please contact Amy Anderson at 745-2216, or 800-621-5908.



Cooing, Babbling and Conversation: Critical Ingredients for Language Development

Amy S. Hood, Infant & Toddler Consultant and Tyler Lee, Speech-Language Student Clinician

People often say they don't know what to say to young children, especially infants, because they don't talk back. Yet, the first three years of life are critical to the development of language and communication for children! The key is understanding that communication takes place not only by words, but also through the use of sounds, gestures, and body movements.

The first form of communication is an infant's cry. When an infant cries, adults should respond to the cry to figure out what the child needs. The child may need to be fed, diapered, or may just need the security of trusting someone is near. Young infants should hear many forms of language in the first year of their life. If there is an absence of sound during this critical year, then the area in the brain for speech does not develop normally.

During the first six months, adults should position themselves so that the young infant can see the adults face as they coo and cuddle them. A good position would be for the adult's face to be approximately eight to 15 inches away from the newborn infant's face.

Young infants also communicate by cooing, babbling and making funny faces. These attempts at communication should also draw attention from adults and adults should respond by returning

the coo or babble. Babbling is one of the many ways that children "practice" language. Because there are so many speech patterns in language, babbling allows the infant to practice forming their mouth for certain patterns and try out the various sounds. It is important to allow the babbling to happen and adults should encourage babbling by adding new sounds.

Around six to eight months of age, children begin to understand the turn-taking necessary for conversation later in life. Adults should begin to talk with babies, allowing them the turn-taking opportunity to begin the process for future communications.

One way to do this is for the adult to look into the baby's face and imitate the sound they made, allow ten seconds and repeat the sound. Imitation is very important in language development. Young infants will begin to play with you, thus encouraging language development. A child's first word will occur when the child is nine to 12 months of age!

Language and communication for children ages 16 months through three years old will go through many changes! A 16-month-old child may only utter one word sentences, but a child will be speaking in complete sentences by the age of 36 months (three years).



How can caregivers and parents encourage healthy language development? There are many opportunities parents and caregivers can provide that will encourage communication and language development during the child's first three years of life! The following are just some of those valuable techniques!

- Respond to the cries, gestures, words and questions from infants and toddlers.
 - Maintain eye contact while talking to children
 - Name the objects that infants and toddlers are playing with.
 - Name the various actions in which a child is participating.
 - Take part in the babbling and cooing process with young infants; play word games, make rhymes, etc. with older children.
 - Read or tell stories to young children! Caregivers can say nursery rhymes, talk about the pictures or tell the story with individual children or very small groups of children.
 - Child care environments should not only include a variety of books for children, but should include at least one book per child.
- Maintain a balance of listening to children and talking with them. Do NOT use language solely to control children's behavior.
 - Talk to the children frequently and use correct sentences.
 - Repeat the words that the children are using and add new words when appropriate.
 - Talk to the children during their daily routines and play activities.
 - Respect the language of non-English speaking families and encourage them to communicate with their child in their native language.
 - Understand the typical development of language and be able to recognize possible delays.

Other Useful Resources

Infant-Toddler Caregiving: A Guide to Language Development and Communication Early Messages, California Department of Education (video)

Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS), Debbie Cryer, Thelma Harms, and Richard Clifford (booklet)

EDUCATION NEWS PARENTS CAN USE

Join other parents and educators to watch **TEACHER QUALITY** on Tuesday, March 18, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. CST on the campus of Western Kentucky University.

This is a *free* program provided locally by the Child Care Resource & Referral at WKU.

There is no registration fee; however, pre-registration is required so the appropriate room size can be arranged. To register, call the *Child Care Resource & Referral office at 745-2216 or 800-621-5908* for local meeting information. Please register by *Thursday, March 13, 2003*.

To view live or archived web casts of this program on the Internet, visit <http://www.connectlive.com/events/ednews/>.

Handouts and identified related web resources for the most recent show can be accessed at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/television/>.

The U.S. Department of Education web page indicates that in some communities the local cable channels are carrying the program. The program will be rebroadcast on the Discovery Networks, TLC (The Learning Channel), the Channel One Network, and some Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) stations.

Please copy and post this information in your place of employment or in your child care facility.