

Children's Language and Literacy at Play

By Evieann Barber, Nursery Manager, International School

We know that 90% of the physical brain is developed in the first five years of life and that a good early childhood program supports this important neurological development. Early literacy is based on experiences with language in all its forms and that success in a lifelong love of reading is not based on early acquisition of ABC's, but on early experience with language.

Approaching academics stress-free keeps the body and brain from producing chemicals that prevent learning and that early pressure to perform academically can lead to long-term related problems. Therefore making nursery/pre-school more academic isn't developmentally appropriate and in the long term, isn't effective in producing smarter kids. We know that play offers appropriate learning and development in ways children naturally embrace and thrive on.

Children actually begin learning academics from birth by making sense of the world around them through their daily interactions and experiences. They learn the foundations of academic concepts through play experiences. As children learn basic concepts, they use these to understand more complex concepts. By exploration and discovery their curiosity is heightened and they are motivated to learn. We can promote play at home and school by providing ample room for play. Playmates, sensory experiences, outdoor play, paints, dress-up clothes, blocks, and helping children realize a love for books and reading. Play is instinctive to children and it encompasses nearly the entire day of a young child.

Ultimately it is our responsibility to allow children to play out their own ideas, and be available for extending their play when appropriate.

About Our Nursery School

Our Nursery School provides high quality developmentally appropriate educational experiences for children 9 months to 2 years old, while advocating for children, parents and families. We adhere to the British National Curriculum and Early Foundation Stage. Our children experience a lightly structured day allowing them to feel safe and supported while enjoying a wide variety of developmental opportunities.

This academic year, The International School of the Turks and Caicos Islands celebrates its 30th year of educating the youth of the TCI.

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"Play comes naturally to children and must be nourished by adults as it serves VERY important development purposes."



It shapes the mental, emotional, social, physical, and intellectual development of children and it promotes significant mental capacities while stretching the attention span and building vocabulary.

By playing a child is beginning to organize ideas, develop planning skills and start engaging in the thought process and during play children practice intellectual thoughts and their 'ideas'. Play is also an emotional outlet for children, by providing a 'cushion' against the realities of life and it helps to form children into social beings and provides the first steps in becoming a friend and contributor.

Try these useful tips in assisting your child's play time and becoming more involved:

Tips for Extending Play

- Observe what children do and show your interest by describing.
- Follow children's lead without taking over.
- Offer assistance when needed.
- Ask open-ended questions to find out what the child is thinking.

Open-ended question starters

- What do you think will happen?
- Tell me about what you are building.
- Tell me more about...
- Why do you like...
- Tell me how it tastes or smells or feels



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How do we support children for optimal development?

Welcome to Issue 3 of The Nursery News, a free and informative and **educational paper for parents and early years educators.**

We aim to provide relevant research-driven articles on a variety of health and educational topics to better advocate for and support our community's children and families. These informative publications will include dates and times for our Educational Workshops Series to be offered monthly in The Nursery School.

It is so important to work together and offer ourselves and our children opportunities that enhance our roles as parent and or educators.

Evieann Barber
Nursery School Manager

"We care for our children and so together We Invest Time in Their Minds."



FREE



Invest Time in a Child's Mind

AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE FOR PARENTS AND EARLY YEARS EDUCATORS



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- Teaching Moments
- Literacy at Play
- Compassionate Parent
- Our Workshops
- About Our School
- Our Sponsors

Every Moment Is a Teaching Moment

By Gwen Foor, Early Childhood Educator, MS Degree in Environmental Education, Michigan, USA

Too often teaching happens when we don't even realize it! Children are so much wiser than most adults give them credit for. **You can bet they hear everything we say!** But they also notice what we don't say or don't do. And because of their innocent, intuitive nature, children are great readers of body language, facial expressions and emotions.

I had a conflict recently with an adult family member over two things that are precious to me, children and Monarch butterflies. Three of my young nieces, ages 6, 8 and 10, were outside playing when one of them came running in to tell us that the oldest was trying to catch a Monarch butterfly. Knowing the serious plight of Monarchs well (they are extremely endangered), I ran out to stop the butterfly catching and give them some information to help them make a more informed decision, a more compassionate choice.

"Because of their innocent, intuitive nature, children are great readers of body language, facial expressions and emotions."

My Aunt ran out telling the girls not to touch the butterflies because it wasn't OK with Grandpa and then stormed off because she felt I was interfering with the way she disciplines her grandchildren. (continued...)



Every Moment Is a Teaching Moment

Continued...

I asked her to please come back and discuss the situation, that Grandpa (and I) had reasons for protecting the butterflies. Instead, she yelled that we were all mean to the girls and did not want them to have any fun. Then she got in her car and drove away!

I managed to gather the girls and explain why catching butterflies with your hands instead of a net can damage their wings, why the Monarch is endangered.

We talked about the Monarchs feeding higher up on the lilac bush and milkweed versus the smaller species darting around on plants closer to the ground. I told them how most Monarchs are born on a milkweed plant, drink its nectar and lay their eggs on its leaves. There may be 3-4 generations in one summer, only the final hatching being strong enough to make the long journey to Mexico in September when they migrate thousands of miles south across the Great Lakes.

The girls shared some of their own knowledge about butterflies they'd learned in school and from books. They agreed it was a good idea to enjoy them from afar next time, now that they had a better understanding of their delicate nature and their importance as pollinators.



“HAVING RESPECT AND COMPASSION FOR ALL THINGS HELPS US LEARN TO HAVE RESPECT AND COMPASSION FOR OURSELVES, FOR OTHERS...FOR THE PLANET!”

They also learned to respect Grandpa's wishes as well as his property and to understand that he was not being “mean” to them; he was simply advocating for the butterflies and all the flowering plants.

What I could NOT do, was change what they had witnessed earlier between my Aunt and myself. They heard and saw the yelling, the refusing to discuss the situation calmly and the running away in anger. There was no opportunity for them to observe **POSITIVE conflict resolution**. The emotional charge of the moment left little room for honoring nature's creatures or the wishes of others. But they saw the tears in my eyes, felt my sadness over what had happened and knew my love for them and the Monarchs as we watched the butterflies dance among the flowers.

Having respect and compassion for all things helps us learn to have respect and compassion for ourselves, for others...for the planet!

By Gwen Foor, Early Childhood Educator

The Compassionate Parent

By Evieann Barber, Nursery Manager, ISTCI

Remember when you were a child? Think back to a time in your childhood and remember a moment or event that made you happy! What were you doing? Who were with you? Relive it again now. What do you feel? Remember?

I believe every parent wants to do the best they possibly can at raising their child or children. A parent at the basic core of their being wants to have a happy, fulfilling and loving relationship with their child. But what does this look like on a daily basis? How do parents achieve this ideal when they are busy balancing their own lives with its own demands, expectations and realities.

If you are curious and interested in ways for you to improve your relationship with your child and to enhance your present parenting skills then becoming a more compassionate parent may be of importance to you.

I have been an early childhood educator for over thirty years and through my relationships with these children and families over the years, I have come to realize qualities and attributes about parents, caregivers, and their children:

1. Parents are doing the best they can at the given time.
2. A situation approached with compassion has a far greater chance for a healthy resolution.
3. A child's world is magical and the more we come to know, accept and embrace our own inner child from our childhood, the better we are able to understand our own child.

“YOU NEED NOTHING BUT TO ACCEPT YOUR CHILD EXACTLY AS THEY ARE RIGHT NOW. (READ AGAIN) ...BREATHE..”

When we work harder to change a situation or a person based on our agenda, it is an uphill battle. When we decide to accept and adjust to a situation, it allows possibilities and choices and a variety of outcomes to explore. To do this in practical everyday situations it means to begin a life-long practice in observing oneself and one's own:

- Agenda(control)
- Desirable outcome
- Compromise
- Resolve and validation

In any given situation you may have with your child, it is important to consider the above by first stopping your emotional agenda. **STOP and PAUSE. (Never underestimate the POWER of the pause).**

It is impossible to address and achieve the optimal outcomes when emotions are in control and reacting overrides responding. We want to be able to come from a place of **Hopefulness, Appreciation, Trust** in oneself and another. This is easier said than done when our nerves are frazzled!



A person who is aware of their own level of happiness, emotional ease, and wellbeing is better able to learn to maintain, continue, and sustain healthy and happy relationships with others.

At times the parent's ideas or expectations are not being achieved. If the situation is causing the parent dissatisfaction, worry or stress, they still may remain attached to it. **A patterned reaction to a situation that causes discomfort can be comfortable to oneself even though it does not produce a desirable result. Habits can be hard to break as we get use to our own repetitive behaviors.** When a parent's expectations of the child are not being met, there is a moment when one can see signs that show feelings of frustration or emotional distress. Remember if your goal is to have as many happy moments with your child as possible, it is essential to be self-aware of one's own state of happiness at any given time.

Gateways to being a more... “Compassionate Parent”:

- Respect yourself, respect your child
- Kindness is contagious
- Little is more
- Pause...a powerful tool
- What is the goal you both share?
- Where is your laughter moment?
- Be in the moment...notice your surroundings
- Say “this too shall pass” - get perspective

Beginning with one's self is an essential key to understanding and addressing issues with a child. As adults, we must value and honor this responsibility and “respond” to the children in our care with authentic, relevant, and respectful ways. As we begin to use this approach and think critically about our reactions with our children, then we create opportunities to make meaningful change and impact our relationships with them.

JOIN US FOR A SERIES OF FREE WORKSHOPS HELD AT THE NURSERY SCHOOL

DENTISTRY AND CHILDREN - FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER AT 4PM

Dr. Harvey DDS, Chief Dental Officer, Turks & Caicos Islands Government

This free and informal workshop is aimed at all parents who want to keep their children's teeth healthy and cavity free.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY - TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER AT 4PM

Evieann Barber, MA, BA, CCLS, Nursery School Manager

Workshop designed to increase knowledge and awareness for opportunities to support children's literacy development and how it plays a part in everyday life. How do we make literacy meaningful and relevant to our young children?

HOW TO BE A MORE COMPASSIONATE PARENT - WEDNESDAY 16 NOVEMBER AT 6PM

Evieann Barber, MA, BA, CCLS, Nursery School Manager

Discover new ways to help improve our ability to respond rather than react to children we love.

MUMS AND TOTS CLUB - Every Wednesday – 3:15 – 4:15. Join us for a casual, drop-in at the Nursery School.

CALL 9465523 FOR MORE INFORMATION