

St John XXIII Pre-K

DYNAMITE DINOS' NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY, 2018



January,
Well, this month really flew by! We have been busy in class, making snowmen, painting snow, making snow and it was wonderful to play in the snow on our winter walk! Thank-you to all the families that were able to attend.

We colored some clothes we wear in the winter (mitts and toques) and cut them out, the children are getting better at cutting. We are counting and drawing buttons on our snowmen. The children have been using playdoh to make some objects from "The Mitten, and "Sadie and the Snowman"; forests, hedgehogs and the most incredible snowmen. The children are learning new winter songs and prayers.

February,
We will continue with "The Mitten" and begin hibernation.

February is also the month of "LOVE", we will continue to discuss God wanting us to be kind and love each other. We will be celebrating Valentine's day by making Stone Soup together, sharing valentines and bringing cookies for our sharing plate (see details below).

To let us know of your child's illness/absence or to discuss your child's program, please contact Ms. Sue Dexter and call the school office.

Office Phone: (780) 998-7777

Ms. Sue Dexter

Email: susand@eics.ab.ca



Birthdays this Month:

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO SEND
CUPCAKES OR A TREAT FOR YOUR
CHILD'S BIRTHDAY.

Milan February 21

Alejandro February 4

Some fun pictures from January!

Making our melted snowmen, and forests!





Our winter walk



Time for hot chocolate, yummy!!!!



Saying goodbye to our gingerbread house, our Christmas Inn and



sad to see it go, but it was sooo much fun destroying it!

our playhouse. At first, the children were

Important Dates: Found on next page

News from the Classroom

Sue Dexter: susand@eics.ab.ca

IMPORTANT DATES:

Feb 6 and 7th, ISP conferences. The conferences will be 20 minutes each, please make sure you have gone online to book a time.

Feb 8th and 9th, Teacher's Convention no school

Feb 14 9:30 to 11:30, Valentine's party morning and afternoon classes

This is a time to connect, visit and enjoy conversation with other parents while sharing valentines and cookies with the children.

Items to bring to the party:

Valentines to pass out to friends, please do not label the valentine (much easier to pass out) have your child practice writing their name.

3 cookies to add to our sharing plate

Stone soup, we will write in your agendas what ingredient to bring

Feb 21 1030-1200 pm Social Communication Skills

With Ellen Bailey

Feb 28 9:00-10:30, Play Group

With Gwen Munca, Roxanne

Kellogg and Nadine Fricke

March 7 9:00-10:30, Connecting with your child though literature

With Stephanie Scott

March 7 11:00-12:30, Emotion Coaching

With Marg Schimpf

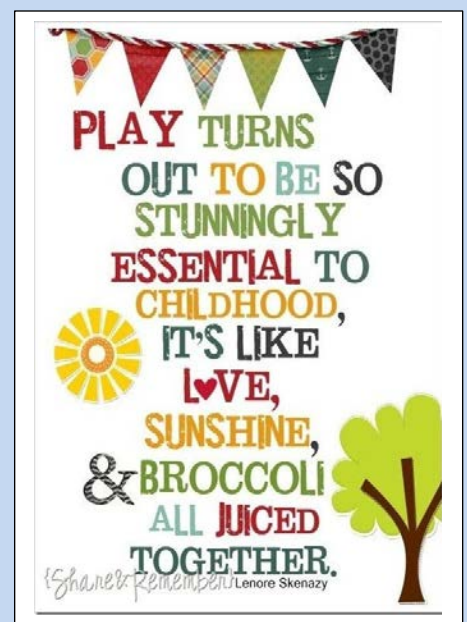
Please read your child's agenda daily, this is our communication between home and school. There may be information on upcoming events or forms to sign eg. FOP reports. Also initial any notes in your child's agendas, that way we know you've read the notes, thank-you.

Please remember if your child is on PUF funding, you are required to have ten FOPs per school year. If you are having trouble scheduling a FOP, please contact Sue Dexter after 4:00. We are currently short on the required number of FOPs. As a reminder Alberta Learning does audits in the spring, if our FOP numbers are short they can and will pull funding (SLP, OT supports) for our children. Thank-you

Please remember to **LABEL** all coats, hats, shoes, boots, mitts and snow pants with your child's name.

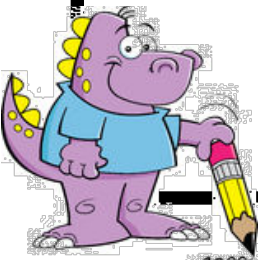
FUN FORK FRIDAYS- please send a snack that your children need to use a fork to eat and send a fork.

Thank-you



Occupational Therapy Corner

Submitted by Suzanne Hauser- Occupational Therapist



There are many APPs available for young children. Here is a list of some I have tried that focus on early drawing, printing, letter recognition as well as fine motor and visual motor skills.

category	Name of APP	company
printing	LetterSchool – learn to write letters and numbers	Sanoma Media Netherlands B.V.
Letter recognition and printing	LetterQuiz-	Tantrum Apps
Very early scribbling	Ookii Squiggles	Baby First & Lazoo
dexterity	Dexteria Jr.	BinaryLabs, Inc.
printing	Ready to Print	Essare LLC
Pre-printing shapes	Shapes Touch and Write v2.0 (4+)	FIZZBRAIN LLC
Motivation; visual perception	Toca Builders v 1.0.4 (4+)	Toca Boca AB
printing	Handwriting Without Tears: Wet-Dry Suite for Capitals, Numbers & Lower Case	No Tears Learning, Inc
Fine motor skills-dexterity	Tap the Frog HD v1.2 (4+)	Playmous, Inc
Fine motor skills-dexterity	Tap the Frog HD, the Magic Key	Playmous, Inc
printing	Write My Name v1.2.4 (4+)	NCSoft
printing	Touch and Write	FIZZBRAIN LLC
motivation	- The “Touch and Move! Service Vehicles” (Car3D) app (Atech Inc.) free	(Car3D) app (Atech Inc.)
motivation, calming	Toca Nature	Toca Boca AB

PENCIL GRIP

Foundations for the development of Pencil grips:

Motor refers to body movement. Gross motor skills refer to large body movements such as walking or throwing a ball. Fine motor skills generally refer to hand movements. Many of the skills a child learns through manipulation and play with toys, leads to the hand movements we may take for granted as an adult. For example: brushing your teeth, turning a key in a lock, using a screwdriver or hammer, opening jars, pouring, locating a particular coin in your pocket without looking, doing up a zipper, belt or button, folding paper, using a ruler, threading a needle, picking a flower, holding the remote and pushing the buttons on it at the same time.

Stability / Mobility:

The ability to hold the rest of the arm still while the hand or fingers move is part of this. Generally, children refine their control of these movements starting at the shoulder and working down to the smaller joints such as the wrist and fingers. In order to be able to move the smaller joints like the fingers accurately, the rest of the body and arm need to be still or stabilized. For example, try sitting on a high stool with your feet hanging in the air and thread of needle. It is easier to somehow wrap your feet around

the legs of the stool and to brace your arms against your trunk. You may even brace the side of your hand against your leg. It requires strength to be able to hold the shoulder in a certain position while the hand moves.

Further steps in the development of “stability and mobility: This is when children learn to isolate finger movements while holding the rest of the hand still. We see this when they learn to poke or point. Later children start to use the 2 sides of the hand separately. We use the little finger side of the hand for stability and the thumb side of the hand for action. The beginning of this is when children learn to use just the thumb and 1 -2 fingers to pick up smaller objects. These skills are important foundations for the development of a tripod grip and manipulating objects using just one hand.

Dexterity:





This refers to refined control of the fingers and includes "in-hand manipulation" which is the movement of an object within one hand. We tend to think of magicians as having extremely well-developed dexterity. Early development of dexterity is learning the control the movement of the fingers and hands to grasp and release objects. A child starts by using the whole hand, then the thumb becomes more involved in the grasp and then the child learns to pick up something very small using the tip of the thumb and the tip of the finger). Throwing and dropping objects are early ways that a child learns about releasing an object. Children then learn to place an object down and then to place it accurately on top of another object or to drop it accurately into increasingly smaller openings. Learning to turn the pages one at a time is another example of a developing skill for dexterity. Stability is also a factor here. The whole hand tends to be used for activities requiring more strength. When hammering nails, the whole hand is used to grip the hammer. You may see children switch from a finger grip on a crayon for drawing to using a whole hand or palmar grasp for coloring. To use more pressure on the crayon, more strength is required. More of the movement then comes from the stronger arm or wrist muscles than finger muscles.

To encourage children to stabilize the larger joints while drawing, coloring etc., it helps to have them lie down on the tummy on the floor. The shoulders and elbows are used to prop up the body. Because of this they are anchored or still while the child uses the smaller joints for the activity.

Wrist position: When the wrist is up or extended, the hand is in a better mechanical position for strength. Try holding onto a bar or someone's arm with your wrist bent and open. Have someone else trying to take your hand off. It is make easier to “break a hold” when the wrist is bent. We encourage children to do drawing, painting and printing activities on a vertical surface, with paper on the wall or on an easel or a high slant board. Very often a grip will become more effective just by changing this position. Working in a vertical position is also easier for some children to understand the concepts of top and bottom of the page move the pencil down or up. When we work on the flat table surface these concepts are more abstract. Also when working vertically, gravity assists downward movements making it easier to start printing a letter from the top rather than moving from the bottom upward. The taller slant boards work better in this regard.

Size of the print: When a child is printing his/her name using very large letters, he/she is able to use whole arm movements. Sometimes the trick to get a child to use a more effective grip and start to use the fingers to direct the pencil movement is to have them draw or print in a very small space. I often cut out a window or picture frame from cardboard and have them print within that space. It may take several times as they learn to adjust the size of their letters to fit the space.

Stages of development for the pencil grip:

			
1-1 ½ yrs. palmar	2-3 yrs. digital pronate	3½ - 4 yrs. Static tripod or quadripod	4 ½ - 6 yrs. Dynamic tripod

Palmar grip (1 year): Children start out holding the pencil in a fist with either the thumb up or down. With this grip the whole arm is involved in the movement.

Digital Pronate grip (2-3 years): They progress to holding the pencil inside the palm with the thumb and index fingers pointing downward. For this grip, children also use full arm movement. When drawing very big lines, we will sometimes use this grip as well. Children are starting to separate the sides of the hand with this grip.

Static tripod grip (4 years): They start to use a more tripod like grip often quite high up on the pencil. The finger is held primarily with the thumb and first two fingers. However the hand moves as a unit still with the much of the movement coming from the wrist. We often refer to this as the static tripod grip.

Dynamic tripod grip (5 years): This is when the fingers and knuckles direct the movement of the pencil. The area between the thumb and index finger is called the thumb web space. Bio-mechanically, when this space is open or shaped like an “O”, there is more movement possible from the knuckles and joints of the thumb and fingers. When it is closed, movement of these joints is restricted or blocked.

The smaller muscles inside the palm of the hand help us to cup the hand and move the fingers and thumb together more easily. To get a really rounded thumb web “space” when gripping the pencil, it helps for children to practice activities that work the muscles inside the palm.

Other grips:

Some children hold the marker where all 4 fingers are extended along the pencil.

Some place the middle finger on top of the pencil. Some direct the movement more with that finger rather than using the thumb and fingers to direct the movement together.

Some children and adults hold the pencil with a closed web space. (Web space is the area between the thumb and index finger and when there is not opening, it is “closed”). The thumb or index finger may wrap around the pencil or the other digit (thumb or finger).

These grips may indicate that the muscles in the inside of the palm and fingers are weak, not yet fully developed or that the child has very mobile finger and thumb joints and are seeking more stable, secure grip on the pencil. Activities that work on strengthening the muscles around the finger joints and in the inside of the hand can be helpful in achieving the tripod grip. (See future newsletters for ideas on building strength).

Some adults use grips on a pencil other than the tripod grip and can print very well. Using a dynamic tripod pencil grip is not essential to printing, however it allows for most effective use of the hand and less stress on the larger joints. It is easier to change the grip of a child when they are just learning to draw and print than it is later. That is why there is so much focus on the pencil grip in the early years of school and preschool.

- It is often easier for a child to achieve a tripod grip first using a thicker and shorter pencil/ marker. If you have very short broken pieces of crayon or chalk, there is not room for all the fingers so the child has to curl them under and just use the first 1 or 2 fingers and the thumb.

There are different stories/ images and strategies that can be used with this to help children. Make up your own using a theme/ character your child likes if you wish. Let them know at school if this is working so they can use the same.

- “Hand up” “Wiggle the fingers”. “Oh no, I hear a shark! “Hide the fish” (the 3rd, 4th and 5th fingers are the fish, bend or curl them), “Here comes the shark!” “Nah, na, nah na, na nah” (or other movie sound effects, “bite” (pinch), Remind the child “Hide the fish!” Bite (pinch the pencil with the index and thumb).
- Driving in the family vehicle: Mommy and Daddy sits beside each other in the front (thumb and index finger). They each sit in their own seats. The children sit in the back (curl the fingers in behind). The middle finger will become a little less curled so that the pencil rests on it.
- The prince kisses the frog so that she becomes the princess. (Thumb and index finger touch on the pencil).
- Later you can just remind the child saying the “shark grip” or “why aren’t the kids in the back of the car” or “where is the frog and the prince?” or “remember the prince has to kiss the frog”.
- Hold the cap of the marker or a small eraser or toy in the 4th and 5th fingers while also holding onto the pencil. This helps the children curl the fingers.
- For the child who holds the pencil in a vertical position rather than slanted. Use a covered hair elastic. Place the elastic over the middle of the palm of the hand position it between the thumb and the fingers. Slide the eraser end of the pencil under the elastic (move in a direction from the fingers towards the thumb). This will help children get the feel of the pencil being slanted and resting against the hand. To wean off the hair elastic you may want to put a small stamp on the hand where the pencil should rest against.
- If the hair elastic also has a small creature/object on it, the child can hold that creature/object with the 4th and 5th fingers (just like holding the cap of the marker) to get the fingers curled.

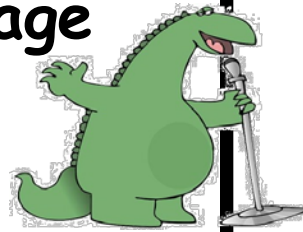
- There is another way of using the covered elastics: a smaller elastic is tied onto the larger one. The larger elastic fits around the wrist. The eraser end of the pencil is put into the smaller elastic. This helps children with wrist position as well as the slant of the pencil.
- Pencil grippers: there are a number of different types of these on the market. The contoured or triangular shaped ones help children with finger positioning. The most successful and popular one to date is the cross-over or grotto grips. There is a flap on top. Children slide the thumb and index finger under the flap. These are sometimes referred to as the batwing or butterfly grips. Some of the grips without contours will increase the diameter of the pencil and provide a non-slip surface to make it easier to have a secure hold on the pencil. Many “adult” pens have cushioned grips built into them these days. Stores like Scholar’s Choice, or Education Station have pencil grippers to purchase. They are usually referred to as “pencil grips”. I call them pencil grippers to not confuse them with the finger position needed to grip a pencil.
- There are also triangular shaped pencils and crayons now. Many are available at local department stores.

Pressure on the pencil:

Once children start achieving the correct finger position you can repeat this idea of repeatedly picking up the pencil but with a twist. Each time they make the mark/short line on paper they can make a dark or heavy line with lots of pressure or a light line that is very hard to see. You could make it into a game: take turns calling out whether it is a dark or light line.

Let's Talk About Speech and Language

Ellen Bailey: ellenb@eics.ab.ca



Thinking beyond the Here-And-Now

1. Talk to children about things beyond the here-and-now. They will gradually learn to understand and use this kind of language. Ask children to think about things that happen in their daily routines. “Do you think it’s a good idea to wash your hands before we eat?” “Should we wear winter boots in the Summer?” Discuss why or why not.
2. Talk about Emotions during pretend play. Use feeling words while pretending (for example....while playing Doctor say “I’m nervous about getting a needle” or while playing Vet say, “I’m upset that my dog is sick”). Encourage children to consider their own emotions and how others might feel in various situations.
3. When reading a story, invite children to tell you about their similar experiences. For example, “The boy got on the bus. Have you ever been on a bus?” Remember to give lots of time for responses.
4. Take the time to answer children’s why questions. Explanations provide information children can learn from and help them learn to use more abstract language.

Try to keep your language slightly above the level that your child is using. The tone of your question and comments conveys your interest and motivates the child to respond. Use an expectant pause to cue the child to talk some more.

Websites you might want to check out:

1) Talk Box: This is a parent guide to creating language-rich environments. It has activity ideas relating to various themes plus some checklists to print off. Go to www.parentlinkalberta.ca or [Talk Box](#)

2) Do2Learn: Need some quick visuals or a special song to help your child through a difficult time (e.g. waiting for the bus)? Check out this educational resource for special needs. Lots of free stuff plus some extra materials if you are willing to pay for it (I have not personally tried any of the products that have to be purchased - but let me know if you find something useful!). www.do2learn.com

3) Videos that Teach: For the younger child who has difficulty learning new vocabulary words and benefits from repetition and simple videos... check out this website. You can order different videos such as Action words or Opposites. Check them out at www.BabyBumbleBee.com

CONCEPTS OF THE MONTH:

Early Learners: **EMPTY** and **FULL**: Use these words frequently while playing with your child. Compare their snack bags before they eat and after they eat. Talk about containers in the bathtub as you fill them with water and then dump out the water again. While playing playdough you can talk about the containers being empty and full. While getting gas, talk about your tank being empty and that you need to fill it up so that you can keep driving. Have fun with these concepts while baking, shopping or just relaxing at the end of the day. The more exposure your child has with hands on learning, the easier these concepts will be to learn!

Older Kids: **FIRST** and **LAST**: Some children might be ready to learn about the concepts of first and last. These are very important concepts when kids are learning to read and write. They need to know which is the first letter in a word and which is the last letter. They need to learn that with words, we go left to right but when lining up to get a drink of water, the person at the front is "first" in line. These concepts can get confusing so make sure to go slow and stress the important words while you are teaching your child.

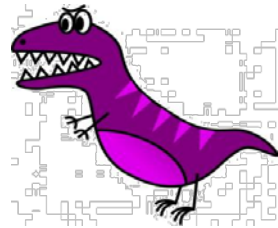


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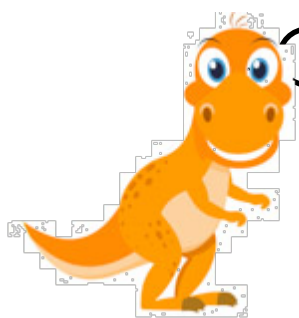
Thought for the month...

Our thought for the month.....

February the month of love!



If parents have ideas they would like to share or topics they are interested in for our "Thought of the Month," please email Sue by the 25th of the month.



Keep reading ↓

Our team



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