



April 2010



Psych Files

I recently attended a conference discussing assessment and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for the birth to 5 population and the National Autism Center has just published their National Standards report outlining various treatment methods and their effectiveness in treating young children with an ASD. I wanted to share this new information with parents and other professionals as there has been a sharp increase in the reported cases of ASD diagnosis. The Center for Disease Control (2009) reported that prior to the 1990's, there were approximately 1 reported case per 2,000 children. In 2009, that prevalence has skyrocketed to 1 in 110! The American Academy of Pediatrics is now recommending screenings for ASD at 18 and 24 months as part of wellness exams if concerns are expressed by parents. Research is showing that ASD is highly heritable but the exact cause is still not known. I will summarize as much of this information as possible in coming DART Board editions, starting in May. If you should have any questions about what I did or did not include, do not hesitate to contact me at felicia.humenik@aiu3.net about this, or any other topic.

Celebration of Success

This month we feature a letter from a parent whose child attended the Penn Hills DART site.



Dear Sue, Bev, Dee, Ally, Elena, & Brianna,
Thank you so much for working with my little boy. Nathan has made so much progress over the past year and I know that a lot of it is because of your love and help. The fact that Nathan has loved to come see all of you at school speaks volumes concerning your influence. We will miss all of you!

Love, Liane Amorino and Nathan



Parents Corner



Medical Assistance benefits for members of ACCESS, Gateway, UPMC For You and Unison health care plans

Transportation:

The Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP) provides non-emergency medical transportation to Allegheny County residents of all ages for the purpose of receiving non-emergency medical services. These services include both physical health services (doctors, dentists, pharmacists, psychologists) and behavioral health services (mental health and drug & alcohol counseling and treatment). MATP will assign the client's medical trip to public transportation, mileage reimbursement, cash cab, or para-transit shared-ride system. To enroll call 1-888-547-6287.

Diapers:

Children with special needs, ages three and older, who are not toilet trained, may be eligible to receive diapers or pull-ups through Medical Assistance. If there is a reason that has prevented your child from becoming toilet trained, such as a medical condition, developmental delay, specific diagnosis, etc., your child may qualify. For more information or to apply for diapers, call 1-800-541-0734 to speak with a Custom Care Coordinator.

Reminders:

The DART Behavior Series will be offered in April & May in the South area and May & June at the AIU Central Office in the Waterfront. If you haven't received a flyer about the meetings or need more information, check with your child's teacher or therapist or call Sue Vandervort at 412-394-5961.

The Early Intervention Families Evening Workshop Series will be offered April 15, 22 and 29th from 6:30-9:00 at ACHIEVA, 711 Bingham St., South Side. If you haven't received a brochure about the meetings, check with your child's teacher or therapist or call Julie Hladio at 412-885-6000, x 3136.

Please Join Us for AIU/DART Open House Family Night!



April 15, 2010 from 6-7:30pm, AIU Central Office
475 E. Waterfront Dr., Homestead, PA 15120

Early Learning Standards 101 and The Importance of Play

During the past few months we've been discussing the Pennsylvania Learning Standards for Early Childhood. At the DART training in March, we learned that the standards have recently been revised. This was done due to a request from the Secretary of Education. The revisions focused on the infusion of play into the standards, as well as higher level thinking and reasoning skills. In addition, there is now a true continuum of standards from infant through kindergarten. We will continue to discuss the standards and how they impact your child. We will also share some of the new titles and "tag lines" that describe the areas.

This month's Key Learning Area is Scientific Thinking and Technology: Exploring, Inquiry and Discovery (formerly known as Science). This standard deals with learning scientific concepts within the key areas of early learning.

Some standards within this area include

- Discuss observations and discoveries
- Participate in scientific investigations
- Recognizing the difference between living and nonliving things
- Using 5 senses as tools with which to observe, classify, collect information and describe observations
- Describe objects according to size, shape, color or properties of matter.
- Identify season that corresponds with observable conditions.
- Discuss rules that protect the environment



How can you incorporate this standard into your child's play? Here are just a few suggestions.

- Provide tools for exploration including magnifying glasses, magnets, microscopes, tweezers and eye droppers
- Encourage your child to ask questions
- Read books about plants and animals
- Keep a pet at home and allow your child to help care for it
- Encourage your child to collect, sort, classify and describe materials (start a rock collection)
- Take nature walks and talk about the seasons
- Talk to your child about what can be done to protect the environment (recycling, etc.)

Make sure to check out next month's issue of the DART Board to read about the featured Early Learning Standard.

Sources: "Psych Files" created by Felicia Humenik, DART School Psychologist. "Parents Corner" created by Sue Vandervort, DART Preschool Service Coordinator. "Early Learning Standards and The Importance of Play" information provided by PDE and DPW. "Focus on Health and Safety" created by Cindy Callaghan, DART Service Coordinator for Physical Health.

Focus on Health and Safety

Poison Prevention Tips

More than a million children (under the age of six years) each year either swallow or contact a poisonous substance. Most poisonings occur when the parents or caregivers are in home. Please remember that holidays and special events can distract families and allow poisonings to occur. The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified the following items as being the most dangerous potential poisons: medicines, cleaning products, antifreeze, windshield wiper fluid, pesticides, furniture polish, gasoline, kerosene and lamp oil. The following tips can reduce the chance that a poisoning will occur:

- Store medicine, cleaners, paints, varnishes and pesticides in their original packaging and in locked cabinets or containers.
- Purchase and keep all medicines in containers with safety caps. Pills which are contained in a box and must be pushed through a foil backing are **not child proof**. Safely discard unused medication.
- **Never refer to medicine as candy!**
- Check the label each time that you give a child medicine to ensure the proper dosage (and that the medication has not expired).
- **Never** place poisonous products in food or drink containers.
- Maintain smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

If you think that your child has swallowed poison, remove the item from the child (and/or ask them to spit it out). Do not make your child vomit. Do not use syrup of ipecac.

If your child is unconscious, not breathing or experiencing a seizure call 911 (or your local emergency number if 911 is not used). If your child comes into contact with poison and has mild (or no) symptoms, call your poison control center: 1-800-222-1222.



More information concerning poison proofing your home and the treatment of poisonings can be found at www.healthychildren.org.

Integration Children Needed...

We are currently recruiting Integration children for most of our DART classrooms for the 2010-2011 school year.



If you know of any families who are seeking a preschool educational program for their child, please share your experiences with them. Please encourage them to contact *Patty Shurtz at (412) 394-5942* to schedule a screening for consideration into the program