I Taught My Child Today…
by providing a loving and caring home.

Ideas to Promote
Social Emotional Well-being…

- Sing, hum, talk softly and make fun faces to your baby at diaper changing times.
- Soothe your baby when upset by responding to cries with soft touching, a gentle voice and calming words.
- Provide bedtime and naptime at similar times each day and set up a routine. For example, bath, then story time and then bedtime.
- Dance together as you listen to soft music with a slow swaying motion.
- Love, love, love, and love, unconditionally.

New parents soon learn that the social and emotional health of their baby is closely linked to his over-all healthy development. Babies are learning their social and emotional skills through warm, supportive relationships with their family and caregivers. It is during these experiences that babies begin to show a capacity for compliance, self-regulatory abilities and cooperation. These are all skills leading to later school success.

The most important fact to remember is that you, as a parent, are your baby’s first and most important teacher. You teach in a hundred different ways throughout the day as you cuddle your baby, feed, keep him clean, clothe, smile, talk and love him! When parents understand and respond to their baby’s cues and keep them safe, important attachments begin to form and strong connections develop. When your child knows that he can trust you, he has a sense of security, comfort and develops a strong, positive, social emotional well-being.

Resource: www.zerotothree.org

Infancy Leadership Circle/Erie:
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For more information contact: infancycirclenys@nyztt.org
I Taught My Child Today…
by enjoying music together.

Ideas to Promote
Musical Experiences

- Put on music and dance to a jazzy tune.
- Expose your little one to many types of music. Keep the volume soft to medium.
- Play music with the sounds of nature at naptime or bedtime. This will be relaxing and help with falling asleep. It is also soothing to a fussy baby.
- Sing to your infant or toddler. It doesn’t matter how well you sing. They love to hear the rhythms, patterns and tones of your voice.
- Sing lullabies and sway to the beat.
- Assist your toddler to make music by banging or patting on a drum or a cooking pot turned upside down, by tapping sticks together or shaking a small, closed container with a small amount of cereal in it.
- Make up a song by using your own words to an old familiar tune. Add clapping and chanting for variety.
- Take toddlers to a family friendly outdoor concert.

With parents as first teachers for their infants and toddlers, the amount of teaching and learning taking place during shared musical activities is enormous. Little ones are bonding with family members. They are learning new vocabulary words as part of literacy development. They are responding emotionally to soothing sounds and new sounds, energetic beats, mathematical rhythms and patterns. Coordination develops as they add movement to the music. They learn new concepts through the singing of songs. Most of all they have musical fun together. Music is a creative teaching tool.

Resource: www.babycenter.com
I Taught My Child Today…
by encouraging exploration of creative art materials.

Ideas to Promote Creative Art Exploration …

- Making some homemade playdough to squeeze, pound, roll, etc., as follows. Use:
  1 cup of flour          ½ cup of salt          1 Tablespoon of vegetable oil
  1 cup of water          1 teaspoon of cream of tartar

- Combine these ingredients in a pan and cook over medium heat stirring until the ingredients pull away from the sides of the pan to form a ball. Cool and store in an airtight container. Add small utensils such as cookie cutters to add to the fun.

- Scribbling with large crayons is a favorite pastime for little ones. Younger babies may need to have the corners of the paper taped down to the tabletop during creative art experiences. Little ones are very interested in trying to figure out just how the crayon works and what type of marks it can make.

- Finger painting is a sensory experience that both infants and toddlers enjoy. They like to feel the finger paint, move it around and see emerging patterns begin to stand out on the paper.

- Tearing paper to make a collage is a very exciting activity for babies. Use colored paper; brush on non-toxic glue with a paintbrush or Q-tip, then, press on the torn paper over the glue. Parents may offer hand-over-hand assistance or put on the glue for the youngest babies. Another great way to make a collage is by using clear contact paper. After the baby tears tissue paper, show the baby how to press the tissue paper on to the contact paper. When completed, cover it with second piece of contact paper for the baby. This is a very interesting sticky, tactile experience for infants and toddlers. It is helpful to tape the corners of the contact paper down during this activity.

- Painting with water and paint brushes outside on sidewalks and watching the water dry in the sunshine is great fun for little ones.

As parents encourage their little ones to explore various simple art mediums, they are again their child’s first teacher. Parents soon learn that the process of exploring the art materials or the “process of doing” is more important than the finished product. The “doing” fuels the imagination and expression of their baby’s personal and cultural uniqueness. Parents are teaching language development as conversations take place during activities. Fine muscle strength and dexterity, eye-hand coordination, creativity and more are learned. Parents enjoy watching and sometimes like to join in the exploration and fun at their child’s side. It is always important to let the babies explore freely and be well supervised with child safety in mind. Infants and toddlers enjoy admiring their creative art displayed at eye level for days to

Resource: Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Education Department, 1295 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY, www.albrightknox.org or other local art galleries.
I Taught My Child Today…
by enjoying outdoor play together.

Ideas to Promote
Learning Outside in Your Neighborhood

- Talk to your infant or toddler about what you see along the way as you walk together out in your yard, to the bus stop or out in the woods.
- Play “I Spy” with your little one by describing something simple nearby and letting him guess what it is. For example, say, “I see something grey and fuzzy,” as you see a grey squirrel by a nearby tree. “What is it?”
- Hang a wind chime outside your door or window to listen to as the wind blows or hang it inside near a window to catch the wind. Use different words to describe the sounds: clink, tinkle, jingle, jangle, ring, chink, clank, soft, and loud.
- Walk together to the mailbox to mail an envelope. Toddlers can help put the letter in the mailbox with your assistance. Help your toddler send his own letter or picture he drew to Grandma or another special relative. Discuss how to cross a busy street safely as you stroll along.
- Visit a neighborhood park. Kick a ball and blow bubbles. Infants will giggle as bubbles fly around. Toddlers will chase them. Lie on a blanket together on the grass and talk about the clouds in the sky. Watch for airplanes flying overhead. Listen to the sounds of birds.
- Encourage your toddler to gently touch the leaves on low bushes, a stone, the grass, moss, dried up leaves, and tree bark. Ask questions about how they feel such as, “Does this feel scratchy?”

As parents recognize the huge number of opportunities for teaching their young children through everyday outdoor experiences, they develop a new level of understanding and joy around teaching and learning. As first teachers of their little ones, parents teach sensory experiences, scientific exploration, language and social development, motor skills, and creativity. At the same time, all these activities require care about constant supervision and safety including choking hazard awareness. Bonding, fresh air and learning respect for the environment go hand-in-hand with the positive effects on cognitive development. An especially great plus for these outdoor experiences is that this increased physical activity positively affects the growing issue of childhood obesity in our country. When teaching about outdoor, neighborhood activities, your little scientist is making sense of her world as it is experienced!


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I Taught My Child Today…
by sitting around our table
and sharing a family style meal together.

Ideas to Promote Family Style Meals

- Encourage a simple routine to start getting ready to eat. For example, wash little hands before the meal, then, put on a bib or apron and talk about it as you do this together.
- Provide simple tasks for toddlers. For example, perhaps a toddler could help tear lettuce for a salad as part of the meal preparation or stir simple ingredients in a bowl. Let her help set the table by putting spoons on the table.
- Put food in bowls and encourage the child to scoop out his portion. This may require you to assist by giving hand-over-hand guidance and holding the bowl or platter for this process.
- Give your infant, who is able to safely sit in a high chair, a spoon to hold, even though she may be still using her little fingers to feed herself. This provides an introduction to utensil use even if it is only held for a few seconds.
- Model good manners during your meal together by encouraging the use of the words “please” and “thank you” or by saying, “Close your mouth as you chew” or “Use your napkin to wipe your mouth.”
- As you eat your meal together, talk about the colors, shapes, textures, temperatures and names of your food. Expand on your child’s vocabulary words in your mealtime conversations.

Family style mealtime is “chuck full” of many ways for parents to be the first teacher for their little one. At a closer glance, parents find that new skills are taught based on the age and abilities of their baby. For example, skills of passing, pouring, scooping, holding, eye-hand coordination, manners, language and cognitive development are enhanced during family style mealtime. Young children get to practice some of these skills daily through the mealtime experience.

Family ties are also strengthened. Families reconnect and focus on each other as they gather together after busy activities and responsibilities that pull them away in other directions. Trust develops, children eat healthier, mealtime is more relaxed, there is exposure to new foods, and social skills continue to mature. At the same time it, it is always important to supervise young children closely during mealtime to prevent falls, especially if children are using high chairs. Always use the seat belt. Food must be cut into small enough pieces so it is easy to chew and swallow. Use family style mealtime as a teaching and learning tool to enjoy happy, healthy and safe mealtimes together!


Infancy Leadership Circle/Erie:
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I Taught My Child Today…
by breastfeeding my little one.

Ideas to Promote Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding provides physical contact that babies love. It is warm, comforting, and provides security.

- Breastfeeding is a bonding experience. Mothers find it calming and a quiet time to relax. It provides a healthy start for this new life. Breast milk is always warm and ready.

- Establishing a good routine for breastfeeding saves time and money. You won’t have to buy, measure or mix formula. You can save the cost of formula and feeding supplies.

- Breast milk is considered the perfect food for babies. It is easier to digest so the baby has less vomiting and diarrhea. It provides vitamins, minerals and other nutrients needed for growth and development.

- Breastfed babies are sick less often so working mothers miss fewer work days.

- Breastfeeding helps your body recover from labor and delivery. It assists your uterus to shrink back to size.

When mothers breastfeed their babies, they are giving their little one the very best start in life. A foundation for learning is in place when babies are healthy. A first step to good health takes place through breastfeeding. Mothers are providing this healthy foundation as their child’s first teacher. Fathers build a bond with their breastfed baby in many different ways. Sometimes they look at baby’s routines and take on an activity to be their sole job. For example, one-on-one time could take place at bath time every day. By supporting breastfeeding through positive encouragement, fathers play an important role as first teachers of their child.

Moms often plan to breastfeed through the first year of life or longer or even for a short period of time. Any breast milk received is better than none. Support for breastfeeding mothers is available through Women, Infants and Children (WIC). This is a federal program proving food, nutrition counseling, breastfeeding support and referrals for eligible pregnant women, infants and children under five years of age. Peer Counselors are trained and available to help moms who breastfeed. They are WIC moms who have breastfed their own babies. The Peer Counselors are also available to provide information, referrals, comfort and encouragement. Catholic Charities WIC may be able to help a breastfeeding mom who is WIC eligible access a breast pump free of charge.

I Taught My Child Today…
by caring for my baby’s teeth.

Ideas to Promote
Good Dental Care for Babies

- Clean your baby’s upper and lower gums twice a day before their first tooth comes in with a clean and damp gauze or washcloth. This will clear away harmful bacteria. Do this after breakfast and after the last feeding of the day.
- Take your child to the dentist for an exam before the first birthday. A modified exam is given while the child sits on mommy’s lap. This early visit helps reduce fear for your child as they grow older.
- Avoid tooth decay by not putting your baby to bed with a bottle. Good feeding habits must be practiced. If milk or juice remains on the baby’s teeth while sleeping, the enamel is eaten away. This results in cavities. Severe cavities may create a condition called “bottle mouth.”
- Use an infant toothbrush to brush your baby’s teeth with water. At age two, a small pea-sized drop of toothpaste may be used for brushing teeth with supervision.
- Consider taking your little one to a Pediatric Dentist. These dentists specialize in treating children.

There are many reasons why healthy teeth are important. As a parent and first teacher of your child, you have an important role in teaching your child how to care for their own teeth as they grow older. Your assistance in this care is critical during the earliest years. Baby teeth are very important. They allow a child to eat a good diet. They allow for proper jaw growth. They give the face its form and appearance. Baby teeth assist with the formation of speech. They also act as space savers for when adult teeth come in. When healthy dental habits are formed early in life, they are more likely to be carried on through a lifetime. Smile pretty!!!

Resource: http://www.webmd.com/parenting/baby/caring-babies-teeth
Baby proofing your home will help keep accidents from occurring. It is not a onetime procedure. It is an on-going way of thinking. Careful supervision of your baby goes hand-in-hand with baby proofing. You need both ingredients for effective safety planning. As your child’s first teacher, you are showing your little one how to stay safe. Growing babies find new and different ways to explore so there will be new and different potential hazards to head off.

Resource: http://www.womansheart.org
I Taught My Child Today…
by taking my child to the pediatrician for a well-baby visit.

Ideas to Promote Healthy Living

- Model good eating habits by eating a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Make exercise fun. Play outside every day, even if only to take a short walk. There should be no screen time for babies under age two.
- Get enough rest by providing nap and bed time at the same time each day.
- Help your baby build language by identifying body parts with him/her. Make it into a playful game.
- Encourage your child to help with his/her own care by giving your child finger foods, a toothbrush to hold and to practice brushing teeth and a washcloth at bath time to practice washing.

Talk to your child about what will take place when you arrive at the pediatrician’s office. For example, talk about waiting for your turn to see the doctor, playing with toys while you wait or reading a book together. Explain that when the doctor sees him/her, the doctor will weigh, measure him/her and listen for his/her heart beat. The doctor is checking on how your child is growing and learning new skills.

Teach your child that taking care of him/herself is important because s/he is important. During routines (eating, sleeping, bathing) talk about what you are doing and why. Eventually, s/he will want to take care of and love him/herself. You are your child’s first teacher.

I Taught My Child Today…
by helping my child learn to use the potty.

Ideas to Encourage Your Child
to Use the Potty

- Help your child know when he needs to go to the potty by learning about body sensations. Does your child give cues through facial expressions, posture or words? Look for cues then take your child to the bathroom.
- Choose clothing for your child to wear that she can pull down and then pull up again by herself.
- Take your child to the bathroom when you go if you’re comfortable with it.
- Explain how to pee and poo in the potty instead of in the diaper by helping him picture the actions. Read books about it.
- Establish a potty routine. Try to use the potty after nap time, after breakfast, lunch, dinner, and before bedtime.
- Show him how to flush the potty. If flushing causes anxiety, don’t include him in this step until later.
- Wash hands with soap and water after going potty.
- Praise her when she tries on the potty.

Every child learns to use the potty in their own time. Your child may be ready to use the potty when s/he wakes up with a dry diaper, asks about the potty, or tells you when s/he has a dirty diaper.

You are your child’s first teacher. Helping your child learn to use the potty may take several months (3-12 months) and a lot of patience. Stay positive and keep a good sense of humor! When accidents happen, clean them up calmly.

Resources: www.healthychildren.org; www.mayoclinic.com/health/potty-training
I Taught My Child Today…
by knowing what vaccines my child
needs and keeping them on schedule.

Ideas to Better Understand
the Reasons for Immunizations

- Immunizations for our infants and children protect them before they become infected with diseases and are spread to others.

- Testing of vaccines make sure they are safe and effective.

- Delaying vaccines put infants and children at risk for vaccine-preventable diseases.

- Catch-up schedules for infants and children exist for those who fall behind on their vaccines.

- Catch-up schedules are available to review at www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/.

- Following the vaccine schedule gives babies the best chance to be immune to diseases before they can be exposed to them.

You are your child’s first teacher and advocate. Feel free to speak to your child’s pediatrician about any concerns you might have about vaccines for your baby. The vaccine schedule is recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians. They state that a healthy baby’s immune system is able to handle the number of vaccines on the recommended schedule.


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I Taught My Child Today…
by reading a book together.

Ideas to Promote
Emerging Literacy

- Touching is important. Put your arms around your little one as you sit together. This may be the best part of the story!
- Set aside some time each day to read to your child.
- Select simple books with simple, colorful pictures. Say the names of the pictures as you and your baby point to them.
- Touch books with textured fabrics are enjoyed by infants and toddlers. Make a home-made “feel” book for your child.
- Choose books about people, animals, objects that toddlers are familiar with.
- Choose stories with repetition, interesting sounds and words that rhyme.
- Change the pitch of your voice, especially as you pretend to be different characters in the story. Make the story come alive. You can even sing the words.

As your baby begins to look and recognize pictures in picture books, s/he is beginning to develop early literacy skills that eventually lead to language, reading and writing development. These skills are all linked and develop at the same time. Your baby will associate books and stories with positive feelings of fun and comfort. This develops in real life settings through the enjoyment of books, positive interactions and literacy experiences. As you read or share stories, you are your child’s first teacher.

Resources: www.zerotothree.org

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