Fairfax County
OFC Office for Children

Update

Winter 2015

A Newsletter for Fairfax County Child Care Programs

Mind in the Making

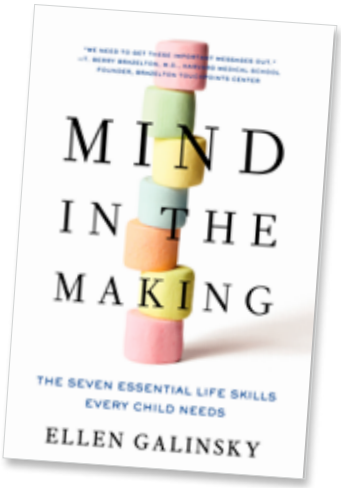
Ellen Galinsky's book "Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs" lays out the science of how children learn, explaining the basic executive function skills that children need to thrive and be successful in life. Over the last two years, the Office for Children and Fairfax County Public Schools have partnered with Galinsky's Families and Work Institute to share this research throughout our community. This included offering a series of community events and professional development workshops, to raise awareness among families, early childhood and mental health professionals, and members of the business and academic communities.

If you are not yet familiar with the research, according to Mind In the Making, the seven essential life skills are:

1. Focus and Self Control – Children need this skill in order to achieve their goals, especially in a world that is filled with distractions and information overload.
2. Perspective Taking – Children who can figure out what others feel and think are less likely to get involved in conflicts.
3. Communicating – Children need to be able to determine what they want to communicate and how. This is the skill teachers and employers feel is most lacking today.
4. Making Connections – Children who can make unusual connections are more creative and can go beyond knowing information to using information well.
5. Critical Thinking – Children need to be able to search for reliable knowledge to guide their beliefs, decisions and actions.
6. Taking on Challenges – Children who can take on challenges instead of avoiding or simply coping with them will do better in school and in life.
7. Self-Directed Engaged Learning – Lifelong learners can change as the world changes in order to reach their full potential.

OFC and FCPS are working in partnership to bring information to our community about executive function skills. FCPS has been offering a MITM series to families; presented it at the 2014 Education Summit; and using MITM research, provided rising kindergartners, who had no pre-k experience, an opportunity to participate in a three week Bridge to Kindergarten program in 54 elementary schools.

OFC is engaging early childhood and school age professionals in this work through professional development programs and new initiatives. In collaboration with many community partners, a Social Emotional Competence workshop series which incorporates the seven essential life skills has been developed and implemented in several locations throughout the county. OFC staff has participated in the MITM Community Facilitator Training and will be offering Institute for Early Learning workshops in the coming months. In addition, this year, OFC has integrated the



Seven Essential Life Skills into the School Age Child Care curriculum- Amazing Kids, Discovering the Wow in Every Child!

Another initiative of MITM provides tools to strengthen children's executive function skills through the use of literature. MITM and First Book have curated a groundbreaking "Mind in the Making" Book Collection for ages birth-12 that combines children's books with tips for building essential life skills. Tip sheets for each title provide ideas for sharing the story with the listener. The collection includes many favorite titles already found in children's homes and early childhood programs.

For more information or to download tip sheets at no cost visit the website at **www.mindinthemaking.org.**

Inside this Issue:

Guiding Children's Behavior 2
Crib Compliance Verification 2-3
Play Yards 3
School Age Child Care Where Inspiration Grows! 4

Professional Development

Guiding Children's Behavior

Children desire to be successful and as early childhood and school age professionals, our goal is to help them succeed by gently guiding their behavior. We want children to learn to make choices for their behavior in a way that will help them throughout their lives. We often refer to this as self-control or self-regulation. There are several positive guidance strategies that we can use to help children develop a sense of control and to develop skills that will help them for years to come.

Children need guidance from adults who are willing to teach, model, explain, and provide many opportunities to practice. Offering children simple choices is one way to help them. Choices that are offered to children need to be real choices – choices that are safe, appropriate, and will be accepted by the adult. Providing clear directions is another way to help children succeed. When children know what is expected of them, they know how to be successful. Eliminating directions that begin with the word "don't" is an important step in helping children.

Role-modeling is one of the most effective ways to help children succeed. Children are learning about the world and do not understand or remember adult rules or social norms unless they are role modeled for them. For example, if we want children to clean up after playing, we also need to keep our adult spaces clean. If we want children to use a quiet voice, we need to speak to them in a quiet, calm voice. If we want children to be gentle with other children, we need to be gentle with them. If we want children to eat healthy food, we also need to eat healthy food.

When Behavioral Guidance is Inappropriate

Physical punishment in child care centers and family child care homes is forbidden by state licensing, and local permitting agencies. Any form of physical punishment is hurtful, physically and emotionally. Physical punishment is not effective in helping children develop self-regulation of their behavior, and does not teach children an appropriate response to problems or frustrations. In addition, children become emotionally distant from anyone who hits or abuses them which can lead to a sense of low self-esteem, depression, or reacting to others in aggressive ways.

Resources for Additional Information on Positive Guidance

Helping children learn to get along with others and to make appropriate choices for their behavior is a goal of early childhood educators. Using positive guidance techniques, we can help children succeed.

Additional resources:

"Without Spanking or Spoiling," by Elizabeth Crary, Parenting Press.

"Beyond Behavior Management: The Six Life Skills Children Need," by Jenna Bilmes, Redleaf Press.

"Guidance of Young Children," by Marian C. Marion, Pearson Education.

"101 Principles for Positive Guidance with Young Children: Creating Responsive Teachers," by Katherine Kersey and Marie Masterson, Pearson Education.

Health and Safety

Crib Compliance Verification

All early child care programs want to provide a safe, nurturing environment for the children in their care. Programs must be sure the sleeping equipment used meets current safety standards.

Cribs

Beginning December 28, 2012, any crib provided by child care facilities and family child care homes must meet new and improved federal safety standards. The new standards took effect for manufacturers, retailers, importers and distributors on June 28, 2011, addressing hazards previously seen with traditional drop-side rails, requiring more durable hardware and parts and mandating more rigorous testing.

According to the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, there are three documentation options that may be used to determine if a crib meets the new safety standards.

Health and Safety

Crib Compliance Verification (cont.)

These documents are:

- A certificate provided by the manufacturer or retailer: If the crib was purchased prior to and manufactured before June 28, 2011, a Children's Product Certificate (CPC) or test report from a CPSC-accepted 3rd party lab is required in order to demonstrate compliance with 16 C.F.R. Part 1219 or C.F.R. Part 1220.
- Manufacture date based on the required tracking label on the crib. If the tracking label on the crib indicates that the crib was manufactured after June 28, 2011, CPSC would not require additional certification documentation.
- Manufacture date based on the registration card which is required to accompany the crib.

Fairfax County

Office for Children

Partnering with families and the early childhood and school age community

Contact us
703-324-8000

Child Care Assistance and Referral
703-449-8484

Head Start and Early Head Start
703-324-8290

School Age Child Care
703-449-8989

Community Education and Provider Services
703-324-8100

School Readiness
703-324-8103

Institute for Early Learning
703-324-3044

Virginia Preschool Initiative
703-324-7513

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Fairfax County Office for Children
Department of Family Services
Community Education and Provider Services
12011 Government Center Pkwy., Suite 800
Fairfax, VA 22035-1102

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Professional Development

School Age Child Care – Where Inspiration Grows!

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? How did your early childhood and after school environment help you to discover and expand your interests?

As child care professionals we strive to create an environment and offer inspiring learning experiences that school age children can be passionate about. This environment and these experiences provide opportunities for children to develop their potential.

When you observe children at play, engage in thoughtful conversation with them, and develop meaningful relationships with them, you can discover what inspires them to explore and learn. These opportunities can reveal what children are excited about and love doing at home, in their neighborhoods, with their friends, at school, and during before or after school care.

Based on your knowledge of children's interests, you can explore ways to create an environment filled with fun learning experiences that inspire children to expand their interests, discover their potential, and develop new skills! The foundation for a meaningful curriculum is developed by asking open-ended questions that help you get to know each child:

- What makes you unique and amazing?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- What is your favorite game or sport?
- What is your favorite way to be creative?
- How can you help your community?
- What would you like to invent?
- What do you think and dream about?
- Who inspires you?

This dialogue can provide a great starting point for planning an inspiring environment and learning experiences based on children's ideas and interests!

The OFC Institute for Early Learning offers resources including professional development courses for school age professionals. For more information, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofc.

Resources for School Age Professionals

National Institute for Out of School Time
www.niost.org

National AfterSchool Association
www.naaweb.org

Afterschool Alliance
www.afterschoolalliance.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org