

PARENT CONNECT

The Kansas Parent Information Resource Center (KPIRC), federally funded under Title V of No Child Left Behind, is the official Parent Information Technical Assistance Center for the state of Kansas. KPIRC promotes meaningful parent involvement at all levels of education and provides information and resources to help parents, educators and other organizations promote the educational success of every Kansas child.

WINTER 2010 IN THIS ISSUE

New Year's Resolution	Page 1
Fun Ways to Spend Winter Days	Page 2
Looking for Quality in Early Childhood Programs	Page 3
Advice for Parents on Talking to Children about H1N1 Concerns	Page 4

KPIRC Team:

Jane Groff, Director
Tammie Benham, Assistant Director
Natalie Schweda, Office Manager
Barbara Shinn, Program Consultant
Suzanne Knorr, Evaluator

Contact us at:
www.kpirc.org



New Year's Resolution: Help Your Kids Do Great in School

Did you know? Kids whose parents are involved in their education have better grades, a better attitude toward school, and more appropriate school behavior than those with less involved parents. Consider trying a few of these tips—and make a big difference!

Tip 1: Get involved

- Visit your child's classroom when you bring your child to school.
- See if your school offers any workshops for parents, and arrange to go!

Tip 2: Check on homework

- Talk to your child each day about homework.
- Help your child manage the workload by dividing assignments into smaller parts.
- Give your child a good place to study—away from TV, phone, or loud music.
- Do not use homework as a punishment; include it as part of the daily routine.

Tip 3: Make home a good place for learning

- Praise and encourage your child.
- Be a role model for getting work done before play.
- Establish a homework routine—same time, same place, every day.
- Most importantly, read to your child or have him read to you every day.

What should I do if my child isn't doing well in school?

Contact your child's teacher; don't wait for the school to contact you. Ask for specific activities you can do at home with your child. Meet with your child's teacher frequently until the problem is resolved.

What if my child doesn't like school?

Try to find out why your child seems unhappy with school. Arrange for a conference with the teacher or school counselor. Listen carefully to your child before you offer any solutions.

Adapted from Lontos, L. *How can I be involved in my child's education?* ERIC Parent Brochure.

For more information on helping your kids succeed in school, visit:
www.ReadingRockets.org/families

Fun Ways to Spend Winter Days

Indoor Fitness Tips for Families

by Kelly Burgess



Neither rain, nor snow, nor sleet, nor dark of night deters the postman; and it shouldn't deter fit families from keeping active during the dark months of winter. Try these tips for fun indoor fitness activities that deliver!

Getting kids moving has to be a family affair, says Matthew Hendison, executive vice president of marketing and entertainment for My Gym Enterprises. "It's not going to work long term if mom's in the kitchen and dad's reading the paper and they tell Johnny it's time to exercise," he says. "But remember, you're not trying to trick them into exercising either; you want to show them that it can be a fun part of togetherness."

Here are Hendison's suggestions for those days when it's impossible to get outside:

- Create a family scavenger hunt.
- Try a few, fun exercise videos.
- Play follow-the-leader all around the house, especially if there are stairs. Make it even more challenging by climbing over soft furniture.
- Do jumping jacks or jump rope.
- March or hop in place.
- Put on some soft or playful music and stretch. Touch your toes, stretch your legs, sit and stretch your spine.
- Dance. Get the whole family moving.
- Make a movie. Give your kids the camera. You can be the director. Get everyone involved to make up a story or music video with lots of action.
- Hold a silly joke telling session. Laughing builds stomach muscles.
- Give the kids a disposable camera and see how many different photos they can take in different parts of the house.
- Cook together. It gets everyone up on their feet and you can teach the kids about good nutrition while preparing healthy foods together.
- Do chores to music. Create an assembly line to put away the dishes, or to fold and put away laundry. Mop, vacuum, dust. Get it all done in a fun way.

Modeling good behaviors is just as important as the actual movement for building a lifelong commitment to fitness. Here's some suggestions for helping children understand the importance of exercise:

- Exercise yourself. When parents make a point of setting time aside to exercise they send a powerful message that it's an important part of their lives. Even if children don't seem interested in formal programs, they're getting the message.
- Talk about it. Explain to children why it's important to move, just as you explain other lifestyle issues to them.
- Set aside an "official" family exercise time. This doesn't have to mean you're doing what adults see as "official" exercises, such as machines and weights. Any of the fun activities listed above can be part of an "official" exercise routine. Setting aside time reinforces the importance of exercise as a part of life. Plus, you're modeling exercise as fun, not just work.

Visit www.iparentingfitness.com for more great articles about health and fitness at home.

Looking for Quality in Early Childhood Programs

Tammie Benham, KPIRC Assistant Director

I recently attended a conference in which two early childhood researchers spoke about considerations of parents when choosing a “quality” early childhood program. The following 3 areas were identified:

1. Comprehensive services such as, but not limited to, flexible hours, nutritious meals, and opportunities to learn English for non-English speaking families;
2. Convenient location of the child care setting that is in a safe area and accessible from families’ home or work;
3. Home-school partnerships that build relationships of trust and have minimal tension, and regular communication.

Finding this to be interesting information, I started reading articles about what professionals are looking for when they give the label of “quality” to early childhood programs and comparing this to the “quality” parents are looking for. I found some important information that families should consider, and that I myself might need to be reminded of when looking for a good, quality early childhood program.

As I read, I was reminded about why quality is so important. Did you know that:

1. Family involvement, which includes building a relationship with a family and ensuring that a family has access to the program at all times, may be the best way to make sure children are not abused in child care settings?
2. Family involvement is critical for social/emotional and cognitive (thinking and reasoning) skills?
3. Parents and program staff may have different ideas about what family involvement is?

I thought it might be helpful to provide a link to a checklist to look at when deciding on the caregiver of your young child. Kansas Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies has a very nice list linked on their website at <http://kaccrra.org/PDFs/FAMpdfs/NACCRRARightPlace.pdf>

As you look through this list of very important things to consider when choosing an early childhood program for your child, make sure that you talk with the program staff about how they involve families in their program. Before your family makes a decision, make sure that you have a mutual understanding with the staff about how you can be involved in the child care program. These important issues can help ensure that your family has a Quality Early Childhood experience.

References:

- Barbarin, O.A., McCandies, T., et. al. (2006). Quality of pre-K: What families are looking for in public sponsored programs. *Early Education and Development*, 17(4), 619-642.
- NACCRRRA. (2008). Is this the right place for my child? Retrieved November 30, 2009, from <http://kaccrra.org/PDFs/FAMpdfs/NACCRRARightPlace.pdf>
- Zellman, G. & Perlman, M. (2006). Parent involvement in child care settings: Conceptual and measurement issues. *Early Child Development and Care* 176(5).



State Treasurer, Dennis McKinney reads to the Capper Foundation KidLink Preschool during Kansas Reads to Preschoolers Week.

Advice for Parents on Talking to Children About H1N1 Flu Concerns

As a parent you know how hard it can be for children to understand stressful situations, such as the current situation of novel H1N1 flu. Stressful situations often cause children to worry and have many questions as to why it is happening and how it can be fixed. It is important to remember to take care of your health and well-being as well as the health of your children. If you cope with a stressful situation well, your children will also cope better. Your confidence and calm attitude will help your children ease their worries and feel safe and secure.


Here are some helpful tips on what you can do for your children:

- Keep activities as consistent and normal as possible even if your normal routine changes (due to daycare or school closures).
- Ask your children what they have heard about novel H1N1 flu. Answer questions openly and honestly, at a level they can understand. Be concrete and do not avoid difficult questions.
- Allow your children to express their feelings and concerns. Let them know it is okay to be afraid or mad. Ask questions so you can help them identify and cope with their feelings.
- Children always need to feel safe and loved. When they are uncertain about situations and afraid they may need even more affection and attention.
- Limit exposure to media and adult conversations about novel H1N1 flu. If your children are watching T.V. try to watch with them or make sure you are available to answer questions about what they have heard.
- As appropriate, encourage healthy behaviors: eating well, sleeping well, playing outside.
- Use their questions as an opportunity to let them know what they can do to avoid getting novel H1N1 flu.

Focus on what your child can do to avoid getting novel H1N1 flu:

- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (long enough for children to sing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Cough and sneeze into a tissue. (If a tissue is used, throw the tissue away immediately).
- Be sure to set a good example by doing this yourself.
- Stay at least six feet away from people who are sick.
- Stay home from school if sick, and stay away from sick people until they are better.

<http://www.cdc.gov/>



Healthy habits help keep your family well.

Take care: Cover coughs and sneezes. Keep hands clean.

Healthy habits can protect you and your children from getting germs or spreading germs at home, work and school. Simple actions can stop germs and prevent illnesses.

Cover your mouth and nose. Use a tissue when you cough or sneeze and drop it in the trash. If you don't have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose as best you can.

Clean your hands often. Clean your hands every time you cough or sneeze. Hand washing stops germs. Alcohol-based gels and wipes also work well.

Remind your children to practice healthy habits, too. Germs that cause colds, coughs, flu and pneumonia can spread easily.

Healthy habits help reduce illnesses and sick days. Feel good about doing the right things to stay well.

Cleaning Hands Keeps Students In School

Days Absent per Student per School Year	Days Absent per Student per School Year
2.42 Days absent using proper hand hygiene	3.02 Days absent not using proper hand hygiene

Demetrius school students using proper hand hygiene

Demetrius school students not using proper hand hygiene

Healthy habits stop germs. At home, work and school.

This message is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Health and Human Services. To learn more, please visit www.cdc.gov/germstopper.

