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Happy 6th
anniversary
to our
newsletter!



Pathways Center

Founded in 1985

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

September, 2010 Volume 7, Issue 1

Important Dates:

SEPTEMBER:

- Mon. Sept. 6th
Labor Day
Center Closed

NSSED Offers Supports for Parents

Northern Suburban Special Education District has two programs in place to support families. The **Association of Parents and Staff (APS)** offers monthly workshops on a variety of topics and has a Parent Resource Guide. NSSED also offers a **Parent Mentor Program** "to provide educational opportunities for parents and staff to learn effective communication skills as they work together to design and deliver programs for children with special needs". Parent Mentor services include training, networking opportunities, resource information and individualized support. Information on both programs is available by phone at (847) 831-5100 or at <http://www.nssed.org/>.

Play to Learn or Learn to Play

The **first years** of your child's life can **strongly influence their school performance**. From those around them, young children **learn skills** they will utilize throughout their school years.

A child grows socially through playing and communication with parents, other adults and children. **Through play, they learn how to get along with others** which is crucial during their school years. When a child is talked to, they in turn learn how to **appropriately express their needs, wants and ideas with words**, not by crying or whining.

In the early years of life, the **groundwork is laid for subjects that will be taught in school**. Early and frequent time spent **reading to a child** will not only **strengthen their listening skills** but provide them with the

opportunity to develop a love for books and the ability to stay focused. By **problem solving with puzzles and toys**, a young child is building their **early math foundation**. **Encourage** your child's **curiosity** to explore the world around them. **Provide opportunities to create** art with common household objects such as sand, rice, empty coffee cans and paper towel rolls. You will be **helping** your child to **hone fine motor skills as well as enabling their creativity**.

Young children learn best through play and their learning is maximized with fun and challenging experiences. Through **play they learn communication, imitation, cause and effect and problem solving skills that they take with them and develop in school**. By offering varied opportunities for play, you are setting the stage for their future.



Tips on Developing Friends

For many children, the social aspect of school is almost as important as the academic. However, many children exhibit **weaknesses** in the area of **pragmatics or social language skills**. **Often the most obvious problem** that parents, as well as children, may notice is a child's **difficulty making and maintaining friendships**. In order to make friends, a child must show an interest in other people, as well as a desire to interact with peers.

Joining groups is a great way to help children spend time with peers with whom they will automatically have something in common. Children **must learn how to invite** others into their groups, as well as demonstrate the ability to **listen to others**.

In order to maintain friendships, it is important for children to learn how to **compromise**, as well as be fair.

Depending on your child's age and skills level, listed below are some **suggestions** to help **promote** your child's **social skills**:

- Ask your child to list 5-10 things about him/herself that other people would find interesting.
- When playing a game with your child, ask your child to **identify** more than one "**fair**" way that you can decide who goes first.
- **Role play** scenarios in which your child needs to ask to join your group.

If you are interested in having your child participate in a group that specifically focuses on improving social skills, please talk with your therapist.

Therapy Tip of the Month

Here are some fun activities your child can do to increase hand strength and dexterity for pencil grasp:

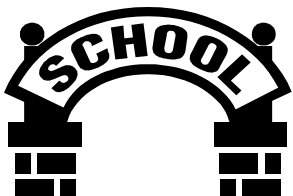


- Kneading bread, pizza, and cookie dough.
- Pegboard designs and Lite Brite®.
- Use a spray bottle to shoot floating targets in the bathtub.
- Pick up coins and put them into a bank.
- Pull string or pipe cleaners through a hole in a colander.
- Have finger puppets dance to music.

Home and School September Tip

Begin to establish a positive relationship with your child's school team. Call or meet with your child's primary teacher:

- **introduce** yourself
- say you are **looking forward** to working together
- give the best **ways to contact you**
- be **positive** ... no problems or complaints now



Backpack Safety

Do your children use a **backpack for school**? Do you use one? You can help **protect their back, or yours**, by wearing and using a backpack the right way. Follow these **important steps** to keep your back healthy.

Step #1: Choose Right

- Use a backpack with **wide, padded straps**
- Pick a pack made of **light-weight material** with additional pockets.

Step #2: Pack Right

- Don't carry too much weight (see formula)
- Put the **heaviest items toward the back** of the pack, not at the bottom.
- Distribute the load around the backpack using several compartments

Step #3: Wear Right

- Always **use both shoulder straps**

- Wear the waist belt (if pack has one)
 - The backpack should be the right size (from your shoulders to your hips)
- Backpacks come in many varieties.** Try to use your backpack in the safest way possible.

Remember: Carry the right amount of weight in your backpack! There should be **no more than 15% of your body weight** in your backpack. Use this **formula** to help you: Your weight x .15 = backpack weight

For more information check out:

<http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/Awareness/School-Backpack-Awareness.aspx>



Social Language Skills

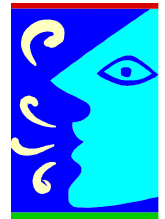
As a new school year approaches **pragmatics, or social language skills**, is an **important topic** of conversation.

Pragmatics **involves three major communication skills:**

- **Using language for different purposes**, such as greeting, informing and requesting
- **Changing language according to the needs or expectations** of a listener or situation, such as giving enough background information to an unfamiliar listener or talking differently in a classroom

than on a playground

- **Following rules for conversations and narratives**, such as taking turns during conversations, staying on topic and rephrasing.



It is **not unusual for children to occasionally experience pragmatic problems.** However, **if problems occur often and/or appear inappropriate** given your child's age, please **contact a speech-language pathologist.**

Reminders for Parents



Regular attendance at therapy sessions is essential for your child to achieve optimal progress. **If you must cancel, please call the reception desk at 847-729-6220 or email cancel@pathwayscenter.org at least 24 hours in advance** to allow us to offer that slot to another child. We will be happy to attempt to **reschedule** the session so your child doesn't miss out.

For the safety of all, therapy rooms, equipment and toys are to be used only during therapy sessions with a therapist present. Siblings must be supervised by parents at all times. The kitchen/lounge is available for siblings to enjoy a snack from home, complete homework or watch a movie (sign one out at the reception desk). There are also books, quiet toys and a computer with games available in the lobby or feel free to bring your own activities from home. Please approach Linda Rooke, Director of Therapy Services to discuss any alternative ideas to help siblings pass the time.

Thank you for helping to ensure that all children remain safe and that our therapy staff is able to focus fully on the needs of your child receiving services at Pathways Center.