

Covered Bridge Chronicle



September 2010

The Spirit of CBA

Welcome, parents and students!!

It seems like just yesterday that I was writing the first newsletter entry for the 2009-2010 school year. All of us on staff have been here at school over the summer, making plans and getting ready...we look forward to a fantastic school year full of fun and growth.

Most of you will have figured out by now that I am expecting a child at the end of this month! This will be the first child for my husband and me—we are very excited and experiencing all the joy and fear that comes along with impending parenthood. My last day of work before maternity leave will be Friday, September 17th. I plan to return to school after the Winter Holiday Break in January. If you have questions or concerns about your child's progress, please call or email your child's teacher to find a convenient time to meet. Please refer to the school-wide letter sent out yesterday for more information.

In the meantime, I have compiled some information on various areas of development in children. My plan is to focus on a different area of development for each month during the Fall. The information that supplements the newsletter is intended to help you learn more about your growing child and milestones and markers to keep in mind. For the month of August, you will find an overview of how your child's brain develops, as well as general information about the various areas of child development. I hope the newsletter becomes a useful tool for you throughout the year.

Here's to a fantastic year!

-Sincerely,
Ms. Kate Garrett
Director

Understanding Brain Development in Young Children
Sean Brotherson, Family Science Specialist, NDSU Extension Service

This publication is intended to assist parents understand how a child's brain develops and their important role in interacting with children to support brain development.

A child's first words. Grasping a spoon. Babies turning their head in recognition of a mother's voice. What do these things have in common? All of them are examples of a young child's developmental "steps" forward.

Perhaps no aspect of child development is so miraculous and transformative as the development of a child's brain. Brain development allows a child to develop the abilities to crawl, speak, eat, laugh and walk. Healthy development of a child's brain is built on the small moments that parents and caregivers experience as they interact with a child.

Think of some recent memories when you have watched a baby or toddler.

- As a mother feeds her child, she gazes lovingly into his eyes.
- A father talks gently to his daughter as she snuggles on his lap and he reads her a book.
- A caregiver sings a child to sleep.

These everyday moments, these simple loving encounters, provide essential nourishment.

What Do We Know About Brain Development?

As scientists learn more about how the human brain develops, many of our ideas about the brain are being challenged. We are learning that some old ideas actually were myths that are being replaced with new facts and understanding. Consider the following examples:

Brain Development - Myth or Fact?

Myth - At birth the brain is fully developed, just like one's heart or stomach.

Fact - Most of the brain's cells are formed before birth, but most of the connections among cells are made during infancy and early childhood.

Myth - The brain's development depends entirely on the genes with which you are born.

Fact - Early experience and interaction with the environment are most critical in a child's brain development.

Myth - A toddler's brain is less active than the brain of a college student.

Fact - A 3-year-old toddler's brain is twice as active as an adult's brain.

Myth - Talking to a baby is not important because he or she can't understand what you are saying.

Fact - Talking to young children establishes foundations for learning language during early critical periods when learning is easiest for a child.

Myth - Children need special help and specific educational toys to develop their brainpower.

Fact - What children need most is loving care and new experiences, not special attention or costly toys. Talking, singing, playing and reading are some of the key activities that build a child's brain.

How the Brain Develops

A number of factors influence early brain development. These important factors include genetics, food and nutrition, responsiveness of parents, daily experiences, physical activity and love. In particular, parents should be aware of the importance of furnishing a healthy and nutritious diet, giving love and nurturing, providing interesting and varied everyday experiences, and giving children positive and sensitive feedback.

In the past, some scientists thought the brain's development was determined genetically and brain growth followed a biologically predetermined path. Now we know that early experiences impact the development of the brain and influence the specific way in which the circuits (or pathways) of the brain become "wired." A baby's brain is a work in progress. The outside world shapes its development through experiences that a child's senses – vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste – absorb. For example:

- The scent of the mother's skin (smell)
- Seeing a face or brightly colored toy (vision)
- Drinking milk (taste)
- The father's voice (hearing)
- The feel of a hand gently caressing (touch)