

Bright Horizons at Argonne Child Development Center

The Importance of the Outdoors in Children's Lives

Millions of children are only allowed outdoors with close supervision. In many areas, even the backyard or front stoops are viewed as perilous. Many children come home from school and watch television and may learn more about nature from television shows such as "Survivor" or "Gilligan's Island" than from the workings of their own backyard -- that marvelous ecosystem teeming with life. They may know more about exotic animals on the Discovery Channel or farm animals on PBS than the snails, squirrels, birds, worms, and bugs that live outside their windows.

Daniel Janzen, the world's foremost tropical biologist writes (Gallagher, W. The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions, Actions. NY: Simon and Schuster. 1993, p.206): "Here's, what nature does for us no matter who we are or where we live...Human animals carry around this big brain, this big device for processing input. Part of our ability to use that device depends on the complex stimuli that challenged it throughout our evolution. Nature — whatever is out there, from a single tree to a whole forest — provides a big wad of the possible information that we can process. If you diminish nature, you diminish the diversity of those stimuli. When we don't get input from nature, we don't end up having much sense of smell, hearing, or vision. Television becomes our reality. We can survive on that and do, but it is not nearly as complex...When we diminish nature, we turn off lots of things in our own heads...Over the past 10 or 15 years, I've been bothered by the fact that Americans think that they're getting nature through TV — all those shows that bring the elephants and tigers right into the living rooms. This Musak nature destroys the reality of people's experience outdoors. When they are actually in nature, it's disappointing, because the big spectacular stimuli aren't coming as fast as they do on television..."(Gallagher, W. The Power of Place: How Our Surroundings Shape Our Thoughts, Emotions, Actions. NY: Simon and Schuster. 1993, p.206).

Whether or not your child learns to love the outdoors boils down to priorities and will. The purpose of life is, after all, to inhale and to live it fully and reach out eagerly without fear for new experiences. Open the back door. Walk through a park. Get out of the car. Our children deserve our effort.

Reprinted from [Bright Horizons E-Family News](#)

FROM THE NURSE

[Choosing an Insect Repellent
for Your Child](#)

[How to Share Books with Your
Preschooler](#)

BRIGHT HORIZONS
FamilyMatters
WEBINAR SERIES

[VIDEO CLASSES & WEBINARS ON
PARENTING TOPICS](#)

PRODUCT RECALLS FROM CPSC

Information regarding recalls issued by the
Consumer Product Safety Commission
[Please review your home for these items.](#)

Argonne Child Development Center

9700 S Cass Ave., Building 952, Lemont, IL 60439

630-252-9601, argonne@brighthorizons.com

www.brighthorizons.com/argonne



CLASSROOM HIGHLIGHTS

Infants

Science Rocks: The infants explored the metal Treasure Basket. Treasure Baskets include collections (usually everyday household items) of different objects to engage and stimulate the developing senses. During tummy time, young infants work to reach for and grasp objects that are nearby. They used their senses to look at and touch the items. Older infants begin to manipulate the objects, using two at a time to imitate actions or to create sounds. When allowed to explore materials with various textures, shapes and sounds, infants learn to use their senses to explore and to manipulate objects.



Toddlers

Garden Works: The toddlers helped to plant flower seeds in a pot outside. They used shovels from the sandbox to add the dirt and then watered the seeds with a spray bottle. Then they put our flower pot with the garden. While at the garden box, they noticed that one of the tomato plants was beginning to grow. Children learn to use an object as a tool to complete a task by using shovels to plant seeds. When toddlers make simple observations about plants, they begin to develop an understanding about living things.



Twos

Science Rocks: The Twos took advantage of the first water day to utilize the outdoor water station. They explored the water using scoops and cups to collect and dump water. Children also experimented with the waterfall feature, pouring water in the top tray and watching it flow into the bottom table. Children begin to understand the properties of materials when they are allowed to explore and experiment with familiar items.



Preschool

Science Rocks: Preschool children participated in Corn-On-The Cob Day. Children inspected the full ears of corn – husks and tassels. Next they worked to prepare the corn for cooking by peeling away the husks and attempting to remove all the tassel strings. Once the ears were ready for cooking the class delivered them to the kitchen to be added to the large cooking pot of water. Children learn about the healthy food sources when helping to prepare snacks and meals.



Kindergarten Prep

Math Counts: Kindergarten Prep kids noticed the colorful quilt in the *Llama, Llama* book series. Together they discussed the geometric patterns of quilt and the different shapes that make up the colorful blankets. In the Math Center, children used the shape tiles to recreate some different quilt patterns and attempt to make patterns of their own. Children develop a greater understanding of shapes and spatial relationships when they manipulate shapes into new visual images.



BRIGHT HORIZONS NEWS

Lemons to Lemonade with Four Ingredients

Need help taming your child's tantrums? Turn those parenting lemons into lemonade!

It might not seem like it, but your child is more predictable than you think—and each stage of your child's development, along with every meltdown, is a gateway to skill-building for your little one.

Hear from early childhood experts Ellen Galinsky, the Chief Science Officer at the Bezos Family Foundation and Executive Director at Mind in the Making, and Rachel Robertson, the Education and Development Vice President at Bright Horizons, as they discuss common parenting challenges and the science behind parenting that can turn frustration into great skills for life.

You can subscribe to the Bright Horizons Family Matters Podcast through iTunes, Google Play Music, SoundCloud, Stitcher Radio, and RSS. Learn more by visiting the link below.



Podcast: Lemons to Lemonade with Four Ingredients

brighthouse.com/lemonstolemonade

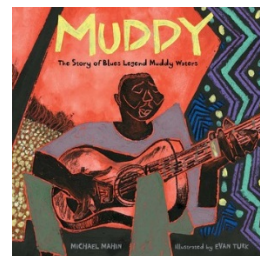


Book of the Month

Title: *Muddy: The Story of Blues Legend Muddy Waters*

Written by Michael Mahin; **illustrated by** Evan Turk

The story of guitarist Muddy Waters, who embraced the blues from an early age, despite his grandmother's disapproval.



[Check out more Books of Excellence from the Bright Horizons Growing Readers Library.](#)

READY FOR SCHOOL NEWS

Family Traditions Celebrate Life!

Regardless of the size of your family, traditions are a meaningful way to create cohesiveness, forge fond memories, and celebrate life. Meg Cox, the author of *The Book of New Family Traditions*, defines family traditions as “any activity you purposefully repeat together as a family that includes heightened attentiveness and something extra that lifts it above the ordinary ruts.”

Many of us smile when we think about our childhood traditions. We might remember Sunday afternoon walks, game or movie nights, holiday preparations, special family hugs, or a secret family handshake. Often the activity is secondary; it's the being together and sharing a custom that lives in our hearts.

Below are a few ideas for fun family traditions that you can start this year.

Commemorate a special day by planting a tree.

Be it Thanksgiving, Earth Day, or to celebrate a holiday, planting a tree together connects us to nature, and produces an everlasting keepsake. Think of the library you can create by videoing and discussing the experience.

Designate a game night.

A weekly game night brings everyone together for relaxed fun. Game suggestions include Apples to Apples Junior; Don't Wake Daddy; Bingo; Dr. Seuss Cat in the Hat; and Guess Who? You might play action games, such as Charades, Twister, Hide and Seek, and Freeze Tag.

Compose family newsletters.

Rather than adults writing an annual letter, all family members can participate by talking about their year. Young children might depict their news by drawing, painting, and taking photographs.

Connect with residents in a nursing home.

Developing a relationship with people in a nursing home enriches the lives of the residents, makes your family feel good, and helps raise children with grateful hearts. Perhaps plan monthly visits and share stories, make cards, bake treats, or simply sit and hold someone's hand.

As you plan the tradition, eliminate distractions, and reserve the time as you would any meaningful activity. Remember that family traditions are about enjoying time together. As Michael J. Fox says, “Family is not an important thing. It's everything.”