

# Pre Boston

Family Newsletter – April 2022

Monthly News from Boston Universal Pre-K for Parents and Caregivers

Dear Boston UPK Parents & Caregivers,

Happy Spring! This month we are celebrating the first anniversary of the launch of the Early Childhood Family Council (ECFC)! The Council's primary goal is to amplify parents' voices! There are roughly 30 council members now, who have been participating in various working groups and pilot programs and collaborating with school and program staff to better support our young UPK scholars. We are also pleased to announce that the ECFC event planning committee is joining forces with Boston UPK staff, UPK community provider administrators, Countdown to Kindergarten, and other UPK partners to organize a Spring celebration for our Class of 2021-22 departing UPK students and their families and to celebrate this great partnership blossoming between school and home. Please hold the date of **Sunday, June 5!** This citywide UPK family event will take place at Franklin Park Zoo and includes entry to the zoo! Please stay tuned for additional information!

In April's newsletter you will find articles from Boston UPK partners and other events and opportunities. Please continue to support your child at home with the recommended readings and activities found in the curriculum home links: [Unit 4](#) & [Unit 5](#). Teachers would love to hear from you, so do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or suggestions!

### How can we better serve you?

We would love to hear from you through this [survey](#). We have partnered with the Boston Opportunity Agenda to learn how we can better engage with families. You can find details on the survey in the column to the right. (Hint: when asked "which agency sent you this link?" please select "other" and fill in "Boston UPK").

### K2 Registration - Transitioning to K2

Transitioning to Kindergarten (K2) is a big milestone for our UPK children. Please be attentive to your child's social-emotional needs during this time. The BPS priority registration period has ended, but if you have any questions or still need to register your child for BPS, please contact [BPS Welcome Services](#), or I would also be happy to direct you.

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### Events and Announcements

#### Behavioral Health Workshop: Tips for Responding to Challenging Behaviors

**Saturday, April 23, 10-11:30 AM, or  
Thursday, April 28, 6-7:30 PM**  
(Only sign up for one session)

Learn from Boston UPK Behavioral Health staff about responding to challenging behaviors. Please register in advance to receive the Zoom link: April 23 (10 AM) [here](#) or April 28 (6 PM) [here](#).

#### Self-Care for Parents & Caregivers

**Saturday, May 7, 10-11 AM**

Attend this virtual workshop hosted by Boston UPK partner STRIVE to share your experiences and learn about strategies, activities, and resources for parents and caregivers to practice self-care. Please register in advance and the Zoom link will be sent to your email. Sign up [here](#).

#### Intro to Related Services Workshop

**Thursday, May 12 at 6 PM or  
Saturday, May 14 at 10 AM**  
(Only sign up for one session)

The Boston UPK Related Services team will present to parents/caregivers a brief overview of the special education process as it relates to the UPK program on two dates. Register in advance to receive the Zoom link: May 12 (6PM) [here](#) or May 14 (10AM) [here](#). See a flyer [here](#).

#### Citywide UPK Event Sunday, June 5 Franklin Park Zoo

The Early Childhood Family Council is excited to be planning a fun spring event for families with children finishing their UPK school year. Save the date - **June 5** - for this event - which includes entry to Franklin Park Zoo - to connect with other UPK families, engage in activities with your children, and celebrate an amazing year!

## Self-Regulation Series, Part 3: Co-Regulation

By Liz Muscolino, M.Ed., EdS

UPK Behavioral Health Services Liaison

What is self-regulation and why is it important? Self-regulation skills allow us to successfully manage our day-to-day lives and responsibilities. This month's publication is about **co-regulation**, which is an interactive way to foster self-regulation skills by providing a warm and responsive relationship, structuring the environment, and teaching and coaching self-regulation skills (a full article on the topic can be found [here](#)). Recommendations include that parents and caregivers:

### **Provide a warm, responsive relationship by:**

- Displaying care and affection
- Recognizing and responding to cues that signal needs and wants
- Providing care and support in times of stress

### **Build strong relationships with children, youth, and young adults by:**

- Communicating, through words and actions that you are interested in the young person's world
- Communicating that you respect the young person as an individual
- Communicating that you care for the young person no matter what (i.e. unconditional positive regard)

### **Structure the environment by:**

- Creating an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for children to explore without serious risk to their well-being (e.g. putting toys and books out for preschool aged children)
- Having consistent, predictable routines and expectations that promote a sense of security (e.g. singing a song or having a big hug every night before bedtime)
- Providing clear goals for behavior regulation and [logical consequences](#) for negative behaviors (e.g. provide an explanation about why we have to sit safely in the car or on the bus and provide high fives and praise for doing so)

### **Teach and coach self-regulation skills by:**

- Letting your child practice the skill in a role-play or enactment
- Praising and rewarding the successful use of a self-regulation skill or subskill (e.g. naming a feeling or using words to ask for something)
- Like a coach on a sports team, caregivers should first teach skills and then provide lots of supports for children to practice using the skill

**Coming next month:** Read about **modeling** self-regulation. Although modeling these skills can be challenging, it can have a big pay off. Look out for the following segment in next month's newsletter to learn more about how to model self-regulation for your child.

As the UPK Behavioral Health Services Liaison stated in the article on the previous page, co-regulation is “an interactive way to foster self-regulation skills by providing a warm and responsive relationship, structuring the environment, and teaching and coaching self-regulation skills.”

The co-regulation process can be disrupted when a child experiences trauma and can lead to challenges with self-regulation and navigating distressing emotions. Trauma occurs when a child experiences an intense or deeply stressful event that threatens or causes harm to his, her, or their mental, emotional, and/or physical well-being.

When a child is having a trauma response, some examples of behaviors they may exhibit are: *increased tantrums, clinginess or separation anxiety, distractibility, withdrawal, and/or desire for more attention*. In these moments, one of the most powerful steps in supporting co-regulation is to **ask these reflection questions below** before reacting.

These questions can help ground you before engaging with a child who is experiencing intense emotions.

STRIVE ([Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators](#)) is a partner of Boston Universal Pre-K. STRIVE is a collaborative project between Boston Medical Center’s Child Witness to Violence Project and Vital Village Networks that aims to help schools and early education systems of care increase their capacity to **identify, respond to, and optimally support** the unique needs of young children who have been impacted by trauma exposure.

## Co-Regulation Reflection Questions

Questions parents/caregivers can ask themselves when supporting children experiencing intense emotions

1

How do I feel about this situation? What may be causing my own reactions in this moment?

2

What can I do to bring myself back to a calm place, even for just a few moments?

3

What might have caused my child's feelings and behaviors?

4

What does my child need in this moment?

# Spring Has Sprung – Let's Get Outside

By Molly DuBuc, MS



After a winter of wind, snow, rain, and freezing temperatures, it is time to reconnect with the outdoors! Most indoor activities are structured and come with stricter rules, while playing outdoors gives children the opportunity to choose how to interact with nature. Activities such as exploring the new flower buds, the growing grass, and the birds chirping can help children practice behavior management and it encourages their imaginative play. Also, playing outdoors and being in nature is free. Let's look at how getting outside with your child this spring can have emotional, physical, and cognitive benefits.

## **Increases creativity with unstructured play**

- Most games, puzzles, and toys have specific uses, whereas sticks, mud, and green space allow kids to think freely. Using their environment in an unstructured way develops their imagination, creativity, and confidence.
- Kids of all ages can engage in this play, so it encourages siblings and different age groups to interact together.

## **Encourages movement and natural exercise**

- Usually being inside means a smaller space and less room for active play. Outdoors you and your child can go for *long walks or play tag or red light/green light at a park* that has more space - and less breakable objects and furniture!
- **BONUS:** This type of exercise also helps children's brains be more focused during indoor time.

## **Reduces stress and fatigue**

- Research shows that being outside in nature can reduce stress and fatigue that comes with the effort children put into attention at school. Even as little as 20 minutes of free play in nature can have these emotional benefits for kids - AND adults!
- Calming activities like *blowing bubbles, swinging, or nature walks* are great for a more meditative nature experience.

It is not always easy to break the habit of indoor play and screen time. But knowing about these benefits and talking about them with your children may open opportunities to explore and have fun. Whether it is *building something with sticks, starting a collection of nature finds (all the rocks!), finding an outdoor performance or class, or simply going for a family walk*, there is something for everyone outside. Encouraging your child to become an explorer of nature will benefit them this spring—and you as well.

## **Here are a few outdoor activity resources:**

- Playground Map: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/popular-playgrounds-and-parks-boston>
- Sports & Activity: <https://www.boston.gov/departments/parks-and-recreation/parks-sports-and-activities>
- Exploration Activities: <https://bostonchildrensmuseum.org/summerofplayathome>

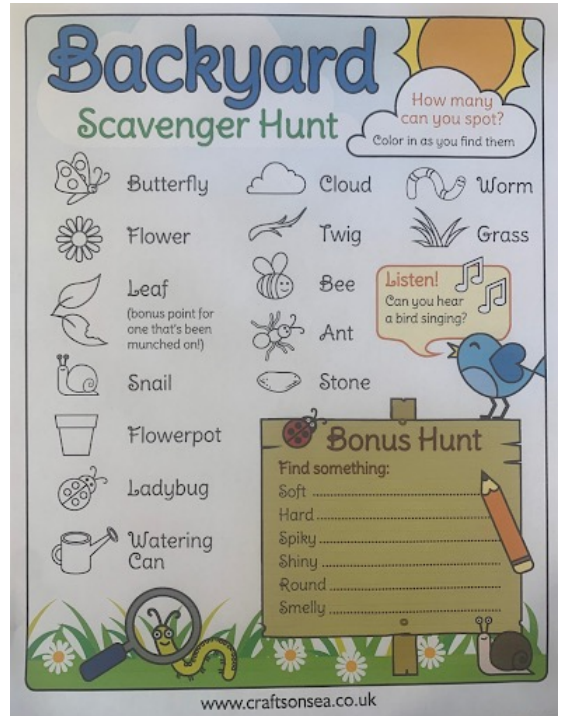
Time to get outside!

## SPOT (Speech & Occupational Therapy) Corner

Jennifer Montrose, Speech and Language Pathologist

Each month, the UPK Related Services team shares information and/or activities that can be done to help with the development of language, eye-hand coordination skills, or self-regulation. Language skills refer to what the child can understand (receptive) as well as what they can say (expressive). Self-regulation is the ability to manage disruptive emotions and impulses. This month will center around Spring.

Spring has finally sprung! With the warmer weather comes more time outside. This is a great opportunity to help your little ones expand their language. While outside, talk about the signs of Springs that are all around us (ex: the sounds of the singing birds, the trail of ants or the sprouts rising from the ground). Also, highlight where things are outside (ex: the nest *up* in the tree, the flowers *next to* that big tree, the ants went *under* the ground). Try completing this scavenger hunt while taking a walk or at the park. You can print it from [this link](#) or just keep it open on your phone while out. Remember to keep it fun and playful. The language input you provide will help expand your child's vocabulary as well as their understanding of the world around them. Happy hunting!



## Survey for Parents & Caregivers

As a partner of the Boston Opportunity Agenda, Boston UPK encourages parents and caregivers to complete this feedback survey on how we (Boston UPK) are engaging with your family. It is a 15-minute confidential survey - we will not know how you responded. [Click here to answer the survey](#). When asked "which agency sent you this link?" please select "other" and enter "Boston UPK").

The survey is available in: English, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese, Brazilian Portuguese, and Spanish. You can watch a welcome video with instructions (available in the eight languages) [here](#).

## Survey Tax Prep Resources for Families

**Boston Tax Help** is a program developed by the Mayor's Office of Financial Empowerment, with virtual and neighborhood tax preparation sites. The program offers free tax preparation and filing for individuals who earned less than \$60,000 in 2021. You can get your taxes prepared [online](#) or at a [neighborhood tax preparation site](#). Find details at [bostontaxhelp.org](http://bostontaxhelp.org).

**StreetCred**, a program affiliated with Boston Medical Center, offers free, IRS-certified tax preparation for families who earned less than \$73,000 in 2021. You can file your taxes in person or virtually. Find details on the StreetCred website [here](#) or access a flyer [here](#) on tax filing options and a list of documents needed.