

Pre Boston

Family Newsletter - June 2021

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

Dear Parents and Families,

The month of June - the first month of the summer - brings all these super cool holidays among others like, Flag Day, Fathers Day, Juneteenth, Paul Bunyan Day, etc. Also, Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness month! If you are like me, an immigrant and eager to learn more folk culture stories about America, I suggest that you check out the website [Ducksters](#) to read about the history behind holidays, including in a way children can understand.

Even during the summer, continue to seize every teaching opportunity for the children! You are their first teacher and you are their primary role model. Remember to celebrate dads and father figures, and teach your children about Juneteenth, also known as freedom day, Jubilee day, or liberation day - which commemorates and honors the June 19, 1865 announcement by Union Army general Gordon Granger, proclaiming freedom from slavery.

Some of our greatest accomplishments this year were putting in place an online application system, which was developed to allow families to apply for the Boston Universal Pre-K online; the Connector system, which facilitates a smoother transition for students from the UPK program in community settings to kindergarten in Boston Public Schools classrooms; and launching our Early Childhood Family Council, which facilitates the participation of UPK families in the governance of the Boston UPK citywide program. We could not have done it without you!

Highlights of this month's issue include:

- SPOT (Speech & Occupational Therapy Corner), which includes tips to continue working on your child's eye-hand coordination skills and self-regulation over the summer
- An article from Boston UPK partner Families First with tips to build imagination into everyday play
- An article from Boston UPK partner STRIVE with resources including tips and articles as your family adjusts back to regular life as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted

What a school year 2020-21 has been! We thank you for your resiliency, courage, determination, faith and a great deal of adaptability this past year. Please check the Boston Universal Pre-K [website](#) and spread the word that registration is open for new students to begin in September!

Onward!

Joelle Auguste
Boston UPK Family Engagement and Comprehensive Services Manager

Updates for Parents and Caregivers

Self-Care Workshop for Parents & Caregivers

Thursday, June 24
6-7PM

Workshop for parents & caregivers to share experiences and learn about strategies, activities, and resources to practice self-care. Hosted by Boston UPK partner STRIVE.

RSVP required to receive Zoom info: sign up [here](#).

You may download a flyer [here](#).

City of Boston Child Care Survey

The City of Boston is asking Boston parents and caregivers to complete a survey on child care to better understand how families access and experience care for their children, ages five and under, in order to create thoughtful policy that works for all.

Details on the survey and the survey link are on the City of Boston website [here](#).

SPOT (Speech & Occupational Therapy Corner)

Jennifer Montrose, Speech and Language Pathologist

Cassandra Crichlow, Occupational Therapist

The end of the school year is quickly approaching. With that said, we would like to thank all the UPK staff, teachers and families for their dedication to the students during these unprecedented times. This was our first time working with the UPK program and we have enjoyed every moment including this SPOT Corner where we share activities that can be done to help with the development of language, eye-hand coordination skills and self-regulation. We look forward to working with the teachers and a new group of students in the 2021-2022 school year. The Related Services Staff would like to share some activities that can be done at home over the summer to encourage eye-hand coordination skills and self-regulation. Have a fun and safe summer!

Here are some fun and inexpensive ways to keep working on your child's O.T. skills over the summer:

- Make necklaces out of cereal (Cheerios, Fruit Loops, etc.) or use painted pasta (ziti, elbows, penne) - paint the pasta and let it dry first
- Make letters out of raisins - by memory or draw letter on paper first
- Make name posters with raisins or cereal- make one letter at a time with glue then use finger tip grasp to pick up raisins/cereal
- Make letters out of playdough- from memory or a model
- Draw with sidewalk chalk and use a spray bottle of water to wash the chalk away
- Have a playdough design competition
- Balloon toss
- Make loom bracelets
- Card games
- Jigsaw Puzzles
- Maze Books
- Legos

Cassandra A. Crichlow, MS, OTR/L

Let Your Imagination Run Wild!

Maureen O'Brien, PhD, Director at Families First



As adults, it is sometimes hard to remember our 'childhood self.' But most of us can close our eyes and remember back to the time when we used our imaginations to fill our play time. Perhaps we had an imaginary friend that we talked to when we were very young. Or we pretended we were a superhero, saving the world from evil. The Toy Story movies are a wonderful example of how parents and children alike can share in the wonders of imagination – a world where things that can't possibly happen in real life capture our hearts.

Using our imagination is a wonderful skill that parents can nurture. It comes naturally to young children, as they try to understand what is real and what is not. And while it all seems like just fun, there are lots of brain benefits to a child engaging their imagination, whether they are alone with their toys or they enjoy dress up or role play with a caregiver or another child.

There are many ways to launch a child's imagination and explore these pretend worlds together. Fun activities include reading books, playing games, creating/ drawing stories and engaging in pretend free play. Let's explore a few options and their accompanying benefits.

Read together. Classic stories like *Where the Wild Things Are* give families a chance to explore a child's emotions. The main character, Max, imagines a whole world at bedtime where he is a hero who takes on many challenges. Whether in book or read-aloud format, parents can stop and explore how their child is feeling as the story progresses. Asking your child: Is this scary or an adventure? Is this real or pretend? or What would you do in that situation? allows you to have a conversation that will provide insight into what your child is thinking and feeling. Plus, snuggling together for reading time is quality connection time for both of you.

Share picture books. Other books like *The Dot* or *Also an Octopus* don't tell a story with words, but rather lead you and your child to imagine what could possibly be going on. Discussing the details of the illustrations (colors, shapes, sequences) and sharing what you both imagine is happening will open the door to new vocabulary and to narrating stories that are unique to you. This works particularly well for young children who don't like to sit still or read pages "in the right order". Such creative time is wonderful for your child's learning and sense of control over a world that sometimes feels big and out of control.

Create and illustrate stories: Preschoolers can sometimes find writing letters or shapes intimidating, but gaining fine motor skills with crayons or pencils is helpful as they approach kindergarten. Depending on where your child's level is, you may need to outline the letters and let them color them in. Encourage them to use their imagination so there's no "wrong way" to do it – for example, why can't a giraffe be purple? One way to add even more fun is to borrow the idea of Letter People that many teachers use for letter recognition: you can turn letters into people, animals or everyday objects (like turning a T into a tree). Then you can both use your imaginations to make up a story about Teresa the Tiny Tree.

Lastly, playing games together (either open-ended or card/board games) is another fun way to build a child's imagination. Your family can borrow puppets, puzzles and games from the local library to keep costs down and assess your child's interest and attention span before investing in your own. Or check online if you want some new ideas – here are [34 Imagination Games for Kids of All Ages](#).

Hopefully some of these activities will spur you to think of ways to build imagination into your everyday play with your youngster. Not only will your child enjoy the shared time and attention, but you will have a chance to rediscover the child within yourself. Imagine that!



Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators

[STRIVE](#) (Supportive Trauma Interventions for Educators), is a collaborative project between Boston Medical Center's [Child Witness to Violence Project](#) and [Vital Village Networks](#) which is partnered with Boston Universal Pre-K.

Below are a handful of summer related resources and tips for families as the state of [Massachusetts](#) and [City of Boston](#) has lifted COVID-19 restrictions and families are planning transitioning from school to summer vacation.

[Strategies for a Successful Summer Break](#)

Article by Child Mind Institute

Maintaining routines, getting outside, following children's strengths, and paying attention to emotional cues can support a fun summer break for everyone in the family! Check out this article to learn more.

[What to Look for In a Summer Camp During COVID-19](#)

Article by American Academy of Pediatrics

If you're considering camp for your child this summer, whether it's just during the day or an overnight program, here are some questions to ask and advice from trusted pediatricians.

[CONtexts \(Community Resources On Health Nearby Fun\)](#)

Free Text Messages by Vital Village Networks

Promotes child and family wellness by sending 3 texts a week on current information nearby community resources, wellness tips, and family-fun events. Text KIDS to +1(844)-806-0616 to subscribe.

[We're Going to Make It Wednesdays](#)

Weekly Newsletter by Boston Alliance for Young Children's Social Emotional Wellness (BAYCSEW)

A weekly newsletter that provides resources, activities, and information with a focus on children (birth through age 8) and social emotional wellness

[Navigating Stress & Trauma-Informed Resources for Families](#)

Compiled Resource List by STRIVE

A list of activities, supports, and organizations to support families navigating stress. Was created during the beginning of the pandemic, but still relevant resources!

[Understanding Childhood Trauma and Your Family](#)

Brochure by Family Resource Centers

A brochure to find information on trauma-informed resources for parents and caregivers, which is available in several languages.

