

Pre Boston

Family Newsletter - May 2021

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

Dear Parents and Families,

In the month of May, we harvest flowers, we celebrate Cinco de Mayo and Mother's Day; we commemorate Memorial Day and many other holidays! With this plethora of important events to look forward to, please seize each opportunity to continue to model appropriate behavior for your children and teach them the meaning of these occasions and good values. Please check with your UPK site's Family Engagement Coordinator for ideas and resources about these holidays.

Highlights of this month's Boston UPK Family Newsletter include:

- An article from Abby Morales that shares some powerful reflections about motherhood and Mother's Day celebration
- A piece from SPOT (Speech and Occupational Pathology) Corner with activities for making flowers
- An article from Families First about exploring non-screen fun
- An article from STRIVE about co-regulation in children

The Steering Committee of the Early Childhood Family Council will be in touch soon to introduce themselves to the community and engage in conversation.

Finally, I want to highlight that UPK registration is open for the 2021-22 school year. So please encourage your friends who have 4-year-olds to apply – UPK sites are available across Boston! More information is available at www.bostonpublicschools.org/upk.

I would really appreciate it if you would email me with questions, comments, and/or appreciation about this newsletter!

Joelle Auguste
Boston UPK Family Engagement and
Comprehensive Services Manager

Updates for Parents and Caregivers

Self-Care Night for Parents

Thursday, May 13
6:15-7:30PM

Boston UPK and partner Families First are hosting a free self-care night virtually which will include self-care activities such as arts & crafts, games, and trivia.

Space is limited and preregistration is required [here](#). (For art & crafts, materials will be delivered to parents ahead of time).

Event flyer (English and Spanish) [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

Each month, the UPK related services team shares activities that can be done to help with the development of language, eye-hand coordination skills and 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.

It's finally getting warmer and the earth is beginning to wake up! Trees are turning green and the flowers are blooming! This time of year gives us many opportunities to build language and motor skills. Remember to talk, talk, and talk some more about the beautiful things around you. Take a walk and comment/label the things you see or the things your child is doing (e.g., The birds are flying above the houses, Look at the geese swimming in the pond, You are climbing up the tree). This is a great way to model language as well as build on your child's vocabulary. There are a number of things you can do in the home as well. With a few items that you may already have at home and a quick trip to the dollar store, you and your child can make some really cool spring flower crafts.

Handprint Flowers

Materials: Finger Paint, Paper, Paper Towel or Toilet Paper Roll, Scissors, Glue

Skills: Sensory Play, Finger Isolation, Eye Hand Coordination



Cupcake Flowers

Materials: Cupcake Liners, Pipe Cleaners, Paper, Glue, Paper, Buttons (optional)

Skills: Small Finger Movements, Eye Hand Coordination



Fork & Fingerpaint Flowers

Materials: Fork, Fingerpaint, Paper

Skills: Tool Use, Sensory Play, Finger Isolation, Eye Hand Coordination



Exploring Non-Screen Fun at Home

By Molin Chen, Curriculum and Training Intern at Families First



Schools have opened and closed and COVID is, for now, still in the picture. With another summer around the corner, parents may expect more time at home with their little ones. While online schooling can be a relief in some ways for parents, it might not be so easy for children. Long screen time, few peer interactions, and the lack of opportunities to let out their physical energy, are just among the few challenges children endure with remote learning. So, now is the perfect time for parents to introduce some non-screen fun for the summer ahead.

Using LEGO bricks is a great way to have your child explore the world around them without the use of screens, especially if your child is a kinesthetic learner! Numerous studies have been done around the benefits of using LEGOs in preschoolers' play activities, and they have shown that these magical bricks, albeit soul-crushingly painful to step on, are beneficial to your child's creativity, spatial abilities, mathematic abilities, problem solving skills, and many other aspects.

For example, here we'll share an activity created by the LEGO Foundation where you and your child can play together using some LEGO bricks. The activity is called "Hanging Around". The goal of this activity is to hang as many LEGO bricks off the table as possible with as few bricks as possible on the table balancing the weight. To start, have your child place one LEGO brick right at the edge of the table so that only part of it is on the table. Using their index finger to balance the first brick, ask them to connect another brick to it underneath, on the part that's off the table. Encourage your child to think of ways to keep these bricks from falling. If it's too hard for them, give them some tips to get them started. After you and your child have got some bricks hanging off the table, try adding more bricks!

During the activity, you and your child can explore different ways bricks attach to each other, what difference it makes to attach a brick to another with two, four or six studs, etc. This encourages them to think about different possibilities, and even how gravity works. Though they may not need to take a physics exam for many, many years, it never hurts to get them to start thinking and learning early!

The fact that these bricks are so painful to step on is actually another merit of using them for this activity. Kids have in their nature the strong desire to destruct and destroy. But with destroying being generally frowned upon, they seldom have the chance to smash things. Well good news for your child: this activity is one of those chances! When the bricks fall from the table, there's no need to worry that anything will break. Simply collect them back from the ground and go again! Failures are certainly not enjoyable for your child, but when mixed with the joy of smashing and destructing, your child will be happy to start over, knowing that this will lead to either success or another surge of joy from the destruction. And from the repetitive trying, failing, laughing, thinking, and trying again, resilience and problem-solving skills are gradually developed.

This is only one of the many fun activities you and your child can do with LEGO bricks. While cultivating creativity in your child during play, it's also fun for you and your child to get creative and think about new ways to play together. And if you need more ideas, [LEGO Foundation](#) has many other more options for you to choose. Go explore and play, because that's what summer is about, with or without COVID!

Abby's Corner

Mother, May I?



May 9th is Mother's Day. As both a mother and a child, I "celebrate" this day with a mixture of heartache and pride, but most of all, with an appreciation for the power of mothering in all our lives.

Whether your relationship with your mother is complicated or close, whether she is with you or not, or even if you identify 'mother' as biologically related or not, this relationship is one of the most fundamental and formative ones to shape a child.

I remember as a new mother feeling overwhelmed by that responsibility. And I remember looking to my own mother for how to understand and navigate this strange new world. Of all the advice she passed on to me, it really came down to the simple, yet powerful act of "never stopping looking for solutions to your child's problems." This didn't mean bubble-wrapping my son from any challenge or pain that he would inevitably face -- from a skinned knee to not getting accepted to a particular school -- it meant being present and always in his corner. When my mother passed earlier this year, I found comfort and inspiration in this [short film](#), that I hope will resonate with you, as well.

This Mother's Day, many of us will be celebrating with breakfast in bed, or a home-made card, or a couple of hours being taken care of. But my wish for all mothers is to value 'mother love' as not just tucking children in at night and making sure their lunch is packed for tomorrow. Mother love shapes cultures and individuals. It has a profound and long-lasting impact on developing our children's brains, teaching them first lessons of love, and shaping their consciences for who they are and will be in the world.

Abby Morales
Program Director
Boston Public Schools Early Childhood Department

Co-regulation With Children

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.

What is Co-Regulation?

"The supportive process between caring adults and children, youth, or young adults that fosters self-regulation development is called 'co-regulation'. This term began as a description of adult support for infants, but is now used to describe an interactive process of regulatory support that can occur within the context of caring relationships across the lifespan." Source: Rosanbalm, K.D., & Murray, D.W. (2017)

Why is Co-Regulation Important?

Young children need the support of caregivers for developing emotional self-regulation skills. The co-regulation process is often disrupted when a child experiences trauma and can lead to challenges with self-regulation later on.

To support children through relationships, below are some steps to practice co-regulation:

1. **Check Yourself:** Caregivers using self-regulation skills to reflect on own emotions and needs
2. **Attune & Connect:** Reflecting and listening to understand children's emotions, what may have caused the present situation, and identifying what they may need
3. **Soothe:** Consider what activities can support children regulate their emotional state (e.g. movement, breathing, etc)
4. **Discuss and repair:** Resolving conflicts and teaching social-emotional skills



Resources to help with Co-Regulation:

- [5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise](#)
- [Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Insights for Educators--Regulating Yourself and Your Classroom](#)
- [Five Finger Breathing](#)

Adapted from STRIVE Co-Regulation for Children Experiencing Intense Emotions Workshop.