



# SCHOOL-AGE

## CONNECTIONS

Volume 4, Issue 3, 1994

### ***First They Are Children***

by Lynn Moore, Donna Nylander, and Anne Shannon

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Adam, a child with Down's syndrome, is entering your program. He looks different from other children, and he has developmental delays. His play is not as complex as other children's play. He feeds himself, but he only uses a spoon. He speaks, but his speech is often hard to understand. He tries to interact with other children and responds when they approach him, but these interactions are usually brief (Bredenkamp and Rosegrant, 1992).

In most families, the first day of school triggers excitement *and* anxiety. In families with children who have disabilities, parents are also concerned about their child's rights. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 gave parents the right to enroll children with disabilities in neighborhood child-care settings. The act requires that you assess each child on a case-by-case basis and decide what supports would be necessary to include that child in your program (Fink, 1992). If a child with disabilities wants to enter your program, what steps should you take to make sure it's going to work for everyone involved?

#### **Where Do I Start?**

Always remember that children are more alike than different. In all important ways, disabilities don't make a difference. Children need to feel welcome, and they need to feel safe, both physically and emotionally. They also need to have friends and to feel as if they belong. *All* children should be encouraged to live up to their potential, and every child should be celebrated for his or her uniqueness. It's easy to focus on the differences, but there are two important things that you should keep

in mind (Wolery, Strain, and Bailey, 1992). All children are first, last and always children; and second, all children have special needs.

Louise Derman-Sparks says that teachers must become aware of their own deep-seated attitudes. One mother asked her day-care provider to “try to get past his face.” Try to look beyond the features that remind you of the disability, whether they are physical, mental, or emotional. If you can’t see beneath the surface, it’s hard to believe in the child’s potential. Children who are not disabled should also gain information and express their feelings about disabilities.

“The challenge for the teacher is to treat each child as an individual. If you treat everyone the same, you are not using each child’s uniqueness. Seek and recognize the differences and help the child feel comfortable with her differences. The goal is to develop an appreciation for each child as an individual. Then we can help parents value their child as an individual.” (Neugebauer, 1992)

### **What About the Curriculum?**

The curriculum for children with disabilities should follow the same principles found in high-quality programs for children with typical development (Woverly, Strain, and Bailey, 1992). Gear your curriculum toward individual children. Seek input from families. Work to develop the skills listed on the individualized education plan by using child-centered and teacher-led activities. Make learning activities and materials concrete, real, and relevant to the lives of young children. The classroom environment, outdoor activities, materials, and equipment should be organized and easy to obtain. Work to develop the skills listed on the individualized education plan by using child-centered and teacher-led activities.

### **How Do I Answer Questions from Peers and Parents?**

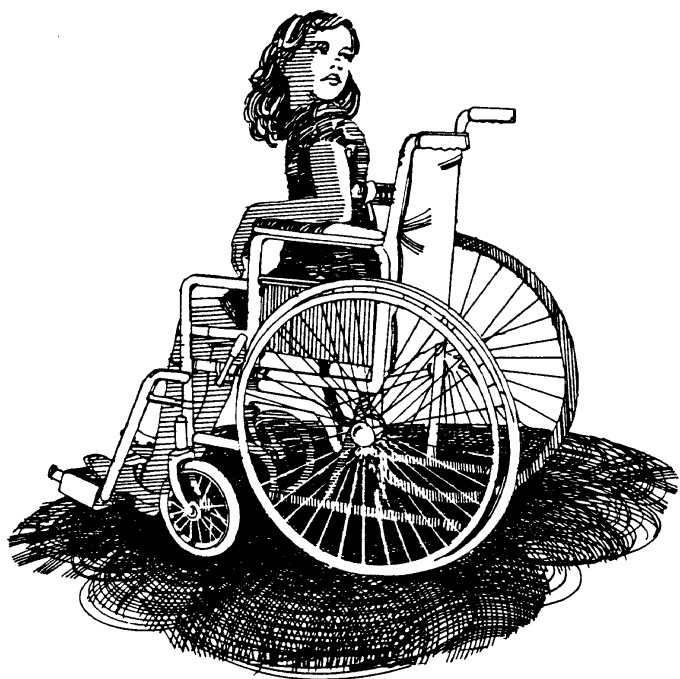
Children *do* notice differences in people, although they tend to become aware of disabilities later than they become aware of gender and race. By age 2, some children begin to recognize obvious differences in physical abilities (Derman-Sparks, 1989). In the

past, children were told not to point, stare, or ask questions about people with disabilities. Today, we believe that children should be encouraged to ask questions in a respectful way. They should know that it’s okay to have questions and concerns. Children may believe that they can catch a disability or that it is a punishment. Acknowledge and correct these fears gently.

Always use correct language. That means using the child’s name first and then the disability. Say, for example, “Adam was born with Down’s syndrome. That means it takes him a little longer to do things.” Include all of the children in these conversations. Answer questions as they come up and give simple and direct responses. If the child uses adaptive equipment at school, encourage him to show how it works. Or you could invite the parent or a nurse to come demonstrate the equipment. Let the other children experience how it works.

Parents often fear that a child with special needs will take time and energy away from their own child. Talk with them about this concern and set the tone for future dialogue. Invite parents and community members to take part in your programs and get people involved during and after your activities. Help the other parents understand why parents with special-needs children want their kids in “normal” settings. Point out that having children with disabilities in the classroom is good for their children. They’ll learn to accept differences, they’ll benefit from a number of teaching strategies, and they’ll have the chance to be a peer helper or to see how this is done. And, as you demonstrate daily your belief that everyone is special, the children will learn to feel valued for their own uniqueness. As an active learner in this environment, they learn to become supportive adults.

Most educators believe that the parent is the child’s first and most important teacher. When you involve a child’s family and understand their strengths and needs, the child benefits. The family also benefits as they receive support in dealing with the challenges and joys of raising their child. For the best results, parents and professionals should work together. We are only limited by our vision, our creativity, and our willingness to work as partners!



## Suggestions

As a first step in countering bias, look at the room where children play and the materials used. Remember that just putting children with and without disabilities together does not instantly reduce fears or create friendships. Take these steps to help the children accept and value each other.

1. Introduce disability awareness into your after-school program by using pictures, stories, and dolls. There are many excellent books and videos that discuss a variety of disabilities. Don't let disabilities become a "theme." Materials should be used naturally throughout the year.
2. Let children explore special equipment used by persons with disabilities. Local hospitals, rehabilitation institutes, physical therapists, and special education programs may let you borrow equipment or buy old equipment.
3. Recognize that a child with a disability is just like any other child. He or she may need your help in entering a group or playing a game. Part of your task with this new child may be helping him or her learn how to approach and play with peers. You may need to be the child's play partner for a

while. As the child learns these skills and begins to use them, you can fade out of the picture.

4. Pair children as "buddies." Children can help each other in math, art, language activities, and in outdoor play. This gives children an organized way to get to know each other. Make sure the child with the disability has the chance to be the helper too.

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- Sparks-Derman, L. 1989. *Anti-Bias Curriculum Tools for Empowering Young Children*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ### Additional Resources
- Chapel Hill Training Outreach Project, (919)490-5577, FAX (919)490-4905.
- Illinois Early Childhood Intervention Clearinghouse. For information or bibliographies on birth to five issues, call 1(800)852-4302.
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# Snacks for School-Age Children

by Karen M. Chapman

Snacking has a bad reputation in today's society. The importance of eating regular meals has been stressed so much that frequent snacking may be seen as a bad thing.

When children are active, they require more calories. If their activity level is moderate to high, they may need more calories than adults. Although a school-age child may be sitting in a classroom for most of the day, there is also gym class, recess, and after-school activities.

The school-age child may have many more social "events" than an adult does in a day. Activities that revolve around food are a very important way to learn social skills. Providing frequent opportunities for school-aged children to eat with other children and adults meets their nutritional needs, and it provides opportunity for socialization.

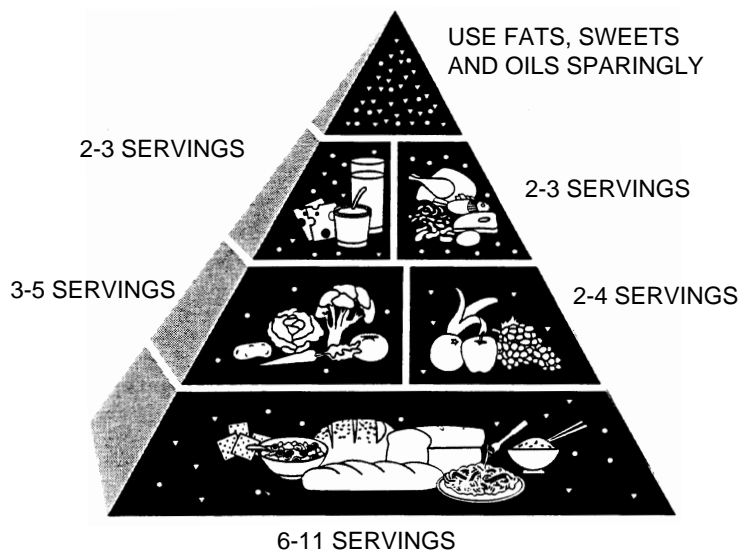
So snacking may be fine—even good—for school-age children, but all snacks are *not* equal! Because snacks can provide a substantial amount of a child's food intake, they should be nutritious. Nutritious snacks will help children get all the vitamins and minerals they need each day. To make wise choices, use the food pyramid when you are planning snacks and meals. This useful tool will help you provide the children with the correct number of servings from the dairy, fruit, vegetable, and grain groups.

Snacking has also been attacked for increasing cavities. The two main factors that increase the risk of cavities are the length of time that food is in a child's mouth and the amount of sugar that is in the food. If a food is sticky or is sucked on, it stays in the mouth longer. Foods like caramel-covered popcorn and suckers are more likely to cause cavities. Some foods that are a problem when they are eaten alone are not such a problem when they are eaten as part of a meal. During a meal, teeth have a better chance of being "cleaned" of sugary substances by other foods and liquids. The best plan is to keep sticky foods like dried fruits as part of the meal and give fresh fruits or plain popcorn as a snack. And don't

forget to teach children to brush their teeth every time they eat.

Although nutritious foods are best for a child's snacks and meals, don't eliminate certain other foods completely. Denying a child birthday cake, Halloween candy, or holiday cookies may make the child want those foods more often. This is also true of foods like french fries, chips, or cookies. These foods *do* provide calories, which the child may need! As long as other nutrient requirements are met, extra calories usually won't hurt an active child. Including these foods occasionally may also teach the child about moderation, and that's something they'll need to practice later in life!

Snack time is a good time to practice eating fat calories in moderation. Many of our common snack foods are high in fat, but alternatives are available. Help the school-aged child to read labels and evaluate the nutrition of the snack they've chosen. Remember that children model their parents, teachers, and other older children and adults. If you choose healthy snacks for yourself, a child who is watching will learn about good eating habits.



What about children who skip meals and want only snacks? If the snacks are nutritious, you are helping make sure that nutritional needs are being met. Children may have widely fluctuating food intakes. Don't force a child to eat. They need to learn to eat when their bodies tell them they're hungry. And don't let children use food to manipulate you. Parents and teachers can provide food, but it is up to the child to eat it. This attitude provides a balance between the structure of mealtime and freedom of choice.



### Some Recipes for Nutritious Snacks

(from *Kids' Team! Curriculum Cards*, University of Nebraska—Lincoln, Cooperative Extension)

#### *Graham Cracker Face-Ups*

1 graham cracker  
 1 tablespoon peanut butter  
 Add-ons: 1/4 banana, sliced; 2 tablespoons applesauce, 2 tablespoons crushed pineapple  
 Sprinkle-ons: 1 teaspoon each of raisins, sunflower seeds, crisp rice cereal, granola, coconut

Break each graham cracker into two squares. Using a table knife, spread each square with peanut butter. Select one of the add-ons to spread on top of cracker. Sprinkle one or more of the sprinkle-ons on top.

#### *Carrot Raisin Rounds*

1 carrot, grated  
 1/4 cup raisins  
 1/4 cup walnuts  
 2 tablespoons mayonnaise  
 2 tablespoons plain yogurt  
 1 teaspoon lemon juice  
 4 slices raisin English muffins (could be toasted)

Clean carrot and shred into small pieces. Mix all ingredients except bread. Spread on English muffin halves. Serve.

#### *Bahama Bagels*

1/3 cup lowfat cream cheese  
 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts  
 1 tablespoon crushed pineapple  
 2 bagels, sliced in half

Mix cream cheese, pineapple, and nuts in small bowl. Spread on each half of the bagels. Serve.

#### *Banana Rolls*

6 bananas  
 1/2 cup peanut butter  
 1/4 cup coconut  
 1/4 cup rice cereal

Peel and cut bananas in quarters crosswise. Spread with peanut butter. Roll in coconut and rice cereal. Serve immediately or chill until served.

#### *Yogurt Parfaits*

16-oz. carton lemon or vanilla yogurt  
 1/4 cup Grape Nuts  
 1/4 cup fruit of your choice

Sprinkle Grape Nuts in the bottom of a dessert cup. Add a spoonful of yogurt. Add fruit and top with more yogurt. Sprinkle Grape Nuts on top.

# ***The Innocent Victim: How Domestic Violence Affects Children***

by Sherry Jones

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According to a national survey in 1985, ten million children witness a physical assault between their parents each year. In two-thirds of these cases, the child has seen repeated violence between adults in the household. Experts say the numbers should be tripled because millions of incidents are not reported each year.

Domestic violence happens when one member of a household harms another member of the household. It is usually part of an effort to control, and it can be emotional or physical in nature. Often, it is a combination of both. Domestic violence includes pushing, punching, slapping, choking, and beating. But it can also include name calling, threats, put-downs, and deprivation. The victim can be a child, a parent, or an older person living in the home. Domestic violence knows no limits. It can affect anyone anywhere.

Children who witness abuse between the adults in their home become secondary victims. Research shows that even if a child is not abused, witnessing violence is much like being an actual victim. Child-care providers should be trained to recognize secondary victims too.

Adults who are violent may hurt their children without meaning to. Objects that are thrown may hit the children. They may be punched, pushed, or kicked as they come between the abuser and the victim. Or they may hear and see emotional abuse as it is taking place.

When parents do not model healthy relationships, children do not learn the skills for peaceful problem solving. Typically, they learn anti-social responses. They may fight or act out their feelings in inappropriate ways. Saddest of all, they learn that the person who loves you the most hits you the most. They also learn that it is okay to hit another family member, especially if you want to teach them a lesson.

Children growing up in violent homes may have

- stomachaches, headaches, ulcers, rashes, diarrhea, or bedwetting
- very high levels of stress
- delays or regression in development
- speech disorders
- feelings of helplessness
- a loss in their ability to feel badly for other people
- a flattening of their emotions
- feelings of guilt,
- a feeling that they have no “safe haven”
- an inability to concentrate, which can lead to school failure
- low self-esteem
- mixed feelings toward their parents and a lack of trust in all adults
- withdrawal into books or television
- keeping peers at a distance to keep the family “secret”

The younger the child, the greater the threat to healthy development. As the child grows older, years of witnessing domestic violence take their toll. Witnessing violence is stressful. Older children are at risk for such problems as alcohol or drug abuse, physical conflict in their own relationships, anorexia, and even suicide. Other anti-social behavior may include involvement with gangs, truancy, or dropping out of school.

Because so many families live with domestic violence, child-care providers should be prepared to help address this problem. Here are some things you can do for these families.

- Teach parents how domestic violence affects children and how to resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways. Use fact sheets, newsletter articles, workshops, or press releases. Offer to teach parents how to resolve conflicts in nonviolent ways.
- Urge cooperation between child welfare agencies and domestic violence shelters. Both agencies should address the needs and safety of children.
- Stop violent behavior—physical or verbal—between children *every* time you see it.
- Teach children how to solve their problems without using violence.
- If a child becomes violent, remove him from the room until he is able to regain control.
- Provide an organized, open, supportive environment.
- Provide chances for children and adults to express their feelings through language, play, art, and drama. Such activities can start the healing process.
- Work to establish warm, nurturing relationships between child and caretaker.
- Provide access to physical and mental health services.
- Promote violence prevention, conflict resolution, and respect for self and others.

## ***School-Age Connections***

*School-Age Connections* is a professional medium for the interchange of information related to school-age child care published by the Cooperative Extension System. The newsletter is targeted to child-care professionals who care for children from five to twelve years of age. For ordering information, contact *School-Age Connections*, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois, 174 Bevier Hall, Urbana, IL 61801. Phone: (217)244-6798.

Those involved as providers, educators, or researchers in the area of school-age child care are encouraged to submit articles. Articles about appropriate practice, program implementation and maintenance, and/or the child-care profession are encouraged. Authors submitting articles for review should be aware of the following policies.

The article is subject to peer review and will be edited to conform with the newsletter's goals, space requirements, and eighth-grade reading level.

The article should be consistent with the content and language used in *School-Age Connections*.

Articles typically should be one to three pages, typewritten, double-spaced, and on one side of 8 1/2" x 11" paper with 1-inch margins. Please include your full name, title and affiliation, your address, and your phone and fax number.

The article should be submitted to Christine M. Todd, University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service at the address listed above. Articles submitted for publication will not be returned.

Articles will be accepted based on two peer reviews and review by the managing editor. Accepted articles will be published according to timeliness of subject matter, space availability, and the projected schedule of themes.

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