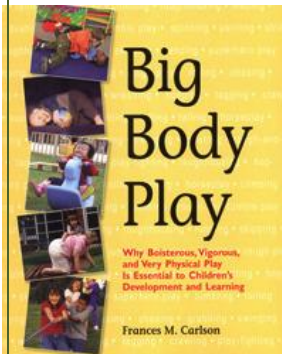


Get on the track to increase physical activity...

Check out this resource for helping to get young children more active and assist in development of their fundamental motor skills and movement concept:



Big Body Play, by Francis Carlson outlines the value of rough and tumble play and provides detailed approaches for implementing and controlling it in early childhood settings.

Play such as socio-dramatic play, board games, play to explore objects and learn shapes and textures, finger plays and play that involves building things has countless benefits for children. But the fleeing, tagging, climbing, tumbling, and wrestling that most young children seem to crave is also play and is equally beneficial.

“As we might assume, there are also abundant positive effects for physical development when children are active in their play. We know, for example, that when teachers involve children in physical exercise with intentional planning, children can practice and develop a variety of physical skills and gain optimum health benefits.” - This resource can be purchased at www.ChildCareExchange.com for \$20 plus shipping and handling.

Submitted by Richard Rairigh, Be Active North Carolina, Be Active Kids

Encourage healthy role models...

Healthy for the Holidays, a 5-week staff wellness challenge, concluded in December with staff participation from *The Early Learning Center* in Mecklenburg County, *Small Beginnings* in Iredell County, and *Lulu's Child Enrichment Center* in Alexander County. As part of the challenge, participants monitored their steps taken using a pedometer, sugar-sweetened beverages consumption, fruits and vegetables eaten, daily weight, and number of cigarettes smoked each day. Each week feedback was provided to encourage participants to meet more challenging goals as well as to help them stay on track for the coming week. We would like to congratulate all staff who participated and everyone met at least one goal of the challenge and did a fantastic job sticking with the challenge through a difficult time of year. All 3 centers were in a close race but The Early Learning Center staff pulled ahead and won the challenge. We look forward to hearing the continuing success as these centers continue to make staff wellness a priority at their centers.

Story submitted by Christina McWilliams, UNC Chapel Hill, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Announcing **BE ACTIVE KIDS** Staff Wellness Challenge!

To continue the momentum from Healthy for the Holidays, join Be Active North Carolina and serve as a physical activity role model for the children you care for by increasing your own physical activity! Childcare centers will create teams of up to 5 staff members, then record and report their physical activity time to our staff. Be Active will provide participating sites with all materials and reinforcement needed to succeed and will serve as technical assistance throughout this fun challenge. Register your childcare staff teams between now and February 15th. The challenge will run from February 20- April 16, 2012. Visit the Be Active Kids website at www.beactivekids.org for more information and to download registration forms. Or, feel free to contact Meredith Dolan at (919)287-7012 or meredith@beactivenc.org with any questions.

Submitted by Meredith Dolan, Be Active North Carolina, Be Active Kids

Involve children in the planning process if possible...

Take a look at these great ideas submitted by Ann Hess from Alamance Partnership for Children on how they involved the childcare teachers and children in the planning of a new outdoor play space:

- Asked the local children's librarian for books depicting children interacting with nature for teachers to use with their classes in advance of the children's planning workshop.
- Copied some Natural Learning Initiative website photos and pasted one on each page labeled "I like." Next, teachers instructed the children to vote for their preferences by signing their name or marking each with a sticker.
- Collected various art supplies and natural materials for children to create collages and three-dimensional creations. The facilitators noted that it would be helpful to ask and record children's comments about their ideas and creations for the outdoor play environment.



Story submitted by Michele Rivest, NCSU, Natural Learning Initiative.

Encourage family meals at home...

Did you know that eating meals prepared at home is associated with eating fewer calories and may play a role in preventing child obesity? Check out this blog to find daily recipes posted by Emily Bell, the Down East Hub Specialist. She hopes these recipes will help inspire more families to cook and eat together at home. <http://www.getdinneronthetable.wordpress.com>

Submitted by Emily Bell, Down East Partnership for Children, Hub Specialist.

Sharing your stories...

Changing attitudes and perceptions can be difficult but here is a nice story from Alexander County Partnership for Children:

"Today I had such an exciting success story I just have to share. One of our providers who has not been very involved in the past has expressed an interest in the SHAPE initiative. I went out to visit her today and as I was about to leave she said, "I spoke to the manager at Lowe's Foods. He was very nice and I explained what we were doing to decrease childhood obesity but that I needed help to offset the cost of healthier choices. He excitedly insisted that he would do all that he could to help her." I was floored. I just grinned from ear to ear and told her how wonderful that was."

Story submitted by Ariel Ashe, Smart Start of Buncombe, Hub Specialist.

We want to hear from you!

Shape NC Connection will continue to issue newsletters to keep you posted on the happenings with Shape NC and current news and resources regarding physical activity, dietary practices, and outdoor learning environments in childcare.

Please share your successes and/or challenges with improving the health of young children by contacting:

meredith@beactivenc.org or (919)287-7012.