Hello Empower Superheroes!

Somehow the holidays and the New Year have slipped by and it’s almost February! Sorry for not getting anything out to you during December and most of January. It’s been very busy around my house and our office. I hope to get back to a monthly newsletter soon!

Just because I’ve been silent doesn’t mean there hasn’t been news however! I hope you enjoy this issue of the Empower Newsletter. If you have success stories, questions, or comments, we’d love to hear from you and help you share with others.

Did you know:

- There are almost 2,100 child care centers licensed in Arizona?
- There are almost 300 (small) child care group homes licensed in Arizona?
- There are almost 500 family child care homes certified by DES in Arizona?
- Almost all of these programs are enrolled in the Empower program?

That’s almost 3,000 child care facilities, representing thousands of providers and even more thousands of children and families served who are helping Arizona’s children be healthy and well. Quite an accomplishment!

**Physical Activity**

**Empower requires** a total of at least 60 minutes per day (for a full day of care) of physical activity and to provide a balance of adult-led and free play, indoor and outdoor, and moderate to vigorous activity during that time.

*Structured vs. Unstructured*, Gigi Schweikert, Diane Trister Dodge and Debra Sullivan share their views on when learning needs to be structured and when it should remain unstructured. See what the experts say in this video.

**Go Smart** is one of the neatest resources I’ve come across in a long time. Just input the age of the children, group or individual, indoor or outdoor, and it will pull up many developmentally appropriate activities. The activity is presented in picture, video, in writing, lists materials needed, concepts and skills, and more! Check this out for sure!
Media Use Guidelines for Young Children—UPDATED!!

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that parents and caregivers develop a family media plan that takes into account the health, education, and entertainment needs of each child as well as the whole family. Key recommendations:

- **For children younger than 18 months**, avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting. Parents of children 18 to 24 months of age who want to introduce digital media should choose high-quality programming, and watch it with their children to help them understand what they’re seeing.

- **For children ages 2 to 5 years**, limit screen use to one hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should co-view media with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.

- **For children ages 6 and older**, place consistent limits on the time spent using media, the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.

*Media and Young Minds* provides more information and tips for families.

What does active learning look like for early learners? Explains active and passive media use.

*Learning Together: A Parent Perspective on the Early Learning and Educational Technology Brief*

*Healthy Children* has additional information on creating media plans for families and children including a *Media Time Calculator*.

The *Gamification of Exercise for Children* is something to think about. For example, ‘Pokemon Go’, is a game which gets people up and moving. Gamification turns any activity into a game, creating rewards and incentives to motivate people who would not participate in something otherwise.

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**Arizona WIC Data Trends Show Fewer Arizona Preschool Children Are Obese**

**Obesity Prevalence %**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2014</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
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Resources and Articles

Community Playthings provides lots of neat articles. See a sampling that relates to Empower:

**Community Playthings Says 'Get Out'**

- Get babies out of containers of all kinds.
- Get out the mats for babies and toddlers to tumble and roll on.
- Get out the obstacle course materials and create tunnels, steps, cones, and mats for them to master a sequence of movement.
- Get out and play.
- Get out toys that move and spin.
- Get out the open-ended toys.
- Get out the instruments and music with simple clear rhythms.
- Get out the heavy materials to push, pull, and lift.
- Get out of the way!

**Musical Games for Early Learning**

This is a great resource for easy music games to play during circle times, transition times, outside and inside, or any time! Everyone is included, everyone is accepted!

**What is the Outdoor Classroom?**

We are lucky in most parts of Arizona to have beautiful weather almost year round. How much time do you spend outside? Do you plan for outside play as thoughtfully as you do for indoor play? Read this article for some insights!

**Providing Opportunities for Risk-Taking**

Safety is something to take very seriously but have we taken this so far that children don’t experience risk and challenge anymore? This article poses some thoughtful questions!

**Gardening with Children**

Many of you have explored gardening with your children as you focus on nutrition and learning. It doesn’t need to be perfect, you just have to try! Do you need assistance in starting a garden? We have resources for you.

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