

August 2011

Parent & Child Activity Calendar



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Go to the library and check out two books for your child. Check out some books for yourself, too.	2 Find a kid-friendly recipe. Help your child make that dish today.	3 Give your child some of your old clothes to play dress up with. Ask her who she is as she puts on each outfit.	4 Let your child help you make a chores chart. Everyone can check off jobs as they are finished.	5 Eat outside tonight! Let your child choose at least one menu item.	6 Take your child on an early morning walk to look for birds and listen to their songs.
7 "Catch" your child being good today. Remember to make praise as specific as possible.	8 Make some post-cards of your town. Help your child send them to out-of-town relatives.	9 Look at a tree outside. Talk about the way the leaves look now and how they will look in two months.	10 Do a ball toss. Let your child practice tossing balls into buckets of various sizes and at various distances.	11 Read a story to your child. Then later ask him to retell it to you from memory.	12 Visit a bakery. Share a treat and think of words to describe it, such as "flaky."	13 Help your child make a collage from odds and ends around the house - ribbons, string, buttons, etc.
14 Will your child need a physical for school this fall? Make an appointment now.	15 Are you taking a car trip? Don't forget to take audio books.	16 Teach your child a new skill today, like matching socks, putting clothes away or setting the table.	17 Take your child to a baseball game. Have fun at a local Little League game.	18 Give your child a handful of beans. Ask her to give you "just one," then "just two," and so on.	19 Reuse items around the house for a craft. Cover cans to create pencil holders. Decorate grocery bags.	20 Have a family photo or snapshot taken. Give your child a copy.
21 Teach your child to use a magnifying glass. Investigate things.	22 Read a story to your child. Stop before it ends. Ask him how he thinks it turns out.	23 Fill a jar with small items. Ask family members to estimate how many are in the jar. Then count them out.	24 Pretend you and your child are taking a trip together. How would you get there? What would you bring?	25 Place a piece of paper in a box. Dip a marble in paint, drop it in the box and have your child roll it around.	26 Make fruit popsicles. Pour juice into small cups or an ice cube tray and freeze.	27 Make a pretend post office out of a box. Write a note to your child, and let her find it. Read it together.
28 Give your child some positive feedback: "That's a great idea!"	29 Fill a glass with water. Tint the water with food coloring. Add a white flower and watch it change color over a few hours.	30 Ask your child to draw a picture of a special activity that you did together this summer. Write his comments on it.	31 This is the last day of the month. Talk with your child about what "last" means.			

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AUGUST 2011



# Great Start Collaborative

YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE GSC'S NEWS, INFORMATION AND EVENTS.

Great Start Collaborative of Berrien County

711 St. Joseph Ave  
Berrien Springs, MI 49103



## Early Childhood Investment Corporation

Since its creation in 2005, the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC), has been the only state level organization solely focused on early childhood. ECIC funds Great Start Collaboratives, Great Start Parent Coalitions, and Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Centers to build a single, interconnected and intertwined network of public and private programs, working together in a community to accomplish better results for young children and families. The locally developed Great Start strategic plan, focused on all needs of a young child related to school readiness: physical health, social and emotional health, child care and early learning, parenting leadership, and family support, is the core document guiding local implementation efforts. Regional plans guide child care quality improvement efforts across the state.

The Early Childhood Investment Corporation was founded to be a catalyst, convener and

conveyor of best practices and innovation and also to move Michigan toward a common sense and efficient early childhood system that supports young children and families. At the state level, ECIC acts as a connector between the public and private sectors to build public education, shift policy, and inform early childhood practices all in the effort to build a statewide early childhood system that better supports young children and their families.

**What has resulted from ECIC's work so far?**

In 2010, Michigan State University conducted an independent evaluation of ECIC and of the local Great Start Collaborative and Great Start Parent Coalition efforts. Below is a summary of key findings regarding the value and success of ECIC:

- ECIC has built a network of Great Start Collaboratives and Great Start Parent Coalitions.

- ECIC has increased family awareness, engagement, and leadership.
- ECIC has improved and expanded the local service delivery system.
- ECIC has provided focused early childhood system building efforts, including leading the development of a shared vision.
- ECIC has raised the profile of early childhood, including business and legislative understanding, of the return on investment.

Thank you to the Early Childhood Investment Corporation for all their hard work on behalf of the children of Michigan!



## Water Safety

Pools, lakes, ponds, and beaches mean summer fun and cool relief from hot weather. But water also can be dangerous for kids if you don't take the proper precautions. Nearly 1,000 kids die each year by drowning. And most drownings occur in home swimming pools. It is the second leading cause of accidental death for people between the ages of 5 and 24.

Kids need constant supervision around water - whether the water is in a bathtub, a wading pool, an ornamental fish pond, a swimming pool, a spa, the beach or the lake.

Young children are especially vulnerable - they can drown in less than 2 inches of water. That means drowning can happen where you'd least expect it - the sink, the toilet bowl, fountains, buckets, inflatable pools, or small bodies of standing water near your home, such as ditches filled with rainwater. Always watch children closely when they're in or near any water.

Don't assume that a child who knows how to swim isn't at risk for drowning. All kids need to be supervised in the water, no matter what their swimming skill is. And infants, toddlers, and weak swimmers should have an adult swimmer within arm's reach to provide "touch supervision."

From an online article at [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

## Asset #3: Other Adult Relationships

Assets are 40 key building blocks of development that help youth grow up healthy. The more assets youths have, the more likely they are to succeed. Forty-five percent of youth surveyed by Search Institute had the "Other Adult Relationships" asset in their lives.

### The Support of Others

Think back to your childhood. Was there one adult you really enjoyed talking with? Maybe it was a grandparent, a club leader, an aunt, a coach, a neighbor, an older cousin, someone in your congregation, or your piano teacher. This person helped you sort through growing-up issues. Even if you can't recall any specific conversations, you will remember the warm feelings brought by talking with that person.

Young people need parents to talk to, but they also need other adults to bounce ideas off, to ask questions of, to laugh with, to help sort through sticky situations. Researchers have discovered that young people who have other caring adults to talk with are:

- Less likely to do risky things, such as use alcohol or other drugs or be sexually active.
- More likely to grow up successfully. Even children in abusive, financially stressed, chaotic, or otherwise difficult situations have better futures if they find at least one caring adult outside the home.
- Likely to think they can make a difference and that they matter.
- Better able to succeed in school.

### Time Together

Three ways to encourage your child to build relationships with other caring adults:

1. Help your child find an adult you both trust who shares a similar hobby or interest with your child.
2. Play games with other families where teams consist of adults of one family paired with children from another family.
3. Use letters, phone calls, and email to keep relationship strong with caring adults who are far away.



## Four Secrets to Helping Your Kindergartener Enjoy Writing

Many kindergarteners love to write, and it's a skill they'll use throughout life. If your child hasn't caught the "writing bug" yet, don't worry. Here are a few ways to encourage this activity:

1. Ask for help. When you need to write a card, a list or other item, invite your child to participate.
2. Relax about spelling. Kindergartners often write words the way they sound, often without vowels.
3. Listen to your child read. Instead of admitting, "I can't read your writing," ask your child to read it to you.
4. Provide interesting utensils. It's tough for kids to resist writing with cool markers, pencils and paper. Use creative supplies to make words, such as finger paint, chalk, glitter and yarn.

## Early Childhood Programs & Parental Responsibility

A blog by Timothy J. Bartik, Senior Economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

My local newspaper, the Kalamazoo Gazette, recently had an interesting interview with Speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives, Jase Bolger. According to reporter Julie Mack,

*[Speaker Bolger] also expressed reluctance about spending more tax dollars on social programs for early childhood. He acknowledged the research that shows the value of early intervention services, but also he sees it as an area where government programs intrude on the role of the private and nonprofit sectors.*

*"It's a very difficult balance," he said. "Kids go hungry, so schools start feeding them. Kids get in trouble after school, so there's after-school [programs]. Parents don't read to kids at home, so we give reading help at school. Parents don't get kids ready for kindergarten, so we need preschool. We turn to schools to do the things that parents aren't doing and it builds an expectation in parents that it's really the schools' responsibility," Bolger said. "It's an unintended consequence of government doing too much."*

The print version of the article stopped there. The online version added one more crucial sentence: "This doesn't mean that the state won't expand early childhood programs," he added, "but my point is we need to be very careful."

I think Speaker Bolger reflects an uneasiness that is common among some policymakers. Is government interfering too much when it engages in early childhood programs? Will government discourage parents from fulfilling their responsibilities?

What can be said is response to such uneasiness?

First, there is no evidence that publicly supported early childhood programs lead to poorer parenting. In fact, many early childhood programs seek to improve parenting. Good preschool programs seek to encourage parent involvement in their child's education. Good home visitation programs, such as the Nurse Family Partnership program, center their program on empowering parents.

Second, much of what early childhood programs do involve activities that are difficult for parents to do completely on their own. For example, some of the social skills developed in preschool are difficult to develop outside of an organized group setting.

Third, as with any additional program, it is always possible that a new program will substitute to some degree for what is already going on. For example, a free, universally accessible preschool program may attract some parents who otherwise would have paid to enroll their child in a private preschool. However, many middle class and working class parents cannot afford the high cost of high-quality preschool. Preschool programs with broad eligibility also allow integration of different income groups, which may help develop adults who can work with diverse groups.

Fourth, the estimates of the high benefit to cost ratio of high-quality early childhood programs already account for whatever the programs' effects are on parental and private activities. For example, the various studies on how state-supported pre-K programs affect kindergarten readiness already account for any possible

effects on reducing enrollment in other pre-K programs. The state pre-K program is being compared with whatever child care and pre-school options parents use on their own if their child is too young to get into the state program.

Fifth, publicly-supported early childhood programs can be structured to encourage more parental and private sector responsibility. For example, state support can go to quality private pre-K programs as well as programs run by public schools. Parents with sufficient income can be asked to pay tuition on a sliding scale.

Sixth, I certainly agree that we should be careful in adopting any policy towards early childhood programs. Part of that policy should be to ensure accountability for results. We can design early childhood programs so that we regularly collect data on outcomes. In that way, the public can be assured that their funding is actually improving our society and economy. In addition, accountability encourages programs to be improved in their performance over time.

While we should be careful in adopting early childhood programs, there are also costs in doing nothing. Doing nothing means that we are not adopting programs that are known to improve the outcomes of former child participants as adults, that are known to have short-run and long-run positive effects in creating more and better jobs, and that are known to reduce crime. Every year in which we avoid action means another cohort of children without needed early childhood services. We know that the lack of such services will have a cost for both those families and for the broader society and overall local economy.

## Dates to Remember

**AUGUST 18, 2011** | Early Childhood Campus Open House; 1:00 pm - 6:00 pm; Discovery Enrichment Center (formerly Seely McCord - Benton Harbor)

**AUGUST 23, 2011** | Great Start Parent Coalition Meeting; 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm; Stevensville United Methodist Church

