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ABSTRACT

This paper presents methods by which teachers can show parents how to use opportunities they have in everyday life to peak the interest and curiosity of their children. It establishes steps to build a workshop for teachers and day care providers, sharing tips and advice and displaying books and materials which parents can use in their homes. After discussing parent involvement in young children's motivation and education, the paper focuses on inciting curiosity while developing reading readiness skills through everyday fun activities; cultivating curiosity through preparation of the environment with parents as educated preparers and observers; reading aloud to promote curiosity; sharing books with all children; supporting curiosity by encouraging young children's participation in work around the house; and promoting curiosity by knowing how children learn (keeping activities simple and age appropriate). The paper describes the workshop, which is from 1 1/2-2 hours long. It explains ways that teachers and caregivers can help parents create curiosity (e.g., talk, play, sing, and dance; make time to read; make reading relevant; and use technology). It explains how children, families, teachers, daycare providers, the community, and the world benefit from encouraging curiosity in children. Relevant books, magazines, and audiotapes are listed. (Contains 10 references.) (SM)

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**TEACHERS HELPING PARENTS
TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF
CURIOSITY IN YOUNG CHILDREN**

by Methlyn Green

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Abstract

This paper presents methods by which teachers can show parents to use the opportunities they have in everyday life to peak the interest and curiosity of their children. In order to raise more curious children, the paper establishes steps to build a workshop for teachers and day care providers, sharing tips and advice and displaying books and materials which parents can use in their homes.

INTRODUCTION

To raise the level of *curiosity* in young children should be the goal of all parents who believe in the importance of rearing happier offspring and in making the world a better place for future generations. Ideally, people should try to achieve a healthy state of mind and body prior to becoming parents because babies are affected before and after birth by the environment in which they are formed. A child's level of intelligence is not fixed for life by the genes he/she inherits. It can be raised by the way they are cared for prior to their meeting a teacher in the classroom. Parents can and do give many opportunities for children to be *curious* and learn in the home and teachers and caregivers can support parents in the effort.

Curiosity is defined here as an eagerness to know. This inquisitiveness leads to a high level of understanding, knowledge and intelligence which in turn leads to expertise.

EARLY START, PARENTAL EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT TO INFLUENCE
AND SUPPORT CURIOSITY IN CHILDREN

➤ In her book How to raise a brighter child, Joan Beck, (1999) points out that the evidence is overwhelming that the quantity and quality of learning experiences a

baby encounters can greatly influence how well his brain works for the rest of his life. Scientists have made alarming discoveries about baby's brain growth in the early years of life, it forms countless connections every second that will later serve as pathways of thought. Learning experiences and loving, one-on-one attention and interaction strengthen those connections and shape the neurological structure of the brain. It has also been found that without appropriate stimulation those connections eventually wither and die.

Because of the importance of early learning, educators and politicians have seen the need to create and fund a wide variety of early learning programs across many states. During the 1990's First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton sponsored a White House conference calling for greater investment in young children aged zero to three.

Even the prestigious Carnegie Corporation of New York has focused its resources to call fresh attention to the critical years between birth and age three, calling for a 'national investment' in the nation's youngest children to give all babies and toddlers the opportunity for optimal neurological development. (p.3)

Many of these programs have focused on providing learning opportunities for young children from homes that appeared to be disadvantaged. The most widely acclaimed is the Head Start Program. Head Start begins at three years old and operates in collaboration with families. These children's progress has been followed over the years and the program has been very successful.

Compilations of studies on Head Start children, for example, show that they had higher IQ scores than comparison youngsters – ranging from 7 to 10 points in several studies to as much as 30 points in one report. Far more of them were scoring at grade level in reading and math. Fewer had been flunked and needed to repeat a grade. (p.15)

Recently, a substantial number of research projects have shown that young children can profit enormously when their parents are given some information and encouragement about early learning.

Beck reported that in the early 1980's four Missouri school district began the "New Parents as Teachers Program", which became a national model for assisting parents at home. The program involved 380 families from a broad cross-section of socioeconomic backgrounds. Specially trained educators made regular visits to each home before the mother gave birth, teaching parents how to help their babies develop well. Parents also met periodically at a nearby school. Parents were given packets of learning materials, directions for simple learning games they could individualize for their children for every phase of development from birth to age three. They were also given directions on ways to have fun in making learning a natural part of their home environment while creating *curiosity* in the child.

At the end of three years the children were tested and compared with a control group with the following result:

Children of parents participating in the New Parents as Teachers project consistently scored significantly higher on all measures of intelligence, achievement, auditory comprehension, verbal ability and language ability than did comparison children.
(p.18)

The author further quoted Dr. William Fowler, professor of applied psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and a former director of the Laboratory Nursery School at the University of Chicago, as saying:

In no instance [where documentation exists] have I found any individual of high ability who did not experience intensive early stimulation as a central component of his development (p.18)
A major cross-cultural study directed by Stevenson, found that Japanese

and Chinese children excelled in reading and math due to those countries' child rearing and early learning practices. Because of parental involvement in young children's education, they are referred to as "education mama". Most of their family time is spent in informal learning activities. British psychologist Dr. Richard Lynn stated that in one generation the mean IQ of the Japanese jumped 7 points to be 11 points higher than the mean for the United States.

Beck quoted from a report published by the University of Chicago, as follows:

In homes where parents make great efforts to motivate a child, reward him, and reinforce him, he "learns to learn". He comes to view the world as something he can master through a relatively enjoyable type of activity, a sort of game, which is learning. (p.13)

INCITE CUROSITY WHILE DEVELOPING
READING READINESS SKILLS THROUGH
EVERYDAY FUN ACTIVITIES

➤ The critics have said Help Your Child Learn to Read, New Ways to Make Learning Fun, a book written by Harry Forgan, (1975), is a must-have in college classrooms for beginning teachers or for teachers' in-service training. I could not agree more. Forgan has not left a stone unturned. He states in clear, recipe-like language the fundamentals of reading. Forgan has attempted and succeeded in showing a beginning teacher and parents alike many fun exercises or activities that starts with the toddler through grade school. The choice of activities are so varied that the parent can pick and choose depending on what the child is *curious* about, and therefore most appealing in developing readiness skills. He begins by giving parents ideas on how they can use the everyday situations that are taken for granted as opportunities to foster curiosity. Listed

below are Forgan's suggestions for promoting the development of visual skills, auditory skills, interest in words and books, as well as listening and speaking vocabularies:

- a. Sing "Old McDonald Had a Farm" and have child repeat the animal sounds to you while you listen. Young children love music and singing and learn a lot when they participate. They are *curious* about animals and the sounds they make. (p.36)
- b. Help child observe and remember details by asking him what is on the dining table when both are in another room. (p.33)
- c. Help listening the speaking vocabularies by playing "Simon Says," while substituting "Mother Says" for the former. (p.27)

Forgan tells why parents can and must help as follows:

Reading is the foundation of nearly every school subject. It opens the doors to a richer and more independent life by making available exciting adventures, valuable information, and interesting ideas.... Parents are important in helping since so many natural opportunities arise when learning can occur. Children are constantly asking, "What does this say?" or "How do you spell _____?" When going places and doing things with your child there are many opportunities for learning.cooperation from parents is necessary for the child to reach his full potential. (p.13)

He reminds parents to cater to the needs of their particular child, and states that said need will be discernable through exposure and observation. Parents should choose toys, activities, books and magazines that appeal to the child and make sure that he has easy access to them. Children read out of *curiosity* or to find information that they need. Parents must model the behaviors they wish to instill, or lead by example, as values are taught by parents' actions. Visit the library and bookstore with the child and show that books and reading are an important to the family. (p.31)

CULTIVATING CURIOSITY THROUGH PREPARATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT WITH PARENT AS EDUCATED PREPARER AND OBSERVER

➤ In her book, Home Guide to Early Learning, Gould (1976) she theorizes that children learn by insight; which means that they have to come to an understanding of what they are trying to learn through hands-on experiences by “playing with” objects, and that children learn what they are *curious* about. She indicates that it is *curiosity* that captures a child’s mind and motivates him to pursue an activity, and that understanding how something works produces a feeling of achievement in the child. While children should not learn through memorization, they nevertheless must remember what they have learned. She embraces Piaget’s theory of critical or sensitive stages for learning.

Gould believes that a parent should not push a child—that he should instead learn through experimenting at his own pace at an early age. She leans toward a child finding out for himself while the parent serves the role of helpful observer. He should be introduced to the process of learning in a painless way and should enter school with thinking experience which will make him feel competent from the beginning. His success in school helps establish a positive cycle and inevitably brings enjoyment in learning, excitement and *curiosity*. (p.27)

Gould’s suggested approaches do not leave anyone guessing. She has outlined the various age appropriate books which families should read aloud to young children, activities and materials (most of which are materials found around the house), that should be available in the environment for family members to use in causing *curiosity*, building intelligence and for learning to take place (p.69). She is an avid advocate of Early Intervention and her book teaches how parents can observe and detect disabilities (p.150).

Gould points out that the parent's role cannot be overemphasized, and states that:

Research shows that parents of early readers generally enjoy playing with their children. They find the time to talk to them, to answer and ask questions, and last but not least, to read to them... You can build a secure foundation for reading in your child by actively enriching his early years and by being sensitive and attuned to his critical periods of interest and capability. Even in his first months you influence his ability to learn. By fostering his *curiosity* and the acuteness of his five senses, you are giving him the first stepping stones to learning..... (p.56)

She stated that even though it is hard to believe, the time parents give and the games parents play develop a child's readiness for learning.

READING ALOUD PROMOTES CURIOSITY

➤ Trelease, the writer of The New Read-Aloud Handbook, (1989) said he read to his children because his father read to him, but that he was unaware at the time that any cognitive or emotional benefits would come of it. He was just keeping up a tradition which he enjoyed as a child. Could it be out of mere coincidence that in the foreword of his book he thanked his ninth grade English teacher who wrote to his parents to tell them that they had a talented child? (p.XV)

Trelease points out that a parent's investment need not be more than approximately fifteen minutes read-aloud time and since library cards are free, the only cost is time. For parents who cannot find the time, he suggests that they rethink their priorities. (p.XIV)

The first half of the book is the evidence in support of reading aloud: when to begin and how to make it work – supported by personal experiences. He also makes suggestions as to how families can cope with the pervasive influence of television.

The second half of the book is the “Treasury of Read-Alouds,” a beginners guide to recommended titles, from picture books to novels. The list is intended to take the guesswork out of reading aloud for busy parents and teachers (many of whom were never read to in their own childhoods) who want to begin reading aloud but don’t have the time to take a course in children’s literature. (p.XV)

Trelease traveled and lectured about literature to young children and was amazed at the *curiosity that was* expressed as he talked about various children’s books. He began by discussing the pictures on the front cover, back cover and those on the pages of the book. He told the children that the books he read to the children were borrowed from the library, but because the children loved the books and did not want to return them he ended up buying each one.

Trelease explained that the reasons one reads to a child are to reassure, to entertain, to inform or explain, to arouse *curiosity* and to inspire – in a personal way. Reading aloud to children improves listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing and speaking skills. Trelease reiterates that instead of teaching children how to read, we must motivate, inspire and arouse *curiosity* in them. This makes them want to read.

During the last twenty-five years two major studies have been done on “early readers,” the majority of whom were never formally taught to read at home. The research on these children, as well as that done on pupils who respond to initial classroom instruction without difficulty, indicates four aspects of the home environment of nearly every “early reader”:

1. The child is read to on a regular basis. This is the factor most often cited among early readers. In Delores Durkin's comprehensive 1966 study of early readers, every one of the seventy-nine children had been read to regularly. Additionally, the parents were avid readers and led by example. The reading aloud included not only books but package labels, street and truck signs, billboards, etc.
2. A wide variety of printed material – books, magazines, newspapers, comics – is available in the home.
3. Paper and pencil are readily available for the child. Durkin explained, "Almost without exception, the starting point of curiosity about written language was an interest in scribbling and drawing. From this developed an interest in copying objects and letters of the alphabet."
4. The people in the child's home stimulate the child's interest in reading and writing by answering endless questions, praising the child's efforts at reading and writing, taking the child to the library frequently, buying books, writing stories that the child dictates, and displaying his paperwork in a prominent place in the home. (p.28)

He emphasized that the above four factors were present in the home of nearly every child who was an early reader. None of these involved much more than interest on the part of the parent.

But beyond simple materials, the program requires time: time to read to the child, time to post his drawings on the refrigerator door, time to answer questions, time to point out signs along the highway. Always feeding his desire to know – his curiosity.

➤ In perusing First Lady Laura Bush's speech in Vital Speeches, address to The Republican National Convention: Education and Responsibility (8/15/2000), Mrs. Bush said:

Growing up I practiced teaching on my dolls... George and I always read to our girls ... we wanted to teach our children what our parents had taught us ... that reading is entertaining and interesting and important ... (p.2)

SHARING BOOKS WITH ALL CHILDREN TO CULTIVATE CURIOSITY

➤ For reading out loud, A guide for sharing books with children, written by Kemmell and Segel, (1988) is not just another book about reading to young children. It is the authors' position that children should be read to at home, in school and anywhere else. The authors give advice on which books should be purchased and which ones should be borrowed, and on how to fit reading aloud to children into the course of daily living. They advise on how to read effectively to arouse curiosity. Kemmell and Segel gives practical tips on reading to babies and toddlers, and descriptions of over 300 successful read-aloud titles, with many more mentioned. Each book is listed by type, length, and subject for ease in selection, and entries include age level, time required for each session and good stopping points.

SUPPORTING CURIOSITY BY ENCOURAGING YOUNG CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN WORK AROUND THE HOUSE

➤ Retrieved from www.naeyc.org/resources - Early years and learning years – Teaching Young Children Through work and play was excerpted from the NAEYC journal Young Children, Readdick and Douglas (2001) The article asserts that young children look forward to helping in family activities and gets pleasure from the learning experiences. It states that in the company of family or other adults, children become curious and eagerly engage in work. They want to 'help' with pursuits of adults, and this work can be a crucial part of their early learning. If they are shielded from a whole category of activity simply because it is called 'work' and not 'play', you may be squelching their *curiosity* and limiting their developmental opportunities. On the other hand, if you invite children to participate in work and play, you give them many

more ways to grow and learn. Through work that is meaningful and a real contribution to the family or group, even young children can gain a sense of purpose and come to feel more a part of the family. With proper adult supervision young children can help with chores such as gathering, preparing and cooking food, running errands, picking up toys, setting tables, feeding the cat and watering plants. (www.naeyc.org/2002) (p.1,2)

'NO TIME TO SPARE'? – DO WHAT WE DID TO RAISE CURIOUS KIDS

➤ Beaulieu and Granzin, (1999) wrote Working parents can raise smart kids, because they raised smart children and want to help busy parents 'find free time' in painless ways – the ways they accomplished it. This book makes realistic suggestions and shares methods rooted in experience that working parents can implement, to develop skills that children need to succeed in school. It is based on creating a home environment that supports the growth of curiosity in a child, bearing in mind that the learning experiences a child brings from home form the foundation of his/her education.

PROMOTE CURIOSITY BY KNOWING HOW CHILDREN LEARN - KEEPING ACTIVITY SIMPLE AND AGE APPROPRIATE

➤ Parenting – The Best Way to Teach Kids to Read, is a website article (2/12/2002), which states that expecting more from young children than is developmentally appropriate may just frustrate them, may squelch their *curiosity*. It is important to know that from birth forward, children are becoming readers and writers. Their listening, drawing, early wordplay, pretend reading, storytelling and scribbling all set the stage for reading excellence, *curiosity* and a love of books and writing later on. The activities you engage in to help get children ready to read are simply part of normal, pressure-free together time and play. (www.parenting.com., (p.2)

Babies and Toddlers

Reading to an infant – even though she can't understand everything you say – is the best way to start. “A baby begins to associate the act of reading with nurturing and closeness, creating positive associations, says David Pearson, Ph.D., a professor at Michigan State University. Reading to older babies and toddlers also teaches them that:

- Books are handled from front to back.
- The pictures depict a world outside of books.
- Books say the same thing each time you read them – specific words are associated with certain books.
- Certain phrases are used only in print, such as “he said excitedly,” and “she answered happily.” (p.3)

Preschoolers

Reading to preschoolers teaches them that English is read from left to right, and that the little marks on the page – not just the pictures – convey the story. And through exposure and repetition (and more repetition, knowing most 3-year olds) it boosts vocabulary.

Other things to try:

- Make reading interactive by asking questions about the story (What do you think will happen next?), and talking about the pictures.
- Think of fun ways to teach your child the alphabet by putting letters in a context she'll find relevant. Ask her, for instance, to point out the “I” on the side of an ice cream truck or the “T” on a toy store. (p.4)

Kindergartners and First Graders

At this age, most children will be starting to sound out words and read simple books. Some signs of readiness: Your child can rhyme. He'll also start writing words, perhaps with greater apparent skill and understanding than he shows when

reading. To give him a hand:

- Read books together with fun rhyming texts. The rhymes emphasize the relationship between spelling and pronunciation.
- Seek out books about things he likes, whether it's Pokemon cards, sports, or pets.
- Encourage him to read and reread easy books aloud. This will familiarize him with words and word endings. (p.4)

THE WORKSHOP – PURPOSE OF THE CURIOSITY PROJECT

The purpose of this project is to help teachers enlighten or remind parents of young children, of the importance of not missing the many learning opportunities that occur in the first few years of children's lives. By giving a workshop, teachers can show parents in clear and simplistic ways the many tools available to families that raise curiosity in their children and to help children reach their potential in an effortless and fun way for the whole family.

My workshop audience will be teachers and day care providers. It will be held at my day care center, and timed for post business hours to maximize attendance and participation. The duration is expected to be between 1.5 and 2 hours long. The display will be set up prior to arrival of the attendees. When the teachers and day care providers arrive, there will be an informal meet and greet session including light refreshments. Guests may peruse the display and mingle for the first fifteen or twenty minutes. I will then begin by thanking everyone for coming introducing myself and anyone else on my team. Items I will need to refer to and support my presentation will be within arms reach and numbered for professionalism and efficiency.

I will then begin the presentation which follows.

HOW TEACHERS AND CAREGIVERS CAN HELP PARENTS CREATE CURIOSITY IN CHILDREN

When there is collaboration between parents and teachers – teachers and caregivers obtain vital information which translates into understanding the needs of particular children. Teachers are then able to select materials and coordinate the parents’ activities at home with school or day care curriculum. In this way, the material is clearer to the child and advance curiosity. (See Handout “Infant Toddler Family Communication From Your Child’s Teacher,” also available in Scholastics Early Childhood Today magazine, (April 2002 issue). This collaboration and cooperation effort from the outset supports curiosity in children because it communicates vital information which puts parent and teacher on “the same page”.

Teachers and caregivers can direct parents and families to neighborhood resources to obtain various services necessary for the families’ basic needs when and if necessary. A few such services are: early intervention for children with special needs, literacy classes, and free medical care for children.

As a child’s first teacher, parents should start interacting with their babies right after birth, conversing and making eye contact as much as possible. They should breast feed if possible for as long as it is feasible to do so. Other interactions with the developing toddler should include:

- Eye Contact at the changing table, tickling and laughing, while touching and naming its body parts.
- Talk, Play, Sing and Dance - Babies delight in hearing language. Talk as

they do simple everyday things together: recite nursery rhymes, and do finger plays, games and action songs.

- Make Time to Read, Make Connections, Observe and Listen -

Read with child every day at a regularly scheduled time, sometimes substituting baby's name for the character in the book, making her the subject. If possible, parent should choose a time when you can be relaxed and not rushed. If you have more than one child, spend time reading with each child separately, especially if they're several years apart. Taking time to read to children on a regular basis sends the message that reading is worthwhile. Adult should begin reading activity by describing the cover, front and back informing the child of the connection between the cover picture and the story which is about to be read, and by moving finger along print left to right. The young child will realize that English is written from left to right.

As every adult who cares for children knows, they often ask to hear the same story again and again. They delight in knowing what comes next and often learn a favorite book so well that they can "read" it on their own. That favorite story may speak to child's current interest and emotional needs, so it is important for the adults in their lives to be patient during this phase. Young children are eventually ready for different stories if they are continuously exposed to a variety of books.

It is not just what is read to children, but how it is read that matters. If adults rush through stories or read without enthusiasm, children quickly lose interest. Each character should sound differently. Reading at a leisurely pace with occasional pauses gives children time to take in what they hear, mull it over, and imagine the people, places, and events. Pose a question or make a remark that will prompt the child to think, express

himself, or relate the story to his own experiences. It is also a good idea to follow children's cues. Sometimes they get caught up in the story and don't want steps and detours along the way.

Parents who must work should "involve themselves" and their child in a high quality early childhood program that responds to children's needs and one which follows developmentally appropriate practice.

- Make Reading Relevant – Adults should choose materials that Provide "hands-on" and "sensual experience" to the subject matter to bring understanding and meaning or make connection to the child's world and experience

Gould in her book Home Guide to Early Reading, (1976) has contributed several pages of activities that arouse curiosity at various age levels. In supporting the theory of relevance she stated the following:

Max Wertheimer, who founded the School of Gestalt Psychology in Berlin in 1913, developed the theory that learning by insight... is not only more productive than learning by memorizing but also more enjoyable for the pupil as well as for the teacher. "Every good teacher enjoys teaching and learning when really sensible learning takes place; when eyes are opened, when real grasping, real understanding occurs, when the transition takes place from blindness or ineptness to orientation, understanding, mastery, and when, in the course of such happenings, mind develops. (p.6)

- Model Awareness in words and actions and discuss Stereotypes - As a child share his thoughts parents should find out where thoughts come from and whether or not they are fair and why or why not.

- Point out the Diversity Around You – Talk with child about the different types of people in your community. "What languages do most people speak in the community. How many different cultures do you see in the neighborhood? How

many tall children and how many short children do you know? Encourage children to get to know a variety of people. Provide opportunity for the child to become familiar with the elderly and people with special needs.

- Choose Books with Care - Reading together often, parents learn a lot about the kinds of books your child likes and understands. Visit the local library and involve the child in deciding what to bring home. Selecting books that relate to what is happening in the child's life at that time is a good way to ease transitions and allay fears about upcoming events. Topics such as potty training, new siblings, adoption, or moving to a new home are covered in a variety of books that are written specifically for young children.

- Surround Children with Reading Material - In addition to library books, children also like having some books of their own that they can look at or read whenever the mood strikes them. Affordable books can be found at yard sales, thrift stores, secondhand book stores, and public library book sales. Make the trip to the library a special outing periodically. This will instill the value of the library and its importance to his family. Consider subscribing to a good children's magazine – they will be tickled to have mail arrive for them with their name on it. Maintain his favorites on a shelf that is low enough for him to reach at any time. When he can read, parents should ask him to read to them and parents should respond with enthusiasm and in a non-critical manner. Have him read to a younger child or to a special visitor because it is a vote of price and confidence which builds self-esteem.

- Give him choices - Give toddler the choice between two different color bowls in which to eat his cereal on some days. Place toddler chair on opposite side of the

table to give her a different view.

- Instill Self-worth - Watch home movies with her as the star or part of the audience.
- Make Nature, Other Living Things and Readings More Relevant - Hunt for harmless bugs, butterflies and birds at the park to familiarize her with living creatures he/she previously read or heard about.
- Educational Toys - Introduce a selection of educational toys and add new toys as his interest shifts or broadens. Share in his games, building, fixing and arrange for playmates to join in.
- Find Appropriate Substitute Care and Learning Environment - Parents who work must “involve themselves” and their child in a quality early childhood program that responds to the needs of young children in terms of safety and nurturance and one which follows developmentally appropriate practices. This program will not however, take the place of time set aside at the end of the day for your own “program”, (i.e. the attention that lets them know you love them).
- Recall - At bedtime recall the day’s activities to see how much he/she recalls.
- Involve Others in the Household - Family members should share responsibility.
- Playing Games - offers you a unique opportunity to help the child develop many specific readiness skills essential for his success in learning to read. A child first has to learn to identify objects or pictures by their proper names and to observe details in a picture. After he/she has mastered this skill, he/she will develop an understanding of classification and sequencing and will build on these skills.

○ Helping the Child Develop Language – A child’s language development depends greatly on the adults around him in his early life. Parents who are aware of a child’s learning needs encourage conversation that includes the youngest member of the family, both on a one-on-one and conversations which include other family members. His efforts to say the correct words should be met with delight and corrective feedback given appropriately. This enhances growth of vocabulary and sentence use, which puts his emotions and intensions into language.

The author Beck quoted from a report published by the University of Chicago, which states in part as follows:

In homes where parents make great efforts to motivate a child, reward him, and reinforce him, he “learns to learn”. He comes to view the world as something he can master through a relatively enjoyable type of activity, a sort of game, which is learning. (1999, p.13)

○ How Television Supports Curiosity - While it is no substitute for live interaction, television does stimulate curiosity when programs are chosen well and supervised. Programs like ” Mr. Rogers Neighborhood” and “Sesame Street” are informative about other people and places and feelings. Language, social skills and mathematics are taught by these programs. Young children must be accompanied by a knowledgeable person to share the experience and to explain new words and concepts. The bright colors and graphics are particularly attractive and exciting to young children and do boost curiosity. Young children in family gatherings should be included and be part of conversations with other family members. This helps young children feel accepted and important and that his opinions or contributions matter. His efforts to say the correct words should be met with delight and corrective feedback given appropriately.

This enhances growth of vocabulary and sentence use which puts his emotions and intentions into language. The television is also a necessary device for showing video tapes used with the VCR.

- Technology Plays a Role in Promoting Curiosity

Whether people like computers or not, it is vital for personal biases to be shelved for the advancement of children. Children love and are dazzled by the computer. The National Association for the Education of Young Children states on its website that computers supplement **and do not replace** highly valued early childhood activities and materials, such as art, blocks, sand, water, books, exploration with writing materials, and dramatic play. The article further states that:

In the end, a computer is a tool, just like a book, a pencil or a television. Computers can be used in developmentally appropriate ways beneficial to children, and like any other tool can also be misused. www.naeyc.org/resources, (4/2002)

With use of compact discs children enjoy games and learn various skills while enjoying sharing and interacting with other children. “Reader Rabbit” at the Toddler and Pre-K level teach literacy, math, and problem solving skills, while Scholastic’s “The Magic School Bus: Whales and Dolphins Activity Center” teaches science, problem solving and uses the imagination. With the help of older siblings and family members children communicate through the internet, and explore various topics of interest to them. Parents should be responsible for the quality and quantity of computer use, and guidance toward edifying programming choices. As is well known, improper monitoring can lead to too much information too soon. As the child moves toward independence in learning, the computer will become a partner in his quest for

information.

- Here is what Diffily and Morrison, (1997) editors of the book

Family Friendly Communication for Early Childhood Programs, published by NAEYC

say about computer use among young children:

Children need to have opportunities to work independently of adults. The computer software that we use allows independent use. We choose software with verbal instructions or picture menus that allow children to work with little adult intervention. Kids learn by doing. The software that we choose allows the child to explore concepts, determine the pace and the direction of the experience, and use their creativity. Developmentally appropriate software is open-ended and calls for thinking and active problem solving.
(p.24)

STAKEHOLDERS AND THE WAY PEOPLE BENEFIT FROM ENCOURAGING CURIOSITY IN CHILDREN

Children - They will enjoy the fun and games and look forward to the attention given to them during these activities. Children feel loved, important, attached and worthwhile; therefore more secure and happy because they receive more attention as their curiosity grows. If his relationship with parents and caregivers are nurturing, your child will associate all of his future interactions in the context of the loving and positive memories from his primary attachments. The developing child will have the ability to form a wide range of relationships from which he can learn the value of others. Out of his aversion to pain and suffering, parents we will raise a non-violent child. Children benefit from curiosity which leads to intelligence, expertise and success in life.

Spending time and interacting with children can reveal physical, emotional and psychological conditions that require early intervention or medical care while treatment can be most effective.

Families - Families that encourage curiosity profit from their investment in time

and planning when their children excel, achieve and become loving family members, as well as caring responsible members of the community. Parents who make efforts to perpetuate culture and family values will enjoy satisfaction from the success their children have achieved.

Teachers and Day Care

Providers Who Cultivate Curiosity – A curious child is a definite asset and sometimes a challenge to a teacher or caregiver. They do not represent the majority. A teacher or caregiver becomes more alert and can learn from a child who is eager to learn.

Community and Country that Subscribe to Curiosity in Children -

Communities and countries benefit greatly from investment in their children. These investments are in the form of quality child care, early intervention, early childhood programs, health, literacy and other socially beneficial programs for families.

Curious children reared by aware parents become leaders with talent and expertise and contributes to innovation and quality of life for people.

There is also public awareness that bright children are a national asset and that they should be encouraged and cherished and their intellectual development fostered not only for their own benefit but for the public good as well.” (Beck, 1999, p.21)

During the 1960's the Ypsilanti Perry Preschool Project conducted by the High Scope Educational Research Foundation of Ypsilanti, Michigan, began a study of 123 African American preschoolers living in poverty and at risk of failing school. Half the group began preschool education at ages 3 and 4 while the other half had no preschool.

Both groups have been followed since. At the age of 19, those who had preschool experience were much more likely to have finished high school, to score average or above on competency tests, and to have a job or be enrolled in post-high school educational programs. By age 27, the preschool group had half as many arrests

as the comparison group. Those who had attended preschool were also far more likely to own their own homes and to earn \$2,000 or more a month and were less likely to have been on welfare or to have had children out of wedlock. (p.16)

The money spent on providing the high-quality preschool program also paid substantial dividends for taxpayers – saving \$7.16 in reduced welfare payments, court costs, and need for special-education programs for every dollar originally spent” (p.16)

The Abecedarian Project was another experiment which exposed a group of poor infants and children to warm nurturing educational day care environment from infancy, and used a control group for comparison. This study demonstrated that intense, early intervention can raise children’s IQ scores and rescue those who might have been labeled mentally retarded.

The World - The World will become a better place to live in with a greater population of better adjusted smarter people. Parents of these people write books and articles to tell the rest of the world how they produced these “smart people” who find solutions to problems in the environment, health problems and social problems. The World will benefit from the positive findings, solutions and inventions they bring about.

CONCLUSION

Raising the level of curiosity in young children has been the goal of parents, educators and researchers for many decades. By raising curiosity, a higher level of thinking and understanding is achieved. This relies on the joint efforts of parents and educators to put children first through example and guidance. It is therefore incumbent upon teachers and parents to work together toward this most worthwhile end.

Author Beck is very clear, concise and to the point when she writes:

If you fill your child’s life full of stimulation all of her early years,

if you make your home what scientists call an enriched, “culturally abundant environment, “if you use early-learning techniques we now know, you can do much to raise your youngster’s intelligence. In such a home a child who would have grown up to the “average” will almost certainly become an “above-average” individual. And a youngster who would have been “above average” in normal circumstances will probably grow up to be “bright” or “gifted”. (1999, p.21)

Items on Display at the Workshop

Reference Books

Pointing to my reference books - I assert that the greater part of the information gathered in this research paper came from the books listed below. Each of the eight volumes described in varying degrees the environment and activities and interactions that cultivate curious children. Some of the authors have carefully listed the books and activities in age and subject order to save the parent time. It would be a good idea for teachers and caregivers to copy book lists and exercises from these books to offer to parents at their workshops. These would serve as a springboard from which parents could move forward.

Books

The new read aloud handbook, Jim Trelease (1989) Penguin Books, USA
Home Guide to Early Reading, Toni S. Gould (1976) Walker Publishing Co., USA
Help your child learn to read, Harry S. Forgan, (1975), Pagurian Press
How to raise a brighter child, Joan Beck, (1986), Pocket Books – Simon and Schuster
Family-friendly communication for early childhood Programs, Deborah Diffily and Kathy Morrison, (1997), NAEYC
For reading out loud, a guide to sharing books with children, Margaret Kimmel and Elizabeth Segel, 1988, Delacort Press, NY
Working parents can raise smart kids, by John E. Beaulieu and Alex Granzin, 1999, Parkland Press, USA

Activity Books

The activity books listed below show directions and illustrations of activities in age order

and explains what the child learns from each activity.

The right stuff by Martha Bronson, NAEYC 1996

Games to play with babies, Jackie Silberg, Gryphon House, 1993

Games to play with toddlers, Jackie Silberg, Gryphon House, 1993

More games to play with toddlers, Jackie Silberg, Gryphon House, 1993

Games to play with two year olds, Jackie Silberg, Gryphon House, 1993

A parents guide to early childhood education by Dfiane Trister Dodge
and Joanne Phinney, Gryphon House, Inc. 1990

Magazines

These magazines can be subscribed to or purchased on the newsstand. These are current and trendy.

Scholastics Early Childhood Today, April 2002

Scholastics Parent and Child, April/May 2002

Scholastic Parent and Child, October 2001

Scholastics Parent and Child, November 2002

Parents Magazine, April 2002

Parents Magazine, May 2002

Read Alouds and Audiotapes

Also displayed are some popular read aloud books and accompanying audio tapes.

Green Eggs and Ham, by Dr. Seuss is one of the old favorites.

Jigsaw Puzzles and Manipulative and Playdough

Puzzles and manipulative with different degrees of difficulty.

Households items such as flour for making playdough, red and green and yellow apples for counting, telling colors and for slicing and examining its parts and cooking, a scarf for describing colors and shape for using in a dance with mother and child. Mixing colors, making playdough or cooking apples may be some of the interactive activities teachers may want to get involved with at the workshop for parents.

1. Family Communication from your Child's Teacher (4/2002) Early Childhood Today, Scholastics - Helps teacher understand the child's temperament and the home environment.

2. Tips from Teachers - Adjusting to a new teacher(11/12/2001) Parent and Child, Scholastics – How parents can help young children adjust to a new teacher or caregiver and a new environment.

I will again thank everyone for attending and offer further help if needed.

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Kemmel, M. M. & Segel, E., (1983) For reading out loud, A guide to sharing books with children, New York, Delacorte Press

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Retrieved from the Internet:

First Lady Laura Bush address to the Republican National Convention
Education and Responsibility, Vital Speeches (8/15/1001) <http://web5.infotrac>.

Parenting – The best way to teach kids to read (2/2002) www.parenting.com

Readdick and Douglas (4/2002), Early years are learning years – Teaching young children through work and play, www.naeyc.org/resources



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