

KIDBIZ NEWSLETTER
MAY 2009

A Newsletter for Early Childhood & Child Care Professionals

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Hug a kid for me!
Patricia

TEA PARTIES FOR TEACHERS – PART I Baking the Goodies

Friday was always my favorite day of the week at my preschool. No, not because it meant the long work week was over, but because Friday was Tea Party Day! Every child looked forward to it as much as I did. The assumption is often made that tea parties are strictly a girly-girl type of activity, but this is not so! Boys and girls alike arrived on Friday mornings with an air of expectation and excitement, it was an activity that touched, taught and inspired every child, boys and girls alike. Tea parties can be so much more than a plastic tea set on a child's table filled with water and enjoyed by an array of dolls and stuffed animals and a little girl in a pink fluffy dress!

Tea Party Day came in three parts: baking the goodies, setting the stage, and what we called the "A Good Time Was Held By All" execution of the party! Each part was filled with learning experiences in a variety of developmental areas, and each lead to the other, building anticipation and memories along the way. When all was said and done, "tea" was the least significant element of our Tea Party Days – fun and learning ruled the day.

Tea Party Day begins with a cooking activity. You have to have goodies to go with your tea! Why not use this opportunity to bring some math and science in? Start by having the children help to choose a recipe. Give them an assortment of cookbooks to look through and become familiar with. Or ask them to bring their favorite recipes from home. You can even add in some computer learning and help them to search cooking websites for recipes! If you've done some baking with your group before, they may also be ready to experiment a little and create their own recipes. We did this often as it gave the children an opportunity to experiment and practice cause/effect as well as problem solve. You can start out simple, such as taking your favorite cookie recipe and changing a few of the ingredients to see what happens! We stuck to recipes for cookies, cakes, scones and muffins for the most part. They each had nice basic recipes the children could learn and each could be modified easily to create countless results. Also, they can all be made into small, finger size treats, perfect for any tea party.

One staple of our baking was to be dressed for the occasion. (Why wait for the tea to get dressed up?) I made simple paper baker hats (see Tips and Tricks section) for each child and everyone got a chef's apron to wear. (Another art project you can do!) It always amazed me how putting on this simple costume would transform even the most reluctant child into an eager chef!

Throughout the baking activity, several priorities were followed in order to obtain maximum learning potential. First, math is a natural component of any recipe and we would extract as much as possible from ours. For example, if the recipe called for 2 cups of flour, 4-8 children would receive a $\frac{1}{4}$ cup measuring cup and they would work together to reach the 2 cups. By breaking down the measurement the children got hands on experience with fractions ($\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$) as well as basic counting (1,2,3,4) and even multiplication ($4 \times \frac{1}{4} = 1$ cup). Teachers can easily use any recipe to create math experiences for a wide variety of developmental levels. With larger groups, the more you break down the measurements, the more opportunities for each child to participate.

Another principle was experimentation. Experimentation with ingredients provided the children with knowledge of cause/effect and provided lots of opportunity for problem solving. For example, teachers can ask the question, "What do you think will happen when..." before each step in the recipe. Such as before adding the dry ingredients to the wet, or before turning the mixer on fast or slow. Teachers can vary these greatly for maximum effect. For instance, instead of adding the flour all at once, add a small amount at a time, asking if they think it will be enough when mixed to turn the liquid into a solid. Or, add the flour all at once and see what happens when the mixer is turned on high versus low. (Kids LOVE this!) Let the kids learn the science behind experimentation. For example, when flour is added slowly and mixed for a long period in a cookie recipe the cookie will be much harder as more gluten will be produced. But when it is added all at once and mixed lightly the cookie will be very soft. When children are unsure of a particular outcome of adding an ingredient, or length of mixing, it's

nice to pull out some of the dough and make changes to this piece, and not the whole batch. Then, once baked, they can see the results of these choices and learn from them.

The final principal followed while baking is that everyone gets to be involved. For teachers, this means it will take longer, and will be messier, than if you baked yourself. But the hands on experiences for the children have such a positive impact that it will be well worth it. Remember your goal is not necessarily to have perfect looking and tasting treats for the tea party, but to create learning experiences for the children.

As much as possible, break down the measurements and mixing steps so that everyone gets to contribute. Having the children hand mix with spoons, rather than using an electric mixer, also allows more opportunity for many children to get a turn. Let the children measure out the ingredients themselves, rather than presenting them with pre-measured bowls of ingredients like a cooking show host does. Let them scoop the flour out of a big jar, or pour the vanilla into a teaspoon. And by all means let everyone crack an egg! You can save unused eggs to make scrambled eggs later. Give each child a cup to crack it into so shell pieces can be removed before adding it to the batter. These activities are great for small motor and hand/eye coordination.

When children are given the opportunity to really be involved in the baking process they have many more opportunities for learning. They also begin to anticipate the tea party event – everyone can't wait to taste how the treats have turned out!

When it comes time to bake, follow your state rules for using the oven near the children. If at all possible, at least allow the children the opportunity to view the baking through the oven door window. When this is not an option, put a small portion of the item to bake in the oven for only half of the required baking time then remove it from the oven. When everything is baked, you can show the children the three stages: an unbaked item, a half baked item and a fully baked item. You might even want to over bake one as well to get the full spectrum! Discuss the changes that occurred in the dough during this process.

You've got your Tea Party goodies, and before that first cup is poured you've already accomplished a curriculum that has offered development of small motor skills, problem solving, cause/effect, hand/eye coordination, experimentation, estimating, spatial math, simple counting to multiplication, social skills and cooperation, and more. The baking activity alone can help you meet state standards in math, science, cognitive and social skills! What a great start to any day for both teachers and children. And there's so much more to come!

Next month: Setting the stage for a great Tea Party!

TIPS AND TRICKS

Make some hats!

We made a lot of paper hats at my preschool, dressing up always made every activity so much more fun! Having a large roll of butcher paper makes creating hats quick and inexpensive for every day. Here's 3 of my favorite...

BAKERS HAT

Cut a strip of white butchers paper 3'x1'. Fold over the 3' side 4 times to create a strip that is 3" x 3' long. Then, cut a 3'x3' sheet of white butchers paper and very gently fold it in half, DO NOT CREASE! Line up the open side across the band you created earlier. Staple one corner, then fold and pleat the open end, stapling as you go, letting the top fold poof out as it bunches up a little. After stapling, cover the staples with masking tape to prevent scratches. Turn over, and put band around the child's head, securing with tape in the back. You can write "Chef XXXX" on the band as well. From the front, the hat resembles a standard chef's cap with the poofy top and all!

SUN HATS/BOWLERS

Cut a 3'x3' piece of butcher paper or colorful wrapping paper. Center over a child's head and use your arms to pull the paper down all around their head. Note: you will be covering their eyes/face so be sure they understand this beforehand so it does not scare them! Then use colored masking tape and wrap the tape firmly around the child's head about eye level to hold the paper together. After taping gently pull the hat up off the child's head. The tape will have formed a hat band, and the hat should fit perfectly. You can trip the corners off the floppy edges to make them more rounded, or leave it as it, bending up the flaps to create the shape you like. Decorate with stickers, markers and streamers or flowers. To create a bowler type hat, simply roll up the floppy edges, turn the hat as you begin to roll and keep going around until it is about 3-4 inches from the hat band.

WIZARD HATS

Cut a 3'x3' sheet of butcher paper. Starting at one corner, roll the paper into a cone shape, taping to secure. Be sure the cone is wide at the open end – wider than needed to fit as a hat. Roll up the ends, working your way around the edge and rolling until it has been rolled up far enough to hold on it's own. If you need the hat to be smaller, roll up farther. Bigger, roll down farther. Decorate with streamers or pipe cleaners formed into squiggles coming out of the peak, stickers, markers or paint.

These hats are the perfect follow up activity to reading my children's book, *The Patty Cake Kids & The Lost Imagination Cap*. Each child can create their own "Imagination Cap" just like in the book!

June Sale Item at 50% Off! Order after June 1st at: www.patriciadischler.com.

KIDBIZ BLOG

The KIDBIZ Blog is a place where I can share all the great articles and information I have access to and think you should have access to as well! If you've found a great article or website that you think should be shared with others in our field, send it to me so I can post it and pass it on!

This month is another book review: *More Help! For Teachers of Young Children: 99 Tips to Promote Intellectual Development and Creativity* by educator Gwen Snyder Kaltman. I highly recommend this book, which is filled with practical advice and lots of activities – read more at:

Visit: <http://kidbiz.blogspot.com>

IN THE NEWS

Join me next month in Baltimore for the NAFCC Conference!

In addition to a long list of workshops and board meetings, I will be presenting my "From Babysitter to Business Owner Train the Trainer Course." Those of you who present trainings to providers, R&R staff and other mentors, will receive training on how to present a three hour training based on my book, (and how to break it down to three, one-hour workshops) along with a free copies of lecture outlines, handouts, and my new power point CD to use when you present the training yourself! This training kit will be sold for \$250 and you get it **FREE!** I can't be everywhere, but this information is something I believe every provider needs to learn, so I'm ready to teach others how to help me spread the word on professionalism! Visit www.nafcc.org today to register! If you are attending, be sure to stop by the Presenters Marketplace booth on Thursday evening in the exhibit hall to say "Hi!"

WISCONSIN PROVIDERS AND TEACHERS:

As you may know, I represent the Wisconsin Family Child Care Association on the Wisconsin Early Learning Coalition. The Coalition is made up of organizations throughout Wisconsin that serve children birth – 5 years and have an interest in government policy. Our hope is that by joining together our voice

will be much louder! And we need your voice to join in as well – take a moment to write to your legislators today and tell them what you think about the Wisconsin Shares Program, the proposed Quality Star Rating System and any of the other issues being discussed right now as part of the Governor’s Proposed Budget! They really listen to individuals much more than large groups, so I urge you to visit the coalition website today and see how you can help! Visit www.greatstartwi.org.

THIS MONTH’S SALE ITEMS

May Sale Item: 101 Tips & Tricks - \$2 Off!

101 of my best tips to make your job easier, save you money and save you time in your child care business! All those little things that can make a big difference that you learn the hard way over the years, or learn from other seasoned professionals gathered in one easy guide to make your job easier overnight!
Regular Price: \$8.00. **Sale Price: \$6.00**

June Sale Item: The Patty Cake Kids & The Lost Imagination Cap – 50% Off!

Join Austin and his friends as they go on a search for his lost Imagination Cap! This book engages the reader on a journey to using their imagination to solve a problem. Beautiful illustrations and engaging text make this a great group time book – that you can follow up with the hat activities above!
Regular Price: \$9.85. **Sale Price: \$5.00**

Order yours today at: www.patriciadischler.com!

UPCOMING EVENTS

May 12, 2009

Writers Round-up

Camp Whitcomb

Author-in-Residence

Book reading and “The Publishing Process” presentation.

Merton Intermediate School Camp for children writers.

June 18, 2009

Child Care Share Training

Your Space/Their Space: Creating Inspiring Child Care Environments

6:45 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

4530 N 85th St.

Omaha, Nebraska

For more information visit: www.childcareshare.net

June 19, 2009

Being the Best You Can Be! A Day of Training & Motivation

Topics covered:

Turn the Job You Love into the Career You'll Keep!

Building Partnerships: Parents & Providers Working Together

Teaching the 3 C's: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy

Tips and Tricks

Hosted by ECCOA

Westside Community Conference Center

Omaha, Nebraska

For more information call: 402-597-4991

NAFCC Annual Conference

Pre-conference Day:

From Babysitter to Business Owner Train the Trainer Course

Thursday:

Presenters Marketplace booth

Friday:

Parents Can't Hear Me!

Marketing & Interviews

Saturday:

Tips & Tricks

Teaching the 3 C's: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy

If you are a member of a group planning a training event and would like to book one of my keynotes or workshops, visit the Lecture page on my website and contact me for availability. Visit www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.php.

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Patricia Dischler

Author, *From Babysitter to Business Owner, Because I Loved You, Tips and Tricks* and *The Patty Cake Kids & The Lost Imagination Cap*.

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