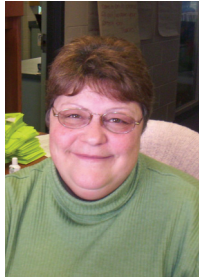


How can I provide stimulus to enhance fine motor skills and name recognition in pre school children?

Carol Shand

Biography



Carol Shand started her career of working with pre-school children when she became the cook and cleaning staff of one of Simcoe's daycare centres upon completing high school. She entered Mohawk College for the Early Childhood Education Program and has worked with children ever since. When she had her own children, Nicholas and Kasi-Lynn, she wanted to be a stay-at-home mom so she opened a home daycare in Delhi. When her children went to high school she was given the opportunity to work at the After-school Activity Program in Port Dover. This year the After School Activity Program and Launch Pad Program were offered at the Port Rowan Public School. When she was offered this position, she jumped at the chance since it was much closer to her home and she felt more connected to the community.

Abstract

This Action Research project is about enhancing fine motor skills and child's name recognition in a Launch Pad setting through connecting with parents and assisting their involvement at home.

My Question

How can I provide stimulus to enhance fine motor skills and name recognition in pre school children?

Fine motor skills may be defined as small muscle movement in the hands and fingers. They can be strengthened with time and practice. Children need this for activities such as grasping and releasing, using tools such as pencils, crayons, scissors or manipulating objects in the hands. Examples of fine motor skills include drawing, cutting, buttons, zippers, etc. The child's ability to perform fine motor skills depend on muscle strength and coordination.

Fine-motor Control

Tommy Thumb, Tommy Thumb

Where are you?

Here I am, Here I am,

How do you do?

Introduction

Tyler's mother, Lisa, had voiced a concern about his fine-motor growth and development to me. She felt that his development was not progressing. She inquired about activities that would encourage,

enhance and inspire him to take part in play experiences to develop his coordination. I too, had observed Tyler having problems holding markers and using scissors. (Journal Nov 28/04)

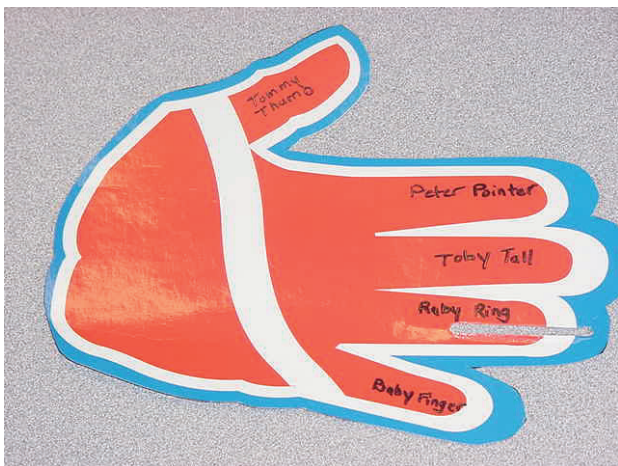
Strategies

My strategy was to provide stimuli. Examples such as scissors, playdough, primary crayons and primary markers during craft times, free play and circle times. Mom could take ideas from these activities and implement them at home.

During circle time I use many finger play songs naming the fingers:

Finger Play:

Tommy Thumb goes up
Tommy Thumb goes down
Tommy Thumb goes dancing
All around the town



Hand

The reason for using the finger plays during circle is to concretely identify each of the fingers. This helps when using scissors for example “Put Tommy Thumb in this hole and Peter Pointer and Toby Tall in this hole.” This is an awesome tool when working with young children in the area of fine motor. It gets the child to identify each of his/her fingers and makes it easier for us to refer to the fingers when we introduce scissors, crayons and pencils.

In most of the circles we would play these games. Tyler enjoyed the songs and always participated if not in singing but in doing the actions.

Clothes Pin Game

This game is to help strengthen the muscles in the hand (pincher grasp). What I did was to put a dish of objects (they were small balls with four spikes attached) into a dish. The idea was to transfer the balls from one dish to the other without using your hands. You could only use the clothes pegs. “Let’s see if we can get these balls into the plate only using the clothes pegs and not our hands.” I made it a game. It did not matter how many got into the dish. This was put out during free play. Tyler needed to use two hands to hold open the clothes peg. He tried a few times with one hand, failed, tried to open the clothes peg with two hands. He lost interest and carried on to another activity (free play is when an activity is put out and the children are free to do it if they choose).

Primary Crayons (Thick Crayons)

Many children do not have enough strength in their hands to hold onto small objects. It is best to start out with the thicker markers, primary crayons or primary pencils, sidewalk chalk, etc. Primary crayons are bigger versions of the typical crayons. They are easier for young children to grasp and hold. In November, we noticed that Tyler was holding the markers in his right hand upright with Tommy Thumb on the left side of the marker and Peter Pointer, Toby Tall and Ruby Ring down the right side of the marker. Baby finger lightly touched the marker at all.

Play Dough

Play dough is a way to help strengthen muscles in the hands. Pulling, rolling, pinching and pounding help to enhance the muscles and with the cookie cutters even pulling the play dough that has gotten stuck helps with the coordination and pincher grasp.

Scissors and Play Dough Together

This again helps in the development of muscles in the hands. It causes a little resistance to help to strengthen the hands and fingers. My friend, Tyler, chose not to participate in this activity or was not present when this activity was introduced. (Journal November /04)

Scissors

Just learning how to hold scissors is a challenge to some children. That is why it is so helpful with naming the fingers. When directing the children on how to hold the scissors, you can identify the fingers and direct them as to where they go. For the action of opening and closing the scissors I made up a little song that I used quite often when teaching the children how to cut.

Open and shut
Open and shut
That's what we do
When we cut

For cutting, it is recommended to start by using construction paper shaped like a rectangle. The child will randomly cut. The reason for construction paper use is because it is easier for the child to hold and will not be flimsy. Continue by cutting corners of a piece of paper off, cutting along thick black lines to guide cutting, cut along curved lines, variety of angles, cut figures with curves and angles, etc

In November, Tyler had a hard time holding the scissors. He held them upside down or sideways He would need help in holding the paper so that he could open and shut the scissors sometimes with two hands. If the paper got stuck in the scissors, he would simply tear the paper away.

Parent Education

Tyler was three years of age when his mother first brought him to the Launch Pad in September of

2004. She usually brought him to play but his father popped in because Lisa had to run some errands. Ama, his grandmother, drops in periodically to see how he is doing and watches while he plays.

Tyler is lucky to have a wrap-around process for continuing his skills at home. When I asked his mother in April if Tyler was practising cutting at home, she smiled and said, "Oh yeah, he cut the dogs whiskers, straws and a stack of computer paper."



Tyler and Family

Name Recognition

I printed all of the children's names on different coloured construction paper and made three names for each child. I hung them up in different places in the room at eye level and left it. At circle time I would bring out their printed name and look at the first letter of each of their names.. I brought in the sound of the letters but looking back I may have

given them some information overload.

We would play games like "Can Tyler find a place where his name is?" We would sing songs like:

This is a song about Tyler

This is a song about Tyler

This is a song about Tyler

'cause Tyler is our friend

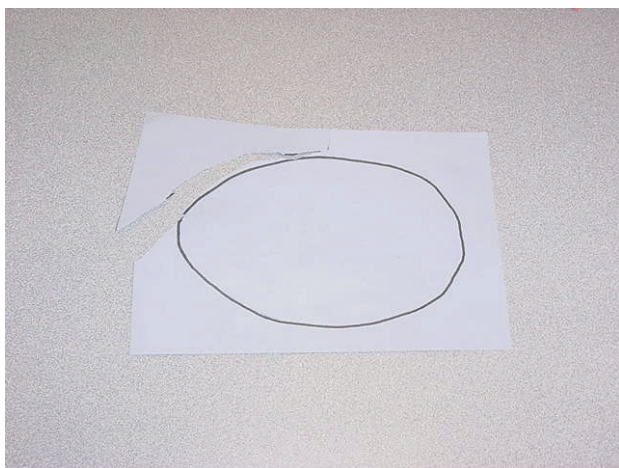
At one point near the middle of January (Journal) Tyler pointed to Ben's name that was taped on to the play house. "Carol, whose name is that?" I replied "Whose name do you think it is?" "It's Ben's." and he then proceeded to walk away. I also had the children print over their names with primary crayons during circle time and made sure that every craft or painting had their name on it.

Their names are always put in the top left-hand corner of their creations for pre-reading skills. I made cardboard, construction paper puzzles for each child with their name on it. I gave it to each of the

children to take home to play with. I also introduced the last initial of their name so that when they go to school, if someone else has the same first name, they can still identify their own name. So when Tyler sees "Tyler I" it means just him.

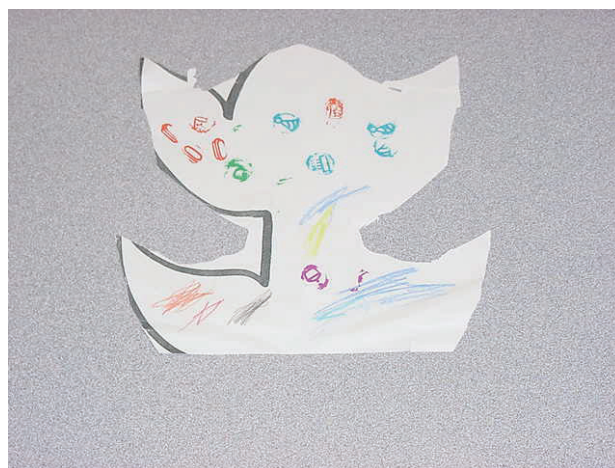
What did I find?

When we began concentrating on Tyler's fine motor skills it was in November 2004. He was 3 ½ years old. From November /04 until May/05 he has made



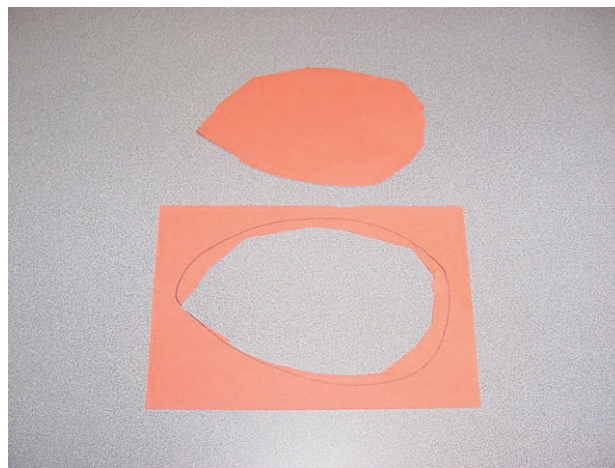
amazing steps. From not being able to hold scissors correctly in Nov. (Journal) or follow a thick black line on construction paper, holding a primary marker or crayon in the correct position, to having more strength and coordination in his hands for printing and being a whiz in his cutting ability (Journal-May), Tyler has improved greatly.

Although he still holds the markers or crayons with the thumb on the left side of the utensil and the three other fingers on the right side, we still have a couple of months to work on this. We are also going to get him pencil grips



Cutting with child scissors

From November /04 until May /05 (Journal) Tyler's cutting abilities are very age appropriate. He went through all of the stages of holding the scissors upside down and sideways to the correct position. He began random cutting of corners and progressed to cutting along thick black lines as a guide, to cutting curves and angles. He now knows the name of each finger to help him with other fine motor activities. He has gained strength and coordination in opening and closing the scissors. He can hold the scissors in the correct position and is very proud of his accomplishments.



Name Recognition

This seemed to be the easiest and fastest concept at which Tyler excelled. If you have something concrete for the child to see, (His name) draw attention to it and make games that utilize the tools(eg. concrete name and musical songs), and are fun for the child and all who are working with him, the concepts seem to be grasped more readily.

In November (Journal Nov 28) Tyler could not identify the first letter of his name. After six months of working with him, he could identify his name along with several of the other children's printed names (Journal Feb. 21 /05). With the help from his family and here at the Launch Pad, Tyler has made giant steps to be very successful in school. I would love to track him in kindergarten in September to see if his fine motor skills and name recognition makes a difference in the classroom. I also think that the support and help Tyler received from his nuclear family encouraged him to work on his skills without even knowing it.

His mother's comments:

I started taking Tyler to play group which is sponsored by Early Years. We started attending when Tyler was just an infant. From this program I had heard about the Launch Pad that was going to be introduced at the Port Rowan Public School. We started attending this program when Tyler was three. He really enjoyed the program and really liked Carol. After a couple of visits I had addressed a concern with Carol about Tyler's fine motor skills. With this concern Carol took it upon herself to introduce activities that would help strengthen his fine motor skills. These activities included finger



songs, play dough activities, cutting different shapes with scissors. At the beginning Tyler found some of these activities difficult and would get frustrated with himself and lose interest. With continuous activities focussing on fine motor skills, Tyler started to participate in these activities and began enjoying each activity Carol would introduce. From the beginning until present I feel Tyler's progress has been excellent. He went from not having the capability of properly holding the scissors to being able to cut different shapes. He really enjoys playing with playdough and making different items with play dough. Tyler also enjoys painting and has painted many pictures of

trucks and people. Tyler's progress with printing his name is getting a lot better. Before he could not print the letters of his name and now he is doing a good job at practicing. Tyler's letter recognition is very good. He is able to now recognize his name as well as others that come to the Launch Pad. Overall, I feel with Carol's help and family help, Tyler's fine motor skills are progressing very well and I feel the Launch Pad Program has helped Tyler to prepare himself for junior kindergarten which he will attend this fall. It is the activities he has participated in at Launch Pad that have helped him with school readiness and properly prepared him for his journey into the educational system.

Lisa Irvine May 11/04