

MILFORD FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

The Infant and Toddler Times

JUDY LOBDELL, EDITOR

December 2020

Dates to Remember

December

Our center will be closed from December 24th-January 3rd. We will resume outdoor playgroups January 5th.

Wishing you a joyful, peaceful Holiday and a safe and healthy winter!

Milford residents are invited to step outside on December 24th at 6:00 pm and ring a bell for two minutes to spread the holiday spirit!



The Milford Family Resource Center
@Fanny Beach Community Center
16 Dixon Street
Milford, CT 06460
(203)783-3626
mfrc@milforded.org

Milford Family Resource Center Staff:
Program Director:
Peggy Kelly
Parent Educators:
Kathy Aspinwall
Judy Lobdell
Anne Mundy

Ways Parents Can Think Like a Teacher to Improve Virtual Learning*

As many school districts move back and forth between in-person and distance education, it is important to be reminded about the particular challenges and opportunities, as well, that a virtual environment can present, particularly for young children. By understanding that a handful of feelings have been shown to enhance motivation: a sense of safety, meaningfulness, competence, belonging, autonomy and connection, parents and caregivers can improve distance education.

The following are a few evidence-based guidelines that offer support for parents:

Create the best space possible. Abigail Amoako Kayser, Ph.D. and husband, Brian Kayser, Ed.S., report that to feel safe, children need a designated work space that's comfortable. To create a feeling of belonging, they suggest asking kids to pin up artwork or otherwise personalize their learning space. Helping children feel more autonomous by keeping the materials they'll need — not just pencils but also pencil sharpeners etc, close at hand and, if possible, having separate designated work spaces for zoom meetings and quiet time, as well.

Rely on routines and systems to get and stay organized. Charis Lauren Wahman, Ph.D. points out that, "Teachers can't control whether kids show up to class tired and hungry, but parents can make sure kids get sleep, waking up with enough time to eat a hearty breakfast and get dressed in school clothes — a subconscious cue that it's time to focus — before distance learning begins."

Additionally, Wahman recommends setting up systems that kids can navigate independently as much as possible, such as keeping a bucket of healthy snacks out on the kitchen table so a child can leave their work space after a lesson ends, help themselves to a snack and return afterward. Also, educators agree that it is a good idea not to overschedule, particularly for young children. Time spent outside and physical activity have both been proven to reduce kids' stress levels and increase their readiness to learn. There's a reason schools have recess and Free Choice Friday!

Make work meaningful. Professor O'Connor started the website Scientific Mommy with Robin Neuhaus, a doctoral student at NYU. They recommend, "Encouraging students to look for ways that academic content aligns with their personal values. If that fails, try telling a story about an experience of yours that makes the assignment more relatable."

Play to their (and your) strengths and catch them being good. To help things flow more naturally, consider a strengths-based approach. To understand strengths-based education, teachers learn that focusing on what kids don't do well can cause them to become disengaged, while focusing on their strengths — things they enjoy doing, are good at, and choose to do, explains psychologist Lea Waters, Ph.D., increase feelings of competence, meaning and autonomy. You can start with a strategy dubbed "catch them being good." As Professor Horn explains: "You definitely want to say, 'It's so great that you used the timer.'" But a strengths-based approach also requires some deep thinking about what engages your kid. **O'Connor and Neuhaus say it's important that students can express themselves in a "format that fits their individual strengths.** If a teacher has assigned a book report, but you know your child will be more engaged in producing a video news story, encourage them to ask. They (and you) can also request homework arrangements that play to your kid's strengths.

Also, it's not just kids' strengths that need honest assessment. Research ties a parent's belief in their potential to positively impact their child's learning (called "self-efficacy") to stronger academic outcomes, O'Connor and Neuhaus report. They suggest that parents evaluate their strengths and define and teach subjects and activities they feel comfortable with, as well.

In pivoting from parent to educator/facilitator and back again, Professor Horn says, "Most of us fear our whole relationship with our children becoming about nagging them to do their things.

When things don't go well in the classroom,... don't just reprimand or chastise, ...start with a curiosity, like, 'I noticed this isn't going the way we talked about? Tell me what is going on.'" She goes on to explain that using the 'say what you see' method helps to make kids less defensive and more open. Furthermore, she recommends avoiding overt power struggles keeping things playful whenever possible – eg. 'But in seat, but in seat' instead of telling them to 'sit down'.

Embrace a growth mindset. In a nutshell, Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck, Ph.D., explains the basics : "Individuals who believe their talents can be developed (through hard work, good strategies and input from others) have a growth mindset. They tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset (those who believe their talents are innate gifts). This is because they worry less about looking smart and they put more energy into learning."

Another important point to be aware of, is the value of the word 'yet', "When a child encounters a lesson or [activity] they expect to be able to do and can't", Professor Horn says try, "Okay, so you don't get it now [or yet], but what questions do we need to send to the teacher?"

Stay as positive as you can. You've got all this, right? No problem?

Children look to their parents to figure out how to react to new or intimidating situations. O'Connor and Neuhaus feel: "Children, especially young children, look to their parents to figure out how to react to new or intimidating situations. If their parent seems skeptical or defeated, then they're likely to follow suit. So motivate them, not just by creating a work space, establishing rules and systems, making work meaningful, playing to strengths, encouraging a growth mindset, and focusing on relationships, but by staying as positive about distance learning as you can. 'If their parent is enthusiastic about their child's new teacher, about the things they can learn,' O'Connor and Neuhaus say, 'Then they'll be more likely to be excited.' And you don't need a professor's advice to know a more excited kid is a more motivated one."

* excerpted from <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/parenting/a33608758/virtual-learning-tips-for-parents/>

You can read this article by Gail Cornwall, author of parenting information and former public school teacher, in its entirety at website above.

An Example of A Lovely Preschool

The Milford Co-operative Preschool has been educating children for over 65 years! Our developmentally appropriate play based curriculum offers a rich and exciting experience that encourages healthy social and emotional growth. Daily art projects, dramatic play, music and movement, science exploration and plenty of time outside exploring our playground encourages fine and gross motor skills.

We are accepting applications on December 1st for current and returning Co-op families for the 2021-2022 school year. We will begin accepting applications from new families on January 15th. Applications will be available on our website as well as information about our program.

milfordcooperativepreschool.org

3s Program - Tuesday and Thursday 9:00-12:00. \$2500 per year or \$250 per month based on (10) monthly payments

4s Program - Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00- 1:30 \$4500 per year or \$450 per month based on (10) monthly payments

Contact us for further information at milfordcooperativepreschool@gmail.com



Milford Family Resource Center Outdoor Playgroups



Tuesday
Outdoor
Fun



Wednesday
Outdoor
Fun



Friday
Outdoor
Fun





The Milford Family Resource Center
is participating in a fundraiser for the
Milford Prevention Council
Come see Arrgh Snowman on the Milford Green



Doing the Most Good



The Milford Salvation Army Service Unit provides support to the families in the Milford Community throughout the year. With funding from the United Way of Milford, the Hartford Salvation Army office, and generous Milford donors, the Service Unit assists families with rent, food, car repairs, children and adult clothing as well as a myriad of needs. Each year students from Jonathan Law, Joseph A. Foran, the Academy and Platt Technical High Schools, combine their efforts to stand outside local grocery and department stores as part of the Milford Salvation Army Kettle Campaign. Through the students' effort, and with support of local dignitaries (including school system staff), the campaign raises approximately \$10,000 each year from Milford contributors to the Kettles. The funds raised through the Kettle Campaign are used to help Milford families in need.

Due to the limitations placed on the Milford Salvation Army Service because of Covid-19, the Kettle Campaign will not be collecting funds directly from the generous residents of Milford. The need still exists however. If you have been a donor to the Kettle Campaign or would like to support the effort, you may do so by sending a check made payable to: Milford Salvation Army Service Unit, and mail it to the Milford Human Services Department at 150 Gulf Street, Milford, Connecticut 06460

We wish you all a wonderful holiday!

FIVE TIPS

*to Make the Most
of Video Chats*



Video chat using apps such as FaceTime and Skype is a great way for young children to stay in touch with long-distance family and friends. Through video chat, children have an opportunity to build a relationship, communicate with, and learn from a loved one on the screen.

Here are five ways to help your child get the max from screen-time conversations:



1. Make it a social, interactive experience.

Try rhymes, songs, dancing, finger plays, and games like peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek that young children can participate in and enjoy with their screen partner.

2. Use props.

Encourage the screen partner to read one of the child's favorite books, as the child follows along with his own copy. Or, the video partner can play with a toy car while the child rolls her toy car. Puppets and stuffed animals also are great props for playing together virtually. Also, sharing a snack together is a favorite of young children.



3. Be the "hands and heart" of the person on-screen.

When the screen partner "tickles" your baby's tummy, give your child's tummy a tickle, too. When a grandparent leans toward the screen to "kiss" your toddler, you can give him a kiss on the cheek. By taking this role, you help nurture the relationship between the child and their on-screen friend.

4. Explain any technical difficulties.

Tell the child why the call dropped, or why the video partner may appear to "freeze" on the screen or not be looking directly at her. Explaining these experiences in simple terms helps children better understand both the technology and the interaction. It can also help screen partners adjust factors on their side (like the angle of their webcam) to improve the video chat.



5. Let children take the lead with the technology as they grow.

For example, toddlers can learn how to touch the green button to call or red button to hang up.



Kids Count of Milford is a non-profit community collaborative organization that strives to ensure that all young children and their families receive the support that they need to maximize their school readiness. This goal stems from the recognition that learning does not begin at the schoolhouse door, but rather in the first 60 months of life.

SUSAN HENCHMAN PAVELKO MEMORIAL PRESCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

This scholarship program is sponsored by Kids Count of Milford and provides scholarships to Milford families. Parents with children who are 2 years 9 months to age 3 years 9 months in September and have not reached kindergarten age are eligible to apply.

Scholarships are provided to families who can demonstrate financial need based on their income.

Scholarships are available September through May

\$110 for 3 year old children

\$130 for 4 year old children

Families who are experiencing a temporary hardship may be eligible for a short term scholarship at any time throughout the preschool year.

As with all nonprofit organizations throughout the country, Kids Count was unable to host its annual Harborlight Happening. As a result funding for scholarships is limited. If you have been a supporter of Kids Count of Milford in the past, please feel welcome to send a check made payable to Kids Count of Milford to support a scholarship. Your contribution is tax deductible.

Mail checks to;

Kids Count of Milford, 167 Cherry Street, Box 169, Milford 06460

Finally, if you are struggling to pay for your child's preschool attendance, please go to the Kids Count website at: www.kidscountofmilford.com to download a scholarship application. Scholarships are awarded based on income need.

Complete the scholarship application and return to the address above.



Sponsored by The Milford Kiwanis Club

Keeping Milford Warm is dedicated to serving individuals and families in need who do not have the resources to heat their homes throughout the year. Each year, for the past several years, the Keeping Milford Warm Holiday Benefit Dinner raised thousands of dollars to help underwrite this important venture. This year, however, in an effort to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 Coronavirus and to keep everyone safe, we have cancelled the Benefit Dinner.

We are all living in very stressful and ever changing times, however, the need to keep our Milford Community warm continues to place high demands upon us. **You** can help us raise funds for those in need in our community and provide them with a little peace of mind this season. No one should have to choose between heating their home and affording other everyday needs. We are requesting that you donate to the KMW fund in any denomination. Every dollar helps. At \$1.74 for a gallon of oil, please consider contributing whatever you can see in your heart to support the families of Milford.

Ways to Contribute: Please make all checks payable to Kiwanis Club of Milford, CT

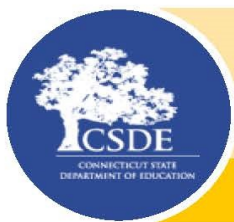
Mail all donations to: Keeping Milford Warm

250 Woodmont Road

Milford, CT 06460

Donations may be made via our website: www.keepingmilfordwarm.com

***Keeping Milford Warm
Making a Difference in Milford, Connecticut***



Connecticut State Department of Education **Professional Support Series for Families**

Please see below and join as we learn together and grow together.

Series 20 — November 30, 2020

Virtual Town Hall for Parents and Families: Supporting Children in Remote Learning during COVID-19 (Live webinar)

Q & A Session for Families

Families, do you have questions about remote learning?

The Connecticut State Department of Education is hosting a Virtual Town Hall for Parents and Families to discuss remote learning during COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic is presenting incredible challenges not only for schools but also for families. Families are coping with new terms like hybrid, remote, and asynchronous, along with multiple online platforms and various technology issues, all while trying to keep their children safe.

Parents and families are invited to join members of the Connecticut State Department of Education, and community, education and child development experts to provide tips and best practices, answer questions and highlight new resources to support students and families in remote learning in Connecticut. The Town Hall will be in a webinar format and participants will have the opportunity to ask questions of panelists.

Date: Tuesday, December 8, 2020, 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Register: <https://ctserc.net/townhall>

Contact: judy.carson@ct.gov

Panelists:



- Charlene Russell-Tucker, Deputy Commissioner, CSDE
- Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer, CSDE
- Bryan Klimkiewicz, Division Director, Bureau of Special Education, CSDE
- Gladys Labas, Director of Equity and Language, CSDE
- Judy Carson, Program Manager, School-Family-Community Partnerships, CSDE
- Ingrid Canady, Executive Director, SERC
- Subira Gordon, Executive Director, Connecticut Coalition for Achievement Now (ConnCAN)
- Robert D. Keder, M.D., Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Connecticut Children's Medical Center; Assistant Professor, Pediatrics, UCONN School of Medicine

Save the dates! See next page for upcoming sessions.

December 11, 2020, 10:00am-11:30am

Reimagining Family-School Partnerships in a Remote Learning Environment

For further information visit: <https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/COVID19/Professional-Support-Series-for-Families/Social-and-Emotional-Support/Family-Tips---Providing-Social-and-Emotional-Support-to-Children-for-COVID-19>