



ASU Toddler Emotional
Development Project

Childhood *focus*

NEWSLETTER FOR THE ASU TODDLER EMOTIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AND THE ASU PRESCHOOL STUDY

*Thank you for your participation!
We could not conduct this type of research
without your help!*

Our Studies....

We have been very busy since our last newsletter! The last year has been devoted to entering and preparing the data from our “preschool study.” As part of this study, we observed children who were enrolled in the ASU preschools. (We had so much fun watching them play!) We also asked the children to play games like Simon Says (during which we collected heart rate data), asked them questions about emotions and social relationships, and had them play computer games. Parents and teachers also pitched in by filling out questionnaires. We are eager to learn more about children’s regulation abilities and how these may relate to their relationships.



We also have been very busy working on our Toddler Emotional Development project. In this study, we observed children from the time they were 18 months old! We have already learned much about how children develop regulation skills across the toddler and preschool years, but there is still much to learn. This year, we have been working on studies involving children’s ability to understand emotions, children’s physiological regulation, biological markers of stress, children’s school success, and, most recently, genetic contributions!

For more details, turn to our Research Highlights section...

*Thank you
for your
support!*

FUN ACTIVITIES

Phoenix Art Kid Days

Drawing Stations will be set up ending with a final mixed media art piece that the kids create. Ages 5-12 with their parent. At the Phoenix Art Museum. General admission applies (free for 6 and younger, \$4 ages 6-17, \$10 for adults).

Free First Friday Nights

Children's Museum of Phoenix (215 N. 7th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85034; 602.253.0501)

Library Reading Programs

Sign up for a reading program this summer... Kids can earn prizes for listening to or reading books. Most summer programs begin in May. Read, earn prizes, and have fun!

Research Highlights

One of our graduate students, Alison Edwards, is examining children's regulation abilities over time. For example, children were shown a gift box and asked not to peek inside. Although this was a pretty hard feat for some young children, many children were able to control their behavior and impulses. Alison has found that children who could wait on this task were also able to control their behavior in other tasks – and mothers and caregivers/teachers saw those children as having better attentional skills too!

Another one of our graduate students, Sara Nozadi, has been working on a study about children's emotions. She is interested in how children's emotions are linked to their language development. She has found that toddlers who expressed less anger were reported to have relatively large vocabularies. Interestingly, toddlers' who expressed high levels of sadness also were rated as having a larger vocabulary. These findings demonstrate that it's really important to view anger and sadness as separate emotions because they may relate to outcomes differently – and it also tells us that negative emotions are not necessarily bad.

Kassondra Silva, another graduate student, is interested in how children's understanding of emotions is related to their regulation skills. Using data from our Toddler Emotional Development study, she found that children who are better at recognizing emotions and identifying which emotions are likely given certain situations also did better on tasks requiring regulation. It may be that children who can identify their own feelings and those of others also learn ways to regulate their emotions. These findings suggest that teaching children about emotions of themselves and others may help them with managing their own.

*For more information on these studies or future studies, please contact
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Want to know more?

The following articles (and more!) are available at <http://www.asu.edu/clas/ssfd/se>

Spinrad et al. (2009) in *Hormones and Behavior*

We examined the relations of 84 preschoolers' situational stress reactivity to their observed emotions and mothers' reports of temperament and adjustment. Biological measures of children's reactivity (i.e., Salivary cortisol and salivary alpha-amylase) were collected prior to, and following a frustrating task. Children's anger, sadness and positive affect were measured, and mothers' reported on preschoolers' emotionality, regulation, and problem behavior. Findings showed that one biological measure of children's reactivity (salivary alpha-amylase) was related to lower problem behaviors for girls, but not boys – suggesting that this measure of reactivity may reflect girls' constrained behavior.

Eggum et al. (2010) in *Journal of Positive Psychology*

In this study, children's ability to understand emotions and their theory of mind (i.e., understanding one's mental states) were examined as predictors of children's prosocial orientation (i.e., children's tendency to help others or feel sympathy). Emotion understanding and theory of mind were found to predict parents' reports of prosocial orientation over time.

Our Lab

December 2010



Welcome Dr. Jennifer Betkowski!

We are lucky to have Dr. Jennifer Betkowski join our team this year. Dr. Betkowski's research focuses on promoting young children's self-regulation and school readiness. In Baltimore, she developed a preschool-based program (GOALS) that fosters attention, social learning, and impulse control. GOALS predicted improvement in teacher-reported attention, self-control, and disruptive behavior. As Dr. Betkowski continues to develop GOALS and evaluate its effectiveness, she will be looking at practical ways to integrate strategies into typical school and home activities. This year, she will help evaluate a multi-site preschool program targeting self-regulation, social adjustment, and academic functioning.

MORE ACTIVITIES...

PetSmart Charities PetWalk & Adoption Event

Sunday, February 20, 2011

Tempe Town Lake 620 N. Mill Ave., Tempe, AZ 85281

The PetSmart Charities®

PetWalk™ is a festival to

celebrate the compassion we have for pets. Your

participation raises money for local animal welfare agencies

that help thousands of

homeless pets throughout

Arizona. The event includes a pet adoption event, 5K and 10-

mile walks (for humans and

their four-legged companions),

and fun activities for children,

adults, and pets. Voted the

Best Annual Pet event!

Free Classes

Tempe Community in Schools offers free classes for activities with preschoolers, parenting

workshops, nutrition, and

communication with children.

Visit: <http://www.cistempe.org>

Reading daily is essential for developing reading skills...

Fun reads for your school-aged child!

**Popular Books for Third and Fourth Graders --
Books you can read aloud to your children or even read along
with them!**

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The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt

by Patricia MacLachlan (HarperCollins Children's Books, 2004).

Stellaluna

by Janell Cannon (Harcourt Children's Books, April 30, 1993).

How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World

by Marjorie Priceman (Dragonfly Books, 1996).

Frindle

by Andrew Clements, illustrated by Brian Selznick (Aladdin, 1998).



Exercise in School-
Let's Be Healthy!



Physical education (PE) may only be an hour out of your child's day or maybe a few times a week, but did you know that this helps your kids in their classrooms? Exercises like jumping jacks or kickball in the school day can help with their thinking and focus. Their test scores can actually go up after exercising! Encourage your kids to jump, run, and play at recess and in PE. After a day of school, some playtime outside (instead of sitting on the couch) is healthy for their bodies and their brains!

Santa Fe Enchilada Bake

prep time- 20 min; **total time-** 1 hr; **makes-**8 servings

what you need

1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-size pieces

1 each large onion and green pepper, chopped

2 cups salsa

1 pkg. (10 oz.) frozen corn, thawed, drained

12 corn tortillas (6 inch)

1 cup BREAKSTONE'S or KNUDSEN Sour Cream

1-1/2 cups KRAFT Mexican Style Finely Shredded Four Cheese

make it

HEAT oven to 400°F.

COOK and stir chicken, onions and peppers in large nonstick skillet sprayed with cooking spray on medium heat 10 min. or until chicken is cooked through. Stir in salsa and corn.

ARRANGE 6 tortillas on bottom of 13x9-inch baking dish; cover with layers of 1/2 each chicken mixture, sour cream and cheese. Repeat layers; cover with foil.

BAKE 40 min. or until heated through, removing foil after 30 min. Let stand 5 min.

