

# HEAD START HIGHLIGHTS

February & March 2011

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## DIRECTOR'S REMARKS

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### THE DIFFERENCE OF ONE

Not long ago, a Head Start grandparent called me. He wondered why we do not have an American flag at the center he is most familiar with.

I explained first and foremost, there is not a good answer and that I agreed it a good idea to have an American flag present for all to see at all of our centers. He explained that he is a Veteran – and I thanked him for his service to our country. I also explained that I have an American flag proudly displayed at my home and in my office.

To accomplish our objective, I have asked my staff who are in Washington DC for a Head Start Leadership Institute and who will be meeting with our Congressional and Senatorial offices to ask them for an American flag (we need four in all) for our centers in Delevan, Olean, Salamanca, and Warsaw. This grandfather agreed with my assessment that our programs located in public schools already have an American flag present. If this request goes unanswered, I will ask our NYS elected officials. If that goes unanswered, then we will simply buy them.

Not only are we 'one nation' as symbolized by the flag, but this is how one person can make a difference. And did you notice the fact that we have the American flag on this and all prior issues of this newsletter?

What will be your power of one?

What will be your legacy?

## TRANSPORTATION

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### DRIVING TIPS FOR SNOWY AND ICY ROADS

Since old man winter doesn't seem to be giving us any breaks this winter, here are some winter driving tips.

Remember... our Head Start school buses are big vehicles and as such have a hard time with the



snowy side streets. Please keep in mind that you should have your child ready and waiting for their bus but that

it may be running a few minutes behind because of the road conditions.

Also because the buses are so big, they don't heat up inside as well as your car does. Children should be dressed appropriately with pants, coats, hats, and gloves. This will help them stay warm inside and outside the bus.

- ✓ Before you go, listen to the radio or TV for announcements about accidents, road closings, and road advisories.
- ✓ Plan your route ahead of time to avoid any roads that become dangerous during bad weather. If a road is closed or blocked, do not attempt to continue on this route.

- ✓ Let someone know your route so if you do become stranded, your family can let authorities know where to start looking.
- ✓ Be aware that bridges and overpasses freeze first. Slow down before reaching them and avoid sudden changes in speed or direction.
- ✓ Use gentle impulses while driving: accelerate gently, turn slowly, and brake carefully and early. Avoid unexpected quick movements that could put you in a spin by leaving ample room between you and the next car. Anticipate turns, stops, and lane changes well before they occur. Conversely, don't go too slow. The car will need some momentum to be able to push through heavier snow without getting stuck.
- ✓ Steer clear of trucks. They are heavier than cars and need considerably longer stopping distances. Their tires also tend to spray snow and rain into parallel lanes, further hindering your visibility.
- ✓ If you have a vehicle with four- or all-wheel drive, don't get overconfident and rely on its abilities to get you out of a problem. The traction and force created by all four wheels driving instead of two helps you get going from a stop, but does not assist your vehicle's braking ability. In fact, AWD- and 4WD-equipped vehicles are heavier than 2WD vehicles and require more time and braking power to come to a stop.
- ✓ See and be seen. Always keep your lights on while driving through rain, snow, and fog.

## MENTAL HEALTH

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### WHINING

I think I can speak for most of us when I say “Enough winter!” Has this winter been seemingly worse than recent ones and, also, seemingly endless. I’m thoroughly fed up with chapped hands, arthritic hips and the never-ending winter weather advisories. Am I whining? You bet!

Even in a fairly mild winter we are indoors more and, therefore, in close proximity to family members and others more than in warmer months. It has been

proven that the gray months of winter have a negative effect on some of us. It’s no wonder that both children and adults engage in more noticeable whining.

Weather aside, let’s look at children’s whining. If you are like most parents, there is one child behavior that pushes every button you possess. That behavior is whining. There is nothing quite so guaranteed to get your hackles up as the sound of your beloved children whining to you about their needs or wants.

My best guess is that while whining has not yet led to any parent’s complete nervous breakdown, it has probably come close. The phenomenon is universal but it is not proven that children come hard-wired to make those dreadful sounds.

Let’s consider why kids whine. The simple answer is: because it works. Therefore, it follows that the way to stop kids from whining is to make sure that it doesn’t work.

The following scenario will be familiar to most. Three year old, Zoe has discovered that when she says that she wants to watch TV, Dad’s usual response is to say: “No, go play with your toys.” But when she moans and adds a whiney quality to her request, screwing up her face and so on, Dad quickly says, “Okay, go watch TV for a while.”

Dad is happy to get a little peace, and doesn’t really notice the connection between Zoe’s ways of asking with the whine added in and his response. But, you can bet that Zoe quickly learns which method is effective. In fact, Dad’s response has reinforced the whining, and Zoe is much less likely to speak in her normal voice the next time she wants something.

Pay a little closer attention to the next whiney episode in your home, and watch the dynamic at work. Okay, when you accept that part of the problem is of your own making, it’s time to figure out what to do about it, assuming you don’t want to live with whining all the way through college and beyond.

First, realize that if your child is old enough to speak her requests, she is old enough to understand that she can control the way she speaks. She is also ready to understand your explanations. So you have a conversation with your child that goes something like this:

“I want to help you remember to talk with people in ways that other people will enjoy. That does not include whining and crying when you ask for something,

or when you tell people things. So, if you want me and other people to pay attention to you when you talk, you will need to stop the whining.”

“To help you remember this, I’m not going to pay attention to you when you whine. But I will definitely pay attention and listen to you when you speak in your regular voice. So when you see me not listening, think about whether you need to talk in a different voice.”

That’s pretty clear. Now comes the hard part. When you hear the next whine—and you will; remember this is a strongly reinforced habit—immediately leave the room and busy yourself with something else. You have put your child in charge of part of changing the action, but you have an equal responsibility to maintain and monitor your responses.

Will this happen overnight? Definitely not, and you’d best be prepared for more whining than usual while your child tests out the changed situation. But if you hold firm over time, your child will discover that whining is not productive. No child wants to keep doing something that just doesn’t work.

Will we, even adults, find something to whine about? Of course. Probably this spring will be too rainy, mud will get tracked in and the dog will dig up the first daffodils that bloom. Just remember the steps to get back on track.

*excerpts from Grandma Says , October 2010*

## FINANCE

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### COSTLY TAX MISTAKES

1. Was your debt forgiven? Report it as income. In the view of the IRS, canceled debt from credit cards is income. Credit card companies report forgiven debt to the IRS on Form 1099-C and you should receive a copy. Things get more complicated with mortgage debt, and you may want to talk with a tax expert if you have restructured your home loan. Canceled mortgage debt on your primary residence may be eligible for exclusion from income under the Mortgage Forgiveness Debt Relief Act, which applies to debt forgiven starting in 2007. The law remains in effect through 2012.
2. Report all your jobs. Don’t forget to include all sources of income.

3. A tax break for what? Don't get scammed. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
4. Handle your Roth IRA with care. Looking forward to tax-free income when you retire? That's the promise of a Roth IRA. Individuals who qualify can set aside after-tax income in the investment accounts and then withdraw the money (plus any investment gains) tax-free at retirement. But such tax benefits don't come without restrictions including income limits on who can set up a Roth IRA. There are also complicated rules for how to convert a traditional IRA into a Roth IRA.
5. Don't let 'I do' undo you. For example, a common mistake is made in the first year of marriage when both wife and her husband send in tax returns, and both check the "married filing jointly" status. The rules for when you can claim adult children as dependents are complex, but marriage typically rules out the dependent tax break.
6. Was your student loan debt paid by your employer? Make sure the IRS knows. If you're lucky enough to have your employer cover some of your student loan debt, don't forget the tax man. In the eyes of the IRS, it is pay and must be reported as income on your W-2.
7. Don't be afraid to second-guess your tax preparer. If your tax preparer's advice contradicts your past experience, get a second opinion from another preparer -- or, better yet, from the IRS.
8. If your taxes get complicated, consult a tax preparer. This may sound like it contradicts tip No. 7 but don't make a dumb mistake that you'll regret later.

## HEALTH & DISABILITIES

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### THE IMPORTANCE OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

The truth is that most of us need to eat more fruits and vegetables each day. The health benefits are worth the effort.

Fruits and vegetables are sources of many vitamins, minerals and other natural substances that may help protect you from chronic diseases. Some of these

nutrients may also be found in other foods. Eating a balanced diet and making other lifestyle changes are essential to maintain your body's good health.

healthy.	kale, cantaloupe, broccoli, pineapple, Brussels sprouts, oranges, mangoes, tomato juice, cauliflower
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Fiber	
Diets rich in dietary fiber have been shown to have a number of beneficial effects including decreased risk of coronary artery disease.	Excellent vegetable sources: navy beans, kidney beans, black beans, pinto beans, lima beans, white beans, soybeans, split peas, chick peas, black eyed peas, lentils, artichokes

Folate	
Healthful diets with adequate folate may reduce a woman's risk of having a child with a brain or spinal cord defect.	Excellent vegetable sources: black eyed peas, cooked spinach, great northern beans, asparagus

Potassium	
Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain a healthy blood pressure.	Good fruit and vegetable sources: sweet potatoes, tomato paste, tomato puree, beet greens, white potatoes, white beans, lima beans, cooked greens, carrot juice, prune juice

Vitamin A	
Vitamin A keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps to protect against infections.	Excellent fruit and vegetable sources: sweet potatoes, pumpkin, carrots, spinach, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, collard greens, winter squash, cantaloupe, red peppers, Chinese cabbage

Vitamin C	
Vitamin C helps heal cuts and wounds and keep teeth and gums	Excellent fruit and vegetable sources: red and green peppers, kiwi, strawberries, sweet potatoes,

## GETTING TO KNOW YOU



**NANCY BRITTON – Family Support Assistant, Warsaw**  
*'nearing'* 20 YEARS at Head Start

**FAVORITE PASTIMES** - Family, gardening, amateur photography, yoga, and family vacations on Chatteguay Lake.

**FAVORITE FOOD** - Toss up between lasagna and cheese cake.

**FAVORITE SONG** - Can't choose just one!

**BEST HEAD START MEMORY** - My favorite act of parent involvement involved a car bringing a sheep, a pony, a pot bellied pig, and of course the police.

**NANCY SAYS** - I was born and raised in Warsaw. Graduated from the University of Maine, married a "Mainiac, had three children, continued to live in Maine ten years, then made a deal to return to New York to be closer to my family *and* build his "earth house".

Never built an "earth house" but do have a nice older home that I am very attached to. My three children are now grown. My two sons are married and multiplying.

I now have four absolutely wonderful grandchildren and another one coming. My daughter attends Brockport where she is majoring in Spanish and currently has a 4.0. She graduates this spring.

Back when Head Start decided to come to Warsaw, I had no idea what it was all about. I applied and then went straight to the local library to research Head Start *before* my interview. I was hired and began work on June 1, 1991.

Originally there were just three of us (two Teachers and a Family Support Assistant). Together we were trained, recruited families, and were involved in the building and set up of our new Center. Later two Assistant Teachers, a Cook, and two Bus Drivers came on board. I continued as a teacher for 13 years and then in 2004 I joined the Family Support Assistants (FSA's).

I remember hoping to be with the program at least 10 years. It's hard to believe it is almost my 20<sup>th</sup>! I have worked with some of the best little kids ever and some really memorable families. I've seen hard times and good times and lots of changes and growth in our program, plus I've made some dear and lasting friendships.

I guess "my hopes, dreams, etc." are just to keep on this path for a bit longer. Then who knows what!










## CAVITY FREE KIDS CORNER







### MY MOUTH HURTS

A sore mouth may require more home care or a trip to the dentist. Some kids will tell you and complain, complain! Others just get used to the pain and think it is "normal." How can you tell if your child's mouth hurts?

 Refuses to eat.

-  Refuses favorite foods.
-  Only wants to drink, not chew.
-  Sweet, hot or cold food make him jump or complain.
-  Is grumpy.
-  Fights brushing his teeth.
-  Touching the cheek or outside mouth hurts.
-  Brown or black spots or holes are visible on her teeth.
-  Gum is swollen.
-  Cheek or eye is swollen.

Baby teeth are important. A hurting mouth won't get better on its own. What can you do?

-  Brush for him two times each day.
-  Pay special attention to keeping teeth clean.
-  Pay special attention to sore gums.
-  Gently floss for him. If he won't let you near his mouth, it probably needs some special attention by the dentist. The dentist can fix the problem before it gets worse.

## POLICY COUNCIL

Andrea Aldinger, Chairman  
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### A NEW YEAR, SOME NEW MEMBERS

We recently had our annual Policy Council and Board of Directors dinner. It had to be postponed from December to January because of weather. It gave us a chance to meet our newest Policy Council members, provide some training, and take care of official business. As is the Head Start way, we shared a wonderful meal.

I was honored to be re-elected as the Policy Council Chairperson. I serve on other 'boards' in addition to Head Start but being involved in Head Start (and Early Head Start) is most rewarding. I love interacting with our families.

It is shaping up to be a challenging year. There is a lot of uncertainty about funding. Our 34 expansion slots may go away plus there is talk about real cuts ... rolling back the budget to the 2008 funding level.

We will continue to promote school readiness and all the other aspects of the program – from Exploring Parenting, to Cavity Free Kids, to healthy meals and snacks, to breakfast of champions, volunteer recognition luncheons, and safe transportation.

I hope all who read this newsletter take the time to get involved in the program as volunteers.

Head Start makes a difference in the lives of not only the children, but the families, the staff, and our communities.

## EARLY HEAD START NEWS

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### VISITING THE DENTIST DURING PREGNANCY

Many women steer clear of the dentist during pregnancy. They believe that certain aspects of treatment might harm the fetus. But dental care during pregnancy is an important part of keeping you, and your baby, healthy. Having a healthy mouth during pregnancy may reduce the risk of delivering a premature or low birth weight baby.

Hormonal changes that occur during pregnancy increase the chance of developing "pregnancy gingivitis" and periodontal disease. During pregnancy, the immune system may work differently than usual. This can alter the way the bacteria that cause gum disease react to the tooth surfaces. Cleaning often helps to relieve the symptoms of "pregnancy gingivitis" and improves overall oral health.



Sometimes periodontal treatment such as scaling and root planning is necessary during pregnancy. The American Academy of Periodontology recommends scheduling it early in the second trimester. It is generally agreed that treatment during pregnancy is safe. However, dentists recommend scheduling non-urgent care for the second trimester or early in the third trimester of pregnancy.

The first trimester is not the preferred time for dental treatment. During this time, the fetus's organ systems are developing. Also, during the first trimester the fetus is more likely to be affected by the mother's exposure to medicines, chemicals, caffeine, alcohol and tobacco. The third trimester presents other possible risks. In the last half of the third trimester, the uterus becomes sensitive to influences such as stress or an infection in the mother. These situations can lead to an increased risk of premature delivery.

In some women who are in their second and third trimesters of pregnancy, the growing uterus will put pressure on a large blood vessel called the inferior vena cava. This can cause a decrease in blood circulation. This problem has been reported in as many as 8% of all pregnancies. Women with this condition can have an increase in heart rate. They may feel light-headed.

A dentist who treats a woman with this condition should make sure that she can get in a comfortable position during the dental procedure. It's also a good idea to limit the length of the visit.

Regardless of the trimester, urgent dental treatment should not wait. Examples of urgent dental problems include a broken tooth, an infection or another problem that causes pain.

It is best to avoid using any medicines during pregnancy. In situations where they are absolutely necessary, common dental medicines can be used. They should be used in the smallest amounts possible to achieve results. Your dentist will usually consult with your obstetrician before prescribing antibiotics or pain medicine.

X-rays should be avoided during pregnancy. However, if they are needed to treat a dental emergency, your dentist will take steps to protect you and your baby. You will be covered with a lead apron. You will get only the minimum number of X-rays needed to help the dentist treat you.

If you are pregnant and have bleeding gums, swollen gums, gum pain or a toothache, visit your dentist so he or she can diagnose the problem. When you visit, be sure to tell your dentist that you are pregnant.

## SOCIAL SERVICE

### PARENT/INVOLVEMENT

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### FIGHTING IN FRONT OF CHILDREN IS EMOTIONALLY DAMAGING

Children may not listen when told to clean their rooms, but when Mom and Dad are having a raised-voice, door-slammings, fighting, children are all ears. And what they are hearing isn't good for them, according to a new study

from Cardiff University, which says that arguing in front of children can cause them serious damage.

Dr. Gordon Harold, a researcher at Cardiff University in Cardiff, Wales tells Good Morning America's parenting contributor Ann Pleshette Murphy that parents can argue in front of children, but should do so with caution. "When children are threatened at an emotional level they're showing increases in symptoms like depression, anxiety, aggression, hostility," Harold says. A child reacting to parental fighting may be withdrawn or quiet ...or the child may become aggressive and difficult, perhaps even acting out while the parents argue to distract them.

It isn't the number of fights that seems to impact children the most. Instead, the extent to which the fighting affects depends on the fights get whether the up.



parental children whether nasty and parents make

"We know now, however, that the ability for a parent to parent effectively is determined by the quality of that parent's relationship with their spouse," Harold says. "Couples that are happy and comfortable with each other in their relationship are more emotionally available and sensitive to the children and their needs than couples that are caught up or embroiled in conflict."

Experts say even though fighting can be damaging to kids, there are good lessons children can learn from fighting. "When conflicts are handled constructively, kids learn to compromise, compassion, and to use humor and warmth to solve disagreements," Murphy says.

Research has shown that kids as young as 3 years old pick up on tension between parents. When children are upset by fighting or tension, they may act out or freeze or become very clingy. Boys tend to withdraw, and girls try to get involved, Murphy says. This places more of a burden on the children, because they blame themselves if fights continue to flare up.

### Here are some tips on how to avoid arguing in front of children.

1. Pick your battles. Decide if this argument is really worth having and what you hope to achieve out of it. Determine if a resolution is possible instead.

2. Postpone the actual argument until the children are either in bed or out of the house. A majority of the time the argument will not be as passionate and more easily resolved after you both have some time to calm down and think more rationally.
3. Avoid doing things to each other that will result in an argument in front of the children. If you know that talking about finances usually results in an argument, save that conversation for when the children are not around.
4. After an argument, apologize to each other in front of the children. Children need to realize that even people who really love each other argue on occasion, but that they can resolve issues and move on.

Take a time out. If you find yourself feeling heated about something, then remove yourself from the situation until you calm down. Let your spouse know that you would like to finish the discussion later.

Excerpts taken from <http://abcnews.go.com>



## EDUCATION

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### LET'S READ A STORY

Numerous research studies have indicated that children whose parents regularly read to them during the preschool years will later tend to do better in school. That's why we continually encourage parents to read aloud to their children. A child's parents are generally her first educators and her most important resource for developing a love of reading.

Let's consider for a moment some of the things your child can learn while you read a story aloud:

- Vocabulary: As you read, your child is acquiring new words. Let her see the pictures in the book. Point to an object as you read its name. See if she can point to some objects that you name.
- Information: Your child is also acquiring new knowledge and expanding the horizons of her

mind. Reading helps to open a whole new world for her.

- **Comprehension:** From books a child acquires new understanding of her world. She perceives new relationships between words and can relate new knowledge to what she already knows.
- **Listening and attention skills:** Reading helps to sharpen your child's listening skills and improve her attention span.
- **Mental awareness:** As a result of your reading, she will also likely become more aware of and take greater interest in her everyday world.
- **Sequencing:** From your reading, she can learn about sequencing in time ("Once upon a time...") and space ("In the first place sat...") which is an important skill for later school learning.
- **Emotions:** As she identifies with the characters in the story, she can sometimes gain a better understanding of her own emotions.
- **Love of books:** As you read to your child, you are imparting to her an important value in your life, namely, your own love of books.
- **Personal Love:** Above all, by setting aside uninterrupted quiet time for reading, you are letting your child know how important she is to you. You are thereby conveying your own personal love for her.

*Information taken from: Growing Together—Vol. 26 No. 5*



### OLEAN EAST VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CENTER

Greetings from East View! We have been happily busy spending our Fridays with our families for our Literacy Fun Fridays. Our parents enjoy hearing our book of the day, participating in the activity that follows, reading to their child, and finally having a healthy lunch.

We enjoyed learning about germs from the school nurse. She showed us how to properly wash our hands, as well as how to help keep germs away. We've also

enjoyed our fourth grade Reading Buddies that come into our room to read some stories to our class.

Miss Pam has visited our room and brought her special friend Miss Addy with her. They shared a story about staying safe and how to find help. The children really enjoyed dressing Miss Addy for the weather, and look forward to her next visit!

### OLEAN CENTER

Happy New Year to all! Winter is here, and Miss Abby's class has spent a lot of time learning about and celebrating the season!

There was an excellent turnout for the Breakfast of Champions in December. We would like to thank all of the Champions who were able to join us for breakfast!

Our center has read the book, "See How They Grow: Owls". After reading the book and studying owls and how they change as they grow, our students were able to see three live owls that were brought to the Center. The students all really enjoyed this opportunity to see the owls and learn a little bit more about them.



### WARSAW CENTER

As we drive around this time of year, we see many snowmen - snowwomen, snow families, and even snow forts. It's nice to see that people are trying to enjoy these winter months.

In December we had our Breakfast of Champions, where fathers, uncles, brothers, and friends came to have breakfast with all our classrooms. Miss Karen the cook made a fantastic breakfast of eggs, ham, toast and

fresh fruit. The children really enjoyed having everyone there. We would like to thank all who joined us and made this day truly special.



Miss Sue from Cooperative Extension came to visit the children in December and Miss Rachael will be visiting in January. Project read continues so please make sure you are marking your calendars and sending them back to your child/children's teacher.

Miss Kathi's class learned all about penguins. Miss Kathi's class has a grandfather helping in the classroom almost every day - the children enjoy having him. The children really enjoy having him here. Miss Kathi's class went upstairs to

Field trips have included the YMCA, Home Depot, and BOCES. More field trips are planned.

Miss Sue's class began their Cavity Free Kids CHOMPERS program in December teaching the importance of early oral health. They will be having "Toothy Tuesdays".

Miss Laura's class continues to have the letter people visit every week. Teaching the children what the letters look like, how to write them and how to pronounce them.

### **SALAMANCA CENTER**

The Breakfast Of Champions activity last month was a success. Everyone had fun with the father/child activity of making a flagpole donated by Home Depot. Also they enjoyed great breakfast made by Mrs. V.

Carol's classroom has been busily working on the Scott Foresman Curriculum. In January they were concentrating on the question "How do people and animals change?"

Danielle's room is working on the Letter People –M (My Five Senses), N (My Name) and O (Opposites). She has started the "Chompers" program and has been using the program for 5 weeks. They have been learning about how to properly take care of their teeth and gums, different types of teeth and how they are used and the germs that can be found in your mouth. Next they are talking about problems that the germs cause in their mouths

Penny hosted a Parent Center Meeting with the highlight of a Co-Operative Extension workshop for parents.

The center had a Family Literacy Fun Night for parents and children. Mrs. V. served a delicious meal. The activities centered on the book "Penguin Pete". Each parent and child did a craft together making a penguin costume. Another Family Fun Night is planned for next month. Also for February the children will decorate and write a letter to their parent, then we'll go to the Post Office to mail it.



### **OLEAN WASHINGTON WEST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CENTER**

The Washington West UPK classroom was recently learning about the change of seasons. The children were very excited about the new fallen snow and the fun they would have playing in it.

We began our activities with reading "The Hat" by Jan Brett. We discussed how to dress properly for the winter weather. The children then were able to pick out a hat that had been made and donated to Head Start.



Program. For more information, please call the Elementary School at 716-676-8020. Hope to see you there!

Later in the week the children made decorations for the hallway outside our classroom. They were very excited to make snowflakes that would hang on the walls for everyone to see. The children enjoyed all the winter books we read and the winter games we played.

*For information about employment opportunities – including as substitutes*

*- at Head Start, contact:*

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## FRANKLINVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CENTER

Greetings from the snow cave!

For those of you who have never visited our classroom in the middle of winter, our windows are usually covered about half way up by snow. This winter is no exception! Soon Staff will have to lift our daily “Weather Helper” so that they can see outside to make their forecast☺

Despite the cold temperatures and the snow, our classroom is still as bright and cheerful as the spring days we are all looking forward to. From the colorful aquarium scene on the window, to the winter penguin scene in the hall, our children have been busy and creative! The children are finishing their unit on Dinosaurs and a fun filled week of debates over whether the “T-Rex” is truly the biggest and coolest of them all.

On Thursday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>, we will be going on a field trip to Shea’s in Buffalo to see Sesame Street Live! This show is a great opportunity for our families (and staff) to enjoy a Broadway quality show here in our neck of the woods.

As the year is speeding quickly by, we also find ourselves planning our annual Pre-K Information Night for the 2011-2012 school year. This meeting is open to all and will be held on Thursday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm. in the Franklinville Elementary School Library. If you have a child who will be 4 years old by December 1, 2011, please join us to apply for either our Head Start Full Day Pre-K or the Franklinville UPK Half Day

## Best Practices for Helping Children Build Confidence, Self-Control, and Communication Skills

Model the skills. Call to mind the old saying, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” When it comes to teaching children, this idea is profoundly true. Children are always watching and listening to their teachers: everything we do teaches a less. *And parents are a child’s first teacher!*

Talk about the skills. Children’s books provide an intriguing source of discussion material. The plots can often serve as a springboard for a discussion that will increase a child’s understanding and expand their thinking about social and emotional themes and skills.

Practice the skills. Children need opportunities to use and improve new skills. Practice helps children make sense of what they are learning. Offer relevant opportunities to practice using a skill. This makes the skill more meaningful and, therefore, easier to master. Practice strengthens brain connections associated with new skills, which helps children retrieve information and knowledge faster. For practice to be effective, children need feedback from you, and they also need to do their own self-evaluation. If they are practicing something the wrong way, they are not achieving their goals. Feedback helps children learn the correct way to use a skill.

Acknowledge efforts. When you see children sharing, being responsible, showing empathy, and/or practicing

persistence or other positive traits, acknowledge them with specific feedback. For example, you might say “Laurie, I noticed you helping Bobbi carry the paint brushes to the sink. It sure is easier when two people work together, isn’t it?”

Reflect and review progress. One of the most disheartening by-products of our fast paced lifestyle is the lack of time for reflection. Yet we are often reminded of how critical taking time to examine progress is to the achievement of goals. As children practice new skills, remember how important it is to provide feedback and support and to encourage children to think about how they feel about their progress and accomplishments.