



## DIRECTOR'S CORNER — GETTING KIDS TO CLEAN UP

How do early childhood teachers do it anyway? Are they issued magic wands or what? You've seen it happen. The classroom can be a total mess after a busy morning of play, and somehow they get the kids to clean it up. While I can't tell you where to buy a magic wand for home use, I can let you in on some of the trade secrets:

**1-In the classroom, teachers label storage space.** Containers, shelves, cupboards, you name it, teachers have probably stuck a picture or words on it. Why? Because cleaning up is easier for kids when they can see where to put their playthings. A toy truck gets parked in front of a picture of a toy truck. Wooden beads go in a tub marked with a string of beads. What's more, there's an added bonus academically. When kids put real objects next to pictures, they're doing more than being neat. They are practicing the early reading and math skill of matching. *At home have your child help you draw or cut out pictures to label the shelves, boxes, and drawers where she keeps her belongings.*

**2-Teachers suggest categories.** Being told to "clean up" is overwhelming to young children. Teachers simplify the task by helping kids concentrate on putting away one group of items at a time. "Let's put all the crayons away first, and then all the scissors." While children are busily searching for the crayons among scraps of paper and scissors, they're strengthening another thinking skill—the ability to classify and create groupings. Putting together a group of

items involves some complicated thought processes, including reasoning, discrimination, and analyzing. *At home, suggest that your child first pick up all his toy cars. Then see if he can think up another category. Socks? Books?*

**3-Teachers help kids remember the steps of cleaning up.** Kids are learning that it's wise to do things in certain order. That's why teachers take time to go over the steps of various tasks frequently. "The bucket goes under the water table first, then you pull out the plug and let the water drain out." When someone helps children figure out a logical order in which to do things, they're supporting skills in prediction and in understanding cause and effect. *At home, you can help your child think of the steps to a task. "Put the placemats on the table, and then get the dishes out."*

It takes time to help kids learn about cleaning up. It means breaking down tasks that have become second nature to us as adults. Although it takes time, chances are that the long-term results will be worth it! Better, in fact, than if you'd simply waived that magic wand!

Hope you find these clean-up tips helpful!

—Debbie



## Activities That Build Skills Needed For Handwriting

Many preschool and kindergarten children need to build strength in their hands and develop fine motor coordination in order to master letter writing skills later on. You can help your children reinforce fine motor control by providing them with these activities:

- \*Provide play dough and clay for children to manipulate. Use cooking cutters, rolling pins, potato mashers, or garlic presses with the play dough. This helps to strengthen hand muscles and coordination.
- \*Involve children in measuring and mixing the ingredients in a favorite family recipe or try making your own play dough: 2 cups flour, one cup salt, two tablespoons of salad oil, and one cup water. Let them squeeze the mixture with their hands until it's blended.
- \*Allow children to manipulate desk tools such as hole punchers, staplers, blunt-end scissors, stamp pads/stampers, paper clips, etc.
- \*Have your children help you with household tasks: folding clothes and napkins, dusting furniture, drying silverware, pouring their own milk or juice, mixing foods, kneading dough.
- \*Provide tools for writing. Make available pencils, crayons, markers and paper for exploration. Draw to music with markers, colored chalk, etc. Select songs that have varying tempos.
- \*Other household tools and utensils for developing finger and hand strength and coordination include pump and spray bottles and turkey basters, flour sifters, kitchen tongs and tweezers of various sizes, clothespins, squeeze bottles, sponges to wring and squeeze, and wooden hammers to use with golf tees to pound into Styrofoam blocks.

## ST. PATRICK'S DAY FUN!

Delight your children on St. Patrick's Day with a surprise visit from some mischievous leprechauns. Before your children wake up on March 17th, leave some playful clues as evidence of a visit from these mythical characters. Try these ideas or create some mischief of your own:

- \*Squeeze a few drops of green food coloring in the toilet*
- \*Sprinkle a little green glitter over counters or near the door*
- \*Leave a trail of chocolate gold foil coins or Andes mints*
- \*Leave behind a small old buckle, a tiny shoe, or glove*
- \*Use a baby shoe dipped in flour to make footprints*
- \*Make a mess in a cupboard, a shelf, or a closet*
- \*Wake the children up with Celtic music!*



## Green Potato Recipe

This recipe is good for St. Patrick's Day or any day there is a nip in the air:

|                         |                   |                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6 medium sized potatoes | 3 stalks broccoli | 1/4 cup milk                        |
| 2 T. butter             | 1 tsp. salt       | 3/4 cup grated cheese (your choice) |

Peel the potatoes and boil or steam them until done. Peel off the tough outer skin from the lower broccoli stems. Steam broccoli until just tender. Chop fine and put into a bowl. Mash the potatoes until they are free of lumps. Then add them to the broccoli. Add 1/2 cup of cheese, butter, salt, milk. Mash all these ingredients until potatoes are pale green with flecks of dark green. If mixture is no longer warm, return to stove briefly. Serve green potatoes warm with sprinkling of the remaining cheese. (You may prepare this recipe by omitting cheese and slightly increasing broccoli and butter).



## Coming Discovery Center Events:

**Sunday, March 12th**

**Daylight Savings Time Begins**

**Monday, March 13th**  
10:00 am

**Music with Laz and San**

**Wednesday, March 15th**

**YELLOW ROOM (YOUNG 5'S)**  
**OPEN HOUSE from 6-7:30PM.**  
**Please RSVP to the front desk**  
**if you and your child will be attending**

**Thursday, March 23rd**  
10:15 am

**Storytelling with Laura**

**Monday, March 27th**  
10:00 am

**Wild Swan Theater presents: "Frog and Toad"**

