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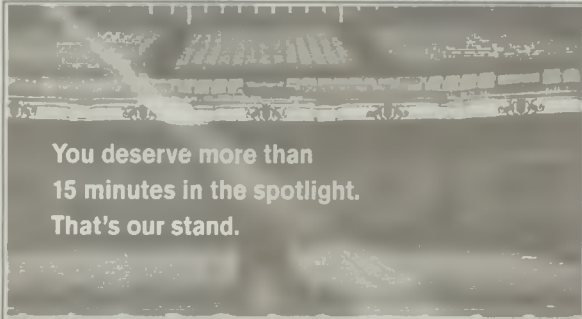


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Preschool Puzzlers

By Fern Sanderson

Preschool Puzzlers is a monthly feature presented by the Jewish Preschool on Sardis. Fern Sanderson is the director of JPOS and a member of the national, state, and local Associations for Education for Young Children, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the National Jewish Early Childhood Network. She can be reached at jpos@sardis@earthlink.net.

Q: At my son's parent-teacher conference, his teacher spoke at length about his social skills. Why is so much emphasis placed on social development?

A: When educators talk about a child's "social competence," they're referring to an array of abilities, behaviors and responses directed at other people in order to build positive human relationships. Learning to work and play well with others is a lifetime goal with the foundation being set in the early childhood years. It is a universal concern for both teachers and parents. A survey of parents of preschool-aged children revealed that the top three priorities for early learning were social skills with peers, language skills and self-help skills. A preschooler's acceptance by peers is not

only correlated with positive attitudes toward school; it is a powerful predictor of social adjustment throughout life.

A preschooler learns about social interactions when relating to others. Every interaction, whether children are meeting for the first time or playing a taking-turns game, offers an opportunity for social learning. Their peers afford preschoolers some of their most exciting, fun experiences. Preschoolers who have positive peer relationships are likely to have positive interactions in elementary school, while children who have difficulty getting along with peers are more likely to experience later academic difficulties and rejection or neglect by their elementary school playmates. Without the skills to play constructively and to develop friendships with peers, children become excluded from opportunities to develop the, more complex skills that are important for future interactions.

Being agreeable and flexible are prerequisites to good peer relations, but they alone are not sufficient. Socially competent preschoolers develop additional,

more sophisticated skills that they use in play. The first of these skills is the ability to tune in to important features of the social context – for example, the ability to recognize other children's preferences, frame of reference, behavior and interests – and to adapt accordingly.

In addition to being generally agreeable and well-attuned to the social context, socially competent children are responsive and able to mesh their behavior with the behavior of their playmates. Children who have social skills are able to do more than merely behave in positive ways. They show responsiveness and sensitivity to the situation and to others. They are able to maintain positive contact and counter rejections with alternate options.

Good communication is a skill that is important to socialization. Well-liked children appear to communicate well. They are likely to be clear in direct communications by saying the other child's name, establishing eye contact or touching the child they intend to address. Well-liked preschoolers more often reply appropriately to other children who speak to them, rather than ignoring the speaker, changing the subject or saying something irrelevant. ☆



Fern Sanderson

Jewish Preschool on Sardis Four-Year-Olds Visit Hunter Farms

Joshua Sorell finds himself back in the saddle again, after visiting with the farm's animals.



The four-year-old classes at The Jewish Preschool on Sardis ushered in autumn, visiting Hunters Farm in Weddington. The children enjoyed a hayride and made friends with the farm's residents – cows, horses, goats, rabbits, pigs and chickens. They compared pumpkins, learned about the inner-workings of the farm, and even managed to sing a few songs.



Ms. Beverly's and Ms. Michael's classes get set for the hayride.

Benjamin Goldman is all smiles during the field trip to Hunters Farm.

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