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### New Year's Resolution issue!

With the start of a new year, we want you and your family to start the year off right.

### Start the Year on the Right Leg...Then Shake it All Around

By: Yesenia Reyes, Early Learning Coalition Staff



Every year we set personal New Year's resolutions, such as having a more active lifestyle, but we cannot forget about our little ones. Instead of setting a New Year's goal for you, set one for the whole family! According to [Bright Futures in Practice: Physical Activity](#), early childhood is a key period for promoting physical activities.

These are the years children begin to develop fundamental motor skills and it is important that we encourage physical activities so these motor-skill patterns last a lifetime. Below you will find some simple activities you can do or play with the whole family.

#### Think Twice on Gift Ideas

Instead of giving your toddler an electronic device, give them a ball, a jump rope, a hopscotch, etc., to promote physical activity.

#### Play "Simon Says" Together.

Rules:

-One person is Simon and the rest stand in a line facing Simon.

-The 'Simon' calls out instructions like this, "Simon says touch your nose." Everyone else has to touch their nose.

-If the 'Simon' calls out an instruction without saying "Simon says" then everyone should ignore the instruction.

-If you don't follow a Simon-says instruction you are out.

- If you do follow an instruction that doesn't have-Simon says command you are also out.

-The person who wins can then be Simon next time.

### Enjoy a Day at the Park

Go to your nearest neighborhood park and play a game of tag, tumble in the grass, hop like rabbits and/or gallop like horses. Don't have a whole day? Enjoy an afternoon. Can't go to your nearest park? Play in your back/front yard. There are no excuses!



#### References:

*Bright Futures-A National Health Promotion*

Initiative: <http://www.brightfutures.org>

Playground Fun: <http://www.playgroundfun.org.uk>

## Traditional Drop-Side Cribs Have Been Outlawed

After more than 30 infant and toddler deaths last year, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) officially outlawed the manufacture, sale, and re-sale of drop-side cribs. While these cribs were initially designed to aid parents in easily lifting their babies up and out via a drop-down side-rail, the result of malfunctioning and cheaply-made parts often led to tragedy as infants got caught in the partially detached rails.

More than nine million drop-side cribs have been recalled in the past five years. Parents and caregivers are advised to check that each part on the rail of their drop-down crib is properly and securely assembled. Also, please ensure your crib has not been recalled. For more information, please review the CPSC's press release on crib-safety at <http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PREREL/prhtml11/11074.html>.

## Make Sure Your Children's Toys are Safe

By Christine R. Hughes, Ph.D. ELC Research & Evaluation Analyst

Each holiday season brings many new toys for our children! After the gifts have been unwrapped, parents must always be aware of the potential safety hazards of the thousands of toys intended for young children.

Perhaps the most basic ways to ensure a child's safety when playing with any toy would be by (1) reading the instructions and using the item properly and (2) supervising the child during play. These will often reduce the chance of harm or injury to a child.

Also, there are a few common dangers to watch out for before giving a toy to a young child:

1. sharp edges & sharp points
2. small parts
3. loud noises

4. propelled objects
5. electric toys



Often a toy is thought to be safe and appropriate for kids, but later we realize it poses a danger. Typically in this case, the toy or object will be recalled by the manufacturer. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission monitors and shares information with the public about which toys (and products in general) have been recalled. You can find this valuable information on their website

<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prerel.html>. On the go and need some answers? Access the U.S. Public Interest Research Group's <http://toysafety.mobi/> from your mobile phone.

Reviewing the safety rules and knowing common hazards to young children will ensure that our children are safe during the holidays, and all the days to come!

*References:*

*U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: <http://www.cpsc.gov/National>  
Network for Child Care: <http://www.nncc.org/health/toy.safety.html>; U.S. Public Interest Research Group: <http://www.uspirg.org/>*

## New Year, New Ways to Improve Child Literacy Skills

By: Yesenia Reyes, Early Learning Coalition Staff

Start the New Year by helping your toddler improve their literacy skills. As a parent you can help develop your child's reading skills with just a few minutes a day. Simply talking to your child; for example, asking what happened in preschool/daycare will help improve your child's ability to understand language. Below are two more activities you can do with your toddler throughout the year!

### My Name has Letters

With this game your child will learn that his or her name is made up of letters and start to recognize these letters and how they sound.

You will need some materials for this activity:

- Plastic 3-D Letters
- Paper
- Markers
- Basket



1. Using the plastic letters, spell your child's name on the paper.

2. Trace the letters with the marker so that your child's name is written on the paper. Color in the letters all the same color.

3. Place the plastic letters that are in your child's name in the shallow basket.

4. Have the child pick letters from the basket and match them one by one to the corresponding letters on the paper. Continue until the child spells out his or her name.

### Jump for a Rhyme

Start by making two lists, one with pairs of rhyming words and another with pairs of non-rhyming words. You want to first model this activity to your child so they understand how to play.

1. Say a pair of words that rhyme, for example cat-bat. Tell the child that when the words rhyme you will jump.

2. Say a pair of non-rhyming words and explain to the child since the words do not rhyme you will not jump.

3. Play the game with your child beginning with several pairs of words that rhyme and then add some pairs that do not.



Resources:

*A Child Becomes a Reader: Proven Ideas From Research for Parents*, National Institute for Literacy

*Get Ready to Read! (GRTR!)*, [www.getreadytoread.org](http://www.getreadytoread.org)

## ELC and You- Quality Counts

By Fiorella Altare, ELC Fiscal Analyst, and Yesenia Reyes, ELC Staff



Quality Counts is a voluntary rating system that reviews early learning programs according to clearly defined, high-quality standards using a five-star method of evaluation to help you make informed choices about the best care and education for your child. Quality Counts is open to any licensed and license-exempt center and family child care homes, including MDCPS pre-k programs in Miami-Dade County that want to participate. Quality Counts evaluates areas such as:

- teacher qualifications
- learning environment
- curriculum
- teacher/child ratios
- family engagement
- program administration

Participating programs benefit from a variety of support services modified to their needs, including technical assistance, grants, scholarships and wage stipends. Quality Counts is proving that balancing higher standards with professional incentives helps to steadily raise the quality of services for young children and families. For a more detailed description on areas Quality Counts evaluates visit <http://www.thechildrenstrust.org/quality-counts>.

Understanding the life-changing impact of quality early learning programs, The Children's Trust, Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, and The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami have made a significant investment in a quality rating

improvement system. For a list of early care and education centers and family child care homes currently participating in Quality Counts, please visit:

<http://elcmdm.org/QualityCounts/PDFs/qccurrentcenters1110.pdf>.

## Local Events for the Whole Family!

### Let's Celebrate the Miami-Dade Public Library's 40th Birthday!

Celebrate the Library's birthday with stories, songs, and activities for toddlers and preschoolers

**When:** Wednesday, January 26, 2011

**Time:** 10:30 a.m.

**Where:** Hialeah Gardens Branch

11300 N.W. 87 Court

Hialeah Gardens, FL 33018

305-820-8520

<http://www.mdpls.org>

\*Too far? Check the Miami-Dade Public Library Web site for anniversary events in your neighborhood library branch!

### Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Present ZING ZANG ZOOM

Join the Ringling Bros and Zingmaster Alex in this fun adventure!

**When:** January 8 through 18

**Time:** Varied showtimes

**Where:** American Airlines Arena

601 Biscayne Blvd.

Miami, FL 33132

For more information on ticket prices and showtimes, please visit

[www.ticketmaster.com](http://www.ticketmaster.com)

## Parent Space

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe would like parents to have an area in the *Parent Link* newsletter that you can call your own. This space will provide advice, tips, jokes, stories, and/or even job opportunities that other local parents wish to share.

So don't be shy; send us something you would like to share at [info@elcmdm.org](mailto:info@elcmdm.org). Please note that included submissions may be edited for clarity, etc. We look forward to hearing from you.

## About the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe

The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring high-quality early care and education for children in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Through a variety of affordable and innovative early education and voluntary pre-kindergarten programs, the Coalition serves more than 50,000 children ages birth to 12-years-old and their families.

Founded in 2000, the Early Learning Coalition is among 31 similar organizations in the State of Florida established following the enactment of the School Readiness Act, which consolidated Florida's early learning services into one integrated program.