

# SUCCESS STORIES

Edited by Exchange intern,  
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*Exchange* celebrates the creativity of early childhood programs in creating solutions to everyday challenges. We invite you to share your ideas with the readers of *Exchange* magazine.

We are looking for all sorts of ideas, both big and small. It could be a technique you use for training staff, a fundraising idea, a fee collections tip, a public relations idea, a financial management tool, a program evaluation approach, a paperwork organization method, or anything that makes your program work better.

Go to [www.ChildCareExchange.com](http://www.ChildCareExchange.com) and click on "Success Stories." Identify the challenge or problem you faced; your solution to this problem; and some details about this solution so others might follow in your footsteps. Be specific! Thank you for your willingness to share your innovations with *Exchange* readers! Read on to learn about three real life success stories.



## **Gale Wiik, Breezy Point Day School, Langhorne, Pennsylvania**

**Making Classroom Science and Math Centers new and exciting in all 15 classrooms.** Many times I would attend conferences or go on a trip and find an item which would pique the interest of a 3-4

year old. Since I only bought one bear claw, giant quartz crystal, alligator puppet, or shark jaw, I devised a system of

boxes for Science and Math Centers. I put all items for a theme into each of 15 Math and 15 Science Center storage bins. We label every item with an Arabic numeral for math and a Roman numeral for science. These bins circulate via teacher power by a schedule which each teacher receives at the beginning of the year. Since 1978 our classrooms have the most interesting, hands-on Math and Science Centers you will ever see. You will never see one ugly pumpkin sitting in the science center from October through spring. Teachers love the materials and will even contribute some of their own treasures. The children are inspired by the props to investigate their own interests. Every summer we clean them up and add to them.

## **Leanne Grace, Rainbow Hill, Shickshinny, Pennsylvania**

As a program that begins a partnership with many new families each September, we realize the importance of establishing safety and trust. As a staff we began to think about "What does this look like, feel like, and sound like to families?" During a staff meeting we challenged ourselves to be specific in thinking about safety and trust in concrete terms and created a display for families. The display included pictures of the current children and families, newsletters, and lists of how safety and trust present themselves from different points of view. For example, from a child's perspective,

safety and trust may be found in consistency (a schedule), emphasis on the positives, a friendly environment that encourages independence, and adults showing interest in children's discoveries. Similar concepts were also listed from the families' and staff's perspective. We found that when we take the time to establish meaningful relationships with families and find ways to support their parenting efforts, we can make a difference in their lives. Staff discussions revealed the idea that perhaps families may not actually see and understand the work that staff does in establishing safety and trust. This work helped staff to think from the family's perspective and to be more intentional in working together with families.

## **Karen Stephens, Illinois State University Child Care Center, Normal, Illinois**

A "dangling" detail I find easy to lose track of is keeping batteries fresh in our program's emergency radio and flashlight supplies. I dread the thought of needing emergency supplies just to find them "out of juice." So, to keep up-to-date and prepared for emergency situations — even if my memory fails — we maintain small (about 8" square by 2" deep) hand-generated emergency radios. They really work. Camping stores or catalogs carry them as do some radio specialty stores. The small appliance takes about 2 minutes of hand-cranking to generate enough power for the radio and light to work; children can even help with the cranking to help pass the time. It would also give preschoolers to school-agers a constructive "role" to play if you as a center need to respond to an emergency.

The radio accesses local NOAA weather stations and alert broadcasts. Depending on the model, you can get: a built-in light, a red flashing alert light, a siren (in case a group needs to be located by sound rather than sight), and a connection to power up a variety of cell phones. A shoulder-strap carrying case is a nice feature in case hands-free evacuation from a building is needed. And, in case there is information on the radio you only want adults to hear (because it might scare children too much), you can use headphones with the radio for privacy. Whether we live in hurricane, earthquake, flood, or tornado-prone areas — it seems we all sometimes have to face lack of power — even if our buildings have generators. The "human-powered" emergency radio is a low-tech resource we found that helps us keep "current" during quickly changing natural disasters or other emergencies.

