



THE KELTER CENTER

WINTER 2007

*The Kelter Center
11340 W. Olympic Blvd. Suite 140
Los Angeles, CA 90064*

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Kelter Families and Friends

Welcome to the holiday season.

At this time of year, families are spending lots of time together. At our home, we spend evenings reading to one another or silently reading. I have included an article in this newsletter about how parents can make this reading time more valuable.

I recently found about a new section of amazon.com Reading Zoo. Books are reviewed and categorized by grade level on this site, a good resource for finding Christmas or Hanukah gifts. As we move through the holiday season, The Kelter Center family wishes each of you a joyful New Year filled with health, happiness and peace.


STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS AND ANXIETY IN CHILDREN

Part of our job as educators is to be aware of our student's academic needs, as well as how they feel about themselves in a learning environment. When we are trying to teach things to children that are very difficult for their brains to process, the children feel an inevitable amount of stress and anxiety. Children often hold a secret fear that they will never be able to do what is expected of them.

Because of learning stress/anxiety, a student may become easily distracted, fidgety, or experience physical discomfort. They may also introduce irrelevant information, be unwilling to exert any effort, or complain about unimportant items. These behaviors are the defense mechanisms that the child uses unconsciously to help cope with the feelings of stress and anxiety.

The goal of the teacher working with such a child must be to develop ways to diminish or override the student's initial defensive behaviors in order to develop a good working relationship and to help the child develop enough skills to begin the process of mastery. One way the feelings of stress and anxiety are significantly reduced is for the student to begin to achieve some level of mastery over the material that is being learned. As children begin to feel more competent and successful, they start to gain the internal sense that they are indeed capable of learning. As mastery increases, the stress is reduced and the behaviors significantly diminish.

There are a number of strategies that can be helpful in unlocking this difficult cycle.

- 1) Create a positive, non-threatening learning experience.
 - 2) Do hands-on activities, especially games that actively engage the student. If students can move around, they will feel more comfortable.
 - 3) Vary the work pace; alternate more focused, challenging work with high success, familiar activities. In planning how long to work on challenging tasks, err on the side of underestimating the child's ability to stay focused and feel successful.
 - 4) Wait time - when asking a question give the student plenty of time to think through the task before stepping in to help them or ask another question.
 - 5) Offer the student a choice of activities at the beginning of the learning session, "Preview" activities that are coming next so the student knows where she is and where she is going next in the lesson.
 - 6) If the student begins to show signs of anxiety, reassess what you are working on, modify your activity, talk about what is happening and how the two of you can work through the challenge. Move to a familiar activity that you know the student has been successful with in the past.
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WHAT CAN I DO AS A PARENT TO HELP MY CHILD BE A BETTER READER?

The Kelter Center has worked with children for 30 years in the areas of “learning to read” and “reading to learn”. When we work with families, parents often ask, “What can I do at home to enhance my child’s reading skills?”

Research in the early development of reading clearly shows two areas that parents can have an impact upon:

- Vocabulary development
- Reading comprehension

Children learn vocabulary words from the ages 3 to 7 at astonishing rates if they are “talked with” regularly and read to.

Let’s explore this “talked with” idea. Sitting around the dinner table together parents can ask questions like: “What was the tastiest food you ate today, string beans or mashed potatoes? Why did you pick mash potatoes? Why did you not pick string beans?”

What was your favorite activity in school today? Reading circle or your music class? Why?

Describe what you did this morning at school. What did you do first? Next? Next? Last?

Notice that these questions are framed in a very structured manner. Each question gives two possible answers and a framework for the child to organize their thoughts. Questions should be followed with a “why” component.

Most children’s books have very sophisticated vocabulary and ideas. When reading a book to your son or daughter, it would be helpful to read it to yourself first. Ask yourself,

- “What are the key ideas in this book?”
- “Who are the characters? What do they look like, act like, talk like?”
- “When is this taking place?”
- “Where?”
- “What words do I want my son or daughter to learn from this book?”

Once you have answered these questions, you can create an informal introduction to your reading session that will prepare your child to better understand the book.

Here’s an example using the book, “Pink and Say” by Patricia Polacco.

“This book is about two teen-age boys who go to fight in the Civil War. They are both terribly frightened by the fighting. Say is injured and Pink helps him. Let’s read this book to see how Pink does this.”

Then as you read, every page or two you can ask, “What did Pink do now to help Say?”

Patricia Polacco has used some very descriptive verbs in this book. Before and/or during the time you are reading with your child, you can bring these words to life by doing some activities. Three of these verbs are

- Stumbling
- Slogging
- Belly crawling

All these actions describe how Pink and Say are moving, because Say is injured. When one of these words comes up in the story you should create a “kid friendly” definition and have your child pantomime the action.

- Stumbling - “Say is walking very slowly and falling down when his foot hits a stone or a tree root. He is being very unsteady.”
- Slogging - “Say is walking through a stream and his feet can hardly move through the water.”

If you want to find age and grade appropriate books, two excellent resources are Amazon.com, Reading Zoo and Children’s Book World on Pico Boulevard in West Los Angeles.

If you want to learn more about active, interesting ways for your child to learn to read and spell, contact us at the Kelter Center, 310.312.1056 or visit our website at keltercenter.org

“We are not what we know, but what we are willing to learn”.

-Mary Catherine Bateson



The Kelter Center

11340 W. Olympic Blvd.
Suite 140
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Phone:
310.312.1056

Fax:
310.473.2465

E-Mail:
Keltercenter@earthlink.net

BOOKS OF THE QUARTER

Look for these and other books in the Kelter Center waiting area

Eight Nights of Chanukah Lights

By Dian Curtis Regan

This book is a delight for children of all cultures. It takes you on a unique yet simple journey through the eight days of Hanukah through the eyes of one family of four. You will learn what is to happen on each day and what a delight Hanukah can be for the Jewish culture.

Santa Calls

By William Joyce

This is a phenomenal book. In this book you will be taken on a wondrous adventure through the eyes of a young boy named Art Atchinson Aimesworth. He discovers the yuletide flier which takes him for a ride he could have only imagined in his dreams. He also finds himself in toyland before he finds Santa himself. If you have any imagination this book is the one for you

From The Administration

We're on the Web!

See us at:

Keltercenter.org

Dear TKC Families,

It is the New Year and we are all preparing to celebrate our health and love with our families. I want to take the time out to wish each and every one of you a wonderful New Year. I am looking forward to working with all of you this coming year and in the summer. We have a wonderful summer program planned for our TKC kids. We are determined to make each summer a brighter and more adventurous one than the year before. Thank you for all of your support and thank you for being such a delight to work with.

Best regards,

Teroya Roberson
Office Manager

The Kelter Center
11340 W. Olympic Blvd.
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