

The editor of First Steps Families is a mom that had a child in the First Steps program. Hopefully the information shared will provide you with helpful resources for your family. To conserve resources and to make sure you don't miss out on helpful information, please send your e-mail address to Connie Coovert at cccov2@uky.edu to receive the newsletter electronically or call me at 859-257-6427 to arrange for a hard copy.

Connie



THE JOY OF WATCHING THINGS GROW



Spring is here and what better way to spend quality time with your little one than to grow plants! Planting is a wonderful way to generate toddler enthusiasm. When you serve orange or grapefruit slices for a snack, remove the seeds for planting. Citrus fruits, including lemons, make small, lovely plants with shiny, dark green leaves. Your toddler can spoon some dirt into a disposable drinking cup and drop the seeds into the mix. Water the plant every few days and soon two little leaves will sprout. These plants grow slowly, but they are fun to watch. Your child will learn that not only can he enjoy eating the fruit, he can make a plant grow from the

fruit's seeds. Growing grass is another simple way to show your toddler how things grow. Plant grass seeds in a large shallow container. Plastic storage containers work well and are usually inexpensive. Use a nail or drill to add drainage holes at the bottom. Encourage your child to take care of her grass seeds. Are they getting enough water and sunlight? Toddlers love to take charge and help. Once the grass grows, you can use it for other activities with your toddler. Put toy animals in the grass and encourage her to play. Or give your child kids' scissors and let her cut

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE

ZERO TO THREE is a national nonprofit organization that provides parents, professionals and policymakers the knowledge and the know-how to nurture early development.

Neuroscientists have documented that our earliest days, weeks and months of life are a period of unparalleled growth when trillions of brain cell connections are made. Research and clinical experience also demonstrate that health and development are directly influenced by the quality of care and experiences a child has with his parents and other adults.

They know that, as babies, the way we are held, talked to and cared for teaches us about who we are and how we are valued. This profoundly shapes who we will become.

Early experiences set a course for a lifelong process of discovery about ourselves and the world around us. Simply put, early experiences matter and the Zero to Three website has tons of info! They even have a new app called "Let's Play" for parents to use to support early learning. You can download it for free! Check it all out at zerotothree.org

PARENT CONSULTANT

Connie Coovert
229 Taylor Ed. Bldg.
Lexington, KY 40506
1-859-257-6427
cccoov2@uky.edu

We are on the Web:
[http://chfs.ky.gov/
dph/firststeps.htm](http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/firststeps.htm)
Or
kyfirststeps.org

“It's not only children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it, myself.”

Joyce
Maynard



ARE YOU ON THE LISTSERVE?

The First Steps Family Listserv is used to send informational emails from time to time for First Steps families. Examples of things we feel are useful to you and your family may include the monthly First Steps Family Newsletter, the yearly family survey, information about trainings and conferences or other helpful resources for your family, etc. Your email address will not be shared with any other program. The listserv is maintained by the state lead agency staff in Frankfort.

If you know of other First Steps families that are not a part of the listserv they can join by sending a blank email to join-first-steps-families@listserv.ky.gov

If you wish to no longer receive First Steps Family listserv emails, you can unsubscribe by sending a blank email to leave-first-steps-families@listserv.ky.gov

WHAT IS A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?

All young children tend to do best when they are in familiar surroundings with the people and objects that are most important to them. For young children with developmental delays those reassuring surroundings are an essential part of their First Steps services. A natural environment is any place your child and family live, learn and play. It includes:



- *Settings*, such as your home, yard, place of work, child care site, relative's home, park, grocery or library.
- *Materials*, which can be anything found in your child's physical environment—toys, rocks, books, swings, grass, spoons, a high chair, or a favorite wagon .
- *People*, such as parents, siblings, relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers, or anyone else with whom your child may interact.
- *Activities* that incorporate the interests and routines of your child and family. These might be daily activities such as eating, bathing, and dressing; recreation such as playing, reading, walking, camping, swimming and going to the playground; and community participation such as going to worship, celebrating holidays, taking part in cultural practices, going to the grocery store, and riding in different forms of transportation.

Natural environments make every moment of your child's day an opportunity for inclusion and for developing new skills! Studies show that when children are engaged in activities and playing with objects in which they are interested, they learn best.

Through the development of the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), the team must provide individualized services that meet the unique needs of your family and child with developmental delays. Deciding on what those services should be and where they should be provided is a key role of the team. As a parent and IFSP team member, you will be asked to identify the natural environments for your child. Keep your eyes open for opportunities to promote your child's learning and skills. Natural environments are everywhere your child and family are!