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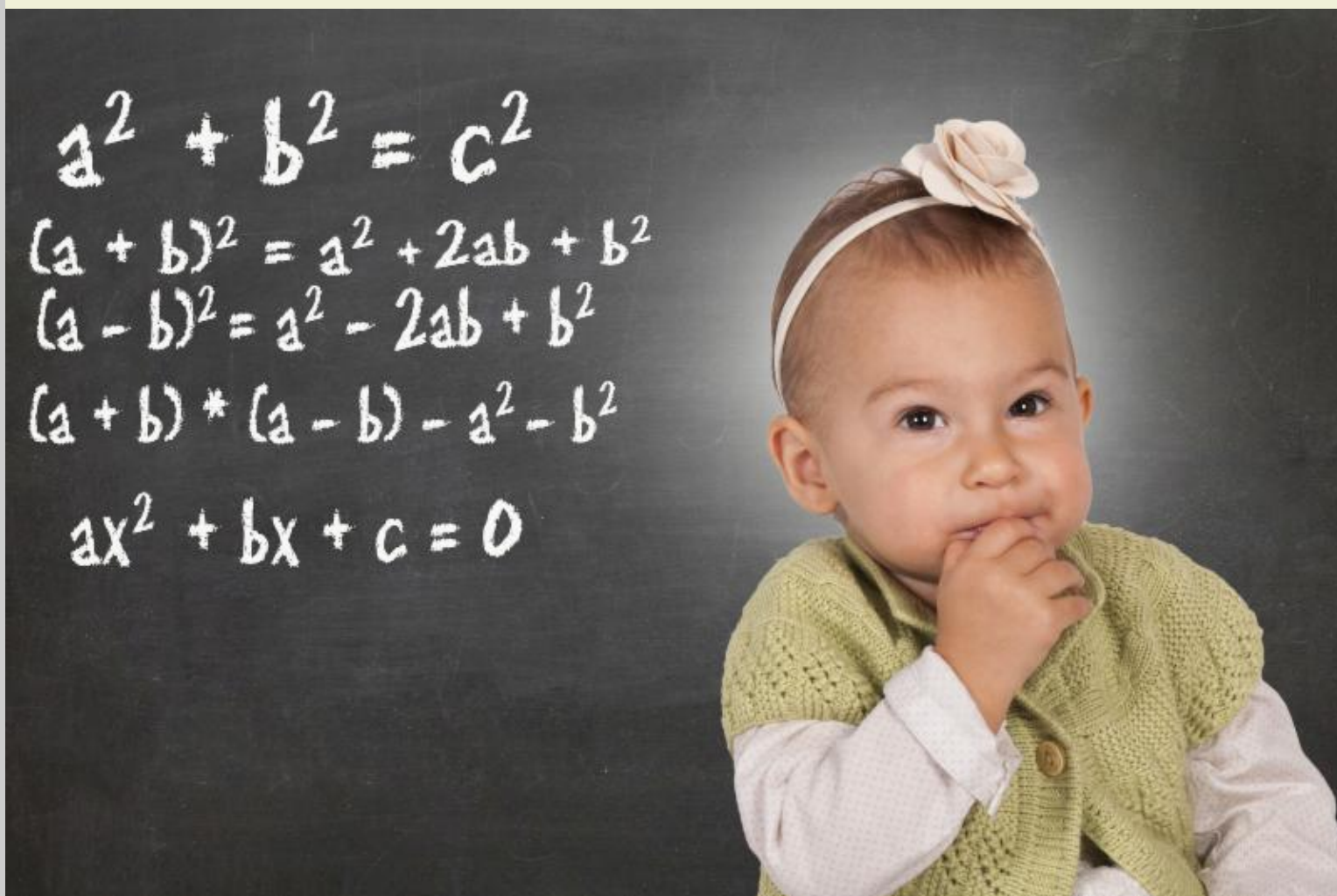
Network News

e-Newsletter of the VA Infant & Toddler Specialist Network

VIRGINIA
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST
NETWORK
"Achieving Excellence in Early Care"

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Issue #24



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Baby Brain Development

Brain development is extremely important for infants and toddlers because a strong foundation

during early childhood can lead to them being dynamic learners throughout their lives. As child care professionals, activities that encourage good brain development such as the ones listed below should be incorporated into daily interactions with infants and toddlers.

Exposure to language

Talk to infants and toddlers all the time. Read board books and other fun stories early and often. Also, talk through your day and include the steps of various activities you complete. This helps introduce them to language which lays the foundation for more challenging learning later in life.

Motor skills

Provide opportunities for babies to use large muscle groups, such as crawling, standing, and walking. Also allow children to strengthen fine motor movements such as grasping by giving them objects to manipulate.

New experiences

A creative environment where children are exposed to a variety of new ideas, objects, and experiences help them develop healthy, curious, baby brains. Researchers from the University of Iowa found that infants look at an object longer the first time it is presented and then pay less attention to it as it becomes more familiar. The researchers advise caregivers not to switch out objects such as books and toys too quickly because not spending enough time studying a new item may not allow infants and toddlers to grasp new items as well and later learning may be affected.

Physical activity

Exercise in early childhood can improve cognitive function, help in processing information from long- and short-term memory, and control spatial reasoning. Infants can exercise with assistance from caregivers with activities such as tummy time. Tummy time helps develop stomach and neck muscle strength while improving head control. It also promotes spatial awareness when an infant sees the world from a different perspective. You can encourage a more active lifestyle in children by getting them involved in various age-appropriate play activities.

Repetition

Infants and toddlers repeat behaviors as a way of learning how the world works. Repetition is a simple way for them to strengthen connections in their brain and memorize interesting stories or important information. Embrace the requests to read the same book numerous times as it is the way young children learn.

Sensory activity

Hands on activities and sensory play are a great way to get young brains working. Encourage exploration by engaging the senses of infants and toddlers with interesting textures, colors, music, and foods. Provide a diversity of sensory experiences. Sensory bins containing items such as balls or blocks can be fun options for this type of play.

Social Interaction

Infants and toddlers should be actively engaged by their caregivers and other children to help encourage healthy brain development and social skills. Every day, loving interaction with caregivers is what matters most. Talking to infants and toddlers not only encourages growth in the language center of their brains but it also helps them become better learners through making and strengthening connections in their brains. Responding to a child is one of the best things you can do for their growing brains. Touch and nurturing responses help soothe infants' nervous systems and prevent the stress hormone, cortisol, from interfering with development.

Avoid toxic stress and develop positive relationships

Toxic early life stress may be triggered by family poverty and exposure to violence and neglect and constantly triggers the stress response in a child which can damage the mind and body. [Click here](#) to view a video on how toxic stress can affect healthy development from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Infants and toddlers who have secure attachments to caregivers who respond to them warmly may be less negatively affected by difficult experiences they face.

References:

The ABC's of Baby Brain Development

<https://www.parents.com/baby/development/intellectual/the-abcs-of-baby-brain-development/>)

The Science of Child Development and Learning

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/science8_15.pdf

News You Can Use: Early Experiences Build the Brain

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/article/news-you-can-use-early-experiences-build-brain>

Brain Development of Children from 0-6 Years-Facts Every Parent Should Know

<https://www.adam-mila.com/brain-development-children-0-6-years/>

"Toxic Stress" Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>

RESOURCE SPOTLIGHT ON:

Click [Milestone Tracker App](#) to download

Milestones matter to providers and parents! Track children's milestones from age 2 months to 5 years with CDC's easy-to-use illustrated checklists; get tips from CDC for encouraging a child's development; and find out what to do if you are ever concerned about how a child is developing.

From birth to age 5, children should reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act, and move. Photos and videos in this app illustrate each milestone and make tracking them for children easy and fun!

The new app offers:

- Interactive milestone checklists for children ages 2 months through 5 years, illustrated with photos and videos
- Tips and activities to help children learn and grow
- Information on when to act early and talk with a doctor about developmental delays
- A personalized milestone summary that can be easily shared with the doctor and other care providers
- Reminders for appointments and developmental screenings



Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities:



Spring 2018 Training Locations and Dates	
Norfolk	February 2 and 3
Charlottesville	March 17 and 24
Fredericksburg	May 3 and 10

8:30 am to 4:00 pm

[Click here for the Spring 2018 1-2-3 READ! brochure](#)

[Register online at www.va-itsnetwork.org](http://www.va-itsnetwork.org)



Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) Modules 1 & 2

Spring 2018 Training	Locations and Dates
Altavista	February 17 and 24
Fairfax	March 9 and 10
Hopewell	March 10 and 24
Roanoke	April 7 and 14

8:30 am to 4:00 pm

[Click here for the Spring 2018 CSEFEL brochure](#)

[Register online at www.va-itsnetwork.org](http://www.va-itsnetwork.org)

Did you know...

...that it is time to register for the annual spring institute?

An Invitation from the VA Infant & Toddler Specialist Network

Please join us at one of these four exciting institutes for early care providers who serve infants and toddlers!

March 10	Staunton
March 24	Reston
April 14	Fredericksburg
April 28	Hampton

Institutes will be held 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Working lunch will be provided.

These exciting professional development institutes will focus on infant and toddler brain development and the important role child care professionals play during these critical years. Hands-on workshop sessions will provide ideas to help encourage brain development through daily routines and play.

Information and online registration available at www.va-itsnetwork.org



The VA Infant & Toddler Specialist Network is a program of Child Development Resources, and is supported by the Virginia Department of Social Services Grant #93.575, with funds made available to Virginia from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Registration
Now Open!



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For more information contact Amy Stutt, VA ITSN Statewide Director at (757)378-3167.

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