

Seeds



A publication for parents of preschool children
in the Schalmont Central School District

of Learning

- 2 Turning a new leaf
- 3 Suggested reading list
- 4 A word from your district

Who says "It's not easy being green?"

Turn on the news or check the morning paper, and you're likely to find an alarming account of global warming, polluted lakes, or some other pending environmental crisis. At times, these reports seem so grim that parents may wonder how they can possibly discuss these issues, and others like them, with their children without frightening them.

In his book, *EcoKids: Raising Children Who Care for the Earth*, Dan Chiras says that in order "to forge a sustainable future, we need citizens who care for the earth...and we need generations who live according to their values and convictions and who can effect positive change in their lives and the lives of others."

As hard as Kermit the Frog may find it, being "green" (a buzz word for environmentally conscious) is not as hard as you might think. In fact, making a few simple changes to your daily activities can actually make a world of difference for our environment while raising your children's awareness of the role they can play to help preserve it.

Get "green" early

Because children are naturally inquisitive—especially about the world around them including plants, animals,

insects, weather, pollution, and more—it's never too early to help them develop a sense of respect and caring for the environment.

"The sooner children understand how their actions impact the environment and why it's important to protect our natural heritage, the more likely it is that their actions will last a lifetime," says Robert Moore, executive director of Environmental Advocates of New York.

...making a few simple changes to your daily activities can actually make a world of difference for our environment while raising your children's awareness of the role they can play to help preserve it.

Getting youngsters to participate in eco-friendly efforts, such as recycling or growing a garden, can help them gain a better sense of the importance of protecting and preserving the earth, while fostering a love of nature. And, as with most tasks that children accomplish on their own, you may find that your kids take pride in their earth-saving efforts and will continue to develop their own environmental values as they grow.





2

Turning a new leaf

A good way to get your children to start adopting earth-friendly habits is through example and education. If they grow up watching and learning how to integrate eco-friendly habits into their daily lives, children will find these practices become second nature to them in the future.

“Our daughter didn’t pay much attention to our family’s recycling efforts until we explained the benefits of recycling in terms she could understand,” says a mother of a four year old. “We explained that her empty juice bottles are sent to a special factory where they are turned into new, pretty items rather than sitting in a big garbage pile for years and years. We even visited a local boutique where products made of recycled materials are sold. Now she tells everyone her favorite stuffed animal is made of ‘used stuff!’”

Consider trying a few of the following eco-friendly activities as a way to encourage your kids to be proactive about protecting the earth:

- ▶ **Set up recycling bins** in your home to collect paper, plastic bottles, cans, and glass. (Most areas have weekly recycling services to pick up the items.) Delegate your kids to be the “official recyclers” and have them collect all recyclable items in your house. You’ll be surprised what they find! This task also helps children practice their sorting and matching skills.
- ▶ **Conserve water and energy** by having the whole family make a habit of turning off the lights when they leave a room and turning off the water when brushing their teeth. Explain that water and energy are valuable resources that shouldn’t be wasted. A mother of three children took water conservation a step further by putting a barrel in her backyard to catch rainwater. She lets her kids use this water, instead of water from the garden hose, for outdoor fun, such as filling up watering cans and squirt toys, giving their action figures baths, etc.
- ▶ **Teach your children to respect nature**—plants, animals and insects—by visiting a petting zoo, botanical garden,



“If you throw an aluminum juice or soda can into the trash instead of the recycling bin, it will sit around in a landfill for another 80 to 100 years—that’s how long it takes to decompose.”

— From Parents Magazine

museum, nature preserve, or even your own backyard for a hands-on experience and a close-up look at the wonders of nature. Using a magnifying glass to get a closer look at insects, or peeping at birds and other animals with binoculars, might stimulate your child’s curiosity and interest in science, too.

- ▶ **Get creative and find new ways to reuse household items.** Use egg cartons for paint palettes or to hold small items, such as beads and buttons, for making crafts. Empty paper towel and toilet paper rolls can become horns, spyglasses, or craft creations. Cardboard, paper bags, and other used paper can become your child’s sketchpad.
 - ▶ **Visit your local library** and sign out books on wildlife, nature, pollution, etc. Many books have such vibrant pictures it might be hard to get your children to put them down. Use these teachable moments to talk to your kids about why the earth and every living thing needs to be treated kindly.
 - ▶ **Start an anti-litterbug club with your kids.** Anytime you’re out for a walk, hike, or bike ride, bring a bag with you to collect litter. Teach your kids how litter can harm animals (if they eat plastic, they’ll get sick) and plants (damaged soil doesn’t provide nutrients and vitamins for plant and flower growth).
- The pressure for families to be “green” in today’s world can be overwhelming and sometimes impractical. Not everyone can replace the family car with a bicycle to cut down on pollution. But the reality is that small steps, such as walking your child to a nearby friend’s house instead of driving, can truly make a difference.

Suggested reading list

Once all the empty cans, bottles, and old papers in your home have been put in your family's recycling bins, settle down with your little ones and enjoy some books that are sure to make your kids proud of their earth-friendly actions.

Berenstain Bears Don't Pollute (Anymore) by Stan & Jan Berenstain

In this book, readers learn that careless citizens pose a threat to Bear Country's environment, so Brother and Sister Bear form the earthsavers club. Their spirited ecological efforts deliver a message about the need to mend the citizens' polluting and wasteful ways.

Why Should I Recycle? by Jen Green

What if everybody threw away old bottles and newspapers, littering the world with glass and plastic and



tin cans that should be recycled and made into new products? Mr. Jones takes his students on a class trip to a recycling plant where they learn the value of recycling.

The Wartville Wizard,

by Don Madden, tells a story about a tidy old man who spends his time cleaning up litter that the thoughtless people of Wartville leave behind. When he tires of his task, Mother Nature gives him "power over trash," and he decides to make litter go back and stick to the person who threw it. This book reinforces the importance of respecting the earth.



The Lorax, by Dr. Seuss, offers an ecological warning about the dangers of cutting down trees without

replacing them, pollution, and general disregard for the earth's environment. The Lorax is the only one who can convince the evil Once-ler to change his ways and save the earth that he ruined.

Planting a Rainbow, by Lois Ehlert,

shows a child learning about the yearly cycle through the process of planning, planting, and picking flowers in a garden. Mother and child plant bulbs in the fall, order seeds in the winter, wait for the first signs of growth in the spring, select seedlings in the summer, and watch their rainbow grow!



"My son is only two years old, but he already helps me with our vegetable garden," says one father who encouraged his son to start the garden with him. "Together we plant seeds and seedlings. He uses his own watering can to feed the plants, and the best part is that he's learning how to care for Mother Nature's children."

Seeds of Learning



4

Playing in a winter wonderland

Although it's cold outside, winter is a wonderful time for everyone in the family to play together. Here are some ideas to try:

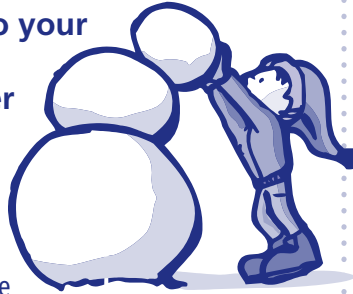
Grow some snow

Snow days offer lots of fun fitness opportunities. Children can learn the concepts of big, bigger and biggest, and increase their arm, leg and torso strength as they roll snowballs through the snow and watch them grow.

Encourage the whole family to make snowballs and compare the sizes. Once inside, you can snuggle together and see how your snow creations compare with those in such picture books as *The Biggest Best Snowman* by Margery Cuyler and *Snowballs* by Lois Ehlert.

Coming to your backyard: the Winter Olympics

Grab your sleds, head for the closest hill and see how far you can travel. Hold long-jump competitions in the snow or make snowballs and use them for a shot-put event.



Create rainbows in the snow

Fill squeeze and spray bottles (available at dollar stores and pharmacies) with water dyed with food coloring. Using the snow as their canvas, encourage your budding Picassos to paint in colorful ways. This type of activity encourages arm, hand and finger muscle strength.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Kindergarten Registration will be held in March 2008 at all 3 of Schalmont's Elementary Schools. The dates are:

Mariaville March 7th, 2008 1:30 pm (864-5411)

Jefferson March 11th, 2008 AM and PM sessions (355-1342)

Woestina March 13th, 2008 1:30 pm (887-5600)

Please call your school for further information.

Early Spring Preschool

Story Hours



Jefferson School

March 5, 12, 19, 26 1pm

Please call 355-1342 to register.

Mariaville School

March 7, 14, April 4, 11

Please call 864-5411 to register.

Woestina School

March 4, 11, 18, 25

Please call 887-5600 to register.

If you have concerns about your child's development...

The Schalmont Central School District wants to help ensure that children receive any special services they may need as early as possible.

If you are concerned about your child's development in any area, first speak with your pediatrician. If you still have questions or concerns, please contact Shari Lontrato, chairperson, Committee on Preschool Special Education at 887-5600 x6503 or 355-9200 x4018. She can help begin the process of determining what services your child may need before entering school. For more information on the special education process, go to www.schalmont.org. click on Special Education and follow the link to the preschool information.

Board of Education

Michael DellaVilla, President
Robert Sheehan, Vice President

Trustees

Sandra Beloncik
Albert Falcone
Denise Pendt
Carl Strang
Kevin Thompson

Superintendent

Dr. Valerie Kelsey

Published by the Schalmont Central School District in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service
Tara Mitchell, Editor

Schalmont Central School District

401 Duaneburg Road
Schenectady, New York 12306

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Schenectady, NY
Permit No. 703

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Check out all the Schalmont information on our Web site at: www.schalmont.org

Winter 2008: **Raising a "green" child**