

80 - Screen-Free Summer

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Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Host Dr. Shipley: Hello, everyone, and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. And as always, we will be uploading a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Host Dr. Heald: Twice a month, we'll come to you with a 10-minute professional development with new ideas for you to try. Don't forget to subscribe to the podcast for notifications about future episodes.

Today, we are so excited to have with us Diane Salazar. Diane currently serves as principal of Faith North Early Childhood Learning Center for the Phoenix Elementary School District. Faith North ECLC provides developmentally appropriate play experience instruction in a nurturing child-centered environment. Diane also serves as the vice president of membership and communications for the Arizona Association for the Education of Young Children.

Diane, welcome and thank you for being with us today.

Diane Salazar: Thanks so much for having me. I appreciate the opportunity.

Host Dr. Shipley: Diane, we're so super excited. And when you turned in what you were going to present today, I was like, oh yes, I'm so glad somebody's gonna talk about this. So the title of your session is A Screen-Free Summer, which is vital for all of us to understand, whether you be a child or a parent or just anyone.

I think families will really appreciate this right now because it is going to be summertime. So, why did you choose this topic? Why is it important to you?

Diane Salazar: So being the principal here at Faith North, I recognize that summer can be a wonderful time for children, for families, but it can also have its challenges. You know, childcare can be an issue for families. Inflation is an issue for families.

I know the change in routine can be difficult. And there in the background is the accessibility we have with devices of phones and tablets. And so when we're thinking about these conditions, we really want to focus on the relationships and the routines that will help the families to have the most opportunities for interactions and for relationship building during the summertime."

Changes in routines can really impact students and how they learn. And so we just, I just wanted to give parents some ideas of how they can interact in an easy way with their children that doesn't cost a lot of money and can be implemented in a matter of minutes.

Host Dr. Shipley: Love it.

Host Dr. Heald: I want to know more about this. Dr. Shipley, how about you?

Host Dr. Shipley: Yes, definitely.

Host Dr. Heald: Tell us about it. Tell us exactly how families can do exactly what you're saying.

Diane Salazar: So one of the things we need to be thinking about when we think about working with our littles, as we call them, our zero to eight-year-olds, is what's appropriate for them in their development and where they are in their development. And we hear the term developmentally appropriate practice. This is a whole field of study.

Obviously, we would need a lot more time to get in depth with it. But I wanted to share in a nutshell, the best that I could, what is developmentally appropriate? I know as a parent, I was an educator. My husband is an educator as well. When I had my children, they're now adults. But when I had my children, even as an educator, I wasn't quite sure what was always developmentally appropriate for my kids.

And so what we need to be thinking about with our children is just really watching, what are our children attempting to do? What are they able to do? That is going to be unique to each child.

It is where they are developmentally. So watching your child, offering materials to explore, and the good old, the best strategy, as far as I know, is really that good old show and tell. You know, taking time to show our children what we're doing and talking about it as we do it.

Really providing a lot of language to our children and just talking, just as you would to anyone in explaining what you're doing. Thinking about how do, you know, how do young children learn? You know, when a child's learning to talk, they don't just start talking. They need to see the talking modeled. And so thinking about that in all aspects of what we do during the day, just our regular day to day.

I do it first, and then we can do it together, you can help me, and then you can do it on your own eventually. And just keeping that in mind, exploration, the show and tell, and the I do, we do, you do, can really make everyday experiences developmentally appropriate for children.

Host Dr. Shipley: I love that. I know that it's so easy to give a child some sort of technology. It's an easy way for parents to be able to work. It's an easy way for parents to be able to clean the house or make supper just to do something. So do you have activities that you give your families or daycare providers or a childcare provider that might be coming to the house in the summer to watch a child? Is there anything that you can say, do this with your child? We know swimming is great, playing outside is great, but do you give any tips and tricks to your families that you work with since you're the leader of the school?

Diane Salazar: Absolutely. I think the first and most important thing is to consider the routines of your day. The more routines you have in place, the more your child will be able to engage joyfully in the other activities that you plan for them.

And, you know, I want people to know that developmentally appropriate activities do not need to be bought at a store. They do not necessarily need materials. It can be things that you have right there in your house. We don't need to have anything fancy to be engaging with our children. It really becomes about how do we engage them in what we are already doing. So we have...routines are paramount. They can save a lot of dis-regulation for children. You know, children who are out of routine sometimes can feel anxious and not know what's coming next.

We always want our children to know what's coming next and those routines help promote that. That in and of itself is the most, in my mind, the most important thing to having our children engage joyfully with us. Then we think about our daily activities.

We can think about cooking, cleaning, dishes, laundry. Obviously, depending on the age of your child, you know, it may be more show and tell than them actually doing it with us, but having them near and talking to them about what we're doing, when we're doing it, almost narrating what you're doing. And it can be, it can be, it's something that you have to really think about and practice.

It's very easy to just go into, I'm getting it done mode, rather than really narrating what you're doing. For example, you know, today we're going to make pancakes. What do I need to make pancakes? Just that think aloud. What do I need to

make pancakes? I need the pancake mix. And then I'm going to grab the milk, and I need two eggs. Let's count the eggs together. One, two.

Basic things that you can just talk to your child about what you're doing, show and tell. Show them what you're doing. Tell them what you're doing.

And then thinking about optimizing the times. When I was a new mom, we spent a lot of time in the car. And thinking about things that you can do in the car that are interactive, especially if you have road trips and what's going on. You know, listening to age-appropriate music, sing-alongs, things that they can play over and over that you can enjoy, and they can enjoy.

Thinking about I-spy activities. But really using language. We played a game when my kids were little, and we actually still play it. I'm thinking of a creature. And we would describe the creature, and they would have to guess. And then we would take turns.

Eventually, they were describing the creatures. And it became very elaborate over time, but it was something that we did in the car together. Thinking about your regular activities.

Going to the grocery store. What can you have the child do besides plugging into a phone? Because really it takes them away from the rich learning environment that our everyday world presents to us.

Thinking about going outside for a walk in the morning can really, you know, collecting rocks, looking at leaves, looking at flowers, looking at insects. Thinking about those free or nearly free opportunities they have with our public institutions, like our libraries. Our libraries offer cultural passes where we can go to a museum without cost or low cost.

Just thinking about things that we have already in our homes, things that we can do inexpensively, you know, hit up the splash pads. And that really, you know, that can be apparent doing that, but it can also be a caregiver doing those things with your child. And that's, you know, there are so many different families and situations with child care, but really thinking about how can you make things routine and optimize the time that you do have together, because I understand that as a working parent, you know, you may, the time that you may have maybe in the car, cooking dinner and bath and bed, and that may be it for the day. So how do we optimize those times and make them interactive with our kids?

Host Dr. Shipley: Love it.

Host Dr. Heald: You know, and I think the fact that you, I hear the message that you've said throughout, that we're not asking or we're not, you know, requiring anything additional. It really is such an integration into the daily routine and utilizing and optimizing the time that we have with our children. I think that's so important. You hit upon the caregiver aspect, and I think that's really crucial also. We have educators in our listening audience. We have caregivers. What is a way that families and educators can kind of come to that common vision with this for the future?

Diane Salazar: That's a great question. I think it really comes down to communication. I know as I was working, it was more about my routine and what I needed to do, and it really became about, I get the kids over to the babysitter, and then I'm going to go here, there.

And really taking time. I think the best thing that parents and caregivers can do is take time to talk. What does the caregiver see your child doing? What interests have been expressed? What is the routine that they've developed over the course of the day? And sometimes routines are easy.

Sometimes routines are difficult with changing work schedules. But really thinking about how you chunk your time. But having parents talk with the caregiver, I mean, at least once a week, I would say, you know, checking in, "How's it going?"

You know, are you noticing any concerns or behaviors that, you know, because that information can then inform the parent to what maybe the caregiver could do to help with parents' knowledge of the child, the caregiver's knowledge of

the child. How do we come together and make sure that the child is engaged in joyful, playful activities throughout the day? Not all day, but throughout the day.

Host Dr. Shipley: Right. I love it. So as we leave, what are three takeaways that you want our listeners to remember?

Diane Salazar: Watch your children. What are they doing? And what are they attempting to do?

Think about how you can engage your child in your everyday activities. And then think about how you can engage your caregiver in providing those joyful, playful activities for your children. But all of it, all of that is rooted in routines.

So just thinking about the routines of the day and making it predictable for our children.

Host Dr. Heald: Yeah, Diane, that's so important. We can have this joyful relationship with our children, and we can increase that learning with all the strategies that you gave us, and I'm excited. All right, give us one challenge as we wind down our session.

Diane Salazar: So I challenge anyone to try or to really be intentional with one of these activities, be it a daily activity, routines, thinking about outdoor adventures, be them in the backyard, and try it. Do something you wouldn't normally do, and then post on our link, comment on our link, so that we can share what everybody is doing with their children.

Host Dr. Shipley: Thank you so much, Diane. We appreciate you and we hope to have you back on, and we hope you have a great summer.

Absolutely. To you, too. Enjoy your children if you have them, and just enjoy the time, a little bit of downtime we might get.

Host Dr. Shipley: Thank you.

Diane Salazar: All right, thank you.