

Early Development & Learning Lab Newsletter

Summer, 2014

Sleep Study Update

By Amanda Prokasky

Summer is in full swing at the Early Development and Learning Lab. Between collecting data, training on new measures, and taking the occasional vacation, our lab has been very busy. Recently, 6 of our research assistants went through ERP Boot Camp with Dr. Dennis Molfese, to learn how the brain processes information. We are currently piloting some toddlers measuring brain activity. In addition, we've welcome a few new students into our lab--be sure to check out their bios in this newsletter. Many students in the lab are working on their own projects related to sleep, temperament, and peer relations to present at national and international conferences this coming year. We look forward to sharing this work with you in upcoming newsletters. From everyone here at the EDLL, we wish you a happy and safe summer.

Amanda is the EDLL project coordinator and a graduate student in Child, Youth, and Family Studies.

Summer Road Trip Fun!

By Rachel Schroeder

Each year many families head out on road trips with their young children. Whether the ride is two hours or 24, it feels like an eternity to children and they can get pretty restless. Keeping children entertained on the trip makes the journey easier for them and for parents. Books are a great tool to help keep kids occupied on the road. Parents can either read books to their children, or let them explore the books on their own. Another alternative is coloring. Bring crayons, coloring books, and a light, hard surface that can be placed on a child's lap. Another common method of keeping children busy on the road are games. Here are a few suggestions to make car trip enjoyable for your children (and for you :)

I spy / 20 questions

Most families are familiar with games in which one person thinks of (or "spies") an object, and the other people in the car try to guess what the object is, by asking questions. In 20 questions, there is a limit of 20 to the number of questions asked.

The Alphabet Game

The goal of this game is to work through the alphabet from A to Z. It can be played using license plates, billboards, signs, and anything along the way with letters on it. This game is great for children who know the alphabet or are learning the alphabet.

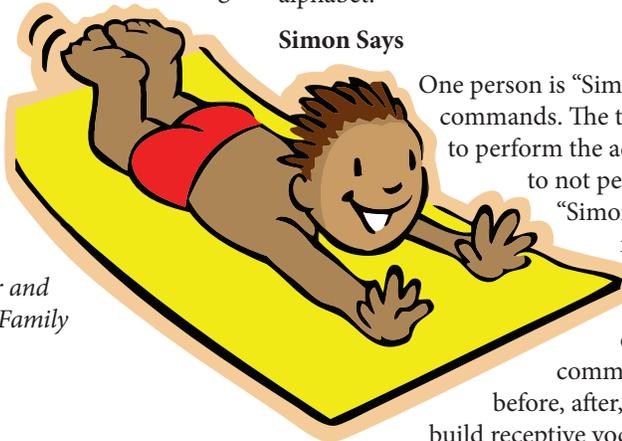
Simon Says

One person is "Simon," and Simon's job is to give commands. The goal is for the respondents to perform the action that "Simon says" and to not perform the commands without "Simon says." Although the commands cannot involve a lot of large movements (e.g., standing, walking, jumping, etc.) parents can give multiple commands using conjunctions (e.g., before, after, during, without) to help build receptive vocabulary skills.

Cards

Bringing any kind of cards would help to teach new skills and pass time going through them. Whether it's ABC flash cards, counting cards, or Go Fish, cards are always a big hit with children, but can be quite messy if dropped or thrown in the car.

Rachel is an undergraduate Family Studies major.



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Early Development and Learning Lab

Temperamentally Sensitive Parenting

By Dr. Kathleen Moritz Rudasill

Ask any parents of more than one child, and they will likely say that their children are quite different from one another. Even parents of identical twins tout the differences between their children in terms of likes/dislikes, behaviors, and personality. These differences are rooted in temperament, our biologically-based tendencies when responding to people, events, and feelings. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges parents face is parenting their different children in ways that seem consistent and fair. This dilemma emerges from the notion that “fair” treatment is “equal” treatment. When it comes to parenting, though, that is not really the case. Some children respond very negatively when a parent scolds their behavior, yet other children may be unfazed by the same parental action. Many of the problems parents have with their children’s behavior are rooted in their responses. When my daughter was five, she went through a difficult period – she was adjusting to kindergarten and giving up naps for the first time in her life. Being around her was very challenging, particularly at the end of a long day of school (for her) and work (for us, her tired parents). When she got frustrated and lashed out angrily, our natural response was to use a stern, “you’re really in trouble now” voice, sometimes coupled with our own angry face; in stark contrast with our older child, who easily cried when scolded, our younger daughter responded with escalated anger, and we were further away from our goal of good behavior. One night she decided she didn’t want to go to bed. She kept getting out of bed and I kept putting her back in. Over and over – she got out, put her back – until it occurred to me that I should respond by picking her up and giving her a hug instead. The response that had seemed absolutely the opposite of what was logical or how I was feeling turned out to be the formula for success. She calmed down and explained that she was tired but didn’t want to be away from us. When we considered the other stresses in her life at the time, this behavior seemed more understandable – not okay, but understandable. Since then, we have learned that, with our younger daughter, responding to her anxiety with our own anxiety backfires and results in an escalation of anger. Now we respond with quiet, calm, and sensitivity, then we talk about her behavior, why it is unacceptable, and how to behave in the future.

There are two important points here. The first is that children are different and discipline styles with them will likely need to be different, too. A parent’s responses to a child’s behavior must be sensitive to the child’s temperament, while reaching

toward the same goal of desired behavior. This leads me to the second point: although a parent’s discipline style may vary between her children, expectations for behavior should not vary. Rather, children may need different paths to get to the same outcome. For my older daughter, all that was needed to end some negative behavior was a “look”. Anything stronger would have been overkill, causing unnecessary distress for her. My younger daughter, on the other hand, is unlikely to even notice a “look” of displeasure – when she’s engaged in an activity, that’s where she’s focused. Quick to anger and intense in responses, she responds best when we’re calm, so her cooler head prevails. Individual differences in children’s temperament can be inconvenient and even maddening for parents, but working with, rather than against, these characteristics will pay big dividends. Children disciplined with sensitivity to their temperament build and keep positive relationships with their parents and, ultimately, turn into adolescents and adults who understand themselves well and are sensitive to others in their lives.

Kathy is an Associate Professor of Educational Psychology.

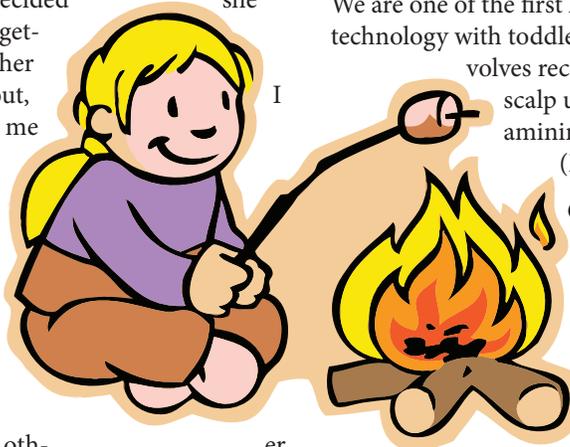
Studying Toddler Brainwaves

By Molly Holmes and Carly Champagne

The Early Development and Learning Lab has teamed up with Dr. Dennis Molfese, the Director of the Center for Brain, Biology and Behavior, and his Developmental Brain Lab to pioneer electroencephalography research with toddlers. We are one of the first laboratories in the world to use this technology with toddlers! Electroencephalography (EEG) involves recording the electrical activity along the scalp using electrode sponges, and then examining small parts of the electrical activity (ERP) to learn about brain processing.

Our lab is fortunate to have access to the most advanced and easy-to-use ERP systems available, which use electrode nets or “special hats.” Families who sign up for the ERP study will come into the lab for an additional 1-hour visit and receive a \$20 gift card. The visit involves playing games with a researcher to get comfortable with the “special hat.” After the child has the net on, they will listen to some computer tones and play a short computer game. This is an exciting opportunity for your child to be a part of cutting-edge research and have a unique and fun experience! Please consider signing your child up for the ERP visit, and give Amanda a call!

Molly and Carly are Master’s students studying Educational Psychology.



Undergraduate Student Spotlights

Nadia Shatalova

Hello, my name is Nadia and I am a UNL undergraduate student majoring in Speech Language Pathology with minors in Education and Child, Youth, and Family Studies. When I graduate in 2015, I plan to attend graduate school to continue my education in Speech Language Pathology. Here at the Early Development and Learning lab I am completing my UCARE summer research project. For my project I am investigating how parents' involvement in the pre-bedtime routine with their toddler children relates to the development of the toddlers' sleep regulation. In this work, I am listening to audio recordings and coding types of interactions parents have with their child. I am also analyzing actigraph data that provides information on sleep onset times, length of sleep, and number of night awakenings. Some of the data I am using have already been collected by the researchers in the Lab, but I am participating in home visits, learning to score actigraph data, and learning to use the data to test my hypotheses. My favorite part of working here at the lab is seeing how each family's bedtime routine is unique in its own way. Participating in this research has been one of the most valuable undergraduate experiences for me by opening up the world of research to me and by building on my understanding of child development.

Olivia Reinert-Gehman

I am from Omaha, NE and a senior at UNL. I'm majoring in Psychology with a minor in Biology. During my undergraduate career, I have worked in a few other Psychology labs and done research in Behavior Genetics and Cognitive Psychology. I am excited about the opportunity that the EDL lab provides to work directly with children and their parents. My research interests include emotional development in infancy and early childhood and how genetic and environmental factors affect temperament. I have been in the lab for about two months and I have been an RA on home visits and also filmed lab visits. In the lab, I also file paperwork and make packets for parents. I am currently applying to graduate programs for clinical child psychology and hope to eventually go be a practicing child psychologist while continuing to do research. In addition, I work at the UNL Children's Center and nanny for several families in Omaha and Lincoln.

The Early Development and Learning Lab needs more participants!!

We are currently recruiting toddlers younger than 2½ years for our sleep study. We are also seeking toddlers between 2½ and 3½ for an EEG study. EEG is safe and painless. If you know anyone else who may be interested, please tell them to contact **Amanda** and pass along our information:

Early Development and Learning Lab

www.cehs.unl.edu/edl | 402.472.8982

Summer Events!

Free Places To Go All Summer

Tour the Nebraska State Capitol (14th & K)
Explore Sheldon Museum of Art (12th & R)
Check out the Larsen Tractor Museum (East Campus)
Travel to the Nebraska History Museum (15th & P)
Visit the National Museum of Roller Skating (48th & South):
Have fun at Pioneers Park and Nature Center

Free Concerts

Concerts at South Pointe (27th & Pine Lake)
- Every Friday until Aug 22, 6:30p-8:30p
Party on the Plaza at Union Plaza (21st & O)
- Visual performing arts, music, food trucks
- July 12, Aug 16, and Sept 13, 4p-9p.
Stransky Parks Summer Concert Series (17th & Harrison)
- Thursdays until Aug 14, 7-9p
Lincoln Municipal Band Summer Concert Series (Antelope Park Bandshell)
-Sundays until Aug 17, 7p

Family Swims (\$7/family)

May 26th -August 8th, 6:00p-8:00p
Arnold: Tuesday and Fridays; Ballard: Fridays; Belmont: Mondays; Eden: Mondays and Tuesday; Irving Wednesdays and Fridays; Woods: Fridays

Children's Garden Fun (Pioneers Park, \$3/person)

July 18/19 Herbs
July 25/26 Bugs in the Garden
Aug 1/2 Fresh Flavors
Aug 8/9 Summer Harvest
Aug 15/16 Garden Circles

Other Events

Garden Tea Parties (Pioneers Park - Chet Ager Building)
- \$5/person, July 31st, 3p-4p
Pioneers Park Family Nature Night (Prairie Building)
- \$15/family, Aug 1st, 7p-8:30p, register by July 30
Art in the Gardens (Sunken Gardens, 27th & Capital Parkway)
- Aug 23, 12p-8p

The EDLL Staff

Dr. Victoria Molfese – Co-Lab Director
Dr. Kathleen Rudasill – Co-Lab Director
Amanda Prokasky – Project Coordinator
Scott Frohn – Graduate Research Assistant
Molly Holmes – Graduate Research Assistant
Carly Champagne – Graduate Research Assistant
Moon Yu Yue – Graduate Research Assistant
Jayden Nord – Graduate Research Assistant
Hannah Malcolm – Undergraduate Research Assistant
Jeanna Song – Undergraduate Research Assistant
Jack Gallagher – Undergraduate Research Assistant
Rachel Schroeter – Undergraduate Research Assistant
Shannon Guy – Undergraduate Research Assistant
Kaitlyn Johnson – Undergraduate Research Assistant
Olivia Reinert-Gehman – Undergraduate Research Assistant
Nadia Shatalova – Undergraduate Research Assistant