

GRAB AND GO LESSON

An Earth-Friendly Child Care Environment

Administration | Business Practices

Purpose: This handout provides different ways to create an Earth-friendly child care environment.

A healthy environment is one that embraces good stewardship of the Earth. By practicing and teaching green habits in your home or center, you can contribute to a healthier planet. A planet with cleaner air, water, and food contribute to healthier people. Here are three ways of creating Earth-friendly child care environments.

Water

Water is essential for our body, as well as a natural resource. Even though water covers 70% of the Earth, less than 3% is suitable for human activities, such as drinking, cleaning, or agricultural use. When washing hands, rinsing vegetables, or brushing teeth, avoid letting the water run continuously. In terms of hydration, filtered tap water from most municipal water supplies is safe (and much cheaper) than bottled water. Collecting rainwater for watering plants and designing yards with less water-intensive landscaping are also strategies for using water in a much wiser manner.

Energy

Replace light bulbs with energy-efficient bulbs, such as halogen, incandescent, compact fluorescent lamps, or light-emitting diodes. Many of these bulbs can save you as much as \$75 each year and hundreds of dollars over a lifetime. They tend to use 75% less energy and last about ten times longer than non-energy efficient bulbs.

Waste Reduction

The “R’s” (reduce, reuse, and recycle) provide an easy reminder for waste-reduction practices.

REDUCE: The best strategy is simply to buy and use less “stuff.” Being mindful of your purchases will not only help you save money, but also conserve essential resources such as fuel, land, and water.

REUSE or REDO: Find alternative uses for an item. An antique toy chest can be refurbished into a table while plastic milk crates can serve as toy storage bins. Children are often the most creative when it comes to reusing or redoing items. A discarded rope can be a pretend snake, a tug-of-war rope, or a way to create different shapes or letters. Items such as clean plastic food containers, catalogs, fabric scraps, and leaves can be used in creative craft projects.

RECYCLE: Recycling is an excellent alternative to throwing items in the garbage. Take advantage of curbside or community recycling programs for everyday household items. Find out how to safely recycle or dispose of hazardous materials such as oil, paint, and lawn chemicals in your community.

For additional information, refer to the following organizations:

- The United States Geological Survey (USGS) Water Science School
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- National Resources Defense Council
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

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References

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