

Parenting

VOLUME 08
NOVEMBER



NEWSLETTER OF THE BASEL CHILDREN'S TRUST



**READING
AND WRITING**

Parenting



NEWSLETTER OF THE BASEL CHILDREN'S TRUST

IMPRESSUM

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Submissions

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WE RECOMMEND

Lactation Consultants

Ruth Brodbeck 076 246 40 43
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The above are professionals in private practice and charge for services. A few sessions are usually covered by health insurance. Alternatively contact your Mütterberatung. Check with your local Gemeinde for contact details and opening hours or contact the BCT Antenatal Coordinator (see left), who holds a list of local Mütterberatung.

Miriam Müller Gudenrath

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BCT – Who we are...

We are a volunteer-run, non-profit organization that provides help, support, and information to expectant parents and families with young children living in the Basel area: from bump to babe and beyond.

Through our many programs, such as antenatal and first aid courses, informational booklets, playgroups and neighbourhood coffee mornings, monthly newsletters and social events, the BCT supports members on the incredible journey which is parenting. Founded in 1992 with only 29 members, today we support more than 200 families from around the world with English as the common spoken language. We are an international community of parents with young children who want to get involved with other members, with our wider community, and with the surrounding Basel region.

FIND US AT:

www.baselchildrenstrust.ch

www.facebook.com/BaselChildrensTrust

Co-Chairs' Report

By Menna Keyes

Hi Everyone,

Winter is nearly upon us. The beautiful landscape of golden autumnal trees will soon be replaced by crisp white snow in the mountains and once again Switzerland will wow us with its beauty. And when the weather is not good then it is a perfect opportunity to get all he cosy, snuggle up with the kids to read a good book. In the newsletter this month we have lots of really interesting articles about reading and writing that we hope you enjoy!

I have to announce with great disappointment that I will be stepping down as Co-Chair at the end of October in order to focus more on my work as a Doula. I have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside Laura and the rest of the BCT team and members. There is true dedication and commitment that keeps the BCT going and I have loved being part of it. I am not going very far as I will continue as a neighborhood co-ordinator for Schutzenmatt and help wherever and whenever I can. I want to say a huge thank you to the committee team, especially Laura, for taking me under their wings and supporting me in the Co-Chair role, they really do put their heart and soul into the BCT and want to make it the best they can and I really think it shows.

We are now on the look out to find a new Co-Chair to join Laura and the team! If you would like any further information about this exciting opportunity please contact Laura at chair.bct@gmail.com



Menna



Laura

BCT OFFER YOU FOUR WEEKLY PLAYGROUPS

*that start from pregnancy and grow with parents
and children through the pre-school years*

Expecting

<1 year

1-3 years

>3years

**Antenatal
Courses**

*Birth and the
Beginnings
Relax, Stretch
Breathe*

**Antenatal
Courses**

*Mother and Baby
Yoga*

Bumps and Babies

*Babies and
Bruises*

Beyond Bruises All Ages Playgroup

*plus a new all ages playgroup starting in Therwil on
Thursday 29 November – check out the back page of
the newsletter for more details!*

MONDAYS

9:30am-
12:00pm

**BUMPS
& BRUISES**

KONTAKTSTELLE FÜR ELTERN UND
KINDER

Stöberstrasse 34, 4055 Basel
monday.bct@gmail.com

This group is suitable for families with children 9 months to 3 years. Lunch is served during the playgroup, so please bring along a healthy drink and lunch for both your child(ren) and yourself.

TUESDAYS

12:00pm-
2:00pm

**BUMPS
& BABES**

THE MAGICAL CAFE

Max Kämpf Platz 2, 4058 Basel
bumpsandbabes@gmail.com

This group is designed for parents to be and parents of children up to one year old. This is the ideal group to meet new parents, ask questions and create friendships for yourself and your baby.

THURSDAYS

11:30 am-
1:30 pm

**BUMPS
& BRUISES**

BURG

Burgweg 7, 4058 Basel
bumpsandbruises@gmail.com

This group is suitable for families with children 9 months to 3 years. Lunch is served during the playgroup, so please bring along a healthy drink and lunch for both your child(ren) and yourself.

FRIDAYS

2:30 pm-
5:00 pm

**BEYOND
BRUISES**

GYMBOREE

Elisabethenanlage 7, 4051 Basel
beyondbruises@gmail.com

This playgroup is suitable for families with children from three to six years of age. We ask participants to bring a light healthy snack for sharing.

ALL AGES!

BCT PLAYGROUPS CODE OF CONDUCT

- Please keep your child within arm's reach. Parents are responsible for their own child.
- If your child(ren) is ill or contagious (fever, vomiting) please give this week's playgroup a miss. We look forward to welcoming you back next week.
- Please make sure no strollers are left near the lift at the Burg. All strollers must be in the hallway. Collapse your stroller if possible.
- Please bring your BCT membership card with you to playgroups to verify membership in case asked.
- Physically disciplining children is not permitted at BCT playgroups.



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www.gymboreeclasses.ch

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www.buespi.ch



PREGNANCY & PRENATAL

INFORMATION SERIES FOR FAMILIES IN BASEL

By Susie Atkinson

Baby on the way, or newly arrived? Need some preparation, information or support? Here are details of upcoming prenatal education, information and support for parents in Basel.

BCT SESSIONS FOR WOMEN AND MEN

BCT: Preparing for Parenthood 11 prenatal course:

Saturday 17 November 14.00-19.00 and Sunday 18 November 13.00-19.00

Group prenatal courses covering labour and birth, breastfeeding and the first days, weeks and months as a new family. The courses help families understand the choices, resources and support available in the area, to develop their own birth and parenting plans and have the information, confidence, skills and support to make those plans happen how they want them to. Suitable for first time parents and for parents who have already have children and want a refresher or to have a different sort of birth with their next. Discount for BCT members.

Further courses will be running throughout the year, for more course dates see the website calendar or contact Susie on antenatal.bct@gmail.com.

One to one sessions or small group sessions are also available, to be arranged at mutual convenience.

All BCT members are welcome to a free RSB or Mother and Baby Yoga class. Please get in touch on antenatal.bct@gmail.com

HOSPITAL SESSIONS

English language information evening at Frauenklinik Basel:

11 December 19.00-20.30, 11 December 19.00-20.30

Regular presentation by the obstetrical department of the University Hospital of Basel in English about pregnancy, birth, and care of the mother and newborn after delivery at the Frauenklinik in Basel.

English language information evening at Bethesda Maternity Unit:

31 October, 28 November, 19 December 19.00

Information evening and tour in English of the Bethesda Maternity facilities. Contact gebbs@bethesda-spital.ch to reserve a place and attend.

SESSIONS FOR WOMEN

BCT: Relax, Stretch and Breathe (RSB) Prenatal Yoga sessions

every Thursday evening 18.00-20.00

Part prenatal class and part prenatal yoga. Informal prenatal class and Q&A on all topics birth and baby and then is 75-90 minutes of blissful stretching, moving, breathing skills and relaxation techniques tailored for pregnant women and an excellent preparation for labour and birth. Suitable for first time parents and for parents who have already have children.

BCT: Mother and Baby Yoga sessions

every Thursday 16.00-17.15 and Friday 13.45-15.00

Discussion time followed by postnatal yoga where the babies are not just welcome, but are part of the class. Each session includes baby massage and baby yoga, as well as postnatal yoga and relaxation techniques for the mother. Suitable for mother and babies from six weeks after birth, up to around one year old.

For more information about any of these sessions, or if you have any questions or need any information or support relating to pregnancy, birth and postnatal life in Basel please contact Susie Atkinson on antenatal.bct@gmail.com



For a Padlet created by our antenatal teacher that is full of useful information about pregnancy and birth in Basel, maternity and paternity leave, prenatal and postnatal care, and different maternity options in Basel, please see:

padlet.com/susieroseatkinson/CongratulationsHavingABabyinBasel

TELL ME MORE ABOUT...

Febrile Convulsions

by Alison Snow, Registered Nurse & First Aid Trainer

Approximately 1 in 50 children will have had a febrile convulsion or seizure by the time they are 5 years old. These may occur when a child is unwell with a rising temperature, which acts as a trigger for the seizure. Whilst febrile convulsions are unlikely to be life-threatening or cause long-term problems, they can be extremely frightening.

A seizure occurs when there is a sudden burst of electrical activity in the brain, which temporarily interferes with its normal processes, in this instance triggered by the raised temperature. It is therefore important to reduce the child's temperature taking care not to over-cool them.

To reduce your child's temperature

Take off excess clothing, use a tepid flannel to gently sponge the child under their arms and on their forehead, give them plenty to drink. If they have been feeling unwell paediatric paracetamol or ibuprofen may be given

If your child starts fitting - maintain safety. Remove any objects that may cause injury (for example furniture), talk to them calmly, cushioning their head using a blanket or pillow and loosening any tight clothes. If the child has a lot of saliva coming out of their mouth, put them on their side. If possible, note the time the convulsion started.

Do not try to restrain the child or put anything in their mouth. During this time, the child may bite their lips or tongue. They may go a little blue and appear to stop breathing, although this is unlikely to last more than a few seconds.

Phone for an ambulance if this is their first seizure, if it lasts more than 5 minutes, their breathing does not appear normal after the seizure, if they are unresponsive for more than 5 minutes after the seizure, if they have another seizure within 24 hours or if you are worried for any reason.





BASLERS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Jannick Awcock
Owner of Magical Cafe

This month we are featuring Jannick Awcock. Jannick is the owner of Magical Cafe, a childrenfriendly cafe, next to Musical Theatre in Basel where she offers parents a relaxing homely environment to sit and enjoy something to eat and drink whilst their children play.

Tell us a little bit about where you are from and how you came to be living/working in Basel

I'm from Belgium. I spent all of my childhood abroad, as a diplomat's daughter. Moving to Basel was about the 10th move and change of country in my life! My husband who is British got a job opportunity so we moved from Brussels to Basel in January 2000, thinking we'd stay here for 4-5 years... and nearly 18 years later we are still here!

What did you do before setting up the Magical Cafe and what gave you the inspiration to open the Cafe?

I worked in marketing and advertisement till our first son was born a year after arriving in Basel. 5 year later, I was the proud mum of 4 boys! I think that tells you what my job was for the next 10 years! But being a full-time mum wasn't easy everyday: my husband was travelling a lot and I found raising a family in a foreign country, struggling with a foreign language and without the support of my family and long-time friends to be more challenging than expected. I also found Basel not to have much to propose for really





little ones. The BCT and Kindermusik were life savers for me! But I was lacking a cosy, children-friendly place where I could meet my friends over a nice cup of coffee and a comforting piece of cake while the children could play. And that's when my dream started... It took 3 years to make that dream come true! It was a long and difficult journey but as with any challenging experience I learned a lot from it. I will never thank enough my husband for his support and for believing in me. I am also thankful to have amazing friends who encouraged and advised me along the way, giving me some of their time. With their help, the Magical Café opened its' doors in May 2017!

Tell us about the Magical Cafe

The Magical Cafe is a children-friendly coffee shop offering home-made pastries and cupcakes (we also take cake and cupcakes orders), as well as fresh soup and bagels for lunch and we have a large playroom with an inside play structure and lots of toys to keep little ones busy playing.

What differentiates the Magical Cafe from other Cafes I think is the atmosphere: when walking in, you get this cosy feeling that you are entering someone's home. I will never forget the first father and child who stepped into the Cafe: they froze and looked in amazement and the father asked if he should take off his shoes! I also remember this little girl who asked her mother if she could have a house like the Magical Cafe! This is when I think the Cafe is truly magical!

You also host events at the Cafe? What sort of events can people host at your cafe?

The Magical Cafe has also acquired its' reputation by organizing amazing birthday parties. We propose an all-inclusive package that comprises decoration, cupcakes, drinks, balloons and treat bags all around the theme of your choice: for example, Princess, Ballerina, Unicorn, Dinosaurs etc. We also propose extras like Piñata, candy floss making, disco balls and lights, photo shoot accessories. We can also help you organise games to entertain the children or plan a cupcake decorating class. We have already organised over 100 birthday parties at the Cafe and offer over 30 themes. Ours customers appreciate the atmosphere, our care and attention to detail. A birthday



celebration at the Magical Cafe is truly a magical experience for both the children and the adults. But we also organise events and workshops for small children (mainly 1 to 4 years) like a Halloween Party (on 31st Oct.), a little Christmas Market and Photo shooting (on Nov. 24th), Fastnacht celebration, an Easter Party, Baking workshops, story telling etc. You can follow us on Facebook and subscribe to our newsletter to be informed of our events.

Do you have any advice for anyone who dreams of doing something other than their current 9 to 5?

Opening the Cafe was a very challenging experience. You need to have a clear Vision, Mission & Values. You need to have faith and patience: it takes time to build a business. There will be obstacles along the journey. You have to be flexible and be able to adapt but remain faithful to your values, to what your goal is: there will always be people who will criticize and you cannot please everyone. Be ready to put a lot of extra hours: running your own business is not a 9 to 5 job! The support of your family is crucial and don't be afraid to ask for help. Thank you to all those mums who have offered to help me along the way when I needed it.

A lot of people ask me why "Magical" Cafe? It's firstly because children are magical: being a mum was the most extraordinary and marvelous experience of my life and I am sure every parent will agree with me. But it is also about the magical moments shared with a friend over a cup of coffee, playing and learning with your child. It's this magic we tried to create at the Magical Cafe but the heart are the people so share the Magic!

**To learn more about Magical Cafe
visit the following websites:**

Web: magicalcafe.ch

Facebook: [MagicalCafe.Basel](https://www.facebook.com/MagicalCafe.Basel)





PAST BCT EVENT BIP BOP DISCO SEPTEMBER 2018

By Joanna Piemonti

The last Bip Bop Disco of 2018 was held on Saturday 15 September at Quba Bachletten. Babies, toddlers and children enjoyed bopping along to some party classics as well as some more modern tunes.

Bip Bop discos are held every quarter and everyone is welcome whether you are a BCT member or not. They are a fantastic opportunity to let your little ones expel some energy and make new friends (as well as Mum and Dad)!

We look forward to next year's first Bip Bop Disco to get the BCT events calendar off to a fantastic start. We expect all Dads to be well and truly limbered up for plenty of Dad dancing, having had plenty of opportunity to practice during the festive season

Until Next Year, The Programs Team!

UPCOMING BCT EVENTS

**09
FRI** **MOM'S NIGHT OUT**
B Yoga Basel
20:15 – 21:30

**10
SAT** **NATURE DETECTIVES WALK**
Skulpturenweg, Reinach
10:00 – 12:00

**17
SAT** **BIP BOP DISCO**
Quba Bachletten
Bachlettenstrasse 12, Basel
10:00 – 12:00

**24
SAT** **JUKIBU BOOK READING**
JUKIBU library
Elsässerstrasse 7, Basel
10:30 – 11:30

SAVE THE DATES: DECEMBER

02 SUN Christmas Party
08 SAT Nature Detectives Walk
09 SUN First Aid Class
15 SAT JUKIBU Reading

EVENTS AROUND BASEL

**08
THU** **CRAFT AND CHAT EVENING
FOR TEENAGERS AND ADULTS**
Ahead With English School
Therwil, 19:00–21:30

Make 5 wonderful holiday cards with Pallavi Roe using fun techniques and have a drink and a snack and enjoy the evening with friends or make new ones! Please visit <https://www.aheadwithenglish.ch> for more information and to register for this fun evening out.

**29
THU** **MULTILINGUALISM AND
SPEECH DEVELOPMENT
IN CHILDREN:
MYTHS & REALITIES**
Ahead With English School
Therwil, 19:00–21:00

A fun, relaxed evening to have your questions answered about growing up multilingual. This event will be hosted by Ahead With English and moderated by Joy Penard, MS, CCC-SLP, an American-trained speech-language pathologist specializing in multilingual speech and language development. Please visit <https://www.aheadwithenglish.ch> to register for this topical and informative evening.

? *The above events are subject to confirmation. Please check our website: baselchildrenstrust.ch and Facebook page for latest details. For further information, to sign up for an event, or to volunteer, please contact programme.bct@gmail.com.*



Reading

and

Writing

Dear Readers

As parents we always strive to do the best for our children; feed them the most nutritious food, ensure that they are in good health, monitor all their developmental milestones and stimulate their minds to ensure that they become engaged with learning.

However, it's been a long time since we began to learn, so how can we ensure that we are doing all we can to provide the best environment for our children to start piecing together the skills they need to read and write? What are the key elements that we need to focus on given that our children are probably all going to be exposed to multiple languages in this wonderful city we now call home?

We hope that the articles in this month's issue will inspire you to engage with your children in fun and enjoyable ways to promote learning to read and write. We also hope that these articles provide you with the confidence and conviction in the choices you make for your child's learning and development and provide some useful information to continue on your educational journey together.

Happy Reading
the Newsletter Team

Multisensory learning for early Literacy

By Hazel Simpson

A multisensory approach to learning can have great benefits in early language education. Traditionally most children are taught through visual and auditory channels- see the word and hear the sounds. However, it has been shown that this method is not always the right learning style for each child.

Stimulating senses of touch by having real things to manipulate or hold, and movement using the whole body and gross motor skills, can activate different parts of the brain in learning. The multisensory style has benefits for all, but has been shown to particularly help children with learning and processing difficulties.

Here are some ideas to help engage your child in early language activities, stimulate their senses, but most of all, they are fun!

Multisensory letters

Cut out letters from sandpaper, bubble wrap, crinkly card, or other tactile materials around the house. Stick them onto card and practice “writing” the letter with your finger, starting at the right point. You can make a whole alphabet with different textures.

Fill a box or tray with lentils, salt or sand. Use a paintbrush to make the letters.

Use playdoh to model letters, or even biscuit dough and bake an alphabet... including the sense of taste!





Chalk games

Write letters in chalk on the ground. Practise jumping on the letters you can read. Can you jump from one letter to another to make a word?

Write the letters in chalk and take a large paintbrush and a pot of water, can you paint over the chalk with the paintbrush to encourage correct letter formation? You can do this on a blackboard or just on the ground.



Tray games

There are many possibilities to this game, but children love to explore random things on a tray. You can collect all words beginning with a certain letter, match items to their beginning sounds, search for rhymes, find odd ones out. This is my tray to match ch and sh items to their word. Have a search around the house for things to include, or get your little one involved in the hunt to make a tray of sounds.



Fishing for letters

Make letter cards and attach to paperclips, have you an old magnetic fishing rod game? Or magnets bought from a hardware store on a stick make a good fishing rod (mine is a budget version using chopstick and an old fridge magnet). Use the magnetic rods to pull out letters, can you read them? Can you say a word that starts with this sound?



Active workout

Make the shapes of the letters with your body!!

Update a twister board with letters of the alphabet, call out the instructions “right hand on the letter C”, keep going until everyone is in a tangle!

It's the simple things...

For young learners the auditory is still one of the best channels for learning. Sing, rhyme, dance, clap, listen to music, make up nonsense lyrics, all great ways to channel your child's ears to language.

Bider&Tanner

Books | Music | Tickets | biderundtanner.ch

At Bankenplatz | Aeschenvorstadt 2 | CH-4010 Basel



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XMAS MINI SHOOTS



BOOK YOUR XMAS MINI SHOOT NOW!

Holidays are coming and so are my yearly Xmas shoots! This is the most wonderful time of the year for a special photoshoot of your little ones or your whole family. A perfect opportunity to get into the season spirit with your loved ones while having fun dressing up in Xmas attire in front of my camera.
I'm looking forward to creating your 2018 Xmas images together with you!

BOOK YOUR SLOT VIA MY WEBSITE WWW.LISANNEVREEKE.COM/XMAS2018

PACKAGE A

30 min Christmas-themed photoshoot incl. festive background and choices of costumes and accessoires.

You'll receive 5 digital high-resolution photographs via a personal gallery where you can download them.

You'll receive 2 prints of your choice (13x18cm) by post.

CHF 150,-

PACKAGE B

45 min Christmas-themed photoshoot incl. festive background and choices of costumes and accessoires.

You'll receive 10 digital high-resolution photographs, chosen by yourself out of a gallery of 20.
You can download the photos via a personal gallery.

You'll receive 4 prints of your choice (13x18cm) by post.

Option to choose additional photos CHF20,-/each

CHF 225,-

Reading and Writing with your Whole Body

By Susie Atkinson

As adults we sometimes think of reading and writing as sedentary activities - even after we have seen how our little ones shuffle, swing and sway when they are learning best. There is plenty of evidence to show how important movement is in a child's learning development. But did you realise how much specific cross midline movements can make to a child's literacy, long before they are ready to read and write?

Activities that cross the midline are an important part of literacy development as well as physical development. They are activities where one hand or foot cross across the body to do an activity on the other side of the body - using your right hand to help put on your left sock of example. Or, in the context of literacy, using the left hand to turn the pages of a book, or being able to write across a page. People who have difficulty in crossing the body midline will find all those things more challenging to do easily and neatly. They may also have trouble in tracking the lines of a page with their eyes - so that reading becomes more difficult.

Using lots of movements that cross the middling with babies can help them strengthen their cross body skills and the brain development that accompanies it. So what things might you do with the little ones before they have the motor skills to practice their own cross body activities?

You might do massage going from one hand, down the arm, across the torso and down the opposite leg. Or you might play "if you are happy and you know it" clapping games with the opposite hand and foot. You might sing





“wind the bobbin up” as you roll the hands round each other. You can encourage them to reach for objects or to track them with their eyes - musical instruments are brilliant for this as the sound of them is both an incentive and a reward. You could help and encourage them to play a big drum (or an upside down tray will work too). And everyone’s favourite, blowing bubbles for the little one to watch and reach for (and pop - when they’re older you can encourage them to pop the bubbles with one specific hand, as a game).

As motor skills develop you might give your baby a tray of finger food, well spread out, to encourage them to reach across their body to get the titbit they want. Or with a dexterous child you could encourage them to fill a rectangular ice cube tray with rows of different objects, so they are working along a line. Once they are crawling the fun and games get bigger and more energetic, the same ideas will still be fun and helpful, but are possible on a bigger scale. And crawling of course is the ultimate cross body activity. Have fun!

Writing activities for preschoolers

(that are not worksheets)

By Elizabeth De Gaetano

“Up, down, step in the middle”. This is the little mnemonic my four-year old uses to write the letter A. She learnt these with her favorite pre-school teacher about a year ago and uses it and variations of this in order to write her name, which she now also recognizes. While she is still too young to start writing full words, we have occasionally tried activities involving letters and numbers that encourage a light-hearted approach to letter reading and writing.

It goes without saying: I am not a teacher; I am a parent who has needed to keep my daughter busy from time to time. I therefore cannot attest to the effectiveness of these activities from a pedagogical point of view but I am listing the ones that worked best with my wiggly preschooler whose attention span is well - that of a four year old.

Join the dots:

This is an easy one and one that is often used. You simply make a series of dots outlining the letter or number you would like them to try and have your little ones join or follow the dots with a pencil or finger. I know that is how my eldest learnt how to recognize her name this way.

Invisible letters:

This activity requires a little preparation but is simple and fun. Cut up some white cardboard (or thick) paper and using a white crayon write the letters of the alphabet. Hand them over to your little one and have them paint over them with water-colours and ta dah! The mystery letter appears. Small tip: I would make the letters a little thick so that they really stand out when painted over. If your child is learning how to read, you could even make a few words using this method and then put the letters in the right order together.

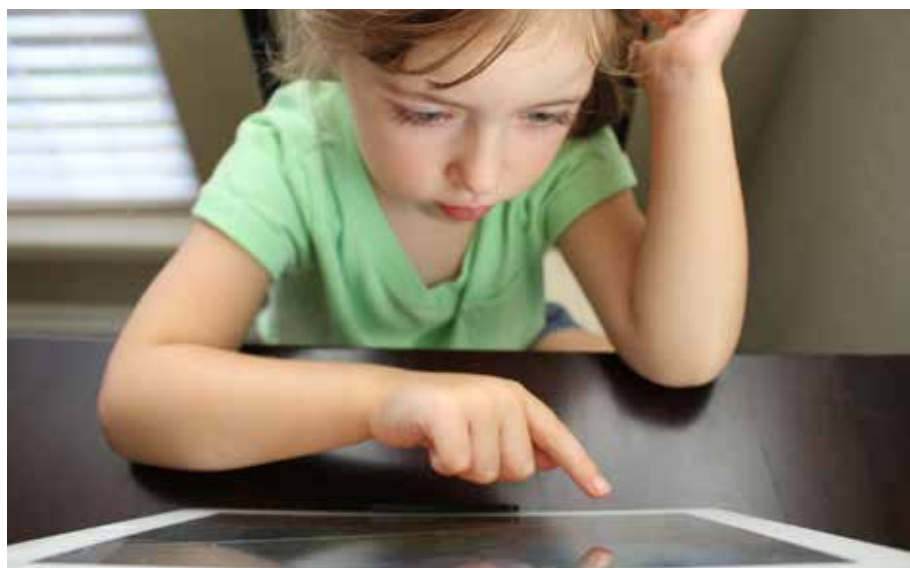
Rice tray:

I tried this about a year ago. I had some cardboard letters and I read that you could grab a bag of rice fill a zip lock bag with rice and hide the letters in the bag and have your toddler squeeze the bag to look for them. It worked but with a small variation; I used a large bowl instead of a bag, as my letters were too big. Also, be prepared to use a lot more rice than just one packet to make it work. If you have small fridge letters, they will work in a bag but with bigger wooden ones, it's best to hide them at the bottom of a large bowl.

Tablet Apps:

I know, I know, screen time should be limited to no more than two hours a day but if your little one insists on using a tablet then Montessori have a great set of apps for numbers and letter writing that range from tracing numbers and letters to word building. I feel that at this point, instead of waging a battle for the use of my Ipad, I might as well just put something educational on it with a timer and let her experiment. You can check out the App I chose here: <https://montessorium.com/app/intro-to-montessori>

The activities I tried were sourced from the following website: <https://handsonaswegrow.com>, a website dedicated to activities at home for toddlers, preschoolers and beyond. There are so many to choose from. If you want to know whether the App you're about to purchase is age appropriate and educational, I like to use the following website for reviews: <https://www.common sense media.org>



Tips on how to encourage your children to read, from a teacher of young children

By Colleen Potts

Questions on Reading? Here's what you need to know...

Accuracy (reading the words on the page) and comprehension (understanding what I just read) are the two fundamental skills in reading. So what can I do?

Read. Read to your child. Read with your child. Model reading books. Your child cannot see if you are reading the newest historical novel on your kindle or playing Candy Crush. Showing your child that mom or dad reads books just like them is valuable to increasing their interest. Hard to find time to read together? As a family we read aloud during dinner. We read picture books, novels, articles, recipes, and anything else we come across.

Teach your child they can read a book three different ways. You can read the pictures. You can read the words. You can retell a familiar story. It's not just about the words on the page.

Ask questions. Encourage younger children to read the pictures with you and really engage with the book. Questions like, "what else do you see?" or "why do you think ..." can spark a conversation with a 2 year old that may really surprise you. For older children you can ask questions like, "which character did you relate to?", "Would you have made the same decision", "why", or "why not?" Questioning encourages comprehension. You can incorporate writing here too, children can write a story with their favorite character in a new adventure, or a story about two of their



favorite characters from different books meeting for the first time.

Work on accuracy. Using a finger to track each word is a strategy that can encourage a child to slow down and focus on each word they are seeing. Rhyming words supports this skill as well. Here is an easy game for practice: cut letters out of paper and move letters around in words. Take “cat” as an example, move the c and put a b in its place, bat. The words don’t even have to be real, but follow the pattern; kat, yat, etc.

Encourage unstructured play. Play encourages fine and gross motor skills - a skill your child will need when holding a pencil or a book. Play encourages problem solving - a skill your child will need when they feel stumped by a word. Play encourages communication - a skill your child will need when presenting and working with people. Play encourages interests - a skill your child will need when choosing books, essay topics, and later a career. Play encourages concentration - a skill your child will need when sitting at a desk. Finally, play encourages imagination - a skill your child will need for life.

I hope these tips help you in your journey! Here’s one final thought, if you read one book a day to your child, they will have been read 1825 books by their 5th birthday. Happy Reading!

Being bilingual

By Menna Keyes

This is our personal story of our daughter starting Kindergarten in Basel Stadt. The experience could be different depending on which Canton you live in.

The following links are really good resources for anyone interested in the Education system in Basel Stadt. The second link in particular gives a timeline of what you can expect and when, as entering the local school system.

The third link is about Deutsch vor dem Kindergarten (German before Kindergarten) I could only find in German but I try and give an brief explanation below of what you can expect.

<http://www.bs.ch/en/Portrait/living-in-basel/education-and-work.html>

<http://www.ed.bs.ch/dossiers/neu-in-basel/english.html>

<http://www.volksschulen.bs.ch/schulsystem/vor-dem-kindergarten.html>

Before it starts...

Nia went to a bilingual private day care from 7 months old, when I returned to work outside of the home, and there she was spoken to in English, Swiss German and High German, she went there until she was 3 years old and I decided to stay at home following the birth of our second daughter.

Deutsch vor dem Kindergarten (German Before Kindergarten)

18 months before Nia was due to start Kindergarten, Basel Stadt wrote to us asking if we intended to send her to a local Kindergarten. They asked us to complete a questionnaire so they could assess what level of German she had

and whether or not she would need to attend a Spielgruppe before Kindergarten to expose her to German.

This could be obligatory for children without German as their first language – but as Nia had been to daycare in her early years it wasn't needed. More details about the obligatory attendance are available in this link below, in German.

<http://www.volksschulen.bs.ch/schulsystem/vor-dem-kindergarten/obligatorische-deutschfoerderung.html>

In the May before Nia was due to start Kindergarten (around mid August) they wrote to us to tell us which one she would be going to.

(please see <http://www.volksschulen.bs.ch>, in German)

The Education as we know it...

Our observations have been that in the first year of Nia's Kindergarten the focus and primary aim is to stimulate and develop social skills through play-based learning. There is a lot of "free play", (as opposed to teacher led) music, singing and dancing with crafts and games. There are lots of activities taken outdoors, whatever the weather, and the children are very much encouraged to develop independence, curiosity, problem solving, empathy and resilience. They are taught to respect themselves and others and there is a definite focus on health and wellbeing and the importance of this.

The children are encouraged to try and solve any differences between themselves with little or no interference from the teachers. This has definitely encouraged me to take a step back, particularly when the two sisters have any conflict, to give them the chance to resolve it without me stepping in.

In the second year, from what we have seen so far, they start to introduce the fundamentals of reading, writing and numbers but it is through play based learning rather than a lesson specifically in reading and writing.

There have certainly been some eyebrows raised from our friends and family in the UK when we announce that Nia will not get formally taught to read and write until she starts Primar Schule (Primary School) (when she will be 6 years old) and I feel that occasionally there is the assumption that Nia is at a disadvantage because of this. Personally, we have never felt this would be a disadvantage. Although, I admit there are times when I have suddenly thought “Am I just going along with what is the norm here and should I be questioning it more, doing more with her at home etc...?”

Nia, who is 5 1/2 years, is just starting to show an interest in reading and writing and we are using material at home, in English, to positively encourage and develop any interest she has, at her own pace. My understanding is there is no rule in Switzerland that states that “your child should not learn to read and write before they are 6 years old”... It is just purely that the main emphasis of early learning is placed on different areas of development.

The other thing we have been very aware of in our Kindergarten is the amount of children who have a different mother tongue. We once overheard a conversation between Nia and her friends where they were discussing

how they say “poo” in their mother tongue. They were all proudly saying it in Spanish, Portuguese, German, Finnish and English and morepver. Swiss children, who have only been used to speaking Swiss German at home, learning High German at Kindergarten also constitutes learning a new language.

Many children start Kindergarten with varying degrees of language skills and the focus in the first year of the Kindergarten that Nia attends has been very much to develop their language skills which I would imagine enables the children to develop their social and communication skills.

Learning a new language...

I can’t exactly remember when Nia started to talk but I don’t remember thinking there was a real delay in her starting to speak English (her mother tongue). She would often mix up German and English in a sentence or say “her” instead of “she”, and say “gotfor” instead of “forgot”,



which I have since discovered is quite common for bilingual Children.

When she started Spielgruppe she was not speaking any German, apart from the odd word here and there. She understood everything that was said to her but she still spoke only in English.

For the first few months at Kindergarten, she was still not speaking any German. But after a few months there, something changed and she slowly gained the confidence to start speaking. To begin with. I think there was a lot of frustration on her part, which isn't easy for her or for us to see but as with everything, you need to practice and receive positive encouragement for the confidence to grow.

We are now into the 2nd year of Kindergarten, and quite often when she speaking with her friends, I have no idea what she is saying... She switches from English to German to Swiss German without pausing for thought and for her now, this has become completely normal. When she is a situation when different languages are being spoken to her, She differentiates between the languages and the vocabulary required to speak the different languages without even thinking about it. Well, she is thinking about it but the processing time for her to switch seems seamless at times.

I think we assume that learning two languages confuses them. I must admit to begin with I thought Nia was confused when she was constantly asking "are you speaking English or German mummy", or telling me someone was speaking English when they were actually speaking German or sometimes a different language. Now I realise this wasn't confusion but more a realisation and confirmation for her that she was processing two or more languages.

We have been very happy with our experience of Kindergarten and are looking forward to Nia's younger sister following her lead in 1 1/2 years time. She hasn't had so much exposure from such a young age, as Nia, but we don't see this as a disadvantage at all. All children are different and learn in different ways and at different paces, whether it is learning a new language, learning to ride a bike or learning to read and write.

Being bilingual can make you more empathetic, be better at problem solving and weeding out useless information. This doesn't just apply to children either, it applies to everyone that learns and speaks a different language on a regular basis. At the age of 40 I am now taking intensive German lessons determined to be able to understand what my 5 1/2 year old daughter is talking about.

"Research has shown that bilingualism is beneficial for children's development and their future. Children exposed to different languages become more aware of different cultures, other people and other points of view. But they also tend to be better than monolinguals at 'multitasking' and focusing attention. They are often more precocious readers, and generally find it easier to learn other languages. Bilingualism gives children much more than two languages!

More recent research also suggests that learning another language may have benefits in later life, delaying the onset of dementia symptoms, and slowing cognitive aging. The good news is that these benefits seem to exist even when people learn a second language later in life. So it is never too late!

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jan/21/the-joys-and-benefits-of-bilingualism>

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DECEMBER: TRADITIONS

Would you or your child like to share a tradition that your family follows? How do you teach your children about traditions from your home country? Have you started any new ones and are there any Swiss traditions you have adopted or adapted? Do you worry that your children might miss out on the traditions you enjoyed as a child? Our December issue will be dedicated to the wonderful and eclectic world of traditions big and small.

We welcome all articles, short stories, pictures, drawings, poems, crafts, recipes, etc from parents and children.

Please send all submissions to newsletter.bct@gmail.com by October 5th for the November issue or by November 5th for the December issue.

For any questions, please contact the Newsletter team at newsletter.bct@gmail.com



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