On Tuesday evening, July 25th, a Preschool For All (PFA) forum was brought together by the local California Lutheran University radio station, KCLU.

In proper reporting fashion: the panel members consisted of Jim Rondeau, KCLU moderator; Dr. Charles Weis Superintendent of Schools for Ventura County; Jennie Martinez, Child Development Program Administrator for the Santa Barbara School District; Carrie Murphy, Preschool For All Planner and School Readiness Coordinator for First Five Ventura County; Michelle Robertson from the Office of Early Care and Prevention, First Five Santa Barbara County; and Rachel Champagna from Child Development, Inc.

The failure of Prop. 82 “was a missed opportunity… because it had everything we’d wanted all in one package and it would all happen all at once. And so, instead of getting that, we’re getting it [here] in increments,” said Robertson. “Preschool For All is still coming”, she continued, and there are pilot projects throughout the state.

Early learning standards for California young children (birth through age 12) have already been released, reported Robertson. In fact, the California Department of Education, Child Development Division in collaboration with the California Institute on Human Services website provides a description of Desired Results for Children & Families including an explanation of both the Desired Results System Model and Process. It also hosts downloadable forms such as the Desired Results System Forum, Observation Forum, and Parent Survey Forum. (To read more, please visit http://www.sonoma.edu/cihs/desiredresults/training/)

In the final analysis, PFA is expected to resurface on the 2008 California voter’s ballot with little or no changes. Should it pass, PFA “will become as common as high school” according to Dr. Weis. To listen to the hour long recording of the town hall meeting on the subject of California universal pre-school, visit http://www.kclu.org/index.html.

Christine Gillan-Byrne, Coordinator
Early Childhood Education and Care Division
P. O. Box 5005
Westlake Village, Ca 91359
(805) 413-7344—FAX: (805) 497-7099
Balloon Bash

**WHAT IT TEACHES:** **Teamwork Beats Arguing**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Find an open area where your kids won’t bump into furniture. Then give each child two balloons (don’t try this with kids under 3, since balloons are a choking and suffocation hazard). When you say “go,” they must team up to keep the balloons in the air for a set time (start with 30 seconds). You can also have them try bopping the balloons with just one silly part of their body, such as their nose or their pinkie fingers.

**WHY IT WORKS:** Your children will see the value of working together toward a common goal. Remind them of this lesson the next time you ask them to clean an area or set the table.

Look on the Bright Side

**WHAT IT TEACHES:** **Optimism**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Start telling a story in which something negative happens (“One day Steve was feeling cranky because it was too hot outside”). Ask one child to continue by describing a positive turn of events. For instance, “The good thing was, there was a nice, cool lake nearby for taking a dip.” The next player then introduces another negative idea, which is answered by a positive one from the next player.

**WHY IT WORKS:** It helps kids develop a more positive outlook so they can deal with real-life frustrations more easily.

Follow the Helpful Leader

**WHAT IT TEACHES:** **Tidying Up**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Gather your kids outside a cluttered room. Explain that you’re the first “helpful leader” and that they should do what you do. Lead them, skipping and clapping, into the room. Then start straightening up. Make sure they’re copying you. After a few minutes, let one of your children be the leader. Encourage the kids afterward by saying, “This room looks really clean!”

**WHY IT WORKS:** Children will realize they’re capable of cleaning up after themselves, and that doing so can even be fun—especially when everyone helps out.

The “I never thought of that” Game

**WHAT IT TEACHES:** **Problem-Solving**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Gather a few everyday objects, such as a trash bin, a shoe, and a pencil. Hold up an item and ask your child to think of as many uses for it as he can. (For a trash bin, he may come up with ideas such as “sit on it,” “hide in it,” “use it like a bucket,” and bang it like a drum.) Take turns letting players think of as many ideas as they can in a minute, using a different object for each.

**WHY IT WORKS:** Kids learn that it’s fun to think things out on their own. You can also use this technique for helping them come up with options for settling sibling squabbles or dealing with a kid who teases them.

A Few of My Favorite Things

**WHAT IT TEACHES:** **Empathy**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make a list of five things that make you feel happy, such as ice cream. Big smiles, sunny days, Daddy, and getting a good night’s sleep. Ask your child to repeat these five things. If he does it correctly, add a sixth item, and ask him to repeat them all. Keep adding to the list until he can’t recall it. Then it’s his turn to say five things that make him happy and have you repeat them. Continue playing by choosing different feelings (sad, angry, afraid) and naming things that make you feel that way.

**WHY IT WORKS:** Your child will start to consider other people’s likes, dislikes, and emotions, not just his own. This game will also make him think about how his actions affect the feelings of friends and siblings.

The Same-Time Game

**WHAT IT TEACHES:** **Interrupting is Rude**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Think of some things you can do at the same time (such as clap your hands and sing) and things you can’t (such as stand up and sit down), and demonstrate each. Feel free to do something silly, such as frantically trying to sit and stand simultaneously. Then let your children come up with their own examples (“I can’t hold my nose and breathe through it at the same time, but I can touch my toes and laugh at the same time”). Take turns until every player has come up with at least five sets of cans and can’ts.

**WHY IT WORKS:** Children have a hard time accepting that they can’t always get your attention right away. This game will help them to be more patient—and less likely to interrupt—when you’re on the phone or making dinner.

Treasure Hunt

**WHAT IT TEACHES:** **Bedtime Cooperation**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Make a certificate good for an extra story, a back rub, or your child’s favorite breakfast. Hide the slip of paper in her room, then let her look for it after she’s brushed her teeth. If she’s having trouble, give hints, such as, “you’re getting warmer.”

**WHY IT WORKS:** Bedtime becomes fun for kids when they get extra time with Mommy and Daddy and have the bonuses to look forward to.

Center Highlight

Children’s Discovery Center, Riverside, CA

The Impact of an Adventist Preschool

Children’s Discovery Center is located in Riverside, California. As with most Adventist early childhood programs, the teaching evangelists at Children’s Discovery Center minister to over 90 families on a weekly basis. The prospects are endless; the impact is eternal.

Take for instance, four-year-old Jason Hughes. “Our resident cowboy” beams Teacher Denise Savala. On May 12, 2006, just one month before his fourth birthday, Jason was diagnosed with Astrocytoma, a horrible, fast-growing brain tumor.

Within three days, Jason underwent his first surgery at UCLA to remove the tumor but within weeks, his left side began to show paralysis. A second surgery was 94% successful and he began to slowly regain the use of his left side. Sadly, additional tumors have since been found in his neck and spine. Jason’s parents, Lindsay and Lucky, are hopeful for a possible bone marrow transplant through the Children’s Hospital of Orange County. In the meantime, the little boy with an infectious smile is receiving physical therapy at home and chemotherapy at Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital.

The sudden turn of events in Jason’s life found him celebrating his fourth birthday in the hospital. Savala and friends recorded a video of “Happy Birthday” messages, songs and get well wishes. Despite the new and scary situation, center director Laura Parker said “this little boy is happy.” He is able to spend a lot of time with his mom, has new shoes with his new brace, and friends and family have showered him with love and gifts.

Families from the preschool have continuously provided the center’s office with gifts and cards for their young friend. In love and consideration, each has thoughtfully provided gifts appropriate for a young boy in a supine position, such as lap boxes, books, toys and, of course, a new cowboy hat! Even children not associated with the center have sent cards and pictures for Jason.

A local floral shop was touched by Jason’s story and the employees of the store invested personal interest by creating a special care package for him for a fraction of the regular cost. The package included a book made by his preschool friends. In addition, the shop delivered the gift at no cost even though the hospital was outside their delivery area.

Other local organizations have been prompted to demonstrate generosity as well. Members of the Riverside Community Church and La Sierra Spanish Church raised money to help the Hughes family with medical costs. A blood drive and car wash have also been held to assist Jason and his family.

The community’s response to Jason’s diagnosis has been overwhelming. The preschool purchased boxes of cards and stickers for the children to use and set about preparing to mail encouragement packages filled with notes, pictures, and presents. A self-employed preschool client volunteered to mail the packages at her personal expense. As a result, young Jason receives an encouragement package each week from his preschool friends.

What’s a typical day at school like without Jason? Amid the regular daily schedule of worship, physical and academic skill development, lunch, nap and play time outside, everyone prays for Jason. Since his diagnosis, the boy who wears a straw cowboy hat and greets everyone has been greatly missed by teachers, peers and parents alike.

Jason’s grandmother told center director Parker how touched she was at the amount of support and love demonstrated by the preschool staff and families. Jason is in a life and death battle, but the amount of love, care and support from within this Adventist preschool will bear much fruit or a long time.

To learn more, visit Jason’s website at www.myspace.com/imacowboy4u or contact Laura Parker at Children’s Discovery Center (951) 781-3621.
Pre-kindergartners benefit from experiences that support the development of fine motor skills in the hands and fingers. Children should have strength and dexterity in their hands and fingers before being asked to manipulate a pencil on paper. Working on dexterity and strength first can eliminate the development of an inappropriate pencil grasp, which is becoming more commonplace as young children are engaged in writing experiences before their hands are ready. The following activities involve the use of manipulatives which will support young children's fine motor development, and will help to build the strength and dexterity necessary to hold a pencil appropriately.

**Fine Motor Activities**

- Molding and rolling play dough into balls - using the palms of the hands facing each other and with fingers curled slightly towards the palm.
- Rolling play dough into tiny balls (peas) using only the finger tips.
- Using pegs or toothpicks to make designs in play dough.
- Cutting play dough with a plastic knife or with a pizza wheel by holding the implement in a diagonal volar grasp.
- Tearing newspaper into strips and then crumpling them into balls. Use to stuff scarecrow or other art creation.
- Scrunching up 1 sheet of newspaper in one hand. This is a super strength builder.
- Using a plant sprayer to spray plants, (indoors, outdoors) to spray snow (mix food coloring with water so that the snow can be painted), or melt "monsters". (Draw monster pictures with markers and the colors will run when sprayed.)
- Picking up objects using large tweezers such as those found in the "Bedbugs" game. This can be adapted by picking up Cheerios, small cubes, small marshmallows, pennies, etc., in counting games.
- Shaking dice by cupping the hands together, forming an empty air space between the palms.
- Using small-sized screwdrivers like those found in an erector set.
- Lacing and sewing activities such as stringing beads, Cheerios, macaroni, etc.
- Using eye droppers to "pick up" colored water for color mixing or to make artistic designs on paper.
- Rolling small balls out of tissue paper, then gluing the balls onto construction paper to form pictures or designs.
- Turning over cards, coins, checkers, or buttons, without bringing them to the edge of the table.
- Making pictures using stickers or self-sticking paper reinforcements.

Playing games with the "puppet fingers" - the thumb, index, and middle fingers. At circle time have each child's puppet fingers tell about what happened over the weekend, or use them in songs and finger plays.

**Scissor Activities**

When scissors are held correctly, and when they fit a child's hand well, cutting activities will exercise the very same muscles which are needed to manipulate a pencil in a mature tripod grasp. The correct scissor position is with the thumb and middle finger in the handles of the scissors, the index finger on the outside of the handle to stabilize, with fingers four and five curled into the palm.

- Cutting junk mail, particularly the kind of paper used in magazine subscription cards.
- Making fringe on the edge of a piece of construction paper.
- Cutting play dough with scissors.
- Cutting straws or shredded paper.

**Activities To Develop Handwriting Skills**

There are significant prerequisites for printing skills that begin in infancy and continue to emerge through the preschool years. The following activities support and promote fine motor and visual motor development:

**Body Stability**

The joints of the body need to be stable before the hands can be free to focus on specific skilled fine motor tasks.

- Wheelbarrow walking, crab walking, and wall push-ups.
- Toys: Orbiter, silly putty, and monkey bars on the playground.

Compiled by Loubina Buxamusa, Occupational Therapist and Ann Mahoney, Early Childhood Specialist

2006 Dates to Remember . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 18-22</td>
<td>CCC Center Visitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 27</td>
<td>SCC Director's Meeting, TBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 2-6</td>
<td>NCC Center Visitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 12</td>
<td>PUC ECEC Board, WLV, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 8—11</td>
<td>NAEYC Conference, Atlanta, GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HI Center Visitations, TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the next PUC ECEC Newsletter we will highlight the NAD Teacher's Convention. Submit your stories by October 1 for inclusion!