



Take it outside

Learning can—and should—be done outside the classroom. Kids who engage in extra-curricular activities become more dynamic, curious, expressive and eager students. **BY BAMBI SY**



having been a teacher of young children for over 15 years, I've found that parents or caregivers who take time out to spend true quality moments and have meaningful conversations with their children usually have kids who are adjusted, happy, and do well in school. We as teachers must encourage the parents of our students to support what we do in the classroom by helping and allowing their children to continue learning away from school.

Summer is a great time to encourage learning outside the classroom, but these activities, techniques and

strategies can easily be done during weekends as well. It does not mean having to spend a lot of money. It's all about being creative and taking the time to converse with the child that is the key.

At your next meeting with parents, or through a circular or bulletin, share some of these activities that they can do with their children, and you will have more curious, brighter, happier pupils!

Try these at home

Here are simple but fun learning activities that can be done around the house. Have your students do some

of these activities at home and encourage parents to try them with their children:

1 Ask your students to write a letter or greeting card to a relative, friend, or even to you. Take the time to discuss what the child can write about, and encourage parents to help their children brighten up the letter with drawings, magazine cut-outs, photos, etc.

2 Have the child decorate and personalize an old, empty notebook (or an old calendar), then encourage daily journal writing about significant events in the day and how these made him or her feel. Teachers can also follow up on this journal once the child is back in school.

3 Children enjoy maps. Have them draw maps of favorite indoor spaces (like different rooms in the house) or outdoor spaces (like their neighborhood or the school campus). You can even extend this activity by making a "treasure hunt" game using the finished map.

4 Encourage parents to borrow or buy a chapter book, then set aside a time daily to read a chapter from the book. Parent and child can talk about what they read together or draw a favorite part of that chapter. This is a great bonding experience as well.

5 Children just love to cook! Tell parents to allow their children to cook with them. Children can even write out a grocery list and go with mom or dad to buy what's needed. If a recipe is followed, this is a great way of learning about measurements, fractions, conversion, and following instructions.

A Principal's Game Plan

Principal Leoncio S. Vergara of Sta. Lucia Elementary School in the City of San Fernando shares his tips on developing an extra-curricular or summer program:

STEP 1: SET GOALS

Iron out and write down the exact goals you want to accomplish, including the learning that you expect the students to acquire and the materials needed.

STEP 2: GET PARENTS AND STUDENTS INVOLVED

Meet with the parents and students at the same time to discuss the project, making your goals and their own roles clear. Ask for the unwavering support and cooperation of the parents.

STEP 3: MONITOR AND EVALUATE

Find ways to regularly check up on students and periodically evaluate whether the program is accomplishing your goals. This can be done in school or another designated location, such as someone's home. Keep it informal, serve food and drinks if appropriate, so that kids don't feel like they're in school.

STEP 4: REWARD

Motivation is an important aspect of teaching, and rewards come in many forms. Be resourceful. You can, for example, approach donors within your community who might be open to donating small prizes like school supplies, food, books, etc. Approach local officials with a sound plan; they are usually willing to support you if they believe in your cause.

STEP 5: BE RECOGNIZED

Document your project thoroughly and analyze whether you were able to meet your goals. In what areas were you successful and which areas need improvement? Share your documentation with your superior for possible accreditation, and so that it can be shared with others. *(Ed's Note: you can even mail it to Star Teacher for possible inclusion in a future article!)*

6 Make a simple sundial in your garden by planting a stick in the ground. Observe where the shadow of your stick falls during different times of the day and have fun trying to figure out where the shadow will go next and why it moves.

7 Most kids love to collect, label and keep records of items. Collecting is a learning experience, and most collections tell stories. Encourage your students to start a collection of items that interest them, mount the items in an appropriate container, and then share this with their classmates. Coins and stamps are obvious choices, but they shouldn't be limited to these. Kids

can collect rocks, shells, postcards, family photos, recipes, dried flowers and leaves, or even unique buttons.

Good trips

Besides activities around the house, parents can also turn turn trips with the children into learning and bonding experiences. Here are some ideas:

1 Going to a mall without shopping? Why not? Parents can plan a day to just walk around the mall to spot things. Think of a theme to spot around the mall (animals, colors, types of food, a particular object) then have a great time looking for them and listing down everything you find.

2 The next time parents go grocery shopping, they can ask the child to be in charge of placing all the items from a particular food group (or another category) in the cart. The grocery store is a great place to learn math. Younger children can count the number of items in the cart, while older kids can add up the cost of the items to see if they're within budget.

3 Take a walk in a nearby park and help children build an observant eye and understanding of the natural world by just observing and sharing your observations about the distinctive behavior and characteristics of different plants, trees, animals, sounds and weather.

4 If there's no public library near your students' neighborhood, encourage them to visit their local bookstore. Most bookstores now have children's areas where kids can sit to read a book. Parents can ask young children to read the titles of different books as an exercise, while older children can sit and read quietly (you don't have to buy the book!)

5 Older kids need to be exposed to the work options available to them in the future. Hopefully, the more exposed they are, the more committed they'll be to finishing their studies and pursuing a career. Encourage them to visit their parents at work (if possible), to step inside places of business in their neighborhood and try to understand what goes on inside (e.g. banks, grocery stores, clinics, offices, factories, restaurants, etc.) You can even have them report on their visits and share what they have learned with their classmates. ★

ABOUT THE WRITER

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WHAT YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT...

Child Abuse

Child abuse is a silent epidemic in the Philippines. Here's how you can intervene to prevent a student from being damaged for life by an abusive adult. **BY OWEN L. SANTOS**

In the Philippines, there are at least 36 million Filipinos—nearly 40 per cent of the total population—who are below 19 years of age. Many of them are exposed to the hazards of abuse, neglect and exploitation. Experts say experiencing violence in childhood may serve as a model for the child's future behavior as an adult. Studies have shown that victims of abuse can turn into abusers themselves when they become adults. Thus, early detection and prevention of abuse is key.

The role of teachers

Educators have a special role in stemming this continuing problem. Child abuse prevention workers agree that you are in a unique position to recognize the indicators and report the abuse because you spend long periods of time with the children on a daily basis.

You are also mandated by law to protect children from abuse. According to a primer from the Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse (CPTCSA), teachers, school nurses, counselors, and administrators are “required by Section 4 of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Anti-Child Abuse Law (Republic Act 7610) to report suspected incidents of abuse.”

Will it get you into trouble if you report suspected abuse? Not legally. The law provides you with civil immunity for good faith reporting. Besides, the CPTCSA primer continues, “failure to report could be perceived as a participation in the perpetuation of abuse and thus, school personnel are administratively liable.”

What is child abuse?

It comes in various forms and can affect anyone from any socioeconomic environment or culture. Knowing the indi-



THE LAWS ARE ON YOUR SIDE

Know the law. You can find the complete texts of the laws against child abuse through the DSWD or in the following:

Republic Act 7610 – Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act
Website: www.salidumay.org/policies/articles/ra7610.htm

Republic Act 9262 – Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act
Website: www.ncrfw.gov.ph (click on the link to RA9262 to download)

The Comprehensive Program on Child Protection
Website: www.doj.gov.ph/children1.html

Abuse and violence hotlines:

- DSWD: (02) 734-3617 or 807-1586
- Community and Family Services International (CFSI): (02) 931-5417 or 931-5670
- Bantay Bata 24-hour hotline: Dial 163

Sources:
Child Protection in the Philippines (Philippine Resource Network); Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse; Department of Social Welfare and Development; Department of Justice; Virginia Institute for Social Services and Training Activities, Virginia Commonwealth University, USA; Child Welfare League of America

cators can help you identify if a child is suffering from abuse.

Physical abuse. This is characterized by intentional injury to a child by her or his parent, guardian or caretaker. Punching, beating, kicking, even burning, are some of the ways this kind of abuse is inflicted. Watch out for unexplained bruises, welts, burns, scars, broken bones and other unexplained injuries, especially if they appear on a regular basis. Sometimes, the existence of spousal abuse in the home may also mean that child abuse is happening in that home.

Neglect. The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) describes this as lack of attention to the basic needs of a child—food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, and of course, education. They present the following as indicators of neglect: the child consistently stealing or hoarding food, disorganized thinking or unattended needs. If you suspect neglect, the CWLA suggests that you ask yourself whether the context of the community would provide any answers. Is this culturally acceptable child rearing or a case of true neglect?

Emotional abuse. This involves verbal, psychological and mental abuse brought about by consistent belittling, blaming or rejection of a child, lack of concern for the child's welfare, and, sometimes, unequal treatment of siblings in the home. Even being exposed to domestic violence can cause emotional damage to children. Unfortunately, emotional abuse is difficult to identify because its indicators may not be as obvious as the other kinds of abuse.

Sexual abuse. This is defined as forcing or inducing a child to engage in sexually explicit behavior for the sexual stimulation of the abuser or another person. Abusers are usually in a position of power or control over the child and are usually significantly older than the abused child. The CPTCSA cites a few indicators of sexual abuse: change of behavior (e.g from outgoing to introverted), the child running away from home without giving a specific reason, the child refusing to change into P.E. clothes, difficulty walking or sitting, evidence of physical trauma and bleeding in the oral, anal and genital areas, the existence of venereal or sexually transmitted disease, pregnancy at an early age (especially if the girl is not known to be very sociable), sexual knowledge, language or behavior that is advanced for the child's age.

What to do

Your role is to set things in motion—by reporting it, the process of getting the child out of the situation will begin.

You need not investigate or verify the crime, but interviewing the child when you suspect abuse will help you verify your suspicions and give you reasonable cause to refer it to the proper agencies such as the DSWD. Sometimes, the child will

even disclose the abuse on his own. Based on experience, the CPTCSA says that an abused child usually is willing to reveal the incident once.

As much as possible, have someone from the DSWD present for proper documentation. The DSWD worker will need to hear the account directly from the child.

Provide moral support, too

Apart from reporting the abuse, your emotional and spiritual support for the child is crucial. Here are guidelines:

- Reassure the child that it is okay to tell others what happened, and that he or she won't be punished for it.
- Tell the child what to expect. If you don't know, say so, but let the child know s/he will be supported by you.

- Call support groups if you need help determining "reasonable cause."
- Project a calm, understanding and supportive attitude at all times.
- Avoid having the child repeat his story many times.
- Tell the child that you must tell authorities to get help.
- Reassure the student that it is not his/her fault.
- Respect the child's privacy by not discussing the situation out of school.
- After reporting, it is important to maintain a supportive presence for the child. Don't disappear, thinking that it's now out of your hands.

A GROWING PROBLEM...

Reported cases of child abuse with Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD):
 1998: 2,000 cases
 2002: 10,000 cases

From the 2000 Department of Health (DOH) Baseline Survey for National Health Objectives Project:

- 85% of adolescents surveyed have experienced some kind of abuse
- Nearly 83% endured physical abuse
- Almost 60% experienced psychological abuse
- Almost 12% were sexually molested

Reporting the abuse

An educator who reports in good faith is protected from civil liability. If you have reasonable cause to believe that a child is being abused, you must report this within 48 hours. Put your report in writing, inform your principal or administrator who must then inform the DSWD. After this, you may also contact the DSWD and/or other government or non-government agencies yourself.

Each incidence of abuse merits a separate report even if it happens to the same child. Make sure you include the child's name, age, gender and birth date, the names of the parents, guardians or caretakers, their contact information at home and at work (if any), the nature and extent of suspected abuse, background information on previous injuries, and the identity of the abuser if you know it.

Some schools already have a protocol as to how to deal with suspected abuse victims. Find out from your principal or school administrator. ★

