

**Ready! Set! School! Project**  
**Product Testing English Speaking Group Session Two**

**February 8, 2006**

**Session Findings & Analysis**

**Session Objectives:**

Session moderator Jack Wilbur, and Family Center staff member Amanda Kobelin, presented four draft activities to a group of 11 English speaking parents of 3-5 year old pre-school children. The objective was to solicit feedback about the activities and suggestions to make them usable for parents.

**The Group:**

Eleven English speaking parents participated in the session: two fathers and nine mothers. Nine of the eleven are Caucasian, two are Latino. The two Latino participants are also the only two working moms in the group. The group was well mixed between parents who have one or more older children already in school, and parents whose 3-5 year old pre-school child is the oldest. Two of the parents each currently have two children that fit into the demographic. Geographically, the participants live in three counties along the Wasatch Front (Davis County, 1, Utah County, 2, and Salt Lake County, 8). One of the mothers from Utah County has a son with autistic characteristics.

**The Activities and Procedure:**

We went through a total of four activities during the two-hour session (The ABCs, Ready set go, Playtime, and Feelings puppets).

Jack and the participants read through one activity at a time. After reading an activity, Jack asked the participants a series of questions to gauge their initial impressions (refer to the Product Testing Review Questions attachment).

Following the initial round of questions and answers, Amanda joined the group from an adjoining office where she watched and listened to the proceedings via a television monitor. Amanda demonstrated the activity as the writing committee had envisioned it.

When Amanda finished demonstrating the activity, she retreated again to the connecting office and Jack asked a follow up set of questions to determine if any of the parents felt differently about the activity after seeing it demonstrated.

This procedure was followed for each activity one at a time.

**Parent Impressions**

### **General impressions, overriding themes:**

1. Watching the demonstration was very helpful.

One parent, whose 4-year-old is her oldest, said “Watching the demonstration gets you over the initial ‘how am I going to present this? Where am I going to start?’”

Other similar comments included, “It’s nice to see a different approach,” “I’m more likely to do it myself after seeing it done.”

2. A tips box(es) on the card that included other materials that could be used, other extension activities that could be done. Something beyond the list of suggested readings on the topic. They want more places to go for similar activities. Web sites, additional books, etc. They recognize the limited space on the cards, but they want as much as they can get in that one concise area of the card.
3. Some of the cards need better, different graphics to be more visually appealing.
4. The web site should have a chat room or electronic bulletin board for parents to exchange ideas.
5. The DVDs should also include the cards or other printed instructions for the activities.
6. Multiple, or cross media examples are important. In other words a visual demonstration or depiction along with written instructions.

### **Activity Specific Comments:**

#### **The ABCs:**

1. A Good activity to recognize letters; it was good to distinguish upper case from lower case letters.
2. It stimulates creativity; good for visual learners; liked the use of pipe cleaners, stickers, etc. After seeing the activity demonstrated one parent said she wouldn’t have thought of using noodles, for example.
3. This activity is good because the learning continues throughout the day. Parents can point out other signs with the same letters, etc.
4. One parent said that some of the learning strategies in the activity are very similar to what his son is getting in his pre-school class. He liked the connection.
5. When asked to visualize doing this activity at home, one parent said that she would include her older children. Another parent said that she sets aside a certain time each night after work to work with her daughter. This activity would fit well into that routine.

#### **Ready Set Go:**

1. The parents were not very impressed with the graphic used on this card. One parent was adamant about wanting the layout to be more kid-friendly. Even after it was pointed out that the materials are intended for parents, this parent insisted that the experience will mean more to her children if they can be in on it from the first when the activity is chosen. Her children won't choose an activity unless the card is visually appealing. Some of the activities did have more pleasing graphics, she later noted, but she was not excited by the look of this card.
2. Visual learners need this activity, the parent of a developmentally delayed boy pointed out.
3. Two of the parents would not do it because of logistical or space concerns. One parent has five children. Drawers are often shared. Another parent doesn't have drawers for clothes, etc. If the activity were more general to suggest labeling other things. One mother suggested making a poster to hang on the wall that depicts the child putting things away in specific places, rather than labeling a drawer.
4. There were some parents who would use this activity as written.
5. There were several positive comments about the intent behind the activity to teach organizational skills, independence, pride in accomplishment, etc.
6. The instructions were easy to follow. The language consistency and grammar issues were pointed out. Amanda has noted those comments and I made corrections on the card.

### **Playtime:**

This activity didn't seem all that useful to these parents.

1. "Duh, playtime," one parent said. But she said that it is still useful to see other ways to play with children.
2. One parent did not like the instruction that said "no outside interruptions." This is not possible for her. She wants the card to give her permission to try to limit interruptions but have it be okay that there still may be some.
3. Several parents did not like the "Police Officer" scenario that was described in the activity card. Make the example more real world for the child.
4. The benefits of role play should be better spelled out to parents.
5. The card is too general in this case, at least one parent felt.

Because of lack of time, the decision was made not to do the demonstration with this activity.

### **Feelings Puppets:**

1. Most of the parents said they would do this activity at home. Two parents did not like the idea. One seemed more put off by the mirror, while the other felt uncomfortable playing with puppets.
2. One parent was having trouble visualizing how to make the puppets with happy or sad faces prior to the demonstration.

3. Another parent wanted to know who this activity was designed for from an age and/or developmental standpoint. A few parents thought that another box discussing age and development level and educational or psychological reasons behind the activity might be good. Maybe it could be an extension of the expected benefits box.
4. One mom who already uses puppets can see the benefits. She believes her children might say some things to the puppet on her hand (even though it is an extension of her) that they might not say to her.
5. After seeing the demonstration, nothing really changed. The couple of parents who didn't like the activity after reading it, still didn't like it after seeing Amanda demonstrate it.
6. One parent suggested that if the point is to demonstrate feelings that, once again, alternate methods should be explained.
7. One parent suggested that for the web site that a simple computer activity could be developed that the parent could play with their child would be a great extension.

### **Conclusions:**

This group of parents seemed very interested in the products being developed. Most of them liked most of the activities. But they want the activities better spelled out, they want ideas about other ways they can accomplish the same outcomes and variations of the activity. Visual cues such as simple as a picture of a finished activity for the cards would be helpful to these parents. Some of them are obviously visual learners and will do what they can to be exposed to the DVD or internet versions of the products. Even those parents who could easily visualize the activity after reading the instructions still appreciated the demonstrations.

Along with more detailed instructions, visual cues and alternative variations, this group also wanted more resources listed beyond the few books listed for each activity. They realize that space is limited on a card, but they want more. They seem hungry for good activities to do with their children.