



6-10 YEAR-OLDS

**SUNNY  
IDEAS  
FOR A  
RAINY  
DAY**

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## The Kids Are Alright

One of my favorites images in a children's book is on the opening page of *The Cat in the Hat*, by Dr. Seuss. Two forlorn children sit in wooden chairs, looking out the window on a grey and dismal day. It says,

The sun did not shine.  
It was too wet to play.  
So we sat in the house  
All that cold, cold, wet day.

I love this for so many reasons. For one, I know the delicious mayhem that is about to ensue. Another, is that it's a given that the children want and need to be playing outside. I can still remember the feeling of my 6 year-old nose pressed against the window as I yearned to go outside when the weather wouldn't allow.

Needless to say, there have been extraordinary changes in our world since "Sally and I" were created in 1957. Children have become technologically savvy beyond some of our wildest dreams. The sheer amount of information generated and being accessed by children and adults is unprecedented. Many people, including politicians and some of our leading educators, assume that the brains of today's children, and therefore their developmental needs, have changed dramatically. To my relief and to the relief of those of us who have worked with and observed children daily, this is not the case.

Children's bodies, along with their brains, are growing in the same basic ways at the same times they always have (see note). If this were not true, babies would be sitting up at 2 weeks, writing at 2 years and doing calculus by 10. Seem silly? Still, parents are inundated with false information. We (I'm a parent too) get nervous because we are pressured into believing that today's children need to be doing more cognitively advanced tasks, earlier and earlier.

Let's take a deep breath. Your children, my children, *the world's children*, aren't a new species of human (okay, yes, it feels like that

sometimes). Instead, they are traveling along a well-worn developmental path that can guide us if we use the information with discernment. Awareness of developmental yardsticks can help us relax into parenting. It helps us judge whether a school, classroom or activity is appropriate. Informed but not anxious, we can have the peace of mind to let our children grow and learn without pressure to plow ahead of what is nurturing, now.

It helps to remember that *the* essential relationship remains between you and your child. It's the foundation upon which everything else rests. Fundamental to that relationship are qualities: openness, safety and awareness, which lead to golden moments of joy and connection. I always want more of those. At every age.

Obviously, this book is not about encouraging pandemonium in your home a la *The Cat in the Hat*. It is about using years of accumulated knowledge of child development I've garnered as a teacher, parent of two, teacher trainer, and life coach to guide you in providing activities that are not only enjoyable, but encourage you and your child to connect, grow and learn. Rain or shine.<sup>2</sup>

#### Notes:






1. An article in the Harvard Education Letter, *Kids Haven't Changed: Kindergarten Has*, (Pappano, Sept./Oct. 2010) states that a national study conducted by the world renowned Gesell Institute For Human Development shows that children are still progressing along the cognitive and behavioral continuum that Gesell identified first in 1925, then in 1940 and in later studies by colleagues in 1964, 1979 and again in 2010.

2. Of course each child is unique (this should go without saying), therefore, you are free to mix and match activities because *you know your child*.

## How To Use These Books

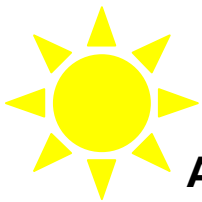
There is a *Sunny Ideas for a Rain Day* for each of these age groups: 2-6, 6-10, and 10-14. AND, there will be multiple installments so that you can add a new age group or new activities to your collection.

### What will you get?

- ♥ A few general developmental attributes of a typically developing child for each age year
- 2 activities per age (feel free to mix and match)
- Instructions for each activity and a list of materials (supplies are easy to find)
- A parent key for:
  - Prep/set up time (1- 4 clocks) 
  - Messy /clean up (1- 4 sponges) 
  - Level of supervision (green, yellow, red)   
  - Why do this activity (besides fun, of course) ?
  - Ideas for extending or adding on +
- Templates for activities when needed
- A list of resources for further reading

## Six - Seven

- ♥ They can learn 20 new words per day!
- ♥ Teeth are changing continuously.
- ♥ Industrious, enthusiastic, receptive, love surprises.
- ♥ They still ask questions for reassurance from adults.
- ♥ They're willing to ask open-ended questions.
- ♥ The process of discovery is more important than the outcome.
- ♥ They can generate and respond to Who, What, Where, When & Why questions.
- ♥ They can be active in reading and writing stories.
- ♥ Friendships are not yet based on appreciating the qualities of another.
- ♥ They can follow 3 step directions in sequence.
- ♥ Easily upset when there are changes in plans.
- ♥ It's easier to learn rules for a game, but they may change them to win, or suit needs.



**Activity:** Make 10



You'll need:

1. A deck of playing cards, all 10s and royal cards removed

What to do:

1. The object is to turn over 2 cards that add up to 10.
2. Lay out 12 cards face down, 4 rows of 3 cards.
3. Keep the rest in a pile for filling in empty spots.
4. The first player turns over 2 cards to see if they add to 10.
5. If yes, the player keeps the cards and replaces them with new ones from the pile.
6. If no, the cards go back face down and the next player goes.

7. Play continues until there are no cards left, or no 10s can be made.

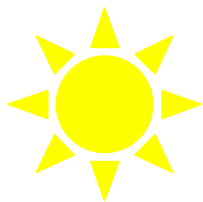
? Some children will be practicing counting skills to count both cards, while others will “count on” from the number on the first card. Some children will be practicing mental math by doing the calculations in their heads. If your child is calculating mentally, (s)he may also be able to look at the first card and calculate what card will be needed to make 10. All of these are age - appropriate skills.

? Working with the 12-card grid allows your child to practice spatial memory.

+ Instead of a grid, play Make 10 with the prepared deck (but put the 10s back in) as you would play the classic card game “War.”

+ If your child is practiced with the concepts of more than and less than, you can allow a 3 card sum if the first 2 cards add up to less than 10.

+ At the end of the game, compare your pairs, e.g. “Look four of my pairs are  $3+7$ .” Then write one of each as algorithms, e.g.  $3+7=10$ . Graph paper is good for this.



**Activity:** Can we change the color?



You'll need:

1. Carnations (flower) or celery stalk
2. Several cups or glass jars (transparent)
3. Food coloring
4. Water
5. Sketchbook/blank paper, camera &/or magnifying glass (for observations)

## What to do:

### The experiment:

1. Decide which colors you want to use.
2. Mix food coloring in the water so the color is very dark.
3. Trim the ends of your flowers or celery sticks.
4. Place 1 celery or flower stem in each cup.
5. Ask your child what she/he thinks will happen.
6. Wait. It can take anywhere from a few hours to a few days for changes to occur. *Psst...the color should move up the stem and color petals/leaves.*

### The observations:

7. Have your child draw, or take photos (or both) of the changes during the hours and (maybe) days of the experiment.
8. Use the magnifier to look more closely.
9. Ask you child what might be the reason for the changes.

**? Making a hypothesis, observing, recording observations, guessing at reasons and finding information are all science skills.**

**? This experiment explores the science concept Transpiration. It works well by itself, and would go even better with a planting activity to help your child understand how a plant uses water.**

**? Patience and follow through are developed through waiting and returning again and again to observe.**

**+ For flowers, you can choose theme related colors, e.g. orange for Halloween.**

**+ Two-tone: try splitting the stem (with razor – adults only) and putting each half in separate cups with different colored water.**

**+ If your child enjoys writing or is willing to take turns writing with you, have him/her describe what is observed and record it next to the drawing or photo.**



## Seven - Eight

- ♥ They can learn 20 new words per day!
- ♥ They're fidgety. Need physical activity.
- ♥ They can plan the steps to complete a project.
- ♥ Being read to is enjoyable: books beyond their reading level.
- ♥ Define a friend as someone who is like them in some way and shares similar interests.
- ♥ Can follow complex 3 to 4 step directions.
- ♥ Serious and can be moody, intense, hypersensitive, & self conscious – don't like making mistakes.
- ♥ May imitate peers to feel like part of the group, but prefer to work alone to completion.
- ♥ Interested in the world around them, curious, inventive.



### Activity: Rainy Day Challenge



#### You'll need:

You can use anything you have around the house.

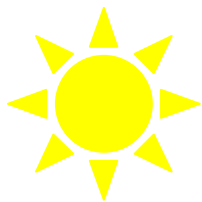
#### What to do:

This is a 3 - step gross motor movement challenge.

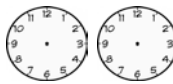
1. Say something to your child like, "I'm going to give you a body challenge, are you ready?"
2. If yes, give her/him a series of movements to perform, in order, e.g. <sup>1</sup>hop on one leg to the door, <sup>2</sup> jump to the bookshelf, pick up my glasses, <sup>3</sup> balance on 1 leg while you put them in my lap.
3. Build success, be sensitive to this age's self-consciousness.

**? This is a lot of fun when you are stuck inside. It gives your child a chance to move, follow directions, exercise short-term memory & physical memory, and you can sneak in some simple chores ;)**

- + So many possibilities, be creative. Use props, get silly, e.g. walk like an angry monkey to the kitchen, hop and squawk like a chicken, etc.
- + Take turns giving each other challenges.
- + Work in fitness activities like jumping jacks, wall push-ups, etc.
- + Add more steps and/or have your child reverse the sequence or add another step to the challenge.



### Activity: The Skin I'm In



#### You'll need:

1. Magazines
2. Acrylic paints: red, blue, white
3. Brushes
4. Water
5. Dish or palette for mixing paints
6. White paper (computer paper is fine)
7. Newspapers to cover painting space

#### What to do:

1. Find pictures of faces with varying skin shades in the magazines.
2. Cut a square swatch of color from each one - about 3 total.
3. Glue them onto paper leaving space next to each one.
4. Put dabs of red, white, yellow and blue in the bowl or on the palette.
5. Mix some red with the white; add yellow and blue until you've matched the color of one of the swatches. Paint it next to the swatch to check for a match.
6. Repeat for the next swatches.
7. Spend some time together, observing and discussing the color of your skin and your child's skin.

8. Mix colors to match your own skin tone.

*Important: Allow your child to self determine what is her/his skin tone, even if you don't think it matches.*

? **Mixing color is a basic art skill, which can get more nuanced as your child gains skill.**

? **Recognizing that skin is composed of many colors and comes in various shades reminds your child of his/her uniqueness and that of others.**

+ Ask your child to come up with words to describe the different skin colors using color words, e.g. cinnamon, tan, sand, oak, etc.

+ Take the swatches with you into the neighborhood and make a list/take pictures of matching colors.

+ Have your child do the same activity matching the skin color of his/her palms, lips, abdomen, and/or soles of feet and compare.

+ Make a "self portrait" using the colors you mixed.

## Eight - Nine

♥ Can learn 20 new words per day!

♥ Adjusts better to change.

♥ Enjoys humor, cooperation and sociability while working.

♥ Industrious, in a hurry, tends to underestimate size of projects.

♥ Needs a good deal of physical activity, but tires easily, needs short breaks.

♥ Tends to exaggerate.

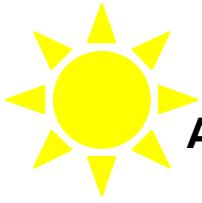
♥ Identifies a best friend, having (at least) one is very important at this age.

♥ Recognizes what characterizes a "good" friend.

♥ More balanced when coping with frustration and failure.

♥ Recognizes mixtures and blends of feelings.

♥ Can work cooperatively toward a shared goal.



## **Activity:** Write Around the House



### You'll need:

1. Paper and pencils or portable computer for writing
2. Graphic organizer – on pg. 19
3. Action figures, photos, or stuffed animals - optional

### What to do:

1. Discuss who will record the story.
2. Decide what genre you'll be working with: mystery, adventure, comedy, science fiction, etc.
3. Decide on main characters (limit to 3) and describe them. Feel free to use the graphic organizer to help with this.
4. Pick a problem for the story.
5. Pick 4 places in the room/house for the action to take place.
6. Decide where you will start and end.
7. Sit or stand in each place as you write/tell the story.

### Example:

Michael and Madge are under the kitchen table hiding.

Problem: It's thundering and their dog, Spike, is barking outside, but they are afraid to go find him.

Spaces: under the kitchen table, the attic, the bathroom, and the back porch.

**? Your child's comprehension of what makes a good story will be explored and reinforced with this activity. Creating a conflict, characterization, beginning, middle and end, and descriptive writing can be practiced.**

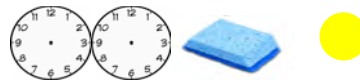
? If you are taking dictation for the first draft, your child can practice handwriting skills, if appropriate, when rewriting.

+ If there is enthusiasm from your child, edit, illustrate and make a cover for your story. You can do this over an extended time, come back to it if your child stays interested.

+ Suggest reading your finished stories to younger children.



**Activity:** Trail Mix Survey  
*Ask, Graph, Make and Eat*



You'll need:

1. Graph paper on pg. 17
2. Clipboard
3. Colored pencils
4. A variety of ingredients (nuts, seeds, dried fruit, sweets (like carob chips) for the trail mix or themed mix (see below +)
5. Measuring cups
6. A large bag or bowl
7. Small bags

What to do:

1. Have your child decide 4 or more ingredients for a mix.
2. Write 1 ingredient in each space at the bottom of the graph.
3. Decide whom you will call or email to survey their likes and dislikes.
4. Have your child ask each person, "Do you like \_\_\_\_\_ in your trail mix?" Then record the name or initials of the person in the lowest box in the column for that ingredient.
5. Don't forget to include yourselves.
6. Analyze results. Make observations. Answer, "Which ingredient do people like the most? The least? Is there someone who likes everything, or only 1 thing? If you were going to make a mix that pleases the most number of people, what would be in it?"

7. Write the recipe using measuring cups to measure amounts.
8. Make your own trail mix.
9. Eat!

*Don't forget to check for allergies*

? Surveys are fun, give your child responsibility, and promote social interaction.

? Bar graphs a great introduction to graphing skills and a useful method.

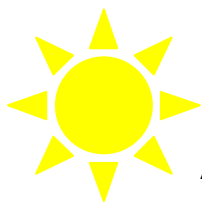
? Discuss fractions while doing the measuring and writing recipe.

+ You can make themed mixes “Movie Mix (popcorn, pretzels, etc.),” “Easter Mix,” “Winter Mix,” by changing ingredients.

+ Give a bag of the mix to friends and family as gifts.

## Nine – Ten

- ♥ Looks for explanations of how things work, why things happen the way they do.
- ♥ Issues of fairness and justice become important and interesting.
- ♥ Complains about aches and pains.
- ♥ Can be critical of self and others, anxious and easily worried.
- ♥ Wants to “make deals” with adults and peers.
- ♥ Can manage two concepts simultaneously.
- ♥ Keeping it light, laughing, and good-natured humor go a long way.
- ♥ Increased sense of truthfulness and trustworthiness
- ♥ Often outspoken and critical of adults, although still dependent on adult approval.
- ♥ Values the process and the outcome.



## Activity: Bag Explosion



### You'll need:

1. Plastic freezer bags of various sizes: sandwich, gallon
2. Vinegar
3. Baking soda
4. Warm water
5. Measuring cup
6. A tissue

### What to do:

1. Do this in the bathtub, kitchen sink or outside.
2. Put 1/4 cup of warm water in bag.
3. Add 1/2 cup vinegar.
4. Put 3 tbsp. baking soda in the middle of tissue and wrap up.
5. Close the bag 3/4 of the way.
6. Make a prediction for what will happen when the tissue with baking soda is in the bag.
7. Working quickly—put the tissue in the bag and close it the rest of the way as fast as you can. It has to be completely closed.
8. Place bag in bathtub or in sink, step away and observe.
9. What happened, why?

**? This is a great way to engage in scientific inquiry and experimentation. Your child will observe an acid base reaction, and the properties of a gas, in this case, CO<sub>2</sub>.**

**? If your child records her/his observations and adds some of the activities below, (s)he can create a lab book.**

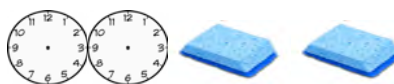
**+ Make predictions about what will happen if you change the temperature of the water. Try it.**

**+ Make predictions about what will happen if you change the size of the bag, but nothing else. Try it.**

+ Do the same with changing the amount of baking soda.



## Activity: Rubber Band Prints



### You'll need:

1. Rubber bands – variety of thickness
2. Thick cardboard
3. Pen
4. Glue – Elmer's or any other PVA glue
5. Clean paint brush
6. Scissors
7. Acrylic paints: variety of colors
8. A smooth table, counter top or floor workspace
9. Newspaper
10. Paper – a variety of colors

### What to do:

1. Draw a design with the pen on the cardboard.
2. Paint over the design with glue.
3. Snip pieces of this elastic rubber band to fit the main shapes and press onto the design.
4. Use thinner pieces of rubber band to fit the details, press into glue.
5. Use snippets of rubber band to create background, if desired, e.g. tiny squares, wavy lines.
6. When the glue is dry, brush paint onto newspaper.
7. Lay cardboard face down onto paint and press firmly.
8. Do several practice prints onto newspaper.
9. Print onto a variety of size and colored paper.

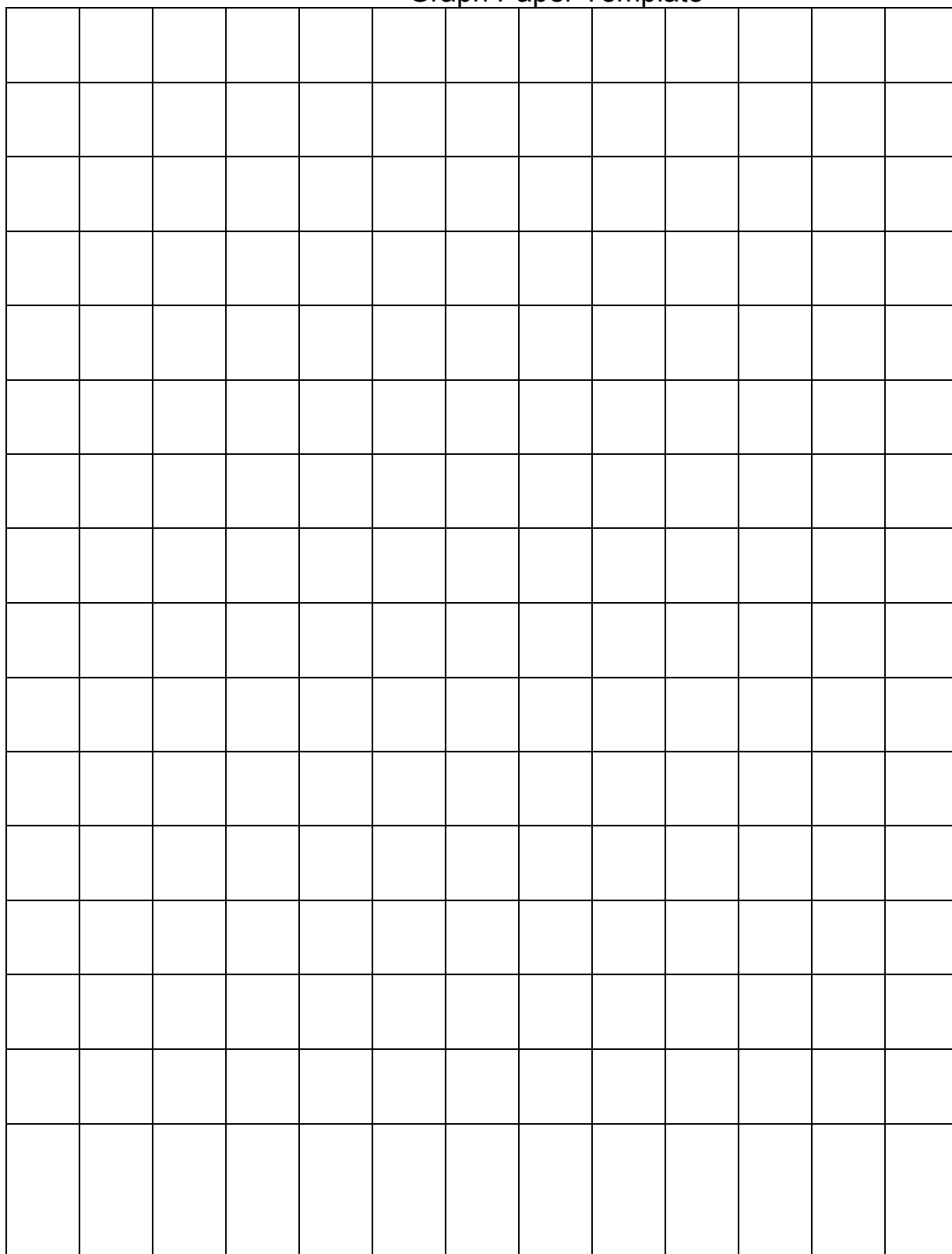
**? Printing satisfies both the need for process and for product. Your child is refining small motor skills, using problem-solving skills and creativity.**

+ Print onto tissue paper by laying the paper on top of the stamp.



- ✦ Instead of an original drawing, use tracing paper to trace a design to transfer onto stamp. Or, glue rubber bands onto a photo or drawing cut from a magazine.
- ✦ Use the prints to make cards for friends and family.

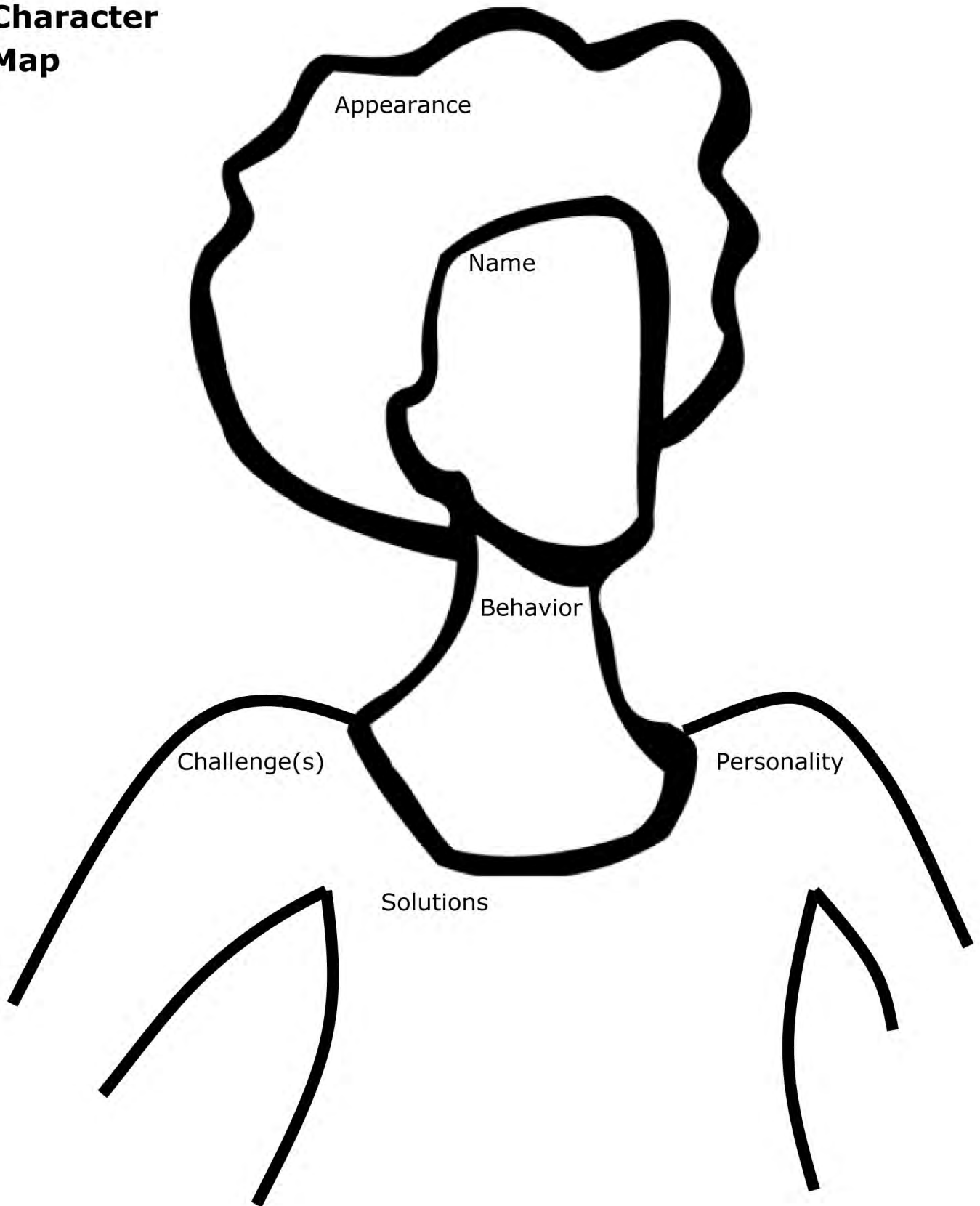
## Graph Paper Template



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Character Map



## RESOURCES

### Websites for Child Development

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopmenttracker/one/index.html>

<http://parents.lego.com/en-us/childdevelopment/cd%200-2yrs.aspx>

<http://childdevelopmentinfo.com/>

[www.gesellinstitute.org](http://www.gesellinstitute.org)

### Good Books for Parents to Read

*The Essential Partnership: How Parents and Children Can Meet the Emotional Needs of Infancy and Childhood* by Stanley Greenspan

*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* By Beverly Daniel Tatum PhD.

---Explanation of the development of racial identity.

*Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky

---7 essential skills children need.

*A Whole New Mind* by Daniel Pink

---The kinds of thinking Pink feels we need in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Yardsticks* by Chip Wood

### Articles

“The Growing Backlash Against Over Parenting” by Nancy Gibbs

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1940697,00.html>

“Learning Through Play” by David Elkind PhD.

<http://www.communityplaythings.com/resources/articles/valueofplay/learningthroughplay.html>

“Don’t! The Secret of Self-Control” by Jonah Lehrer

[http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/05/18/090518fa\\_fact\\_lehrer](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/05/18/090518fa_fact_lehrer)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The information in this book is culled from years of experience in the classroom, from readings (see Resources), attending conferences and working in collaboration with inventive, interesting and extraordinary teachers. I cannot name them all, but some contributed so much to my understanding of children, child development, teaching and creating curriculum that I must name them.

So thank you to:

Karen Biddulph, Director of the Mead School, whose faith in me, friendship, and consistent guidance in the social and emotional development of children, taught me more than I can say.

Joy Lenters, teacher extraordinaire, whose years as my teaching partner (and friend) inspired me to quest for depth and meaning in curriculum and is still inspiring me outside of the classroom.

Barbara Allen, who taught me “Make Ten” and so much about mathematics and about the brain.

Marcia Zimmerman, who thought up the original “Block Recipes” (See *Sunny Ideas* for 2-6 year-olds) and whose compelling and inventive activities supported the learning of so many Pre-K and Kindergarten students.

Chris Mutolo, for his passion for reaching every child, and for showing me the how to communicate more clearly with children, especially when giving instructions.

Unfortunately, I can't identify where some of the activities in this book come from. I think people have been making explosions from vinegar and baking soda for a very long time. I don't remember the first time I did this. It is the same with using rubber bands to make prints and mixing colors to match skin tones. I'm guessing that a teacher from childhood must have shown me these, and more. So thank you.

Judy