

Autism Discovery Institute

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WHAT'S NEW

Alexa's PLAYC (Playful Learning Academy for Young Children) is a unique early education program for typically developing children and children with or at risk for an autism spectrum disorder. Alexa's PLAYC features two toddler inclusion classrooms and three preschool inclusion classrooms. Program highlights include:

- Play-based learning approach
- Individualized instruction
- Focus on developmentally appropriate communication, cognitive skills, social interaction and independence goals
- Highly trained teachers
- Low child-to-teacher ratios

Alexa's PLAYC is now recruiting typically developing children, ages 3-5 for Fall 2011 enrollment. Contact Alise at 858.966.8555 or visit www.rchsd.org/alexasplayc.



MEET THE ALEXA'S PLAYC LEADERS

Alexa's PLAYC toddler and preschool inclusion programs are under the leadership of Sarah Denno and Dr. Jennifer Reinehr. Sarah Denno, M.A., is the Director of Alexa's PLAYC and began at the Children's Toddler School program as an Autism Education Associate in 2001. After leaving for a brief time to develop and open a community based inclusion program in Arizona, Sarah returned to Rady Children's as director of what is now Alexa's PLAYC. Jennifer Reinehr, Psy.D. has been a licensed psychologist since 2008 and has specialization in both clinical and school psychology. She has worked extensively on developmental evaluations and implementation of intervention plans that address the developmental and behavioral needs of all children, including children with autism spectrum disorders.



TODAY'S TIP: Spotlight on Speech— Provided by Susie Thorpe, M.S., CCC-SLP

All parents want their child to talk; but before expressive communication can develop, children need to develop receptive vocabulary (understanding) that enables them to talk about their world. Parents can name objects in their child's daily environment as one way to stimulate receptive vocabulary.

RESEARCH CORNER

The SoCal BRIDGE Collaborative consists of community providers, parents, funding agencies and researchers working together to develop a community plan to assist children and families of children with risk for autism spectrum disorders from the earliest stages. The Collaborative has been pilot testing a parent implemented program to provide support, information and skill development for families of children with difficulty interacting and communicating. The program includes *Teaching Social Communication* an evidence-based curriculum designed to coach families in the use of naturalistic, developmental and behavioral techniques to increase their children's social communication skills during daily activities. So far, children have shown increases in communication and improvements in parent/child interactions.

SUCCESS STORIES

Max started his journey with a hearing test at RCHSD's audiology department at 23 months of age to rule out a hearing loss. He was then enrolled in speech and occupational therapy and referred for a developmental evaluation. At the age of 26 months, Max was evaluated through the Developmental Evaluation Clinic and diagnosed with autism. He received intensive intervention and enrolled in what was then the Toddler School (now Alexa's PLAYC). Now, Max is a happy 7 year old boy who is included in a regular education 2nd grade classroom, plays little league, and enjoys spending time with his sister and parents.

