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Kids in the City Blog

With  Staten Island Advance
By Melissa Chapman-Mushnick

Getting Down with Grandma and Grandpa!

Posted by Melissa Chapman-Mushnick



If you had a chance to read my Kids in the City Column this week about Bridging the Gap between Grandkids and their Grandparents you know that I am ALL for unloading my kids at their grandparents- whenever I possibly can!

I think the key to a successful visit with grandma and grandpa is to have several activities lined up for them--which will cover you on all fronts- it will alleviate your parents' need to find something to do with their grandbabies- and may just facilitate some quality bonding time between them... as opposed to laughing at Tom and Jerry cartoons and watching Disney on Demand... not there's anything remotely wrong with those pursuits- at least my daughter tells me her grandma- knows all about Demi Lovato, Hannah Montana, and can even sing the theme songs to That's so Raven.. But I'm pretty sure- if I provided them with alternate activities- I'd make grandma pretty happy!

Here are some ideas from Block Institute School about activities that all children, including those with special needs, can share with their grandparents which will help them bond, connect and have fun as well as create lasting memories

- Schedule regular visits with Grandma and Grandpa. It gives mom and dad a break and helps grandchildren become familiar with their grandparents and accustomed to a new environment. This is especially important for children with special needs who often have limited experiences outside of their immediate world. For grandparents, it offers them time to get to know their grandchild and to understand the nature of their special needs.
- Schedule time for a sleep over or have grandparents babysit, when possible. Children with special needs require many opportunities to gain and retain new skills. It is not uncommon for children with special needs to have difficulty adjusting to transitions, new routines and new people. Spending time with grandparents creates opportunities for children to experience new surroundings and routines in a safe, controlled way.
- Encourage grandparents to tell stories from their childhood. Ask them to talk about what was different and what was the same back when they were young. All children benefit from knowing from where they came. It expands their world in a social, cultural and historical context. Children with special needs are no different in this regard. The stories that grandparents tell are often the best history lesson your child will ever have.
- Grandparents and grandchildren can share memories by looking through photo albums, watching family movies/videos, or visiting old familiar places. These activities bring history to life and give children a frame of reference for the stories that their grandparents share with them.
- Creating a scrapbook of souvenirs, photos, newspaper clippings from "back in the day" is a wonderful activity that can leave a child with a lasting token of their grandparents that can be looked at often and passed on to future generations.
- Watching old movies together is a great way to spend time at home. It gives grandparents an opportunity to talk about what they found enjoyable as a child, and exposes children to forms of entertainment, such as black and white films, musicals, and comedies that are different from those of today.
- Cooking together is an easy way to bond with children and a great way to pass down family recipes and traditions. Cooking is also a great way for children with varying functioning levels to participate in any way that they are capable. Labeling food items, mixing, pouring, and measuring are activities that all children enjoy and they offer opportunities to learn or practice language, fine motor, visual-perceptual and sensory motor skills. The best part is sharing the final product!
- Take a walk or sit on a park bench together. Above all else, spending time together is what really counts. The bond between grandparents and their grandchildren, whether or

not they are children with special needs, represents a relationship unlike any other that they will share.

For more information about the Block Institute School call 718-906-5400 or visit a www.blockinstitute.org for more information.