

36th Annual National Head Start Training Conference Parent Interview: Stephanie Shepherd

(link for viewing at end of transcript)

Jarma Wrihten: Greetings and welcome to The Parent Place at the ECLKC, which is the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. Today we have with us... Stephanie Shepherd: Stephanie Shepherd. Jarma: ...and Stephanie's from where?

Stephanie: Buffalo, New York. Jarma: And you have a...? Stephanie: I have a four-year-old son. Jarma: In which Head Start program? Stephanie: He's in a formal Head Start program. I sit as a community rep. for Bethel Head Start and CAO.

Jarma: All right. So, Stephanie, when we met in the hallway, which was the most unusual place to say, "Hey I want you to do this..." Stephanie: Yeah. Jarma: "...parenting success story for me." And being a teacher in the home, you were so willing and ready to just come forward and I'm so thankful for having you here today with us.

Stephanie: You're welcome. Thank you.

Jarma: So please see this opportunity as – not as a once-in-a-lifetime – but an opportunity to take advantage of sharing your successes and your experiences about being a parent first and then a teacher in the home for your child. So what we'd like to do is just have you share some real hard core experiences and a story about what it meant to you, or what it means to you to be your child's first and most important teacher.

Stephanie: I...it's very important because I grew up like that. My mom was my first teacher and because of the lessons I've learned that my son...it was important to...anything around the house, his communication, even as a baby the words that come out to make sure I pronounce them correctly, the correct way and I have...I write with them, we all...we write with them since birth. He likes to read and...

Jarma: And that makes it really... Stephanie: It makes it really easy and more...more easier for school for him to be in school and learning because he's so used to it, he's always around it. When we're shopping...right now we're in math and counting because if he wants something, you got to tell me how much it is.

Jarma: And how's he find that? Is that a joy? Because... Stephanie: Yeah.

Jarma: ...there's a lot of research around parents being the teachers in the home and I just want to share this with you. It says that research shows that a good home life has a positive and lasting effect on children's learning. And I know you are aware of that.

When you, as a parent, provide that loving, supportive environment in the home it just grows beyond what a child really expects that he's going to get out of life. And those experiences are rich and meaningful and they can take those anywhere and everywhere that they go. Because you are that first and most important teacher in his life, you know, you're that role model that the child looks up to all the time, even though they spend a lot of time with outsiders, with their Head Start classroom teachers...

Stephanie: Right. Jarma: ...with other friends and family members, you are the person that they're looking up to. So as you think about what you do on a daily basis and you started to share that in your first part of your presentation, or your story, how do you feel that you've made a difference in your child's life by just...what things have impacted him?

Stephanie: He...his willingness to learn everything. He wants to learn more. He don't get bored. I try not to get him bored with the same routine. And people are amazed. We can be in the store and they'll be like, "How old is he?" And I'm like, "He's four." Or I forget sometimes. They'll ask me a question, I be like, "You can ask..." you know, about

him, "You can ask him, he knows to talk."

But then I have to be mindful of his age, not to push him too much. But he gets a joy out of...he likes the challenge. He likes to be challenged and I think all kids should be challenged and to keep them entertained in everyday life. Playing outside, about the earth, the flowers, the bugs...

Jarma: So as you share this do you feel like those together-time activities really help him? Do you encourage his...do you have other siblings in the home that he plays with or... Stephanie: No, he's the only child.

Jarma: ...he's the only child. So when he goes to Head Start and comes back home is he able to share some of the things that he's learned from school? And then how do you take the things that he's learned from school to transfer it into the home life? So if he comes back home talking about the wonderful artwork that they did today or, "Mrs. Smith read a book to me about the very hungry caterpillar," how do you take those experiences and just transfer them into the home environment?

Stephanie: He may draw what he...what the story was that his teacher read. Mrs. Caterpillar or Brown Bear, he'll draw or try to recite it back to...memorize it to me like he's reading the story back to me. We just, we make a game out of it. I have a conversation even when picking him up from the center. I'll ask him, "How was your day?" To keep him...to memorize what he's done throughout the day and not just saying, "Oh, I played."

Jarma: Right. And most often children learn through play and that's what we hear, typically. You know, one of the stories I always like to share was the little girl I took to a session with me once. It was my best friend's niece – daughter, I'm sorry. And she said to one of the Head Start teachers asked her, "Oh, you went to Head Start." She said, "Yes, I went to Head Start." And she said, "What did you learn?" She said, "Oh I played. And I played all the time. I think I just learned to ride a tricycle," she said.

And from that point, the learning through play experiences really taught her some things that other people would see or other children would feel as just being simple, but it's something that children learn. They develop their large muscles. So when they're outside what kind of things do you think that you have encouraged him to do?

Stephanie: Getting better at kicking the ball or (inaudible) we played badminton or tennis in the backyard. Coordination, eye coordination. Riding the bike, he's getting better at riding his bike. Just last year I bought him a bigger bike because he's tall and he wasn't too well so he's riding his bike good. And sharing with other kids that don't have. Be able to pull out all his stuff and, "You can ride this, I'll ride that."

Jarma: Beautiful. So if you had to give other parents tips about things you would do to encourage your children succeed in school and become ready for school and life, what would you share?

Stephanie: To just remember you're the first teacher, the greatest teacher that they'll have because they come from you. They represent who you are. And always continue to talk to your child every day. I don't care how old you get, you're still learning. We're all grow, we all still learn. Do activities. Have activities at home for your kids ready, available in your home.

Some people don't have...want kid-friendly home. You got to have, if you have children, you have to have a kid-friendly home where their books are on the coffee table, not just a magazine or a flower or something. Everything is accessible for them to be able to pick up a book, to write in their book.

Even when traveling out, have a little book bag in the car -- something with toys and books and things that they enjoy so they can feel that, "I'm not just going to a meeting with mommy, I have all my things too. I won't have to just sit there."

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-- Permalink for viewing (requires Flash and JavaScript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000328-Stephanie+Shepherd+Parent+Interview-2009-SD360p/5f0923bdB3bbfb4cc47b44bn5ee21ecec844>