

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



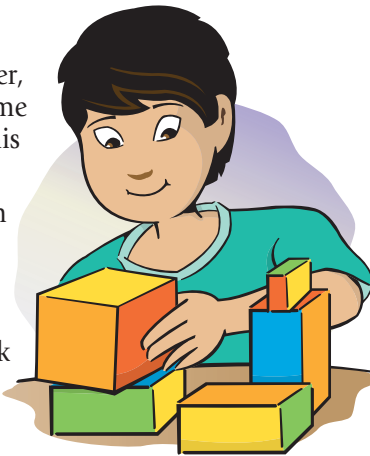
November 2012

Teach your child the importance of self-motivation

You want your child to be a motivated learner, but his sense of having done well cannot come from you. He has to feel rewarded through his own feeling of accomplishment.

To encourage the ability to grow and learn from his own actions:

- **Give your child** plenty of opportunity for creative play. Working with toys such as blocks and puzzles helps him take stock of his progress and results.
- **Try not to rush your child** too much. Motivation includes staying with a task. Let your child stick with a task for gradually longer periods.
- **Allow your child** to do as much as possible by himself. Do not rush to help the first time he asks. If he persists, make a suggestion. "Did you try putting one block on top of two blocks to keep your tower from falling?"
- **Strike a balance.** Not everything should be really easy for your child. If pull-on pants are easy, try some pants with a snap. You want him to be challenged, but not frustrated.
- **Work on a project together**, such as cooking dinner. Give him a part to do on his own, such as tearing lettuce for salad. But also encourage him to watch what you are doing and help you.



Source: National Association of School Psychologists, "Motivating Learning in Young Children," NASP Resources, www.nasponline.org/resources/home_school/earlychildmotiv_ho.aspx.



Expect big advances in development

Beginning around age three until children get ready to move on to kindergarten is a time of major changes in social and emotional development. Here are some typical developmental milestones:

- At three, a child may:
- **Engage mostly in parallel play** (playing alongside, but not really with, another child).
 - **Be possessive** and reluctant to share.
 - **Start playing imaginative games**, like house.
- At four, a child may:
- **Start playing** with others.
 - **Learn to share** and take turns.
- At five, a child may:
- **Learn about being** a friend.
 - **Have friends** and perhaps a best friend.
 - **Learn to play** many kinds of games with others.
 - **Develop a great level of detail** and thought in creative play.

Source: The Whole Child, "Social and Emotional Development," Public Broadcasting System, www.pbs.org/wholechild/abc/social.html.

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All senses add to learning

It's wonderful to watch children explore and appreciate the world. Enjoy the world with your child and use all of your senses:

- **Sight.** Point out interesting things. "Wow! That building is so tall!" Show enthusiasm about what your child sees.
- **Hearing.** Close your eyes and discuss what you hear. Birds chirping? A siren? How many noises can you name?
- **Touch.** Find different textures to touch and describe. "The pumpkin is so smooth."
- **Smell.** Mealtimes are great for enjoying smells. "I smell your favorite ... apple pie!"
- **Taste.** Talk about the sweetness of fruit or cookies, the sourness of lemons and the saltiness of crackers.



Even young children can show their gratitude

Ask your child to think of some things she's thankful for. Write, "I'm thankful for ..." on separate pieces of paper. Have her draw pictures of what she names. Staple the pages together to make a "thank-you book." She can read the book and add pages whenever she likes.

Don't overschedule your kindergarten child

Activities have many benefits. Your child learns new skills, gains experiences—and has fun! But there are reasons to limit activities:

- **Activities leave less time** for reading and schoolwork.
- **Children need time** just to hang out with family or to play alone.
- **Traveling from place to place** can be stressful.

Source: "Over-Scheduling: A Problem for the Child and Family," Cleveland Clinic Health, <http://cchealth.cleveland-clinic.org/be-well-enews/over-scheduling-problem-child-and-family>.



How can parents encourage children to join groups?

Q: My child's kindergarten teacher has mentioned that our daughter is shy and has a lot of difficulty joining a group during class activities. How can we help her?

A: Joining a group is challenging for many children. Kindergarten is a great time to learn this skill because, at this age, children are usually welcoming and accepting. Here are some ideas to share with your child:

- **Approach one child.** Standing outside a group and talking to no one in particular may not get a response. Teach her to look for one child and talk directly to that child. Chances are, the child will move over and include her in the group.
- **Look for a smile.** If possible, your child should choose a child who is smiling in her direction. If she doesn't see a smile, teach her to look for a child who is looking at her, rather than looking in the other direction.
- **Participate.** When your child is new to a group, other children will expect her to play the game in progress, such as tag. When the game is over, if your child feels ready, she may suggest playing another game.



Best of luck to your daughter this year!



Are you helping your child develop important motor skills?

Exercise is more than a healthy activity for your child. It's a chance for him to develop critical muscle skills. Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're encouraging this:

1. **Do you plan** activities where your child can climb, swing, run, balance and do other physical activities?
2. **Do you pick** games that require your child to use hand, arm, and leg muscles, such as playing catch?
3. **Do you find** creative ways to use muscles, such as by building obstacle courses or moving to music?
4. **Do you play** energetic games like Simon Says, Freeze Tag and Follow the Leader?
5. **Do you build** finger muscles by writing, drawing, painting,

doing jigsaw puzzles, and adding finger movements to songs like "The Itsy Bitsy Spider"?

How well are you doing? Each *yes* answer means you're building your child's muscle skills. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Learning never exhausts the mind."
—Leonardo da Vinci

Have fun with writing

One important skill your child will be learning in kindergarten is writing. Help her build that skill with hands-on activities:

- **Cook spaghetti until it is soft.** Use trimmed pieces to show your child how to form letters. Help her spell her name.
- **Use glitter glue to form letters** on bright paper. Once it dries, have your child trace her finger over the letters.

Beth

Source: C. Wright, *A Parent's Guide to Home and School Success, Kindergarten*, Brighter Vision Publications.

Reading with your child should be a relaxing routine

Set aside a special time each day to look at books with your child. For instance—nap time, bedtime or after meals. Read together:

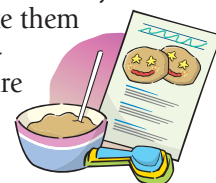
- **When you are both** in relaxed moods.
- **To soothe your child** when he's sick or cranky.
- **During waiting times** on trips or at the doctor's office.

Don't read together if your child is too restless. Forcing a child to sit still and read is a sure way to turn him off to books.

Try a new activity together

New experiences are important to your child's development. Make them more meaningful by sharing them with her. Here are some ideas:

- **Take a parent-child class** together.
- **Try a new recipe** and include your child in preparation.
- **Go to the library together** and find new authors.
- **Pick out new foods** at the grocery store.



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