

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board

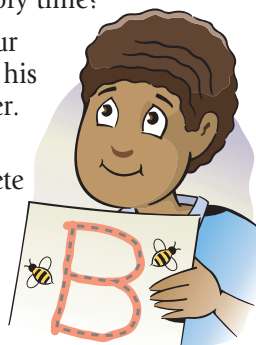


March 2013

Your involvement can boost your child's kindergarten success

Whether your child is in kindergarten now or will be making the transition in the fall, remember that parent involvement will help him succeed academically and socially. Research shows that when you reinforce what your child is learning at school, you raise his chances of success. Here are some simple ways to do this:

- **Talk with your child** about school. Ask him to teach you something he learned today. Ask, "What did the teacher read at story time?"
- **Keep in touch** with the school. Review papers your child brings home from school. Communicate with his teacher. Attend school events. Find ways to volunteer.
- **Set homework routines.** It's never too early to establish good study habits. Help your child complete his homework at the same time each day. Choose a quiet, comfortable, well-lit homework spot.
- **Read together.** Spend at least 10 minutes a day reading together. Choose books you know your child will enjoy.
- **Find creative ways** to expand on class lessons. Do fun activities that involve shapes, colors, numbers and letters. Count how many steps there are in your house. Write your child's name in his favorite colors.
- **Limit screen time.** Don't let TV or video games interfere with critical developmental activities, such as reading, talking, exercising and playing with friends.



Source: L. Hinkle, "Kindergarten & Parent Involvement," LIVESTRONG.COM, www.livestrong.com/article/228273-kindergarten-parent-involvement/.



Help build your child's attention skills

Parents sometimes worry about their child's attention span. According to pediatric experts, a child should be able to focus on a task for three to five minutes per year of the child's age—so a child entering kindergarten should be able to concentrate for at least 15 minutes at a time.

Developing this attention span is critical for academic success. Help by:

- **Making sure your child** gets enough sleep—11 to 12 hours each night. A sleepy child cannot pay attention.
- **Feeding your child** the "brain food" he needs to pay attention. Find a healthy balance of whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean proteins.
- **Encouraging exercise.** Young children need to get the "wiggles" out to help them focus.
- **Doing activities** that promote attention span. Work puzzles and play simple board games.

Source: Fort Carson Pediatric Clinic, "Attention Deficit Disorder (Short Attention Span)," Fort Carson MEDDAC (Medical Department Activity), <http://evans.amedd.army.mil/peds/pdf/add.pdf>.

Art projects help teach critical thinking skills

As your child enjoys creating art projects, she is also learning skills that will contribute to her success in school, such as:

- **Planning.** She has to think about and carry out her project, often in several steps.
- **Classifying.** She has to think things like: "Does this piece belong here?"
- **Evaluating.** Her opinion of the result may lead her to do something differently next time.

Source: Americans for the Arts, "Fact Sheet About the Benefits of Arts Education for Children," www.artsusa.org/get_involved/advocacy/funding_resources/default_005.asp.

Hatch curiosity by learning about animals and science

Help build your little scientist's knowledge by learning about animals this spring, the time of year when many animals have new babies. You can:

- **Talk about how the name** of a baby animal can be different than the name of its parent. Talk about *dogs* and *puppies* or *horses* and *foals*.
- **Read about a favorite animal.** Check out a book from the library to learn where your child's favorite animal lives, what it eats, and how it takes care of its young.



Source: Georgia Department of Education, "Oh Baby! What Baby Animal is That?" <http://tinyurl.com/ax8ebtl>.

Build communication skills during family mealtime

Today's parents are so busy that many don't plan family meals. But eating together builds a child's communication and social skills—two important skills for success in the classroom. Just one family meal a week can make a difference. Plus, it's fun!

Source: P. Leach, *Your Baby and Child From Birth to Age Five*, Alfred A. Knopf.

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How can I help my child build critical reading skills?

Q: Many of my child's friends already know how to read. My daughter enjoys our story times, but I do all the reading. I know it's okay if she's not reading yet, but can you suggest some activities that will encourage her interest but won't make her feel I'm pushing her?

A: How wonderful that you read with your child—and that she enjoys it! Continue to read with her every day. Here are some suggestions for making the most of your reading time:

- **Talk about the book.** Show your child the title on the cover. Point out the name of the author. As you read, show how the print goes from the left side of the page to the right.
- **Talk about the alphabet.** Say the names of the letters as well as the sounds the letters make. "Look. Here's the letter *m*. It says *mmm*."
- **Check out some rhyming books** from the library. Rhyming is one of the building blocks of reading. It teaches children to listen for word and letter sounds. As you read, pause before a rhyming word comes up. Let your child guess the word.



Find opportunities during daily activities, too. Do some sight reading. Your child will enjoy being able to recognize common words, such as *stop* on a stop sign.



Does your family have wise TV habits?

Preschoolers learn through play and interaction, so it's especially important to limit their TV time—this will also help them focus on learning! Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to check your family's television habits:

1. **Do you restrict** your child's screen time to two hours a day or fewer, as recommended by experts?
2. **Do you monitor** the shows your child watches to make sure they are educational, age-appropriate and nonviolent?
3. **Do you watch** TV with your child so you can answer questions he has and discuss what he sees?
4. **Do you limit** the amount of commercials your child watches?
5. **Do you choose** alternatives to TV viewing, such as reading, talking, telling stories and being active?

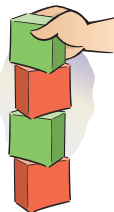
How well are you doing? Each *yes* answer means you're taking control of TV time. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"We worry what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."
—Stacia Tauscher

Simple ways to develop higher-level math skills

Help your child lay the foundation for future math skills by having her play with blocks! Here are some of the math skills your child will learn:

- **Adding and subtracting.** Each time your child adds a block to her tower or takes one off, she is learning the concepts of *more* and *less*.
- **Making patterns.** Your child is practicing patterns as she stacks up a red block, then a green, then another red.
- **Geometry.** Identifying shapes and how they fit or stack together is the basis for geometry and other higher math skills.



Source: University of Idaho Extension, "Idaho parents and children learn math concepts through Block Fest," www.extension.uidaho.edu/impacts/Pdf_09/18-09hshakdee-blockfest.pdf.

Agree about discipline

When mom and dad disagree about how to respond to discipline issues, a child is confused about how to resolve conflicts. When it involves problems at school, the disagreement can affect the child's achievement. Make a family "rule book" that includes agreed-upon, acceptable behaviors that apply at home and at school—and enforce them every time.



Source: A. Brott, "Mom vs. Dad," SheKnows Parenting, www.sheknows.com/parenting/articles/803081/when-parents-disagree-on-discipline.

Get your child thinking with the 'If/then' game

Playing the "If/then" game builds language and thinking skills. It also teaches cause and effect. Take turns giving each other "If I ..." sentences to finish. "If I am hungry, then ..." or "If I go out in the rain, then ..."

Source: J. Silberg, *500 Five Minute Games*, Gryphon House, Inc.

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