

Helping Children Learn®

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board



January 2012

Strive towards new goals in 2012

Your child may not understand the meaning of the word *resolution*, but that does not mean he is too young to learn how to set goals and follow through. Be sure his goals are reachable and include plenty of support from you.

Here are some goals you and your child can work on this year:

- **Personal care.** Your child should resolve to brush his teeth morning and evening. He should comb or brush his hair and wash his face. You can help, but keep encouraging him to do as much as he can on his own.
- **Staying healthy.** Your child should wash his hands after school, after using the bathroom, and before eating. Other healthy habits include getting enough sleep and eating nutritious foods.
- **Getting dressed.** Most young children can dress themselves if their clothes are "preschooler-friendly." Help your child choose underwear, socks, shirts and pants that are easy to pull on. Work on skills such as buttoning and snapping, too.
- **Minding trusted adults.** Your child knows who the special adults are in his world. Emphasize to your child that these people love him and want to help him. In return, he must listen to them and be respectful.



Source: R. McClure, "Preschooler Resolutions, Goals to Grow By," About.com, <http://childcare.about.com/od/enrichment/tp/kid-goals.htm>.



Three activities build attention span

Paying attention is a skill that improves with time and practice. To help your child build her attention span, choose activities that require concentration and interest. For example:

1. **Play.** Try board games or card games that require thinking, but aren't overly challenging.
2. **Read.** Before, during and after a story, ask questions that help your child focus on it. "Why do you think they put that picture on the cover?" "Do you think the little pig made a good decision?" "Would you change anything about the ending?"

3. **Work** together. Solve a simple jigsaw puzzle, draw a picture or make something out of clay.

Also talk with your child's teacher. Ask for suggestions of activities you can do at home that build attention span and thinking skills.

Source: P. Gisler, Ed.S. and M. Eberts, Ed.S., "Improving Concentration Skills," FamilyEducation, <http://school.familyeducation.com/study-skills/homework/41196.html>.

Make the most of this year

Busy parents often wonder if they spend enough meaningful time with their child. Remember that just *talking* with your child during everyday activities is a meaningful activity. This year, make the best use of:

- **Errands.** Ask your child questions. What kind of vegetable is that? How many colors do you see in the produce section?
- **Housework.** Teach new skills to your child. Show your child how to follow a recipe or sort laundry.
- **Daily tasks.** Share them with your child. Let her look through coupons or sales papers and circle items you buy.

Source: C.R. Tomlin, "Quantity Versus Quality Parent Time" Earlychildhood NEWS, www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=284.

Match mittens, learn math!

On a cold winter day, build your child's math skills with this fun activity. Cut out at least five pairs of mittens from paper. Make some the same size and some the same color. Have your child match pairs, sort by size, and then organize by color.



Source: "Mittens," Preschool Education, www.preschooleducation.com/mwinter.shtml.

Water play uses the senses

January offers few opportunities for play with water and sand. So create your own indoors! Find a dishpan or plastic tub that is big enough for your child to splash his hands in, but not big enough for him to fall into.

Fill the tub part-way with water. Give your child spoons, cups and waterproof toys. Supervise carefully. Let your child enjoy the sensory play!



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When are children ready to attend kindergarten?

Q: In a few weeks, I will have to decide whether to keep my child in preschool one more year or send her to kindergarten. She will turn five in August. What are some important factors to consider as I make this decision?

A: Kindergarten programs vary, depending on the type of school you are considering. Ask at your preschool if there is a kindergarten readiness program you can attend. Listen to what the teachers have to say.

Kindergarten teachers are not looking for advanced academic skills. Some children can already read and add when they come to kindergarten. That is great. But teachers never expect this. There are some things, however, that all kindergarten teachers look for so that each child can have a successful first year in school.

Your daughter should be able to:

- **Perform** basic tasks by herself—such as using the bathroom, washing her hands and hanging up her jacket.
- **Follow** directions and work at a task for about 15 minutes at a time.
- **Get along** with others, know how to take turns and share without a fuss.
- **Take** an interest in learning and listen happily to a story read aloud.



Are you strengthening motor skills?

Children need parents' help to build large and small muscles, including finger muscles used for writing. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're providing opportunities for your child to develop strong motor skills:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your child to play outside, where there's plenty of room to move around?
- ___ **2. Do you plan** activities that use finger muscles, such as drawing, doing jigsaw puzzles and playing catch?
- ___ **3. Do you practice** using large muscles by running, hopping, jumping, climbing, crawling and more?
- ___ **4. Do you support** and compliment your child's efforts to write, even if he can only scribble?

- ___ **5. Do you motivate** your child to exercise by playing active games like "Simon Says"?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're promoting your child's muscle development. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Only where children gather is there any real chance of fun."
—Mignon McLaughlin

Respectful feedback can encourage good behavior

Young children want nothing more than to please their parents. When you see behavior you want your child to repeat, chances are he will, if you use these respectful actions and words:

- **Make** eye contact.
- **Stand** near your child and smile.
- **Use** "I-messages" like "I feel so happy when you're kind to Lucy!"
- **Combine** praise with a hug and a kiss.

Source: K.T. Alvy, *The Positive Parent*, Teachers College Press.

Games build language skills

To help your child develop language skills, play language games. You might:

- **Pick a word**, such as *cat*. How many words can you each think of that rhyme with it?
- **Take each letter** of your child's first name. Think of things she likes that start with each letter. For example, *Jacky* might like *jam*, *animals*, *cookies*, *kites* and *yo-yos*.

Show your child how to behave at the library

Before your next trip to the library with your child, practice being quiet. Then, at the library, set an example by turning off your cell phone and whispering. Explain why this is important. People at the library are reading and also concentrating on special projects.



Source: D. Gottsman, "Everyday Etiquette: Shhh! This Is The Library!" Parenthood.com, www.parenthood.com/article-topics/article-topics.php?Article_ID=12642.

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