

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School



April 2012

Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District
School Board

Grow responsibility on Earth Day

Earth Day is celebrated on April 22. You can use this day to begin teaching your child about responsibility for our planet. Many activities are simple and free. Here are some ideas:

- **Teach your child** to turn off the lights and TV when leaving a room. Have your child be the “reminder” for the family.
- **Ask your child** to help you sort items to recycle from the trash.
- **Keep a small cup** in the bathroom. Teach your child to fill it with water before she brushes her teeth. She can use the water in the cup to rinse out her mouth—rather than leave the water running while she brushes.
- **Consider putting tap water** in reusable bottles instead of buying water in plastic bottles.
- **Plant something together.** Use seeds to plant flowers or vegetables, outdoors if you can or indoors in a container.
- **Hang reusable shopping bags** on a hook your child can reach. Ask your child to be in charge of carrying them along when you head out to go shopping.
- **Participate in a clean-up day.** Many communities plan these to celebrate Earth Day. If you can’t find one near you, rally neighbors to clean up a section of your own neighborhood or block.



Source: “10 Ways to Celebrate Earth Day,” Lifetime: Innovation, Quality and Value, www.lifetime.com/article/173.



Rain, rain go away? No, help us learn!

Rainy days usually keep children indoors. But after the rain, there’s a wealth of learning to be found outdoors. Look for a puddle and have your child:

- **See how deep it is.** Dip a stick into the center. Then dip it near the edges. Ask, “Where is it deepest?” “Why do you think the puddle formed here?”
- **Pick up a leaf,** a stick and a rock. Let your child guess whether it will sink or float before he tosses each one into the water.
- **Check out the surface.** Does the wind or your child’s breath make the top of the water ripple?
- Can he see his reflection? How about the colors of the rainbow?
- **Enjoy jumping** over the puddle. If he’s wearing boots and play clothes, let him splash right through it.
- **Use washable chalk** to trace around the puddle. Revisit the puddle in a couple of hours to see how it has changed. Is the puddle getting bigger or smaller? What happened?

Let your child know you won’t respond to whining

Whining irritates everyone. But if parents respond, children will keep trying it. To curb your child’s desire to whine:

- **Model the difference** between whining and an appropriate tone.
- **Be firm** and say, “I’m sorry, I don’t understand whining.”
- **Respond quickly** when your child remembers his appropriate voice.

Source: J. Fay & C. Fay, *Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood*, Love and Logic Press.

A secret hideaway can boost kids’ independence

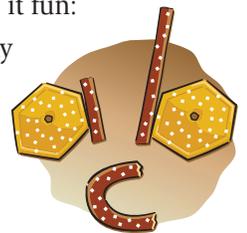
Young children strive for independence. (That’s why they say *no* so often.) Why not create a secret hideaway for your child? Drape a blanket over chairs to make a “cave.” Tell your child it’s his own special place to play. When he wants company, he’ll probably let you know.



Have fun ‘writing’ letters

Recognizing letters is an important step toward reading. To make it fun:

- **Give your child** tasty supplies to create letters, such as circle-shaped crackers and straight pretzels.
- **Have your child** follow a flashlight beam as you use it to write letters on the wall. Give her a turn writing, too.
- **Draw a circle** or line. Let your child add to it to make a letter. Switch roles.



Source: J. Silberg, *Reading Games for Young Children*, Gryphon House, Inc.



How can parents work on children's social skills?

Q: I'm worried about my son's social skills. His preschool teacher agrees that he is a little behind, but that with more social time, he should catch up. I'd like him to be successful when he gets to kindergarten. How can I help?

A: You're right about the importance of social skills. Kindergarten teachers never worry about whether their students can read or write on the first day. Their first interest is whether a child has the social and emotional skills needed to support his or her learning.



Sending your child to preschool is a great start. You might also consider a playgroup. Or invite other children to your home (one at a time). Here are some social goals to keep in mind:

- **Taking turns and sharing.** If your child has trouble, try setting a timer. When it goes off, he should hand the toy to his friend.
- **Following rules.** State rules ahead of time. "We put our toys in the toy box before we watch TV." Enforce all rules consistently.
- **Using self-control.** Work with your child to say, "I'm sad" or "I'm angry," instead of crying or hitting.
- **Playing alone or with others.** Your child should be able to play without having you right next to him. He should also work on inviting others to play. For example, "Want to play trucks?"



Are you enjoying time at the library?

The library is an amazing resource, but sometimes families don't realize how to take full advantage of it. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're enjoying all the library has to offer:

- ___ **1. Have you requested** a schedule of activities for young children?
- ___ **2. Do you ask** librarians for suggestions for books your child is likely to enjoy?
- ___ **3. Do you check out** audio books for use at home and on trips?
- ___ **4. Do you look** for different kinds of reading material, such as child-friendly magazines?
- ___ **5. Do you attend** story hour for your child's age group?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're making the most of library time. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"The door available to everyone that can lead to happiness & success is the modest door of the public library."

—Herman Wouk

Teaching about winning & losing promotes fairness

Teachers who work with young children make an effort to keep things fair. This can be difficult for a child who always wants to win or be first. Here's how you can help:

- **Tell your child** if she had fun, she succeeded, whether she finished first or last.
- **Teach your child** to say, "I'll try again another time."
- **Encourage your child** to always be proud of herself if she gave her best.

Source: N. Samalin, *Loving Without Spoiling*, McGraw Hill.

Look ahead to the summer

The school year isn't over yet—but the end is starting to seem pretty close. And children need to keep learning over the summer. If they don't, they may suffer a learning loss.

Now is the perfect time to ask your child's teacher for ideas to keep your child learning all summer long. You'll be able to plan ahead, and your child's teacher won't be as busy now with end-of-year issues.

Relationships with parents boost children's motivation

Studies show the closer kids feel to their parents, the more motivated they are to learn.

To maintain a close relationship with your child, show him you're interested in his life. Ask specific questions about preschool. Did his teacher read a story? What did he do when playing outside?

When kids feel connected and supported, they're more likely to make better grades in elementary school and beyond. So set a strong foundation now, in preschool!

Source: D. Stipek and K. Seal, *Motivated Minds: Raising Children to Love Learning*, Henry Holt and Company.



Helping Children Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Erika Beasley. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

Copyright © 2012, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1005