

Early Childhood Parents[®] *make the difference!*

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Readiness Program
Intermediate Unit 1



Early parent involvement has benefits beyond preschool

Your child's time in preschool paves the way for her future success in school. Being involved with your child's education, even at this early stage, benefits your child and it also pays off for you.

Here are some great research-proven results of early parent involvement. Parents who support their child's learning in preschool are more likely to:

- **Read often to their children.** Reading to your child nightly may be the single best thing you can do for school success later.
- **Feel comfortable visiting** the classroom once their child starts kindergarten. Involved parents have learned that their child's school is their partner. And when you visit your child's classroom,

you have an opportunity to learn additional ways to support the school and help your child be successful.

- **Form relationships** with other parents in their child's class. An involved parent knows that parents can work together and communicate with each other. Other parents are wonderful resources. One of them may have already experienced what you are now going through. And meeting other parents provides a great opportunity for your child to form friendships and build important social skills needed for school success.

Source: H. Kreider, "Getting Parents Ready for Kindergarten: The Role of Early Childhood Education," Harvard Family Research Project, <http://tinyurl.com/posvwh>.

Music can boost your child's literacy skills



Music is a great experience for your child for many reasons. One of them is that music is linked

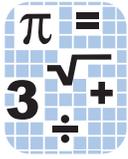
with helping your child understand language. This will help him unlock the code to reading.

Here are reasons to expose your child to music each day:

- **Music teaches** your child to listen for sounds. Recognizing sounds is a huge step toward reading. It helps your child learn to put these sounds together with the letters that make them.
- **Music is often** your child's first exposure to devices used in literature and poetry, such as rhyming.
- **Music makes** your child familiar with song lines that repeat. When your child is comfortable with the lines, he becomes skillful at repeating them. A similar pattern of learning happens when your child learns to read.
- **Music boosts** your child's vocabulary. Songs are a gateway to learning new words.

Source: C. Bollinger, "Using Music to Teach Early Reading Skills," Songs for Teaching, www.songsforteaching.net/early-reading-skills.

Activities can make math fun & meaningful for your preschooler



What's the key to teaching your preschooler math? Fun! If your child likes math, she'll keep learning. And she'll take her enthusiasm to school, where it will help her learn even more!

To build your child's math knowledge in enjoyable ways:

- **Ask questions** about counting. Make sure they interest your child. "How many books did we check out at the library?"
- **Notice numbers.** What numbers can your child find on signs? Houses? License plates?
- **Sort things** in many ways. You might arrange plastic cups by size, shape or color.

- **Use math words** while playing. "Let's put the triangle block under the square block." "You have more blocks than I do."
- **Play games.** Toss pairs of socks into a hula hoop or laundry basket. Count how many you get in—and how many you don't.
- **Cook.** While making dinner, let your child measure items, such as cups of water or pinches of salt.

"Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

—Mahatma Gandhi

Building your child's sense of responsibility takes patience



Teaching young children responsibility takes great patience. After all, preschoolers try and fail many times as they learn.

But the more you support your child, the more he'll accomplish at home and at school. He'll see that hard work gets results—and it feels great!

To build your preschooler's sense of responsibility, it's essential to:

- **Set expectations.** What rules and routines must your child follow? Why? What will happen if he doesn't? Help him take responsibility for his actions.
- **Give responsibility.** Let your child help with age-appropriate jobs (such as picking up toys) and decisions (such as choosing between two shirts).
- **Allow mistakes.** Minor, safe challenges are good for children. While pouring a drink, for example, your child may spill it. Relax. Discuss and learn from it.
- **Be a role model.** Use your actions to teach about responsibility. Be honest. Take care of duties. Be on time. Apologize for mistakes.
- **Develop empathy.** Encourage your child to imagine how others feel. Teach him to treat others as he wants to be treated.
- **Encourage maturity.** As your child becomes more responsible, rules and expectations may need to change. Compliment your child's efforts often!

Source: M. Purcell, "Building Responsible Kids," PsychCentral, <http://psychcentral.com/lib/2006/building-responsible-kids/>.

Are you teaching your preschooler about respect?



Preschoolers are not too young to practice being respectful. They need this skill to succeed in all parts of life, including

school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're teaching your preschooler respect: ___1. **Do you enforce** a few easy-to-understand, age-appropriate rules, such as "Keep your hands and feet to yourself"?

___2. **Do you teach** basic manners and use them every day, such as saying *please* and *thank you*?

___3. **Do you show** respect for belongings, such as by putting away toys and taking care of library books?

___4. **Do you help** your child consider other people's feelings? "Your friend will be happy when you share your cookies."

___5. **Do you react** positively when your child shows respect by obeying rules, being polite and more?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're promoting respectful behavior. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Maria Koklanaris & Susan O'Brien.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Take advantage of the learning opportunities this season offers



Spring presents many opportunities for fun with your child. Even better, many of these activities help your child learn valuable information and skills that will help her in school.

Here are some ideas for things to do and talk about with your preschooler this spring. Spring is a season of:

- **Changing weather.** Make a point of talking about the weather with your child each morning before she goes to school. Look outside and discuss whether it is sunny, cloudy, windy or rainy. Open the door and feel the air. Is it warm? Is it chilly? Does it still feel cold? Once you have your report, you and your child can talk about how to dress for the weather. Ask your child which of her clothes would

keep her comfortable today. Talk about how important it is to dress appropriately for the weather.

- **Growing plants.** Plant a few flowers or herbs in pots with your preschooler. If you have more room, consider planting a small garden or flower bed.
- **Birth.** Animals usually give birth to their babies in the spring. If you are lucky enough to live near a place where your child can see baby animals, such as a farm or zoo, consider taking your child. If not, ask your librarian for some books about animals and their babies.
- **Outdoor fun.** Do you know your child's favorite outdoor game? Take some time from your day to play it with her, even if it is just a quick game of tag. Your child will be delighted.

Use creativity to blend art and science with your preschooler



Art is about creativity. And sometimes it is about creating something totally unexpected. Your child can learn

from this with an activity that will be fun for both of you. You will need:

- Water.
- Food coloring.
- Card stock or heavy paper.
- A baking sheet with sides.
- White glue in a bottle.
- Salt.
- An eyedropper.

To do the artistic experiment:

1. **Mix water and food coloring** to create colored water. Let your child decide what color to make.

2. **Put the paper** in the baking sheet (to avoid a mess).
3. **Give your child the bottle of glue** and ask him to draw designs on the paper with the glue.
4. **Cover your child's designs** completely with salt. Shake off the extra.
5. **Use the eyedropper** to apply the colored water. Drop one drop of colored water at a time onto the glue.
6. **Talk about what you see happen.** The color will move across the glue lines as the salt absorbs the liquid, creating a web of color!

Source: "Absorbing Artwork," Spoonful, <http://tinyurl.com/c746556>.

Q: My son will be four this month. Lately he has been asking about writing his name as well as other words. I want to encourage him but not to push. I would love some suggestions.

Questions & Answers

A: It's wonderful that your son wants to write. While he is very young, practicing writing is a great way to prepare for kindergarten. At this age, the key is to show your child that writing is fun.

Here are some guidelines:

- **Set up a simple writing center** for your child. Just have crayons, thick pencils and paper to write on.
- **Encourage drawing.** It is an important step toward writing.
- **Show your child** how to write the first letter in his name. When he is proficient, move on to his whole first name.
- **Read and write** at the same time. As he learns to write his first name, have him "read" it as he writes.
- **Show your child** that writing is something everyone does. Let him see you writing. Tell him what you are writing and why.
- **Write a story together.** He can draw pictures and tell you about them. You write his words underneath his pictures.

Remember that there are also activities helpful to writing that don't involve crayons, pencils or paper. Writing makes use of the small muscles in the hands. So help your child strengthen these with fun activities such as stringing large beads and playing with clay or play dough.

Enjoy the exciting time of your child discovering writing!

—*Maria Koklanaris,*
The Parent Institute

The Kindergarten Experience

Explore the solar system with your kindergartner



Your kindergartner probably knows about the sun and the moon. But what about the rest of our solar system?

Chances are it will fascinate her—and you, too! Consider taking a week to focus on solar system activities. Plan one for each school day. You and your child might:

- **Do research.** Visit the library and check out books. In the book *There's No Place Like Space*, for example, the Cat in the Hat tours our solar system! Go online, too. You'll find amazing pictures at www.NASA.gov.
- **Draw or print a picture** of each planet. Refer to books or web-sites before coloring them in. What is known about how each planet really looks? Let your child color the planets however she likes.
- **Make a book.** Combine your research and drawings. Suggest that your child add a caption to each page. She might write the planets' names—or have you write the details she dictates.
- **Make a model.** Think of creative ways to represent the planets. Use items, such as fruit, sports balls and more. Line up the "planets" from smallest to largest.
- **Bake planets.** Find a cookie recipe and let your child shape the dough into "planets." Decorate each cookie with details that emphasize what you've learned.

Source: "Creative Ways to Help Your Kindergartener Learn About the Solar System," Yahoo!VOICES, <http://tinyurl.com/auh2nrx>.

National DEAR Day is a time to celebrate reading together!

Each year on April 12 (the birthday of beloved children's author Beverly Cleary) teachers, parents, children and librarians celebrate National DEAR Day. DEAR represents the first letters of the phrase "Drop Everything And Read." Here's a way to celebrate it with your child:

1. **Collect reading material.** Have your child collect some of his favorite books. Find some reading material for yourself.
2. **Tell your child** you are going to "Drop Everything and Read" for 30 minutes.
3. **Set a timer for 15 minutes** and read your child's favorite books aloud to him.
4. **Set the timer** for an additional 15 minutes and tell your child that you will now each read on



your own. Encourage your child to spend this time looking at his books. Spending time independently with books is an important step toward reading.

5. **Talk about what you read** once the timer goes off. Tell your child how much you love reading.

Source: "National Drop Everything and Read Day," Walden Media, <http://tinyurl.com/aefufk5>.

Keep your child motivated to learn the entire school year



The school year may be winding down, but kindergartners have plenty of learning to do! To help your child make the most of each school day:

- **Maintain high expectations.** You probably established a homework routine early in the year. Keep it up! Set an example by reading or doing other tasks during study time.
- **Minimize distractions.** During your child's homework time, provide a quiet environment. This means no TV or disruptive music.

While you work nearby, resist the urge to text or chat on the phone.

- **Put school first.** With spring sports and activities in full swing, it may be tempting to relax about schoolwork. But it should remain a priority. Put homework and family time on the calendar so nothing interferes with them.
- **Be positive.** When your child focuses on learning, compliment her! When she doesn't, be patient and creative. Think of ways to make it fun. After homework is done, celebrate with activities your child likes.