

# Early Childhood Parents®

September 2013  
Vol. 18, No. 1

Readiness Program  
Intermediate Unit 1

*make the difference!*



## Encourage your preschooler to talk about daily activities

**W**hen your child begins school, her teacher will want her to talk about her thoughts, ideas and experiences. This kind of communication is a very important part of preschool and kindergarten.

Here are some ways to help your child get ready:

- **Get the story** behind your child's drawings. When your child draws a picture, ask her to tell you about it. Then write a sentence or two of her description underneath her drawing. Read her story together.
- **Talk about your own day** with your child. For example, say more than, "We're going out." Instead, try, "We are going to the grocery store this afternoon. I need to get some fruit and a box of cereal. You can help me pick them out."
- **Help your child** tell a story in sequence. This helps her learn that one event follows another. For example, ask her, "What are some of the things you do after dinner and before bed?" If she's not sure, say, "You brush your teeth. Then what do you do?"
- **Encourage your child** to provide details. Say your child tells you that she went out to the playground with her preschool class. Ask her questions that will help her recreate more of that experience. "What color is the slide?" "Did you like playing on the swings or on the monkey bars more?" "Who was playing with you on the playground?"

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

## Puppets can make learning school rules fun



When children start preschool, they are expected to follow certain rules.

Following those rules will be a lot easier if they have learned to follow similar ones at home.

Try a technique that many teachers use in school: Ask your child to act out each rule. Make it fun by having him use stuffed animals or puppets to demonstrate the desired behavior.

Be sure to cover some of these important and typical school rules:

- **Use your inside voice.**
- **Use your listening ears.**
- **Walk when you are inside.**
- **Say nice things to others.**
- **Take turns and share.**
- **Use manners.** Use words like *please*, *thank you* and *excuse me*.
- **Take care of your belongings** and others' belongings.
- **Keep your hands to yourself.**
- **Be kind to others.**
- **Look at the teacher** when she is talking.
- **Pick up after yourself.**
- **Throw trash in the trash can.**
- **Wash your hands.**

## Pretending to read builds your young child's love of literature



Children love to be read to. But they love it even more when they can read. While your child might not be able to read, he can pretend he does. The more he pretends, the sooner he'll start reading.

To encourage pretend reading:

- **Get books** that have simple pictures and text that has rhythm and rhyme.
- **Reread familiar books often.** Your child will memorize all or parts of these books.
- **Pause while you're reading.** Point to a picture. Ask your child to say what it is.
- **Stop before you say a word or phrase**—perhaps one that repeats

or rhymes. See if your child can fill it in.

- **Omit more words and phrases** until your child is telling the story.
- **Ask your child to "read" the story** to you. Help out as needed.

Remember, your child isn't really reading, so don't insist he say the exact words. Just enjoy this special reading time with your child and keep it light and fun.

**"Too often we give our children answers to remember rather than problems to solve."**

—Roger Lewin

## Focus on your preschooler's interests to build attention span



Staying focused on an activity is an important skill for school success. Like adults, children find it easier to pay attention to activities that interest them.

To build your child's attention span, choose something she enjoys. Then look for ways to keep her focused on it for longer and longer periods of time.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Extend your story time.** Instead of a short picture book, try reading a longer story or a beginning readers' chapter book over a period of nights. Each night, remind your child of where you are in the story. Then explain that you are going to read on to find out what happens to the characters.

- **Work together on a jigsaw puzzle.** Try one with about 25 pieces. Move on to more complicated puzzles once your child masters these. Remember, there is no need to finish putting one together in one sitting! Attention span also involves coming back to a project after you have put it aside.
- **Try a multi-step art project**—such as making a clay animal. Help your preschooler shape an animal out of clay. Allow the clay to dry and harden. On another day, let your child paint the animal. To go a step further, let the paint dry. Then help your child apply fur or eyes using glue and yarn or bits of paper.

**Source:** J. Bradford-Vernon, *How to Be Your Child's First Teacher: Insights for Parent Involvement*, School Specialty Publishing.

## Are you raising a preschooler who is eager to learn?



Children are born with a desire to explore their world. They are curious, and it is important that they remain so if they

are to succeed in school. Are you keeping your preschooler's natural curiosity alive? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you model curiosity** by wondering about things out loud?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you encourage your child** to ask questions? When he does, say, "That's a good question!"
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you give your child things** he can explore, take apart and put back together?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you help your child** use a small magnifying glass to examine things—bugs, flowers, newsprint, walls, carpet, dirt?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you take "adventure walks"** to see how many new things you can find?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* answer means you're keeping your child's spirit of investigation and wonder active. For *no* answers, try those ideas from the quiz.

**Early Childhood**  
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**Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children.** ISSN: 1523-1267

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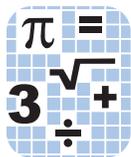
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Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Rebecca Miyares.

Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

# Point out math and numbers in your child's everyday activities



Early childhood is a great time to show your child that math is not only fun, it's natural, too. Math can be found in nearly everything we do. Each time you get dressed, for example, you follow a sequence. That's a key math skill.

Here are some other natural ways to help your child become aware of math:

- **Look for patterns.** Help your child find patterns on her bed sheets, curtains or clothing. "Your shirt has a red stripe, then a yellow stripe, then a red stripe. That's a pattern."
- **Estimate.** Say to your child, "I think you can finish your toast in 10 bites. Let's see." Then help her count her bites.
- **Have a "shape of the day."** In the morning, show your child a shape. "Look at your plate. The shape of your plate is a circle. We're going to have a circle hunt today!" Through the day, point out circles where you see them. Praise your child when she points out a circle.
- **Sequence.** Preschool children love daily routines and knowing what's going to happen next. Talk about the course of the day. "First, I'll drop you off at preschool. After preschool is over, we will have lunch."
- **Look for numbers.** If your child can recognize any numbers, look for those she knows. If she is not yet recognizing numbers, simply point them out on occasion. "That big sign has a 2 and a 5 on it!"

## Parents can avoid these four common self-esteem busters



Confidence is a necessary ingredient for school success. Children who feel capable and good about themselves achieve greater academic success than children who don't.

You probably know lots of ways to build your child's confidence: praise, show love, teach responsibility, etc. But do you know what *not* to do?

Here are some common mistakes and how to avoid them:

1. **Don't deny feelings.** "You can't be tired. You just took a nap." "You can't be upset. I let you play for 30 minutes." Denying your child's feelings makes him feel unimportant. It can also make it harder for him to empathize with others.
2. **Don't label.** Sometimes parents use negative stereotypes or nicknames to describe their children: "He's stubborn" or "Messy Max." Labels make your child feel bad about himself and keep him from improving.
3. **Don't compare.** It's not helpful to compare children, especially siblings. "Why can't you skate as well as your brother?" "Why can't you play quietly like your sister?" Children are unique and shouldn't be expected to be alike.
4. **Don't expect too much.** When parents have unrealistic expectations, kids feel they're not good enough. It's important to learn about what's reasonable to expect of your child.

**Q:** My daughter, who just turned five, loves her sleep! Preschool starts at 9:00 a.m. and we have been late many mornings. We have even missed some days because it is so hard to get her out of bed. Can you give me tips for helping her get up and out?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** You're right to be concerned. Good attendance is absolutely necessary for school success, and attendance habits begin in preschool. A recent study even showed that children who attend preschool regularly show more growth in literacy skills than those who are frequently absent.

To make your mornings a bit easier:

- **Make sure your daughter is getting enough sleep.** Children this age need at least 11 hours of sleep each night to be at their best. Try getting her to bed by 7:30 or 8:00 p.m. Try this for a week and you may be surprised at how much easier it becomes to awaken her in the morning.
- **Adjust your routines** in the evenings and mornings. Prepare the night before school. Pack your child's backpack and have it by the door. Set her clothes out for the next day. Have all breakfast foods that don't need refrigeration on the table. These advance steps can save you 30 minutes or more.

Remember that preschoolers love to dawdle, so include a little extra time in the morning. If your child gets ready early, reward her with a quick story. That may be all the motivation she needs to move a little faster!

# The Kindergarten Experience

## Attendance is a high priority for kindergartners



Studies show that attendance rates for kindergartners are lower than for students in any later school

grades. Yet regular attendance in kindergarten is critical for your child's school success.

The first year of school is the time to instill the value and habit of attending school regularly. Being in school every day will enable your child to do well.

Here's how to help your child achieve excellent attendance:

- **Let your child know** that you expect him to go to school every day. If you tell him it's important to you, it will be important to him.
- **Remain calm** if your child balks at going to school one day. This is normal for kindergartners. Don't discuss it or raise your voice. Just tell him he must go. It's a rule.
- **Keep your child home** if he's sick—especially if the illness is contagious. But not feeling like going to school isn't a good reason to stay home.
- **Try to schedule doctors'** appointments outside of school hours.
- **Schedule family vacations** during school breaks.

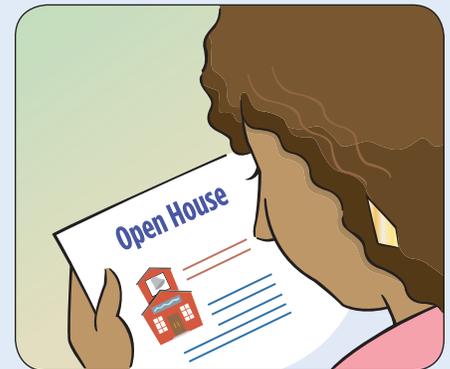
It's also important to develop the habit of getting to school on time. If your child arrives late, he might miss something important. Late arrival also disrupts the whole class. So be sure your child gets to school before the bell rings.

## Find ways to connect with your kindergartner's teacher

**D**uring preschool, it's common for parents to chat with teachers when dropping kids off or while volunteering. In kindergarten, however, your child may ride the bus and the teacher may have limited volunteer opportunities.

Here are some other ways to connect with your child's teacher:

- **Attend parent events.** The year will probably start with an open house. Be there to meet staff and learn about the class.
- **Schedule conferences.** Make the most of one-on-one time with the teacher. Bring a list of topics you'd like to discuss.
- **Keep an open mind.** If the teacher mentions areas in which your child needs improvement, try not to be defensive. You and



the school are on the same team. You have the same goal—your child's success.

- **Stay in touch.** Tell the school about changes that affect your child, such as a divorce or move. Ask the teacher to tell you about your child's progress, setbacks and ways you can help at home.

## A time capsule project stresses the importance of education



Take some time at the start of the school year to talk to your child about how important education is to you and your family. Then create a time capsule together. Here's how:

1. **Make predictions** with your child. What does your child want to be when she grows up? What types of classes does she think she will like when she is older? Where does she think she will go to college? Write down your child's answers to these questions on a sheet of paper.

2. **Ask your child to draw a picture** of what she thinks she will look like on the day she graduates from high school.
3. **Collect some recent photos.** Include a picture of your child on the first day of school, your home, pets and family members.
4. **Seal the keepsakes in a box** and store it in a safe place. Plan to open the box with your child when she graduates from high school, or another time you choose.

**Source:** J. Bissett, *Little Bits of Wisdom: A Collection of Tips and Advice from Real Parents*, Compendium Publishing & Communications.