

Helping Children Learn

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

Krys Croxall, Superintendent of Program
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

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THE MAGIC OF MUSIC

Make music part of your preschooler's life

There is almost no limit to what children can learn from music. Music helps them express emotions, improve language skills and identify patterns. Here are some ways to make the most of music:

- **Have at least one time of day** when your child expects to hear music. It might be on the car ride to school, during playtime or just before bed.
- **Give your child opportunities to move to music.** Wave scarves or strips of fabric. Clap to the beat. Act out lyrics.
- **Blend music with other creative activities.** For example, let your child listen to music while she draws or paints.
- **Make homemade instruments,** such as a container filled with rice (a maraca) or rubber bands pulled across a shoebox (a guitar).
- **Find children's music** at the library, on the radio and even online. Try different kinds and see what your child likes.
- **Attend community concerts and musicals.** If possible, stay afterwards to meet performers and ask questions.
- **Let your child listen to favorite songs repeatedly** to learn from the words.



Source: Jennifer R. Bradford-Vernon, *How to Be Your Child's First Teacher*, ISBN: 1-5622-99-4 (Instructional Fair, 1-800-417-3261, www.teacherspecialty.com).

EXPANDING YOUR CHILD'S WORLD

Explore the library with your child

The library provides a whole world of knowledge, fun and imagination for your child to explore. No child is too young for the library. The earlier you start visits, the sooner your child will be comfortable there. Consider these activities:

- **Call your local librarian** to ask about hours and children's programs.
- **Give your child** his own library bag for carrying books.
- **Practice** using a quiet library voice and handling books with care.
- **Introduce your child** to a librarian. Ask where to find items your child would like.
- **Consider letting** your child apply for a library card.
- **Choose books** that you'll enjoy reading aloud.
- **Attend special events,** such as puppet shows and story hours.

Source: Aedin Clemens, "Library Safari: Tips for Parents of Young Readers and Explorers," International Reading Association, www.reading.org/downloads/parents/pb1032_safari.pdf.

DISCIPLINE

Encourage your child

Young children practice many skills, so they make lots of mistakes. This can frustrate them! Help by making supportive comments, such as, "Wow. You're a hard worker!" and "You've almost got it! I'm so proud of you!" A little encouragement goes a long way.

BUILDING THINKING SKILLS

Teach your preschooler how to cope with problems

When a puzzle piece doesn't fit, does your child give up? Or does he try to smash it into place? Either reaction is normal. Until age five or six, children have little patience for problem solving. They try few solutions before getting frustrated. To nurture problem-solving abilities:

- **Be patient yourself.** Give your child time and space to work through challenges.
- **Offer help.** But don't solve the problem for your child.
- **Ask questions.** "How might you ... ?" "Where might that ... ?"

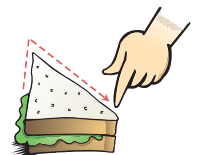


Source: Carla Poole and others, "Problem Solving in Action," Scholastic Early Childhood Today, http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/childdev/problem_action.htm.

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Go on a shape search

You and your child are surrounded by shapes all day, so take advantage of it! Have her point out the shapes that make up her lunch. For example, sliced sandwiches are triangles, cookies are circles and crackers are squares or rectangles.



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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can you help your child become more caring?

Q: My child isn't very sensitive to others' feelings. I want to help him with this. What should I do?

A: It's natural for children to concentrate on themselves. But life is much happier when they consider other people's emotions, too. Here are ways you can help:

- **Talk with your child about his friends and classmates.** "Tell me about the kids at preschool. What games do you play with them? Are students nice to each other?" Ask the teacher how things are going.
- **Help your child understand others' reactions.** "You said Jimmy hit Tommy and Tommy cried. Why do you think Tommy cried?" Your child may answer, "Because he got hurt!" Take it a step further. "What might make Tommy feel better?" Give some examples, such as, "Jimmy should say he is sorry."
- **Teach your child about non-verbal cues.** "Katie is smiling at you. I bet she'd like to play." "Oh, Brian is moving away a little bit. Maybe he doesn't want anyone right next to him right now."
- **Teach your child words that describe feelings.** "You look so excited!" "Oh, I can tell you're disappointed." These sentences will help him recognize and discuss a variety of emotions.

Source: Cathi Cohen, *Raise Your Child's Social IQ*, ISBN: 0-9660366-8-9 (Advantage Books, 1-888-238-8588, www.addvance.com).



PARENT QUIZ

Is your child learning at the store?

Preschoolers can learn many things at the supermarket. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're teaching while you shop:

- ___ 1. **Do you name** items as you put them in the shopping cart?
- ___ 2. **Do you point out** colors, shapes and sizes?
- ___ 3. **Do you encourage** your child to use her senses, such as by smelling bread or touching pineapples?
- ___ 4. **Do you count** things aloud, such as apples or juice boxes?
- ___ 5. **Do you mention** directions, such as up, over and behind?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means your child is learning at the store. For each *no* answer, use that idea from the quiz to change your response to *yes*.

"From the very beginning of his education, the child should experience the joy of discovery."
— Alfred North Whitehead

BUILDING VOCABULARY

Try using some 'big' words when talking to your child

Some parents avoid using words they think their child can't understand. But young children are captured by the sound of long, complex words. They like to use the "big" words adults use.

So go ahead. Make seemingly difficult words part of your regular conversation. Don't just *beat* an egg, *whisk* it. Tell your child he's *delightful*. Use new words repeatedly to help your child learn. Soon he'll take pride in blurting out, "That's scrumptious!" or "Look at that gigantic cake!"

Source: Susan Canizares, "For the Love of Words," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, April/May 2003 (Scholastic, Inc., 1-800-246-2986, www.scholastic.com).

ROUTINES

Set up a sleep routine

Does your child have a sleep routine? If not, try to create one. Set a reasonable, regular bedtime—and commit to it. Being well-rested is one way to get your child ready for a day of fun and learning.



BUILDING ATTENTION SPANS

Return to unfinished jobs

Some jobs are just too big for preschoolers, such as cleaning up a whole playroom. But the work doesn't have to be done all at once. Let your child do parts of it throughout the day. At night, she'll be proud of her big accomplishment!



Source: Lee Hausner and Jeremy Schlosberg, *Teaching Your Child Concentration*, ISBN: 0-89526-394-7. (Regnery Publishing, 1-888-219-4747, www.regnery.com).

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