

Helping Children Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Children Do Better in School

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

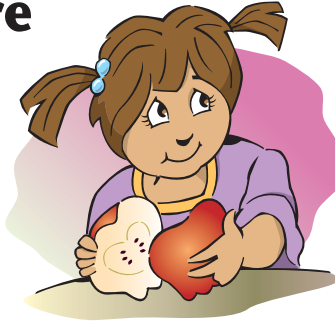
April 2010

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Find math everywhere

April is "Math Awareness Month" and one of the best places for your child to learn math is at home. You can help your child:

- **Practice counting.** Count the steps as you walk up the stairs. Make number requests: "Please bring mommy three spoons."
- **Learn shapes.** Walk around the house. Explore the pantry. See how many circles, squares, rectangles and triangles you can find.
- **Experience fractions.** Cut an apple in half. Let your child put it together.
- **Classify.** Have her sort things by size, shape, texture, function, etc.
- **Understand order.** Review the steps your child takes to get ready in the morning. ("Get out of bed. Get dressed. Eat breakfast. Brush teeth.")
- **Learn about time.** Use a timer to see if your child can brush her teeth for two minutes. Or count seconds out loud to see how long it takes her to get dressed. "One second. Two seconds ..."
- **Notice patterns**—how wide stripes are followed by narrow stripes on a kitchen towel, for example.
- **Practice estimating.** Ask, "How many sips will it take to finish your milk?" Then count each sip as she finishes drinking.



Source: Carol Sue Fromboluti and Natalie Rinck, *Early Childhood: Where Learning Begins—Mathematics*, ISBN: 0-16-050072-9 (U.S. Department of Education, www.ed.gov/about/pubs.jsp).

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Problem solving builds responsibility

It's easy to get into the habit of telling your young child exactly what to do. But even a preschooler can figure some things out by himself. To help your child develop responsibility:

- **Ask questions.** Instead of, "Get your raincoat," say, "It's raining outside. What should you wear?"
- **Offer facts.** Say, "I'm going to vacuum soon." Then say, "What do you think you can do to keep your toys safe?"
- **Make suggestions.** Use phrases such as "Sometimes, I ... " or "One idea is to ... " to suggest solutions for your child. This still gives your child some responsibility—he can try your suggestion or he can decide to do something else and see how that works.
- **Watch for frustration.** Learning responsibility should be a positive experience.

Source: Jody Johnston Pawel, *The Parent's Toolshop: The Universal Blueprint for Building a Healthy Family*, ISBN: 1-929643-34-9 (Ambris Publishing, www.parentstoolshop.com).

TALKING AND LISTENING

Try to answer the endless questions of preschoolers

Does your child ask nonstop questions? Try not to get frustrated. Answer as many as you can. And keep in mind that curiosity is a sign of desire to learn!

EXPANDING YOUR CHILD'S WORLD

Tap into nature together

Earth Day is April 22. To enhance your child's creativity and thinking skills:

- **Stroll** through the park or your own backyard. Talk about what you see, hear, smell and touch.
- **Bring** a notebook and crayons outdoors. Help your child draw pictures of interesting bugs and animals he sees.
- **Create** a nature scrapbook. Collect rocks, shells, bark, etc. Put them in a notebook in sealable plastic bags.
- **Plant** the seeds of herbs you can use for cooking in a pot or bucket. Teach your child to water them when the soil begins to dry out.



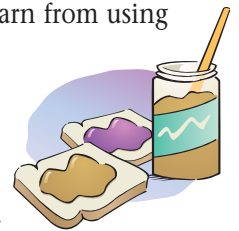
Source: Jane Hammerslough, "The Outdoor Classroom," *Child Magazine* (www.parents.com).

USING OUR SENSES

Jobs promote sensory play

Allow your child to help around the house, and chances are she'll learn from using her senses. Have her:

- **Make** a sandwich.
- **Use** sandpaper to smooth something.
- **Help** you put wet clothes into the dryer.
- **Bake** cookies. Let her smell ingredients, stir mixtures, shape dough, and taste the finished product!



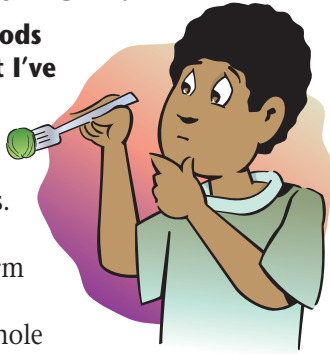
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents encourage healthy habits in children?

Q: My son loves sweets! He wants starchy foods like pasta, French fries and white bread. But I've read many articles about the dangers of childhood obesity. Can I possibly reform his diet now?

A: You can't force your child to eat certain foods. But you can—and should—reform the mealtime conditions in your house so your child can reform his own diet. Here's how:

- **Choose foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean protein and dairy.** If you don't keep and serve white bread and French fries, your son can't eat them—at least not at home.
- **Don't make the mistake** of offering starches and sweets just because your son is currently rejecting the healthy choices you have on the table.
- **Remember that a healthy child** will never starve himself. What a healthy child may do, however, is reject an unfamiliar food. Research shows that children may need up to 15 exposures to a new food before they will eat it.
- **Offer a mix of new and familiar foods.** Try to include at least one healthy food you know your child likes. Offer small portions of newer foods.
- **Make sure your child gets** at least 30 minutes of active play every day.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you teaching your child to be kind?

If children learn to care about people and things, they're likely to care about doing well in school, too. They're also less likely to be bullies. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your child be kind:

- ___ **1. Do you model** caring by thanking, helping and showing respect to your partner, child and others?
- ___ **2. Do you nurture** your child's sense of appreciation? Do you help her write thank-you notes?
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your child to do random acts of kindness?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to think how others might feel when she's hurtful or nice to them?
- ___ **5. Do you show** your child how to take care of a plant or pet?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're promoting kindness. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Look beyond the behavior

Address the emotions that lead to your child's behavior, such as:

- **Confusion.** Your child wants a drink and doesn't know what to do. So she pushes at the water fountain.
- **Anger.** You turned off the TV. Your child throws a tantrum.
- **Excitement.** Your child sees a friend. She starts shouting and running.

Source: Meri Wallace, *Keys to Parenting Your Four Year Old*, ISBN: 0-8120-9745-9 (Barron's Educational Series, www.barronseduc.com).

READING READINESS

Notice your preschooler's connection to books

Here are some signs that children love to read—followed by ways to encourage these traits:

- **They're eager to choose books.** Keep favorite stories handy.
- **They memorize books.** Let them recite parts they know.
- **They pick new books.** Visit the library together each week.

Source: Robert Needlman, "Exploring Books With Your Preschooler," DrSpock.com, www.drspock.com/article/0,1510,5139+cbx_behavior,00.html.

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Encourage puzzling play

Jigsaw puzzles are among the best learning toys for children. Puzzles help your child:

- **Think** logically and visually.
- **Build** fine motor skills.
- **See** the progress he is making.
- **Learn** to work quietly on a project.
- **Learn** how to return to a project. This will help him learn to study and do larger projects when he gets to school.



Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares. Writer: Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

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

Copyright © 2010, 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