

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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KID BITS



Stay in touch

Show your child that you think school is important by working with his teacher. Find out the best way to keep in touch (notes, emails, phone calls). Then, let your youngster know when you communicate with her. (“Mrs. Jones said you’re a good helper.”) He’ll see that you’re both interested in helping him succeed.

Understanding feelings

Encourage your child to imagine how others feel. You could ask how she thinks the new kid in her class felt on the first day of school (nervous, scared) or how the dog feels when your family gets home in the evening (excited, hungry). Being able to put herself in another’s shoes can help her develop empathy.

Which direction?

Instead of driving to a nearby store or playground, try walking there with your youngster instead. It’s good exercise—and it can build his sense of direction. Let him lead the way and tell you where to turn. Talk about whether you’re going left or right, or if you’re heading north, south, east, or west.

Worth quoting

“Parents hold their children’s hands for a while, their hearts forever.”

Anonymous

Just for fun

Q: How do you fit four hippos in a car?

A: Two in the front and two in the back.



Excited about learning

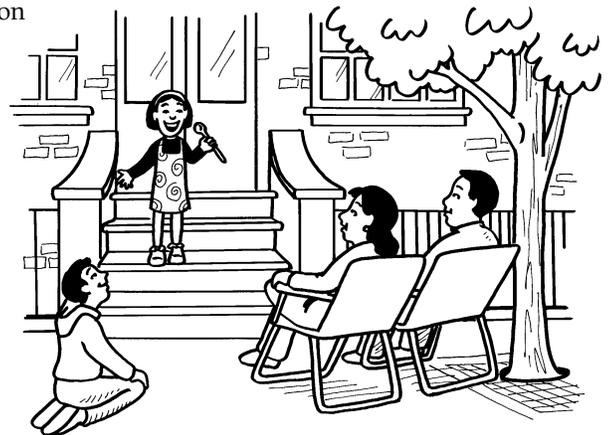
What does your youngster like to do? What is she good at? Build on her excitement with these ideas for supporting her interests and celebrating her accomplishments this year.

Read—then read some more!

Look for books on topics that capture her attention. For example, if she notices ducks during a picnic or points out geese flying south, you could read a nonfiction book on birds. *Idea:* Try using her current interests to lead her to new ones. A child who loves animals might enjoy reading about people who work with them, like vets or zookeepers.

Put on a performance

Let your youngster feel like a star while she practices what she’s learning. She could hold a pretend microphone and stand on a “stage” (porch, steps) while you watch her recite the Pledge of Allegiance or name the months of the year.



Take “field trips”

You don’t need to go far to find learning opportunities! If you’re heading to the bank and the post office, tell your child it’s a “math field trip.” Help her count coins or read numbers on post office boxes. And if you’re going to a park, call it a “science field trip.” You can each name trees and flowers that you recognize and share facts about them. (“That must be an oak tree because there are acorns under it.”)♥

Healthy habits

Being sick is no fun, and missing school means missing out on learning. Use these tips to help your child stay healthy so he can attend school every day:

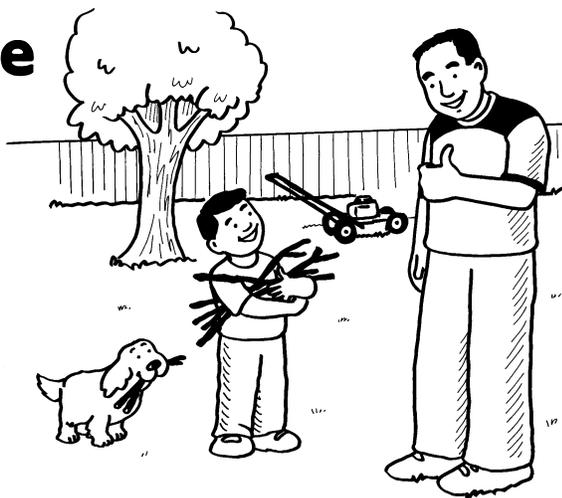
- Remind him to wash his hands with soap and water before eating and after using the restroom. *Tip:* You might get soap in fun shapes and colors that he’ll look forward to using.
- Make sure your youngster eats a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables. Also, stick to a regular bedtime that allows 10–12 hours of sleep.
- If your child does get sick, replace his toothbrush and change his sheets after he’s better. Germs left behind could make him sick again. *Note:* Ask his doctor when it’s safe for him to go back to school—he doesn’t want to make his classmates sick, too.♥



Words that inspire cooperation

The words you choose can encourage your youngster to be a “team player.” Consider these suggestions.

Include your child. He’s more likely to cooperate if he feels like he’s part of things. He might not be able to mow the lawn, for example, but you could say, “You’re old enough to help me with yard work—you get to pick up the big sticks so I can mow.”



Recognize initiative. If your youngster pitches in without being asked, tell him that you noticed. (“Singing to the baby was a good idea. You kept her entertained while I put away the groceries.”) This will motivate him to think of more ways to help.

Point out benefits. It’s one thing to *tell* your child that working together makes a job easier. It’s another for him to *see* the results for himself.

(“When we all pitch in to clear the table after dinner, we have more time to play before bed.”) He’ll learn that cooperation pays off!♥

ACTIVITY CORNER Write a book

Creating a book about school is a great way for your youngster to practice writing skills—and it can help her feel confident about school.

Materials: paper, crayons, stapler



Start by asking your child what she likes about school (her teacher, the library, math time). Let her draw a picture of each one on a separate sheet of paper.

Then, she can write a sentence about each drawing. You could make suggestions to help her decide what to write. She might mention the title of a book her teacher read or the name of a friend she played with at recess. If she isn’t writing yet, she can dictate her sentences to you.

Have her illustrate a cover, and then staple her book together. Now, listen while your youngster reads her book aloud.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Flashlight talks

We went camping with my parents this summer, and my daughter Bella loved our evening conversations around the campfire. When we got home, she asked if we could continue the nightly tradition. And that’s how our “flashlight talks” began.



At bedtime, we turn out the lights and sit on the floor with a flashlight. We start with a “thinking” question like “If you were a vehicle, what kind would you be?” or “If you could invent a new milkshake, what ingredients would you use?” Then, we each answer the question.

At first, I asked all the questions, but now we take turns. Bella is getting better at waiting for her turn to talk and participating in conversations. Plus, we’re making some nice memories.♥

Q & A Play and learn

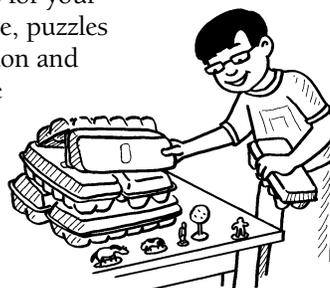
Q: My son’s teacher said that kids learn by playing. How can I help my child make the most of play-time at home?

A: All play offers opportunities for your youngster to learn. For example, puzzles and blocks improve coordination and problem solving. And when he plays with puppets and action figures, he uses his imagination and develops his speech and language.

It’s okay to offer a little guidance during playtime,

but he’ll learn more if you follow his lead. For instance, instead of saying, “Let’s build a house out of egg cartons,” you could ask, “What can we make with these egg cartons?”

Tip: Encourage your child to keep his toys organized so he can see what’s available. You might provide plastic baskets or shoeboxes and help him label them.♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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