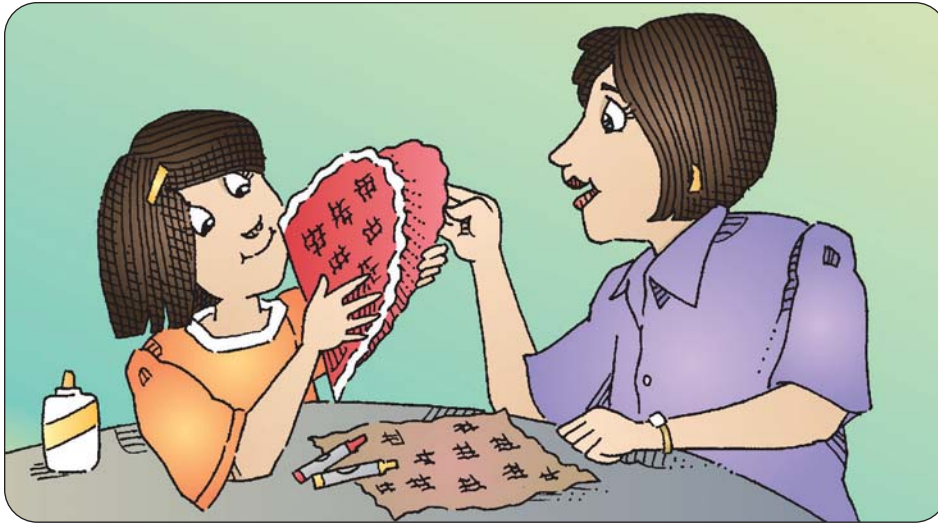


Early Childhood Parents®

February 2009
Vol. 13, No. 6

Brighton Area Schools Educational (BASE)
Foundation 810.299.4050

make the difference!



Create homemade valentines using different types of art

This Valentine's Day, give your child the gift of art and creativity. Sit down with your preschooler and create some fun, artistic valentines together. You can:

- **Tape a textured scrap of cloth** to a table. Lace works well. Put a sheet of thin white paper on top. Give your child a red crayon and have her rub on the white paper so that the shape of the scrap underneath appears. Fold this and turn it into a card, or cut it out and tape it to the front of a card.
- **Paint on unusual surfaces.** Consider having your child use thick red paint to paint on aluminum foil. Cut out a heart from the painted aluminum foil, and tape it to the front of a folded piece of paper.
- **Cut out heart shapes.** Let your child trace and color the shapes. Show her how to overlap the shapes to make different designs. She can also form them into a heart "person" or "animal." Experiment with different materials for tracing, such as paints and chalk.
- **Create a woven heart.** Help your preschooler cut out the shape of a heart from a piece of sturdy construction paper. Using a hole-punch, make holes all along the edge of the heart. Then let your child weave a piece of yarn or colorful ribbon in and out of the holes.

Source: MaryAnn Kohl, *Preschool Art: It's the Process, Not the Product*, ISBN: 0-87659-168-3 (Gryphon House, 1-800-638-0928, www.gryphonhouse.com).

Introduce your preschooler to journal 'writing'



Having your child keep a journal when he can hardly write his name may sound odd.

However, your child doesn't have to know how to write to keep a journal. To start:

- **Give your child** a large, blank sheet of paper.
- **Talk about something** your child did today.
- **Ask him to draw a picture** of the event. After he draws, ask him to tell you about his drawing.
- **Write down a sentence** capturing his words, as a caption for the drawing.
- **Explain that the words** tell about the picture. Ask him if he would like to "write" anything—even if he just makes a few marks.
- **Repeat this process often.** Save his pages and staple them into a "book."

Over time, you will likely start to see letters and real words emerge from his marks.

Source: Lillian Alice Noda & others, *Off to a Great Start: Activities for Becoming Your Child's Best Teacher*, ISBN: 0-7802-4207-6 (The Wright Group, a McGraw-Hill Company, 1-800-648-2970, www.wrightgroup.com/index.php).

Teach your preschooler the importance of being a good sport



Many children begin organized sports in early childhood—some by age four or five. Even if your child doesn't play a sport, it is important for her to learn how to be a good sport.

You can foster this character trait in your child if you:

- **Focus on fun.** Sports are competitive, but young children do not go to world championships. They are in sports to learn, have fun and get exercise. If your child does this, she's a winner, no matter what the score.
- **Practice good manners.** Even with a focus on fun, children are aware of who does "well" and who does "not as well." Teach your child to say, "good game," or "good job," to all of the children she plays with,

regardless of a child's skill or ability level.

- **Empathize.** Let your child know that it is okay to feel frustrated and that you understand. "Sometimes you catch the ball, and sometimes you don't. It's hard not to feel bad when you don't catch it, but don't give up! You can do it!"

Source: Paul Coleman and Richard Heyman, *The Big Book of How to Say It KIDS*, ASIN: B000TDH25E (Prentice Hall Press, a Pearson Education brand, 1-800-282-0693, www.pearsonhighered.com).

Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.

~Robert Fulghum

Try some new activities with your child as winter winds down

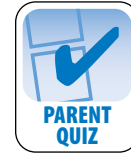


By February, many families are ready for spring, but unless you live in a desert or tropical climate, spring may not be ready for you.

Here are some activities to try:

- **Snow on the ground?** By this time, you have probably tramped through it, rolled it, thrown it and made a snowman out of it. But have you painted it? Get some spray bottles and fill with water and food coloring. Head outside and let your child create some beautiful snow pictures.
- **Popcorn sampling.** Most families have their popcorn with oil and salt, or with butter. But you can do almost anything to popcorn. Encourage your child to try new tastes. (Just keep in mind any allergies or food sensitivities your child may have.) Pop some corn and coat it well with butter, a mild oil or cooking spray. Now experiment with toppings—try cheeses or any spice or seasoning you may want to get out of your pantry, even sugar!
- **Have your own Olympics.** The summer games were six months ago and the 2010 Winter Games aren't until next year, but you can have your own Games now. Some ideas for events: Pillowcase Sack Racing, Broad Jumping, High Jumping, Stair Climbing, Front Yard or Sidewalk Sprinting. Of course, use your judgment to make sure all athletes are safe and supervise your child intently.

Are you helping your child respect belongings?



At school, students must respect others' belongings, such as books, toys, crayons and furniture.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you're encouraging this at home:

- ___ **1. Do you give your child places to keep belongings,** such as a bin for blocks or a drawer for crayons?
- ___ **2. Do you make cleaning up a habit?** "Before we get out a new game, let's put away the one we just played."
- ___ **3. Do you talk about the benefits of respecting belongings?** "If you treat Grandpa's piano gently, I'm sure he'll let you play it again."
- ___ **4. Do you notice when your child treats belongings well?** "Thanks for putting your books on the shelf. That will keep them in great condition!"
- ___ **5. Do you set an example by caring for household items yourself,** including your child's belongings?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you're building your child's respect for belongings. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

Early Childhood
Parents
make the difference!

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

For subscription information call or write:
The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit our website: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency. Equal opportunity employer. Copyright © 2009 NIS, Inc.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D. *Managing Editor:* Pat Hodgdon. *Editor:* Rebecca Miyares. *Writers:* Maria Koklanaris & Susan O'Brien. *Illustrator:* Joe Mignella.

Build strong teeth, school skills during Dental Health Month



February is National Children's Dental Health Month—a time to include lessons about dental health in everyday

learning activities. For example:

- **Discuss why teeth are important.** Look through a magazine together. Find pictures of people using their teeth. What are the people doing? Eating? Smiling? Talking? What if no one had teeth?
- **Practice making sounds.** Use your teeth to make sounds, such as the *th* in *teeth* and the *f* in *face*. People use their teeth when pronouncing the letter *v*, too.
- **Review how to clean teeth.** Brushing and flossing are ways to keep teeth healthy. Preschoolers should not floss without parents'

help—and brushing should always be supervised to prevent swallowing of toothpaste.

- **Talk about dental visits.** Who and what will your child see at the dentist? Lots of friendly helpers, a light for seeing better, a chair that moves up and down for the best view of teeth, an x-ray machine for pictures, and more.
- **Read about the dentist.** Find reassuring books about visiting the dentist. One is available online from the American Dental Association at www.ada.org/public/games/story.asp. Or ask the librarian at your local library.

Source: "Classroom Ideas and Resources" and "Talking About Teeth," American Dental Association, www.ada.org/public/education/teachers/ideas.asp; www.ada.org/public/education/teachers/ideas_talking.doc.

Q: My son turns five next month and will attend kindergarten in the fall. Between now and then, I'd like to help him become more responsible for himself and his surroundings. What would you suggest?

Questions & Answers

A: Your son's teachers will thank you for this! Kindergarten teachers are much more interested in seeing a responsible, well-adjusted child than a child who can already read and add. You can build responsibility if you:

- **Encourage your child** to express his wants and needs politely. He will have to raise his hand and wait his turn.
- **Help him solve problems.** If he spills his milk on the floor, ask him, "What do you think you should do about this?"
- **Think consequences** rather than punishment. If he leaves his bike outside, it may get wet. It's his responsibility to dry it off if he wants to ride it.
- **Give him chores** he can accomplish. He can put the napkins on the table, pull up the cover on his bed and pick up his own clothes and toys.
- **Work on personal care.** A kindergarten child should be able to dress himself, with the exception of tying shoelaces. (Kindergarten teachers often work on this skill with the whole class.) Washing hands is critical.
- **Empathize.** Your son may struggle with new or challenging tasks. Express confidence that he will be more successful with time and practice.

Best of luck to your family as you take this important step!

—Maria Koklanaris,
The Parent Institute

Celebrate 'Library Lovers' Month' by sharing the love of books



You knew February is the month for valentines, but it's also the month for loving the library—that world of books that gives

all of us the chance to read and learn about anything we choose.

Perhaps your child has already begun to experience the library. Encourage his reading and set him on a lifelong path of loving books and the library.

Here are some directions to get him on that path.

- **Check with your library** for programs geared toward children your child's age. Take him when you can.
- **Help your child think** of you as a reader. Explain the ways you need to read for work and for fun.

- **Consider your child a reader** (being a reader-in-training counts!). Say things like, "Let's read the sign—E-X-I-T, *exit*. Exit means the way out."
- **Set aside a corner** of your home for reading and writing. Keep newspapers, magazines, books, picture books, crayons, pencils and paper there. Encourage your child to feel that spending time in this corner with you is a special activity you can do together.
- **Choose rhyming books** often. Rhyming helps your child become aware of the relationship between letters and sounds. This is an important step toward reading.

Source: Reading Readiness Project, "Reading Tips for Parents," Colorado State Library, www.cde.state.co.us/cdelib/download/pdf/ReadingTipsEnglish.pdf.

The Kindergarten Experience

Be mindful when you are speaking about your child



Parents are often careful about the words they say *to* their child. They don't want to hurt their child's self-image.

But sometimes this goal is forgotten when talking with other adults. A parent might say to a kindergarten teacher, for example, "Liza isn't great at math," while Liza is sitting nearby. Ouch.

To avoid damaging your child's self-esteem:

- **Realize your child is listening**—even when you think she isn't. Your kindergartner may not hear everything you say, but she picks up on a lot, even if she doesn't show it. She may also misinterpret what she hears because of her age.
- **Respect your child's feelings.** It's unlikely that you would complain about a friend while she is standing right there. Nor should you gripe about your child in her presence.
- **Choose your words carefully.** Imagine how your words could make your child feel—or how you'd feel if you heard someone say them about you. Put a positive spin on things: "Subtraction is difficult for Liza, but she never gives up. How can we make it easier for her?"
- **Let your child overhear** you saying nice things about her. "Liza helped her sister pick up her room. She's such a caring sister."

Source: Elizabeth Pantley, "Casual Remarks," FamilyCorner.com, www.familycorner.com/parenting/ages/casual_remarks.shtml.

Make the most of kindergarten parent-teacher conferences

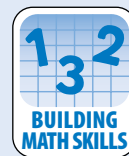
The kindergarten parent-teacher conference is an exciting opportunity to learn about your young student. But for many parents, it's also the first conference with an elementary school teacher, which can be nerve wracking. To help things go well:

- **Arrive prepared.** Bring a list of questions or thoughts for the teacher. You are the "expert" on your child, and the teacher depends on your input. Show gratitude for what's working for your child, such as classroom activities he loves.
- **Be on time and upbeat.** Don't miss a minute of this time dedicated to your child's success. You and the teacher are a team. If your child is struggling in some way, solving the problem will be easier together.



- **Ask questions.** It's natural to be confused about certain elementary school terms. Speak up if you're confused.
- **Make plans.** It's wonderful to hear how your student is doing, but set goals, too. How can you help at home? What habits can he develop that will help in the future? Plan to keep in touch with the teacher about his progress.

Help your child experience the practical uses of math at home



Exposing your child to math does not necessarily mean doing an addition worksheet or even practicing counting. Math is at the foundation of many routine activities.

With your child each day:

- **Compare the quantity** of something. Does your child have more crayons or more markers? After she eats some of her cereal, is there *more* or *less* in the bowl? Most of math is about the concept of *more* and *less*!

- **Locate something.** Help your child understand the concept of *above* and *below*. When setting up a subtraction problem, your child will need to understand that the larger number must be *above* the smaller number.
- **Measure something.** Give your child a measuring cup to play with in the tub so she learns what "one cup" looks like.

Source: Jennifer R. Bradford-Vernon, *How to Be Your Child's First Teacher: Insights for Parent Involvement*, ISBN: 1-56822-998-4 (School Specialty Publishing, 1-800-417-3261, www.schoolspecialtypublishing.com).