

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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UMES Child & Family Development Center
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KID BITS



Questions, questions

It's never too early to introduce research skills. Keep a list of questions your child asks ("Why does it thunder?" "What does a hippopotamus say?"). Look for answers together at the library. Your youngster will learn a lifelong skill—how to find information she needs.

Head lice

Those pesky bugs known as head lice are common in children. To prevent their spread, remind your youngster not to share combs or hats. Check her scalp during bathing or brushing. If you find lice or nits (the eggs), ask the school nurse about the safest way to get rid of them.

Family math fun

How fast does your heart beat? How many Friday the 13ths are in a year? Build your child's math skills by posing challenges like these. You can find problems, hints, and answers to 80 kid-friendly problems at a Web site from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, www.figurethis.org/challenges/challenge_index.htm.

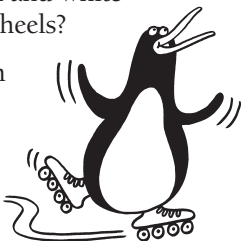
Worth quoting

"The more good qualities we look for in our children, the more good qualities we are going to find."
Zig Ziglar

Just for fun

Q: What's black and white and has eight wheels?

A: A penguin on rollerblades.



Making connections

Can learning about the letter X, discovering two-digit numbers, or doing science experiments help your child in everyday life? Of course!

It's amazing how much your youngster will learn if you can connect what she is learning in school to her life outside the classroom. Try these ideas.

Letters. Find ways to use the letters your child is studying. Serve waffles for breakfast when she's working on W, or give her quarters for her piggy bank when the focus is Q. If she's learning about Z, read a book about a zoo, such as *Zoo Looking* by Mem Fox. For Y, let her wear yellow. While doing these activities, show her the letter in print, and say the sound it makes.

Numbers. When the teacher introduces two-digit numbers, practice reading them everywhere you go. Calendars, clocks, and speed-limit signs all have two-digit numbers. Have your child read the numbers out loud.

Science. Is your youngster's class learning about solids and liquids? Give her hands-on lessons in the kitchen. For example, show her that when butter is heated, it turns from a solid into a liquid. Or show how liquids turn to solids by making frozen juice treats together. Let your child pour 100 percent fruit juice into paper cups and put them in



the freezer. An hour later, she can peel off the cup and eat her "juice" with a spoon! ♥

Fire safety

More house fires happen in winter than any other time of year. To keep your youngster safe, teach him to:

- Stop, drop, and roll in case his clothes ever catch on fire.
- Crawl low to the ground in an emergency, since smoke and heat rise.
- Keep his bedroom door closed at night (to slow the spread of a fire).

To help your child feel comfortable around firefighters, take him to your local fire station. Call ahead to find a good time to visit—he may get to sit in a fire truck or even try on a firefighter's boots and jacket! ♥



Playing with others

Having friends and playing with others can make school more enjoyable. Help your youngster build important social skills, such as cooperation and sharing, that will give him a boost in the classroom.

Preschool

Most children this age are just learning to play together. Teach your preschooler to ask another child, "Do you want to play with me?" Invite a friend over to give him opportunities to share and take turns.

Encourage activities that require cooperation, like card games or pretend play. You might help your youngster learn to



make decisions with questions: "Who's going to build the train track?" "Who's going to put the cars together?"

Kindergarten

As children get older, they like games with rules, such as soccer or board games. They might make up their own rules, too: "You be the teacher, and I'll be the kid."

Kindergartners still need help with problem solving. Offer suggestions: "You both want to use the red crayon. One of you could use the blue one, and then you can trade." Provide toys that allow them to work together to achieve a goal, such as blocks to make a city or a puzzle to complete. ♥

PARENT TO PARENT

Alike and different



My daughter recently started asking questions about the skin color and clothing of people who are different from her. I wanted Lindsay to understand that, to others, we might seem "different," too.



So we started talking about differences and similarities in our own family. I asked, "How are you and your brother alike?" Lindsay said they both have brown hair and blue eyes. I asked how they are different. She said

he is bigger and wears jeans, while she is smaller and prefers dresses. Then, we compared the rest of our family members.

The next time we saw a woman from another culture in traditional dress, my daughter said, "Look, Mommy. We're both wearing blue." I was happy that the first thing she noticed was what they had in common! ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Family scrapbook

"Let's make a family scrapbook!" Surprise your youngster with this creative activity that combines spelling and writing practice with organizational skills and family time.



Materials: photo album, family pictures and mementos, paper, scissors, glue

Start by gathering photos and collecting items from events your family has enjoyed. You might include birthday party invitations, ticket stubs from baseball games, programs from school plays, and postcards from vacations.

Have your child divide the items by category, such as special events, holidays, months, or seasons. Then, let her create pages for each by arranging the pictures and souvenirs. She can glue them down and write or dictate captions for each one.

When the scrapbook is finished, your child will have a keepsake that will remind her of the fun your family has had together. ♥

Q & A

Staying in touch

Q: What is the best way to keep in touch with my son's teacher? She seems so busy!

A: Your child's teacher will be happy to know that you're interested in what's happening at school. Why don't you send a note asking the best way to reach her (attach the note to your youngster's backpack to be sure the teacher sees it).

Let the teacher know what times you are available by

phone and whether you have access to a computer. Some teachers prefer to talk by phone, while others like to use e-mail.

Regardless of the method you use, regular communication between home and school will help your child do his best.

Note: If you have a serious concern, ask the teacher to call as soon as possible, or request a conference. ♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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