

# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May 2007

UMES Child & Family Development Center  
Ms. Donna Long, Director

## KID BITS

### Driving adventures

"We're on a safari—look at those elephants out the window!" Pretending together while driving in the car can build your child's imagination skills. You can make believe you're flying a plane or steering a tractor and ask your youngster what she "sees." Watch her creativity grow as she describes puffy clouds or farm animals.

### Teacher's helper

As the school year winds down, teachers are busy wrapping things up. If you've been wanting to volunteer, now is a good time. Your child's teacher might appreciate a hand in taking down bulletin boards or packing up books. By helping out, you'll show your child you care about his school.

### Safe in the sun

Sunscreen isn't just for sunny days. Remember to protect your youngster even when it's cloudy. Choose an SPF of at least 15, and reapply after two hours or after swimming or sweating. Using sunscreen will help your little one avoid sunburn now and skin damage later.

### Worth quoting

"Wisdom begins in wonder."  
Socrates

### Just for fun

**Mom:** Zach, why are you standing on your head?

**Zach:** Because my feet are tired!



## Summer skill builders

Summer's almost here—let the learning begin! You can use the great outdoors for activities that will build your child's reading and math skills. As a bonus, he'll be exercising his body, too. Try these ideas.

### ABC drills

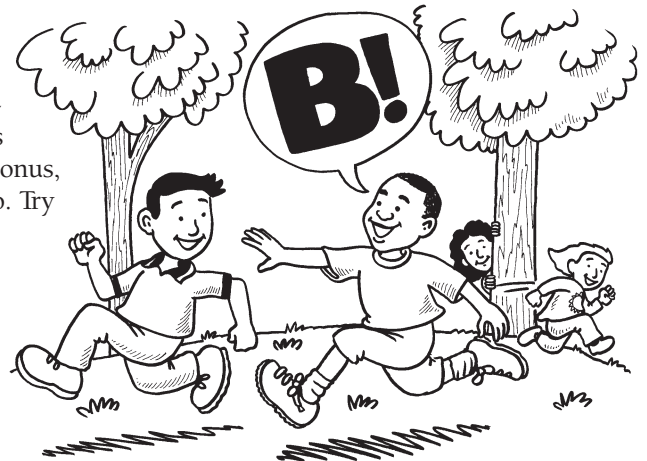
Play hopscotch to practice reading skills. Put a letter or word in each square instead of a number. Ask your child to name the letter or read the word as he hops to that spot.

Try a game of alphabet tag. Choose one player to be "It." He picks a letter, shouts it out, and begins chasing the other players. When he tags someone, that person has to freeze and say three words that begin with the letter. Then, he becomes "It."

### Counting games

Encourage your youngster to practice counting in fun ways. How many times can each of you bounce a ball in a minute? Touch your toes? With sidewalk chalk, have him make a graph comparing your numbers. *Example:* He can make a bar graph by stacking up squares for each bounce (say, six squares for you and eight squares for him).

Go on a shape hunt in your neighborhood. Have your child divide a piece of paper into four boxes and draw a



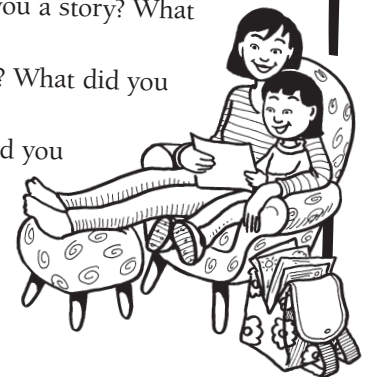
shape (circle, triangle, square, rectangle) in each one. As you walk, he can make a tally mark for the shapes he spots: yield sign (triangle), front door (rectangle). How many can he find? ♥

### An inside look

Do you sometimes have trouble finding out what your youngster is doing in school? Ask questions like these to get details:

- Did your teacher read you a story? What was it about?
- Who did you play with? What did you play?
- What kind of picture did you draw? What colors did you use?
- Did you sing a song today? Can you teach it to me?
- What made you laugh?
- Did you work on a project? What is it about?

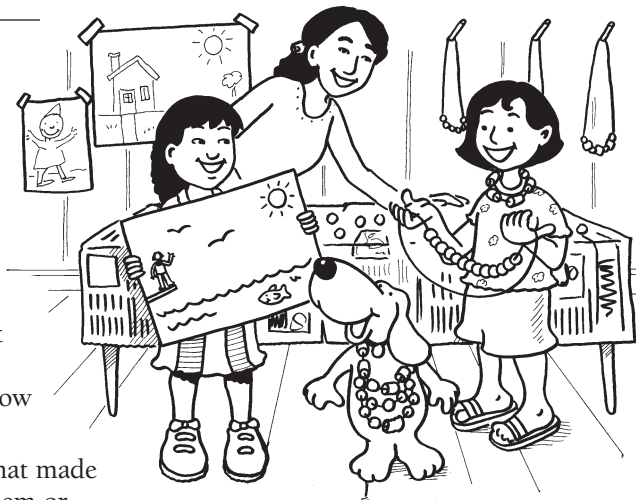
*Tip:* Looking through your youngster's school bag will give you clues on what to ask about (a book, a worksheet). ♥



## “You’re terrific!”

When children feel good about themselves, they’re likely to do better in school. You can help your youngster develop strong self-esteem with these everyday tips:

- ▲ Give her something to feel proud of. Let your child select drawings and stories to hang on the refrigerator as a reminder of how hard she worked.
- ▲ Ask her to tell you something she did that made her feel good. Maybe she learned a new poem or cleaned up the art table. If she can’t think of anything, you can go first: “I helped Mrs. Foster when her computer wasn’t working right.”



▲ Find an activity your youngster is good at, and give her a chance to practice. For example, run relay races outside, or string beads to make a necklace.

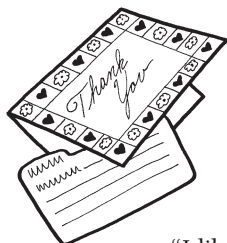
▲ Turn around negative comments. If your child says, “My letters are messy,” reassure her: “It’s hard to make letters just right when you first learn. Let’s try together.”

*Note:* If your child often criticizes herself or says she can’t do things, ask her teacher if she is struggling with schoolwork or playmates. ♥

### ACTIVITY CORNER

## Thank you, teacher

Teachers work hard to help children learn. Here are three creative ways for your youngster to say thank you—and get some writing practice, too:



1. Make a fill-in-the-blank card for your child to complete. You can start sentences that he can turn into his own: “Thank you for helping me \_\_\_\_\_ (write a story).”

“I liked this year because \_\_\_\_\_ (I made lots of friends).”

2. Together, think of a “Recipe for the Perfect Teacher” (“Take one person named Mrs. Peters, add some games, stir in a few books...”). You or your child can write the recipe on construction paper.

3. Have your youngster make a “box of thank-yous.” On slips of paper, help him write or dictate ways his teacher is special. *Examples:* “You taught me to subtract.” “You are so nice.” Have him put the notes in a shoebox, decorate the outside, and deliver it to the teacher. ♥

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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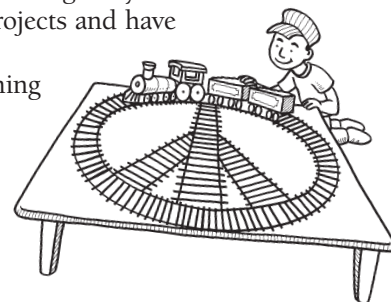
### PARENT TO PARENT

## Add a touch of fun

My kids could get along for a while without fighting, but late in the day, things would often break down. I realized I needed ideas to head off the arguments.

After talking with a neighbor, I decided that keeping my children busy might prevent them from fighting. So we sat down together and made a list of things they like to do. My son said playing hide-and-seek and visiting a toy store with a train table. My daughter wanted to do art projects and have a picnic.

I posted our list next to the calendar. Each morning we pick one thing and agree on when we’ll do it (after work, after dinner). Since we’ve started, I’ve noticed that having something to look forward to cuts down on arguments. It seems that a daily activity creates just the routine that my children needed! ♥



## Q & A Moving up to kindergarten

**Q:** My preschooler will be old enough for kindergarten this fall. How will I know if Brianna is ready?

**A:** Children who can play with others, follow directions, pay attention, and do simple things for themselves are usually ready for kindergarten.

There are many things you can do to give Brianna practice in these skills. For example, have her get together with friends outside of school.



Encourage them to play games, and she’ll work on following rules.

To help increase her attention span, you can read to her a little longer each night. Also, let your daughter make more choices (“strawberry or vanilla yogurt?”), and encourage her to do more for herself (pour her cereal, hang up her coat).

If Brianna is doing well in preschool, chances are she’s ready for kindergarten. If you’re concerned, talk to her teacher. ♥