

Early Childhood Parents[®]

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EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTER
Penny Goldstein, Building Administrator

make the difference!



Learning lessons of respect at home benefits your child

It's difficult to learn in a classroom where students don't show respect. Thankfully, it's easy and fun to teach about respect at home.

Talk to your child about what respect means to your family. Give real-life examples and find ways to demonstrate it. You can:

- **Draw attention to respectful behavior** when you see it. Thank the person who holds a door open for you. Thank the playmate who shares his book with your child.
- **Be a good role model.** Wait politely in line or elsewhere. Talk to your child about being patient. "I wish it were our turn. But let's smile and play a quiet game while we wait."
- **Watch a TV show together** and discuss the characters' behavior.

Who is being respectful? Who isn't? How can you tell?

- **Write a song or poem** about respect with your child. It can be silly, as long as it's meaningful, too. Recite it cheerfully together.
- **Plan ahead.** If you're going somewhere, ask your child to name three ways he can show respect while he's there. For example, at the library he could speak quietly, handle reading materials carefully and put books back on the shelves.
- **Create a respect collage.** Look through a magazine together and find pictures of people showing respect. Cut them out and glue them onto paper.

Source: M. Borba, Ed.D., *Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues that Teach Kids to Do the Right Thing*, Jossey-Bass.

Family reading is linked to school success



When you read with your child daily, you're doing much more than preparing her to

read independently. Research shows you're also boosting her chances of success in reading, writing, language and math!

In a study of almost 5,000 preschool-age kids, those who read frequently with parents did better on school testing years later than kids who didn't.

Experts suggest you make time to:

- **Read together every day.** Make this a fun part of your routine. Choose books your child will like, and read them with enthusiasm!
- **Visit the library together** every week. Attend events for kids and find books on topics that appeal to your child.
- **Surround your child** with words. Keep lots of reading materials handy so your child can enjoy them anytime. Say, "Yes!" when your child asks, "Can we read?"

Source: *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, niswc.com/ec_research_read.

A positive attitude can shape your child's feelings about school



Your child's positive attitude in preschool can go a long way toward determining his future success. Here's

how to encourage his love of school:

- **Be excited** about what your child is doing in preschool. Ask him questions every day about what he learned in school. If the teacher sends him home with a book, say, "Wow! That looks like a great book! Let's read it together!"
- **Celebrate success.** Did your child bring home a great progress report? Celebrate with a special treat. However, never offer a bribe for schoolwork. Saying, "You can have an ice cream *if* you get a star on your paper" doesn't teach

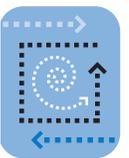
your child to work hard. It teaches him to try for the ice cream by any means possible.

- **Never criticize** the preschool or teacher in front of your child. Tell him that you and his teacher are on the same team. If you ever have an issue to discuss, contact the teacher directly.

"A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes. It is a catalyst and it sparks extraordinary results."

—Wade Boggs

Teach the concept of time with calendars, paper chains & books



Time is a difficult concept for children to master.

It is abstract—you can't see it, hear it or touch it.

Truly understanding time requires higher-order thinking skills.

You can build your child's sense of time if you:

- **Keep a calendar** in your child's room. Let her mark special days with stickers. Explain that calendars are read from left to right. Each morning, ask your child to cross off the day before. This helps her learn that the preceding day is over, and you have begun a new one.
- **Use time-related words** when looking at the calendar. "Let's put a sticker on *tomorrow*." "Avery came over *yesterday*." "You have

soccer on *Tuesdays*." "Valentine's Day is *February 14*." "*Today* is *Friday*."

- **Count how many days** there are until something fun. "Grandpa will be here in eight days!" Then make a paper chain with one link for each day. Hang it in a place you and your child will notice. Each night, have your child tear off one link. Explain to her that just as the chain is getting shorter, so is the amount of time until the special event.
- **Read books about time.** Ask the librarian to help you find books about days, weeks, months and even years. Try *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle and *Chicken Soup with Rice: A Book of Months* by Maurice Sendak.

Are you helping your preschooler explore the world?



Preschoolers are just beginning to explore the world, and they need their parents' help.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the following questions to see if you're helping your child experience new things:

___ 1. **Do you take** your child to new places? Think of destinations that will fascinate her, such as an airport or construction site.

___ 2. **Do you read** new books along with old favorites? Visit the library to find fresh, exciting stories.

___ 3. **Do you give your child** opportunities to meet new children and socialize by taking her to indoor and outdoor playgrounds?

___ 4. **Do you practice new skills**, such as playing catch, singing songs, moving to music and naming letters?

___ 5. **Do you encourage** your child to try new foods? Remember, it may take many tries before she likes them.

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're helping your child learn about the world around her. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Use the magic of music to teach your preschooler valuable skills



There is almost no limit to what your child can learn from music. Music can help him identify emotions—some songs sound happy, others sad, still others calm and relaxed. It can also improve language skills as he learns lyrics.

Music can even help your child identify patterns—a key math skill—as he learns to recognize when the chorus will appear in the song.

Here are suggestions for creating a musical world for your child:

- **Set aside at least one time** of the day when your child can expect to hear music. It could be on the car ride to school, during playtime or just before bed.
- **Give your child opportunities** to move to music. This is even

more fun for children if they have something to wave as they move. Long strips of fabric or scarves work well.

- **Blend music** with other creative activities. Your child could listen to music while he paints.
- **Expose your child to rhythm.** Show him how to clap his hands in time to the beat of songs.
- **Make up songs to sing** when doing activities around the house—when picking up toys or getting ready for bed.
- **Put your own words** to familiar tunes. Include your child's name in the song.
- **Help your child recognize** some of the instruments he hears. Show photographs of them.

Source: J.R. Bradford-Vernon, *How to Be Your Child's First Teacher: Insights for Parent Involvement*, Instructional Fair.

Routines and rules can boost your preschooler's attention span



Young children need time to play, explore, dream, create and just be kids. But they benefit most from doing these things within a day of lovingly structured routines and rules.

Routines and rules support school success and can strengthen your child's attention span. Here's how to get started:

- **Establish consistent routines.** Sleep, healthy meals and quiet play can all help your child pay attention to his best ability. Your child needs at least 11 hours of sleep. He needs predictable times for meals and snacks. He needs quiet time every day, free from loud noises and media.

- **Establish rules** and consequences. Your child's ability to follow rules will be a huge factor in his success in school and life. There is a link between following rules and paying attention. When a child follows rules, he is controlling his behavior. When a child can control his behavior, he is better able to pay attention and learn.
- **Practice transitions.** Give your child notice when it's time to switch activities. Prepare him for what comes next. This will ease any anxiety he may have. Being free of anxiety also strengthens your child's ability to focus.

Source: J.M. Healy, "Helping Children Learn to Pay Attention," *The Parents League of New York*, niscw.com/ec_attention_span.

Q: My four-year-old daughter does not seem as talkative as her sister was at this age. Should I be worried? What language skills are typical for a four-year-old?

Questions & Answers

A: Every child is unique, and that includes their language skills development. There are, however, some language milestones and skills to listen for.

Most four-year-olds:

- **Enjoy talking** and asking questions. Some have a hard time stopping once they get going.
 - **Use language** in different ways. They might like to sing and recite nursery rhymes in addition to using normal speech.
 - **Are usually understood** by people outside their own families. Grammar and usage aren't perfect, but people can understand what the child means to say without having to ask parents to clarify.
 - **Are starting to use various tenses.** "I jumped up high." Or, "I'm going to Drake's house."
 - **Can give basic information.** They can say their first and last names. They can tell you a sibling's name or the name of a favorite friend. They may even be able to say the name of their street or their address.
 - **Use some prepositions.** "My kitty is *under* the table." "I put my toys *in* the toy box."
- If your daughter is doing most of the above, her language skills are likely just fine. But it never hurts to ask an expert. Check in with her preschool teacher or her pediatrician. They can tell you if your child's language skills are within the normal range.

The Kindergarten Experience

Fun activities reinforce key school lessons



Students learn so many important things in kindergarten. Keep that learning going at home! Reinforce

what your child learns in school by planning activities related to reading, math, history, geography, science and more.

You can:

- **“Read and tell.”** With your child, choose a book and read it aloud. Afterward, have your child tell you the story. This is an effective way to check understanding and build thinking skills. Ask questions such as, “What happened next?” and “What would you have done?”
- **Play matching games.** Collect similar things of various shapes and colors. Then have your child match or sort them. “Let’s put all the black socks in one pile.” “Can you arrange the blocks from smallest to biggest?”
- **Discuss different countries.** Name a country you would like to visit. Find it on a map or a globe. Together, research the country’s climate and culture. Plan an imaginary trip, including meals and activities.
- **Observe nature.** Help your child make a list of things in nature that fascinate her, such as trees, insects, flowers and birds. Together, spend time looking at them, drawing them and describing them. Ask your child, “What do you see?” This simple question may lead to exciting discoveries!

Stay involved during the second half of the school year

Your child only has a few months left of her kindergarten year! By now, you have met your child’s teacher. You have had a productive parent-teacher conference. You have visited the classroom. But the next few months also offer good opportunities for working with your child’s school.

Plan to:

- **Find out about** your child’s school performance. This is especially important as first grade looms! Ask her teacher about literacy skills, math and social skills. Also ask, “What should my child work on for success in first grade?”
- **Look for opportunities** to volunteer. This time of year is especially busy for teachers as



they work to incorporate special activities and prepare students for next year. Ask your child’s teacher how you can help.

- **Be there for your child.** Spring often brings presentations, concerts and other activities parents are invited to. Make an effort to attend whenever you can.

Social skills are essential for continued kindergarten success



Your child’s ability to get along with teachers and classmates influences his learning and his overall experience in school. According to kindergarten teachers, children need support from home to continue building important social skills, such as:

- **Recognizing authority.** Your child must follow rules at home and at school. Review the school rules together.
- **Sharing.** In school, students share everything from crayons to blocks to books. At home, practice sharing with others.
- **Helping.** Expect your child to pitch in with age-appropriate tasks at home, such as setting the table.
- **Staying in control.** Frustration and anger are tough feelings to manage. Teach your child to express himself with appropriate words.
- **Using names.** Role-play some situations, such as introducing himself to a new classmate. “Hi, I’m Jake. What’s your name?”
- **Communicating.** Spend plenty of time talking with your child. Ask about school and listen attentively.