

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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John I. Dawes Early Learning Center

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KID BITS



Generosity feels good

Inspire your child to give to others by pointing out what happens when she is generous. If she gives her cousin a coat she has outgrown, you might say, “This coat will keep Molly nice and warm this winter.” Soon she’ll begin to notice the results on her own. (“My little brother is so happy I gave him my toy!”)

Hear the rhyme

Classic nursery rhymes boost your youngster’s literacy skills by calling his attention to sounds in words. Read some to him from a library book or website, then reread—this time replacing a word with a different rhyming word. *Example:* “Jack and Jill went up the *spill* to fetch a pail of water.” Can he catch and fix your “mistake”?

“Will you play with me?”

Your little bundle of energy wants to play, but you’re tired after a long day. Now what? You might pretend to order pizza from her restaurant—she can make it out of play dough and deliver it to you. Or offer to be her audience while she puts on a show.

Worth quoting

“Today a reader, tomorrow a leader.”
Margaret Fuller

Just for fun

Q: What’s black, white, and green?

A: A seasick penguin.



Number of the day

“I have 8 grapes on my plate.”
“Look—it’s 8 o’clock!” Have your youngster pick a number to explore each day. Then, use it to help him develop number sense—the ability to understand and use numbers.

Spot it

Ask your child to point out his number of the day wherever he sees it. For instance, if today’s number is 2, he might notice 2 on a license plate (LSJ492). Suggest that he carry a small notebook and pencil and make a tally mark each time he spots the number. At the end of the day, he can count the tally marks to see how many times he saw his number.

Count groups

When your youngster counts, he is learning that each number stands for a specific amount. Have him count people or objects that equal the number of the day. If the number is 5, he could count 5 ants crawling on the ground, 5



people around your dinner table, or 5 bushes in your yard.

Play

Fit the number of the day into your child’s playtime. If he’s drawing, and the number is 7, you might ask him to give his monster 7 eyes. Or when he plays with his railroad track, tell him to show you 7 trains. *Idea:* Have him separate the 7 trains into groups to see what numbers make up 7 (for instance, 5 trains + 2 trains or 3 trains + 4 trains).♥

Healthy meals fuel learning

Helping you plan nutritious meals, shop for ingredients, and cook teaches your child about healthy eating. Here’s how to involve her in each step.

1. Plan. Together, discuss healthy meals you will cook this week. Your youngster can draw the foods for each day’s menu on a sheet of paper to post on the fridge.

2. Shop. Use your child’s menus to make a shopping list together. Let her add the items to your grocery cart (even an online cart!) and check them off your list.

3. Cook. Give your youngster jobs like finding and measuring ingredients, tearing lettuce for a salad, and spreading sauce on pizza dough.♥



Go, team!

Family projects let you bond with your child while teaching her to be part of a team. Try these activities.

Paint a mural. Making art can be even more rewarding when your family uses teamwork. Tape together several sheets of poster board or construction paper to create a large canvas. Agree on a topic for your mural—will you draw a fairy tale kingdom, a rain forest scene, or an undersea world? Now each person can decide what to add. You



and your youngster might work on a castle while her little brother paints rolling green hills in the background.

Create a hideaway. Your child will see that she can make a bigger fort if everyone works together. Gather sheets and blankets, and brainstorm ideas. Your youngster may suggest using the back of the couch to hold up one side. And you might propose draping a blanket over a card table to make a “tunnel” between sections. As you build, communicate with each other: “I’ll hold this side of the sheet while you get heavy books to put on it.” Celebrate your teamwork by hanging out in your fort.♥



Q & A Little ones and current events

Q: We try to shield our daughter from all the scary stuff in the news these days, but she overhears things sometimes. What should we do?

A: You’re right to be careful about what your child hears and sees. Little ones can be frightened by scary images or words on the radio or TV—without understanding exactly what’s going on.



Try to watch and discuss the news when your daughter isn’t home or is asleep. Or listen in the car when she’s not with you, or just read the news silently.

If your child asks questions about the pandemic or another worrisome topic, offer a calm, simple explanation. You might say, “Yes, Grandma and Grandpa are still staying home to be healthy,” and then remind her of steps you take to keep *her* safe.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER I’m an author

Creating these mini homemade books will give your youngster early writing practice and help him see himself as an author.

Materials: scissors, paper, pencil, crayons or markers, stapler



Cut paper into fourths to make pages for his books. Together, brainstorm simple books he could write, and make a list of ideas. *Examples:* book of colors, alphabet book, counting book, animal “encyclopedia.”

Now your child can draw pictures on separate pages. Maybe he will draw something of a different color (red apple, yellow sun, green dragon) on every page. If he makes an animal encyclopedia, he might fill the pages with his favorite animals (dog, koala, dolphin). Help your youngster label each picture—he could say the words and write letters for the sounds he hears.

Finally, he can make a cover with a title and his name as the author. Staple the pages together, and invite him to read his book to the whole family and to himself at bedtime.♥

Teachers ♥ volunteers

Volunteering with your child’s school may look different this year, but his teacher will still appreciate your help. Consider these ideas.

1. Ask the teacher what she needs, and choose a job that’s a good fit for you.

If you’re tech-savvy, for instance, maybe you could work on the class website. Share your ideas, too. You might offer to do a curbside pickup at the public

library or send in cleaned recyclables for craft projects.

2. Recruit more volunteers. Many parents would be happy to help but don’t know where to start or think it’s not possible this year. Ask the teacher if she’d like you to email other parents and suggest ways they can volunteer if they are able. You’ll likely find parents with a variety of skills and interests that the teacher could use.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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