

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Arroyo Grande United Methodist Children's Center
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KID BITS



Flashlight reading

Try this fun twist on bed-time reading. In a dark room (or outside after sunset), snuggle up and read stories by flashlight. Let your child shine the light on the words while you read. *Idea:* Choose a "scary" story like *The Berenstain Bears and the Spooky Old Tree* (Stan and Jan Berenstain).

Leaving toys at home

If your youngster frequently asks to take toys to school, have him decorate a cardboard "waiting" box. He can put special toys inside so they'll be ready for him to play with when he gets home.

My phone number

Your child may find it easier to memorize her phone number if she sings it to a familiar tune like the alphabet song. Decide if she needs to learn a cell or home phone number or both. Then, she can practice dialing while she sings.

Worth quoting

"Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere."
Chinese proverb

Just for fun

Q: What coat is only put on when it's wet?

A: A coat of paint.



I see, I think, I know

At school, your youngster is learning all about her world. Keep the excitement going at home by encouraging her to share observations, ideas, and discoveries. Try these suggestions.

I see ...

Ask your child to find examples of what she's learning at school. This will help her become more observant and connect her studies to real life. During a unit on jobs, for instance, have her look for workers at the supermarket (cashier, baker) or bank (teller, security guard). If she's learning about rules, she can search for rules posted in your community ("No Parking," "Keep your dog on a leash").

I think ...

Give your youngster opportunities to express opinions and draw conclusions. These thinking skills are important for making decisions, understanding stories, and exploring science. For example, ask her how your family should spend Saturday afternoon or what the squirrels in your backyard are doing. Then, encourage her to explain her thoughts ("I think the squirrels are looking for food because I saw acorns in their cheeks").

"What if...?"

A new school year brings new situations for your child. With these ideas, he'll feel more confident about tackling anything that comes his way.

- "Will the kids like me?" At home, role-play making new friends. You might pretend to be another child and say something like, "Hi. My name is Chloe. What's your name?"
- "How will I do my work?" Reassure your youngster that it's okay to ask for help. His teacher can show him how to hold scissors or write his name, for example.
- "What if I have to use the bathroom?" Remind your child to go to the bathroom before school and during class breaks. Also, he should tell the teacher right away if he needs to go at other times. ♥



I know ...

Let your child write or draw about what she learns. She could start a notebook for recording discoveries ("Up and down are opposites"). Or have her make a "knowledge chain." Help her write each fact on a two-by-six-inch strip of construction paper. Then, tape the ends of each strip together to make a loop through the previous link.

Tip: Little ones need time to form thoughts and put them into words. When you ask your child a question, try waiting quietly for a few seconds so she can come up with an answer. ♥



Getting to know the teacher

Your youngster will spend a lot of time with his teacher this year. When you work together with her, you show him that you're interested in this important part of his life. Here are ways to develop a strong partnership from the start:

- Attend school events such as open house and back-to-school night. Introduce yourself to the teacher



and let her know you look forward to helping your child do well.

- Read information that comes home, and talk to your youngster about it. For example, discuss an upcoming field trip to an apple orchard or explain that his teacher is asking families to send in cardboard boxes for classroom projects.

Tip: Be sure to return paperwork (permission slips, picture forms) as soon as possible.

- Send the teacher occasional notes or emails to share information or ask questions. Tell her what your child likes about school. ("Blake loves listening to audiobooks.") Also, mention any concerns so that the two of you can address them right away. ("Does Blake wear his glasses all day?")♥

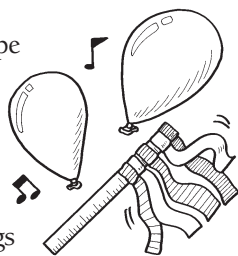
ACTIVITY CORNER

Creative movement

Does your child like to wiggle, dance, and sway? Moving to music can build her coordination and imagination. Try these ideas.

Musical balloons. Blow up two or more balloons. Put on upbeat music and try to keep the balloons in the air. Each time the music stops, catch the balloons and hold them still.

Rainbow dance. Tape multi-colored crepe paper streamers to a ruler. Your youngster can hold the ruler and dance while she sings her favorite songs.



Show her how to wave it quickly back and forth, make large circles with the streamers in the air, or slowly drag the streamers across the floor.

Falling leaves. Play soft music, and suggest that you and your child pretend to be autumn leaves. Ask her to imagine what it feels like to float gently through the air to the ground. You might stretch out your arms and wave them as you twirl and sink to your knees.♥



Q & A

Happy good-byes

Q: My son cries when I drop him off at school. What should I do?

A: It's common for youngsters to shed a few tears at the beginning of the school year. The good news is that your child is probably just fine once he's involved with a classroom activity.

Talk with your son's teacher. She may suggest that you help him find something to do before you leave him there. Once he's playing, say good-bye cheerfully and let him know you'll see him when school is over. You might also tape a family photo inside his school bag. As he gets used to being away from you and discovers how much fun he has at school, he probably won't cry.

Note: If your child is still crying after a couple weeks, consider scheduling a conference with his teacher or school counselor.♥

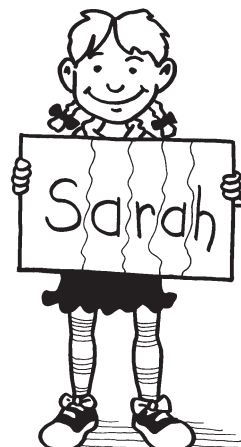


PARENT TO PARENT

That's my name!

My daughter has learned to read and write her first word: "Sarah." When she started school this year, the teacher sent home a list of ideas to help her recognize her name—and the suggestions worked!

For example, I wrote her name in pencil and let her use a different-colored marker to trace each letter as she said it out loud: "S-a-r-a-h." We also made a name puzzle. She printed her name on cardboard and drew squiggly lines between the letters. I cut them apart, and she put the puzzle back together.



Her favorite activity is listening to stories about characters named Sarah. At the library, we checked out *Sarah's Story* by Bill Harley and *Sarah's Room* by Doris Orgel. She loves pointing to her name as I read.

Now Sarah is learning to read other names in our family. She made puzzles for her sisters, and she wants to find library books with their names, too.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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