

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

February 2021

Marion County Schools

Pre-K Program

KID BITS



“Read” social cues

This activity helps your child use expressions, gestures, and tone to pick up on social cues. Choose a phrase (“I’m a little teapot”), and take turns saying it in different ways (excited, tired, bored). Your youngster might yawn and rub his eyes to be a *tired* little teapot. Or to show excitement, you could jump up and down as you say the words.

Just say yes!

When you’re tempted to say no to your child, consider whether there’s a way to say yes instead. If she jumps in a puddle in her nice shoes, you could say, “Let’s put on your rain boots so you can splash!” She’ll be more positive and cheerful, and when you do need to say no for safety reasons, it will have more meaning.

Ready for homework

Whether or not your youngster has real homework yet, you can start building good homework habits now. Consider setting aside 10–15 minutes each day for him to sit at the kitchen table and work on art projects or do jigsaw puzzles. You’ll set the stage for success as he gets older.

Worth quoting

“Some people look for a beautiful place. Others make a place beautiful.” *Hazrat Inayat Khan*

Just for fun



Cashier: Would you like your milk in a bag?

Shopper: No, you can leave it in the carton.

Developing fine motor skills

Little fingers need to be strong and coordinated to accomplish all the jobs they do, from writing and drawing to zipping and buttoning. These playful activities will give your child’s fingers a workout.



Paint-n-peel

Have your little one make a design on paper by crisscrossing strips of removable tape (like painter’s tape) on the page. When she’s finished, she can paint over the whole page. Wait for it to dry, then have her peel off the tape to reveal the design left behind.

Pipe cleaner creatures

Invite your child to twist pipe cleaners together to create people and animal figures. Then, she can thread beads on the ends to make heads, hands, and feet. Show her how to bend the ends of the pipe cleaners around the beads to keep them in place.

Gator grab

Let your youngster pretend a pair of tongs is an alligator and use it to fish small toys one at a time out of a bin or bucket. How many toys can she pick up without dropping any?

Smiley face race

Start with a blank sheet of paper and give each player a different-colored crayon. Take turns adding a smiley face to the page. Faces can be any size, but they can’t overlap another smiley. Keep adding until the paper is full. The last person to fit a smiley on the page wins.♥

I love you THIS much!

Share a little love and affection with your youngster each day. You’ll boost his confidence, make him feel secure, and build stronger parent-child bonds. Try these ideas:

- Sing songs that express your love for him, such as “You Are My Sunshine.”
- Share favorite memories of your child. For instance, you might tell about the day he was born or where he took his first steps.
- Take turns adding a fun ending to “I love you ____.” *Examples:* “to infinity and beyond,” “no matter what.”
- Leave little love notes for your youngster, perhaps on the bathroom mirror, under his pillow, or beside his place setting on the table.♥



Steps toward responsibility

Giving your child responsibilities while he's little helps him grow into a responsible person. Get started with these tips.

Put him in charge. Together find a few “big kid jobs” that your youngster can do, and make them his responsibility. It could be his job to pick out his pajamas and towel for his bath and then put away his bath toys afterward, for example. Add some simple daily chores, too. He might be



responsible for wiping down the table after dinner and feeding the family goldfish.

Help him keep track. Part of being responsible is remembering to do things you're supposed to do. Together, create a reminder board to lay on his nightstand. Take a photo of him doing each job (brushing his teeth, tidying his room). He can glue the pictures in rows on a sheet of paper. As he completes a task each day, let him cover the photo with a checker or

bottle cap. He'll be able to see what he has done and what remains. At the end of the day, he could clear the board so he can start fresh tomorrow.♥



Q & A

Ahh ... a good night's sleep

Q: My child often has trouble falling asleep. Sometimes he even wakes and calls me in the night. What should I do?

A: Nighttime struggles are common, but you can use simple strategies to overcome them.

First, set aside at least 1 hour for winding down each night. Use the time for quiet, screen-free activities like reading or chatting. And try to end the night on a positive note—especially if it has been a challenging day—by pointing out good things that happened.

If your child calls to you in the night, keep your visit short and offer things he can use to comfort himself, like a night-light or a soft toy to snuggle.



He'll have an easier time learning to get back to sleep on his own if you avoid sitting with him until he falls asleep.

Note: Consult his pediatrician if his sleep issues persist or are worrisome.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Ice cube science

Can your youngster keep ice from melting? Help her try this experiment to see what material works best to protect ice cubes.

Let your child choose different materials (paper towel, washcloth, aluminum foil) that she thinks will help ice stay cold. She could lay the materials on a cookie sheet and wrap an ice cube in each one.

Now ask your youngster to predict which one will melt the least and the most. After 10 minutes, she can unwrap the cubes and compare them. Which one is biggest (melted the least)? Smallest (melted the most)? Were her predictions accurate?

Explain that some materials are better *insulators*. They help keep things the same temperature. For instance, a cooler helps food stay cold. Can she think of more examples?♥



Creative sparks

Nurture your child's creativity to help her develop critical thinking skills she'll use in every school subject. Here's how.

Where?

Find places where your youngster's imagination can flourish. Perhaps she could use a corner of the garage for messy projects or set up an “exploration station” in the backyard for discovering nature.

When?

Make sure each day has free time for “anything can happen” play. Let your little one turn

on her imagination and create her very own games and activities. She might combine two favorite board games to invent a brand-new game.

What?

Provide unexpected “toys.” Anyone who has ever watched a child pretend a stick is a light saber knows that many great playthings didn't start out as toys. Offer items like your old clothes for dress-up and empty containers (coffee canisters, plastic bottles) for playing store.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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