

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Mountain Brook Schools
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KID BITS

Visit the library

Build your youngster's love of reading by signing her up for a library card. Explain that it's a big responsibility! Together, find a safe place to keep books she checks out and write the due date on the calendar. Then, be sure to visit the library regularly so she can use her card.

Safe crossing

Keep your little one safe by teaching him three words to remember before crossing the street. 1. *Stop* at the curb. 2. *Link* hands with a grown-up. 3. *Look* both ways to see if the street is clear. Practice by saying, "Stop, link, look" each time you cross. *Tip:* At stoplights, let him press the button to cross, and show him how to wait for the signal.

Building friendships

Here's a fun way to teach your child to value and nurture friendships. Have her write a thank-you note to a friend. Let her draw a picture of the friend, and help her write something she likes about the person underneath. *Example:* "I love playing dress-up with you. Thanks for being my friend."

Worth quoting

"If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere." *Vincent van Gogh*

Just for fun

Q: What's black, white, and pink all over?

A: An embarrassed zebra.



The roots of respect

Does your child know what respect is? You can try strategies like these to help him understand what respect feels like, looks like, and sounds like. He'll learn to treat others the way he'd like to be treated.

Feels like...

Talk about people you respect, and explain why you feel that way. Perhaps you respect your youngster's grandparents because they have worked hard for many years. Then, ask your child who he respects. He might say his teacher because she knows a lot.

Looks like...

When you read to your youngster, have him be on the lookout for respectful people. Maybe he'll see a knight bowing to a queen in a fairy tale or an athlete shaking hands with an opponent in a biography. *Idea:* Suggest that your child draw a picture of himself being respectful. For example, he shows respect by



standing for the national anthem at sporting events (respect for country) or moving a turtle to the side of the driveway (respect for nature).

Sounds like...

You are your youngster's best example—and the one he's most likely to imitate. Make a point of using polite words like *please*, *thank you*, and *excuse me*, and encourage him to do the same. Try to remind him quietly when he forgets. He will hear you showing respect for him even when he makes a mistake. ♥

Strengthen little fingers

These hands-on activities can help your youngster develop the muscles she uses for handwriting, tying shoes, and other fine-motor tasks:

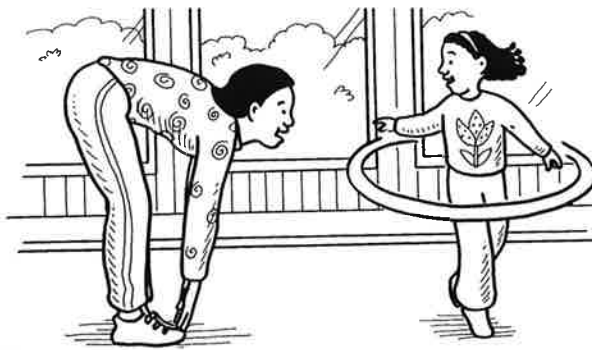
- Let her thread beads onto pipe cleaners to make bracelets and rings.
- Have her count a handful of pennies and put them in piles of 5 or 10.
- String a piece of yarn between two chairs. Your child could use clothespins or binder clips to hang doll clothes on her "clothesline."
- Show her how to roll clay into small balls. Then, she can connect the balls with toothpicks to build a sculpture. ♥



S-t-r-e-t-c-h your child's attention

Youngsters often like to zoom from one activity to the next. But as your child gets older, a longer attention span will help her learn in school. You can help increase her ability to focus with these ideas.

Build up gradually. As a rule of thumb, your child should be able to focus for the number of minutes matching her age plus one minute. Start there (have a



4-year-old work on putting away toys for 5 minutes), and increase a minute at a time as she seems ready.

Look and listen. Turn everyday activities into tasks that require concentration. In the car, you might ask her to look for words on signs that start with the first letter in her name. Or have her listen for a

particular word or phrase in a song on the radio and clap each time she hears it.

Make it a game. Work together to make up a series of movements, adding a new one on each turn. For instance, you could begin by touching your toes. Then, your youngster has to touch her toes and add another motion, like spinning around. She'll need to pay close attention to remember the sequence of movements.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

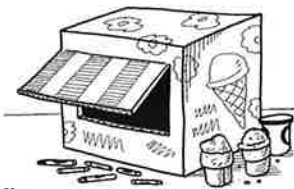
It's a bus! It's a store! It's a box!

With crayons and imagination, a large cardboard box can become anything! Here's how.

1. Decide. Together, think of different things the box could be (ice cream shop, fire station). Let your child pick the idea he likes best.

2. Decorate.

Have him use crayons to color the box. For an ice cream shop, help him cut out a window where customers place orders. Then, he could draw cones and sundaes with different flavors and toppings. If he's making a fire station, he might draw a garage door for the fire truck and windows with firefighters looking out.



3. Play. Your youngster can use his creation for pretend play. He could make ice cream treats out of play dough while you pretend to be a customer. Or his toy fire truck might rush from his fire station to put out a big fire.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

How to adapt to change

We moved over the summer, and my children had to change schools. My daughter, Sara, is doing great, but my son, Curtis, tends to struggle with new situations. The school counselor gave me some ideas for helping Curtis to adjust.

First, she said to let Curtis make choices when possible, like what to wear to school or what to eat for breakfast, so he feels in control. To make him feel connected to people around him, she suggested we visit our new neighborhood playground where he can see kids from his new school.

The counselor also told me to help Curtis have a positive attitude about changes. When he says he misses his old school, I let him know I understand. I tell him I miss my old job, but I'm finding things I like about my new one. Then, I encourage him to look for things he likes at his new school, too.♥



Q & A

Organized paperwork

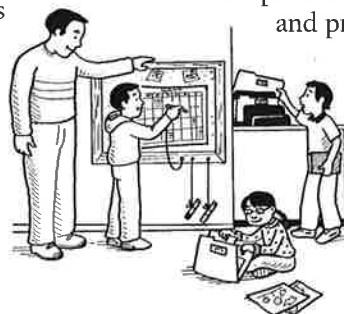
Q: My youngest child just started kindergarten, and now I have three kids in school. How can I keep track of activities, appointments, and homework for all of them?

A: Staying on top of things can be a challenge with just one child. For more than one, organization is even more important.

First, have an after-school check-in. Choose a set time each day, like after dinner, to check backpacks and

sort papers. Label a folder for each youngster, and use it to hold papers you want to keep, such as report cards or special artwork.

A large calendar and a handful of colored pens can make managing activities and projects easier. Assign each child a different-colored pen. Help them put their important dates on the calendar using their color ink. You'll be able to tell at a glance what is happening when—and so will they!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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