

Learning Doesn't Just Happen in the Classroom:

What Can I As A Parent to Teach My Kindergarten-Aged Child This Summer?

Following are some suggestions of ways that parents can incorporate natural teaching opportunities into daily activities.

Language/Communication activities

- Increase your child's vocabulary. Teach him new words as you encounter them in your daily activities...*That's a big rock. Do you know another word for big? Gigantic! That's a gigantic rock!*
- Read to your child daily if possible. Let your child choose the book. Read with expression! Change your voice with the characters to make reading interesting.
- Talk about the book. Ask open-ended questions (not yes/no answers). *What do you think will happen next? Why do you think she did that?*
- Let your child tell the story from the pictures. It doesn't have to be accurate. Let him use his imagination!
- Using plastic letters or refrigerator magnets, spell your child's name. Next, see if she can do it on her own.
- When the weather is warm, help your child write the letters of his name in the sandbox or in the dirt. For an inside activity, spread shaving cream on the table or on a cookie sheet instead.
- Look for letters and words in your everyday environment that your child knows. e.g., cereal boxes, television, magazines, at the grocery store, etc.
- Let your child see you reading. Don't worry if it's not a novel! Magazines, newspapers, anything in print counts.
- Practice letter sounds with your child. *Your name is David. David starts with a "d-d-d" sound. That is a cow. Cow begins with the "c-c-c" sound.*

Math Activities

- Work simple puzzles together.
- Practice naming shapes. Shape-sorting toys/games are excellent for this, but homemade ones are just as effective.
- Look for shapes everywhere you go – around the house (*the door is a rectangle*), at the grocery store (*the wheels on the cart are circles*), at grandma's house (*the sandwich halves are triangles*).
- When setting the table for a meal, turn it into a math lesson. Ask your child...*How many people will be eating? How many plates, forks, cups, etc. will we need?* Practice counting each item as you set it on the table.
- Practice measuring and sequencing by letting your child help with simple cooking activities. She can measure the amount of milk needed for muffins. He can count out two eggs for the pancake mix. Let your child help you stir the batter for the brownies you are making. When you are finished, ask your child...*What did we do first? Next? Last?*
- After you get home from the grocery, ask your child to help put things away. Tell your child...*Find all the cans of green beans, corn, peaches, etc., that are the same. Ask him...Why are the apples and pears different?*

Social/Emotional Activities

- When your child becomes angry or upset, ask her...*Why do you feel like that? What would make you feel better?*
- Look at family photos or pictures in a book or magazine with your child. Talk about what is happening in the picture and ask your child questions...*How is that person feeling? Why do you think he feels like that?*
- Allow your child to help with household chores such as the laundry. Give her simple directions to follow...*Put the dirty clothes in the basket. Pour the detergent into the washer.*

- Once your child is able to follow single directions successfully, give him two-step directions to follow...*Take the clothes out of the dryer and put them in the basket. Fold the towel and put it in the drawer.*
- Give your child plenty of opportunities to play with other children her age. Visit friends, neighbors and family for play dates. Take your son to the park or to the mall play area.
- Help your child learn conflict resolution. When a situation arises, remain calm and place yourself on the children's level. Give each child a chance to answer...*"What is the problem?" "How can we solve the problem?"* Allow the children to find an acceptable solution. Guide them in the process but do not intervene unless absolutely necessary.
- Provide a warm, nurturing environment for your child. Give him lots of hugs and encouraging words. *You did a very good job picking up your toys! I'm proud of you for dressing yourself this morning!* Acknowledging even her small accomplishments will help her develop a positive self-identity and sense of self-worth.

Physical Activities

- Coloring builds fine-motor skills that are essential when your child later learns to write. Provide your child with a variety of crayons, markers and other art supplies. Praise your child's work...*I love the colors you used for the flowers! You drew a square!* Ask about what is happening...*Tell me what the little girl is doing.*
- Allow your child to use a pair of children's safety scissors. Practice snipping the paper, cutting along a straight line or even drawing and cutting out shapes. Praise her efforts, even if the results are not perfect...*You are doing a good job holding your scissors! You cut on the line! Awesome!!*
- Roll a rubber ball toward your child and ask her to kick it. Try it several times and see how far she can kick it.
- Toss a rubber ball back and forth out in the yard. Stand fairly close to allow your child some successful catches or bounce the ball and have her catch after the bounce. Praise his efforts and give plenty of encouragement...*Good catch! Oops, let's try again!*
- Allow your child to practice walking up and down stairs. Teach her to alternate her feet as she climbs up and down.
- Give your child the opportunity to ride a tricycle or a small bike with training wheels. Coordinating his feet to push the trike will take some practice. Give your child plenty of encouragement...*You're doing a great job pedaling! What strong muscles you have!*
- Take your child to a park or playground. Running, jumping and climbing in a safe environment will help your child build strong muscles and develop good balance and coordination.