



## Born Learning Tips: Birth to 8 Months

The Child Care Council of Westchester Inc. is pleased to partner with United Way of Westchester and Putnam, Inc. on *Born Learning*, an innovative public engagement campaign that helps parents, caregivers and communities create quality early learning opportunities for young children.

*Born Learning* is designed as a tool for long-lasting community change that supports young children. It has three cornerstones:

- **Awareness:** Providing important information about how young children learn
- **Education:** Providing easy, fun action steps that parents, grandparents and caregivers can use very day
- **Action:** Providing a visible platform for public policy and action

The goal of *Born Learning* is to inspire everyone who impacts young children to make the best possible decision to boost school readiness. *Born Learning* provides the tools to make long-lasting community change.

## Creating Regular Routines

### Connection to learning

Routines work wonders. Creating regular routines helps your child learn what to expect at various times. It is easy to establish regular routines with everyday activities such as feeding, sleeping, bathing and playtime. Regular routines provide comfort to children, help them feel safe and secure, and make being a parent a little easier. Here are some ways to create regular routines for young children:

### For your young baby (birth to 8 months)

Talk to your baby as you do something so they hear your words. When getting your infant ready for bed, tell him/her that "first we wash up and change your diaper. Then, we change into pajamas." Your bedtime routine may also include singing a song, playing with a mobile, reading a book and/or hugging and kissing goodnight.

## Learning on the Go - Traveling in the Car

### Connection to learning

Are we there yet? Use the time in the car to enhance your child's natural curiosity and find ways to interact and connect with your child. What interests your child on car trips? Is it looking for signs that you are almost home or it is talking while you are together? Is it repeating new or silly words or sounds? Is it saying nursery rhymes, singing or watching for when the traffic lights change? Rather than finding toys to amuse and distract your child, use driving time to connect and enjoy being together. Here are some ways to do that:

### For your young baby (birth to 8 months)

Use car travel as a time to sing. Play a tape or CD or sing songs you know or love. You can also make up songs about what you are seeing along the road, or sing along with the radio. Singing about everyday activities helps children enjoy the sounds of language, and helps babies begin to associate words with good experiences. Singing also creates a sense of togetherness.



## Making the Most of Meal Times

### Connection to learning

Studies show that meals are one of the most important times to be together as a family. Research on literacy development showed that families who interacted with each other at meal times were more likely to have children with better literacy skills in the school-age years. Family mealtime interaction took place when caregivers extended children's interests, which helped children use language to analyze, sequence, and predict while helping children appreciate the joy of language.

### For your young baby (birth to 8 months)

Give your baby ordinary kitchen objects, such as plastic cups or wooden spoons, to play with while you are preparing a meal. Make up a silly song about the food you are making as he/she plays and makes 'music'. Be sure to name the foods you are eating as well as the foods your baby loves to eat.

## Celebrate Spring: Talk About It!

### Connection to learning

Young children learn with all their senses: sight, smell, hearing, touch and taste. Spring begs us to share its delights with children - to help them see yellow daffodils & purple crocuses, smell lilacs, feel soft new grass, and listen to robins chirping. Sharing words about spring is a gift you give to your child.

### For your young baby (birth to 8 months)

Take your baby for a nature walk in a park, your back yard, or down a leafy block. If possible, put him/her in a baby sling facing out. Talk about what your baby sees, hears, smells, feels - the new buds and leaves on bushes and trees, birds singing, the sweet smell of flowers, the warm sun on skin.

## Taking a Walk

### Connection to learning

Taking a walk is good exercise for you and your child, plus it can also be a special time together. Focus on the present moment and being with your child, not on all of the things you have to do when you get back. Look at the walk through your child's eyes. How might a bug or a big crack in the sidewalk look to your child? What sounds do cars or birds make? Is the sun shining? Is it cloudy, warm or cold?

### For your young baby (birth to 8 months)

Name things that your baby looks at or is interested in - from street and business signs, to animals, flowers, bugs, cars, trucks, people or other sights. Take time to let your baby watch things until his or her interest shifts. Notice how intently your baby studies things.

## Activities to Promote Literacy

### Connection to learning

Talking and listening, and reading and writing provide a lifetime of enjoyment. Catching up with family and friends through phone calls or letters, talking about your day with a loved one, and reading a good book or daily newspaper all bring pleasure to our lives. Unfortunately, current research suggests that young children may not be having the early learning experiences they need to become skilled with the tools of literacy: talking and listening, and reading and writing. All of the below activities will inspire children's delight and mastery in the tools of literacy.

### For your young baby (birth to 8 months)



The development of language skills begins at birth. Infants might not be able to say what they are interested in, so you must observe and pay careful attention to where children look, reach and point. These actions communicate your infant's interests, likes and dislikes. Follow your infant's gaze and talk specifically about what s/he is looking at. This helps strengthen your baby's communication experience as s/he will experience joy and associate these moments with feelings of confidence and security. You will help your baby attach vocabulary to objects simply by pointing to them and naming them. Be sure to sing and talk often to your baby so s/he hears many words.

## **Wading Pool Play**

Note: This tip sheet is for families to use at home. Wading pools are not allowed in child care settings.

### **Connection to learning**

Besides being cool on a hot June day, water play is full of learning opportunities. You can give children new words as they play with water: wet/dry, empty/full, float/sink, etc. When you offer measuring cups and different sized bottles for children to empty and fill, you promote fine motor skills needed for writing.

Children can drown in 2" of water. Keep your eyes and your attention on water play at all times. NEVER leave a child alone.

### **For your young baby (birth to 8 months)**

To keep your tiny baby safe, hold him/her in your lap. Pour a little water on a shallow tray and let him/her pat and splash. To the tune of "Row, Row Your Boat," sing "Splash! Splash, Splash the water, gently down the stream, merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, you're my favorite dream!"

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

### **Connection to learning**

Take your child to visit the person or program where you'll be leaving him so the caregiver isn't a complete stranger. Never leave without telling your child. Always say goodbye, even though she may cry. This helps her trust you and become secure. Make up a "goodbye" routine you follow every day, such as a hug, then blown kisses. This helps your child know what to expect.

### **For your young baby (birth - 8 months)**

Your tiny baby is starting to recognize your voice thus it's even more important to say goodbye. Kiss her/him. Say "bye bye. I'll be back." Your loving words are comforting, and help her/him learn the sounds of language.

## **Helping Your Children Learn**

### **Connection to learning**

Helping your children learn is easy. Creating an environment that helps your child grow and explore can be an exciting time for both parent and child. Here are some ways to help make your environment conducive to helping your children learn.

### **For your young baby (birth - 8 months)**

Your tiny infant will taste, touch, look at, listen to and smell everything. Most objects will end up in the baby's mouth because that's where the most nerve endings are. Ensure that everything you give the infant to learn from and play with is safe for her to put in her mouth, bang, push and throw. Be sure to talk to your baby, as hearing language helps her/him know your voice, learn sounds and feel safe.

## **Making Grocery Shopping Fun**



### **Connection to learning**

Ensuring you and your child are prepared and ready for that shopping trip helps both of you have a more enjoyable time. Here are some ways to help make your trip to the grocery store fun and a learning opportunity for your child. When grocery shopping with children of all ages, be sure you bring a toy or book that will keep your child busy and learning while you shop. Plan trips when your child is rested and not hungry.

### **For your young baby (birth to 8 months)**

Make the most of routines. Do things in order when you get to the store, and explain each step to your infant. Say "First we will find a grocery cart. Then we will look for some bananas."

## **Increasing Literacy Skills with Children**

### **Connection to learning**

Good literacy beginnings help to ensure children's later success as readers and writers. Literacy can include the creation of trusting relationships, two-way communication, exploration and play to figure out how things work, as well as the enjoyment of stories, books, rhymes, and songs. Children who hear lots of stories become the best readers. Read and talk to your children every day. Children who hear lots of words have an easier time learning how to read.

### **For your young baby (birth to 8 months)**

Talk with your infant every single day when they eat, play and when you change their diapers. Your infant will learn to make and recognize the sounds of speech. Talking with your infant in a leisurely, intimate setting gives your child a pleasurable experience that will have a lasting impression on her/him.

## **Holiday Stress Management**

### **Connection to learning**

Maintaining schedules at home and in programs is a tough balancing act that becomes even tougher at holiday time when all the excitement can have a negative impact on children. If staff and/or parents are experiencing an increase in stress, then so are the children. Children reflect the mood of the classroom/household and the ideas and values presented to them. If the staff/parents are spinning out of control, the kids will spin out of control, too. Here are some ways to emphasize the fun and enjoyment holidays can bring while maintaining normalcy for young children.

### **For your young baby (birth to 8 months)**

Preserve and protect routines. Stick to your normal routine as much as possible. It's often hard to take time out of busy holiday preparations, but a walk, a trip to a playground or play area, or whatever else you usually do with your infant each day can be a great stress reducer. Talk with your infant about the holiday and the family traditions and rituals that you follow. Family traditions are what we recall as adults - not the gifts we got. Help your infant know what traditions the holiday season brings by creating wonderful, stress-free memories that they will carry with them for a lifetime and pass on to their own children someday.