



Born Learning Tips: Preschooler

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 preschooler

Words that show transition help with the establishment of regular routines. Say "In five minutes, we will go out, so we must clean up your toys. After the toys are put away, we will get ready to put our coats on." Your child learns what to expect and that there is an order to various routines.

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 preschooler

Use car time to talk about your child's day. Ask specific questions ("Did you draw in preschool?" or "Did you eat a cheese sandwich?") rather than general ones ("How was your day?") because they are easier for young children to answer. Help your child talk about past experiences to enhance memory. Talk with your child about where you are going in the future ("We are going to the market on the way home") to help him or her develop thinking and planning skills.



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 preschooler

Ask your child to tell you a story about their day or tell them a story about yours during mealtime. They should look forward to telling you about their day. Create family traditions at meal times, such as a song that you always sing or a game like "I Spy" that you always play. Ensure your child has the opportunity to talk, listen and take turns.

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 preschooler

Play "I spy with my little eye" using natural things you see, hear and smell. "I spy with my little eye something purple." "I smell with my little nose something sweet." (lilacs) Let your child take a turn and you guess.

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 preschooler

Ask questions about what you see on your walk that seems to interest your child. These questions can include the past, present and future. For example, if you and your preschooler see a dog, ask if he or she remembers seeing that dog before, what the dog is doing, or what they think the dog might do if the dog were bigger or smaller, or faster or slower. Make up rhymes or sing marches as your walk. Try walking and singing or chanting fast, then slow.

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 preschooler

Your preschool child is ready to engage in pretend play full of detail, with narrative, sequencing and chronology. There is the capacity to dictate stories to you as they start to recognize word patterns. Be sure to sing songs, make up stories and poems, rhymes and introduce new words on a daily basis.

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 preschooler

Give your preschooler a container of different household objects - plastic and metal spoons, bottle caps, soap dishes, corks, a small pot. Before putting them in the water, ask, "I wonder what will sink and what will float?"

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 preschooler

3s and 4s can have a hard time separating, especially in new situations. Get your child a "goodbye notebook." Every day, ask "What do you want me to write?" Give suggestions at first, like "Mommy loves me," or "Mommy will pick me up after nap."

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 preschooler

3s and 4s enjoy role playing and make-believe play. They respond well to praise and encouragement. Provide opportunities for children to talk about their own work and develop pride in their accomplishments. While on walks or in the car, create opportunities to have conversations with your preschooler, further adding to their vocabulary and learning about thinking and reasoning.

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 preschooler

Set up a signal that it is time to go. Let your child hold your wallet or a card at the checkout. Older children can help unload items from your cart. By creating routines, you help your child to know what will happen at the store. Knowing what to expect helps your child feel safe and secure.

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 preschooler

Your child is more than ready to turn pages, recognize some letters and words and know that stories and rhymes and songs are fun. Select a topic and let your child make up and tell you a story. This uses vocabulary and imagination and will delight your child.

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 preschooler

De-emphasize television. Much holiday programming seems to be designed to get children all worked up about the holidays. Choose special holiday programs that you can watch together as a family. Limit the amount of time kids play video games and encourage physical activity and interaction with peers. Children who are experiencing some stress usually need more physical activity. Encourage your kids to bundle up and get outside to run around, play on the playground or toss a ball with friends.