



## Born Learning Tips: Toddler

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 toddler

Start establishing regular times for meals and going to bed. Create, for example, a regular routine of hand washing prior to all meals, and ensure there is quiet time before bed time to help your child calm down and relax. Your child will learn to anticipate.

## 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 toddler

If your toddler likes trucks, look for trucks as you drive along and see who can yell out "truck" first. Listen to what your toddler says and repeat his/her words, adding new words or rhyming with words he/she says. The games help children learn to watch carefully and to categorize.



## 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 toddler

Let your young child help make the meal - let him/her tear the lettuce for a salad, put napkins on the table or put the washed fruit on a plate. Ask your toddler to name the foods, and the colors of the foods, you are preparing. Your toddler can make a pretend meal for their toy animal or doll while you prepare a meal for your family.

## 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 toddler

To help your toddler develop large motor skills and vocabulary, play the following game in the back yard or at the park. Chant: "Let's jump on the green grass, green grass, green grass. Let's jump on the green grass, and now sit down!" Repeat with other growing things, like: "Run to the pink flowers," or "Touch the tree bark".

## 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 toddler

If your toddler likes to run and jump and practice moving around, make games of doing this. Help your child learn to be safe by stopping at corners and driveways and showing him or her how to look both ways for cars.

## 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 toddler

Older toddlers focus on actions and attributes. Practice simple songs and rhymes to help build



language. Do finger play, take turns and share conversations. Songs and stories that contain rhyming, rhythm and repetition will hold your toddler's attention and help them practice language.

### **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 toddler**

Toddlers learn about size, shape, and amounts by filling and emptying things. Give them clean yogurt containers, plastic cups, and dish soap bottles. Teach body parts by giving them rubber dolls to wash.

### **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 toddler**

Your toddler knows he is separate from you, which often feels scary. Help him feel closer by hanging a family picture in his cubby. Give choices when you leave. "Do you want kisses, hugs or both?"

### **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 toddler**

Your toddler is very active and wants to explore everything by climbing, jumping or running with increasing skill. Toddlers practice new skills again and again. Set up safe indoor and outdoor environments that allow toddlers to explore safely and use their large muscles. Plan activities that let toddlers practice familiar skills and apply them to new tasks. Toddlers are starting to be able to tell you how they feel and what they want. Be sure to talk a lot to your toddler. Ask questions that he/she can answer with a 'yes' or 'no' as that helps your toddler learn decision making.

### **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 toddler**

You meet lots of people at the grocery store. Say "hello" and "thank you" to the people at the bakery or deli counter. Then ask your child to say "hello", "thank you" and "goodbye."

### **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 toddler**

Sitting on your lap with a picture book, pointing to and 'talking' about the pictures, hearing and 'reading' stories, hearing and trying out rhymes and songs, and talking about related experiences are all great ways to ensure your child tries out the sound of written language. Your child starts to build a concept of story and forms the notion that sounds, words and pictures connect in the personally meaningful and satisfying process of storybook reading and storytelling.

### **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 toddler**

Use stress reducing techniques. Instead of telling your child to go "calm down" this holiday season, give them the tools they need to manage stress and anxiety. If you see your children beginning to get stressed, try to spend some quiet time with them before the situation gets out of control. Stop for a snack, a game or a few minutes of reading before rejoining the holiday activities.