

Pointers For Parents

Smart Ways To Help Children Learn

(NAPS)—Few parents might imagine that when their baby first opens his eyes, he is actually preparing for his first day of school.

Research shows that children are born ready to learn and are naturally curious beings motivated to make sense of the world around them. In fact, the brain is the only organ that is not fully formed at birth.

Children learn best through their everyday experiences with the people they love and when the learning is fun, according to Zero to Three.

Zero to Three offers suggestions for helping children develop skills to become eager learners:

Language and Literacy Skills

Language provides the foundation for the development of literacy skills.

- Talk together. Copy your baby's sounds and encourage her to imitate you. Point out and name the things you see together.

- Read books. It's never too early to start sharing books. Let him explore in whatever way he likes—even if it's chewing on them or holding them upside down! Let your child hold the book and point to the pictures as you read.

Thinking Skills

Children are born eager to understand how the world works.

- Encourage your child to explore objects and toys in different ways. Touching, banging and shaking help children learn about how things work.

- Incorporate math games into your everyday routines. Count stairs as you climb them. Ask if there are enough crackers for everyone.

Self-Control

Self-control is the ability to express and manage emotions in appropriate ways. It is essential for school success and healthy



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development overall.

- Teach acceptable behaviors. Tell and show your child what he can do, not just what he cannot do. For example, tell him balls can be thrown outside but not inside.

- Give choices. Present him with acceptable options and let him choose. If a decision is really yours, don't offer a choice. Say, "It's bed time," not "Are you ready to go to bed?"

Self-Confidence

When children feel competent and believe in themselves, they are more willing to take on new challenges.

- Establish routines with your child. Most children feel safe and in control of their world when events are predictable.

- Let your child be the problem-solver. Give her the support she needs to solve a problem but don't solve it for her.

More Information

Zero to Three is a nonprofit organization that promotes the healthy development of babies and toddlers. With funding from MetLife Foundation, the group has developed a booklet for parents called *Getting Ready for School Begins at Birth*. To download a copy or for additional information, visit www.zerotothree.org.