

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2019

Lowell Joint School District

KID BITS



What's in the bag?

Inspire your child to explore her sense of touch. Secretly put an object in a paper lunch bag, and encourage her to reach in, carefully feel it, and try to identify it. You could choose objects with a variety of textures, such as feathers, rocks, and coins.

Speak up for yourself

Help your child learn to ask for what he needs and express his opinions by encouraging him to be assertive. You can give him opportunities to practice in everyday situations. For example, he could order his food in a restaurant, answer questions his doctor asks, and participate in conversations when you visit with relatives.

Car seat safety

Keep your child in a car seat and then a booster seat until she reaches the weight limit of each seat—even if your state's law doesn't require it. Studies show that staying in each seat as long as possible reduces her chances of being hurt in a crash. *Note:* Be sure she rides in the correct seat in other people's cars, too.

Worth quoting

"Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons." *Ruth Ann Schabacker*

Just for fun

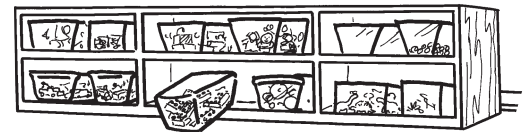
Q: What do snowmen eat for breakfast?

A: Snowflakes!



Hands-on math

For little ones, learning math starts with objects they can see, touch, and play with. Try these activities using familiar items to help your child recognize, count, and compare numbers.



Recognize

Your youngster can use Legos to practice recognizing numbers and putting them in order. Write the numbers 1–10 in washable marker on same-size bricks. Have your child mix up the Legos—can he stack them in the correct order? Encourage him to say each number as he goes.



Count

On separate sheets of paper, write big numbers (1–10). Let him draw the matching number of circles on each (1 circle on 1, 2 circles on 2, and so on). Now your child should count as he puts a small item in each circle. He might say, "1, 2, 3, 4, 5" while placing 5 buttons in the circles on 5.

Compare

Are there more grapes or crackers on that plate? Your youngster can use math to find out. Suggest that he pair each grape with a cracker. Then, he could count the leftovers to see how many more of one food he has than another. ("There are four extra grapes.")♥

Dealing with disappointment

Does your child know how to "make lemonade when life gives her lemons"? Show her with these ideas.

- **Find the benefit.** Put a positive spin on something your youngster is upset about. Perhaps she has to wait until Monday to finish her art class project. You might say, "This weekend, you can have fun thinking about what you might add to your mural."
- **Brainstorm alternatives.** Say it snows and you have to cancel a trip to Grandpa's house. Help your youngster think of an idea that would make her and her grandfather happy. For instance, they might "visit" with a call or video-chat.♥



Kindness is easy!

Being kind to others is a habit that your child can start early. Here are simple ways for her to show kindness wherever she goes.

Be inviting. Suggest that your youngster ask another child to be her buddy at school. Maybe there's a student who tends to play alone or who cries when his dad drops him off.



She could invite him to read or play with her. She'll brighten her classmate's day—and perhaps make a new friend.

Spread cheer. Encourage your child to smile warmly and say hello to people she sees throughout the day, such as the crossing guard, a substitute teacher, or cafeteria workers. She'll discover how rewarding it is to make others smile.

ACTIVITY CORNER

Crafty pinecones

Little fingers can make wintry decorations that add a festive touch to your home. As your youngster decorates pinecones, he'll build fine motor skills.

Materials: old newspaper, pinecones, paint, brush, decorations (stickers, pom-poms, beads, glitter), cotton swab, glue



Spread out newspapers, and let your child paint the pinecones. When they're dry, he can glue on pom-poms or add stickers. Or he could use felt and googly eyes to create faces—perhaps a cute little owl or hedgehog. Another idea is to dip a cotton swab in glue, spread glue on the pinecone, and sprinkle on glitter for a little sparkle.

When they dry, let your youngster display his pinecones in a basket or clear vase on a table. Or help him arrange his pinecone critters on a bookshelf.

Idea: Your child's pinecones would make ideal gifts for friends and relatives!♥



Lend a hand. Helping people makes their lives easier—an excellent way to show kindness. Suggest that your youngster find opportunities like reaching a toy on a shelf for her little brother or picking up papers for a teacher who dropped them in the hallway.♥

Q & A

Learning-filled weekends

Q: Can you suggest places our family can go on weekends that will be educational for our daughter but won't cost a lot of money?

A: Try calling local businesses to ask if they offer tours. Maybe your youngster can get a behind-the-scenes look at a pizza parlor, an ice-cream shop, a yarn shop, or a newspaper office. *Tip:* After a tour, help your youngster write and mail a thank-you note so she gets in the habit of showing gratitude.

Public agencies may offer educational programs, too. Your child could learn about life cycles and habitats at a fish hatchery or discover how cans and bottles are cleaned and processed at a recycling center.

Local performances also make good family field trips. Look for free or low-cost plays and concerts at middle or high schools or community centers. Your youngster may even be able to meet the actors or musicians after the show.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Put on your thinking cap

My son's class recently made paper "thinking caps" to wear when the students do problem-solving activities. Henry liked his hat so much that he wanted to wear it at home.

While we were looking for problems to solve, my older daughter came in and noticed the hat. She showed Henry an activity she remembered doing at his age. She helped him mix dry beans, uncooked rice, and salt in a bowl. Then, she got a colander,

a strainer, and two more bowls, and asked her brother to separate the three foods. Through trial and error, Henry eventually solved the problem. He figured out that the salt would go through the strainer into one bowl and the rice would go through the colander into the other bowl. That left the beans in the colander and the three items separated.

He was proud of his success, and he keeps asking for more problems to solve. Now when we run into a dilemma, we ask Henry to put on his thinking cap!♥



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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