



You and Your Preschool Child





“As any mom can tell you, a surprising amount of progress is made in the first three years of life.”

—Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

The **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001** helps to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education and holds schools responsible for making sure that all children are learning. The information below is consistent with this important law.

Ensuring That Your Child Is Ready to Learn

Research shows that many things affect how well preschool children perform in school, including meeting their physical needs with a healthy diet, exercise and good medical care. Young children also need social and emotional help that will build their confidence, independence and cooperation skills. Families of preschoolers need to show their children how to behave by being dependable, setting a good example and using appropriate, consistent discipline. Children also need opportunities to play and ask questions, and to be read to and introduced to a variety of learning activities. Allow time each day for these things to happen in the life of your young child.

Needs of Your Preschooler

Babies need loving parents or caregivers who respond to their cries or noises, making them feel safe and comfortable. They need to be able to play in safe areas, move around, play with safe objects, and hear and make sounds.

Toddlers need opportunities to make choices within clear and reasonable limits. They need activities that allow them to use their muscles, experience their senses and develop language skills. As a toddler reaches three years old, he will need to work with his hands, learn to do things for himself, play with other children, continue to learn about his body's movements, and build his vocabulary and knowledge about his surroundings.

Four- and five-year-olds will require even more opportunities to use things like books, games and songs, and the chance to do science, math and art activities. Families and caregivers can find these opportunities at their local community centers, libraries or schools. Children need to build their self-reliance and language skills, as well as their awareness of the world and people around them, as they prepare to enter school.

“Our challenge is to reach all children early so that every child starts school with the skills needed to learn.”

—Laura Bush

Selecting a Caregiver

The best advice is to start looking for a caregiver long before you need one. In choosing care, you will need to:

- ★ determine where you can find a caregiver who fits your budget;
- ★ discover what services or agencies are there to assist you; and
- ★ gather as much information as possible about each potential caregiver.

No matter whom you consider, note how kind, nurturing and responsive the provider is; the level of experience the caregiver has; and whether or not the caregiver's child-rearing opinions are similar to yours. And always consider your child's needs. The childcare place you choose should be clean, safe, comfortable and parent-friendly, and have many books and educational toys available.

Kindergarten Tips

Visit your local public school and find out how to enroll your child in kindergarten. Some private kindergartens have waiting lists, based on available slots. Make sure you are aware of how to give your child the best chance to attend the school you select by learning as much as you can about: the school, including details about teachers; the forms that must be completed; the kindergarten program; the school-year calendar; the type of transportation available; the meals and snacks served; and how you can become involved in the school's activities.



Partnering With Those Who Care for And Educate Your Child

At all stages of your young child's growth, it is important that you stay aware of his or her learning activities throughout the day. For working parents, this is often difficult but made easier through open communication with those who care for and educate your child. Make sure your caregiver has updated information on how to contact you. Talk with the caregiver as often as possible, even daily, to stay aware of what your child is learning and how she is behaving. Support what is learned at the preschool or daycare with activities you and your child do at home. This type of communication with caregivers and teachers will not only help your child's academic, social and emotional development, it will also help your child feel connected to you.

Remember that every contact with your child is a learning experience and that learning occurs in many other places besides school.

Examples of Resources

U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov or
<http://www.ed.gov/espanol/bienvenidos/es/index.html?src=gu>
or call 1-800-USA-LEARN

Head Start Programs: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/hsb/hsweb/index.jsp>

National Association for the Education of Young Children: www.naeyc.org

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center: www.nectac.org or
<http://www.nectac.org/espanol/bienvenidos.asp>

Ready to Learn TV: <http://www.pbs.org/readytolearn/> or
<http://www.pbs.org/parents/siteguide/spanish/>

NOTE: This document contains information about and from public and private entities and organizations for the reader's information. Inclusion does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any entity, organization, products or services offered or views expressed. This publication also contains hyperlinks and URLs created and maintained by outside organizations and provided for the reader's convenience. The Department is not responsible for the accuracy of information found in them.