

What's New at the Library?

The public library is a great place to spend time with your child.

The library closest to our school is _____.

It is a great destination for a rainy day! As always, librarians are happy to help!

_____ likes books about

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

At school, your child's favorite authors are

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Story time

Most libraries offer free story time, designed to entertain and teach young children about the wonders of reading. When you attend with your child, you'll get some great read aloud ideas to try at home.

Story time goes digital

Libraries have activities such as e-books on tablets, computer activities, and learning apps that let you learn along with your child. Ask the children's librarian to recommend high-quality apps and e-books.

Movies

Take home an armload of DVDs. Share the movies you loved as a child with your own family. Look for videos that reflect your child's interests—how things work, baby animals, child-friendly cooking.

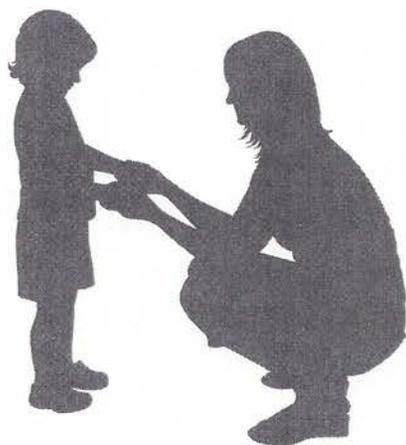
Play and learn

Many libraries have computers and tablets loaded with fun, educational activities. You and your child can learn how to use the equipment while developing math or reading skills.

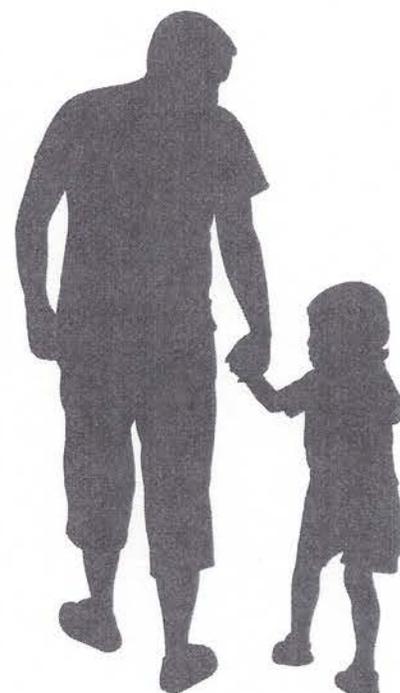
Beyond the children's area

Explore new places in books from the travel section. Find resources in your family's home language or about your family's culture. Learn about different holidays, foods, and crafts. Use the teacher resource section to get ideas for games and activities to do at home. After all, you are your child's first teacher!

A message from your child's teacher _____



Solving Problems With Your Child



Sometimes children have problems getting along with others or following our few, simple classroom rules. When this happens, we work with the child to figure out a solution. Most of the time this works well. Children learn that their teacher is on their side. And they learn an important skill—how to solve problems.

You might want to try our Make a Plan method at home.

Get together. Put your child at ease. Choose a comfy space and a time when your child will feel open to sharing his or her ideas.

"I need your help solving a problem. Is this a good time for us to talk?"

Describe the problem. It's important for you and your child to agree about what the problem is. You may need to work together to pinpoint the exact problem.

*"What happened?"
"How did you feel when...?"*

Brainstorm solutions. Have an honest discussion. Ask your child to suggest a few solutions and pick one to try.

"We need to make a plan so things go better later. What do you think we should do?"

Write it down. Write the plan on a piece of paper and read it aloud. Invite your child to add drawings or words. This helps a child feel like it really is his or her plan.

"I'll write down your idea on this piece of paper. Do you want to decorate it for us?"

Revise the plan. Try it out! If the plan does not work the first time, revise it until you find something that works for both of you.

*"Did it work today? It did? Hooray!"
"Our plan didn't work! I guess we need to make a better plan!"*

A message from your child's teacher _____

Spending Time Outdoors with Your Child

Add a short walk to your evening routine. After dinner and dishes, hit the pavement. Look up at the stars, keep an ear out for sounds of the night, tell a story about when you were young, and listen while your child tells you about his or her day.

Plant, tend, and harvest flowers or vegetables. You can plant seeds or plants in a container (pot, window box, bucket, or even a trash can) in your yard or a neighborhood garden plot. Your preschooler will enjoy digging, weeding, and watching the plants flourish. You could grow salad—cherry tomatoes, cucumbers, and lettuce—or plant flowers that grow to different heights, like marigolds and sunflowers.

Enjoy all kinds of weather. Try to go outdoors, regardless of weather conditions. Plan short activities when it is very cold or hot; enjoy more outside time when the weather is fine. Preschoolers love walking in the rain; just be sure to wear waterproof boots and hooded raincoats. Layers are important on cold days—as you get warmer you can take off a jacket, hat, or mittens. In summertime be sure everyone wears a sun hat and sunscreen and drinks plenty of water.



Our class goes outdoors as often as possible. The children run, swing, climb, ride trikes, pull wagons, go for walks, and kick and throw balls. They also do many of the activities we enjoy inside, like reading, painting, doing puzzles, eating snack, and making music. We believe that almost anything children do indoors can be an outdoor activity too. Family time outdoors benefits children and parents.

Play games. Share the games you played when you were a child, like hopscotch, jacks, Simon Says, and charades. Play board games on a picnic table or blanket. Introduce skills preschoolers will one day use to play sports, such as kicking or dribbling a ball or hitting a foam ball back and forth using light rackets.

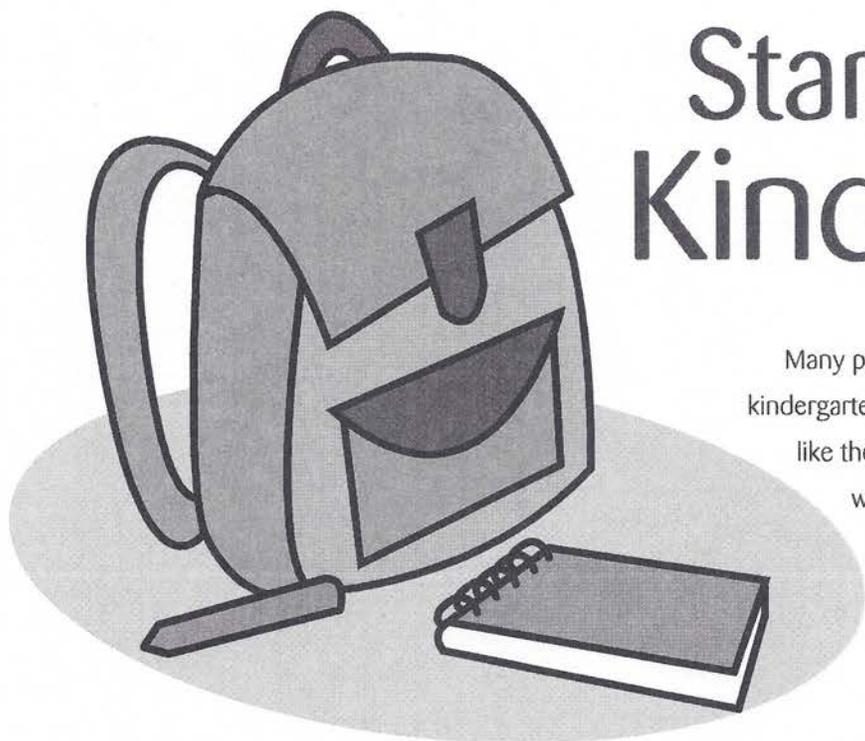
Enjoy the nature all around you. Whether they live on farms or in apartments, children need experiences in the natural world. Point out the nature all around you—new leaves on trees in the spring, bugs living under a rock or in a decaying tree stump, birds flying from bush to bush. Go strawberry or apple picking or visit a park, nature center, or farmers' market. Bring along nature guides, paper, crayons, measuring tools, containers, a magnifying glass, and binoculars so you can help your child become an enthusiastic nature investigator.



Tell us about the fun and learning you and your child enjoy outdoors.
We will share your ideas with our classroom community.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Starting Kindergarten



Many preschoolers feel anxious about moving on to kindergarten. They worry that they won't have friends, won't like the teacher, will get lost, won't be able to do the work, and so on. Here are some tips for guiding your child through the move from preschool to kindergarten.

To help your child handle end-of-the-year feelings

- Place a sticker or make a mark on a calendar as each day of the last month of school goes by.
- Write down or tape-record a memory each day.
- Draw a picture and/or dictate a good-bye message for a friend or teacher.
- Revisit the events of the past year with your child by looking at drawings, paintings, photos, and writing.
- Provide stress-reducing activities at home such as water play, puppets, or playdough.
- Help the class plan an end-of-the-year family potluck.
- Plan ways to keep in touch with classmates or organize a regular play group.
- Encourage children to talk about their feelings; talk about your feelings too.

To ease the move to kindergarten

- Visit the new school before your child's first day. Point out ways the room is similar to his or her preschool room, but also discuss how it holds new materials to explore.
- Read books about starting school, such as *Look out, Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson; *Will I Have a Friend?* by Miriam Cohen, illustrated by Ronald Himler; and *If You Take a Mouse to School*, by Laura Numeroff, illustrated by Felicia Bond.
- Describe the daily routines, including arrival, breakfast, snack, lunch, and bathroom practices.
- Plan playdates with new classmates.
- Plan a visit to preschool or a playdate with old friends once your child is well settled in kindergarten.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Supporting Writing at Home

Preschoolers begin to write long before they learn to read. They scribble, make marks that look like letters, and play with writing, just like they pretend to be the mommy or daddy when they dress up. Here are some ways to help your child learn about and practice writing.

Display children's writing in a special place—the refrigerator, a bedroom door, on a cork board, or taped to a tile in the bathroom. This tells children that their writing is important and worthy of being shown.

Model writing. Whether writing a shopping list, letter, or e-mail and when completing an application or ordering from a catalog, explain what you are doing. Let your child join in.

Invite your child to dictate stories to you. At play time, ask your child to tell you a story about where the cars and trucks are going or who lives in the Lego house. Write down exactly what your child says, and read it aloud afterward.

Create greeting cards for special occasions. Provide paper and crayons or markers so children can make cards and then “sign” their names when finished. Show them old cards with phrases like “Happy Birthday,” “I Love You,” and “Season’s Greetings” to copy on their cards.

Create an “office” for your child. Include things like different kinds of paper, envelopes, pencils and pens, crayons, stickers, and labels on a shelf near a desk or table or in a basket your child can carry to a comfortable place for writing. Add interesting and exciting materials like address and date books, calendars, and an old computer keyboard.

A request

Please send us extra writing supplies. We can use junk mail, catalogs, envelopes, magazines, and writing tools. In short, we can use anything children can write on or with!



Give writing tasks while running errands. Have your child write a “reverse shopping list.” Provide a pad and pencil so he or she can make a list of things you’ve bought. At the bank, give your child a blank deposit slip while you fill out yours. These tasks let children write *and* keep them busy!

Put writing materials in several places around the house. Provide pencils, crayons, and/or markers in coffee cans or baskets and small unlined pads, notebooks, or clipboards with paper attached in the bathroom, kitchen, or in the car. Make sure you discuss that the only place in the room where the child should be writing is on the paper.

Take it outside! Let your child write or draw with chalk or old paintbrushes and water on sidewalks and fences.

Encourage all of your child's writing efforts. Families can make writing part of their children's everyday lives at home!

A message from your child's teacher

Take Your Child to a Live Performance

Many dance, music, and theater companies offer shows specifically geared to young children and their families. These performances offer a wonderful introduction to the performing arts. Attending high school or college music and drama productions is another way to introduce young children to live performance. Many early childhood programs use the following tips to help children prepare for visits to performance venues. You can try them before your family goes to a show.

Before your visit

- **Call the theater in advance** and ask what age children will enjoy the performance and how long the performance will last.
- **Explain what you will see and hear during the performance.** You can talk with your child about the characters, tell the story, or listen to other music in the same style. If the performance is based on a storybook, read it with your child.
- **Review appropriate audience manners.** Remind your child of how to behave among large groups, out in public, and during quiet times. Explain when applause is appropriate and how to be courteous to other people attending the performance.

On the day of the visit

- **Arrive early** so there is plenty of time to explore the theater. You might take a close-up look at the stage or peer into the orchestra pit. An early arrival also leaves plenty of time to use the restroom and find your seats.
- **Recognize that it is okay to leave before the end of the performance.** Preschoolers may find even a half-hour event too long. One adult can take the child who has reached his or her limits to the lobby or outdoors to play a game or read a story.

After the performance

- **Talk about what you just saw and heard.** Ask, "What did you think?" "What did you like best?" and "Which characters were your favorites?"
- **Read a related book or do an art, music, or dance project.** Provide dress-up clothes, puppets, props, and other materials so your child can reenact the performance.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Rough-and-Tumble Play



BY SUSAN WOOG WAGNER / © NAEYC

We believe that exuberant, boisterous, rough-and-tumble play supports preschoolers' development. Energetic big body play lets children use language, understand cause and effect, and learn how to negotiate, take turns, compromise, and make and follow rules. Vigorous big body play is a great way to support physical development. Because children enjoy it so much, they tend to play for a long time.

To support big body play, at home you can

- Play big body games, such as tag and hopscotch, or throw, catch, and roll a ball with your child.
- Build and use an indoor or outdoor obstacle course. Include a box to crawl through, a piece of rope on the ground to walk like a tightrope, and a hula hoop to jump in and out of.
- Supervise your child's active play, whether solitary or with a friend; be sure to watch and listen at all times.
- Walk, instead of riding, to the places you are going. Vary your movements to include periods of hopping, skipping, galloping, and twirling.
- Move aside furniture and breakables in an area of a room so children can tumble and wrestle safely.
- Encourage children's rough-and-tumble play outside in the yard or at a park. Preschoolers like to run, jump, tag, roll, twirl, fall down, and chase—each other or you.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Share Your Passions With Your Child

Sharing your passions with your child can be a wonderful way to explore a special interest together. When you care about cooking, tennis, hiking, creating videos, or any other subject, your child picks up on that interest. Use this as a way to create unique and long-lasting experiences with your child.

Go to events.

Look for local experiences that connect to your passion. Watch people play your favorite sport in the park. Attend a music concert for children. Join other families on a hike.



Be active participants.

Enjoy the activity by doing it together. You don't have to be an expert cook to have fun preparing recipes. Your child will enjoy sharing the experience with you more than the final product or outcome.



Explore the topic.

Learn more about a topic of interest through books, newspaper articles, or websites. Encourage your child to ask questions. If you don't know the answer, look it up together.



Repeat and repeat and repeat.

Sharing your passions can be an everyday and ongoing practice for your family. You will be modeling how to be an active, lifelong learner who knows there's always something new to experience or learn about.



A message from your child's teacher _____



Big Jobs at Home

Preschoolers love to help out, but many times we don't let them. Why? Because we think it's easier—and faster—to do everyday jobs ourselves. Your child might take 15 minutes to finish a job you can do in one. But in 15 minutes your child can learn a lot! Have you heard your child talking about the Big Jobs we do in school? You can do Big Jobs with your child at home too. Big Jobs carry big rewards—for your child and your entire family.

What are Big Jobs?

They are jobs your child does with you (or others) that help the whole family. They may be indoor or outdoor jobs. Setting the table, planting flowers, and tidying up when visitors are coming are all Big Jobs.

How are Big Jobs different from chores?

You *assign* chores. Children volunteer to do Big Jobs because they want to help out. Also, Big Jobs are done together with other family members. Teamwork is an important part of doing Big Jobs.



Let's carry the hose together.

Stand on your stool to reach the sink.



What do children learn from doing Big Jobs?

They learn to:

- work with other people
- solve problems
- compromise
- contribute to their family

What are some Big Jobs preschoolers can do?

Cooking and baking—washing and peeling vegetables, stirring muffin batter, tearing lettuce leaves to make salad

Gardening—digging holes, planting seeds, raking leaves, weeding, watering plants indoors and outdoors

Doing laundry—carrying the laundry basket, sorting, folding, delivering clean clothes to each family member's room

Caring for pets—feeding, brushing, walking, cleaning the cage or aquarium

Cleaning—rinsing dishes, dusting, emptying wastebaskets

Tips for doing Big Jobs at home

- **Keep your child safe.** Show your child how to safely use equipment like a rake or a vegetable peeler. Stay close by when it is his turn.
- **Try to find child-size tools.** They make jobs easier and safer.
- **Have fun.** Remember, your child chose to help out. Keep it enjoyable and she will want to do Big Jobs all the time.
- **Talk while you work together.** Chat about what you are doing and whatever else your child wants to discuss.
- **Show your appreciation** for the work family members have done. Say, "Thanks for setting the table, everyone. We are ready for dinner now, and the table looks beautiful."

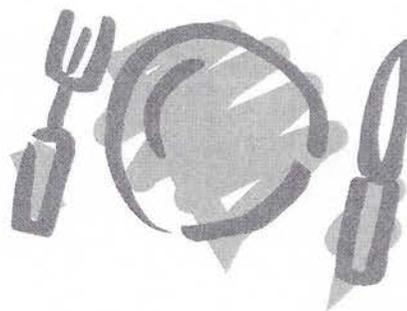
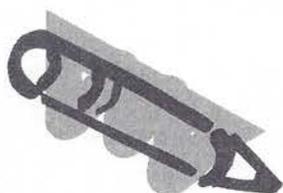


A message from your child's teacher _____

Building Fine Motor Skills

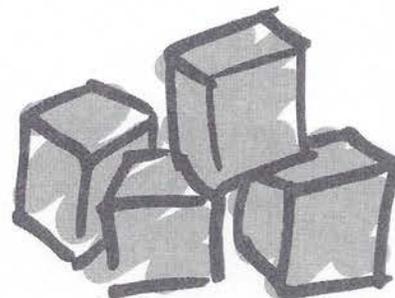
Many of your child's daily activities—like getting dressed, eating, and writing—require control of small muscles in the hands. Such skills are called fine motor skills. When young children have opportunities to practice these skills, they can do more things for themselves. A variety of activities can increase muscle strength and coordination, preparing children for more advanced skills, from using a computer mouse to playing a musical instrument. Children build fine motor skills at home when they . . .

- Set the table
- Hold knives, forks, and spoons to eat
- Pour juice into a cup
- Wipe the table with a sponge
- Help with meals—stir, shake, chop, cut, and mix
- Get dressed—button, zip, snap, buckle, and fasten Velcro tabs



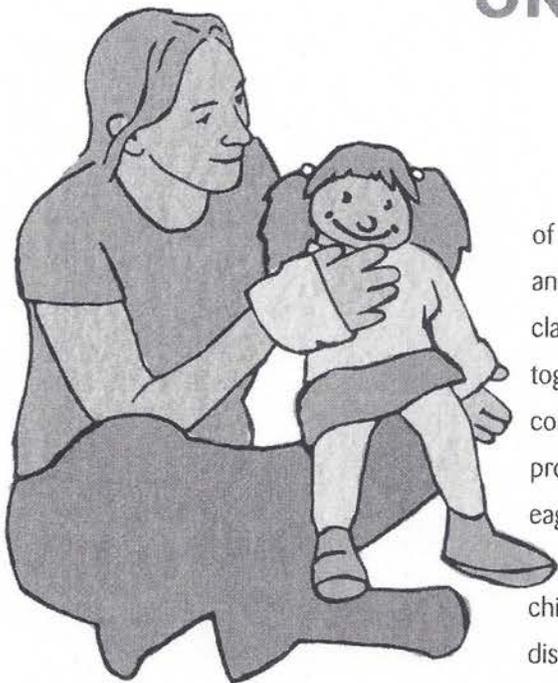
- Open and close containers with lids
- Cut with child-safe scissors
- Finger-paint
- Use a paintbrush
- Play with playdough and clay—roll, smooch, pat, pound, and use tools like popsicle sticks or stamps
- Draw, scribble, or write with crayons, pencils, and markers

- Put together puzzles
- Place pegs in a board
- Build with small blocks
- Play board games
- Play with puppets



A message from your child's teacher _____

Building Social and Emotional Skills at Home



Our classroom is a busy place where your preschooler is learning all sorts of things, including social and emotional skills such as how to express feelings and how to work together with classmates on a project. Most of the time the classroom is a happy place where the children enjoy playing and learning together. Occasionally, however, teachers need to step in to help children resolve conflicts. We often use puppets to talk with children about these conflicts or other problems and to help them think about solutions. In our experience, children are eager to tell their fears and feelings to one of the puppets.

You can use puppets at home, too. They are a great way to introduce your child to feeling words like *happy*, *sad*, *angry*, and *excited*. Puppets can also help in discussions about challenging topics, like getting to bed on time. Here are some other suggestions for helping your child develop social and emotional skills.

Think out loud. When your child hears your thinking process, it helps her understand how to cope with frustration and solve problems: “Whoops. My favorite shopping bag has a hole in it. I’d better take another one with me to the grocery store.”

Read bedtime stories. There is something magical about this end-of-the-day routine that makes it the ideal time for talking about feelings. Discuss the characters and events in the story. Invite your child to share his or her thoughts and feelings by asking questions: “What do you think he should do? How do you think she feels? What would you do if you were this character?”

Do a job together. Instead of asking your child to do a chore alone, do it with her. The two of you might fold laundry, set the table, rake leaves, or paint a wall. Help your child join in by shortening the handle of a broom to make it child-size or providing a small paintbrush or roller.

Play games. Card and board games and outdoor games such as tag or hopscotch offer built-in opportunities for helping children learn to take turns, cooperate, handle frustration, and more. While playing games together, focus on fun instead of winning or losing.

Prevent potential problems. Before a friend comes to play, help your child put away toys he does not want to share. Before taking a bus to the zoo, provide a step-by-step explanation of what you will do: “We will wait at the bus stop for 5 minutes, then get on the bus and sit together and watch the sights go by for about 30 minutes [explain this as the length of one episode of a favorite TV show]. Then we will walk three blocks to the zoo and tour the lion house before anything else!” During the trip remind your preschooler of what will happen next.

A message from your child's teacher

Explore and Learn with Tablets

Tablets are powerful learning tools when teachers and families carefully select activities that match children's interests and abilities. We use technology so children can explore, create, problem solve, and feel powerful. Families can enjoy using tablets and learning together.

- Encourage exercise and nature and science investigations. Take a walk and help your child use the tablet to take photos or videos of birds, worms, puddles, shadows, and more.

- Read e-books together. Select interesting stories with animations or interactions that support the story and lead to conversations with your child. Ask questions about the story and how it relates to real life.

- Celebrate creativity. Use programs and apps that let children draw, paint, take photos, dictate stories, and record their own songs, music, puppet shows, and dances. Review and share their creations so children see how their work evolves.

- Visit webcam sites. You can peek inside a hummingbird's nest, watch pandas at a zoo, or virtually visit a museum to look at Van Gogh's sunflowers.

A message from your child's teacher

Exploring the World of Science with Your Child

Preschoolers have an insatiable need to explore and understand things that adults might overlook. As Rachel Carson says, children need an adult who can share this joy of discovery with them. You can help your child by sharing the joy of discovering science at home and in your neighborhood.

Go for a walk. Talk with your child about what you can see, hear, and touch. Look at clouds, smell pinecones, gently touch a caterpillar, see what's under rocks, and listen to birds and squirrels in trees. Take walks when it's rainy, when it's sunny, early in the morning, and in the evening. Talk about how the experiences are similar and different.

Discover answers together. Children often know all the dinosaur names or notice small details in a leaf. You don't need to know the name of every plant, but you and your child can investigate and answer questions together.

Care for animals, plants, trees, and gardens. Plant bulbs (flowers or onions) and watch what happens. Put toothpicks in an avocado pit and suspend it over a clear container of water. Visit it daily. Soon you will see a new plant growing from the top and bottom of the pit.

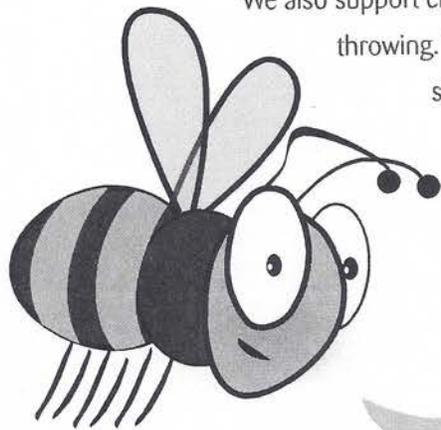
Find science all around you. Learn about physics by playing with tennis balls and soccer balls. Which ball bounces higher? Which one can be kicked farther? Learn about chemistry while baking cookies together. What happens when the ingredients are mixed together and baked in the oven? Ask your child to share his or her ideas about what happens and why. If your child asks a question you can't answer, write it down so that later you can look for the answer together in a book, at the library, or on the Internet.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Family Fun and Fitness

Children today are less physically fit than ever before. Every day our class plays physically active games like Freeze Dancing, and the children have lots of opportunities to move their bodies during classroom activities and outdoors on the playground.

We also support children as they develop specific skills like jumping, kicking, catching, and throwing. These are skills children will use for a lifetime of physical activities, including sports. Here are some tips for increasing your child's physical activity.



BEE
ACTIVE!

Children need opportunities to develop and practice new skills like throwing, jumping, and climbing. Here are ideas to try at home.

Jumping. Hold your child's hands as you jump together or as she jumps from the bottom step to the floor. Place paper circles on the ground and jump from one circle to the next. Place bubble wrap on the floor and jump and stamp on it together.

Throwing and catching. Throw socks balled together into the laundry basket. Sit across from your child and take turns throwing and catching a ball. Stand and toss a small, soft pillow back and forth.

Kicking. Kick a large ball back and forth with your child at the park. At home crumple up aluminum foil and kick it back and forth across the kitchen floor.

Climbing. On the playground hold your child if he is having a hard time crossing the monkey bars on his own. Supporting him along the way will help build his strength and endurance.

- **Be a role model.** Children learn from the adults around them. Show your child you care about fitness by doing some of these fun fitness activities together.
- **Build an obstacle course.** Create a tunnel to crawl through using couch pillows, a path to walk on made of newspapers, and objects to jump over, like rolled-up towels. Have fun as you crawl, jump, and climb through your creation.
- **Go for an after dinner walk.** Find a time during the weekend or after school to walk together as a family. Try running, galloping, and skipping as you make your way around the neighborhood.
- **Dance together to favorite music.** Let each family member select a song. Take turns making up and trying out different dance movements.
- **Spend time outside.** Children use their whole bodies as they explore the outdoors. Collect leaves, acorns, and rocks, and use them in imaginative play. Bike together in your neighborhood or a local park. Explore the equipment at a nearby playground.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Help Your Child Become a Great Problem Solver

Your child has been working hard to learn how to be a capable problem solver. Preschoolers who can solve their own problems feel confident and enjoy learning. They are willing to make mistakes and learn from them and keep trying until they succeed. You can help at home by taking advantage of opportunities to talk about solving problems. Here are some ways to start a conversation.

- Point out that it takes time to learn something new (like riding a bicycle). Explain that learning something new can take a while and that “practice makes better.”
- Remind your child that problems and challenges are chances to “grow our brains.” Say “You know how to do lots of things. You practiced until you got good at them.” Or “Remember when you didn’t know the letters in your name? Now you write them all in order! We can read your name!”
- Work with your child to think of three ways to solve a problem. Talk about each one and then have your child pick one to try out.
- Let your child know that you believe in him or her. Say “Do you think you can solve that problem on your own? I think you can. What do you want to do first?”
- Point out your own mistakes as part of life and learning. “Uh-oh, I spilled my soup. But everyone makes mistakes. Next time I won’t put the mug where my elbow can bump it.”

A message from your child’s teacher _____

Everyone
makes
mistakes!

Grow
your
brain!

Practice
makes
better!

You
can
solve it!

Help Your Preschooler Gain Self-Control

When asked about school readiness skills, many teachers say children who succeed in kindergarten know when and how to control their impulses. They can follow through when a task is difficult and listen to directions for a few minutes. These skills are linked to self-control. Children can develop them at preschool and at home. Here are a few ways to help children learn self-control.

Change the rules of a game to make it an opposite game. For example, instead of playing the familiar version of Simon Says, play Simon Doesn't Say. Explain the new rule in words and actions: "Do the opposite of what Simon asks you to do. If Simon Says 'Touch your head,' you should touch your toes." Be sure to demonstrate how this works. Keep directions simple. Take turns being Simon.

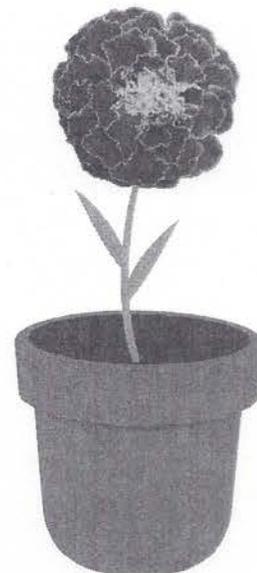
Finish what you are doing, then respond to requests for attention. For example, if you are on the phone and your child asks for something (and it's not an emergency), let her know you need to take time to complete your conversation. This is a good way to let your child practice waiting for a short time.

Do activities together that require following directions. For example, put together a model, play follow the leader, or cook or bake: "I'm going to read the recipe aloud. Listen carefully so we will both know what to do. I'll read them again as we do each step."

Help children understand how long they will have to wait for something and suggest activities to do while they wait. Say to your child, "Grammy and Grampy are coming over before dinner. Would you like to draw some pictures to give them?" or "As soon as I put your sister to bed, I will read you some stories. You can choose three books for us to read together."

Work with your child to complete a puzzle that has a few more pieces than he or she is used to. Set up the puzzle in a place where you can work on it for several days, if needed. Celebrate together when one of you puts the last piece in place.

Plant some easy-to-grow marigold seeds in a pot or in a garden. Check together every day until the plants pop up. Over time, watch the plant grow leaves and flowers.

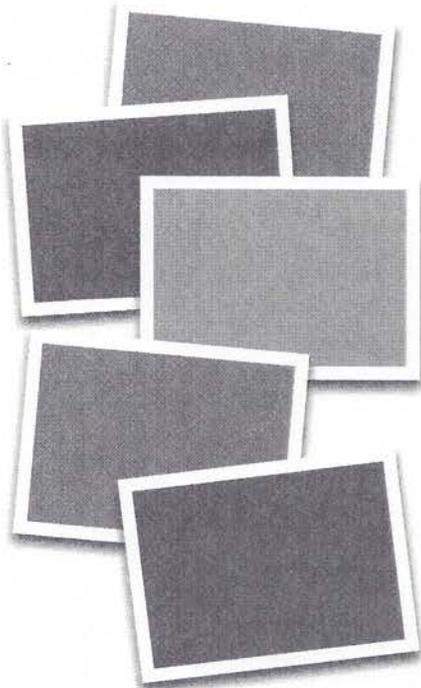


A message from your child's teacher

Home Sorting Ideas

Early experiences in sorting and classifying help young children notice how things are alike and different. They will apply this understanding when learning math skills in the primary grades. Here are some ways you and your child can sort and classify at home.

■ Looking at favorite family photographs together can lead to many interesting sorting/classifying activities. Begin by sorting pictures into girl and boy pictures, and then try more challenging categories, such as Mom's or Dad's family members, brothers and sisters, or where people currently live. If you want to imitate how scientists classify things, try sorting into just two groups, such as cousins versus not cousins.



■ Sort shopping lists according to the type of item, such as fresh vegetables, frozen foods, or cleaning supplies. At the store, predict where each item will be located.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Fruits and Veggies | |
| Dairy | |
| Pasta | |
| Paper products | |

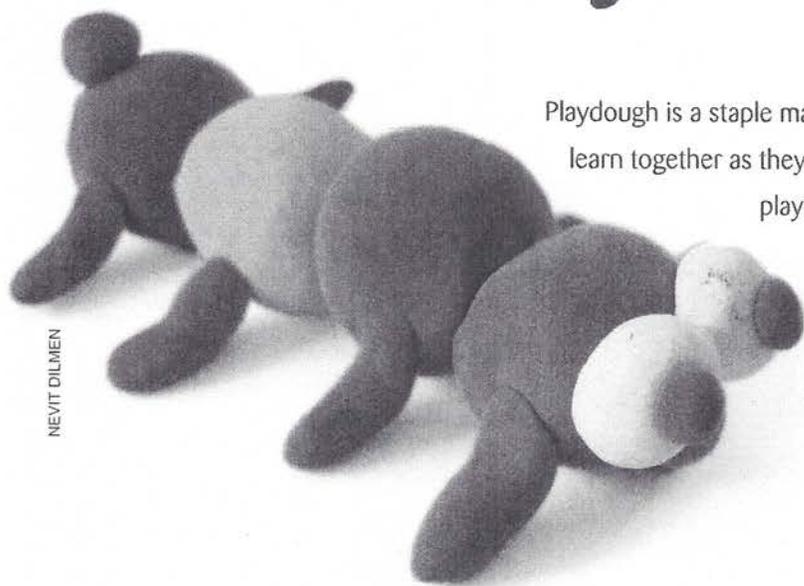
■ Do you collect rocks—or seashells, or coins, or teddy bears? Think of ways you and your child might sort them. Use containers you have around the house—muffin tins, egg cartons, or recycled yogurt cups.



■ Help your child figure out a way to sort and store toys and art materials. For example, suggest keeping all the stuffed animals in one basket and trucks in another. Or sort a collection of plastic dinosaurs by carnivores versus herbivores.

A message from your child's teacher

Playdough!



NEVIT DILMEN

Playdough is a staple material in our classroom. Your children play, talk, and learn together as they pound, roll, and make things. They will also enjoy using playdough at home. What do children need? A few props, a little space, and time to play and learn with YOU!

While using playdough, preschoolers are learning . . .

■ **Social and emotional skills** by sharing and taking turns using the props, cooperating to make something together, and feeling proud of their accomplishments.

■ **Language and literacy skills** by rolling a long snake then forming letters, telling you about what they are doing and making, and discussing new words, such as *cut*, *chop*, and *slice*.

■ **Creativity and imagination** by baking cakes and pies to sell in a bakery or building cages for zoo animals.

■ **Science and math concepts** by responding to your questions, such as “What do you think will happen when you . . . ?” “What did it look like?” “How does it feel?” “What can you do to make it . . . ?” “Which one is fatter?”

■ **Fine motor skills** by using hands, fingers, and tools to pound, push, poke, shape, flatten, roll, cut, and scrape the dough.

Props

Open your kitchen drawers and cupboards to find rolling pins, plastic knives, cookie cutters, and birthday candles.

Collect recycled items such as aluminum pie plates, buttons, lids, and bottle caps of different sizes.

Add a touch of nature with feathers, twigs, leaves, acorns, and dried flowers.

Look in your child’s toy collection for plastic and rubber people, animals, dinosaurs, blocks, and more.

Space

Cover a table with an easily cleaned mat or table cloth. An old shower curtain would work too. Some families use large cookie sheets as the play surface.

Time

Preschoolers need plenty of time to feel, touch, roll, mush, and create with playdough. They will enjoy being with you—talking, laughing, and learning.

A request

Please tell us about your playdough experiences at home. We’d love to see photos too. If you share your recipes and prop suggestions, we will pass them on to other families.

A message from your child’s teacher _____

Let Children Be Children

Do you worry that your children are growing up too fast? Do you wonder what to say when they talk about “going on a date”? Are you frustrated when they beg to watch television shows or movies with characters and activities that are just too old for preschoolers?

We worry too. Let’s work together to protect children and let them enjoy being preschoolers. Here are five ideas that may work for your family.

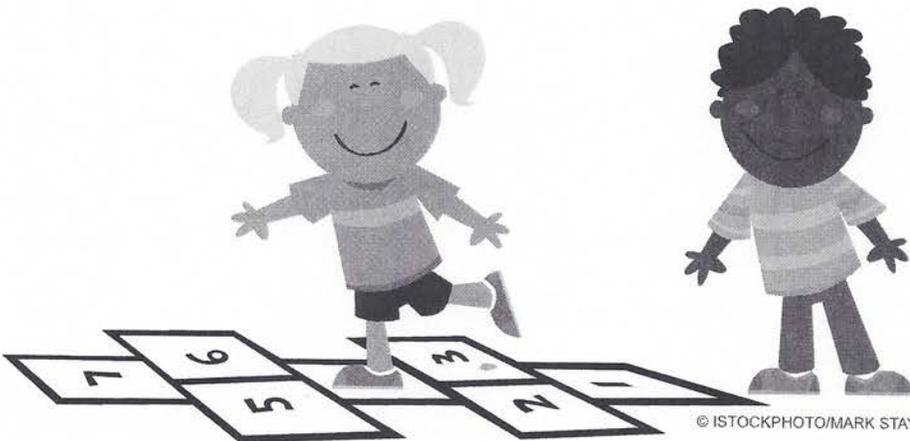
● **Limit the time your child spends in front of a screen—television, computer, video game, and so on.** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting total screen time to no more than 1 to 2 hours a day for children older than 2 years.

● **Make a list of things to do instead of watching a screen.** Ask your child to think of activities he or she enjoys—reading, doing a puzzle, tossing a ball to the dog, or helping to cook dinner. Use photographs or drawings to illustrate each item on the list. Include some activities you can do together. Use the list to help your child choose something to do instead of screen time.

● **Schedule a weekly family night.** Include your child in planning what to make for dinner and what to do afterward. You might go for a walk around the block, play a board game, tell stories, organize family photos, or do any other activity your family enjoys.

● **Help your child become a unique individual with varied interests and abilities.** One way to do this is by reading and talking about books in which both male and female characters are strong, confident, thoughtful, and sensitive. And you and the other important adults in your child’s life can do this by being role models—men and women who work, enjoy hobbies, take care of the home, and spend lots of loving time with their children.

● **Work with other people who want to preserve childhood.** Talk with friends, neighbors, family members, and the parents of your children’s friends and classmates. Agree to hold birthday parties focused on fun rather than TV or movie characters; to dress your children like preschoolers, not teenagers; and to resist (rather than giving in) when children ask you to buy things you know are not good for them.



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A message from your child’s teacher _____

Listen, Talk, Answer— Support Your Child's Learning

Your child comes home every day with stories to share. Do you stop what you are doing and listen carefully? Your child probably asks a lot of questions. Do you try to answer them? If you can respond yes to these questions, then you already know the benefits of giving your child time and attention. Teachers call these daily communication opportunities *powerful interactions*. They help adults and children keep in touch and enjoy being together. These interactions also support children's learning. Here are some communication tips and examples of the types of things to say.

- **Acknowledge and accept all of your child's emotions.** This helps your child feel safe and secure and willing to share all kinds of feelings with you. "Are you feeling happy? I see a big smile on your face."
- **Tell your child what you see him doing rather than saying "Good job."** He will know that you see and appreciate his efforts. "Wow, you've added lots of squiggly lines and circles to your drawing."
- **Help your child make connections to familiar experiences, ideas, or information.** "Good morning. I know you like pineapple. Today we're having papaya for breakfast. I think you'll like it as much as pineapple. Let's see what you think about it."

Please share a story of a powerful interaction you had with your child. We look forward to hearing about it and talking together about the positive difference you make in your child's life.



PATRICK CAVANAGH / © NAEYC

**Powerful interactions are rich gifts
you give your child every day.**

- **Offer a small challenge to nudge your child to try something new or a bit harder.** "You ran so fast to the fence. This time, can you think of a really slow way to get there?"
- **Repeat and extend what your child says to you.** As your child looks through a book and says, "I like lizards," you might say, "I know you like lizards. What do you like about them?"
- **Use interesting words to build your child's vocabulary.** "I think this ice cream is delicious. I love the creamy texture and swirls of caramel."

A message from your child's teacher

Play Games While Waiting with Young Children

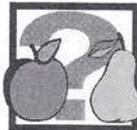
Waiting can be hard for children and adults. What can you and your child do to have fun and learn while waiting for your food to arrive in a restaurant, for the bus to come, or in a long line at the store? Try playing one of these word games. It can make the time pass more pleasantly and help your preschooler build valuable skills. Your child can learn how to focus on and describe objects, make decisions, solve word problems, persist at a task, and recognize colors, shapes, numbers, and letters. They will also learn that different people can see things in different ways.



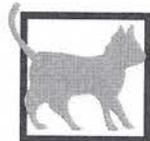
I Spy. The first player looks around and chooses an object that all players can see and then provides one clue: "I spy with my little eye something that is green [or round or striped . . .]." The other players take turns guessing the object. The player who guesses correctly starts the next round.



The Rainbow Game. One person chooses a color, and the others look for something of that color. When everyone spots something of the first color, another player chooses a new one. Keep playing until you run out of colors. Try playing with shapes, numbers, or letters as well.



Would You Rather? One player starts by asking a simple "Would you rather . . ." question, such as "Would you rather play Uno or Go Fish?" ". . . eat an apple or a pear?" ". . . take a bath or a shower?" or ". . . have a picnic with an anteater or a raccoon?" Add explanations for the choices, if you wish.

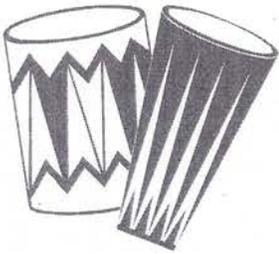


I'm Thinking of an Animal. One person thinks of an animal and gives clues so others can guess what it is. The best clues narrow the search but still allow for multiple possibilities. "I'm thinking of an animal that is black and white" works better than "an animal with legs" (although the second option is typical of young children's first clues). If no one guesses correctly, give additional clues until someone does.

You can change any of these games to fit your child's age and interests.

For younger children, make clues simpler or choose more obvious items. Adjust your play times to match your child's attention span or the length of wait. Playing games makes waiting fun!

A message from your child's teacher



Playing with Music at Home



Preschoolers love to sing, make music, and move to the beat. They feel competent when they learn a new song, powerful when they pound a drum or shake a tambourine, and proud when they invent a new dance.

Play with music and connect it to learning

Young children explore music through play. They make discoveries through trial and error—"If I hit the tambourine lightly, it makes a soft sound. If I hit it hard, it makes a loud one." They listen to the musical beat and dance along with it. They make up new words or add choruses to familiar songs. They ask you to sing with them or, in some cases, ask you to let them perform a solo.

As children explore and enjoy music, they can develop skills in other learning areas at the same time. Teachers and families can relate music to subjects as diverse as math, literacy, and social studies.

A request

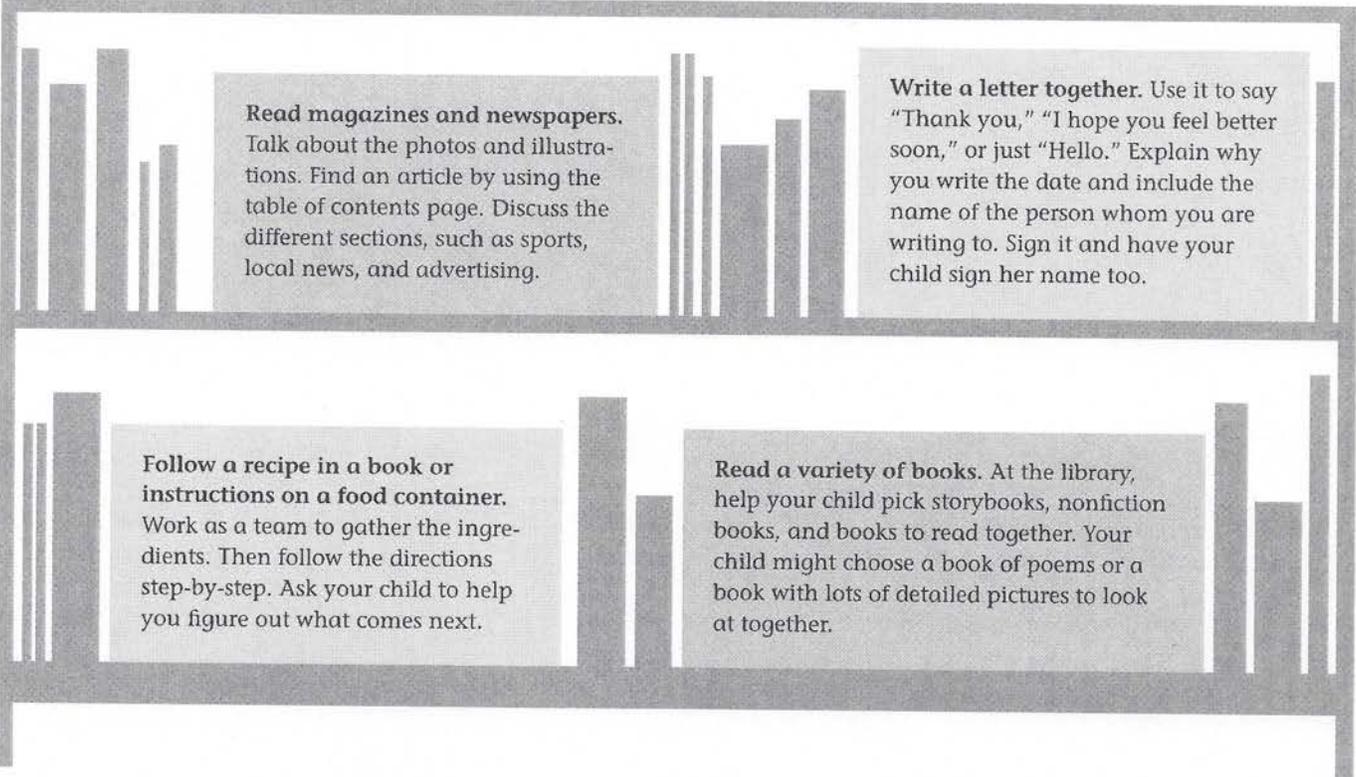
Please tell us about your family's favorite musicians or styles of music. If possible, lend us CDs your child enjoys and would like to share with the class. We will take good care of them.

- Play music made for children.** Many musicians write and sing about topics of interest to preschoolers. Their lyrics and melodies are catchy and easy to learn. The children's room at most libraries offers CDs. You can download free songs from Web sites (for example, freekidsmusic.com) and purchase CDs at the dollar store or from remainder bins at music and book stores.
- Develop literacy skills through rhymes.** When children listen to, repeat, and create rhymes, they learn to match the sounds of language. And what could better inspire rhyming than playful children's songs? As you listen together, repeat the rhyming words and encourage your child to do the same. Take turns making up your own rhyming verses.
- Sample music from around the world.** Play classical, salsa, jazz, and folk. Chat about the music you like: "I really like the jazz—it helps me relax." Ask questions: "I hear horns. What instruments do you hear?"
- Listen for details.** Ask your child to focus on the sounds of different instruments, the rhythm of the music, and the words of new songs. This will help your child learn to be a good listener in school.
- Make and play instruments.** To make a simple shaker, put dried beans between two paper plates, then staple the plates together. Find rhythm sticks outdoors. Use pan lids as cymbals, and march around the house. Try a slow march first, then a faster one.
- Expand vocabulary.** As you listen to music together, introduce and talk about new words like *rhythm* and *note*. Listen for new words in song lyrics and talk about what they mean.
- Recognize and repeat patterns.** Children can develop this math skill while listening to music. Take turns copying patterns in your favorite music, and then create your own. Start with five or fewer beats before moving on to longer patterns.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Read Anything and Everything with Your Child

In our classroom, we introduce the children to different kinds of writing—storybooks, books about topics we are studying, magazines, how-to guides, recipes, and content on the web. These are the kinds of writing that children and adults read in school and in daily life. You can read anything and everything with your child too. This helps your child learn how and why writing and reading are important and useful. Here are some ideas.



Read magazines and newspapers.

Talk about the photos and illustrations. Find an article by using the table of contents page. Discuss the different sections, such as sports, local news, and advertising.

Write a letter together. Use it to say “Thank you,” “I hope you feel better soon,” or just “Hello.” Explain why you write the date and include the name of the person whom you are writing to. Sign it and have your child sign her name too.

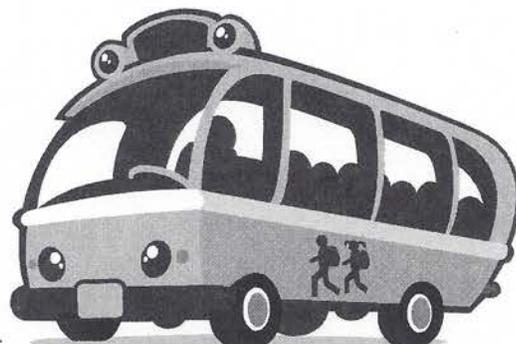
Follow a recipe in a book or instructions on a food container.

Work as a team to gather the ingredients. Then follow the directions step-by-step. Ask your child to help you figure out what comes next.

Read a variety of books. At the library, help your child pick storybooks, nonfiction books, and books to read together. Your child might choose a book of poems or a book with lots of detailed pictures to look at together.

A message from your child's teacher _____

We're Going on a Field Trip



Date/time of field trip: _____

We are going to: _____

Some things your child will see and do: _____

How this trip relates to our curriculum: _____

Please have your child bring: _____

Please have your child wear: _____

After the field trip, try these ideas to encourage your child's interests and learning.

Talk about the trip. Ask questions that will inspire your child to think about what he observed. For example, if he visited a pizza shop, you could ask, "Were the pans bigger or smaller than the ones we have at home?"

Learn more together at home. Find related books at the library, or search for Web sites with more information.

Write a letter or e-mail. Have your child write to a family member or friend to tell them about the trip. You can write down her words as she dictates them.

Take a field trip of your own. Go to a local museum, natural area, zoo, or other interesting spot. The whole family will learn together, and the new experience will give everyone plenty to talk about.

A message from your child's teacher _____

Toys to Grow On

Preschoolers learn through playing with toys and materials that let them be creative, make decisions, solve problems, and use their imaginations. You can find gently used items at yard sales and thrift shops; always look carefully to make sure the item is in good shape and all the pieces are included. Dollar stores offer arts and crafts items and props for playing house. We can give you ideas for making puzzles, games, and toys, and you can find books with ideas at the library.

Child _____

Date _____

Favorite toys, materials, and activities at preschool:

Wooden unit blocks and props ____

Puzzles ____

Other building toys ____

Games (board, matching, card) ____

Dolls and accessories ____

Art and writing supplies ____

Puppets ____

Outdoor equipment ____

Dress-up clothes ____

Books ____

Housekeeping items ____

Music ____

Vehicles (cars, trucks, trains) ____

Playdough and props ____

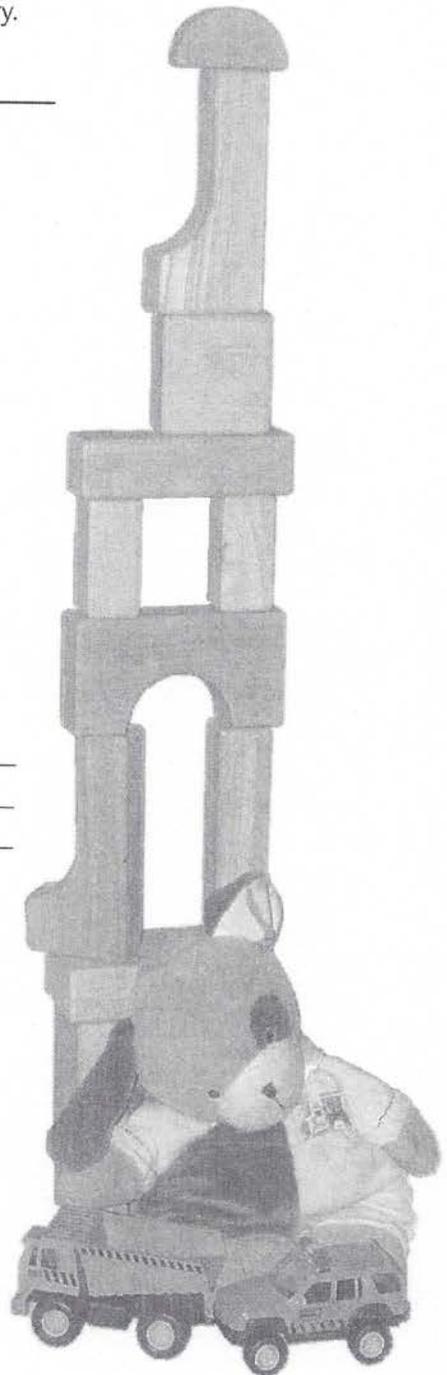
Favorite types of play: _____

Here are a few suggested toys and materials your child may enjoy at home:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Please let us know
what your child
likes to do at home.

A message from your child's teacher _____



Tips for Sun Safety

Most families with young children welcome outdoor fun and sunny days! But before you and your child take off for the parks and playgrounds, here are some sun safety tips.



Sun facts

We all need some sunlight to stay healthy. Sun exposure helps our skin produce vitamin D, which helps us absorb calcium for healthy bones. The amount of time in sunlight needed to produce enough Vitamin D is only 10 to 15 minutes per day a few times a week, depending on skin tone.

Children of all skin tones need protection from dangerous ultraviolet (UV) rays. Too much sun exposure can cause sunburn and possibly lead to skin cancer.



Outdoor Time

Outdoor play is essential. All children need opportunities for physical play and exploration outdoors. For safety's sake, try to avoid the sun's peak hours, generally between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Seek shade if your shadow is shorter than you.

Sunscreen. Select a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a factor of SPF 30 or higher. Apply sunscreen to all exposed areas of skin, including cheeks, neck, arms, legs, behind the ears, and on the nose. Apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going out, even on cloudy days. Reapply sunscreen every two hours and after swimming.

Clothing. Dress your child in lightweight clothing that covers as much of the body as possible to protect against the sun's rays. Send your child to school with a hat with a brim, marked with his or her name. The best way to protect eyes is to wear sunglasses, but not all sunglasses are the same. Look for labels stating that sunglasses provide 100 percent UV protection.



Talk to your child

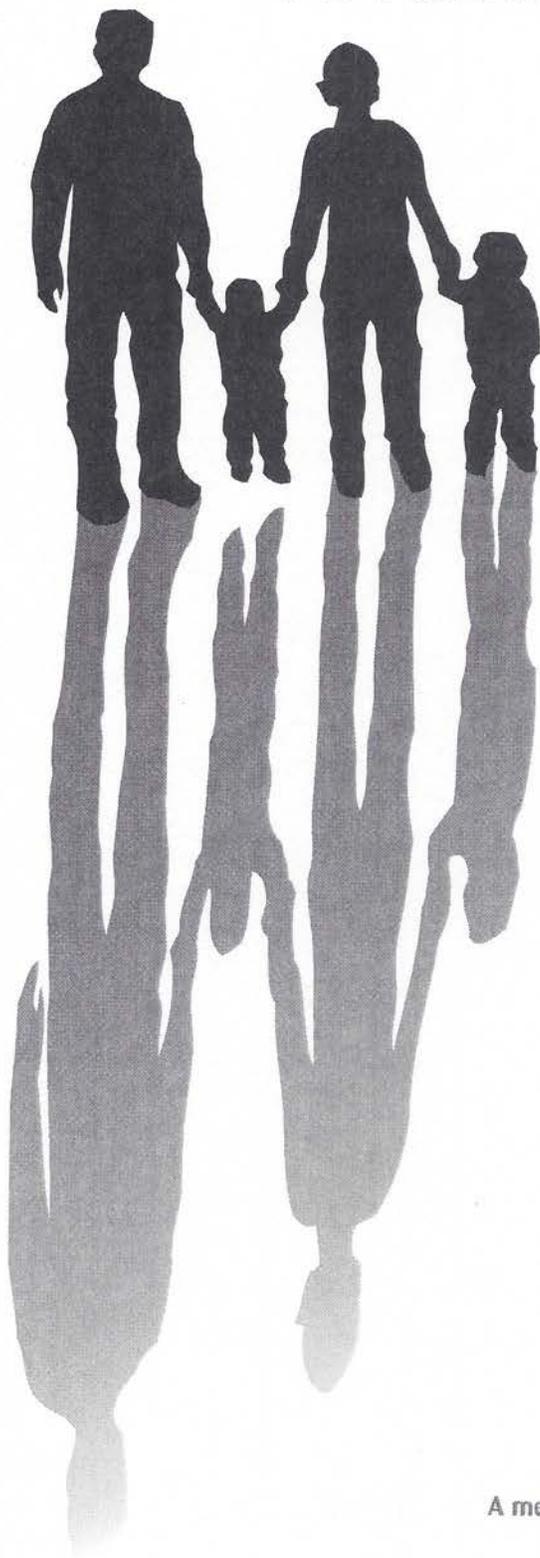
Give your child a positive message about the sun. "We need the sun to build strong bones, to help our gardens grow, and to make lovely sun tea." Remind your child to use sunscreen and wear a hat and sunglasses every day.

Be a sun safety role model

Wear a hat and sunglasses, and apply sunscreen when heading outside. Your child will follow your example.

A message from your child's teacher _____

A Family Shadow Walk



The children and teachers have been exploring shadows in our classroom and outdoors. The children have learned things like how to make shadows bigger and smaller and how to make shadows with extra legs and arms or even two heads. Family walks, no matter where (around the block, in a park, at the beach), provide wonderful opportunities to explore the mysteries of light and shadows. Enjoy the walk and the fun of observing shadows and how they change as you move about outdoors.

- Notice the shadows of the things around you—cars, a dog or cat, a bird flying from tree to tree.
- Observe the way your shadows “walk” along with you, and play with the shadows!
- Make different types of shadows by moving your arms or legs or jumping about.
- Use chalk to outline your shadow and your child’s shadow. Come back later in the day to check on your shadows. In what ways are they the same or different?
- Measure the lengths of your shadows using pieces of yarn or string or with a tape measure. Measure the shadow of other objects too, like a parked car, trees, the mailbox, or anything else that casts a shadow.
- Ask questions or make comments that help your child think:
 - I wonder what will happen to your shadow if you step forward or back?
 - What might happen if we stand close together?
 - Where is the sun in the sky right now? (Ask this at several times of the day.)
 - What happens to shadows on a cloudy day?
- Explore, observe, and enjoy doing and learning about science together!

A message from your child’s teacher _____



Talk It Up!

Why is a large vocabulary important for children?
Because it's linked to their reading and school success.

Help your child learn new words through conversations, reading aloud, and singing. In class, we like to sing _____.

Try these vocabulary-building ideas at home.

Describe what you are doing. *I'm putting the food out for breakfast. I made scrambled eggs because we all like them. There is some tangerine juice to drink. Tangerine juice tastes a lot like orange juice that you think is so yummy.*

Sing with children to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary. *After we read the book I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly, we can sing the song.*

Narrate your adventures in the car, at the grocery store, or on a walk. *Look how many plums are in the bin. They are all round and purple, except for this one on top.*

Talk about what your child is doing. *Look how high you made that LEGO skyscraper. Let's count how many pieces are in your construction.*

Talk, talk, talk. Ask your child open-ended questions and give him time to respond. *What was your favorite part of our trip to the zoo?*

Read aloud to your child every day. *What do you think it means that the spider wiggled and jiggled and tickled inside the old lady?*

A message from your child's teacher _____