

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Little School of the West
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KID BITS

Stay informed

Be sure you don't miss out on information from your child's school. Have him show you what's in his backpack each day, and sign up for class or school email lists. If you use an electronic calendar, visit your school website to learn whether you can link to it so important dates are filled in automatically.

Time to relax

Put relaxation on your family's agenda! Each day, set aside 15–30 minutes for an activity that helps everyone unwind. You might find time right after work or on weekend mornings. Together, look at family photos, blow bubbles, or lie on a blanket in the yard and watch the clouds, for example.

DID YOU KNOW?

Little ones often need extra time to think about what they want to say and to put it into words. During conversations, wait and let your youngster speak for herself. Your patience will help her become a confident speaker—and show her how to be a good listener, too.

Worth quoting

"The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it away from you." *B.B. King*

Just for fun

Q: What can you add to a bucket of water to make it lighter?

A: Holes!



I'm a student!

Your child has an exciting job—she's a student! Encourage her to embrace her "big kid" role by talking about what successful students do.

I follow routines

From circle time to story time to music class, your youngster's school day is full of fun activities. She can get used to her new routine by making a book about it. Suggest that she draw a picture of each activity (circle time, recess, math) on a separate sheet of paper. Help her write (or let her dictate) captions, such as "We go to the cafeteria for lunch." Staple the pages together, and read her book with her.

I learn something every day

Invite your child to share her new knowledge with you. Reserve a special spot on a bulletin board or the refrigerator to post projects and papers she's proud of. Then, ask questions about what she's learning. *Example:* "I see you



drew squares and triangles. How are the two shapes different? How are they the same?"

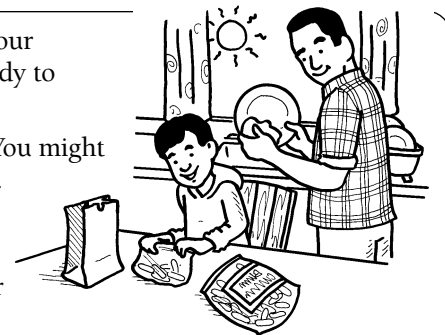
I work with others

Your youngster is part of an important community—her classroom. Play school at home so she can practice working alongside others. Have her create a "learning center" like one in her classroom, and use it together. The two of you could sort and count toy cars in a "math station" or stir together oil and water in a "science lab." ♥

Sunny starts

Starting the day on a positive note lets your youngster head off to school happy and ready to learn. Try these ideas for upbeat mornings:

- Use humor to get your child out of bed. You might sing a silly song or tell a knock-knock joke.
- Give each family member a job to make getting ready a smooth operation. You can wash breakfast dishes while your youngster packs snacks.
- Before you leave the house, hold a "morning huddle." Tell your child what to expect after school, such as who will pick him up or what's for dinner. Then, exchange hugs and an "I love you." ♥



Zippering toward independence

It's fun for kids to learn to button, zip, and tie. Here are strategies that will make your youngster more independent at home and in school.

Buttons. Use stickers to show your child which button goes with which hole in his shirt. Place one sticker next to each button, and put a matching one beside the hole where it belongs. Your youngster can remove the stickers as he fastens each button.



Zippers. To help your child zip his jacket, teach him to say, “1, 2, 3, zip!” On 1, he moves the zipper pull to the bottom of the jacket. On 2, he inserts one side into the other. On 3, he grabs the zipper pull and zips it up!

Shoelaces. Bulkier laces offer a better grip for your youngster's little fingers. Consider replacing thin shoelaces with

thicker ones or swapping out flat laces for rounded ones. *Tip:* Let him try tying the laces when his shoes are off, or have him tie *your* shoes.♥

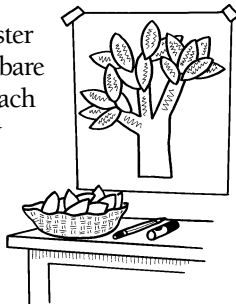


ACTIVITY CORNER

Plant a kindness tree

Does kindness grow on trees? It does when your family tries this activity that encourages your child to be kind to others.

Help your youngster draw a big tree with bare branches and label each branch with a family member's name. Hang her tree where everyone can see it. Next, have her cut leaves from colored paper and place them in a bowl near the tree along with a pencil and a glue stick.



Whenever someone notices a family member being kind, select a leaf, write about or draw a picture of the kind act, and glue the leaf to that person's branch. *Examples:* “Tony picked up my toys” or “Mommy held the door for a lady pushing a stroller.” At the end of the week, read all the leaves aloud, and “plant” a new tree for next week.♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q & A

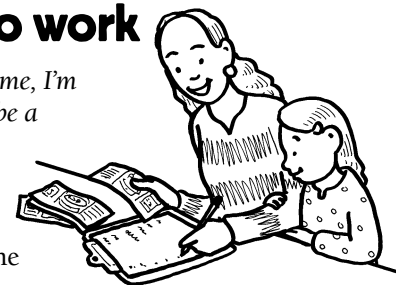
Back to school, back to work

Q: Now that my daughter is in school full time, I'm working days instead of nights. How can I be a part of her school?

A: There are plenty of ways for working parents to be involved. Talk to your daughter's teacher about how you can volunteer from home or at after-school events.

Maybe the teacher needs someone to repair torn pages in books or to collect and count food package labels for a manufacturer's reward program. Or perhaps you could hand out programs before the school musical or type and photocopy an announcement about a class party.

If your workplace would make an interesting field trip, ask your employer about the possibility of having the class visit. Little ones will enjoy seeing how newspapers are printed or going behind the scenes at a restaurant, for instance.♥



PARENT TO PARENT

A is for...

When my son Mark started learning his ABCs, he accidentally invented an alphabet game for us. He was playing with his magnetic letters on the refrigerator and said, “A is for alligator.” Then, he pretended to be an alligator creeping across the floor. I decided to turn his idea into a game using all the letters.

I had Mark put his letters in a pillowcase and shake them up. Then, we took turns pulling out a letter and acting out something that started with it. The other person had to guess the

letter. Mark hopped like a bunny for B, and I painted with an imaginary brush when I got P. The letter X was tough, so we worked together on that one—we decided to be pirates searching for treasure because “X marks the spot!”

The “act it out” game is still one of Mark's favorites, and it has been a great way for him to have fun with—and learn—letters and their sounds.♥

