



Preschoolers: What Parents Can Do At Home

Children benefit most from preschool when their teachers and parents work together. Each has something valuable to contribute. Teachers are trained in child development and early childhood education. They see how your child acts with other children and adults, and can assess what your child is learning and how he or she is progressing.

But only you have in-depth knowledge of your child. You know best your child's interests, fears, joys, patterns, and past. You are most familiar with the world your child is trying to understand. You know about the relationships among the members of your family, and have shared many of your child's experiences, from family events to trips to the doctor's office or the zoo.

This in-depth knowledge makes you a valuable resource for teachers. If you share with teachers what is happening to your child at home--the arrival of a new baby, the death of a pet, nightmares, temper tantrums, trips, separation or divorce--teachers can understand your child better. They can deal with both positive and difficult events through reassuring stories, soothing art activities, imaginative dramatic play, and extra. You are your child's first and most important teacher. Your home is a child's first and continual learning environment. As parents, you decide the family's daily routines--when to get up, eat, play, do chores, visit friends, and go to bed. The way you talk with your children makes a tremendous difference in how they think, how they feel about themselves, and the kind of people they will become.

If teachers and parents can work together, children will be much better off. The more consistent teachers and parents are, the more secure each child is likely to feel. And when children feel secure, they are more likely to explore, to experiment, and to learn.

Many parents ask what they can do to help their children succeed in school. Just try to encourage your child to explore and learn in your home environment the way we help children at school. Help your child become an independent, enthusiastic, curious learner. You don't need to buy a lot of special toys or equipment to turn a child into a creative thinker.

The best thing you can do is to be a good listener and to talk with your child as you and he or she go about your normal, everyday household chores. But you will find that this kind of attention has a wonderful effect on children and makes your job as parent more fun and interesting--and sometimes easier.

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