

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

May 2012

Arroyo Grande United Methodist Children's Center
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KID BITS



Kindergarten ahead

If your child is going to kindergarten this fall, use the summer to help her prepare. Plan to attend orientations so she can meet her teacher and tour the building. Get the supply list from the school, and shop for the items together. *Tip:* Schedule her checkup early—summer is a busy time for school physicals.

Words that describe

This word game can improve your youngster's vocabulary. Help him write descriptive words (*rough, soft, fast, curved*) on separate index cards. Then, go outside, and take turns picking a card and finding something that the word describes. For instance, bark is rough, and tulips are curved.

End-of-year volunteer

Consider volunteering to help your child's teacher with tasks. You might offer to box up books and supplies, take down bulletin boards and other decorations, and file papers. Your youngster will like knowing that you're helping out, and the teacher will have an easier time wrapping up the year.

Worth quoting

"Friends are the sunshine of life."

John Hay

Just for fun

Q: What never asks questions but has to be answered?

A: A telephone.



Summer learning is in the mail!

This summer, your child can read, write, and learn about geography—while she stays in touch with friends and relatives. Here's how.

Get ready

Help your youngster choose a spot in the house where she can write letters and postcards. She might stock a small table with writing tools (pencils, pens, colored markers), paper, and envelopes. Visit a post office to let your child pick out stamps—explain that is how we pay for mail to be delivered. Talk about what else you see there, such as mailboxes, mail carriers, and trucks.

Send mail

Your little one can practice writing by mailing letters to friends and relatives. Help her write a greeting ("Dear Aunt Allison"), a sentence or two about herself, a question for the other person, and a closing ("Love, Lily"). Then, show her how to address and stamp the envelope.



Idea: For a fun project, suggest that your youngster draw a picture and cut it into pieces. She can put her puzzle in an envelope and mail it to a friend.

Collect postcards

Getting postcards from distant places is a fun way to learn about geography. Call or email out-of-town and vacationing relatives and ask them to mail postcards to your child. When she receives one, help her read the words. Then, have her look for clues that it's from another state or country ("I see a cactus"). Each time she receives mail, let her locate the place it came from on a map and put a sticker on that spot.♥

Table manners

Family mealtime is a good opportunity to practice being polite. Show your child that good manners make a meal more pleasant with these tips:

- Encourage your little one to ask politely for food rather than reaching across others to get it. *Example:* "Please pass the salad."
- Dinner conversations can teach your youngster to listen without interrupting. Try letting everyone have a chance to share something during the meal. Remind your child to wait until others finish before he speaks.
- Talk about how to be polite even if he doesn't like what's served. He might take a small amount and try a few bites. Explain that words like "yucky" and "gross" aren't polite to the person who cooked the meal.♥



Summer goals

Whether your child wants to learn to ride a bike, count to 20, or read a book on his own, summer is a great time to work toward a goal. Use these suggestions to help him set a goal and reach it:

1. Ask your youngster to draw pictures of several things he wants to accomplish. For instance, he might draw himself on a bike with no training wheels. Let him hang the pictures on his bedroom door for inspiration.



2. Talk about ways he can meet his goals. If he wants to count to 20, you might help him find many different kinds of objects to count (colored pasta pieces, bottle caps, bingo chips). Put them in zipper bags in groups of 20 so he can count them whenever he wants.

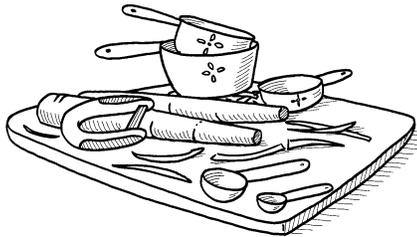
3. Encourage him to track his progress. For example, if he's trying to read a book, he can put a star on the calendar each day that he reads.

4. Once your child has achieved his goal, celebrate as a family. Pack a picnic and take a bike ride, go on a hike to count rocks or flowers, or attend a library story time. ♥



PARENT TO PARENT **Cooking together**

My daughter Abby loves to help me in the kitchen. I've discovered that it's a great way to spend time together and to teach her how to cook.



A friend told me about a vegetable peeler that's safe for kids, so Abby peels potatoes and carrots and gives them to me to slice. She also washes lettuce and tears it up for salads.

Then, I taught her to use measuring cups and spoons. She has learned the numbers and fractions on them. So if I say, "Hand me the $\frac{1}{4}$ cup," she knows which one I'm talking about. She is even reading a few words just from looking at recipes. I was happy the other day when she read "bake" and "milk."

The best part of all is that Abby likes to eat all the healthy foods she helps make! ♥

OUR PURPOSE

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

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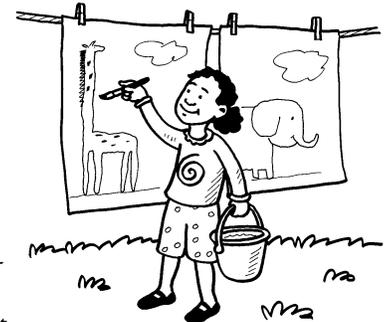
ACTIVITY CORNER **My art studio**

Boost your child's creativity and encourage her to enjoy a different kind of outdoor activity—a backyard art studio. Try these ideas.

Berry mural. Have her paint a mural. Hang up several pieces of poster board or a long strip of white paper on a fence or from a clothesline. Get a bucket of water, a brush, and some watercolors. Or if you can find wild blueberries or blackberries, help her crush them to make paint.

Leaf prints. On a sunny day, ask your child to arrange leaves of different sizes and shapes on dark construction paper. Let the arrangement stay in the sunlight for several hours. Then, she can remove the leaves to reveal the "leaf prints" on the paper.

Bug sculptures. Suggest that your youngster gather twigs, rocks, and other items from nature to make bug sculptures. Have her use sidewalk chalk to color a rock that resembles a ladybug and tape or glue on twigs for legs. Or she might color several rocks with green chalk and line them up to create a caterpillar. ♥



Q & A **Practicing English**

Q: *We speak mostly Spanish at home, so I'm worried that my son won't have many chances to use his English this summer. What suggestions do you have?*

A: Like anything your child learns in school, regular practice during the summer can keep his skills sharp.

Consider signing him up for a summer activity (T-ball team, science camp) where coaches or instructors speak English. He will have plenty of

chances to follow directions, ask questions, and participate in conversations.

You can also invite English-speaking children over to play with him. Or have an older sibling or a babysitter play a board game or read to your son in English.

Also, get some CDs or download children's songs in English.

Singing "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" or "The Wheels on the Bus" can improve your son's vocabulary and pronunciation. ♥

