Early Childhood Parents®
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Clarke County School District
make the difference!

Physical activity improves your child's ability to learn

Exercise is good for the body—and for academic achievement, too. Several studies indicate that physical activity reduces boredom, improves focus, behavior and well-being.

With the long days of summer just weeks away, now is the perfect time to commit to an active routine. Experts recommend 30 minutes of activity at least five days per week.

To help your family reach that goal:

- **Schedule a regular time** for daily exercise and stick to it. Choose a time your child is likely to have energy.
- **Keep an exercise log.** It's fun to look through it and see how committed your family is to health.
- **Make a list of active things** you and your child could do. You could run through the sprinkler, hike a trail, or play a game of tag. On rainy days, build an indoor obstacle course.
- **Take turns choosing** the types of physical activity you do.
- **Provide access** to active toys, such as balls and jump ropes.
- **Turn an errand** into an adventure by walking to the library or store.
- **Use exercise** rather than food as a reward. "After you pick up your toys, we can go to that new playground down the street!"
- **Turn chores into active play.** For young helpers, try challenging them to a "speed cleanup" race to pick up toys, or letting them help wash the car or water the garden—all great movement activities.

Source: C.M. Di Liegro and others, "Physical Activity and Brain Health," Genes, MDPI.

Take advantage of May learning opportunities

There's more to May than Mother's Day, Memorial Day and Victoria Day. Here are some other occasions that offer fun learning opportunities for you and your preschooler:

- **May 1**—Mother Goose Day. Read some favorite Mother Goose rhymes together.
- **May 4**—National Weather Observers Day. Go outside and observe the clouds together. Ask your child to draw a picture about the weather or make a collage using weather-related pictures cut from magazines.
- **May 9**—Lost Sock Memorial Day. Gather all the single socks in your house and brainstorm creative ways to reuse them.
- **May 18**—International Museum Day. Talk with your child about the value of museums. Visit a children's museum online or in person.
- **May 23**—World Turtle Day. Read a book about turtles together.
- **May 30**—Water a Flower Day. Celebrate by planting flowers outside or in containers together.

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Have fun with science by turning your bathtub into a laboratory

The bathtub is a natural playground for most young children who enjoy splishing and splashing in the water. To enhance the fun, turn your tub into a science lab!

Gather items like sponges, plastic containers, empty plastic bottles, a small rock, plastic pitchers, a large plastic bowl, bubble bath solution and rubber animals.

Once in the tub, encourage your child to:

- **Guess which items** will sink and which ones will float. Then, have your child test predictions.
- **Pour different amounts** of water into the plastic bottles. Ask your child, "Which has more water?" "Which has less?" Have your child pour each bottle's water into a bowl to verify predictions.
- **Use the pitchers** to pour and measure. Talk about the meanings of *full, half full* and *empty*.
- **Fill one container** with water and another with only soap bubbles. Talk about the concepts of *heavy* and *light*.
- **Float a large bowl on the water.** Help your child count how many rubber animals will fit in the "boat" before it sinks.

> **"Scientists have become the bearers of the torch of discovery in our quest for knowledge."**
>
> *—Stephen Hawking*

Use proven strategies to promote positive behavior this summer

When managing children's behavior, many families get stuck using the same, familiar approaches, even when they stop working. It may be saying *no* over and over. It may be using a raised voice in anger or frustration.

Try these strategies instead:

- **Focus more of your attention** on appropriate behavior. Teachers know that students sometimes misbehave just to be noticed. So, rather than focusing on what your child does wrong, focus on what your child does right and follow up with a big hug. Your preschooler will soon figure out that behaving well attracts more attention than behaving poorly.
- **Try a change of scenery.** Teachers sometimes move students who are misbehaving to another room to help them calm down. Try this same technique at home. A 10-minute walk outside with you might do more to improve your child's willingness to cooperate than a scolding would.
- **Offer reminders.** Teachers help students make better decisions by reminding them of appropriate behavior. For example, your child is playing in the kitchen and the dog's water bowl is on the floor. You've told your child many times not to splash in the water, but the bowl may be tempting enough to make your preschooler forget your warnings. So, step in before your child gets to the water bowl and say, "Remember, the dog needs his water clean. We use our toys in the playroom, not the dog's bowl."

Are you making the most of your family mealtime?

Maximize the potential of mealtime. Every meal offers interactive opportunities—from counting peas to naming colors—to reinforce your child's learning. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you're nurturing your child's brain and body:

1. **Do you let your child** help with food preparation, including measuring, pouring and mixing?
2. **Do you give your child** a few tasks, such as counting napkins and putting them on the table?
3. **Do you sit with your child** at the table, discussing topics of interest and responding to what your child says?
4. **Do you model table manners,** such as putting your napkin in your lap and saying *please* and *thank you?*
5. **Do you mention concepts** that your child is learning? *The plate is round. The milk is cold. The eggs are yellow.*

How well are you doing?

If most of your answers are *yes*, you're using mealtimes to teach your child important lessons. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

Early Childhood Parents make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children.

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Don't let screen time take over your preschooler's summer!

During the school year, you probably structure your routine around the time your child spends in preschool. As summer approaches, it's time to think about what will occupy the hours your child will not be in school?

Guard against filling the time gap with television and other screen-based activities. It is important to limit these activities because:

- **Too much screen use** robs your child of a great summer gift—nice weather and long days spent in active play.
- **Studies using brain scans** show that the beneficial white matter in the brains of children who spend hours in front of screens doesn't develop as fast as it does in children who don't.

To keep summer screen time in check:

- **Set limits.** Most pediatricians say kids ages two to five should have no more than one hour of screen time each day. Video chatting with family is not included in this time.
- **Give your child a job** when you are busy instead of handing over a digital device. Have your child sort socks, pick up toys or help you put lightweight groceries away.
- **Create an "I'm Bored Box."** With your child, make a list of activities that your child can do independently. Include things such as coloring, sorting items, looking at a book, and playing with puppets. Stock all of the items needed for the tasks in the box.

Source: S. Reinberg, "Too Much Screen Time May Stunt Toddlers' Brains," HealthDay News.

Help your child strengthen kindergarten readiness skills

Summer is the perfect time to make sure your preschooler is on the path to kindergarten readiness. When children enter kindergarten, they do better if they already have some basic skills—such as the ability to:

- **Express themselves clearly.**
- **Listen and pay attention** for short periods of time.
- **Identify some colors.**
- **Compare and contrast** two objects.
- **Work with their hands.**
- **Locate print on a page** and know that it tells a story.

To help your preschooler develop these skills over the summer:

- **Have lots of conversations.** Talk about the things your child sees and does throughout the day. Ask your child to name common objects. Point out different colors. Ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going.
- **Take time to really listen.** Does your child state thoughts clearly? Can your child retell an event in the proper sequence?
- **Offer opportunities** to build fine motor skills, such as by painting and writing together. Show your child how to zip and button clothing.
- **Read together daily.** Encourage your child to hold books and turn the pages. Encourage your child to "read" to you, too.
- **Ask your child to sort objects.** Before you wash clothes, have your child put them in piles by type or color. Talk about how items are similar and how they are different.

Questions & Answers

Q: My child is very shy and has a difficult time making friends. I'm worried that this will negatively affect my child in school. How can I boost my child's confidence and social skills?

A: Self-confidence is a developed trait, and you play a vital role! You can help your child build the confidence needed to speak up and work effectively with others. Here's how:

- **Role-play with your child.** Say, "Let's pretend you're at the playground and kids are playing a fun game that you'd like to join. What could you say?" At first, you might have your child pretend to be one of the other children. You can pretend to be your child. But then change roles.
- **Read books about friends.** Talk about what good friends do—and don't do. Thinking about what makes a good friend may help your child identify someone in preschool who could be a friend.
- **Schedule a playdate** with a classmate or neighbor. Some children feel more comfortable with just one other person than they do in a crowd.
- **Focus on your child's strengths.** Use these as a way for your preschooler to meet other children with like interests. If your child likes art, try an art class at a community center. If your child is athletic, consider signing up for a youth sports team. When young children practice the skills that they enjoy, they develop the self-confidence that can help them make friends!

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The Kindergarten Experience

Find out if your student has mastered skills

Studies show that it's essential for students to keep learning over the summer. Summer learning is especially important for kindergarten students who may not have mastered all of the skills introduced during the school year.

Below are some of the skills rising first graders should be able to do:

- **Write and recognize** upper and lowercase letters.
- **Write their name.**
- **Find a specific word in a text.** Say, "Look at this paragraph and find the word *cat*."
- **Identify words that rhyme.**
- **Identify words that start or end** with the same sounds—such as, *boat/bird* or *dog/frog.*
- **Retell familiar stories**—with a beginning, middle and end.
- **Identify the main topic** or key idea of a non-fiction text that was read aloud
- **Ask and answer questions** about a story they have listened to.
- **Write using phonetic** or invented spelling.
- **Add and subtract numbers** 1 through 10.
- **Draw pictures** to help show addition and subtraction.
- **Answer simple questions** about quantities: how many, how many more, less, all, some, none.
- **Have an interactive conversation** by listening and taking turns talking.

Talk to the teacher to understand your child's skills and learn ways to strengthen them.

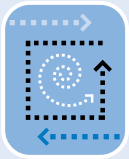
Summer reading keeps your child's literacy skills sharp

Your child learned many new reading skills in school this year. Continuing to read over the summer is the best way for your child to maintain and strengthen those skills.

Get in the habit now of making reading activities part of your child's summer fun. Here's how:

- **Read books together** about your summer activities. If you go to the zoo, read your child a book about zoo animals.
- **Enroll your child** in the summerreading program at your local library. Many libraries offer author readings, prizes and internet access. Hard to get to the library? See if there's a Bookmobile that stops in your area.
- **Engage your child** in online reading activities. There are many literacy websites and apps that offer reading lists, free digital books and print-out activities. Search "free literacy activities" to get started.
- **Bring books everywhere.** See how many places you and your child can find to read. Read on a walk, at a playground, at bath time, during dinner and with relatives you visit.

Engage in summer activities that combine learning and fun



Kindergartners have worked hard all year, and families want their children to retain what they have learned. But families also want summer to be relaxing. The good news is that there are many ways to combine learning and fun. Here are just a few:

- **Have a family spelling bee.** Give each family member words that match that person's skill level.
- **Read together** and discuss what you read. Choose books, poems and other material your child will enjoy.
- **Ask questions about science** and nature: "What would happen if we mixed red and yellow paint?" "Why does that toy float in the bath?" "What kind of bug is that?" Then, look for answers by experimenting or reading together.
- **Write down prompts** (*friendly alien, candy store*) on slips of paper. Each day, select a prompt and work with your child to tell a silly story about the idea.
- **Make math part of your day.** Play math games, count steps, measure ingredients and look for numbers everywhere.