

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

January 2019



Brandywine School District Preschool Program
Kristina J. Viar, Principal

KID BITS

I'm curious...

Curious children make eager learners. Support your little one's "let's find out" spirit by wondering aloud about everyday things. If she likes watching the garbage truck, for example, ask, "Where do you think the trash ends up?" Consider taking your trash to the landfill one day so she can see the answer for herself.

Downtime for parents

Parenting is a full-time job, and as with any other job, it's okay to take breaks. In fact, children thrive when their parents are relaxed and happy. Give yourself permission to spend some kid-free time doing things for yourself like having coffee with a friend, enjoying a favorite hobby, or taking a hot bath.

Drug safety

It's never too early to talk to your youngster about drugs. Anytime he needs medication, turn it into a teachable moment. Explain what it's for ("This medicine will bring down your fever"). Let him see you carefully read the label and measure the right amount. *Note:* Keep all medication in a locked cabinet.

Worth quoting

"Among the things you can give and still keep are your word, a smile, and a grateful heart." Zig Ziglar

Just for fun

Mom: Why are you running around your bed?

Trevor: I'm trying to catch up on sleep!



Spread a little kindness

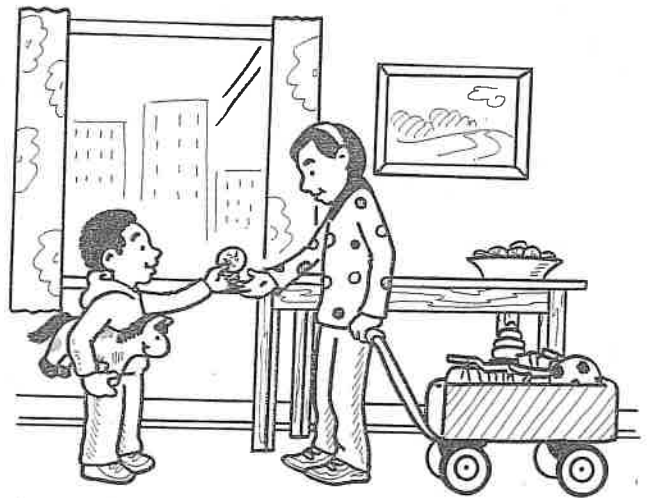
One good deed from your child can snowball into more acts of kindness with a little nudge from you. Encourage him to notice kindness and pass it on with these ideas.

Hand out buttons

Recognize good deeds as part of your family's daily routine. Help your youngster cut out paper circles and write "I was kind!" on each one. Keep the buttons in a bowl, and when someone spots a family member showing kindness, have him give that person a button. Maybe your child will present a button to his big sister for sharing a favorite toy.

Tell stories

Make up stories that could inspire your youngster to be kind. Start with a problem. "Once upon a time, a little boy lost his shovel in the sandbox." Then, your child thinks of a kind deed and adds it to the story. *Example:* "I stopped playing and helped him look for it."



Take turns adding to the story until the problem is solved.

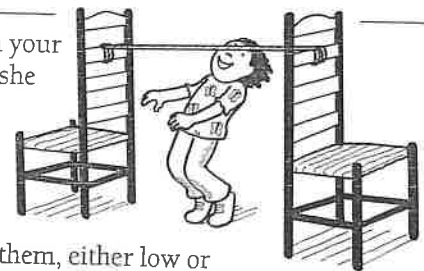
Spread it around

Tell your youngster that the two of you are kindness "ambassadors" and your job is to find ways to be kind. Agree on a special signal (wiggle your fingers, give a thumbs up) to use when you spot an opportunity. Maybe you'll give the signal when you notice that a shopper dropped her grocery list and your child can pick it up for her.♥

Over, under, and through

Set up a homemade obstacle course with your youngster. She'll build large motor skills as she jumps, crawls, and tiptoes. Here's how:

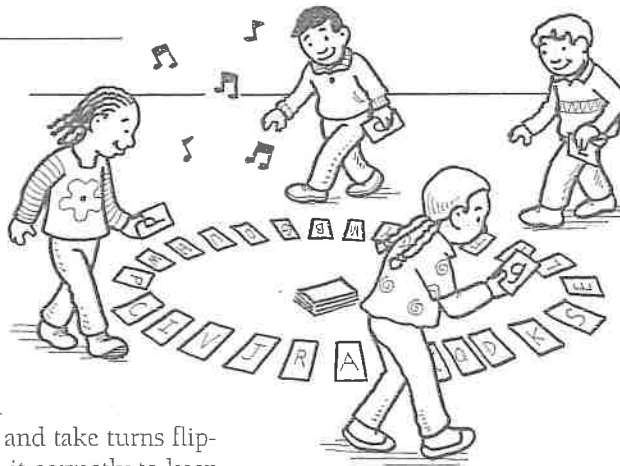
- Arrange paper towel tubes on the floor like the rungs of a ladder—they're "hurdles" for your child to hop over.
- Connect two chairs by tying yarn around them, either low or high. Your youngster could step over or "limbo" under the yarn.
- Put painter's tape or masking tape on the floor in a zigzag pattern. Have your child tiptoe across the "balance beam."
- Scatter paper plates on the floor, tape them in place, and let her leap from one "lily pad" to the next.♥



ABC card games

Learning the alphabet is fun! Write each letter (uppercase and lowercase) on a separate index card for your youngster, and play these games that let her practice recognizing her ABCs.

Animal swipe. Have your child draw animals on five index cards. Shuffle the lowercase alphabet cards with the animal cards. Then, lay them facedown in rows, and take turns flipping over a card. If you get a letter, name it correctly to keep the card. But if you turn over an animal card, make that animal's sound, and swipe a letter card from the other player. Collect the most cards to win. Play again with the uppercase letters.



Alphabet walk. Randomly arrange the uppercase letters faceup in a circle on the floor, and stack the lowercase ones facedown in the center. Each player takes one lowercase letter. Have one person turn on music, while the others walk around the circle and try to find the uppercase letter that matches their card. If they find it before the person turns off the music, they keep both cards. When all the cards have been claimed, the person with the most wins. ♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

Make a snow globe

This homemade snow globe lets your child explore chemistry.

Materials: clear jar with a lid, small plastic animals or other toys, glue, rubbing alcohol, glitter, vegetable oil

Help your youngster glue toys into the bottom of the jar to design a wintry scene. Then, fill the jar about $\frac{1}{4}$ full with rubbing alcohol, and let him sprinkle in "snow" (glitter). Have him pour in vegetable oil to the top of the jar. Now he can screw on the lid, shake the jar, and set it on the table.



It's snowing inside the jar! Shaking the jar broke the oil into tiny drops. The drops and the glitter sank to the bottom because they're denser—the particles in them are packed together tighter than those in the alcohol. ♥

Q & A

Ready for kindergarten

Q: I received a notice about kindergarten registration for my preschooler. What can I start doing to help her get ready for elementary school?

A: In preschool, your daughter is learning many of the readiness skills she'll need, such as getting along with others, expressing emotions appropriately, and listening and following directions.

At home, make sure your daughter has basic self-help skills. For example, she'll need to take care of all her restroom needs independently. If she will use a backpack, help her practice putting it on and taking it off as well as zipping and unzipping it. She could also work on skills she will need in the cafeteria, like carrying a tray of food and opening her milk carton. And if your daughter still takes a nap, gradually ease her into staying awake all day by making her naps shorter. You could have her go to bed earlier to help her adjust.

Finally, at registration, find out about important events like open house or kindergarten-readiness programs. ♥



Handling anxiety

Little ones have big imaginations, and sometimes that can lead to worries. These suggestions will help your youngster cope with situations that make him feel anxious.

● **Accept his feelings.** Your child's concerns are real to him, even if they seem minor to you. Instead of telling him not to worry, you could say, "I know you feel nervous in crowds. I'll hold your hand the whole time."

● **Talk it out.** Often, simply discussing your youngster's anxiety

can lessen it. "That thunder really is loud, isn't it? Do you know what causes thunder?"

● **Offer options.** Give your child power over a source of anxiety. If he's anxious about "monsters under his bed," let him look underneath with a flashlight or draw a picture of a friendly monster to hang by his bed.

Note: If your youngster's anxiety interferes with daily activities, consult his pediatrician. ♥



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KID BITS

Staying safe

Talking to your youngster about stranger safety is crucial. But it's also important to let him know he should tell you if anyone—stranger or not—makes him feel uncomfortable. Also, explain that he needs your permission to go someplace with anyone, even if it's a person he knows.

Sibling squabbles

It's normal for siblings to fight. But when you need a break from the latest chorus of "She's staring at me!" try this. Rather than refereeing, calmly send your children to play in separate areas until they cool down. They'll get the message that you won't take sides in an argument.

Try, try again

When you make a simple mistake, ask your youngster for advice. "Oops, I cut this wrapping paper too short. Any ideas for how to fix it?" Then, try his suggestion. Maybe he'll say you could tape another piece to the end. You'll show him that you value his opinion—and help him learn to persevere.

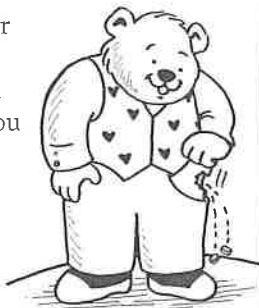
Worth quoting

"A good laugh is sunshine in the house." *William Makepeace Thackeray*

Just for fun

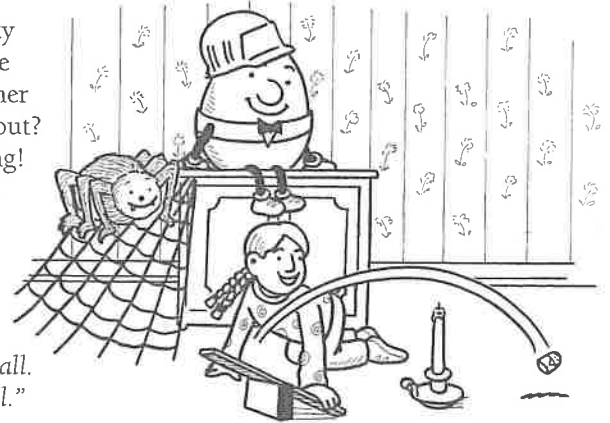
Q: You have four nickels in your pocket. Two fall out. What do you have in your pocket now?

A: A hole!



Nursery-rhyme engineering

How could Humpty Dumpty avoid cracking? How might the Itsy Bitsy Spider catch her dinner after climbing up the water spout? All it takes is a little engineering! Read nursery rhymes together, then try these projects that build your youngster's engineering skills.



Safety suit

"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall."

Hard-boil some eggs, and have your child design a device that would keep Humpty Dumpty safe. She might wrap "Humpty" in a sponge and use rubber bands to buckle him in. She could test her design by dropping Humpty on the floor. If he cracks, she can redesign and test again.

Candlestick catapult

"Jack be nimble, Jack be quick, Jack jump over the candlestick."

Suggest that your youngster create a catapult to launch Jack safely over a candlestick. Set an unlit candle on the floor. Then, let her balance a ruler on a block (like a seesaw) and put a toy figure ("Jack") on one end. When she pushes

down on the other end, Jack "jumps" over the candle! If Jack doesn't make it, your child can make adjustments.

Sticky spiderweb

"The Itsy Bitsy Spider climbed up the water spout. Down came the rain and washed the spider out."

Have your child stack three craft sticks, fan them out, and glue them together in the center. Then, she can weave yarn around them into a "spiderweb." Will the web catch the spider's dinner? To test her design, she could crumple paper into tiny balls (to represent flies) and toss them at the web while you hold it up. Encourage her to reinforce any holes with more yarn if a fly gets through.♥

I ♥ you

Strong parent-child bonds provide little ones with a sense of security and boost their confidence. Give your youngster a case of the "warm fuzzies" with these tips for saying "I love you":

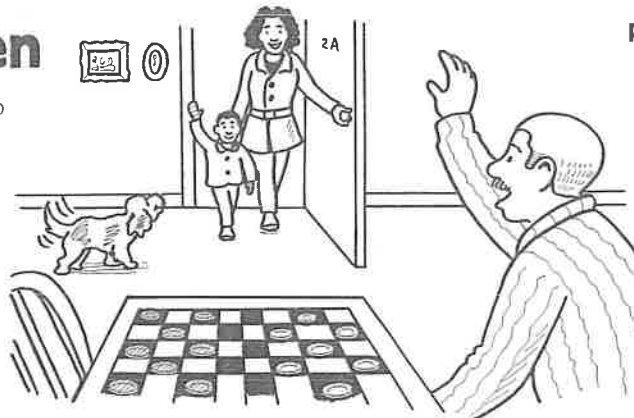
- Use a comparison: "I love you like ___ loves ___." For example, "I love you like Winnie the Pooh loves honey."
- Set aside a special time with your child and do his favorite activities, such as visiting a playground.
- Invent a secret "I love you" signal for each other, perhaps squeezing his hand three times.
- Write a love note to your youngster, and seal it in an envelope. Deliver his "mail" to him in person.♥



Be a good citizen

It's easy to encourage your child to become a good citizen. These ideas will show how obeying rules, serving others, and taking care of property make your community a safer, more pleasant place for everyone.

Point out rules you follow. When you walk the dog on a leash, buckle your seat belts, or use a crosswalk, point out that you're being good citizens. Ask him how obeying laws like these keeps people (and pets!) safer. He might say that the leash prevents his puppy from running into the street.



Reach out to others. Let your child do age-appropriate community service. For instance, if a family loses their home in a fire, have him help you pick out a toy to donate. Or take him with you to play a game or do a craft with an older neighbor who lives alone.

Show respect for property. Together, think of ways you each take care of property you share with others. Maybe your

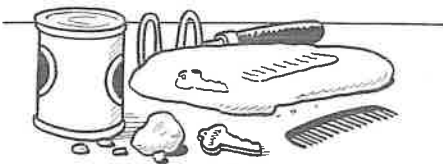
child will say he returns library books on time so others can read them. And you might tell him how you refill the copier paper at work if you notice it's running low.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER



Good impressions

All you need are household objects and play dough for this activity. Your youngster will practice paying attention to detail—an important skill for identifying letters and numbers. Here's how.



1. Gather items that can be used to make impressions in play dough. Good examples include coins, a key, a comb, a potato masher, and small toys.
2. Let your child roll the dough flat. While she keeps her eyes closed, choose an object, and press it in the dough to make an impression.
3. Now she can open her eyes and try to identify the item you used by comparing the objects to the impression.
4. Once she figures it out, let her roll out the dough again and make a print for you.♥

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PARENT TO PARENT

Make healthy snacks together

Since my daughter Sophia loves to play chef in her toy kitchen, I decided to encourage her to cook for real. I thought this would help her become more independent—and eat better, too.

Now when she comes home, we fix a nutritious snack together. Sometimes we use a recipe, but most of the time we get creative and come up with our own.

One of our favorite snacks is mini pizzas. Sophia puts whole-wheat English muffins on a cookie sheet, spoons pizza sauce on top, and sprinkles on shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese. Other times we make “ants on a log”—she spreads cream cheese on celery sticks and tops them with raisins.

Sophia gets a kick out of “cooking,” and I like knowing that she's eating healthy snacks.♥



Q & A

Is my child on target?

Q: My son seems to pick up some skills more slowly than his classmates do. His teacher said he shows no signs of a developmental delay, although I can't help but worry. What should I do?

A: You can feel confident that your son's teacher observes students closely to discover what they know—and whether they need extra help.

However, it's hard as a parent not to worry when you see other kids do things your child is still working on. It may help to keep in mind that children learn and develop at different rates. One student might pick up

counting right away while another might learn to write his name first.

Try focusing on helping your son develop a love of learning. Show interest in the work he brings home. Snuggle up and read aloud to him. And do playful learning activities together, such as singing counting songs, building with blocks, or taking nature walks to observe plants and animals.

If you continue to have concerns, ask the teacher for a conference. She will update you on your son's progress, and you can ask about ways to help him at home.♥

