

## **PARENTS ARE A CHILD'S FIRST AND BEST TEACHER**

As your child's first teacher, please look over these ideas and use them while playing with your child. Children need experience using language and "hands on" activities. Children learn by being involved in their surroundings. These ideas should be ongoing and not done just once or twice. EVERY MOMENT IS A TEACHABLE MOMENT. Capture as many of these moments as you can!

**Personal Information** – Children's knowledge of personal information is a rote skill. It is important for them to understand the meaning of this information. Explain to your children that they have a first, middle, and last name. Refer to other family members using their first, middle, and last names. Review these occasionally with family pictures including your child's picture. Other personal information such as age, birth date, address, and phone number could also be taught using these methods. Be certain your child understands the meaning of the information. Practice their knowledge of the information often and stress its importance.

**Color Identification** – Use color words when you talk. Say things like: Look at the blue fish, the purple flower, or the green paper. Ask your child questions such as: What color is your shirt? Your pocket? Your belt? Use color words for giving your child directions such as: Go get your green and blue striped shirt and your blue socks. While you are in the car, ask questions about the color of the things they see. Play color-matching games. Remind babysitters and grandparents to use color words and color games.

**Language Development** – All of the activities suggested on this handout are opportunities to build language. A child learns to use language by listening and having an opportunity to speak with other people. Talk to your child as much as possible. Use the time spent in the car, the checkout line, during baths, preparing meals, and other times when your hands are busy but your mind is free to talk. Name and explain things as your child experiences them. Say things like: See how I peel the potatoes. Potatoes have skins on them that we take off when we cook. Potatoes are a vegetable. We like to eat them mashed, fried, baked or cut into French fries. Which is your favorite? While in the car say things like: See the cow in the field? Cows say moo. Are cows bigger than dogs? Children are natural explorers and are curious. Help them to answer their questions about the world through discovery.

**Fine Motor Skills** – Allow your child to use various writing tools like pencils, pens, markers, crayons, etc. to color and begin to write his/her name. Show your child the correct form of the letters such as a capital letter at the beginning of the name and lower case letters for the rest of the name. Talk about how the letters may have straight lines and curved lines. Use clay or play-dough to make letters. Make cookies in the shape of the child's name and discuss how the letters look.

**Gross Motor Skills** – Children need lots of opportunities to run and jump. Skipping is a necessary motor skill in reading readiness, but a child will not be able to skip until he/she has learned to hop and gallop well. Don't push your child to skip. It is better to work on hopping and galloping and the skipping will come when the child is ready. Catching a ball takes a great deal of eye-hand coordination. All children need lots of practice. Begin with a large ball and gradually work downward as the child improves.

**Identifying Body Parts** – Body parts can be taught with daily informal conversation and simple games. As you point to a part of your body say: What's this? Ask questions such as: Where do we wear a hat? Where do we wear a ring? How many noses do you have? Use a doll or stuffed animal to point out body parts and also to discuss likenesses and differences.

**Number Concepts and Rote Counting** – Counting 1-10 is a rote memory skill. Number comprehension implies understanding what numbers mean. The child would understand that the number 2 means two objects. Have your child count during everyday activities. Have the child count silverware before you set it out. If your child needs 4 forks, give him\her 2 and ask your child how many more are needed. Use playing cards to learn what number is bigger or smaller. Say: The number 5 beats a 4 because it is more. Using popcorn for number readiness works very well. Say to your child: Count how many pieces are in your hand. Who has the most? Give me 5 pieces. I'll give you 3 pieces. Try giving the wrong amounts and see if your child can tell. Give two people pieces of popcorn and ask if one has more, less, or equal amounts.

**Visual Motor** – Make shapes on brown grocery bags. Let your child try to trace it with his/her finger first, then with pencils or crayons. Trace around cans and magazine labels. Later he\she can copy something you write. You make a circle and a square, and the child copies it. The child can even cut them out. In developing motor skills it is also helpful to work on gross motor skills such as jumping, hopping, galloping, skipping, standing on one foot, throwing and catching a ball.

**Visual Discrimination** – Do matching games and alike and different games. Point to the shape of an object in your home and have your child find another object with that shape. Say things like: See the round bowl. What else is round? Let's look for squares in the living room. I am drawing a small circle. Can you make a bigger circle? Are the box and the table the same shape? Is a TV the same shape as a plate? Can you find two letters that are the same on this cereal box?

**General Knowledge** – General knowledge is gained by living and experiencing things in life. The more experiences your child has, the broader his\her general knowledge. We need to talk to our children and explain things that seem simple to us. Don't assume they know that a banana is yellow or that hats keep your ears and head warm. Talk to your child about such things as what you do when you are hot and what it means when the phone rings. Name everyday objects, animals, people, places, etc. Help your child understand everyday actions and why things happen. Remember to ask many why, where, when, how, and what questions to help your child understand his/her world. Give your child many new experiences and talk about them. By answering questions and talking to your child you will help raise his\her self-esteem and confidence.