



March 2012

Check out what is happening at Wright Field North Child Development Center!

Going to School or Child Care: Addressing Problems

It's the Chemistry

"In the end, there is a fit between child and teacher. Some fits are good, some are not. Keep in mind that this is an arranged marriage and both sides have to work at it. The teacher can't expect that all children will adapt to her and parents can't expect that all teachers will adapt to their child. The teacher has to reach out to the child and the child has to learn the patterns and behaviors of the teacher. Parents have to help the child realize that the teacher is just a person with strengths and limitations. The teacher needs to learn the same about the child. Everything about good teaching is meeting in the middle." **Michael Thompson, Ph.D.** Author, *The Pressured Child*

There may be times when serious conflicts arise and you will need to meet with a teacher, a guidance counselor or principal to discuss them. Check out these ideas before you go to that meeting.

Acknowledge your child's feelings. "If you get repeated complaints that make sense, you do need to validate your child's feelings and then take some action," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "Unfortunately this may interfere with the trust you want to exist between parent and teacher, but in these extreme cases, your child needs to know that you take her feelings seriously."

Consider the teacher's point of view. While it's important to acknowledge your child's description of an event, you should also keep an open mind and listen to what the school has to say before making a judgment, particularly when serious complaints and discipline issues arise. "The story you may hear from your child may not be the whole gospel truth," notes Lawrence Cohen, Ph.D., author of *Playful Parenting*. "It's usually a complex situation that requires a perspective from the teacher. But don't dismiss your child's complaint either."

Evaluate teachers fairly. There will be some teachers you may love and your child may dislike, there may be others your child may love, but you may not. "There are ways to work out a positive relationship with your child's teacher, even if you have issues about the teacher," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D. "Keep in mind that your child may feel very differently than you do, both positively and negatively. And your job is to advocate for your child and remember that you are not the one in the classroom, he is."

Meet with the administration. If a respectful meeting with the teacher does not produce solutions for your concerns, then you need to go to a guidance counselor or principal and say, "my child is having a difficult time," and explain why. Approach this meeting with specific information, and offer to brainstorm what can be done to help. Describe specific incidents in a factual way. "You cannot expect immediate action, but it's important to give the feedback, and to ask the school system to address these issues with the teacher and find a solution that works for your child," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

The Parent's Role

The Learning Environment

"Parents can inspire kids to grow up to love learning and do well in school, by paying less attention to the actual specifics of the homework, but instead by creating learning-rich environments in and outside of the home. Flash cards and learning CD-ROMs are not the only things that promote learners. And they may not be the best ones. Instead, start by turning off the TV and limit the viewing. Read with your child. Experience the world together—take nature walks, go to museums and the theater, watch old movies, and then read some more." **Michael Thompson, Ph.D.**, Author of *The Pressured Child*.

Although a parent's role in their children's learning evolves as kids grow, one thing remains constant: we are our children's learning models. Our attitudes about education can inspire theirs and show them how to take charge of their own educational journey.

Be a role model for learning. In the early years, parents are their children's first teachers — exploring nature, reading together, cooking together, and counting together. When a young child begins formal school, the parent's job is to show him how school can extend the learning you began together at home, and how exciting and meaningful this learning can be. As preschoolers grow into school age kids, parents become their children's learning coaches. Through guidance and reminders, parents help their kids organize their time and support their desires to learn new things in and out of school.

Pay attention to what your child loves. "One of the most important things a parent can do is notice her child. Is he a talker or is he shy? Find out what interests him and help him explore it. Let your child show you the way he likes to learn," recommends Dalton Miller-Jones, Ph.D.

Tune into how your child learns. Many children use a combination of modalities to study and learn. Some learn visually through making and seeing pictures, others through tactile experiences, like building block towers and working with clay. Still others are auditory learners who pay most attention to what they hear. And they may not learn the same way their siblings (or you) do. By paying attention to how your child learns, you may be able to pique his interest and explain tough topics by drawing pictures together, creating charts, building models, singing songs and even making up rhymes.

Practice what your child learns at school. Many teachers encourage parents to go over what their young children are learning in a non-pressured way and to practice what they may need extra help with. This doesn't mean drilling them for success, but it may mean going over basic counting skills, multiplication tables or letter recognition, depending on the needs and learning level of your child. "There may be times to review, but don't take on the role of drill master," adds Diane Levin, Ph.D. " And when you do review it should feel as if your child wants to be a part of the practice."

Set aside time to read together. Read aloud regularly, even to older kids. If your child is a reluctant reader, reading aloud will expose her to the structure and vocabulary of good literature and get her interested in reading more. "Reading the first two chapters of a book together can help, because these are often the toughest in terms of plot," notes Susan Becker, M. Ed. "Also try alternating: you read one chapter aloud, she reads another to herself. And let kids pick the books they like. Book series are great for reluctant readers. It's OK to read easy, interesting books instead of harder novels."

Connect what your child learns to everyday life. Make learning part of your child's everyday experience, especially when it comes out of your child's natural questions. When you cook together, do measuring math. When you drive in the car, count license plates and talk about the states. When you turn on the blender, explore how it works together. When your child studies the weather, talk about why it was so hot at the beach. Have give-and-take conversations, listening to your child's ideas instead of pouring information into their heads.

Connect what your child learns to the world. Find age-appropriate ways to help your older child connect his school learning to world events. Start by asking questions. For example, ask a second-grader if she knows about a recent event, and what's she heard. Then ask what she could do to help (such as sending supplies to hurricane victims). You might ask a younger child if he's heard about anything the news, and find out what he knows. This will help your child become a caring learner.

Help your child take charge of his learning. "We want to keep children in charge of their learning and become responsible for it," says Dalton Miller-Jones, Ph.D. "We want them to be responsible for their successes and failures, show them how engaging learning is, and that the motivations for learning should be the child's intrinsic interests, not an external reward."

Don't over-schedule your child. While you may want to supplement school with outside activities, be judicious about how much you let or urge your child to do. Kids need downtime as much as they may need to pursue extra-curricular activities. "If a child has homework and organized sports and a music lesson and is part of a youth group in church or synagogue, it can quickly become a joyless race from one thing to another. Therefore, monitor your child to see that he is truly enjoying what he is doing. If he isn't, cut something off the schedule," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

Keep TV to a minimum. "Watching lots of TV does not give children the chance to develop their own interests and explore on their own, because it controls the agenda," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D. "However, unstructured time with books, toys, crafts and friends allows children to learn how to be in charge of their agenda, and to develop their own interests, skills, solutions and expertise."

Learn something new yourself. Learning something new yourself is a great way to model the learning process for your child. Take up a new language or craft, or read about an unfamiliar topic. Show your child what you are learning and how you may be struggling. You'll gain a better understanding of what your child is going through.

Video Games: Preschoolers



Many young children lack the physical and cognitive ability to play a video game that requires a console and hand-held controls. That does not stop some of them from experimenting with computer games at very young ages. Though it's tempting to tend to something else while your child is absorbed by the images and sounds of an electronic game, the greatest learning will take place when he's interacting with you as well as the game. Asking him questions, giving him a chance to show you what he's mastered and letting him describe a game as he sees it are all ways to help him get the most out of his computer or video-game playtime. (Don't be surprised, by the way, if he sees a game quite differently than you do.)

4 Ways to Make the Most of Electronic Games

1. **Ask your child questions about the video or computer games he likes.** Your questions will get your child thinking about what comes next: What are you trying to do? What happens if you push that button? If you feel unsure of a game, join in and get to know what's involved.
2. **Ask your child what he discovered about a new game or level.** Find out what your child understands about his computer play. Because what he has accomplished is not the same as what he has discovered, you may need to ask guiding questions: What did you do that was new? Have you ever done that before?
3. **Limit how much time your child plays electronic games.** Physical games outdoors, interacting with friends and family, making arts and crafts, and exploring other kinds of play are all key to his development.
4. **Familiarize yourself with game ratings and reviews beforehand.** The [Entertainment Software Ratings Board](#) rates both video games and computer games. Web sites such as VideoGame Review offer editorial and consumer reviews. After reading a few reviews, rent or borrow a game and try it out before you consider buying it.

4 Software Qualities that Benefit Children's Development

1. **Multiple levels of difficulty.** Being able to set the skill level allows your child to begin in an open-ended "explore" mode. As he masters the program, he can then move on to more challenging levels at his own pace.
2. **Chances to make decisions.** Look for games and activities that give your child opportunities to express his preferences and interests, rather than having everything preset by the software. The freedom to select a color or a character at the outset of a game—as well as the chance to make other choices throughout the play—will develop your child's independence and sense of control.
3. **Multiple players at once.** Playing a computer game or program with someone else—another child or perhaps you—gives your child a chance to talk about what he's learning and discovering. These conversations are a great way to find out what he is experiencing. You may be surprised: what you see your child doing may be different from what he thinks he's doing.

4. **Absence of stereotypes and violence.** Subtle gender and cultural bias may be embedded in some activities. A character's voice, for example, may connect a certain accent to a negative behavior. Read online reviews or rent games before you make any purchase. Avoid games whose characters use violence to resolve conflict.

Early Learning-Testing It Out!

Babies learn by exploring their environment.

Babies learn about how the world works by grabbing, banging, dropping and throwing. They are naturally curious and will crawl or walk towards anything of interest — even if it's fragile or dangerous. This information becomes what they know.

Babies test what they know by trying things again and again.

They start with a question about something they know, like "Will that spoon go clank if I drop it again?" Babies are like miniature scientists, testing their ideas or theories. Researchers call this process "hypothesis testing."

Here's how a baby tests things out.

(While babies can't think in words, this is their thought process.)

"I see a mobile hanging above my crib."

"Can I make that mobile move?"

"Yes! I moved the mobile with my foot."

"I think that if I kick the mobile, it will move."

"I will test this idea by kicking it again. And again!"

"I've learned how to make the mobile move. I will kick it again!"

Take-Away Tip

How to Keep Testing From Driving You Crazy!

It's natural for your baby's testing to try your patience. After all, you already know the answer. (And how many times do you want to go pick up that spoon?)

Understanding that your baby learns by testing — rather than tests to annoy you — will help keep it from driving you crazy. Celebrate his discovery and his smile will make you smile right back!

One discovery leads to more testing.

Once a baby learns how to make one thing happen, he wants to make everything happen. And with every new discovery, he needs to test it out again. "If I pour the water, the table will get wet. If I throw the ball, Mommy will throw it back." Like scientists, the more kids experiment, the more they learn.

Childproofing your house makes (most) testing safe.

Babies are not born understanding the dangers of their environment. It's your job to make their environment safe and fun to explore. You also need to show your baby what is safe to test, and what is not.

Encourage your baby to test and watch him learn!

Give your baby plenty of free time on the floor to explore, test and learn about the world. Applaud his discoveries. How you respond to testing will encourage or discourage your baby's learning about his world. Join in the test, even if it means playing peek-a-boo over and over again.

Did you know...

•The program provides individualized activities for children from across the curriculum, to include: language and communication, blocks, dramatic play, art, library, woodworking, discovery, sensory, music and movement, and writing and computers, as well as many other age-appropriate activities.

Grade-by-Grade Learning: Pre-K



"The skills needed to resolve conflicts do not develop automatically; they develop when adults help children work through problems. Preschool teachers help children learn about their own feelings and how to see another person's point of view, encourage children to find words to use to talk about their feelings and problems, and help them figure out strategies for working out problems so everybody wins."

Diane Levin, Ph.D.

Professor of Education, Wheelock College. Author, *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times*.

The Basics

In preschool, children learn about the world through play. Subject areas aren't separate in their minds or in the classroom. The objects preschoolers find on a nature walk, like feathers, rocks and leaves, might help them figure out math concepts like "big, bigger, and biggest" or motivate them to visit the book corner to find out more about birds. Teachers may introduce children to basic concepts such as shapes, letters, and colors, but preschool is about learning much more than what a circle looks like. It's where children first develop a relationship with learning.

Language & Literacy

Children spend most of the preschool day working together with classmates. Each conversation, whether talking about the class pet or deciding which color block to put on top of their tower, helps children develop their thoughts and language. Preschool teachers read aloud simple stories like *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault) and *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (by Eric Carle) to show children that text runs from left to right, expose them to new vocabulary, point out letter sounds and rhyming words, and help children talk about what they read. Writing often appears as scribbles in the preschool classroom, but letters or shapes that resemble letters soon pop up as children try to write their own names in creative ways. Teachers model writing for preschoolers throughout the day. Many children will not be able to write words conventionally. However, every scribble shows that a child understands that the printed word carries messages, and that she is excited to be able to create these messages.

Math

Preschoolers use numbers every day when they count milk cartons for lunch or figure out how many children are at a table. They work with geometric shapes such as triangles, rectangles, and squares in the block center, and through art projects. They measure at the water table when they compare the size of their hands and feet. Preschool teachers invite children to arrange items in a series or pattern when they make collages and other art projects. Teachers also use simple graphs to present concepts, for example, determining how many children wear mittens to school and how many wear gloves.

Science

Preschoolers are scientists. They learn about the world by observing and experimenting. Natural things fascinate them, from rocks, to animals, to their baby brothers and sisters. They also notice the many ways that they can influence the natural world. Preschoolers may plant seeds, or watch what happens to an ice cube in a warm room. They'll test what sinks and what floats at the water table, and which blowers make the biggest bubbles. They'll find non-fiction books about animals and nature in the classroom library.

Social Studies

Preschool social studies are where children learn about their place in the world. Understanding how to get along with others can often take up the biggest part of a preschooler's day. Children learn how to resolve conflicts and practice skills like sharing, taking turns and cleaning up. They figure out how to express their feelings using words. The class may also explore its community and the people in it by taking short field trips around the neighborhood.

Becoming Learners

In preschool, children first learn "how to learn." They begin to form their attitudes toward school and to see themselves as learners. Strong preschool experiences will help a child think, "I am a good learner. I can find problems to solve. I can master a difficult task." These experiences show preschool children the power that learning holds.

Learning through Play

If you want to know how your preschooler learns at school, just think about the way she learns at home. When your child helps you measure ingredients for her favorite cookie recipe, she's getting a math lesson. When he makes sand castles at the beach and then watches the wave wash them away, he's learning earth science — although he's probably not ready to understand the term "erosion." In school, preschoolers learn through play in the same ways, with the guidance of their teachers. They experiment with the properties of matter at the sand and water tables. They learn phonics when they sing songs together. They master important physics concepts like balance and stability as they build blocks at the block center.

One Skill at a Time

Most preschoolers are not developmentally ready to keep more than one concept in their heads at a time. Take counting, for example. At first, numbers that a child counts in a sing-song manner are just a sequence of words. Then all of a sudden the words become useful as the child learns to match them to an amount by counting fingers. The numbers have now been matched to a meaning.

Forming Pictures in their Heads

"Preschoolers also learn about their world by forming visual pictures — or little movies in their heads," notes Diane Levin, Ph.D. "Each thought they're thinking is like a frame of the movie. They construct these visual movies in their minds as they play. One movie could be about how to make the blocks fit together, another about how to make the blocks into something else. More movies might be about how to work with other kids to create what they want to do and how to solve the problems that can arise. These mental movies help them get familiar with a process and figure out a situation."

Learn the Lingo

Q: What's Developmentally Appropriate Practice?

A: Developmentally Appropriate Practice describes a teaching approach that focuses on the particular needs of the child based upon his physical, educational, emotional and social development. A developmentally appropriate math lesson for a preschooler would ask him to count cups for the class at lunchtime, rather than sit at a desk doing a math worksheet.

March 2012

What: Parent Advisory Board Meeting

Where: Wright Field North CDC

When: TENTATIVE Tuesday, March 20th

Time: 1130 am

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