

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

April 2015

Granite School District



KID BITS

Riddle me this

Your child can practice describing objects by making up riddles with you. Have him secretly choose a toy and tell you about it without naming it. (“It is yellow, has four wheels, and takes kids to school.”) You use his clues to guess the toy (a school bus). Then, describe one for him to figure out.

Healthy snacks

Youngsters are more likely to eat nutritious snacks if they choose and prepare them. For example, let your child top yogurt with blueberries or spread almond butter on whole-grain crackers. *Bonus:* Eating a healthy diet helps her feel better and learn better.

Family playtime

Children love it when their parents play with them. Jump rope on the sidewalk, or look for four-leaf clovers in your yard. At the park, go down a slide or swing side by side. Try a game of follow the leader—whatever your youngster does on playground equipment, you do, too. He will get a kick out of seeing you act like a kid!

Worth quoting

“Weeds are flowers, too, once you get to know them.” A. A. Milne

Just for fun

Q: Why does a robin carry worms in its beak?

A: It doesn't have pockets!



Learning to show empathy

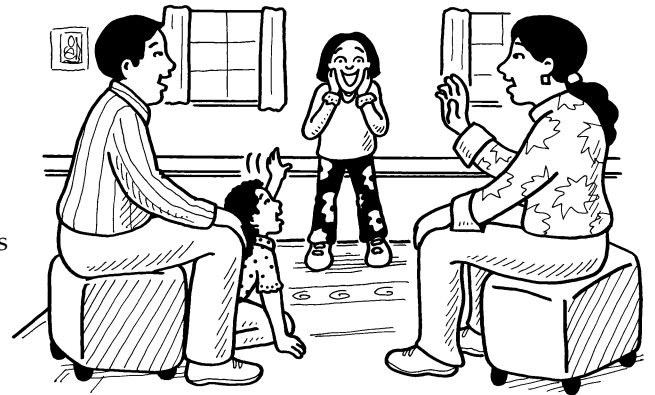
Empathy means being able to understand and share what another person is feeling—a tough job for youngsters just learning to make sense of their own emotions. Help your child develop empathy for others with these ideas.

Connect feelings with words

Identifying emotions as your youngster experiences them will give the words a concrete meaning for her. You might point out that she feels *aggravated* when another child cuts in line, for instance. Later, when she hears that someone is aggravated, she can remember her experience and have a better idea of how that person may feel.

Play charades

Get 10–15 slips of paper. Next, ask everyone to think of “emotion words,” such as *happy*, *sad*, *confused*, *surprised*, and *scared*. Help your youngster write each word on a separate slip, and place them facedown. Take turns drawing one and acting out the feeling. For example,



pretend to cry for *sad* or open your mouth wide for *surprised*. The first person to guess the word then describes a time she felt that way—and gets to act out the next emotion.

Encourage action

Be sure your youngster knows her actions make a difference, even if she can't always “fix” things. You can talk about ways she could show empathy for others. For instance, she might kiss her baby brother's boo-boo when he bumps his head or cheer for a friend who is climbing a rock wall. *Tip:* Let her know you noticed. (“You made Brady smile—he knows you care!”)♥

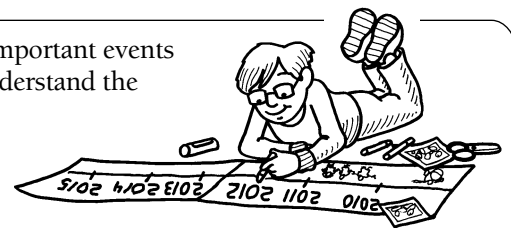
A time line of my life

Here's an activity to celebrate the important events in your child's life—and help him understand the passage of time.

Cut a poster board in half lengthwise, and tape the ends together to make a long strip. Have your youngster draw a long line and add a mark for each year of his life.

Now, talk about what happened in his life during each of those years. *Examples:* “Learned to walk.” “Moved to California.” “Started kindergarten.” “Lost first tooth.” Your child could draw pictures or glue photos of each event. Then, help him label them, or write the words as he dictates.

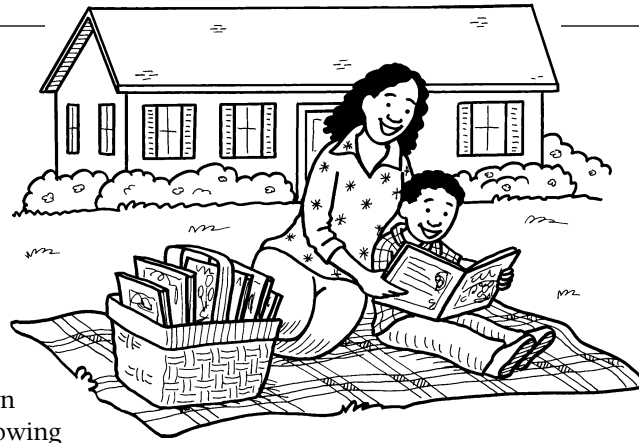
Be sure to leave plenty of room at the end so your youngster can add future milestones in his life!♥



Read it, talk about it

Discussing books that you read with your child can make him a better reader. Snuggle up, and start a conversation using these tips.

Picture talk. Ask your youngster to tell you about the illustrations. In a book on spiders, he might point out a photo showing the hairy legs you read about. Or he could tell you what part of the story the picture shows: “I see Jack climbing up the beanstalk.” He’ll practice using illustrations to help him understand the text.



Word talk. Sneak in practice recognizing letters, sounds, and words. For example, while reading about transportation, ask your child to name each letter in *truck* or *helicopter* and say the sound it makes. Or find a word that is repeated on a page, read it aloud, and tell him to point to its match. Another idea:

Have him spot all the words that he knows on a page.

Story talk. Conversations about the characters, setting, and plot will boost your youngster’s comprehension. Tell each other which characters you liked best, what real-life places the setting reminded you of, or what part of the story surprised you.♥

Beyond the refrigerator

Displaying your child’s masterpieces is a great way to show that her schoolwork is important to you. Here are ways to share her art:

- Use your youngster’s artwork as the wallpaper on your family computer or your phone. Let her choose a favorite picture or painting. Then, scan or take a photo of it. *Idea:* Change the wallpaper regularly to feature her new pieces.



- Make an art “clothesline” by stringing a long piece of yarn across a wall. Help your child display her work by clipping it to the line with clothespins.
- Wrap gifts using your youngster’s art. Family members will enjoy receiving “personalized” gift wrap, and your child will delight in sharing her talents.♥

ACTIVITY CORNER

A nature engineer

Your little engineer’s problem-solving and fine-motor skills will get a workout when she builds a miniature house with items found outside.

Walk around together, and let your child fill a bucket with stones, twigs, leaves, pinecones, and other objects from the ground. Then, she can think about how to use what she collected. For instance, a leaf might make a good roof for her house. Pebbles could become a sidewalk.

Encourage her to solve problems as she goes. Where should she build her house? (It might be freestanding, or she could put it in moss by the base of a tree or against a large rock.) How could she connect the parts of her house? (Mud would make good “glue.”) How will she get her house to stand up? (Perhaps she’ll push sticks into the ground to anchor it.)

When she finishes, she can gather new materials for another house.♥



Q & A

Preventing outbursts

Q: *Lately, my son has been having more tantrums and some trouble switching from one activity to another. What can I do?*

A: It’s easier to head off behavior issues than to correct them after the fact. These two suggestions may help.

First, if you notice your child is reaching a melting point, offer him a distraction. For instance, if you sense an outburst brewing over sharing a toy during a play date, put the toy away

for a while, and offer a different one. Sometimes, switching the focus can prevent a tantrum.

Or try using a countdown to signal a change between activities. For example, you might say, “Ten more minutes until bedtime,” and remind him again when he has five minutes left, then three, then one. Giving him advance notice prepares him to switch gears without getting upset and acting out.♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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