



COWORKING

by Corro

A community to help you grow, scale and thrive.



Growing the Minds of Tomorrow

Each child holds the same right
to dream, experience, and
grow through learning.

As parents, we want the best for our children. Besides providing for their basic necessities we want children to be healthy, confident, sensible, and happy. The basis for a child's emotional and intellectual growth is a healthy and supportive learning environment. Love and encouragement help a child develop effective language and communication skills and a love for learning. What better way to boost self-esteem and prepare a child to make the transition to school and independence.

Growing the Minds of Tomorrow

As a parent you want what is best for your child. Your greatest and most important role is supporting the growth and development of your child to be healthy, confident, sensible, and happy. The basis for a child's emotional and intellectual growth is a healthy and supportive learning environment. Your love and encouragement help your child to develop effective language and communication skills and a love for learning. What better way to boost self-esteem and prepare your child to make the transition to school and self-sufficiency.

Can you Stimulate your Child's Brain Development?

During the first three years your child's brain grows and develops more rapidly than it will at any other time. Your baby is born with a complicated network of billions of neurons just waiting to be activated and wired together by a burst of energy. Every burst of electricity that passes through your child's brain produces a connection that wires the neurons together to enable lightning-fast communication among neurons that specialize in different kinds of brain functions. Every connection adds to the architecture of your child's brain, providing either a strong or weak foundation for the connections that form later.

What produces these electrical bursts? Everything!

Yes everything, but mostly you. Do you know how significant you are!



Connections are largely driven by the interactions that you and caregivers have with your child. Whatever triggers the senses sends an impulse to your baby's brain and builds a connection – the song in your voice when you read aloud, seeing you smile, touching a kitten, being cuddled by daddy, the scent of grandpa's aftershave, the tinkle of piano keys, the warmth of the sun, the whistling of the wind. Everything, absolutely everything in your child's environment stimulates her brain. Every second, at least 700 neural connections are formed and these pathways shape the architecture of her young mind which is what allows her to learn and think! Experiences shape the quality of brain architecture and establish either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the learning, health, and behavior that follow.

In fact by age three, your child will grow trillions of brain-cell connections, twice as many neural connections as an adult possesses. This is the mind of tomorrow with brain development at its peak.

The Need for Stimulation when Every Moment Counts

You've heard of the phrase "use it or lose it." That young brain is vulnerable. The neural synapses need to be stimulated to be wired together. Synapses that are not "wired together" through stimulation are pruned and lost during a child's school years.

Fortunately, the world that surrounds your child during the formative years serves as one big classroom and it is bursting with opportunities to stimulate a young mind and wire those connections together. You are your child's first and most important teacher. This is the perfect time to foster an early passion for learning and lay the groundwork for your child to acquire rich language, reasoning, learning skills and life skills.

Every moment you spend with your infant, toddler or preschooler is an opportunity to tune into your child's individual needs. Every time you talk to your baby, respond to her cooing and vocalizations with more talking, along with smiling, touching, and hand movements, even if it is a one-sided conversation you are stimulating the connections that grow your child's mind. You do not need expensive gadgets or early childhood teaching degree; simple interactions that involve bouncing, rocking, playing, and reading fire up great synapse connections. Every second that your child is involved in the routine of your day, is exceptionally invigorating for brain growth and brain power.

As a parent you are tasked with making responsive and sensitive decisions about nearly everything in your child's learning environment. Would you not agree that it is better to create an environment and experiences that stimulate brain development in a way that is most beneficial for growing your child's mind in readiness for a lifelong journey of learning?

You are your Child's First Teacher

Establish a strong beginning for your child's lifelong journey of learning

What your child needs most to thrive is you. Children need attention. Babies need extra time for bonding, nurturing, and connecting. Parents need to find the time to enjoy these precious moments.

Young children are curious, full of energy, and eager to explore their world. Indeed, your child is a learning machine. Additionally, your child is entranced by your every move, so it follows that one of the best ways for your child to learn is with you.

Are you somewhat overwhelmed by where to start? Do you feel that you lack the credentials or experience to teach your child? Not sure what resources or tools will you need or if you can afford them? Wondering how you will juggle your time?

The best way to answer all those questions is by saying this:

It is the interplay between parent and child that takes everyday moments and makes them extraordinary meaningful occasions for your child to learn. The secret to nurturing your child's healthy intellectual development is to share the simple ordinary things that you do every day with your child. To your child, the ordinary is extraordinary.



Infants

You can exert your influence as a teacher before birth. Stay healthy while you are pregnant, and be aware that certain smoking, alcohol and drugs can be destructive to your baby's brain in utero. Your baby requires attention from the first moment you know she exists, even before you feel her move. You can talk to your baby before giving birth. Take time to relax and tell her about your day.

You can establish a strong beginning for your child's lifelong journey into learning without having to buy anything. You do not need a teaching certificate. Best of all you can do it all in the course of your normal routine. Your child learns by interacting with you during bathing, meals, story and play time. When you are faced with many adult tasks throughout the day, don't let them all distract you from being the teacher. All that your child observes and hears while you get ready for work, tidy up, cook, shop or drive is a learning experience. Your daily routine and everyday activities may seem ordinary to you, but to your child these events are explorations into the real world that arouse her curiosity. Everyday activities, adult conversations, movement in a busy household, background noises all stimulate your child's imagination, provide opportunities for building communication and social skills, and boost your child's self-confidence. Involving your baby in your routine provides you more time to enjoy your baby.

What is Ordinary to you is an Extraordinary Learning Experience for your Child

- Communicate often. Use baby talk and adult language, a gentle voice and lots of expression (facial expression, actions, and inflection). Talk about your day while cuddling with your child or while driving. Even a one-sided conversation is a significant interaction with your child. When your child hears you speak he or she gets mental exercise and develops language skills. That's why it's important to communicate often and to use a wide range of vocabulary.
- Touching activities – hugging, holding, cuddling, rocking, and gentle massage – aid in brain growth.
- Playing helps your child explore his or her ever expanding world. The various hand movements, bouncing, touching different textures, all the sounds and smells of your home stimulate your child's brain. The comfort of your voice, your touch and participation add a dimension of security and loving consistency to playtime. Besides stimulating the brain playing in a loving, protective environment helps boost a child's confidence and self-esteem.
- Your child is never too young for reading. Infants do not have to understand what you read to enjoy the warmth and security as you hold them close. Besides establishing a regular bedtime story, you can read bits and pieces of a newspaper, magazine, novel or a technical journal. Your child finds comfort in the rhythm of your voice and likes the sound of pages turning. Reading to your child not only stimulates brain activity, it also encourages your child to develop a love of books.



- Hand and finger games capture your child's imagination.
- Your baby will benefit from interaction with other infants and children.
- Children are excited by all variety of clapping, cheering, or singing silly songs – any activity that mixes talking, touching, and movement. Vary activities for your child to enjoy, grow with, or imitate.
- Your baby is inquisitive. When you place your baby on its stomach it will try to lift its head to see and explore the surroundings. Lying on a colourful patterned blanket with interesting toys within reach or interesting objects within view will spur your baby's curiosity and encourage movement which exercises the muscles and brain together which are necessary synapse connections.
- Give your baby objects to hold and then as your child get older vary the exercise by placing objects further away, in containers or hide them in easy to find places as part of a game.

- Lie down on the floor next to your baby and observe what your baby is seeing. This will give you new ideas for play and also expose you to hazards you might not have noticed before.
- Use music to stimulate your child's brain. Sing or play a musical instrument. Children love repetition and don't care what you sound like. Let your playlist be the entertainment. When you are holding your child you can dance and sing along to something you love. Include rhythm and music in your interaction. Let your children pound their little hands on a keyboard or pick at the strings of a guitar or violin. They can use pots and pans as drums. Choose music carefully because loud noises can be stressful to infants.

Toddlers and Preschooler

Ever alert, a child's brain is receiving continuous input. A child is a learning machine. Toddlers and preschoolers are full of energy, love exploration and imitating grown-ups all of which provide many opportunities to combine learning with fun throughout the day. The type of games they play, the people they connect with, every exploration of their world and each discovery they make about how their world works increases the synapse connections. They soak up learning and explore different ways to use and strengthen those connections.



Keep talking, playing or reading to your child. Consistent, predictable and planned periods of interaction are still necessary after the transition from infancy to being a toddler.

Remember, it still applies to toddlers and preschoolers that what is ordinary to you is extraordinary for your child. Involve your youngster in your daily routine at home – folding the laundry, dusting, and tidying up. Let them play with flour when you make a cake, play in the dirt when you are weeding the garden, or wash your car on Saturday morning. Plan to spend a little extra time grocery shopping to explore new things on the shelves, study box labels, or put things in bags and your cart. Let them be helpful whatever way possible. It would be additionally beneficial if you did not stress the mess or worry about time during these moments of learning. Instead, use that energy to make the experience more encouraging and delightful. You won't even realize that you're teaching them!

Create time and space for your toddler to expand learning experiences. They will be developing key skills like hand-eye coordination and independence:

- Provide an environment and harmonious routine that allows regular uninterrupted sleep which will help your child withstand the stress of daily life. Stress will impede your child's brain development. When young brains are stressed, brain chemistry changes and it becomes much harder for those important connections to form.
- Ensure your child's living and play spaces are safe and secure.
- Provide quality child care. Loving attachments help children to develop trust. Child care should provide lots of playing, plenty of opportunities for learning, and proper nurturing to help boost your child's brain exercises. Child care should not just be a haven for sleeping and eating.

- Build your child's self-esteem. Do not force your child to learn something new. When he accomplishes a new task reward him with cheers, clapping, hugs and joyous words of encouragement. A well-adjusted child who feels good about himself is more likely to explore and learn with confidence.
- Get down and play with your child. Encourage playtime
- Nourish your child's imagination. Pretending comes naturally to toddlers; it opens up a world of fun and endless curiosity that spurs your child's mind to grow in a healthy way.
- As your child grows, plan playtime around learning activities. Play time can be used to incorporate learning manners, respect for others, safety, good hygiene, how to act appropriately in public and understand the word "no". You can help your child learn about boundaries, routine, being a helper, and practice concentration while she learns about animal sounds, colours, shapes, counting, phonetics, weather, building things, puzzles, or the action words that expand vocabulary and enhance communication skills.
- Repetition reinforces learning and builds stronger connections in the brain. Allow your child to do things over and over even if you find it boring.
- Alternate energetic physical play periods with more relaxed activities. Be sure to encourage restful periods. To do so, you can read, draw, color, fingerpaint, do a craft project or lie down with your child and gaze at the clouds as they float by.
- Get outdoors and encourage physical activity to help your child develop gross motor skills like jumping, running, climbing, pedaling a bike, throwing, catching or kicking a ball.
- Vary play activities so that your child can develop different motor skills. Big movements, like running through a sprinkler or kicking a ball, build one type of skill while filling a pail with sand, fitting geometric shapes into the correct holes, or colouring develops a different part of the brain.
- Ask your child questions and help him to figure out the answers.



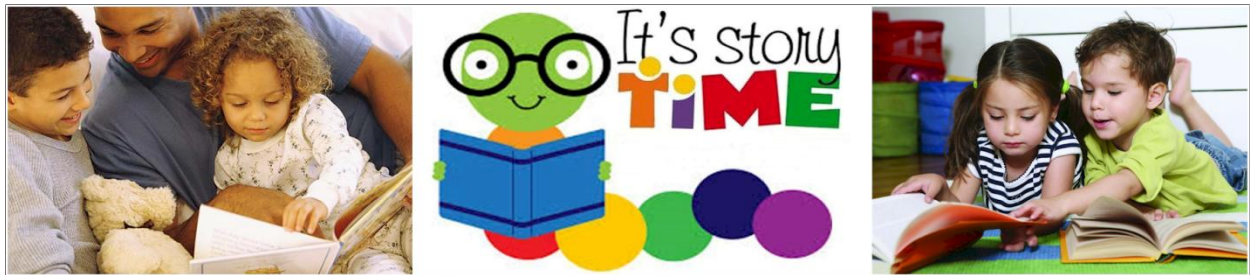
- Answer questions posed to you. If you do not know the answer, sit with your child and find the answer. This sets several examples: show your child that a person is never too young to learn something new, that curiosity and learning go hand in hand, and that knowledge can literally be at one's fingertips.
- When a song is playing watch your child bounce or sway to the music. He loves rhythm and music so get him singing, dancing, and experimenting with musical instruments. Combine music and movement, like marching in a parade, playing pots and pans with a wooden spoon, or learning how to move his body with the rhythm. Whether you use toy instruments or use household objects to create musical instruments, you will discover how music actually helps to enhance your child's ability to create, remember and enjoy learning. Songs are also the best way for little ones to learn and memorize new concepts.
- Help your child learn hand-eye coordination and spatial awareness with puzzles and building blocks. Let your child stack boxes and toys. By building things, taking things apart and putting them back together your child also learns basic problem solving skills.
- Toddlers beg to do things on their own. The only way your child will learn new skills is by doing. Give your child these opportunities to learn, understand, and make mistakes. It lays the foundation for independence.
- Always remember that every child develops at their own pace so don't fret if your child isn't doing the same things as little Johnny next door. There are guidelines that help you understand what your child may be capable of learning, but no defined list of what a child should know how to do at this age.

Reading and Learning Magic

Children who love to read hold a special kind of magic – a gift that will enrich their lives forever. Like ensuring that your child eats healthy and has proper rest, you can also nourish your child's imagination – that endless curiosity that causes your child's mind to grow in a healthy way – by teaching your child to learn and love to read.

Your child has probably asked you many questions and will continue to ask you hundreds more. Your responses are one way that you teach your child about the world. However, you also know that your child has to learn from other sources as well. One of these sources is books, which contain an endless amount of knowledge and pleasure.

Your child's literacy development starts in infancy when family members interact with the baby through cuddling, talking, or reading. Yes, reading! Your baby does not need to understand the discourse to find comfort in the rhythm of your voice and feel the warmth and security of being held as you read. Studies show that children that are read to from a very early age do better scholastically.



Children are eager to learn. They need a supportive environment to build a solid foundation of reading, writing, and arithmetic skills. Children that acquire an early appreciation for language and reading also develop good self-esteem both of which are key to becoming a lifelong learning enthusiast.

When your child starts school family members should continue to engage in reading and learning opportunities at home and in the community. You can support your child's literacy and learning efforts by encouraging and supporting new and challenging learning experiences. One way to do that is to start early to establish good study practices. Your child should not feel alone in this adventure. He or she can find encouragement from activities that involve learning opportunities for all family members. When you can volunteer for classroom activities and field trips and don't forget to monitor academic progress and watch for signs that a tutor may be required. Celebrate learning achievements as a family.

Fostering Discovery of the World of Books

Children learn by imitation. They imitate what they hear and see. It is this fact that allows children to say their first words and that is how children learn the importance of reading from those closest to them. To help your child discover the wonderful world of books and become an enthusiastic lifelong reader we have a few suggestions and activities for families. In them, we hope you will find encouragement to promote lifelong learning as a priority in your family. Share them with grandparents, older sibling, caregivers.

Starting with Your Infant Child

Your child is never too young for story time. A story to an infant could be a fairy tale with your added embellishments, but it could also be parts of a report you are editing, an article from a magazine you've been keen to read, or a few paragraphs from the New York Times best seller list. Your child stimulated by the inflections and cadence of your voice, words and expressions, the sound of paper when pages are turned and the light current of air that wafts across her skin. Use your imagination and just read:

- Set aside a special time for reading. For example, read a bedtime story every night. You could simply hold the book and tell stories about your youth and activities you enjoy doing.
- Books for infants should have pictures filled with brightly colored objects that are familiar to your child. Infants will want to play with the pages, chew them and explore the book. Therefore, pages should be made of cloth, vinyl or sturdy cardboard. Some books have flaps that your child can lift, pop-up pictures that add a three dimensional look, or buttons that will play music or make a noise.
- Infants require rhythm, repetition and rhyme. Babies will enjoy simple action nursery rhymes, like you would find in a Mother Goose book. This is poetry to help your child become more involved in the rhythm of language.
- Children like to hear others imitate the sounds that animals make. Dare to ham it up when you read. Vary the volume, speed and pitch of your voice along with the story line.
- Babies love to look at pictures of other babies.

Suggestion – Make up a Book Specifically for your Child

Fill the pockets of a photo album with cutouts from magazines – colored pictures, especially of babies and familiar animals. Include photographs that the baby will recognize and enjoy, such as family members, familiar pets, animal pictures and simple objects. Alternate pages of images with a various textures of material that your baby can touch, grab, and squeeze in that tiny palm – velvet, leather, burlap, silk, canvas, a knitted square, pompom, or the pocket of a pair of jeans. Add a mirror on one page and insert a container or box filled with things that will make sounds when shaken.

What you can do with Toddlers

At the ages of one to three, children are eager for exploration and full of energy. Take every wonderful opportunity to blend cuddling and intimacy with learning and fun.

- At this age it is best to choose books your child likes.
- Read for at least fifteen minutes every day. Thirty minutes is better. When you can, make time to read more than once per day.
- Talk about the story as you read. If there are things that your child doesn't understand, explain as you read. Relate the story to people, places, and things your child is familiar with.
- Get others to take turns reading to your child – grandparents, older cousins, babysitters, aunts, friends. Your child needs to see that everybody gets pleasure from reading.
- For variety and to enhance the experience, find appropriate times and fitting music to incorporate into reading time.
- Keep books in places where your child can access them. Carry books along when you go to places where you may have to wait, when you go visiting, or when you travel.
- Encourage your child to take along a book when you go out?
- Participate in activities at a bookstore or library that involves other children.
- As they discover that books provide information as well as entertainment introduce books that expand your child's understanding of their favorite subjects such as family, animals, colors, letters, vehicles, household objects.
- Toddlers like to look in your books or magazines to identify objects.
- This is a good time to introduce alphabet books or put magnetic letters on the refrigerator. Set up a blackboard or white board in your kitchen where you can talk and supervise your child as they write or draw.
- Toddlers love predictable books that repeat catchy, rhythmic phrases. At this age children they are interested in pictures that are large, clear and directly related to their world. You will learn that they love to have the same books read over and over.
- New or previously enjoyed, encourage family members to contribute books to your child's collection.

Suggestion – Create an Alphabet Book with your Child

On sturdy paper (preferably large size) print one letter of the alphabet in a bright color. Your child fills the page with words or pictures of objects that begin with that letter. These items can be drawn, cut or torn from flyers and magazines, and pasted onto the page. Your child will not only enjoy this project but gain confidence from learning from his or her own discoveries and creations.

Reading Strategies for your Preschooler

In the pre-school years your child is a learning machine. You may never get used to the number of times they ask a question. You will be amazed by how curious such a little person can be. Maybe not surprisingly, the most effective reading program for your preschooler is simply created by example. This is an excellent age for your child to learn to know more about books, to learn to enjoy and love books, and to learn about language. That means you have to find ways to show your child that reading is enjoyable, enlightening, helpful, and valuable.

This is the time when your child's social development blossoms. Remember that children at this age love to imitate their parents. Give them lots to imitate.

- Share the pleasure of relaxing with a magazine, novel or report from work; let them see you read and witness your enjoyment, surprise, or satisfaction. Be expressive. Laugh appreciatively when find something amusing or delightful. Comment aloud about interesting facts you uncover. Express appreciation for the author or the way something was written. Tell your child why you enjoyed or found value in what you read.
- Your child at this age enjoys stories about the real world and the intriguing changes of nature. This is the best time to introduce and emphasize the very important message that a story is about something and that it has meaning. When you pick up a book or magazine for yourself you might ponder aloud, "I wonder what this story is going to be about?" or "What do you think is going to happen next?" Help your child discover that we find meaning by reading words. This is the basic groundwork for a lasting understanding that your child should expect reading to make sense. Show them you are curious, too.
- Demonstrate the value of reading. Show your child a recipe book. Have him follow the directions with you and together create a meal your child loves. Read instructions aloud before playing a game. When you are assembling a piece of furniture, make a point of explaining that you are reading the directions to the job properly. Use a book to explain processes such as pruning a tree, repairing a bicycle, or building birdhouse. When your child sees the birdhouse on the post or the apple tree in bloom she will be reminded that you learned how to do those things from reading.
- At this age children like humor and word play. They also begin to identify with specific storybook characters that have adventures. Start your child on books that are part of a series.
- Follow your child's interests so that you can get books, poems, or magazine articles on those subjects.
- Make regular visits to the library or bookstore. Let them enjoy storybook hour with other children and choosing books for themselves.

- When you read a poem or verse, stop before you reach the end and let your child provide the rhyming word, or read a story leaving out some key words and let your child fill in the blanks.
- Play reading games. You read a page and then have your child read a page – even if he or she makes up the words. Play games wherever you are. Games like: I spy with my little eye something that starts with the letter 'S' or the color 'red'.
- Make up interesting labels to put on your child's possessions.
- When you are going to be away from home write a message that can be read to your child while you are away.
- Read road signs and billboards.
- Show them books that contain artwork, sports images, sheet music, how-to diagrams, graphs, blueprints, architectural drawings, programming to demonstrate connections between reading and other interests or passions.
- Expose your child to other languages and cultures through a combination of illustrated books and film.
- Get recordings of books. Find ways to build links between television and books.
- Encourage writing along with reading. When you write something, read it to your child or write down her message. Then read it back and post it in a conspicuous place to remind her.

Suggestions:

Start a Memory Box. Create dividers in a box to hold childhood treasures that your child collects when you go for a walk in the park, the woods, or along a beach. The collection might consist of acorns, leaves, small stones, bird feathers, seashells, driftwood, coins and gifts or pictures that they like.

Create an Adventure Collection. If your child has a favorite book you can help him or her to start a collection of objects that relate to that story or the character. Label the objects in these collections to involve reading and writing.

Help your Child Write a Story: It could be about a specific family activity or event or drawn from her imagination to create her own adventure. Write down each idea or event on a separate page. Let her illustrate each page. Compile pages as they are done and allow the means to add more pages or insert embellishments. What a keepsake!

Children after Age Five still want someone to Read to Them

What about the child who does learn to read on his own? Should you stop reading when your child enters school? Never!

One of the predictors of scholastic success is the time parents spend reading to and with their children. This is a practice that should continue throughout your child's school years. There is a special bonding that comes with sharing a story together regardless of the age.

- When your child asks a question about a book or character it is important to take the time to answer it.
- Don't force your child to talk about or listen to a story if she wants to do something else. While you read your child can draw or play quietly.
- Encourage writing along with reading. Encourage your child to keep a journal or diary. Make greeting cards. Write thank-you letters. Help your child write a letter to a favorite author or character. Maybe your child can pretend to be one storybook character who is writing to another character in different chapter or story. For example, what would Winnie the Pooh say to Snow White?
- Work together on crossword puzzles, play word games like Scrabble or Boggle.
- Explore DIY projects that involve reading and developing life skills.
- Find movies based on books.
- Borrow from the library or subscribe to magazines that interest older children.

Suggestion – Make a Time Capsule

Older children enjoy making a time capsule that tells important things about their family. Your child can collect small objects – photographs, recipes or favorite foods, letters from special people, an article of outgrown clothing, a school report or drawing and place these things into a shoebox. Let your child write or help write a family story to include.

What you can do for Your Family

Family literacy is a commitment but it is not a full time job. Integrate a few minutes each day, to combine teaching, reading, and learning with your other household activities or duties. Above all read to your children. Show them that reading is fun, that you enjoy reading. This helps them to learn to know more about books, to come to love to read and to learn about language. Give books as gifts.

There is no necessity to purchase expensive books or programs to establish a learning environment. Your home may already be filled with myriad resources. Visit your local library or contact local community groups for more ideas or to borrow resources. Visit thrift stores or garage sales for used books and games. Use your imagination and demonstrate that one can learn something new every day.

Suggestions:

Try something new. Explore places in your own neighborhood or city. Go on explorations, field trips, or experience a new cultural event. Maintain family diary, album or gratitude journal of these expeditions.

Maintain a home library of Reader Friendly Books: Keep track of who reads which book. Encourage family discussion about books, characters, stories, authors or subject. Encourage family members to start a collection.

Everyone shares what they learned today: To help encourage your family to develop enjoyable learning habits try this: At a prearranged time every day, such as dinnertime, ask each member of your family (no matter what the age) what they learned that day. They might share what they learned from a book, at play, a teacher, the television, or a friend. Older children might share what they learned at work. The range of topics that will come up for discussion will astound you. Some exchanges could be about current affairs or inner feelings; some of this exchange will be serious, some light and jovial – all will be valuable.

- Engage in discussion that allows the whole family to make comments, ask questions or expand upon this newfound knowledge or skill.
- Explore the subject. With the whole family participating explore this new territory of learning. Say it is the population of a country, ask other family members what they might know about the country. Find it in an atlas amid neighboring countries. Research more about the people, their language and cultural activities, history, natural resources, climate, or travelling there.

Don't forget to include guests in this activity, and be prepared to also tell your family and friends about what you learned that day.

This type of activity encourages children to become aware of the world around them. They learn to share ideas, ask questions, explore new places and subjects, and continue to be curious. Most of all this type of family activity helps your child to recognize education as an ongoing lifelong process.

Don't Forget to do Something for Yourself

- Take responsibility for your education and life by actively seeking new knowledge and experiences.
- Take a course in something you never thought of taking before.
- Develop a new hobby.
- Subscribe to new publications.
- Help other adults or children by share your experiences or skills. It will give you a good feeling.
- Do something that challenges you physically and emotionally: white-water rafting, rock climbing, a long run, public speaking.
- Keep a diary or gratitude journal.

Suggestions:

Join a reading group or start one yourself. Reading and enjoying literature does not need to happen in a vacuum.

Help teach children to learn to read. Share your skills, experiences and imagination with young people.

Encourage high quality education, encourage young people to value their learning experiences and stay in school.

How is This Child Smart?

To help your child become a successful learner it is important to find out how your child learns best. In simple language this means that your child has a unique collection of individual strengths, skills and preferences that help him to process and understand information and experiences. It does not have anything to do with how intelligent your child is or what skills he has learned. You should not make the mistake of expecting your child to learn *as we learned* or as a sibling or friend's daughter learns. As a parent you should be able to answer: *How is my child smart?* Instead of *Is this child smart?*

Determining your child's preferential learning style provides an *indication* of possible strengths or tendencies or habits that might make learning easier for your child. There is certainly no right or wrong way to learn. It's all about how your child's brain works most efficiently to learn new information.



Ideally, you can best help your child by allowing him to let his natural learning style reveal itself. At first, this process may be very difficult or somewhat strange if you or another parent favours a different learning style than your child. Your child's early natural preferences may already be masked by earlier experiences which were influenced by you or other caregivers. Your learning style or thinking style may be effective but not necessarily ideal for your child's particular set of strengths or tendencies.

You may want to learn more about your own learning and thinking styles.

The key is to use creativity in finding what learning strategies will work best for your child's learning style. It is especially important to exercise patience, especially with older children whose natural learning process has been suppressed.

Once you determine what your child's preferential learning style is do not over-interpret what this means. Evidence of a preferential learning style indicates *possible strengths and possible tendencies* or habits. It does not indicate anything about how capable or strong your child might be in another learning style and it certainly does not indicate aptitude or unsuitability for a particular subject, discipline, or profession. In fact, as your child acquires skills and experiences you may discover that your child's learning preferences may be a combination of learning styles or that they will seem to change over time as he develops independence.

Knowing how your child learns helps you to prepare early learning experiences that are geared toward his strengths and particular style of learning. You do not want to make his early experiences too difficult or frustrating. The point is to create individualized experiences that help him to gain confidence and self esteem which are so essential to all future learning.

As your child get more comfortable and gains confidence in reading and the prerequisite skills in preparation to enter school, you also need to be aware that your child needs to be prepared for the real world where traditional classroom settings or work environments present too many constraints to cater to every individual's learning strengths and thinking style.

Your child could naturally be one style of learner and over time his learning preferences and strengths could change as he adapts to his environment and acquires new proficiencies. Still, one of the best things you can do is encourage and help your child work to improve in all learning modalities because teaching techniques and resources will always vary and your child has to be prepared to absorb information no matter how it is presented. This exposure and training will help him fine-tune various strengths that he will need for thinking and using his smarts in complex ways as he advances in school or a career.

Be careful to avoid putting a label on how your child learns. Labeling a student by his learning preferences can be misleading and harmful if the child uses the label as an excuse for a bad grade, a reason for avoiding a new learning experience, giving up or not trying, dropping out of a class or school, or shifting career goals.

Acquiring a Tutor

Acquiring a tutor is an important step in helping a child succeed in school. It could be the key for a child to turn around his whole attitude about learning, doing homework, and enjoying school. Through remedial work and individual attention, tutors help students catch up, improve grades, sprint ahead in a particular subject or learn basic strategies to improve learning or study habits. Tutors can be instrumental in helping young children get a head start in school or provide enrichment education for those students who require more challenging study. They can even coach older students to improve college marks and career opportunities. Some students need tutors simply because they are not able to learn in a traditional classroom setting or have difficulty relating to their teachers. Some children simply work better one-on-one or simply just need more time with their teacher.

No matter what their needs or learning capabilities children tend to make significant advances in learning when they receive individualized instruction while working with a tutor or teacher that satisfies their preferential learning style or better understands the way a particular age group learns.



Parental involvement in education is important for all children, but for a struggling child your active participation is imperative. At first you may be frustrated by the urgency of the situation and the means to solve the problem. When you find out that your child needs a tutor you usually have to act quickly because you do not want a situation to become so severe that your child falls behind in the fundamentals skills and starts to lose self-esteem and gives up on school and learning.

You want to make the right choices. Every situation is unique. For some children, parents are the best tutors. For others it leads to frustration and failure. As a parent you definitely play an important role in the tutoring process even if you not do the job yourself. Your responsibility is to determine what your child really needs. What areas of learning need improvement and what type of tutor would benefit your child most? You also have to establish what you can do as a parent to meet these needs. All this you must know before you investigate the skill, experience, commitment and personality of a tutor.

Determine What Your Child Really Needs

Child and tutor should be well matched to obtain the greatest benefit for the child. Every student has unique needs and tutors are skilled on a variety of levels. You need answers to 20 questions.

In what areas of learning does your child need improvement?

To answer this question the best place to start is with your child's teacher and the school counselor. Through testing, grade results, comments from other teachers on potential problem areas – behaviour, personality or learning difficulties – they should be able to tell you in what areas your child needs help.

- 1) For which specific areas of learning does your child require tutoring help?
- 2) Does your child need a short term fix to a specific problem or a long term commitment to improve in more than one subject area. You need to know how much of a commitment is required of your child, yourself, and the tutor.
- 3) Do you need to seek professional counseling or specialized instruction to help your child with behaviour problems or learning disabilities. Either can be a major factor in your child's progress?

Your child is not just a bystander in this process. At some point it will be important to involve your child in the discussion. If he is struggling he probably knows which subject areas are the most difficult. Your child may have special interest or a particular skills he would like to improve. Even the best tutor will not be able to help your child if he is surprised by the introduction of a tutor and refuses to be helped. An experienced tutor may even refuse the job if she feels the child is being forced and will be obstinate.

What do you already know? What do you need to find out about your child's unique needs?

Since they contribute to learning, you want to ensure your child is healthy and getting adequate sleep and nutrition. Apart from that you may know your child's strengths and weakness and the answers to these questions but it never hurts to gain insight from teachers, too.

- 4) What motivates and interests your child to learn?
- 5) What excites your child?
- 6) What is your child's attention span or concentration power? You do not want to consider two-hour sessions if your child can concentrate for an hour at most.
- 7) Would a man or woman be a better tutor?
- 8) Is the age of the tutor a factor?
- 9) What type of environment would be most advantageous? One-on-one? In a classroom? In your home? Online? At school? At the library? On-on-one augmented with online help? Shifting the environment?
- 10) Should the tutor be a nurturing type or one with a disciplined style of teaching?

What are you able to contribute to the tutoring process?

Take into consideration the duration of the tutoring and your family's unique needs, what will influence your level of commitment or what are you able to contribute to the tutoring process. When thinking about expense and scheduling, it is very important to keep in mind that you do not want to make your child give up something he enjoys to do extra schoolwork.

- 11) How much time can you devote to ensuring your child is comfortable with the tutor and is also making progress toward the goals?
- 12) Can you make sure your child gets to the tutoring session and is picked up?
- 13) Do you have time to participate in the tutoring session from time to time or as required?
- 14) If there is extra homework can you oversee that it gets done? If you cannot, who can?
- 15) How will you schedule tutoring sessions into your normal routine?
- 16) Can you make time to meet with teachers at the school to gauge the progress your child is making?
- 17) Considering your immediate commitments and schedule, how quickly can you make time to find the right tutor?
- 18) What can you afford to pay a tutor or what do you have to do to make it affordable? If cost is a barrier for you ask if the tutor would consider trading services.
- 19) How will the rest of the family be affected by these changes?
- 20) Who can help you?

Define Learning Targets

With your answers to the preceding 20 questions you should have a fairly accurate picture of what type of tutor you want for your child. Through discussion with your child's teachers you will have determined what kinds of help your child requires. These are the goals and it will be the tutor's job to see that your child accomplishes them.

Discuss the goals with your child too. He may have a goal or two of his own. Ask him, what he would you like to be able to do by the end of the term? Even if his goal is not as high a priority, its inclusion is important to motivate him to be collaborative and to persevere.



Too many parents, and older students themselves, hire tutors without having a clear goal in mind. *Getting better* is not a clear enough goal. A good tutor will want to know the specific targets because he or she wants to know what is expected, or even if they are qualified. Defining goals does not only give the tutor direction, your child will know what he is aiming for and have a greater sense of accomplishment when he gets there.

- Write the goals down. Be specific. For example: I want my child to learn the multiplication tables. I want my child to demonstrate oral competence.
- Your child might say: *"After this lesson, I will be able to"*
- Include bite-size goals which can provide almost instant results to give your child moments of gratification and motivate him to continue working toward larger learning goals and also teach him the benefits and rewards of goal setting.

As for a time line, there is no tried-and-true formula that defines a good tutoring outcome. As a parent you have to be aware that the tutor needs a certain amount of flexibility to adapt to your child's needs. Progress may be really quick and success easy to measure if the goal was improvement in a fundamental skill, a particular test score or a grade. If you are hoping for long-term changes in something such as your child's approach to learning the means of changing an attitude or behaviour may take longer to accomplish and measuring success is more difficult to quantify in the short term.

Explore Your Options

Even with an accurate picture of what type of tutor you want for your child, finding a good tutor and the right one for your child could be a challenge. Types of tutor programs will vary and many may not match your child's needs. Just because you have a long list of tutors does not necessarily mean that each name on the list is highly qualified or a good match for your child. In rural areas, you may find that you have limited options. You may be presented with too many choices if you live in a well-populated area. You could hire a good tutor, but the relationship with your child might not click and you may have to find a new one.

Where do you look first to find a tutor? Who to ask for advice?

- Again start with your child's school. Ask your child's teacher if they are able to provide extra tutoring. The teacher may know of another teacher or even a parent with expertise to help your child. The teaching staff may also know of tutors who have helped children with similar difficulties or school may have remedial classes already organized.
- Ask about peer tutoring or study partner programs. Depending on your child's needs an older student enrolled at the school may be the answer to your child's tutoring needs.
- Ask family, friends, co-workers and neighbours for recommendations.
- Contact your parent association and ask other parents for recommendations.

- Contact a home-schooling association and ask for ideas.
- Check with your library.
- Contact your local retired teachers association or school board.
- Call learning centres to find out if your child fits their profile.
- Advertise to find a tutor with the type of qualifications you require.
- Every time you explore a lead, ask that person for other suggestions.

References from others is a good way to narrow your search, but a tutor that helped one child you know may not be suited to your child's individual requirements. Thus, you will have to do your homework and interview the tutors before making a choice. Before deciding, consider tutoring experience, tutoring methods, motivation methods, resources, where the tutor prefers to work and the hours and of course cost if that is a factor. Ask if the tutor will work with the classroom teacher and what he or she expects from the family or you in particular? Good tutors welcome co-operation. Check the tutors resume and references.

Private Tutors

A private tutor is the most common arrangement. The individualized attention can be very beneficial. Private tutors usually interact with the classroom teachers to ensure that tutoring sessions develop along with classroom lessons – teacher and tutor have to maintain similar goals. A private tutor can nurture a strong relationship with your child, one in which the tutor can identify and understand your child's strengths and weaknesses and thereby modify lessons accordingly. A more personal connection also allows for meaningful academic discussion and provides opportunities for your child to seek ways to solve academic difficulties without fear of peer pressure or rejection.

Private tutors can be friends, family, peers, teachers, or yourself.

Peer Tutoring Programs

Check with the school, library, local high school, library, or community college to ask if they have a peer tutoring program. This is a program in which older high-achieving senior or junior high students volunteer to help younger students. Peer tutors receive some training, are usually skilled at interacting with other students and good at communicating. Many of these students are graded on their tutoring ventures, so they are motivated by getting good grades.

Online Tutors

Online tutors are growing in popularity. The convenience is certainly appealing. Using the computer to get help with homework is gem-like and can provide motivation, encouragement and an element of fun for students. There are drawbacks, however:

- Communicating through the computer can be difficult, especially for younger children or those who are having difficulties with reading and writing.
- Personal contact is lost in space.
- Online tutors seldom make contact with the student's classroom teacher, so tutoring help is not always coordinated to what the student is learning or what tests indicate is required.
- Online help may reside in a different province or countries so terms of reference and curriculum may not be right for your child's current needs.
- Some educators dispute the value of online tutoring services because often no personal assessment is conducted to determine needs or progress.
- Technology is limiting.
- There is no way to know who, exactly, is interacting with your child or to verify qualifications.

Study Buddy

A "study buddy" is a partner to study with. Sometimes it can be difficult to get motivated to study. Learning with a buddy can be very advantageous. The school may have a buddy system already in place. If not, you may be able to initiate finding a study partner for your child. Two or more students can form a study group. Students can even sign a form of contract to formalize the commitment. Students can motivate each other as well as swap ideas. Studying with someone allows for valuable feedback and having someone to talk to can help a student feel less isolated. This type of relationship promotes co-operation.

Parent as Tutor

To find out if you can tutor your own child, ask yourself.

- Do I have the time?
- Do I know enough about the subject area in which my child needs help?
- Do my child and I work well together, or does one or both of us tend to get frustrated easily?
- Can I be an objective teacher?

Parent Involvement is Imperative

- Ensure that your child's time with the tutor is supervised. Your child must be comfortable, if you want to see success. Whenever possible watch how your child relates to the tutor. From time to time, try to sit in on part of a session. Unplanned visits by you should be acceptable.
- Monitor progress on a regular basis. After each tutoring session, ask the tutor what was learned, what your child did well, what needs practicing.
- Ask the tutor for suggestions so you can help your child make headway.
- Get feedback from your child too.
- Check with your child's teachers to determine what kind of progress is being made.

Then according to your child's progress consult with the tutor and the teacher to ensure that everyone agrees that the goals can be modified.

Remember that learning is a process of taking baby steps before making giant strides. It may take months before your child's grades show improvement, but that does not mean that the tutoring sessions are ineffective.

- Does your child enjoy the tutoring sessions?
- Have you noticed a difference in your child's attitude toward school?
- Do you notice that your child has more confidence with the subject matter?
- Is your child learning some new skills or new concepts through tutoring?
- Get feedback from your child. Tutoring that results in very little improvement or a really negative attitude from your child may mean you need to find another tutor.
- Do not just give up on the tutoring process because your child displays a negative attitude or behaviour. First, discuss your concerns with the tutor. Working together you may be able to identify what is not working and solve the problem.

If your child knows that the tutor may be replaced, but that the process continues with a replacement tutor he may be more inclined to adopt a more positive approach to having a tutor.

It's definitely a team effort, your child, the tutor, the teacher, and you. For the best results you should partner for success and meet your commitments to the team.

Inspired and Committed, We Celebrate Your Journey

At Corro, we believe in the power of people. We are inspired to expand humanity's capacity for wisdom, compassion, and courage.

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