



# Seeds of Learning

## July '15

Beginning school is like planting a new seed, hoping for healthy growth. There are many ways you can cultivate the love of learning in your child. Whether you're preparing for pre-K or kindergarten, we hope this calendar encourages you through the months of summer leading up to that first day of school.



## August '15

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 Independence Day
5	6	7	8	9	10	11 Explore shapes! Using chalk, draw shapes on the sidewalk or driveway, then take turns calling out the shapes and jumping to them.
12	13	14	15	16	17	18 It's blueberry picking season! Pick these gems at a local farm and make something yummy together. <b>Blueberries Grow on a Bush</b> by Mari Schuh.
19	20	21	22	23	24	25 Plan a scavenger hunt to look for signs of summer. Write a list – birds, sprinkler, insects, garden – and see how many you can find.
26	27	28	29	30	31	Count, measure, mix and have fun by making a recipe together. <b>Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes</b> by Mollie Katzen and Ann Henderson.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Make a rhyming bag for summer car trips or lazy days. Place a variety of objects in a paper or cloth bag that can't be seen through. Have your child think of a word that rhymes with each object as they pull it from the bag.				1 Eat a rainbow today. Color a picture that includes fruits and veggies corresponding with the colors of a rainbow.
2 Lie on the ground together and see what shapes you can see in the clouds. Make up a story about where the shapes are headed. <b>Little Cloud</b> by Eric Carle.	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

“Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.”

- Benjamin Franklin



## September '15

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
			1 Read <b>The Kissing Hand</b> by Audrey Penn to ease anxiety about separation and the start of school.	2	3	4 Play a matching game with laundry. Let your child match up pairs of socks and talk about colors and patterns.
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			



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Being a parent is hard work. Sometimes, we just don't have all the answers. Parent Today is your free online resource – available through your school district website – that helps you help your child get the most out of his or her school days. Our monthly e-newsletter talks about what matters most for families and how simple steps at home can lead to huge strides in the classroom.

## Nurturing the Joy of Learning



As parents, we want to instill in our children the joy of learning. Yet, we can make a mistake by allowing their world to be carved into "school" and anything "not school." Artificial barriers that segregate "learning time" from other parts of our children's lives can squelch their natural curiosity.

Kids are born curious. They love to learn. From a very early age, children begin to explore everything, from their own bodies to the world around them. We go to great lengths to "child proof" our homes because naturally inquisitive toddlers want to explore everything they can see, touch or taste. Whatever else we may call it, they are joyfully learning about their world.

When learning is encouraged, good things happen. Swiss psychologist Dr. Jean Piaget, a pioneer in studying how we think, figured out that curiosity – the urge to know more – is the single most powerful ingredient in learning. His research and many follow-up studies proved that when kids are curious about something they learn it far more easily, remember it far longer and learn at a deeper level.

Parents can play a crucial role in nurturing this joy in learning by supporting and expanding on their child's natural curiosity.

First, ask yourself, "How do I feel about learning?" In order to teach children to love learning, you have to love it yourself. So think about what you are learning now and how you go about it. What do you see as learning challenges? How do you feel as a teacher to your children?

*"I am not  
a teacher,  
but an  
awakener."*

– Robert Frost

Look at the world through your children's eyes. When was the last time you sat on the floor and saw things the way your child does?

Observe your children. What attracts their attention? What do they want to touch and explore? Where do they feel most comfortable?

When we create a space for them that encourages exploration and allows them to make choices, take risks, develop their own ideas and express their feelings, we encourage them to grow up to embrace learning as a normal part of everyday life.

Learning is not just teaching children to a set of academic standards. Early childhood education expert Ellen Booth Church says, "Learning is a process, a series of experiences that lead to the great 'aha!' moments of life."

Finnish educators and researchers Taina Rantala and Kaarina Määttä have studied ways to restore the joy in learning in schools. Their research\* offers 10 insights that parents can use to help their children find those "aha" moments every day:

#1: Experiencing and celebrating small steps is important on the way to the larger goal.

#2: Play may not look like learning to an adult, but children structure their environment through play.

#3: "Children's free play should not be regarded only as side action that occurs when nothing important is happening and all the 'real' tasks are completed. A free student is inquisitive and creative."

#4: The joy of learning does not like to hurry. "As the joy of learning is often connected with finishing a task, hurry does nothing to enhance the achievement of these goals."

#5: Your child will only truly commit to a task that is meaningful to him/her.

#6: A student naturally strives for the joy of learning.

#7: Friends and shared experiences help make learning fun.

#8: The joy of learning does not include listening to prolonged speeches. "A student should be at the center of the learning situation." Children want action and doing, not sitting and listening.

#9: Allowing children in the decision-making process of their own learning strengthens the joy of learning.

#10: You never need to say, "Now it's time to learn about..." It's always time to learn. Look at your everyday experiences as the learning opportunities they really are.

\* Ten Theses of the Joy of Learning at Primary Schools, Taina Rantala & Kaarina Määttä, Early Child Development and Care, Volume 182, Issue 1, 2012

### LEARN MORE:

Where's the joy of learning, The CreativePost.com, Aug. 17, 2012  
[http://www.creativitypost.com/education/wheres\\_the\\_joy\\_in\\_learning](http://www.creativitypost.com/education/wheres_the_joy_in_learning)

Curiosity: Nurturing the urge to know more, Aboutkidshealth.ca, <http://bit.ly/1S7WT35>

## THE ROAD TO SCHOOL ENCOURAGE READING



- Help your child hold a book right-side up, with words flowing from left to right. Point out letters as you read.
- Make word play fun! Rhyming and word games, singing silly songs, or writing poems and stories together are great activities that build a love for words.
- Talk about your daily experiences and encourage storytelling in your family. This helps children strengthen their language skills.
- Let young children see you reading. Show them how people use reading every day by reading aloud newspapers, street signs, store signs, billboards, menus and package labels.
- Carry books with you everywhere. Help your child discover that reading is a perfect way to pass the time. Going for a ride? Check out books on tape for listening on the road.

## INSPIRE WRITING

- Provide paper, crayons and an appropriate place to scribble and draw.
- Build letter recognition by forming letter shapes with play-dough, writing with a stick in the sand or using chalk on the sidewalk.
- Ask your child to draw a picture and tell you a story about it. Write down the story as your child speaks, then read it back to her to help make a connection between spoken and written words.
- Encourage your child to "write" his own story, even if it is invented spelling or scribbles on paper. Have him "read" it back to you, and share it with other family members.
- Show writing as part of everyday life! A grocery list, an email, a note from school. Sharing examples of writing can plant the seed of how we communicate ideas, thoughts and feelings with words.
- Build coordination and small muscles used for writing by letting your child cut, paste, draw, paint, thread beads on a string, roll play-dough, use a computer keyboard, play a drum or spread cream cheese on a cracker.

## JUMPSTART MATH

- Count everything! Toes on a foot, petals on a flower, apples at the store, and people in your family. Point to numbers in everyday activities — on a phone keypad, around the house or on price signs at the grocery store.
- Notice numbers. Encourage number recognition in the house, walking through the neighborhood or traveling around town. Search for numbers on cereal boxes, mailboxes and speed limit signs.
- See shapes: Point out different shapes around the home: a round (circle) mirror, a rectangle-shaped book, a square cake pan. Make up your own shape bingo game, or use shape cookie cutters with play dough.
- Measure it. Compare the height of a stack of blocks to a toy box, count the number of steps to cross the kitchen, or make a recipe together. Reinforce measurement concepts by asking questions, such as "I wonder how many spoonfuls of flour it will take to fill this cup measure?"
- Make music. Research shows children who are actively involved in music — meaning they play or sing it regularly — benefit because they do better in reading and math. Listen to different kinds of music: classical, bluegrass, gospel, folk songs, hymns, choral music, opera — and, of course, your favorite classic rock (as appropriate) tunes.

*Aha!*

