

Pointers from Preschool Pros

Secret strategies preschool teachers use that
Cy-Fair parents can learn from

Written by Alex Byrd and Kennan Buckner

Ask your preschooler specific questions about their day to help with their memory recall



Kids 'R' Kids encourages parents to work on projects at home that reinforce what they are learning at school



Navigating the world of preschools can be a challenging thing. After all, it's the first learning environment children will experience apart from their home. They are growing in knowledge as well as socialization skills. *Cy-Fair Magazine* reached out to the local experts, Cypress preschool teachers and administrators, to uncover their preschool tips that parents can utilize at home.

Set Positive Boundaries

Little Rose Montessori's director Heather Daly says their days begin with "circle time" where children are introduced to the ground rule. "The rule is stated, shown, and then demonstrated by a few children," says Daly.

An example of a ground rule at Little Rose Montessori would be for the children to roll up their work rug after they have finished a lesson. Children pick up on the positive boundaries by seeing examples of the behavior they are supposed to emulate. "We review by rolling up our rugs and saying the rule together, 'Roll it. Pat it. Roll it. Pat it.'"

This simple exercise helps children learn to listen and follow directions, which will benefit them greatly in the future. "I would say the main challenge is learning the ground rules of the school and following them every day," adds Daly.

2 Create and Explore

While clear boundaries are important, children also need to have the freedom to explore, ask questions, and figure a few things out on their own. This not only builds their self-esteem, but also allows children to be themselves. “We let our children explore lessons on their own,” says Daly. “Sometimes their own creativity leads them to knowledge.”

Playing with your child and being silly together builds bonds and makes memories that will last a lifetime. Playing is also a stress reliever, and can even be a learning tool. Daly advises parents to “get creative, ask questions, and let them help you.”

Courtney Williamson campus director of Young Leaders Campus says exposing children to the culinary arts, music, science, dance, and fitness can give them a whole new world to explore. Williamson says, “We stretch their brains and focus their talents in different areas.” Let them help in the kitchen, or invite them to sing along with you to the radio - uncover talents you may not have known they had.

3 Read Together

Williamson says that the structure provided in their small class sizes prepares students for elementary school. Parents are an integral part of the preparation process. She advises moms and dads to set aside “family time” specifically for reading with their children. This will help to lay the groundwork for a child’s future educational success.

By reading together daily, parents can help reinforce what their children are learning in preschool. Founder of Head Start to Reading Diane Miller shares, “If they’re just reading in the one hour that we see them, they will not reap the full benefits of this program.”

Take your child to the local library and help them pick out books on topics they enjoy - like trains for your future conductor, or animal stories for your zookeeper.

4 Change It Up

Kids love to have fun, so Miller advises parents to keep their lessons short, and introduce learning as a game. If a child is enjoying the process, they will resist taking on new tasks less often.

Miller says the same is true at Head Start to Reading. “We’re constantly changing activities, and something new is always happening.” Recognizing that your preschooler is likely to have a shorter attention span than their older counterparts will also help parents be flexible and willing to change it up if reading time turns into create-your-own-theatre time.

“If a child is resisting, push a little - but don’t make it a struggle,” says Miller. The important thing at this stage is to make learning fun.



Interactive play can help burn energy while building relationships



Primrose encourages students to foster independence during class projects



The Goddard School suggests that parents combine learning activities, such as reading, with outdoor time



Instead of tube time, set up a learning station at your kitchen table similar to Primrose’s

5 Love and Enjoy Them

Love your preschooler for who they are, and who they are soon going to be. Enjoy this special time with them by providing a warm and loving learning environment. Miller shares, "They're so excited to come and learn. In the short time that we are with them, it's filled with positive learning." Let them know that you enjoy their company and recapture your own childhood adventures with them. "Don't be afraid to get a little messy," Williamson says. "I don't mind getting involved, and getting my hands dirty with the students."

As you do, you may begin to experience your own life in a new, exciting perspective. "I love seeing the world through a child's eyes," Daly says. "The world is theirs, ripe for the taking. They can grow up to be anyone or anything they want to be - maybe even a transformer, firefighter, or the president." CFM

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More Tips from Preschool Pros

- Ask preschoolers specific questions about their day to help them recall what they learned
- Play outdoors as much as possible to develop motor skills
- Use a sticker chart to reward good behavior each day
- Keep regular routines to help children get adjusted to the school schedule
- When preschoolers ask for help, tell them, "You try first," before lending a hand
- When playing with preschoolers, let them choose what activities you will do
- Visit the National Association for the Education of Young Children at naeyc.org to learn about the different development stages of children

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