

What can we do to help Preschool Children Learn Math?

We read to our pre-school children, help them learn the letters of the alphabet, and encourage them to print their names. What can we do to help preschool children build a foundation for learning and math? Just as with reading and writing, math needs to be learned in concrete ways. You need to build a solid foundation, before children can be expected to learn abstract concepts which happen later in this development.

It is important to develop number concepts which will lead to positive attitudes about math at an early age. Math is all around us and children recognize this because they are always asking how much, how big, how many, how far, and how much longer. It is the role of all adults who interact with children to help them discover the answers to these questions in ways they can understand.

Children need to develop experiences in counting, number recognition, measuring, comparing quantities, and shapes. This can be accomplished using many everyday items and simple standard toys. Toys like blocks, shape sorters, building sets, and puzzles promote math skills in a tangible way for children.

Using everyday activities to bring math into children's lives such as, sorting and patterning toys are a great way to promote math development. Preschool children learn about one-to-one correspondence when they set the table and put one knife, one fork, one plate and one napkin out for each person. Count with children, when they go outside for gross motor play and again when they come in, when they are climbing stairs, setting out snack items, or figuring out the number of girls and boys in the class. Geometric shapes are an important concept in math and a classroom has many opportunities to promote shape learning such as, finding the triangles, rectangles, or circles in the room.

Let's not forget about the many songs that have numbers in them and books that often connect numbers to the illustrations on the page. Cooking is not only a science activity but a math activity as well. These activities give children the opportunity to compare and measure quantities.

Sensitizing children to numbers is a skill that will create an atmosphere for children to explore mathematical situations on their own. Teachers can facilitate this learning by naming objects and people whenever appropriate. An example of this would be, "I see we have four people in the block area. How many people can play in this area?"

Make math fun and use it in practical situations everyday. Incorporate math concepts into your lesson plans and make learning fun.

Resources:

Sarama, Julie, Clements, Douglas. (2006). How Children Learn about NUMBERS. Scholastic Early Childhood Today. New York
Today's Parent. (1996). Preschool math (From 3 to 5). Vol.13, Iss.8; pg.124.

Link to math activities:

<http://math.about.com/blbeginnings.htm>

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/early/prekguide.html>