

Bright Beginnings




Help Your Child Prepare for **KINDERGARTEN**

By Deborah Ottman

As a parent, holding your child for the first time or seeing that first step were probably big “firsts” for you.

Sending your child off to kindergarten represents another significant “first,” the start of formal schooling.

By helping your child strengthen key skills before that big day comes, you can make sure your child’s first school experience will be a positive one.

Children entering kindergarten are developing skills in three major areas: academic, motor, and social/emotional. Kindergarten-aged children are typically “in progress” with these skills, which means the skills may be in different stages of development.

As you work with your child to develop skills in these areas, remember to praise the successes and encourage effort and progress.

Academic Skills

Literacy

Children entering kindergarten are building reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Schools call these *literacy skills*.

Pre-kindergarteners work on the skills by using the sounds of language, learning new words, and listening to stories read aloud. They also use drawings, pretend writing, letters, and words to express their thinking. To help build these skills, you can:

- Read to your child every day.
- Talk about new words during everyday activities like bathing or going to the store.
- Introduce, point out, and talk about letters of the alphabet; point out the sounds they make when looking at books, food packages, or signs.
- Encourage your child to use scribbles, shapes and drawing to express ideas.

Math

In math, pre-kindergarten children work on counting, grouping, and organizing objects. They make patterns and know common shapes. To strengthen these skills, you can:

- Help your child practice counting to 20; use objects such as blocks to help.
- Organize objects into similar groups when sorting laundry or putting away toys.
- Find and make simple patterns; highlight patterns in fabric or brick buildings.
- Find and make simple shapes; point them out in everyday objects like wheels or picture frames.

Science

Children entering kindergarten explore the world using the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. They show interest in and ask questions about the natural world.

Pre-kindergarteners like to use simple tools to help them explore. To work on these skills, you can:

- Encourage your child to use the senses to learn about materials and the environment. Talk about what they see, hear, smell, taste, and feel during the course of the day.
- Show interest in the natural world by talking about it during everyday activities such as taking a walk or visiting the zoo.
- Use simple tools such as a bucket and shovel, magnifying glass, or measuring cup when playing in the sand or snow.

Motor Skills

Schools call children’s ability to do jobs with their fingers and hands *fine motor skills*. Children’s ability to make controlled movements with their arms, legs and bodies are called *large motor skills*. Children are still building both sets of skills when entering kindergarten. To develop fine motor skills you can:

- Encourage your child to cut with child-sized scissors and to use pencils, markers, or crayons.



- Offer beads to string and blocks or small boxes to stack and build.
- Help to write some or all the letters in your child's name.
- Copy and draw simple shapes like squares or circles.

To develop large motor skills you can:

- Play catch with your child using a soft object.
- Bounce and kick a ball with your child.
- Give your child time to play safely outdoors each day.

Social and Emotional Skills

Schools call the way children interact with others *social skills*. *Emotional skills* are the way children show their needs and share ideas and feelings.

To help your child develop these skills:

- Offer your child the chance to interact with other children and adults.
- Watch for things your child does well or enjoys; encourage and show confidence in his or her ability with those activities.
- Teach your child to respect and follow rules by playing simple games together.
- Teach self-help skills, such as washing hands and getting dressed.
- Help your child learn to say his or her name, address, and phone number.

Supporting your child's learning in these ways communicates the powerful message that education matters to your family. Your involvement will help your child gain the best education possible in kindergarten and beyond. – and open the door to many more "firsts."

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iPod Apps Can Promote Learning, Growth in Young Children

As technology continues to develop at an ever-increasing rate, it brings with it new, exciting education resources to help your infant or toddler with a disability learn and progress.

Sometimes, you can find these resources in unlikely places, such as iPod or iPhone applications, commonly referred to as "apps." What started as a device to play music can now be used as an innovative education tool for your infant or toddler. For parents constantly on the go – or for parents who are looking for educational resources – iPod apps can be a quality, inexpensive way to make learning fun and easy.

iPods, iPhones and iPads: The New Education Tools

Compared to more traditional education tools for young children, iPod applications have several beneficial qualities that make it easier to teach children with disabilities important developmental skills. First, iPod apps help children learn cause and effect through direct touch. When children use these applications, they select each answer themselves and know immediately whether their answer was right or wrong.

Second, iPods intrigue children because their parents use them as well. Children enjoy imitating their parents, which makes them more likely to stay excited about "playing" with the device.

Third, iPods, iPads and iPhones are portable and easy to carry anywhere. They're perfect for keeping children learning during long car rides or community events.

While there are hundreds of iPod, iPad and iPhone apps available for parents of young children, fewer are designed for children with disabilities. There are learning apps from iTunes.com made specifically for infants and toddlers with a range of disabilities.

Look2Learn

Look2Learn, an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) application, is compatible with the iPod Touch, iPhone and iPad. This application helps young children articulate their wants and needs by matching familiar voices, recorded through a microphone, to more than 80 pre-loaded photos. Available for \$24.99, Look2Learn especially benefits children with delayed communication skills, autism spectrum disorder, short- or long-term communication challenges, or a speech and language disorder.

iTouchiLearn Words

Another popular application, compatible with the iPad and iPhone, is iTouchiLearn Words. This app helps toddlers with disabilities build cognitive and verbal skills through word, picture and match games. Complete with a series of fun, colorful animations, iTouchiLearn Words can help your child learn to read. Available for \$1.99.

First Then Visual Schedule

First Then Visual Schedule is an app compatible with the iPhone and iPod Touch that teaches children with disabilities how to follow directions. The app sets up a visual schedule with pictures that walk children step-by-step through common, everyday tasks or specific activities. First Then Visual Schedule is customizable, allowing parents to record their own voices and load their own photos to create a schedule that's specific to their child's needs. This app works well for children with communication needs, developmental delays or autism. It's available for \$9.99.

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Doing Jobs at Home Helps Children Gain School Success

Children typically learn best by doing. Children can build some of the skills and behaviors schools look for in students when they start kindergarten by talking, reading, and playing. Giving children age-appropriate jobs in the home is another way to build positive behaviors and skills a child needs to be successful in school.

Young children typically can do many simple jobs at home such as: set and clear the table, help feed pets, pick up toys, dress and wash themselves, make the bed, or carry in mail. Parents can adjust these suggestions to fit their child's ability and interests.

As a parent, you can do several things at home to help your child develop kindergarten skills:

- Allow your child to choose the job at home. Your child will have more interest and work longer.
- Break jobs into simple one- or two-step directions. Let your child finish each step before adding another step to the job.
- Focus on the process instead of the end result. Try saying "You're learning to put your toys away on the shelf-that's wonderful!"
- Give specific feedback. Try saying, "I like that you put the toy on the shelf," instead of "Great job!"
- Be flexible and patient. Let your child change or stop doing the job if he or she is frustrated. Give your child time to learn the job.
- Be satisfied with less-than-perfect results.
- Show appreciation for the effort. Share that you value your child's efforts. Tell your child that he or she is helping the family.
- Let your child see you learn new skills, work hard, persevere, and be happy with less-than-perfect results.

The process of learning, doing, and finishing simple jobs builds important skills in children. These skills support academic success. Children will build and use these skills in kindergarten through high school and beyond.

When a young child learns, does, and finishes a job, he or she begins to:

- See herself as able to manage a challenge.
- Understand that effort can bring improvement.
- Learn that persistence can lead to progress.
- See how adults' guidance and feedback can help him improve.

Jobs also make a young child feel valued and responsible. Children learn that their contributions are important, and that chores at home are important. Doing jobs at home helps children learn skills that are essential for school success.

Source: From "Pacesetter," 2011. Used with permission from PACER Center Inc., Minneapolis, MN, (952) 838-9000. www.pacer.org. All rights reserved.

Transition



According to IDEA, transition planning for children in the Early ACCESS Program will begin before the child is three years of age. Planning occurs through a meeting of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team. The team, consisting of you, your family, an assigned Service Coordinator, and others who know your child will work together to plan for your child's transition.

The family role in this process is very important. The vision that you have for your child as well as ongoing observation and assessment data will be valuable in making informed decisions about your child's skill sets and challenges. All of this information will help determine the goals of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) – the plan that will be used in the next school year in place of the IFSP for children who remain eligible for services.

The "**Early ACCESS Transition Toolbox: a Guide for Families**," developed by the Iowa Department of Education and revised by AEA 267 is an excellent source of information. Visit here for the toolbox: http://www.aea267.k12.ia.us/familied/index.php?page=trans_toolbox

The new **Part C regulations, which describe Early Access requirements under IDEA, have been posted to the U.S. Department of Education's website** <http://www.2.ed.gov/policy/speced/reg/idea/part-c/index.html>. The official version should be posted soon in the Federal Register. More information can be found on <http://idea.ed.gov> and in the following press release: <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education-department-announces-regulations-improve-outcomes-infants-and-toddlers>

Source: The PTI Press, Ask Resource Center, Fall 2011.



What can we do for you?

The **Family & Educator Connection Program** would like to remind you of the services we offer to help make your student successful during the school year. The Family & Educator Connection (FEC) is part of a statewide network of parents and educators working together to support educators and parents of children and young adults with special needs.

Newsletters

"Connecting with Families and Educators" is a newsletter distributed about four times during each school year to parents of children who have an IEP, kindergarten through high school, school administrators, special education teachers, AEA staff and our community partners.

"Bright Beginnings" is a newsletter designed for parents of infants and preschoolers and the educators and service providers who work with them. We produce and share this publication three times each school year.

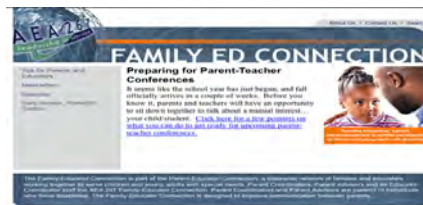
Our hope is that the newsletters are helpful to families, educators and community partners by providing information about topics related to living, learning, and working for our children both now and in the future. We understand that with such a broad audience there may be some topics that pertain to your situation and some that are less relevant. We ask you to glance through each issue, check out the calendar of upcoming events and learning opportunities, and see what meets your needs.

Support of the IEP or IFSP Process

One of the primary ways that the Family & Educator Connection serves parents and educators is by supporting good home-school communication. This includes providing support to families so that they can more effectively participate in the IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) or IEP (Individual Education Program) process. This may include:

- Explaining the IFSP/IEP process.
- Reviewing procedural safeguards/parent rights.

- Helping parents organize their thoughts in preparation for a meeting.
- Attending IFSP/IEP or other school meetings after being asked by the local school, parents or AEA staff.



Website

As part of the AEA 267 website, the Family & Educator Connection posts the "Connecting with Families and Educators" and "Bright Beginnings" newsletters, tips for parents and educators, a workshop and events calendar, and links to sites of interest to parents and educators at www.aea267.k12.ia.us. Click on Special Education, then Family & Educator Connection to get to a menu of items.

Information

The FEC does this by providing one-on-one assistance to parents or educators when there is a need for information or direct support. We provide information through our library on topics including disabilities, parenting, instructional and behavior management strategies. The FEC shares information about community resources and supports with parents and educators as requests are made.

Workshops and Conferences

The Family & Educator Connection publicizes workshops and events that provide information and learning opportunities for families and our



education partners. The FEC also collaborates with AEA staff, community organizations and others to provide workshops as needs are identified.

It is easy to connect with the Family & Educator Connection. Just call, write or e-mail your regional office listed below. If you are unsure which office to call, just call one of the offices listed, and we will help connect you to the right office. We look forward to hearing from you.

Cedar Falls/Waterloo Region Deb Paton

3712 Cedar Heights Drive
Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613
Ph. 1-800-542-8375 or
1-319-273-8265
dpaton@aea267.k12.ia.us

Clear Lake/Mason City Region Sandy Kraschel

Mason City Airport Grounds
9184 B 265th Street
Clear Lake, Iowa 50428
Ph. 1-800-392-6640 or
1-641-357-6125
skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us

Marshalltown Region Andy Lawler

909 South 12th Street
Marshalltown, Iowa 50158
Ph. 1-800-735-1539 or
1-641-844-2469
alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us

“On the Go” Activities

These “On the Go” Activities will help support early language and literacy development from birth through preschool.

Activity

Talking About What Will Happen Next

As you are out and about, ask your child what will happen next when you are:

- About to go into the store
- On the way to the doctor’s
- Going to visit a friend or family member
- Heading out to a place your child likes (McDonald’s; playground, library)



Hints

Talking About What Will Happen Next

To help your child succeed, you can:

- Tell your child what will happen next
- Ask yes/no questions about what will happen next (Will there be other cars in the Safeway/parking lot?)
- Show your child pictures of what will happen next in your outing today (first we’ll go to the library, then McDonald’s for lunch, and then home)

To make it more of a challenge, you can:

- Ask your child what will happen next as you get to where you’re going
- Ask your child what will happen tomorrow when you two go someplace
- Ask what your child thinks will happen at a special event (visit to Grandpa’s birthday party)

Keeping A Diary

Keep a pad of paper handy in the car and:

- Offer paper and encourage your child to scribble, draw or write
- Ask your child to draw what he or she sees out of the car window
- Can your child write words to go with his or her picture (road, trees, cars)?
- When you’re stopped, help your child write a sentence about his or her drawing; remember to date it
- Look back at the pictures in your child’s pad and read what he or she wrote



Source: The development of these materials was supported by Grant H324M020084 from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. Developed by Angela Notari-Syverson, Ph.D. and Colleagues, retrieved from: www.wlearning.com (Washington Learning Systems).

When Student Progress is Falling Short

If sufficient progress isn’t being made on the IEP, the teacher and parents should first consider altering instructional techniques. Some things to consider:

- The amount of time the student is receiving intervention.
- Does the feedback to the student need to be more focused?
- Maybe the student needs more practice time both in and out of school.
- Perhaps the student’s group size is too big.

If tweaking the techniques doesn’t improve progress, it’s time to make sure that the IEP is suitable for the student’s progress.

Source: “Each and Every Child” Volume 1, Issue 8; November 2011, Jim Flansburg, Interagency Liaison. Quick news for Parents, Teachers, and Students, (An e-newsletter by the Iowa Department of Education’s Bureau of Student and Family Support Services).

“Teachers, I believe, are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth.”

— Helen Caldicott



Genetic Counseling Clinics

Regional Genetic Consultation Service (RGCS), Iowa Department of Public Health, provides genetic health care to individuals and families throughout Iowa with statewide outreach clinics.

These services are provided to over 700 clients and 1,800 family members at 80 clinics in 12 communities annually.

Services include:

- Diagnostic evaluations
- Confirmatory testing
- Medical management
- Provision of non-directive counseling to individuals and families
- Case management
- Individual and family support
- Education
- Consultation
- Referral



Cost

Some insurance companies reimburse for genetic consultation. Insurers will be billed if a family has coverage. Families will be charged based upon their ability to pay, using a sliding fee scale. Laboratory procedures, if needed, will be billed separately.

Clinics are located in Ames, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, Fort Dodge, Mason City, Ottumwa, Sioux City, Spencer, and Waterloo.

Referrals will be accepted from doctors, nurses, social workers, clergy, teachers, families, and others. To schedule an appointment for genetic consultation services, to find out about educational opportunities or to find out more about genetic counseling services, call 1-800-260-2065.

Information for this article obtained from the Iowa Department of Health web site at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/genetics/rq_consultation.asp.



Iowa Used Equipment and Referral Service (UERS) Ranks #1

Thanks to people like yourself having used and referred others to this free service we were able to rank first in the nation for savings to consumers compared to all other assistive technology re-use services in the county. Help us keep this awesome ability to pass along savings to consumers through letting others know about our services.

UERS is a division for Iowa COMPASS that provides free listings of adaptive equipment for sale. Individuals wishing to either buy or sell equipment may post the listing free of charge through UERS.

To reach the page, go to:

<http://www.iowacompass.org/> and look on the purple row for “Used Equipment Referral Service (UERS).”

Print lists are also available to people who do not have access to the list on the internet by calling 800-779-2001 or emailing Iowa COMPASS. You can email us at compass-UERS@uiowa.edu

Mail to: compass-UERS@uiowa.edu or follow the links on the website to post an ad.

This information provided by UERS.

To view “Bright Beginnings electronically please visit the Family & Educator Website at: <http://www.aea267.ka12.ia.us/familyed/>, then click newsletters.



Looking for Support? Support Groups

There are a number of support groups across Iowa and in AEA 267. If you are affiliated with a support group and would like information about the group listed on the AEA 267 Family & Educator Connection web site and in our newsletters, send information to Sandy Kraschel at skraschel@aea267.k12.ia.us or call 800-392-6640.

ADHD Support Group

Meets second Monday of the month during the school year at Upper Iowa University, 3563 University Avenue, Waterloo from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. For more information contact Barb at 319-266-2901 or email: bum1992@cfu.net.

Autism Spectrum Support Group

Individuals wanting further information or a personal parent contact should contact: Chris and Tyann Rouw 319-266-5876, or the Family & Educator Connection at 319-273-8265 or go to <http://www.autismiowa.com>.

Designer Genes – A Support Group for families of children with Down Syndrome, provides parent groups as well as family events and playgroups for young children in Cedar Falls, Charles City and Mason City areas. For more information call 319-404-0396 or e-mail designergenes2005@yahoo.com.

Prader Willi Syndrome Association of Iowa

For more information please contact: Edie Bogaczyk, 515-987-0288 or dbogaczyk@msn.com.

Epilepsy Support Group - Waterloo/Cedar Falls Area

Held at the Kimball Ridge Center, Conference Room 1, 2101 Kimball Avenue, Waterloo, IA. Held the second Thursday of every ODD month at 6:30 p.m. For more information contact: Karly Ashlock, Services Coordinator for Iowa Epilepsy Foundation North/Central Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, 1111 9th Street, Suite 275, Des Moines, IA 50314. Phone: 515-238-7660; Email: kashlock@efncil.org.

Calendar

January 2012

**Wednesday – Friday
January 18-20, 2012
2012 DADD (Council for
Exceptional Children, Division
on Autism and Developmental
Disabilities)
13th International Conference
Miami Beach, Florida**

For registration visit:
<http://www.cvent.com/ld/xcgn5n/4w>

February

**Wednesday – Saturday
February 22-25, 2012
Learning Disability Association
49th Annual International
Conference
Hilton, Chicago
Chicago, Illinois**

Register online at: www.LDAAmerica.org/conference/index.asp

March

**Wednesday – Thursday
March 8-9, 2012
Brain Injury Association of Iowa
20th Annual Conference
“Best Practices in Brain Injury
Service Delivery”
Sheraton West Des Moines Hotel
1800 50th Street, West Des Moines**

Conference Highlights:

- Dr. Harvey Jacobs will present on Neurobehavioral services and supports
- Iowa Medicaid will share plans for new service lines and rates for neurobehavioral services
- Co-occurring (brain injury +) issues will be addressed
- The latest in brain injury medical, rehabilitation, and disability service best practice

For more information or to register:
www.biaia.wildapricot.org/conferences@biaia.org
319-466-7455

April

**Wednesday-Saturday
April 11-14, 2012
CEC 2012 Convention & Expo
Council for Exceptional Children
Denver Convention Center
Denver, Colorado**

The CEC is the leading exhibition of special education products and services. For more information visit: www.cec.sped.org or call: 1-888-232-7733, 1-703-620-3660.

**Wednesday
April 18, 7:30 p.m.
Dr. Temple Grandin, Professor of
Animal Science**
And Author of “Thinking in Pictures” will present a Lecture at the University of Iowa Iowa Memorial Union, Main Lounge
125 N. Madison Street
Iowa City, Iowa 52242
(319) 335-3114

The Family & Educator Connection

The AEA 267 Family & Educator Connection provides information and support for families and educators around disability-related issues. Whether you would like to talk about family adjustment issues with a new baby or newly diagnosed disability, home-school communication issues, questions relating to understanding a disability, or parenting strategies, we are happy to take your call. We have quite a library of resources available for loan and a number of highly qualified people to consult. If you have a question, we will do our best to help you find the answer. We are available by phone, mail, e-mail or by appointment, in-person.

Cedar Falls/ Waterloo Office

Deb Paton

3706 Cedar Heights Drive

Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Ph. 1-800-542-8375 or 1-319-273-8265

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Clear Lake/Mason City Office

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Marshalltown Office

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