

# Fantastic Fours

**W**hat should we be helping children learn before kindergarten? This handout gives some information about your child's development and learning, based on the *North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development*. We include ideas for things you can do with your child—in your daily routines of family life—that will help support your child. You can change them to fit your family's needs. If you have questions about your child's development or learning, you can speak with your child's teacher or doctor.

## Approaches to Learning

Preschoolers show interest in learning many things. They ask questions to learn about how to do things, and about future events. Preschoolers use many types of play—building, pretending, exploring—to experiment and solve problems.

### Ways to Support Your Child

- Encourage your child to watch, wonder, and ask questions. Help your child find answers for questions in books, newspapers, the internet or library, or by trying it out. Talk about what might happen in the near future, and afterwards, talk about what actually happened.
- Show interest in your child's play—talk about it or join in. Ask questions and introduce some new ideas. For example, if your child is playing grocery store, use old food boxes and write the "price" of the food on the box. You can cut up paper to use for money, and "buy" things at the store.

## Emotional and Social Development

Preschoolers are learning how to get along with others. They develop close friendships with other children, but still go to adults for affection and help with challenges. Preschoolers begin to understand and talk about "rules" in friendships and can cooperate in play. They can understand others' feelings, and show that they care how others feel.

### Ways to Support Your Child

- Talk about friendships—yours and his—and how to be a good friend. Teach your child how to "cooperate" (get along with others): "Let's set the table together. I'll get the plates for dinner. Could you please get the forks?"
- Talk about feelings with your child. Talk about some ways people can feel when things happen: "Your granddad is happy when you draw him a picture" or "Your brother feels angry when someone takes his toy."

## Health and Physical Development

Preschoolers are learning to care for themselves. They can feed themselves with help with cutting food and pouring liquids. They can dress themselves with help with buttons and zippers. Preschoolers climb and explore; they use their bodies to make things happen. They can understand rules about health and safety.

### Ways to Support Your Child

- Offer your child a variety of healthy foods, and teach him to clean up small spills. You can have your child help with meal time routines. Teach your child how to take off and put on clothes and use zippers and buttons. Try to leave enough time for your child to dress himself.
- Encourage your child to try new challenges, such as climbing, kicking, and catching and throwing balls. Try playing active games with rules, like soccer or tag. Teach about health and safety and show your child how you use healthy and safe behavior, such as washing hands, wearing a seatbelt (booster seat) and holding hands in crowded places.

# Language Development and Communication

Older preschoolers use watching and listening and talking to learn about the world. They talk using longer sentences and include more detail. Preschoolers ask questions, using “Why”, “How” and “What.” They listen to adults reading books, look at pictures, and ask and answer questions. Preschoolers use pictures to write, and begin to use some letters to write their name. They also begin to connect letters to sounds.

## Ways to Support Your Child

- Talk with your preschooler all the time. Listen, ask and answer questions and introduce new words. Talk about things that are important in your family, such as special holidays or events and daily routines.
- Try to read picture books every day. Read the words on the page—or make some up. Talk about the pictures, ask questions, and talk about the story. Re-read favorite stories, and ask your child to tell what will happen next. Read different kinds of books— rhyming, information (books about facts, like planes and animals), and stories.
- Encourage your child to write, using paper and pencils/crayons. Praise her efforts, even though some of her marks may not look like the letters she is trying to write.
- Whatever your home language, continue to use it at home and in your community. Learning two languages is good for a child’s brain development.

# Cognitive Development

Preschoolers play and explore and ask questions to learn. They develop interests in special things (dinosaurs, insects, faraway places, etc.) and new skills (writing their name, building with blocks). Preschoolers use their senses to enjoy art, music, dance and drama, and they may enjoy performing for family members. They can count up to 10 objects, and answer the question, “How many?” They compare sizes, shapes, and amounts of objects.

## Ways to Support Your Child

- Encourage your child’s interests and curiosity. Get books from the library about things that interest your child, such as sports, insects, super heroes or flowers. Share your interests with your child, and talk about things that you find interesting. Let her know that you think learning is fun, too!
- Museums, churches, schools, parks and even local businesses may have free music, art, drama and dancing for your family to watch and join. You can also turn on some music in your home and dance and sing.
- Count and measure things in your daily routines. Ask questions that encourage your child to count, compare, and predict. “Let’s count how many cars are parked on this street.” “How many more cars will fit on our street? What will happen if a very big car comes?”