



Learning & Growing Together

An online newsletter for parents!

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Your Child's Developing Brain

Walt Disney once said, "Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children."

What parents do with their children, positive or negative, will affect how children's brains develop. Although it takes 15-20 years for the brain to fully develop, most of the critical connections are made in the early years. In the first five years of life, there are many "windows of opportunity" for influencing brain development. In fact, there are certain windows that are only open during the early years. Early interactions with children determine how the brain circuits are wired.

Parents can support positive brain development through many everyday activities.

▶ **Safe and loving environments**
Children who feel safe and loved learn to trust and develop self control. They feel comfortable to

try new things which creates new brain connections.

▶ **Cuddle, hug, and hold**

Caring physical contact also makes children feel secure. They are able to form caring relationships with others and continue their healthy development.

▶ **Talking and listening**

Important brain connections are formed through listening and talking. Using lots of words and conversations with preschoolers builds vocabulary and more critical connections.

▶ **Reading aloud everyday**

One of the most important things parents can do to enhance brain development is read to preschoolers everyday. Have children help select the books.

▶ **Singing and making music**

Listening to music, singing songs, and doing rhythmic activities also causes new brain connections.

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Father's Day books to read together!

Reading with your child is an excellent way to ensure her later success in reading and in school.

It's never too early or too late to begin.

Here are some terrific

choices for celebrating Dad:

Animal Dads

Sneed B. Collard

Daddies Are for Catching Fireflies

Harriet Ziefert

Daddy is a Doodlebug

Bruce Degen



Daddy, Would You Love Me If...?
Carla Dijs

Dad's Dinosaur Day
Diane Dawson Hearn

Father Bear's Special Day
Elsa Holmelund Minarik

Happy Father's Day
Steven Kroll

I Know My Daddy Loves Me
Barbara Wolfgram

I Love You, Dad
Iris Hiskey Arno

Just Like My Dad
Tricia Gardella

Just Me and My Dad
Mercer Mayer

Me and My Dad
Stuart E. Hample

A Perfect Father's Day
Eve Bunting

The Secret Father's Day Present
Andrew Clements

What is Father's Day?
Harriet Ziefert

A Present for Daddy
Jessica Schulte

The Secret Father's Day Present
Andrew Clements



Songs to learn and sing together!



Singing with children not only promotes language development, it fosters connections

in the brain that will later be used for math, science, and problem-solving.

Splash Into Summer

Sung to: "The Ants Go Marching"

By: Paula R. Westernen

Summer's coming,

we'll have some fun

Hurrah, hurrah

Summer's coming,

we'll have some fun
Hurrah, hurrah
Summer's coming,
we'll have some fun
We'll splash in the pool before
we're done
And we'll all be happy
that summer has come again!

The Twelve Days of Summer

Sung to: "Twelve Days of Christmas"

By: Paula R. Westernen

On the first day of summer, my
true love gave to me

A robin in an oak tree.

On the second day of summer...

2 gardens growing

On the third day of summer...

3 flowers blooming
On the fourth day of summer...
4 beach balls bouncing
On the fifth day of summer...
5 swimming pools
On the sixth day of summer...
6 swimmers swimming
On the seventh day of summer...
7 picnic baskets
On the eighth day of summer...
8 ants a-marching
On the ninth day of summer...
9 hikers hiking
On the tenth day of summer...
10 marshmallows roasting
On the eleventh day of summer...
11 families camping
On the twelfth day of summer...
12 children laughing

Your Child's Developing Brain *continued*

(Continued from page 1)

These same connections are used for math and problem-solving.

► **Moving and doing**

Lots of physical activity is needed for healthy brain development. Using small and large muscles builds coordination, strength and new connections in the brain.

► **Touch, feel, smell, hear, and see**

All kinds of sensory activities benefit brain development. New connections are created when children explore their world through their senses. About 95% of all information is received through seeing, touching, and hearing.

For additional information about brain development, consider the following books:

Smart-wiring Your Baby's Brain: What You Can Do to Stimulate Your Child During the Critical First Three Years

by Winifred Conkling
Practical information and ideas to guide parents and caregivers in applying latest research in early brain development.

What's Going on in There?: How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life

by Lise Eliot, Ph.D.
Gain invaluable insights into the evolution of the senses, motor skills, social and emotional growth, memory, language, and intelligence. But most importantly, understand exactly how great your

contribution as a parent can be to the development of your young child's brain.

Your Child's Growing Mind: Brain Development and Learning from Birth to Adolescence

by Jane Healy
This book is a window into the fascinating process of brain development and learning. It looks at the roots of emotion, intelligence, and creativity, translating the most current scientific research into practical suggestions for parents and teachers.



Poems With a Little Action



When children make actions to go with poems it helps them memorize them more easily and it reinforces their learning. Have fun with these action poems:

FLOWERS BLOOM

Author Unknown

Here is a green leaf (*hand in front of you palm up*)

And here is a green leaf (*other hand in front of you palm up*)
That, you see, makes two
Here is a bud (*make a fist*)
That is a flower
Watch it bloom for you! (*open fingers slowly*)

WARM ROUND SUN

By: Paula R. Westernen

The warm round sun in the summer time sky (*form a large circle over head with arms*)

Winked at a cloud as it passed by (*wink an eye*)

The little cloud laughed as it made some shade (*palms downward as you float hands from side to side*)
Then out came the warm round sun again! (*form a large circle over head with arms*)

MY BOOK

By: Paula R. Westernen

Here is my book, (*hold hands palms together as if they are a book*)
I open it wide, (*open your palms*)
To see all the pictures, (*use hands to make binoculars in front of eyes*)
That are inside.



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A Father's Day Keepsake



This Father's Day, young children can give Dad (grandpa, uncle, etc.) a wonderful keepsake that he will cherish for years to come! Create a story using the example below (or your own variation) and have your child answer the questions to fill in the blanks.

Be sure to have your child sign the story and draw a picture of Dad. Dads will love to hear a story about themselves from their child's perspective!

All About My Dad

My dad's name is ____ and he is ____ years old. He is ____ feet tall and weighs ____ pounds. Dad always says, " ____." He cooks ____ the best. To relax he likes to _____. He likes _____, but doesn't like _____. I would like to buy him a _____. I think Dad would like to take a vacation to _____. _____ is the special thing Dad does for me. I love my dad because _____.

Happy Father's Day!

Love, _____

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This family fun activity is also and

excellent way to promote young children's literacy development! Helping children write stories illustrates that what they have to say is important and has meaning. It also gives them a sense of pride in authorship.

Children love to hear the stories they have written over and over and will soon memorize them. Memorization is an important pre-reading skill which contributes to children's success in reading!

