

Early Childhood Education

Daily Activity: Going to the Park

Category: Early Childhood Literacy

Grade Band: Ages 3 to 5

Topic: Daily Activities

Concept 1: Strategies to help your child build mathematical understanding and literacy development

Context: Going to the park is a great family activity. Not only does it provide children with a wonderful environment for physical activity and positive social engagement with others, it is rich with opportunities to stimulate conceptual developing in literacy and mathematics, and even science! By taking advantage of these opportunities, parents can help build the foundations necessary for later academic success.

Rationale:

Children enter kindergarten with a wide range of mathematical knowledge. Young children develop mathematical knowledge when they mathematize their world. “To mathematize is to focus on the mathematical aspects of a situation and then to formulate that situation in mathematical terms; it is a means for children to deepen, extend, elaborate, and refine their thinking as they explore ideas and lines of reasoning ([Focus in Prekindergarten: Teaching with Curriculum Focal Points, NCTM, p. 2](#)).” (NCTM)

Parents and caregivers can help children mathematize their world by initiating activities and conversations around mathematical ideas. With rich activities and conversations, children learn reasoning skills, problem-solving skills, ways to represent mathematical ideas, and simultaneously expand their vocabulary.

Children are more successful in reading if they know many words or have large vocabularies. Parents can help influence their child’s oral language development by actively engaging in conversation with their child during daily routines. By intentionally allowing their child to listen to speech, mimic sounds, and associate these sounds with words that represent things and actions, parents can help build a strong foundation of early literacy skill. When children are intentionally exposed to an environment where they hear spoken words and learn how to hold up their end in conversations, they will ultimately develop the foundational skills needed for reading. Giving children opportunities to talk and inviting children to talk are also very important. It’s the practice piece of language. Exposure, paired with invitations to talk, provide young children the opportunities to develop strong language skills.

Opportunities to mathematize a trip to the park

I. Patterning

According to Grace Davila Coats, Program Director of Family Math (Lawrence Hall of Science, University of California at Berkeley), “Children find patterns from looking around and noticing...however...it is a parent’s job to recognize patterns and point them out, in clothes, on the sidewalk, and everywhere patterns are to be found. In short, using the world around you and objects from around the house will introduce your child to patterning and give him a head start in mathematical thinking.”

A pattern is only a pattern if it is repeated at least twice.

Create movement patterns as you move at the park. For example, hop, hop, step, hop, hop, step.

Look for color patterns: Orange pole, blue pole, orange pole, blue pole. Take notice of patterns in leaves – Some leaves have variegated patterns of color. Some leaves have patterns in the lobes or edges. Shrubs or flowers may be planted in a color pattern. There may be brick work patterns on path ways.





The key to teaching patterns is to make your child aware of patterns and then give him chances to create and extend patterns in daily life.

II. Counting

- Have your child take two big steps and then three little steps. Take three big steps, home one time, and take three little steps. Hop four times forwards, turn around once, and take three little steps backwards
Count aloud each action so your child can hear it.
Switch roles so you are doing what your child says and he or she is counting.
- Have your older child estimate how many steps it will take to go from one tree at the park to another. Count off the steps to see if the estimate was correct or close—estimating is designed to be an approximation; we don't always have to have the one right answer.
- Count going up and down the stairs to the slide
- Play Simon Says
- Count birds –
 - How many birds hop?
 - How many birds take steps?
- Count leaves on a compound leaf
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Notice groups of numbers



- Clovers have three leaves



- Count how many petals

III. Spatial Awareness

- a. Work on using spatial awareness with your child while playing together on playground equipment.
 1. Over/Under
 2. In/Out
 3. Up/Down
 4. Across
 5. Back and forth
 6. On top/Below

- b. Use directional words when helping your child locate critters or plants.
Let's look at what is under the rock

Look above the purple flower

- b. Notice how the bee goes down to the flower, then up, then down to the next...Plan for a treasure hunt by hiding something in the park and drawing a map for your child to follow (excellent spatial reasoning activity). Help your child produce his/her own map of the park or a portion of it.

IV. Comparing/Measurements

- Sandbox play with measuring cups. Building piles of sand— bigger/smaller, more than/less than
- That leaf is bigger than that



one

- This is a small, medium, and large rock.
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Literacy connections:

I. Reading

- a. Show your child that reading and writing are a part of everyday life and you find them fun and enjoyable.
 1. Take a book to the park to read **with your child**.
 2. Take field guides (bird, tree, rock...) with you and model using them
 3. Show your child the environmental print (define?) at the park
 4. If there are playground maps or path guides, model referring to them. Even if they don't understand what it says, you are modeling using maps and guides for information.
- b. Look for opportunities to use letters from your child's name. "Look! That word starts with an S, just like at the beginning of your name!" Children should develop literacy through real life settings as they read together with their parents or a caring adult. Children begin to make connections between printed words and their representations in the world.
 1. Encourage associations between symbols and their meanings.
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II. Talking

- a. Name and describe objects, people, events that are at the park. Preschool children need to hear new words in order to learn them. Take the time to label new things for them. Vocabulary so important ☺
- b. Make sure to respond to your child's questions and acknowledge other verbal comments. When you do this, you help your child begin to understand social skills of conversation
- c. Talk to your child while you are at the park playing. Talk about their day using open-ended questions(define, but not just open-ended questions) so you don't get one-word answers. Ask questions that will encourage the conversation to continue.
- d. Wonder about the world with your child, the things you are both interested in and curious about.
- e. Talk as you kick or throw a ball around.
- f. Sing a song together. Children learn a great deal from what they see and hear.
- g. Take the time to speak clearly, so young children have the opportunity to clearly hear how sentences are formed and words are pronounced.
- h. Try to use short, concrete sentences. State one request or idea at a time. Give the child an opportunity to think about and process each request

separately. Try to do this within the context of giving directions as they are trying something out.

Invite children to talk about what they are experiencing: comments, different questions (y-n), wh, and open ended and expand your child's responses.

III. Writing

- a. Take along a pad of paper, pencils, crayons, and markers for your child to draw, scribble, and write.
- b. Encourage your child to draw a story and then have him read/tell you the story. You can write down the words for him. Ask him questions to get at more detail and description.
- c. Make the sand wet and draw pictures to tell stories. Draw letters and short words in the sand to work on alphabet knowledge, segmenting, and blending.
- d. Or bring along sidewalk chalk and let your child draw on the sidewalk.

IV. Importance of being outside away from the TV.