



29 Things Parents Do that Predict School Readiness

Below are **29 things** parents do with their young children, ages 1–3 years or 10–47 months, that predict one or more of the following outcomes when children are old enough to start kindergarten:

Cognitive skills—problem solving, reasoning, science, and math readiness

Vocabulary—word knowledge, language ability

Literacy skills—recognizing letters, linking speech sounds to letters, recognizing text

Social skills—emotion regulation, low rates of aggression

Our research, on over 4,000 observations of almost 2,000 families, shows that very few parents do all of these things, but all parents do some of these things. And the more parents do these things, the better their children do on school readiness assessments. PICCOLO™ is an observational measure of these behaviors.

1. Speak warmly
2. Smile at child
3. Praise child
4. Stay physically close to child
5. Say positive things to child
6. Interact in positive ways with child
7. Show emotional warmth
8. Pay attention to what child is doing
9. Change activities to meet child's interests or needs
10. Be flexible when child changes interests
11. Follow what child is trying to do
12. Respond to child's emotions
13. Look at child when child talks or makes sounds
14. Reply to child's words or sounds
15. Wait for child's response after making a suggestion
16. Encourage child to do things with toys
17. Support child's choices
18. Help child do things on his or her own
19. Verbally encourage child's efforts
20. Offer suggestions to help child
21. Show enthusiasm about what child does
22. Explain reasons for something to child
23. Suggest activities to build on what child is doing
24. Repeat or expand child's words or sounds
25. Label objects or actions for child
26. Engage in pretend play with child
27. Do activities in a sequence of steps
28. Talk about characteristics of objects
29. Ask child for information

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