

Young children are explorers and scientists, discovering and figuring out how the world works. Adults can help them by encouraging their attempts to put things together and take them apart and their questions about how something works and why something happens.

The New Mexico Early Learning Outcomes include several school-success building skills. Our goal for each child is that they

- try new things and activities;
- learn to do things on their own;
- pretend in many ways; and
- develop a longer attention span.



In addition, developing responsibilities for the greater community are important school skills. The New Mexico PreK goals in this area for each child are that they

- express cultural influences from home, neighborhood, and community;
- learn to care for theirs and respect others' belongings;
- play with other children; and
- learn to resolve conflicts.

The following activities in the areas of developing responsibilities, social skills, and increasing caregivers' observational skills can help support your child's development of skills that increase life and school success:

Family Chores

Give your child opportunities to help with family chores. Expect different abilities at different Stages of development.

- A two-year-old child can put a few toys in a basket or on a low shelf.
- A three-year-old can match socks from the laundry basket.
- A four-year-old can set the table with silverware, napkins, and non-breakable cups at each place setting.
- A five-year-old child can help empty wastebaskets from around the house.



Invite your child to suggest other chores in which they can lend a hand (washing and drying unbreakable dishes, helping with simple cooking activities, washing the car, sweeping the floor, getting the mail, watering the plants).

Play, Pretend, and Get Along

To help facilitate cognitive development and social skills, adults can

- set up play times for your child with other children. You can join in or watch the children as they play.
- provide dress-up clothes (e.g., shoes, hats, scarves, and jewelry) to encourage pretending. Children love to imitate adults by pretending to cook, go shopping, and care for babies and animals. You can talk with them about what they are doing and join in the pretend by sitting in the midst of their dolls' and stuffed animals' tea party and sipping a delicious brew of air tea or munching on an air burrito. Green or red? Your participation will help them to stay engaged and become more creative in their pretend.
- facilitate conflicts and disagreements as they come up so that children can begin to problem solve together. You may have to help them talk through their disagreements and take turns accepting others' ideas. This will help them learn to get along with other children at school as well.
- pretend with objects that are not real (such as using a shoe for a telephone). Interestingly, this is good preparation for reading, writing, and mathematics. Those academic subjects require the use of abstract thinking. And, that's just what a child is doing when they pretend!

Take Cues from Your Child— Pay Attention

- Young children will pay attention to activities that interest them. They will quickly move on to something else, if they are not interested. Take your cues from your child.
- If your child is really enjoying coloring on scrap paper with markers or crayons, allow them to continue to do so. You could add some other ideas and materials to help them consider different options and stay engaged even longer. For example, write their name on paper and talk about the letters you see and the sounds that they make. Draw some shapes on your paper (a circle, a triangle, a square) and talk about the shapes. "This one is round. This one has three corners. How many corners does this one have?" Talk about the colors your child is using. Don't worry about what he or she is drawing or scribbling. Being able to realistically draw objects is something many children do not develop until four or five years of age. And some of us never do!
- If you are reading a story to your child—and they are not interested—stop the story and do something else. Look around the room for things that are blue or red. Find a ball to roll back and forth to each other. Set up a bucket outside and fill it half-way with water. Then, give your child some measuring spoons and cups to play with in the water. Find an activity that your child *will* pay attention to and know that

References:

PED. (2019). New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines.