

# Ready, Set, Go: Off to School



Starting school is an exciting time for families! As a parent or caregiver, you play an important role in your child's development. The tips and activities in this pamphlet may give you extra ideas to help you encourage your child's learning as he or she gets ready to go to school. Enjoy the time together with your child.

This pamphlet also talks about what many four year olds typically are able to do and how they often think, feel and act. You may see some differences in your child because each child develops at his or her own pace.

## Social Development



### **Many four year olds:**

- Start to play games with simple rules
- Begin to understand turn taking
- Start to share; begin true "give-and-take"
- Like to please friends and adults

- Start to play cooperatively
- Are able to dress and undress themselves with occasional help

### **How To Encourage A Child's Social Development**

- Play simple games with your child (e.g., I Spy, Snap)
- Share and take turns with your child - this is a good model for play
- Praise your child when he or she shares or takes turns; it is not helpful to punish a child for not sharing
- Talk about how it feels to share and take turns
- Help your child learn to wait to have a turn playing with a toy or playing a game
- Give your child chances to play with other children; talk to your child about good ways to join play situations
- Encourage your child to choose clothes, dress, and take care of personal hygiene (like brushing teeth and washing up) by him or herself; be sure your child knows you are close by and ready to help if needed

## Emotional Development



### **Many four year olds:**

- Like to do things "their own" way and may show their temper if this does not happen
- Are learning how to control feelings such as anger or frustration; they stand up for themselves when challenged but rarely tantrum.
- Are attached to family and enjoy family routines
- Enjoy pretending in their play; they enjoy dressing up to role-play
- Have imaginary friends
- Develop a number of fears (e.g., of animals, imaginary creatures, sudden or loud noises, the dark); have difficulty telling the difference between what is real and what is not



### **How To Encourage A Child's Emotional Development**

- Help your child develop ways to work out a solution to a problem
- Talk to your child about feelings (e.g., anger, frustration, sadness, happiness) so he or she can make good choices about how to act when having these feelings
- Help your child to talk about and deal with his or her fears; take fears seriously and help your child understand the difference between what is real and what is not
- Help your child feel more secure by having routines such as regular bedtimes, mealtimes, story times, and times for brushing teeth
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for things such as picking up toys, making the bed, and little chores around the house
- Encourage your child to try new and different activities

## Language and Intellectual Development



### Many four year olds:

- Like to be read to and choose favourite books to be read again and again
- Pretend to read by holding the book, turning the pages, looking at pictures and words, and telling a story; the story is likely made up, or one he or she has heard
- Are curious about print and ask, "What does that say?"
- Are beginning to recognize and name some letters, especially letters in their name
- Are curious about how and why things happen; often ask these types of questions
- Like to sing simple songs, say rhymes and do finger plays

- Are beginning to print by scribbling, drawing, and using made up spelling; they may pretend to write messages (e.g., shopping list, phone message)
- Can stay with a task for a longer period of time than younger children
- Are beginning to understand basic ideas such as before, after, big, small, over, under, up, and down
- Are beginning to understand time and use past, present and future verbs
- Are aware of numbers, and are starting to count, though sometimes numbers are out of order
- Can give their first and last names and age, and identify many parts of the body
- Can identify many of the things they find in their environment

### How To Encourage A Child's Language and Intellectual Development

- Read to your child as often as you can; encourage your child to join in and "read" when he or she is comfortable doing so
- Talk about the books you read and the people, animals, and events in them
- Tell your child stories; take your child to the local library or other places that have books
- Make certain your child sees you and other family members reading
- Sing songs and say rhymes in which sounds, words or phrases are repeated; include actions to the rhymes when possible

- Do things with your child that involve talking together; give your child lots of time to answer
- Encourage your child to count things he or she sees (e.g., plates on the table, stairs he or she is climbing, cars in your neighbourhood)
- Look for numbers in your home (e.g., on the calendar, clock, remote control)
- Share alphabet books; provide magnetic, plastic or cut-out letters for children's play
- Point out letters and words which appear around them (e.g., on signs, games, food packages)
- Find ways to display your child's name (e.g., magnetic letters on the fridge, on pictures he or she has created)
- Let your child see you write (e.g., cards, lists, messages) and explain what you are doing
- Make a variety of materials (e.g., blank forms, envelopes, scraps, little pads, chalk, finger paint, pencils, markers, crayons) available for your child to draw and experiment with writing
- Ask your child to tell you about his or her drawings and writings



## Motor Development



### Many four year olds:

- Run, jump, and climb well
- Can hop on one foot for a short period of time; are beginning to learn to skip
- Enjoy dancing or moving to music
- Can ride and steer a tricycle
- Can throw a ball or bean bag and are beginning to develop catching skills
- Can stack blocks and complete simple puzzles
- Are developing skills with scissors (safety scissors), glue, pencils, markers and crayons
- Can string beads or coloured macaroni and may do so in a pattern
- Zip and button clothing, sometimes with difficulty
- Can pour things such as water, milk, juice, sand or cereal into a container, usually without spilling

### How To Encourage A Child's Motor Development

- Encourage your child to be physically active; provide safe outdoor areas where your child can run, jump, and play
- Give your child chances to develop balance
- Dance with your child to music on the radio, TV, or favourite CDs
- Set an example of an active lifestyle by spending time playing catch, walking, skating, bowling, or biking with your child
- Encourage your child to draw, colour or paint pictures and make things
- Encourage your child to button or zipper clothes as much as he or she is able
- Allow your child to help with setting the table, cooking, pouring drinks or cereal, and making his or her own snacks

### Final Note:

Parents sometimes have questions about their child's development or wonder if their child is progressing like other children. If you would like more information about your child's development, please contact your local Public Health office or visit the Department of Family and Community Services Excellence in Parenting website at

<http://www.gnb.ca/0017/EIP/excellence-e.asp>

Part of the



**Quality Learning Agenda**