



# The Smarter Preschooler

## August 2010 Newsletter

### *New Publicity*

We are excited that *Raising Arizona Kids* accepted an article we wrote for the August issue. In addition to the magazine article, we were interviewed by channel 12. Although we have had media attention in the past, this time the crew came to our house. The production crew also asked for another mom to share her views on not sending her kids to traditional preschool. The camera crew taped our house and the youngsters playing with one another.

The topic of the article and interview is "Can't Afford Preschool? Other Ways to Get the Benefits." We thought that this topic would be relevant because the economy has been suffering in Arizona as well as throughout the county. Some families have lost their job while others are taking a pay cut making it difficult to afford the high cost of preschool. We wanted to share some of our ideas on how parents can provide an enriched intellectual, emotional, and social environment without the high cost of preschool.

Here is the article published in *Raising Arizona Kids*, August 2010

Many Arizonans remain affected by the difficult economy. Some folks are unemployed and many people who are fortunate enough to have jobs are taking pay cuts or working fewer hours. As a result, some families can not afford the additional expense of preschool tuition. This can cause parents a lot of grief because they may believe that in order to get their preschool-aged child off to a solid academic start they must enroll their child in preschool. So how can parents prepare their children for a successful academic path without sending their youngsters to preschool?

- **Join a playgroup.**

As children move from the toddler to the preschool years they evolve from parallel play to cooperative play. In parallel play children are in a group yet play independently whereas during cooperative play youngsters play together. To foster proper social development it is good for children to have consistent playgroups. A playgroup consists of at least three children of similar ages under parental supervision. Playgroups may meet at the park, members' houses, the zoo, museums, or any other kid friendly places.

An advantage that a playgroup has over preschool is that there is a one-to-one ratio of parent to child; a parent is always close by to ensure the children learn proper social skills. Also when kids spend many hours of unstructured play together they build trusting friendships that can last over the years.

To find a playgroup in your area check out local moms groups such as [www.momsclub.org](http://www.momsclub.org) or [www.mops.org](http://www.mops.org). You can also find friends through your neighborhood, parks, library story time, or other places kids regularly gather.

- **Play with your child**

Play is important for cognitive development of a child. For example, construction play with Legos or building blocks is good for analytical skills. Pretend play develops social skills and an ability to understand symbolic representation. For example, a paper towel holder becomes a sword. Understanding the use of symbols is fundamental to higher thinking such as learning to read. A child must understand that letters together represent words. When a parent engages a child during pretend play, the play is at a higher level and thus more beneficial for the youngster.

- **Read to your child**

Most parents understand that a child's path to literacy starts in mom or dad's lap. A child learns the basics of book handling skills, vocabulary, and boosts general knowledge when he or she is being read to. So make sure you expose your youngster to a variety of different reading materials. Along with your child's favorites add various fiction selections including fairy tales, phonic readers, and chapter books. Don't overlook nonfiction books in the areas of history and science to heighten a preschoolers curiosity and knowledge.

- **Talk to your child**

Preschool children learn language at an astonishing rate. A two-year-old knows about 200 words and by the age six a he or she knows about 14,000 words. During the preschool years a child also evolves from two or three word utterances to compound sentences. The more you talk to you child and the more varied words you use, the more words your youngster can learn. Research has shown that vocabulary is correlated with later reading comprehension.

- **Take a class**

Parents can enroll their children in a specialty class for a fraction of the price of preschool. Many classes are great for developing cognitive abilities or gross motor skills. You may choose classes that you are not able to teach such as a music or gymnastics class. For example in a group music class give your child may gain an understanding music fundamentals and developing an appreciation for music. Reasonably priced preschool classes can be found at your local park and recreation departments or YMCA.

- **Visit museums and the zoo**

Take advantage of the many resources to help enrich your child's preschool years here in Arizona. You may visit the Phoenix Zoo, Children's Museum of Phoenix, the Arizona Science Center, Arizona Museum of Natural History, The Desert Botanical Gardens - just to name a few. You may consider a yearly membership to your favorite place. After a just few visits the cost of the membership is paid for.

One thing that preschool can never do is enhance a healthy relationship between you and your child. Beyond creating a child that is more emotionally secure, studies show that children who have secure attachments with parents have higher IQs. So not only will the time together be enjoyable but your youngster will be more emotionally healthy and smarter by spending more time with you!

### *Stock up on School Supplies*

The school year is just around the corner and many parents have begun purchasing school supplies for their elementary-aged children. Many stores such as Target, Wal-Mart, Staples, Office Depot, and grocery stores have sales so it is a good time to stock up on materials for your preschooler. Here are some items you may want to buy for younger children:

- Construction Paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Crayons, Markers, Pencils
- Writing Paper
- Paints
- Coloring Books and Activity Books
- Glitter and Stickers
- Play Doh

Teacher supply stores such as Lakeshore Learning also have sales. They have many educational toys, games, workbooks and other supplies for the preschool-aged child. Here is a link to their website: [www.lakeshorelearning.com](http://www.lakeshorelearning.com).

### *Recommended Website*

Check out Raising Arizona Kids at [www.raisingarizonakids.com](http://www.raisingarizonakids.com). Not only do they list events in Arizona, but there are many interesting articles that are relevant to all parents. You can search on specific topics from archived publications.

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**[TheSmarterPreschooler.com](http://TheSmarterPreschooler.com)**