

A Developmentally Appropriate Education: Early ED

Resources like apps, games, manipulatives, and curriculum can be helpful in teaching your children the foundations of education; reading, writing, and arithmetic, but more important than all of these components is an understanding of how children learn and the basics of human development science.

NCLB, Race to the Top, and now Common Core are education initiatives that are built on the pernicious beliefs that education is a race—and that the earlier you start, the earlier you finish. They assume that learning follows the same principles at all age levels—ignoring both children’s developing mental abilities and the fact that academic skills vary in their logical complexity and difficulty.

In a developmentally appropriate classroom (home), children are busy taking care of plants and animals, experimenting with sand and water, drawing and painting, listening to songs and stories, and engaging in dynamic play. It is hard to believe that these young children can learn more from work sheets than they do from engaging in these age-appropriate activities. For home instruction to be superior to public school one must first free their educational philosophies from the cage of public school instruction and build a dynamic developmentally appropriate learning environment for their home.

Learning should always start as play. Children should learn almost entirely through play up to the age of 6-7. Those calling for academic instruction of the young don’t seem to appreciate that math and reading are complex skills acquired in stages related to age. Children will acquire these skills more easily and more soundly if their lessons accord with the developmental sequence that parallels their cognitive development.

Don't start too early on concepts your child’s brain is simply not yet ready for. If you wait for the right developmental stage you will discover that teaching a child to reading, writing, and arithmetic will not be hard or stressful for either of you. The exception being a child who is dyslexic. Dyslexia can be identified early and the right instruction and early detection can reduce the struggle but not eliminate it. In preschool aged children some signs to look for are: Developmental delays; hearing, language or speech problems, difficulty learning the names of colors, shapes, letters and numbers, difficulty with rhymes, mispronouncing and mixing-up words, difficulty with memory, difficulty learning left from right. Don’t be alarmed if you notice some or all of these traits. Many non-dyslexic children have some of these troubles and grow out of them. It is difficult to recognize dyslexia in very young children. If your child is dyslexic it will become more obvious as they get older and the developmentally appropriate types of learning activities you do in Early ED are good for any child. For a child struggling in these areas it is even more imperative that you do not push direct instruction and book work too early.

What is most important in Early Ed is not a “rigorous” education but rather an enjoyable one. For young children learning should be fun, an education where creativity is cultivated, and curiosity is not squashed. The environment for learning is more important than the curriculum and teaching methods more important than resources. Don't stress yourself out, ignore the public schools standards and methods, and remember that a healthy happy child can learn what they need to know at any age (and much more quickly at the appropriate developmental phase) so there is no reason to be in a race or comparing your child to other children.

I recommend you read this article: <http://educationnext.org/much-too-early/>

Also look at the reports and articles at: <http://freedomeducator.blogspot.com/?m=0>

Relax and Have Fun, and Good Luck,

Stephanie Morgan

My Treasure Trove of Education Resources for Early Ed instruction

Here are the apps I like the most (they are in the apple app store):

- Endless ABC
- Endless Reader
- Endless Numbers
- Phonics Farm from 22Learn
- TallyTots
- Bob Books Apps
- Duck Duck Moose Apps: all the apps in this family of early ed apps are great the ones that you start with are
- Fish HD
- Reading HD
- Park Math
- Letter School App: This is a handwriting app that has the Handwriting Without Tears font as well as two other standard programs.
- MakeChange App: For learning money
- TT Clock: For learning time

Activities that help prepare a child prepare for reading and math:

- Leaf Frog Alphabet Magnet Toy
- Leap Frog "Letter Factory" DVD (other Leap Frog Videos)
Word World program on PBS (Streams on Netflix)
- Doing Puzzles
- Learning Patterns (string beads in patterns), they make large wooden beads for toddlers
- Coloring; some toddlers won't tolerate coloring and building things, painting, or clay would be better.
- Cut & Paste activities (and other small motor activities), Legos words for fine motor skills as well.
- Connect the dots; again, some toddlers and young children, especially kids who are likely dyslexic will not tolerate this kind of activity.
- Storytelling Activities
- School House Rock: all of the old stuff

Games we Love:

- Sequence for Kids
- Monopoly for Kids
- Rummy Card Games
- "Chunks: The Incredible Word Building Game" by Smart Kids: (for beginning readers; age 6)
- Bananagrams: You can use this for lots of early learning activities and you don't have to play the intended game. Early on I would have Charlie put a set of random letters together and we would try to sound out the word he made. Most of the time the words were a jumble of sounds, but it was funny and helped him understand that letters need to be placed in the order with vowels to make sounds and words we can understand.
- Learning Resources "Pop for Letters" game: All of their games are fun.

Curriculums Worth Having (just in case they seem ready before 6 or 7 years, I used some of these at 4 years old):

- "Parenting: A House United" by Nicholeen Peck (and her children's books that go with the method)
- Explode the Code Primers
- Handwriting Without Tears
- All About Reading & All About Spelling: Level 1
- Horizon Math: Level 1
- Math Manipulatives, such as, base ten blocks, cuisenaire rods, abacus, teaching clock
- Math Inspirations Method: <https://mathinspirations.com/>