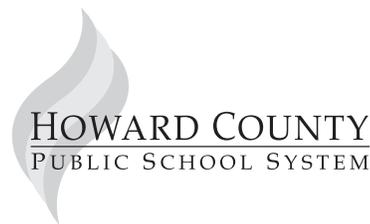


Early Childhood Beginnings Birth to 3 years



Parents are a child's first and most important teacher. There are many things a parent can do, starting at birth, to help their child. They can support learning during daily activities, such as feeding, bathing, grocery shopping, and playing! Parents can also partner with their child's teachers, caregivers, pediatrician, and other service providers to help their child be successful.



Did you know...

- During the first three years of life, the brain grows at an amazing rate (to 80% of its adult size) and forms "connections." By the time a child is three, the brain has formed about 1000 trillion connections, about twice as many as adults have. These connections are critical to a child's healthy growth and development.
 - Neuroscientific research indicates that early experiences, both good and bad, have a great effect on the brain's development and ability to form and maintain these critical connections. Researchers confirm that the way parents and caregivers interact with and provide experiences for young children have a big impact on the child's emotional development, learning abilities, and ultimately, success in school and later in life.
 - Research shows that what a child experiences in the first years of life profoundly influences how his brain will develop and how he will interact with the world throughout his life.
 - Often parents don't know about the many little things they can do to foster their children's healthy cognitive and emotional development, like talking to the children beginning in infancy, reading to them from a very early age, and helping them play simple games.
- Researchers found that when mothers frequently spoke to their infants, their children learned almost 300 more words by age 2 than did their peers whose mothers rarely spoke with them. Furthermore, studies have suggested that mere exposure to language such as listening to the television or to adults talking amongst themselves provides little benefit.
 - Basic brain connections are laid down before birth.
 - Good nutrition is one of the best ways we know to aid in healthy brain development.
 - It is important to recognize that what is most important to later reading success is providing a language-rich environment for children. Reading is one way, but there are many other ways as well, such as talking, singing and listening to music.
 - There are a number of studies that show that when children hear a good deal of "live" language, when they are spoken to often and encouraged to communicate, they are more proficient with language than children who have more limited language exposure. Only live language, not television or computers, produced these vocabulary-boosting effects. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time before age 2. This highly correlates with later school success.
 - For children whose primary language is not English, it is important for them to continue learning in their native language while also being exposed to English.

Birth to 3 Years - Supporting Your Child's Development

INFANTS (Birth to 1 year)	TODDLERS (1 to 2 years)	TWOS (2 to 3 years)
<p>Respond with words to your infant's sounds and movements. Repeat her sounds back to her. Talk to her about what you are doing, what she is experiencing, and what is happening around her. (I'm going to take your diaper off – it may feel cold." "The fan is blowing air on us!") Your infant is learning the pattern and rhythm of language.</p>	<p>Translate your toddler's gestures into words, and her single words into sentences. ("Would you like more juice in your cup?") Comment on whatever your child is doing, seeing and feeling. Toddlers are taking in new words all day long.</p>	<p>Ask your child questions that get him thinking. ("What do we need to wipe up this spill?") Use words that help your child name and understand his feelings. Continue to introduce new vocabulary words. Your two-year-old is learning to use language for many purposes.</p>
<p>Sing lots of different songs to your infant. Sing lullabies. Make up simple songs about your infant or your daily activities. Sing a silly song as you tickle his tummy. Your love and attention helps your infant to focus and listen.</p>	<p>Dance, jump, clap and tap to the beat of music with your child! Your child is learning to coordinate his movements. He also learns by observing and imitating you.</p>	<p>Sing and chant short ABC and number songs. Sing simple rhyming songs. Sing songs about moving different body parts. ("Put your arms up in the air, in the air!") Two-year-olds love to learn through music.</p>
<p>Provide infant toys that squeak, rattle or light up. Also good: simple household containers to put something in and dump it out; containers with lids the infant can take off and try to put back on; safe materials with different textures, like squashy, bumpy, slippery. Your infant is learning about the world around her.</p>	<p>Encourage your child to explore toys in different ways – touching, banging, stacking. Play simple turn-taking games, like peek-a-boo and hide the teddy bear. Sand and water are fun safe materials for a toddler to explore, especially outdoors where mess doesn't matter! Your toddler is learning cause and effect - what makes things happen!</p>	<p>Play simple pretend games with your two-year old, like baby dolls, tea party or stuffed animals. Help your child build a road with blocks or do a puzzle. Provide materials that your child can use to create or explore, like crayons, play dough or finger paint. Allow your two-year-old to help you with simple household tasks. They love to try to sweep, rake or wash things. Your child's imagination and self-help skills are growing.</p>
<p>As soon as your infant can sit by himself, share books with him. Choose mostly sturdy books that can be wiped clean, but include some touch and feel books. Point to the pictures with your child. Make animal noises when you share animal books! Your child is learning more language, and learning to love books.</p>	<p>Choose books with big pictures about things that interest your child – bugs, animals, people and machines are a few possibilities. Talk about the pictures. Ask simple questions. ("Where is the caterpillar?") Your toddler is learning how to hold a book and how to look at it herself.</p>	<p>Your two-year-old is ready for story books with simple plots. She will enjoy stories with repeated words or phrases that she can say as you point to the words. Ask her about what happened in the story. ("What did the doggie do then? Where did he hide?") Encourage your child to choose the book for bedtime, or to "read" the story to you. Be prepared to read her favorite book many times! Your child is learning how books and print work.</p>

Resources and Activity Ideas for Early Learning and School Readiness

American Academy of Pediatrics

Provides parents with information pertaining to children's health and development. Includes topics such as safety, immunizations, nutrition, fitness, and emotional wellness.
www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Shares suggested activities to encourage speech and language development for children, birth to 2 years, 2-4 years, and so on. It also contains information about typical development patterns, learning more than one language, etc.

www.asha.org/public/speech/development/Parent-Stim-Activities.htm

Healthy Beginnings

Will help you to nurture your child's potential for learning and growth by offering knowledge and support. Specifically designed for parents and caregivers of infants and toddlers. Especially useful is the Activity Planner which offers fun, developmentally appropriate activities that build young children's skills and promotes different kinds of learning for specific age ranges.

www.marylandhealthybeginnings.org

Howard County Library (HCL)

The library's collection includes books, developmental toys, CDs, DVDs, and audiobooks for children, as well as books and other resources for parents and caregivers. HCL offers an array of classes for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers that teach creative expression, social skills, listening comprehension, and the foundations of reading through developmentally appropriate activities. Catalog and complete listing of classes are available online.

www.hclibrary.org

Howard County Public School System (HCPSS)

Early Childhood Programs

Offers many resources for families of young children, including helpful tips for promoting school readiness for children ages birth to five!

www.hcpss.org/students

Early Intervention Services

If you have concerns about your child's development at any age, birth to five years old, this site provides information about eligibility criteria and available services.

www.hcpss.org/special/identification.shtml

Maryland Family Network

Here you can find activity ideas to help young children build the skills they will need to succeed in school. There are also tips for working parents, ideas for finding the right child care, and other helpful links.

www.mdchildcare.org/mdcfc/for_parents/parents.html

Maryland State Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Development

Includes information about child care programs and community services, as well as early learning and school readiness.

www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/

Ready At Five

Your involvement is key to your child's future success.

There are many things you can do with your child to help build skills, knowledge, and abilities in many different areas. Especially helpful are the "Activities and the Parent Tips" that can be found on this site.

www.readyatfive.org/raf/for-parents/parents-matter.html

Thinkport

Discover a wonderful collection of resources for educators and parent to help with early learning. An entire section of this site is devoted to early childhood education.

The "Think Family and Community" area has numerous resources for parents, including videos, games, etc.

www.thinkport.org/FamilyCommunity/default.tp

Zero to Three

Promotes health and development for infants and toddlers and their families. Includes a Baby Brain Map (an interactive way to learn about a baby's brain development) and plenty of free parenting resources to browse. You can also sign up for a free e-newsletter that showcases how children learn and grow each month from birth to three years old.

www.zerotothree.org

What if I Have Concerns About My Child's Development?

Here are some practical suggestions to follow:

- Schedule and maintain regular visits with your child's health provider (e.g., pediatrician, nurse practitioner, family practice physician, Health Department staff). Discuss your concerns with them.
- Speak with your child's child care provider or about your concerns and their observations. These individuals work with young children on a daily basis and have an understanding of child development. If they have concerns, it is important to follow up on their concerns, as well.

If you still have concerns:

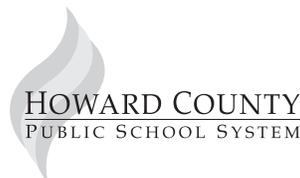
- Check a developmental checklist such as: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones, or http://es.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ntlc10_mffc_homepageasq.

If you continue to have concerns...

- Contact the Child Find Program at 410-313-7046. Find information at www.hcps.org/special/details.shtml.
- Contact the CARE Center at 410-313-CARE (2273). Find information at www.howardcountymd.gov/carecenter.htm.

Educational Opportunities

- Half-day prekindergarten services are available to children who are 4 years old by September 1. Priority is given to students who meet income-eligibility criteria. Information may be found at www.hcps.org/schools/prek.
- Children must be 5 years old by September 1 to attend kindergarten. Kindergarten is a mandatory grade. Processes are in place for families who want an exception to this mandate (i.e., kindergarten waiver or early admission). Information is available at www.hcps.org/schools/kindergarten.
- Registration for kindergarten begins during the first week of March each year for the following school year. Early registration is helpful to both the school and the family as they begin preparing for the child's transition to kindergarten.
- International families may receive assistance with registration or have questions answered at the Office of International Student Services at 410-313-1525 and/or 410-313-7102.
- There are many high-quality, community-based programs in Howard County, including child care centers, nursery schools, family childcare providers, etc. For more information, visit www.howardcountymd.gov/DisplayPrimary.aspx?id=6442463930.
- The Howard County Library System offers many educational services and social opportunities for young children. Visit www.hclibrary.org for details.



10910 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 410-313-6600 • www.hcps.org

The Howard County Public School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, physical or mental disability, age, gender, marital status, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to programs. For more information, contact the Equity Assurance Office of the Howard County Public School System at 10910 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City, MD 21042 or call 410-313-6654.