



ALL IN THE PREPARATION

January is a critical month for parents of pre-Reception children. Michelle Van Wyk and Sue Laidlaw look at some practical ways of preparing for the September entry

Preparing our children for school is a subject which may bring out eagerness in some parents and come naturally to them. If you are one of those that this does not come easily to, do not despair as there are many ways to prepare your child without causing you fear or dread.

Before starting Reception it is important for children to know about themselves, their families, and the world around them. Here are some ways you can help prepare your child academically:

- Read to your child each day and talk about what was in the story.
- Help your child to recognise his or her name in print by writing it in different places.
- Puzzles and games that involve counting and problem solving are beneficial.
- Encourage your child to draw, write, colour and cut to develop dexterity.
- Introduce sounds and phonics by playing "I spy".
- The home provides many opportunities for counting and measuring.

Social development is vital before your child begins school. Children need to learn to get along with other children, obey rules, share and take turns. There are some ways to prepare your child socially for school and, remember, in order to learn effectively the young child needs to be happy:

- Set rules and boundaries as children thrive on this and this makes them feel safe.
- Talk to your child about how to play, share and take turns with other children, there are many books which can help with this.

Children feel good about themselves when they learn how to do up their own coat and their self-esteem is built by doing these types of things on their own. Other ways to encourage independence:

- Buy shoes and clothes that are easy for your child to zip, and fasten.
- Have your child do easy chores like setting the table or picking up toys.

When children speak and/or listen, they are taking their first steps towards reading and writing. As children talk with others, they learn about people, places, and things that they will later read and write about. Children tell us what they understand about the world through talking. Some more ways to encourage communication:

- Talk to your child as much as possible.
- Encourage your child to listen and reply to others when they talk.
- Always try to answer your child's questions.
- Explain meanings of new words and help your child to use them.
- Through singing and rhyming, children can learn new ideas.

Most of all, have fun helping your child on his/her next adventure in their lives and enjoy every moment together.