

## SEE DICK AND JANE...SORT LAUNDRY?

### *Simple, Everyday Ways Busy Parents Can Support Their Children's Development*

Look through the catalogs of new baby products and it doesn't take long to realize there's a new emphasis on the early years of a child's life - "headphones" to pump music to a developing fetus, videos just for babies, and classical music CDs to name only a few. The number of options can be just as intimidating as the costs. What's a busy working parent to do when time and money are already in short supply?

Not to worry. Everyone who cares for young children has the opportunity to make a huge difference in their lives without breaking the bank account. Experience, as the saying goes, is the best teacher. First 5 Siskiyou Children and Families Commission can help parents and caregivers of children ages 0 to 5 turn everyday chores into enriching growth opportunities.

Take a look at the list below to see how Dick and Jane are learning by helping with these everyday tasks all before their first day of kindergarten.

- **Dick is helping his mommy sort dirty clothes into three piles: whites, darks and colors.**  
Dick's mommy is helping him learn colors. With each piece of laundry they name the color and place it in the right pile. As Dick learns his colors, his confidence grows and he takes pride in helping his mommy. For older children, ask them to find a pair of socks or count the number of pieces in each pile. For babies, hold up the items and name them as you sort the laundry.
- **Jane and her daddy count trees on a walk around the neighborhood.**  
Jane's daddy is helping her learn math while she gets some exercise to help her grow. Substitute flowers, bushes, dogs, cats or people and the fun with numbers never stops. As Jane's math skills progress, she will also understand that numbers are part of her everyday life. For older children, ask them to describe what they see on the walk. For babies, identify trees, cars and flowers as you pass.
- **As their grandmother puts groceries in her cart, Dick and Jane take turns telling her that broccoli is green, bananas are yellow and cereal boxes are rectangular.**  
Grandma is helping Dick and Jane learn colors and shapes. Imagine, grocery shopping with children who are excited and attentive! For older children, "read" your shopping list out loud together. For babies, name the items you put in your cart, "Carrots. Milk. Bread."
- **Jane and her mommy are singing songs in the car on the way to child care.**  
Jane's mommy is giving her an early lesson in language and expression. They sing songs together at bedtime, during baths, or when Jane needs a little extra comforting (like when her mommy has to leave her to go to work). Singing helps Jane communicate with the adults in her life. Knowing she can get her message across helps her feel more secure. Ask older children to dance out the words of songs when possible or make up their own songs to familiar tunes. Babies love to hear soft singing – regardless of how “well” one sings.
- **Dick is drawing a picture of the park where he played in the sand and slid down the slide. When his daddy asks him to draw himself when he fell, Dick draws a frown. When his daddy asks him to draw how he felt after he climbed to the top of the slide, Dick draws a big smile.**  
Dick is learning more communication skills - how to tell stories. With his daddy's help, Dick is also learning how to express his feelings.

Most parents have long daily "To Do" lists: cooking, setting and clearing the table, washing dishes, dusting and on and on. Use these simple tasks as a way to teach your children. Can your child help you count how many forks to put on the table? What shape is the napkin? What colors and shapes are the chairs, tables and sofa?

You may not get through your list any faster, but you will make a huge difference in your child's life. Just as they need food to grow physically, engaging young children mentally means healthy brain development. The good news is giving them those opportunities doesn't have to break the bank. All the toys in the world can not compensate for the lack of loving interactions that foster a sense of security and well being in young children. The best gift you can give a child is your time. Just 10 minutes of uninterrupted time spent daily on the floor playing with your child can increase social emotional development which is the foundation for academic success.