

Pointers from Preschool Pros

Secret strategies preschool teachers use that
Sugar Land parents can learn from

Written by Kemana Buckner



Primrose School of Sugar Land suggests that parents discuss expectations with their children before giving an assigned task



Kids 'R' Kids Sugar Land encourages parents to work on projects at home that reinforce what they are learning in school

Navigating the world of preschools can be a challenging thing. After all, it's the first learning environment children will experience apart from their home. They are growing in knowledge as well as socialization skills. *Sugar Land Magazine* reached out to the local experts, Sugar Land teachers, and administrators, to uncover their preschool tips that parents can utilize at home.

Encourage Creative Play

Lonnie Hutson, owner of Kids 'R' Kids in North Sugar Land says, "Show and tell is an excellent way to create a fun and inclusive educational environment."

When children are learning the letter "L" they have a scavenger hunt inside the classroom looking for items that begin with the letter.

"They can also continue to the scavenger hunt at home," says Hutson. "They may find things like a lamp, a letter, or lettuce in the kitchen. It takes what we are learning at school and extends it into the home environment, and it allows the parents to partner with us as we educate their children."

Parents should not always lead organized playtime. Amy Peterson, director of admissions at Cornerstone Christian

Academy says, "Give your child the opportunity to explore, create games, and use his or her imagination."

The world is an adventure for preschoolers. Jerry Luka of New Millennium Montessori School says, "Preschoolers are very energetic and curious – so be patient with them. Have the patience to answer the millions of questions they ask you on a daily basis. Do not be afraid to let them know if there is something you do not know, but make sure to look it up and answer them later."

Za'Mor Turner

2 Face Challenges Together

Parenting isn't always easy. Hutson faces challenges at Kids 'R' Kids and shares, "In our Sugar Land location, we have over 30 different languages spoken in our preschool."

While they enjoy working through it, the staff takes progressive measures to ensure youngsters with no English skills when they arrive, are proficient within a short period of time. "There are multiple activities and games we play in order to accomplish this," says Hutson. "The complete immersion techniques are also very effective."

When facing challenges of getting their attention, Luka says it's time to circle up. "Since it is not realistic to believe that children will be quiet all the time, it is equally important to help them understand - though different outlets including stories and "circle time" - the situations where it is important for them to be quiet and attentive."

Sara Cook director of The School for Little Children in Sugar Land says, "Mutual respect between a parent and child is also very important." Cook suggests parents explain to their child, "when I'm talking, it is your turn to listen; when you are talking, it's my turn to listen."

3 Create an Environment

Preschoolers are always on the move. Creating an environment that stimulates their growth and maturity is important. Luka says, "Make it a family activity to go biking, walking, or playing games.

Outdoor activities are a fun way to bond and have fun with your preschooler."

Invite them to explore their world and ask questions. "Create an environment that invites curiosity," Peterson says. Cook reminds parents that the goal is to make learning fun.

Karen Rombach, the director of Southminster School, says their team seeks to create a classroom environment that is warm and cheery. "Students enjoy an environment that changes periodically," she says. Invite them to help in small seasonal decoration projects around the house, or create a "theme" wall in their bedroom or on the refrigerator for their school art.



4 Reward Responsibility

While children are maturing, it is important to give them small, achievable goals and responsibilities. Empowering them to make smart choices will help them grow up to become responsible adults.

Luka suggests, "Have chores for them to do at home - like helping put laundry in the washing machine." Lalita Trehan founder of Sugar Creek Montessori says, "These simple tasks actually teach by helping children develop independence, orderliness, concentration, and coordination."

Setting up a reward system or chore chart with stickers will help them monitor their progress. Be sure to make a big deal about it when they follow through with lots of verbal praise.

5 Be Consistent

Parents should be patient and get creative with their methods for creating standards of behavior. "Parents have to realize the importance of being consistent with their rules," Luka says. It's important to come up with a plan and be able to stick with it.

Preschoolers need structure and a predictable routine. Luka adds, "They love to have structure. It calms them and makes sense of the big unknown world they live in." Having a regular family dinner time at the table is one great way to create predictability. Have a routine of setting the table together, enjoying the meal, and having a 30-minute bath time afterwards, for example.

To keep the peace in the classroom, Rombach says, "Clear rules are laid out and consistently enforced." Teachers also use assertive "I-messages" - saying things like "I need you to..." or "I expect you to..." to lay clear boundaries for students. Rombach shares that the rules should describe behaviors you expect to see, instead of what they should not do. "Instead of 'no running in the classroom,' use 'walk through the classroom in a calm manner.'"

6 Love and Enjoy Them

Love your preschooler for who they are, and who they are soon going to be. "Without realizing it, your preschooler will grow up really fast," Luka says. He or she will gradually become more independent. Enjoy this special time by providing a warm and loving home environment.

Let them know that you enjoy their company and recapture your own childhood adventures with them. Rombach says, "Children feel important when adults take the time to talk with them. Talking often, and about many things, helps them gain self-confidence. Ask about friendships and the activities that your child enjoys. Talk about your own best and worst experiences." SLM

KENNAN BUCKNER is currently only "mom" to a 2-year-old rat terrier, but knows this advice will come in handy in the future for the Buckner house.



Cornerstone Christian Academy's tip for parents is provide opportunities for creative playtime



Sugar Creek Montessori suggests giving children simple tasks that encourage independence, orderliness, and concentration



Kids 'R' Kids Sugar Land uses immersion techniques such as games and activities to build language skills



New Millennium Montessori School encourages parents to be patient and creative with their children

Fort Bend Childcare & Preschool Guide

Adventure Kids Playcare

4945 Sweetwater Blvd.
832-886-4153
See ad on page 14

Casa dei Bambini Montessori

20211 S. University Blvd., Missouri City
281-261-2272
See ad on page 31

Cornerstone Christian Academy

2140 First Colony Blvd.
281-980-0842
See ad on page 65

Kids 'R' Kids

See website for locations
kidsrkidsfortbend.com
See ad on page 71

New Millennium Montessori

281-208-3232
nmmschool.com
See ad on page 103

Primrose Schools of Sugar Land and of Waterside Estates

1315 Soldiers Field Dr.
281-277-8585

1810 Lewisville Dr.
281-342-2900
See ad on page 105

The School for Little Children

431 Eldridge Rd.
281-242-5437
See ad on page 59

Southminster School

4200 Cartwright Rd., Missouri City
281-261-8872
See ad on page 83

Sugar Creek Montessori School

615 Dulles Ave.
281-261-1000
See ad on page 27

The Towne Creek School

3311 Williamsburg Ln., Missouri City
281-499-8030
See ad on page 93

The Walden School

16103A Lexington Blvd.
281-980-0022
See ad on page 37

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More Helpful Hints

- Ask preschoolers specific questions about their day to help them recall what they learned
- Play outdoors as much as possible to develop gross motor skills
- Use a sticker chart to reward good behavior each day
- Keep regular routines to help children stay adjusted with the school schedule
- When preschoolers ask for help, tell them, "You try first" before lending a hand
- Read books together at home to build language and vocabulary skills
- When playing with preschoolers, let them choose what activity to do
- Visit naeyc.org to understand different development stages for young children



Primrose Schools promotes educational activities with children, such as learning to read nutritional labels at the grocery store