

**shopping** Going to the supermarket – ensure that both you and your child have a list. Your child's may be drawn or made from pictures cut from a magazine or just marks. Make sure that your child has some money to pay for the items on their list so that they are responsible for their payment and change at the till. (Many supermarkets now have children's trolleys which makes this both a game and a learning experience).

These are just some of the ways you can promote your child's learning at home. Children are learning all the time and what we see as just boring everyday chores can be a rich learning experience for young children if provided in an exciting and fun way.

Learning through play and enjoying what you are doing is a very positive experience for the child and being able to use everyday experiences to reinforce this learning provides a safe and familiar model. Through incorporating all activities in this holistic way the child can view their world as a positive, stimulating environment offering them opportunities to learn and enjoy childhood experiences.

## mission

The BCCN aims to be national influencers and providers of outstanding information, training and support to those engaged in the Early Childhood and After School sector, where vision, collaboration, inclusion and standards are key values ensuring that children are at the heart of all that we do.

## about BCCN

The BCCN exists to support the attainment of national quality standards in both Early Childhood and After School Services through the provision of information, training, on-site mentoring and networking with other agencies to increase levels of support to services. The Network operates locally, regionally and nationally with both voluntary and statutory agencies throughout the island of Ireland



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parents  
supporting  
children's  
development  
through play

'supporting attainment of national quality standards in early childhood and afterschool services... promoting children's health, wellbeing, learning and development.'

# play

helps children to learn and develop in a way that is very natural to the child

Play is central to their children's learning and development. Parents or primary carers need to support children's development and learning by playing with them on a regular basis and providing an environment that encourages the child to play in many different ways.

- ✦ Children learn through play: *playing can provide the opportunity for engaging in a range of experiences and should be viewed as an essential part of their daily activities – the right to play is enshrined in Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.*
- ✦ Parents have many opportunities to play with their children from birth. While engaging in play they are enhancing their role as the primary educator of their child: *children, particularly young children learn from their parents or primary carer. It is important therefore for parents to engage regularly in play from their child's earliest days and act as good role models and play partners. Sometimes the adult will lead the play and sometimes the child will lead the play.*
- ✦ Being involved in play helps children to think about what they are doing more deeply, builds their understanding of the world around them, helps them develop language, learn new concepts and come to terms with others round them.

## young children should enjoy what they are doing and have fun

Play should have meaning and purpose for the child (as well as being enjoyable) and help them to make sense of their world. It is essential for children to be given the opportunity to choose their activities but the value of this depends on the choices available and adults' support and potential for developing play opportunities. Adults need to be on hand to create opportunities to enable children to extend their play and encourage them in their learning experiences.

- ✦ Not all children know how to play, they need to be supported to play by the adult. Through supporting play a child can be guided, counselled and encouraged to experiment, investigate, and extend the opportunities on offer. Good support from parents/carers will provide appropriate interaction and intervention and ensure the experience is always interesting and fun.
- ✦ Everyday life is full of wonderful learning experiences and provides a rich environment for exploration and overall development when viewed by the parent in a supportive and imaginative manner. The following are some day to day activities that are carried out automatically, and can be used as a valuable source of learning and playing. You will find that you are doing some of these things already without thinking in terms of opportunities for learning, but isn't it satisfying to know those everyday tasks can benefit our young children's development!

Remember learning should be enjoyable particularly at an early age. If we enjoy doing something we tend to remember the experience in a positive way.

# everyday activities around the home

Hand washing doll's clothes in the sink, pouring/filling, washing plastic dishes, toys, paint brushes/pots etc... Playing with toys while being bathed, again pouring/filling etc... These may be activities that we do not do much any more as many homes have dishwashers/ washing machines, children may not know that it is possible to clean things by hand! (One word of advice – when children are washing things, if possible let them use baby shampoo rather than soap or washing up liquid as quite often they splash or rub their eyes and these really sting). Laying/setting the table/tidying up/vacuuming/ dusting/sorting clothes. These may seem very ordinary, boring activities but they can be good fun and the concepts that children learn from them are invaluable – sorting, counting, one to one interaction, spatial awareness, science etc.

**cooking** this can be a really valuable activity for children both as participants and spectator. It can help children find out where things come from – how they get from the farm, shop, and bag to the table. This is particularly beneficial if the child has helped with the shopping. Children really enjoy helping to make cakes, biscuits, milk shakes, sandwiches etc., and these activities provide a range of learning concepts – maths, science, language, social skills, sharing, mixing, estimating, fine motor skills. Most of the time this is achieved without the child realising they are internalising these concepts.

**books** Books at any age are enjoyable – the range of children's books today is inexhaustible. These are books for children of all ages – from birth upwards! Books enrich the learning environment as they can be used in so many ways, with or without the help of an adult. Reading to your child everyday provides them with a special quiet time alone with you, it introduces them to the concepts that words carry meaning, it helps them to see things in sequence and enriches their language in a supportive way and they may wish to act out some of the ideas contained in the story. Remember books are not just shop bought items; they can also be made at home with drawings, photographs, collecting flowers/leaves, sticking pictures on paper etc.

**dress-up** If possible have some clothes available for your child to use for dressing-up games. This wardrobe does not have to be extensive but should include enough variety for your child to experiment with. It may need to be exclusive in order to ensure that what you want to wear tomorrow is not part of the dressing-up box!

**outdoor activities** If possible provide outdoor activities for your child – sand, water, climbing, digging, planting etc. If this is not possible try to take your child to a local park or leisure centre regularly where activities are available to promote gross motor skills such as climbing, running, jumping, swimming, etc...

**walks/visits/outings/trips** These provide wonderful opportunities to "talk with" and "listen to" your child. Discuss the environment, travel by different means – bus, train, car, tractor, plane, truck etc. Observe differences/similarities. Discuss safety – how and where to cross the road, holding hands when crossing, staying on the path, staying close to you in crowded places and explain why this is important. Discuss the route you take, right/left, around the corner, up the road, across the road – name the shops/doctor/dentist/hospital etc. Look at and discuss the buildings, cars, shops etc. and when you get home talk about where you were and maybe make a simple map of how you went around the shops or how you got there and back.