Parent Involvement in Childcare and Preschool

Some preschools and early childcare centers cultivate supportive environments for military children while others are more hands off. Regardless of the preschool or childcare culture, there are things parents can do to make their child’s experience more successful. In choosing childcare, parents can access ratings at the QRIS National Learning Network at http://qrisnetwork.org/

Even at the best preschools and childcare centers, teachers and directors are generally not trained to recognize the impact of the deployment cycle in the lives of military children. Parents can get involved in several ways. They can take initiative to assist childcare workers in learning about the needs of military families. This could include sharing some of the resources listed on the second page of this newsletter. Parents can help raise awareness by suggesting simple things like a heroes’ tree. This is a practice that allows the community to honor service members, past and present, through the ornaments kids make and hang on the tree. Volunteering is a way to not only support schools but also make connections.

Effective communication from home to school is another important key. For example, meeting with childcare workers or preschool teachers is an opportunity for parents to discuss their child’s progress and any matters that arise.

In the first few years of life, young children’s experiences set the foundation for learning for years to come. Here are some suggestions for building a rich environment that supports learning in the home.

- Read, read, read! Reading everyday builds language skills, familiarity with books, and creativity. Librarians are wonderful resources for finding books that even babies will enjoy. Also, consider story time at the library or local bookstore.
- Speak your native language. If English is not your home language, continuing to speak in your home language will help children gain vocabulary and literacy which will help them learn English better later.
- Play with patterns. Basic math skills begin when young children are encouraged to notice patterns. When parents play games with them, they also learn it is fun.
- Join a playgroup. This is a place to make connections for both parents and children. Parents can take turns hosting or planning an outing.
- Visit the school your child will attend. Whether it’s a fun fair or an open house, just being there will help school feel more familiar.

Your Baby/Toddler

- Is developing their sense of touch and using their lips and cheeks to explore the world
- Is starting to learn and respond to his or her name
- Is incredibly curious
- Is starting to develop his or her independence

Parent Tips:

“Remember as you advocate for your child that no parent is perfect. Meetings are sometimes missed, or papers lost. Talk to other parents, but trust yourself. Keeping a positive perspective can be a challenge when you are tired and frustrated. Understand that your child is not entitled to every intervention that he or she could benefit from, and that the healthcare and education professional you interact with can help you create positive outcomes for your child.”
—DoD Special Needs Parent Toolkit
Resources

Zero to Three, resources for parents of young children
http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/funded-projects/military-families/

Child Care Aware of America, help for military families in finding affordable, quality child care
http://childcareaware.org/

Scholastic, activities and reading guidance by age
http://www.scholastic.com/parents/

Military Child Initiative, a best practices library for a variety of issues

Students at the Center, guides for those involved with military students
http://www.militaryk12partners.dodea.edu/studentsAtTheCenter/

We have closed the recruitment phase of our current ADAPT study.
Thank you to all military families for your interest, participation, and commitment.

We are preparing for the next phase of ADAPT, so please continue to visit our website and Facebook page for details.
To learn more about the ADAPT project, go to www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt.
For more information, you can call us at 612-624-4830 or e-mail us at adapt@umn.edu.

“Like” us on Facebook!

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ADAPT NEWSLETTERS Volumes 1-17 are available at the ADAPT Website

http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/adapt