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RECOMMENDED PARENT-CHILD ACTIVITIES

The activities in this report help foster the development of skills assessed by the ESI-3. They are presented by age and ESI-3 domain: Visual-Motor/Adaptive, Language and Cognition, and Gross Motor. Some of the activities can be used in the classroom, others can be shared with parents/caregivers to try at home, and some can be used in both settings as fun ways to engage the child.

I. Visual-Motor/Adaptive

The Visual-Motor/Adaptive domain assesses fine motor, eye-hand coordination, short-term memory, and drawing skills. Three-year-olds are just beginning to master fine motor skills with their hands and fingers. Using common tools (e.g., pencils, crayons, paint brushes, spoons) may still be difficult for them. For example, some children this age continue to use a full-fist grip when holding a crayon or eating with a spoon. However, playing with Play-Doh®, water, sand, and other materials allows preschoolers to develop skills as they squeeze, poke, roll, and pour. Children of this age are eager to please and to understand the roles and rules around them, but they often find it hard to do some of the things adults want to teach them. Repetition and consistent routines help these children gain a sense of order in their world.

Encourage creative construction. Invite the child to put blocks (pattern blocks, bristle blocks, or table blocks) together in new ways.

Art is everywhere. Keep a collection of "found materials" handy for pasting (e.g., bits of ribbon, cut-out shapes, stickers, feathers, leaves).

Help them express themselves. Give the child markers and plain paper so they can make their own lines and designs. Then, have them tell you a story about their drawings and write down the words to show that you appreciate their creativity.

Help them help themselves. Guide the child as they figure out how to fit things into a box, clean up a spill, or put on their coat.

Encourage finger fun. Provide toys that require the child to use their hands, such as Legos®, puzzles, large stringing beads, or lacing cards.

Let them draw freely. Keep unlined drawing paper and crayons available for the child to practice scribbling and creating line drawings. While coloring books are fun and fine, be aware that a three-year-old will learn more about using pencils and crayons and their own creativity if they can experiment on blank paper rather than trying to color in pre-drawn pictures.

Collectively create collages. Use colored paper, snips of fabric, yarn, stickers, old greeting cards, and magazine cut-outs to craft wonderful designs together.

Have them play with dough. Make dough for the child so they can roll it, twist it, pound it, flatten it with a small rolling pin, and cut out shapes with cookie cutters.

Have them pierce the dough. Give the child things to stick into the dough, such as toothpicks, pipe cleaners, straws, cloves, and pegs.

Get their hands in the sand. Put some sand in a flat cookie tray and show the child how to make designs with their fingers.

Play finger games. Play "Itsy Bitsy Spider," "Where is Thumbkin?," "10 Little Chipmunks," or another similar game.

Let them dress themselves. Let the child get dressed on their own, and encourage them to unzip, unbutton, and take their coat on and off. At home the child can try it with their shirts, pants, shoes, etc.

Practice dressing dolls. Provide doll clothes that have buttons and zippers so the child can practice putting on and taking off the doll's clothes.

Holiday fun. With the child, paste together paper chains, or add stickers and lace to Valentines.

Feed the birds. Help the child spread peanut butter and bird seed on a pine cone to hang outside for the birds.

II. Language and Cognition

The items in the Language and Cognition domain focus on comprehension, expression, the ability to reason and count, and remember auditory sequences. Three-year-olds are excited by their newly acquired language skills. The first ones they develop are listening and understanding. In a group setting, such as preschool, children may have a difficult time with these tasks when a teacher is reading or talking to the group rather than to them individually. Teachers help children listen when they give verbal instructions, read to small groups, and set up listening centers where children listen to audio stories while following along in a picture book. In addition to listening, three-year-olds are becoming proficient in speaking their thoughts. However, they may continue to have trouble pronouncing many words. Some children may even develop a mild stutter as thoughts come tumbling out faster than their tongues can manage. Parents and teachers can help best by pronouncing words clearly, listening carefully, and being relaxed and patient. Most three-year-olds are beginning to be interested in numbers and amounts. They memorize the sequence of the first three to five numbers and may say them over and over, just for fun. They begin to ask questions like, "How many cookies can I have?" They might recite numbers to their stuffed toys or dolls, and they like number rhymes, such as *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*. They enjoy simple number picture books, and they use words like "lots" and "more." Nearly all three-year-olds can proudly tell you that they have two eyes, two hands, one mouth, one nose, and so on, and they love to show you how old they are by holding up three fingers.

Listen to the world. Encourage the child to try to identify the sounds you hear on the playground or as you walk together down the street or in the woods.

Listen to the night. Listen to the night sounds when you and the child sit outside after dark.

Train their ear. Have them listen to audio stories on a smart phone, tablet, or CD. This will help them listen to details and work to understand what they hear.

Do book recaps. Talk with the child about stories you have read together. Ask them who the characters are, what happened to them, and what their favorite part of the story was.

Play a listening game. Try word games, such as you describing the characteristics of an object in the room and have the child try to guess what you are describing.

Reiterate rhymes. Read nursery rhymes together, and then repeat them with the child at different times during the day (for example, as they get dressed, while you are waiting in the grocery store check-out line, when in the car, etc.).

Put them on the phone. Let the child talk on the phone with a grandparent or relative to give them experience listening to and answering questions.

Play small talk. Invent pretend conversations that the child might have at the ice cream store or when visiting a friend.

Practice thinking ahead. While reading a familiar story, stop and ask the child to tell you what is going to happen next.

Let them speak for themselves. Encourage the child to give their own answers when people ask you about them in their presence.

Involve the child in family chats. Include the child in family dinner-table conversations.

Pretend chat. Pretend to have a conversation (or reenact a table conversation) helping the child practice their answers or express their ideas.

Dress by numbers. Count out loud as you put on "1 sock, 2 socks;" "1 shirt;" "1 shoe, 2 shoes."

Shop by numbers. Count out loud the number of oranges or cans of soup you put into the basket at the grocery store.

Eat by numbers. Count out the number of potatoes you'll peel for dinner, or the number of apples you'll slice for a snack, or the number of cookies you're putting on a plate.

Play and count. Count the blocks as you stack them together to make a tall building or line them up for a long train.

Counting mail. As you look through the mail each day, count out the letters for Daddy, the letters for Mommy, and the number of catalogs.

Count at the table. Help the child count out napkins, cups, and spoons so everyone will have one of each at dinner.

1, 2, 3, 4, sing, sing, sing some more! Learn songs that include numbers and then sing them with the child, such as the "Ten Little Chipmunks" finger song.

Count by the book. Read books to the child that include number counting. Without trying to teach them how to count, simply let them hear you counting and then count along with you if they want. In this way you introduce math ideas as fun and natural.

Keep counting. Count the number of cars or flowers on the child's shirt or the number of buttons on the front; find counting opportunities wherever you can.

Make counting a game. Create a bingo board that has numbers to match, and say the numbers for the child when they match them.

Arrange some numbers. Put some magnetic numbers on the refrigerator and play with them together,

sometimes arranging them into the number of the house, the phone number, or how many fingers the child has. Talk about the numbers as you arrange them.

III. Gross Motor

The items in the Gross Motor domain assess the child's gross motor development. The successful acquisition of motor control and skill is necessary for speaking, writing, reading, and other perceptual tasks. Large-motor activities are a three-year-old's focus and joy. Children this age love to try new physical feats, such as climbing stairs using alternating feet, jumping down from the bottom step, riding a tricycle, balancing on a beam, or walking on a line. Each of these activities is a challenge for them, but a challenge that is within their reach. Boost the child's gross motor skills with the following activities.

Play catch together. Use a large ball or a bean bag to play catch.

Play ball! Roll or kick a big ball back and forth to each other.

Shoot baskets. Use a wastebasket or set up a board with a hole in it for the child to use as a target. Then help her aim and throw a softball or a bean bag toward and into the hole.

Let them balance on a beam. Set up a 6-foot-long, 2 x 4 board. Encourage the child to walk its length, and then help them try walking on it sideways, backwards, or on tiptoe.

Hit the playground. Make regular visits to the playground so they can use the climbing equipment and the two of you can enjoy the swings together.

Have nature move them. If you have outdoor space, start a garden with the child, letting them dig the ground, plant the seeds, and harvest the product.

Cavort in the cold. If you live in a part of the country where there is snow, go out in the yard with the child and build a snowman, or go sledding together.

Work out to a workout video. Encourage the child to do exercises with you in time to the music as you watch an exercise video together.

Try a kid's workout video. Choose a children's exercise video, and together, do the variety of movements the program suggests.

Make moving fun. Set up an obstacle course out in the yard, or even in the house, where the child climbs over things (e.g., chairs, ottomans), under things (e.g., a table or even the bed) and through things (e.g., and open cardboard carton).

Vary the speed. Walk around the block together taking tiny steps, then long strides. Walk really fast and then slow down to the speed of a turtle.

Follow each other. Play "Simon Says" and create lots of body motions for them to try. Have them create movements for you to copy.

Shall we dance? Use crepe paper streamers or scarves to inspire creative movement.
