

Building Strong Foundations

It's nearly Valentine's Day and my Pre-Kindergarten students are making cards for people they care about. One student says, "Who's going to make a card for Jesus?" Several students chime in with "I will, I will," until someone poses a problem. "How are we going to get the card to Jesus when he lives in heaven?" Silence, you can practically see their wheels spinning in their heads. What were they going to do? Finally a boy's eyes light up and he proclaims, "It's ok, Jesus will still like the card even if He is in heaven!" I am regularly awed by my students' problem solving and thought processes. This is one of many conversations I get to witness throughout my day. Observing these students come together as a group to discuss their world's problems is one of the greatest joys in my profession. Inspiring and encouraging creativity, critical thinking, and a love for Jesus are a few of the many things I do as a Pre-K teacher.

Pre-K is a brand new program at Elementary. Being the ground community in this area, I have been asked a lot of questions. Is teaching Pre-K hard? Do you basically a babysitter? I have thought regarding my experience and of working with small children. What between babysitting and teaching? I suggest a definition to clarify this providing care and activities for a child is intentionally engaging the brain so place. Our fast paced society is ever growing with knowledge and information. Families are under a lot of pressure to keep up with it all. My teacher is to help families educate



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Madison Campus breaker for our small children. My program offers the option for students to be full time to meet the needs of working parents, and part-time to enrich the education of children with a stay at home parent. As a Pre-K teacher, I am passionate about the importance of engaging the brain at this very young age. I take this responsibility very seriously, knowing that these early years of education are the foundation of a child's ability to learn.

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If you are a builder, you know how important foundations are. If a building does not have a good foundation, the whole building is in jeopardy. It is possible to fix a weak foundation later, but it is a lot harder and will cost you a lot of time and money, and it will still never be as good as it would have been had it been done right in the first place. The same is true with early childhood education. When provided with the right materials and activities, a young child will build a learning foundation that includes conflict/resolution skills, problem solving, the desire and ability to ask questions, a love of learning and discovery, social skills, ability to manage emotions, creativity, confidence, character

development and desire to know Jesus. Another important foundation element is a child's learning attitude. In early childhood education, attitudes about learning are becoming a permanent part of who they are. Teachers will tell you that your attitude about learning makes you more teachable than any other factor. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's analysis of the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress data also shows that if a student is not a proficient reader by the end of third grade, it is unlikely that student will ever be. Providing opportunities for children to fall in love with learning and feel successful is critical to later learning. Building strong foundations is very important and this is why early childhood education matters.

Early childhood education starts at birth and arguably before birth. Parents who are intentionally engaging their child's brains for learning success are therefore their child's first teacher. There are many things you can do at home to build a strong foundation for your child. Reading with your child, providing building materials like blocks and Legos, listening to quality music, teaching your child how to make friends and how to work out social problems, limiting screen time, allowing your child to create art, to quality music, teaching your child how to make friends and how to work out social problems, limiting screen time, allowing your child to ask questions and giving them the tools to find their own answers, focusing on not just time activities and toys that teach and another merely entertain, spending lots of time how to with your child outside, learning language, and showing your child spend time with Jesus are some ways parents can build brain foundations at home. An



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important thing to keep in mind is that it is not about how fast your child can learn information, it is about engaging the brain. Just like a house built quickly does not make it a better built house, a brain needs to be given time to grow for the foundation to be solid. Providing a rich atmosphere with lots of educational activities and letting the child learn at their own pace is the important part. Parents can make a huge difference in their child's character, social, academic, and spiritual life when they intentionally invest in the building of their child's brain.

Early childhood education is about building learning foundations. Taking the time to engage a young child's brain is one of the most important investments a person can make in another's life. As an early childhood educator, it is my challenge to engage the brains of young children for learning success and empower families to do the same. We need to recognize the value and importance of engaging young brains for learning success so our children can be best prepared to further God's purpose for their lives.

By Rachelle Wetmore