Connecting the Dots: Helping Parents Integrate Teachable Moments at Home

Note: Parents will need to assess their child's ability to engage in the following activities and decide whether certain activities are age-appropriate. This list is being provided to help parents identify teachable moments at home that are both innovative and cost-effective. All activities should be completed with adult supervision.

Pre-K through 2nd Grade

- "Sewing Practice"- Cut a piece of thin cardboard into a shape (i.e. square, circle, or star). Punch holes around the perimeter, each hole about one inch apart. With a piece of yarn, apply a piece of masking tape to one end of the yarn to give it a pointed end and tie the other end of the yarn to your cardboard. Have your child practice threading the yarn through the holes around your cardboard shape. This activity promotes the development of fine motor skills.

- "Yarn Painting"- You will need an empty toilet paper tube, yarn, paint, and paper. Wrap a length of yarn around an empty toilet paper tube with spaces in between each loop and secure the ends in place with tape. Roll the tube in paint and roll on paper to create wavy line patterns. This activity promotes art and creativity.

- "Crayon Bundle"- Bundle six crayons together and wrap a rubber band around them. Give your child a poster, copy paper or construction paper and let them create multiple patterns and designs at once using this simple technique. This activity promotes fine motor skills.

- "Decorated Lunch/Snack Bags"- Using crayons and brown paper bags, let your child get creative with decorating their lunch/snack bags. They could also use stickers or cut out shapes from construction paper to glue on the bags. You could make it a weekend project to have a supply of lunch/snack bags ready for the week. This activity promotes art and creativity.

- "Rainbow Streamers"- You will need a large paper plate, markers or crayons, five or six different colored streamers, scissors and tape. Cut the paper plate in half and then cut off the rim of the plate. Color arches on the plate to resemble a rainbow. Tape 12" lengths of different colored streamers to the cut side of the plate. Take the rainbows outside and let the colors blow in the wind. Kids also love to dance to music with these. This activity promotes fine motor skills.

- "Flash Cards"- Using the white thin cardboard paper from pantyhose, cut out multiple small squares and make flash cards for math problems. This activity promotes fine motor skills and aids in developing math skills.

- "Edible Necklace or Bracelet"- Select your favorite snack (i.e. fruit loops, cheerios, or popcorn). As the base for the necklace, use a piece of string (i.e. yarn, thread, or slim shoe string) and make sure the snack item can easily slide on. Finally, string the snack onto the string of your necklace or bracelet. You can count the number of snack pieces as you put them on the string. This activity promotes math skills.

- "Pasta Crafts[1]"- To give uncooked pasta bright beautiful colors, squeeze 1/3 to 1/2 of a small bottle of paint or food coloring into a large re-sealable plastic Ziploc bag. Pour in some uncooked pasta, and shake the bag until all the pasta is coated. Pour out the pasta on newspaper to dry. After drying for a few minutes, rub the pasta between your hands to keep the pieces from sticking together. Help your child print out their name with glue on a piece of paper. Have your child place colored pasta pieces on top of the glue to spell their name. Count the pieces of pasta as you apply them. Let it dry and then tape on your refrigerator door or you could make a door hanger for your child's bedroom by punching two holes in the top of the paper, pulling a string through both holes and knotting the loose ends together. This activity promotes reading, writing and mathematical skills.

3rd through 5th Grade

- "Pasta Crafts [2]"- Necklaces and Bracelets – Penne pasta and macaroni noodles make wonderful necklaces and bracelets. As the base for the necklace, use a piece of string (i.e. yarn, thread, or slim shoe string) and make sure the pasta can easily slide on. You can use multiple colors of pasta by adding food dye or you can spray paint the pasta. Allow the pasta to dry after coloring it, and then string the pasta onto the base of your necklace or bracelet. You can count the number of pasta pieces as you put them on the string. This activity promotes math skills.

- "Braided Clothes Hanger"- You will need a plastic clothes hanger, scissors, and four plastic shopping bags. Cut plastic bags into loops, join the loops and use it to braid around a plastic clothes hanger. The resulting braided clothes hanger looks attractive - and clothes won't slip off! This activity promotes extensive fine motor skills by using the hands and fingers interchangeably.

- "Re-invented Pillow Case"-Cut the arms off an old favorite shirt, then stuff a plain pillow inside and sew the top and bottom openings closed to make a new pillow case. You can also add patches all over the pillow made from other scrap fabric. This activity promotes fine motor skills.

- "Napkin Rings"- You'll need an assortment of dried beans, liquid glue, an empty paper towel tube, and scissors. Cut the empty paper towel tube into 1-1/4" rings. Use the glue to attach the beans to the entire surface area. The beans can be substituted with small rocks or gems. Count each piece that is glued on the napkin ring. This activity builds math skills and promotes fine motor skills.

- "Sunday Paper Treasure Hunt"- Challenge your child to find deals on items that are on the family's grocery list. Allow them to clip the coupons and tally up total amount of money that could be saved by using the coupons. This activity promotes the math skills.

- "Digging for Dinosaurs"- Using a toothpick or another small device with a pointed tip, challenge your child to dig out the chocolate chips from a chocolate chip cookie without breaking it. This is a very challenging task that promotes concentration, fine motor skills and persistence.

- "Checker Board Game"- Using a piece of cardboard or old pizza box, cut out a reasonably sized square to use as your board. Using paint or markers, draw sixty four squares and alternate coloring each box (i.e. red, black, red, black) for each row. Paint twelve pennies red and twelve pennies black to make your game pieces. This activity promotes math and art skills.

- "Button Jar"- This item may be used to hold any number of small items. You will need a baby food jar or any size jar, flat buttons, paint or markers, paintbrush, quick setting glue. Glue several buttons on the outside of the jar and count them as they are applied. Hold the buttons in place until the glue is set. Paint the exterior of the jar and make unique designs. Add any other decorations you may want. This activity promotes math and art skills.

All ages appropriate

- "Ziploc Books"- Using Ziploc bags, put in pictures, flowers or anything else you want to be included in your book. Punch holes halfway from the edges on each bag above the zipper part. Use yarn or ribbon to thread the holes and bind the book. To make the pages "firm", cut a piece of craft foam sheet or card board and place it in each bag. This activity promotes art and creativity.

- "Instant Puppets"- Cut out pictures from old magazines to create a collage, and paste them onto '3x5' pieces cut from thin cardboard (i.e. cereal box, soft drink box or an envelope box). Glue popsicle sticks to the back to make instant puppets. This activity promotes art and creativity.

- "Reward Box"- Using an empty gain or cheer dryer sheet box, place a number of reward coupons inside (i.e. one hour of extra video game time, movie night, or approval to have a sleepover pass). Every time your child does something major such as making an "A" on an exam, they get to draw out a coupon from the "gain" or "cheer" box. Your child can decorate the exterior of the box and around the logo by adding their name or an action word. This activity promotes art and creativity.

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