

PLAY GROUP FOR 2's & 3's

Diane writes:

I am currently trying to decide whether to start a toddler group. I was surfing the net and found your site. I love it! I do have a couple of questions for you. I hope you have the time to respond.

I am thinking of doing a preschool for 2 and 3 year olds. My youngest was just 2 and I thought this might be fun for him as well as myself. Is he too young?

Also, how do you go about deciding what to include in your lesson plans? There are so many ideas and topics out there. Are there any that are more beneficial than others? How do I decide what to put in my curriculum?

I appreciate your time and look forward to your response. Thank you for your website, it has been so helpful.

Jean replies:

Two is not too young to participate in a play/learning program. At this age, don't try to make it a structured school atmosphere. Now is the time for your child to be learning about his world and basic concepts. It is not the time to learn skills such as reading and writing.

The best type of program is one you enjoy. Children learn to love learning by observing others enjoying the process.

To start, I would set aside half an hour or so when you do special projects. These do not have to be elaborate. They could be creative projects, such as; open-ended art; building something from blocks or observing animals. You could also do basic concept projects, such as; opposites (big vs. little or fast vs. slow) or counting cookies or toys (1-3) Most children are not ready for numbers above three, colors and shapes until they are three.

Another important skill you can help toddlers with is expanding their vocabulary. When a child says "car", you can respond with "yes, you have a blue car". Stretch their sentences just a bit, making sure they understand what you are saying.

Whenever using objects to help teach a child something, be sure to keep it simple and always use items with which the child is familiar.

Be sure to always plan a movement time with toddlers. Plan times to crawl, dance, toss balls, and jump. Be sure to plan both large and small muscle control activities.

Whenever working with young children always plan to use lots of songs, stories and rhymes. Be sure to keep your children involved at all times. Active learners are happy learners.

As far as planning your days, you could try this:

Monday and Wednesday do

A creative project,

A concept activity

And a music or rhyme activity

On Tuesday and Thursday do

A counting or animal project

A movement/coordination activity

And a story or language activity

On Friday – Plan an outing to the park, library, P.O., etc. Keep it simple.

Besides the obvious learning opportunities mentioned above, if you involve 1 or 2 other children in your school, the children will all be learning social skills, such as communicating and getting along with others.

A final suggestion, you might want to try, is to pair up with another mother of a 2 year old. You each take the children two days of the week for an hour or so of “school”, then you could all go together on an outing on Friday.

I hope this helps, Jean Warren, Preschool Express