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Parents as Teachers

Environmental Print in the Kitchen

Your kitchen is more than a place to cook! It offers many types of literacy experiences.

Meal preparation and other kitchen activities encourage language development when you:

> Talk together about what you are doing.

> Read meaningful print like recipes and labels.

> Write grocery lists or recipes of your own.

Environmental print is letters and words seen outside of books. It is a meaningful part of everyday life. It will probably be the first print your child attaches meaning to or reads.

The kitchen offers a wealth of environmental print. When your child recognizes store names, product labels and restaurant logos, she is beginning the reading process.

Literacy in the kitchen

> Have your child "read" and follow recipes with you. Encourage her to watch for familiar letters and numbers.

> Post reminders for other family members about shopping or chores that need to be done. You can print your child's dictated words or she can use her emerging writing skills and write it herself. (Be sure to accept whatever level of writing she can manage and not require regular print. Handwriting skills take a lot of practice.)

More skills in the kitchen

The kitchen is a great place for your child to gain skills in other developmental domains too. This learning can get a bit messy, but she can help with cleanup too! Tell her how much you value and appreciate her help.

> Cognitive

Your child can plan menus, match groceries as she puts them away and count out items to set the table.

> Social-emotional

Your child feels responsible when she contributes to the family by doing chores and helping others.

> Fine motor

Your child uses her hands and fingers when she spreads toppings on bread, pours drinks and stirs ingredients together.

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- If you do work like paying bills, writing letters or checking schedules to plan activities, talk about what you are doing with your child.
- Make a book with environmental print your child already "reads." Use cereal boxes, candy wrappers or produce wrappers.
- Collect labels and logos from foods your child likes and help her glue them onto file folders. Punch holes in the sides of the folders and have your child string pipe cleaners or yarn through the holes to form a book.
- Involve your child in searching for, collecting and cutting out coupons and sale ads.
- Talk about the materials and processes you are using. These words represent concepts that will help your child be ready for school: "The beaters go *faster* on *high* speed." "This plastic bowl is *lighter*." "Fill the cup *half* full." "Let's cut *thick* slices." "The bread got *harder*."
- Make simple recipe cards for your child to follow. Use pictures when possible.

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