

# **111 Ways to Help JUMP-START Your Child's LEARNING**



**by Patricia Derrick**

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*Babies are born with just about all the neurons they will ever have. Some of these trillions of brain neurons will dissipate naturally. Others form neural connections that allow electrical impulses to flow between them. Up to age three, the brains of children are forming connections furiously. The brain is being sculpted by experience.*

Dr. Patricia Kuhl, *Born to Learn: Language, Reading, and the Brain of the Child*, 2003.

## INTRODUCTION

*111 Ways to Help Jump-Start Your Child's Learning* provides proven methods to stimulate young children and make strong connections between neurons. With a strong network of neuron connections, learning becomes easier for children. Adults interpret this as smarter children.

**By using these proven methods, it's the children who will benefit. A child under five years is a fine-tuned machine capable beyond his years. Adults can provide oil for this machine, but then "stand aside" as the machine runs on its own. If left alone, the machine may leave the "beaten track." This is where intelligence is born.**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patricia Derrick, Bachelor of Science, Master of Education, is an award winning author of children's books. With 30 years experience owning and operating early learning centers and Montessori Schools, Patricia has proven methods used in her schools for years. The methods included in this booklet are based on 30 years of teaching experience and positive feedback from parents.

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## TODDLING THINKERS

**1 Use sign language to allow the non-verbal child a means to communicate with significant others.** Using sign language will invoke immediate responses. A non-verbal child can finally communicate without fussing and crying. The guess work is minimized as the child gains confidence in his ability to get responses from others.

**2 Teach sign language to everyone who interacts with the child.** This includes grandparents, nanny, Sunday school teacher, and neighboring friends. Provide written sign language guidelines so everyone will be on the same page. Communication within your child's world will then be consistent.

**3 Introduce a foreign language.** It is easier for a 3-year-old to learn a second language than it is for an adult. Have a mother/child language party in your neighborhood that includes different cultures and individuals fluent in foreign languages.

**4 Respond to the child when the child is communicating with you.** Language is communicating, so if the child is not using familiar words but you understand the meaning of what he is communicating, respond with the words he is trying to say. Remember babbling is communicating so respond to babbling as if the child were using words.

**5 Exaggerate sounds to help young children hear language.** Exaggerated and repeated sounds make language more concrete and understandable for a child beginning to speak or read.

**6 Allow language to occur naturally without intervention by adults.** Children can learn language on their own. They can put together sounds, intonations and accents without instruction from an adult.

**7 Make potty training a pleasant experience with positive reinforcement, but without pressure.** Each individual child has a built in time table for toilet training. Provide a relaxed atmosphere without focusing on outcomes. Watching peers is an excellent way for the child to learn.

**8 Remember the toddler is a self-absorbed being.** He is totally interested in self-gratification and instant gratification. Adults should never try to change the powerful person locked in a little body, but provide safe guards so the toddler can continue his journey with as little interruption as possible.

**9 Social dates with toddler peers will help the toddler learn to interact in social situations.** Peers and environment will help the toddler find his own boundaries without destroying his spirit to explore.

**10 Nurture the spirit of the toddler without expecting conformity.** He will need this strong spirit to tackle endless obstacles on his journey to knowledge. Prudent adults will help him without putting unnecessary rules in his way.

**11 Understand the meaning of your child's outbursts, expressions, sounds and cries.** The more you can interpret what your child is trying to communicate, the more your child will be able to move forward in developing language skills. Communication takes on many forms when you're a toddling thinker.

## INGENIOUS PRESCHOOLERS

**12 Pair a picture book with a musical CD that sings the words in the picture book.** This multi-sensory experience will make connections between neurons in the brain stronger and more permanent. Strong connections between neurons make learning easier for children.

**13 Combine all kinds of music, rhythm, rhyme, and movement.** Allow children to

participate by dancing, free-style moving, clapping, and playing any type of instrument, even pots, pans, sticks and lids.

**14 Repeat experiences over and over again, as much as the child desires.** The child will want to repeat certain experiences because of the sensations he feels all over his body. When something is stimulating a child's brain, he will want to repeat the experience.

**15 Stimulate the brain through tactile experiences or simply through touch.** There are 3000 nerve receptors located in the fingertip, just under the skin. Since a blind individual can obtain a college degree by tracing Braille dots with one finger, it makes sense that children learn and stimulate their brains by touching. Allow the child to repeatedly touch objects in the environment because the fingertip is a 'superhighway' to the brain.

**16 Use tactile instruments such as tapping on piano keys, strumming a guitar and playing a violin.** These are all great stimulators of the brain. Tactile and patterning exercises, used while playing these instruments, stimulate the brain. Homemade instruments using the fingertips are just as effective as traditional instruments.

**17 Be a facilitator of learning rather than a teacher.** To facilitate learning, be available to assist as needed and nurture the child on his road to learning. Generally, children do not need to be taught.

**18 Make yourself available to the child.** There isn't a DVD, toy or any other learning tool that can take the place of a significant adult. Availability without interference is priceless.

**19 Take advantage of every opportunity to learn a new concept.** Birth to 5 years is a critical period for learning. Every incident and every experience is an opportunity for learning a new task on the road to mastery. This critical time can never be duplicated in the child's life.

**20** Because a child under five years is a fine-tuned machine capable beyond his years, adults should be available to provide oil for this machine, but then get out of the way as it runs on its own. Adults can suggest routes, but if left alone, the machine may leave the 'beaten track'. This is where intelligence begins.

## ADOLESCENT THINK TANKS

**21** Develop study habits at an early age. This includes setting a specific time for homework, and a place to complete homework and other school activities. Help when help is solicited.

**22** Give permission for the child to move ahead at his own speed rather than the speed of others in the group or in the family. Encourage the child's teacher and/or care giver to allow the child to move on to the next level instead of waiting for others. Greater learning will take place if a child moves at his own speed.

**23** Provide situations for internal checks and balances between you and the child. If you are interacting and asking questions as part of a daily routine, the child will not feel threatened when you ask questions that might otherwise be uncomfortable. Be aware of what's going on in your child's life.

**24** Purchase audio books in a variety of subjects. Listening to audio books will provide another alternative at bedtime, a fun way to pass the time when traveling, and an alternative mode of learning. Audio books will increase listening and comprehension skills.

**25** Provide schedules but do not over-schedule the child's activities. Over-scheduling creates burnout. Make sure the child is involved in schedule making. Be flexible enough to break schedules when an "unforgettable opportunity" presents itself.

**26** Go beyond what is expected by the norm. The child can usually go beyond the norm with help and guidance of a significant adult. Let the child decide 'what the limits are' in his life.

**27** Supplement school activities with rich learning activities. Ask questions about what happened during the school day. Suggest ways to continue learning about each topic. Provide books and a computer for researching each topic.

**28** Increase the child's self discipline by participating in sports and taking lessons in vocal music, musical instruments, dance, gymnastics and karate. Help the child set attainable goals and guidelines. Give positive reinforcement when goals are reached.

**29** Encourage the child to pursue his dreams. Be available to assist and pick up the pieces that fall by the wayside. Early years are critical years, never to be wasted on someone else's dream.

## BRILLIANT ENVIRONMENTAL BACKDROPS

**30** Set up the environment in advance by removing unsafe items. After that is done, get out of the way so the child can explore, put things together, take things apart, do experimental trial runs, and become an explorer in his own space. The child will let you know when you are needed.

**31** Use real life objects in the environment. Start with a live plant and watering pitcher at the child's eye level. Add live animals, live creatures (bugs, ants, gerbils), sensory experiments, dramatic play activities and the list goes on.

**32** Once an environment is created, get out of the way and allow the child to explore. Explain and demonstrate as needed. The word

“no” is usually unnecessary in a well-planned environment

**33 Change the environment often by rotating activities.** You and your neighbors can vary environments by moving from house to house to experience different activities, different cultures, different science, art, dance and dramatic play. Teachers can do the same by moving from classroom to classroom and sharing different materials.

**34 Use themes to set up environments.** Create adventures on an island, learn about animals in a petting zoo, experiment in a science lab, perform neighborhood dramatics, participate in ‘homemade instrument’ musical concerts, or journey to another country on a backyard cruise ship.

**35 Mix up the ages of children.** Older children learn to be leaders as they assist younger children and younger children learn to interact with older children.

**36 Provide opportunities for trips to the zoo, museums, bus caravans around town and even picnic lunches in a pumpkin patch to look at bugs and ants.** Have books available to follow up and answer questions. Use the computer to search for information to add to the real life experience.

**37 Create opportunities for the child to be the center of his universe.** Allow the child to control his space in a safe, well planned environment. Stand back and wait for cues. When adults allow children to take on the leadership role, children will learn to be leaders and make decisions.

## ARTFUL BEHAVIOR ETIQUETTE

**38 Take advantage of “learning bubbles” to explain why a situation occurred, how to change the outcome and how to improve the experience.** Children learn best in situations

that are meaningful to them. What can be more meaningful than the child’s own real life experience? Be on the lookout for learning bubbles as they appear.

**39 Be aware that most situations have a pattern of events that will repeat themselves.** Brainstorm with the child to find ways to handle each situation. Soon the child will have a ‘bag of tricks’ to help carry him through life and take him to the front of his line.

**40 Provide positive reinforcement to encourage the child to behave in appropriate ways.** Positive reinforcement can begin with external rewards: tokens, stars etc. but external rewards should only be used initially to get the child’s attention. As soon as possible, convert to rewards that will internalize the behavior, such as a pat on the back or a verbal, “Good Job.”

**41 Provide choices rather than absolutes.** If this sounds like an old cliché, it is, but it is important enough to be emphasized. By allowing the child to choose between fair and just alternatives, good choices can be made.

**42 Pre-think how you will handle frustrating situations.** Take a few quiet moments and have a plan in mind so you will never have to resort to physical punishment. Physical punishment is so destructive that it stands all alone. Be a thinker rather than a thoughtless reactionary.

**43 Create as much one-to-one interaction with adults as possible.** Children need adults to assist them on their educational journey. Positive adult role models add rich layers to a child’s experiences. Allow grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other important adults to model appropriate behaviors for your child.

**44 Stay clear of the ‘mistaken’ parental mode of creating robots.** A free thinking child cannot conform to what his peers are doing. Within allowable social behavior, give your child room to be unique, with his own set of self-reliant behaviors.

**45 Role model loud and soft voices that are appropriate for different situations.** If you would like the child to use a soft voice, model how and where to use a soft voice. Don't forget to model loud voices appropriate for ball games and other outside activities.

**46 Model self control by not loosing your temper.** If you want the child to learn to control his temper, provide opportunities for him to see how others control their tempers. A child will model the behavior of important adults around him. Expect him to follow your example.

## CONSCIOUS PARENTING

**47 Provide foods that will increase brain power, concentration, energy and alertness.** Children will feel healthy, alert and ready to learn when their bodies are healthy. Brain foods prepare the child to think and conquer his world (Appendix A).

**48 Make sure your child receives adequate sleep in a quiet, comfortable room.** Sleep is necessary for the brain to function properly. A child who has been deprived of sleep cannot concentrate or focus on the task at hand.

**49 Make excellence the norm for your family.** Be on the lookout for new and better ways for your child to excel. Get started along the road to living an enriched life, and there will be no turning back.

**50 Use excellence as a passport to humility, compassion, and forgiveness of others.** You cannot move beyond the norm unless you have an understanding of others, their feelings and perceptions of you and your child. Armed with humility and compassion, don't let anyone or anything hold back the process for your child.

**51 Surround yourself and your child with people who also have an internal mission to excel.** With kindness and generosity, focus on

your goals and move forward. Those who think like you will move along with you.

**52 Follow the child's directives and allow the child to be the supervisor.** The child will learn how it feels to be a leader and take control. Quiet confidence will emerge.

**53 Never lose sight of what is most important for your child: nurturing.** Provide hugs and kisses multiple times each day. In the life of a child, learning without nurturing has little value.

**54 Take time to interact with your child and show interest in his work.** Play games with your child in his space, such as his bedroom or play room. Nothing can take the place of time spent with a child.

**55 Provide immunizations and well-baby check-ups on a regular basis.** Keep these records and give your child a copy when he is old enough to comprehend its value. Explain that this is a record of his "physical plant" in the making. This is an excellent method for encouraging your child to maintain a healthy physical body.

**56 Take your ego out of parenting.** Being a parent, caregiver, or teacher does not mean you are always right. If a child can see the adult make a mistake and even watch the adult express remorse, the child will be more willing to challenge himself and conquer the unknown. Fear of embarrassment over making a mistake is a debilitating deterrent to creativity.

**57 Allow your child to read to himself as he falls asleep.** This includes pre-readers studying picture books. A child lying in bed, not quite ready to fall asleep, has a wonderful opportunity to absorb a few extra pages in a book. Frustration will end and bedtime will take on new meaning.

**58 Empower the child to select clothes to wear including shirt, trousers, socks, shoes, coat and hat.** Then go to the next level

and encourage your child to self-dress as much as possible. Even toddlers can do this with guidance. Again, don't do anything for the child that the child can do for himself. Be available for reminders and prompts.

## SAVVY TEACHING

**59 Make sure videos and DVD's are interactive.** A child viewing a video or DVD provides some stimulation, but it is not enough. However, a child viewing a video or DVD along with an adult, discussing what is going on by conversing and interacting during the viewing, will help make the experience multi-sensory.

**60 Understand "play is the child's work".** The child's work is as important as your work. The child's play should replicate real life experiences. In the child's life, his work is real life. Make sure the child's work experiences are rich with meaningful tasks and experiences.

**61 Provide quiet alone time and private space for the child to think and imagine.** Example: an attic filled with safe, meaningful real life objects, a corner with pillows and books and a sign that says, "Please ask before entering."

**62 Equip the child's space with his own library of books.** Provide shelves to keep the books organized. Divide the books into various areas of learning.

**63 Rotate learning materials to provide fresh experiences.** Storage space is needed to be able to rotate materials, toys, experiments and even books.

**64 Read to the child and allow the child to read to you.** Make reading time interactive by allowing the child to interrupt the story and ask questions and move around the room and dance if music is included with the book.

**65 Make every sentence and every activity open ended.** Look for ways to extend the

activity to a higher level to include role playing, experiments, and excursions. Make each learning experience extend beyond reading a book or drawing a picture.

**66 Let the child shine and be in the spotlight.** This will build self-esteem. Children who feel good about themselves are confident. Arrogance stems from insecurity.

**67 Be willing to stand in the child's shadow while he shares his accomplishments.** Point out special highlights of the child's accomplishments that mean a lot to you. Self-esteem will sizzle.

**68 Allow the child to take the lead.** Being a teacher doesn't mean you always have to be in control. In an environment that has safety hazards removed, the child is able to control and make decisions. Try going a step further and purposefully make mistakes that the child needs to correct. The child will begin to find solutions and alternatives.

**69 Provide non-verbal cues and then sit back and watch.** Verbal communication is not always necessary, and depending on the activity, may hinder the child's progress. Observe what is happening and intervene only when necessary.

## MENTAL MANEUVERS

**70 Provide books with rich vocabulary.** Take the time to talk about the book and use new words found in the book. Children enjoy big words as long as they are broken into syllables and their meanings explained.

**71 Combine sight, sound, touch, taste, smell and movement as much as possible to make the activity multi-sensory.** Clapping and keeping the beat to toe-tapping music will complete the experience.

**72 Encourage the child to change the ending of a book and even add new characters in**

**a book.** This will give the child confidence in his ability to write his own story. If the child is too young to write a story, use his ideas and write the story for him and then read it to him.

**73 Listen to early language and allow time for the child to complete thoughts.** Don't complete the child's sentences. Giving the child ample time to think about what he is saying will increase verbal language skills.

**74 Use games that combine recreation with fascinating brain exercises, such as mazes and labyrinths.** Use crossword puzzles and challenging mathematics/language games.

**75 Make diaries a daily routine between you and the child.** Write down what the child says and/or use pictures to help the child remember words. As soon as the child is able to do so, let the child write the words and paste pictures in the diary. You can even paste Refrigerator Stories© into the diary. (Appendix C).

**76 Rhyme ending sounds of words.** Make rhymes into short poems. Record poems in a poem booklet.

**77 Make poems into songs and sing them daily.** Use songs to tell stories, describe incidents, and complete jobs. Allow the child to complete as much of the song as he can on his own.

**78 Encourage verbal responses to music (What is your name? My name is Sam.).** Encourage the child to make up his own melodies and lyrics.

**79 Eliminate negativity as much as possible.** Discuss desired behaviors and ignore negative behaviors as much as possible. The child will watch his peers and know what to do without being told to do it.

**80 Foster positive self-image by building up and never tearing down.** Make sure significant others in the child's life do the same.

A child needs a positive self image to go beyond the status quo and discover opportunities as they are presented along life's journey.

**81 Allow the child to walk on his own as soon as he is able to do so.** Do not carry the child if the child is able to walk the distance. The child will stand proud because of the confidence you have in him. Walking tall will help the child discover how very capable he is.

## BRAINY TACTICS

**82 Take things apart and put them back together.** Save broken small appliances, radios, toys etc. to take apart and put back together. Save items for weekends, vacations, summer, or even a rainy day. And, speaking of a rainy day, be sure to have a vessel to catch rain when it falls, measure it, and record it.

**83 Keep a bag of tricks to introduce to the child at opportune moments.** If a cloud forms in the sky, take out your cloud cards to interactively determine what type of cloud it is. Keep bird feeders and hummingbird nectar so you can watch bird activity in the back yard. Have yard sticks and measuring tape ready to measure distances. Keep records on your discoveries and have them available to compare with current findings.

**84 Avoid preconceived ideas about how current activities will be handled.** This will allow the child to think of unique ways to solve problems. If it feels like you are taking a back seat to the child, you've arrived.

**85 Try to remember, "Imparting knowledge is not learning."** It is only opening the door for learning to begin. The child will need to buy into the topic for real learning to occur.

**86 Make experiences open ended.** Show extensions of the activity that he can try next time. This will build excitement about returning to the activity at a future time.

**87 Provide patterns to develop the brain.** There are patterns in almost everything. Take the time to find patterns in even the most common household items: paper dinner napkin, poetry, rugs, measuring cups, floor tile, and the list goes on. Another form of patterning is moving a child's arms or legs or a combination of one arm and one leg to a beat or rhythm.

**88 Include left and right brain development in the child's activities.** Take time to research parts of the brain and ways to stimulate those parts. Use this information as you create activities for the child. Vary activities to stimulate critical areas of the brain (Appendix B).

**89 Make the difference between success and failure, just one more try.** If the child is having difficulties solving a problem or completing an activity, model how to complete the job. Then give the child plenty of time and space to do it on his own.

**90 Perform physical activities on a regular basis.** Large motor skills are stimulating your brain while performing patterned tasks. Daily physical activity maintains the human body as a highly tuned, performance machine.

**91 Perform small motor activities on a regular basis.** Mazes, puzzles, and complex patterns fine tune muscles and stimulate the brain while doing so.

## CRANIUM CRYSTALS FOR ADULTS

**92 Set up schedules with family members that allow one-on-one time for you and the child.** It really doesn't matter what you are doing as long as it is alone time with mom or dad, or grandma or grandpa or another significant adult.

**93 Transform everyday experiences into everyday experiments.** Preparing a meal can become a scientific experiment if you apply a little parental creativity. See Appendix C for some ideas.

**94 Make excursions into whole language activities.** Language will come naturally to the child if you use his own experiences to create stories. Build in opportunities to share his very special story with peers and significant others. See Appendix C for some ideas.

**95 Provide opportunities for "on stage" performances.** The more the child performs for his family and friends, the more confident and comfortable he will be in his ability to interact with others. Of course, self-esteem is the byproduct and necessary for learning.

**96 Explain what is going on in each experience, step-by-step.** Take the time to explain how and why things happen. Experiences can range from behavioral consequences, to a discussion of how rain produces rainbows.

**97 Encourage peer interaction to solve problems and make decisions.** Adults will keep out of the way as these brilliant minds solve issues. Encourage children to brainstorm, role play and use their own ideas to find solutions to social issues that would otherwise create a conflict amongst peers.

**98 Make mathematics a family affair.** Learn to count, add, subtract, divide, and make fractions, all while on a family outing to the local pizza parlor. Ask to have your family pizza left whole and cut it into pieces yourself. The parts can be cut into fractions, into squares for adding and subtracting. Bring mathematic templates with labels to put the pizza on.

**99 Keep communication open between parents, teachers, and caregivers.** This will provide an extra advantage for the child by saving unnecessary steps. Duplication of efforts wastes critical time.

**100 Stay current on brain research.** This can be easily accomplished by using 'brain research' as your computer search engine as you search the web. New findings are being published everyday.

**101** **Work toward positive outcomes so the child will be more likely to choose that activity again and carry it to the next step.** Don't artificially create positive outcomes, but find something positive in each try or attempt. Even failure is not so bad, if we can try it again tomorrow.

## GRAY MATTERS

**102** **Watch how children interact in a group.** Give each child an opportunity to lead the group and be responsible for various functions in the group. The shy child, standing off to the side, will blossom.

**103** **When drawing an apple, use fresh apples.** When painting a flower, use a fresh live flower. When drawing a person, find someone who will sit for a portrait. Real life experiences are only a few moments and a little thought away.

**104** **Label objects throughout your house, garage and yard with laminated word labels.** The labels can be kept in a container and rediscovered each time the exercise is repeated or labels can be pinned or taped to the object. This is a wonderful way to learn vocabulary and associate words with real objects.

**105** **Make your own puzzles.** Let the child take his own pictures with a camera, transfer them to the computer and print. Glue to cardboard and laminate with a cold temperature laminator. Then cut into puzzle pieces.

**106** **Provide play dough or clay to be molded into real objects.** Whatever the child does with the material is the correct way. It doesn't matter how it looks to the adult, but only how it looks to the child.

**107** **Provide real life situations for the child to imitate and pretend.** To the child, pretending is a real representation of his world. Creativity will soar when the child has a tea party

in the dining room, goes on an island excursion to his Hawaiian backyard, or takes an African Safari to the local zoo.

**108** **Help the child think logically and find logical solutions to every day life.** He will need to be able to think logically as he tackles life's obstacles. Early experience thinking logically will help in every area of learning.

**109** **Don't expect the child to be the first to do things.** A child who is late talking, may start talking in complete sentences with a vocabulary beyond his years. Being the first does not necessarily translate into being the best.

**110** **Do experiments to find out how each child learns.** Does the child learn best by performing an activity, by listening to instructions, or by watching someone else do the activity and then trying it? Adults with an understanding of how the child learns will help at home and at school.

**111** **Value the thinking process.** You'll find new meaning when you see a child lying in the grass, looking up into the sky. Remember, it's not about learning things. It's all about learning to think.

# APPENDIX A

## BRAIN POWER FOODS

**Provide foods that will increase brain power, concentration, energy and alertness:**

**Calcium:** low-fat milk, soy, yogurt, cheese, almonds, salmon, tofu, oranges.

**Choline:** eggs and nuts (increases memory).

**Iron:** red meat, poultry, spinach, beans, dried fruit, and whole grains.

**Omega Fatty Acids:** salmon, tuna, avocado, nuts and olive oil.

**Vitamins A, C, and E (antioxidants):** fresh vegetables, fruits, beans, and hummus.

**Vitamin B and Folate:** whole wheat and oatmeal.

**Water:** hydrates the body and prevents tiredness.

**Avoid:** sweeteners, corn syrup, processed foods, white sugars and white breads.

# APPENDIX B

## FUNCTIONS OF THE BRAIN

### Sections of the Brain

**Do an internet search to obtain a diagram of the brain.**

**Frontal Lobe** Critical thinking, problem solving

**Parietal Lobe** Processing sensory stimulation

**Occipital Lobe** Vision, Sight

**Temporal Lobe** Processes hearing, speech, language

**Cerebellum** Balance

### Left Brain

Sequences

Logical thinking

Analyzing

Objective thinking

Looking at the parts

Language: words, patterns

Patterns

Counting & measurement

Present and past

### Right Brain

Imagination

Mathematics

Spatial Relationships

Intuitiveness

Random thinking

Synthesizing

Subjective thinking

Looking at the whole

Language contexts

# APPENDIX C

## NEW WRINKLES IN LEARNING

### Mathematical Buffet

Set up experiments in every daily activity. You can make a dinner salad and put it on the table or you can create a living plant experiment by growing your own lettuce, picking it from the garden, washing and cutting the lettuce, cutting celery into various shapes with a plastic knife, peeling hard boiled eggs and cutting the eggs into 1/4's, 1/8's or even separate the white from the yoke and mash them up separately. Then use measuring cups to see which has the greatest amount: egg yoke or egg white. Measuring vinegar and oil for dressing and watching how they separate when you try to shake them together is another eye opener for the child. Make each ordinary life experience an experiment.

### Whole Language Refrigerator Stories®

Use whole language Refrigerator Stories® to make language come alive for the child. Start with a piece of paper and crayons. As the child

is working on his masterpiece, ask him to tell you about his picture. Write down exactly what he/she says on the bottom of the page , e.g. This is me and Mommy going shoppin' in the car with kitty. Upon completion, tape this Refrigerator Story<sup>®</sup> to the refrigerator. With a little prompting, you will be amazed how the child can tell the story exactly as it is written. Of course the story will be told to Mom, Dad, Grandma, Grandpa, next door neighbor Sam and even Mr. Teddy Bear.

### **Back Yard Scientific Expedition**

Take the time for adventures hidden in the grass or within a flower. Be sure to have a magnifying glass, tweezers, scissors, measuring cup, yardstick, clear containers with lids, and safety goggles, all tucked away in a scientist back pack on the child's back. When you and the child are equipped, head for the backyard. What a stimulating, scientific trip you and the child will have. And of course you will record your findings in the scientific notebook. After returning everything to the backpack, keep the backpack on the coat hook near the back door for tomorrow's scientific expedition in the vegetable garden.

### **Learning Factory**

Make your home a factory for learning. Set up music centers with homemade instruments, mathematics centers with objects for counting, science centers with experiments, geographic centers with world globes and maps, language centers with crayons, paint, glue and pencils. Model the activity in each new center to show children how they can use the new center. Skip this step if the child tells you it doesn't need to be explained. Step back and find out what the child gravitates toward. This will be an eye-opening experience.

### **Community Proving Ground**

Make your community the child's experimental playground. Travel around your city or county and take advantage of all the sights, sounds and opportunities for learning. Try taking a bus, a cab, a ferry, a train, or even walk to close destinations. "Knowing your community" is a giant step toward an understanding of how things work and how the child fits in to his/her environment. While traveling around town, give each sight and sound a name. Then go one step further and explain how each thing works. A short list of things to discuss: elevator, escalator, traffic sign, traffic lights, bus stop, parking meters, policemen on bicycles, etc.