

big PLANS in print

Connecting Big Plans' Parents to their Communities

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Back to School Success in 5 Clear Steps

They're heading back and now's the time to get them ready. Whether it is their first day ever or just the first day for this grade, here are five things to consider:

1. TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT YOUR KID – a lot has changed since last June and definitely since last September. Check and see what your child can do independently. Do you really need to help her pack up her back pack (no) or get his lunchbox ready (maybe)? When we do for our kids what they could do for themselves, we are demeaning them: taking away their meaning. Our actions tell them that they can't do it on their own and decreases their sense of self.

2. UNLOAD YOUR PLATE – What will you require your child to do this year? Will your daughter get her own breakfast ready? Will your son make his lunch or sweep the kitchen floor while you finish off the lunches? Get an idea of one or two chores that your child will take off of your plate. Ultimately, this will leave you feeling less stressed and a bit more patient.

3. TAKE TIME TO TEACH – Now that you know what to hand off to your kids, take the time to teach it. Break the chore down into smaller tasks, create a check list if necessary and work with them as they begin to feel more capable. Don't load them down with tons of new chores – just one or two. That way, you'll be setting them up for success. Start on weekends so that they can practice when there is no school and feel capable on school days.

4. SLEEP MATTERS – Check out how much sleep your child needs and find a way to make that happen. Sleep affects our bodies and our brains. Making it a priority will be a great gift to your child as well as an important habit.

5. ROUTINES HELP – Whether it is getting out the door, getting to dance class, getting homework done or getting kids to sleep; creating a routine with your child will make things easier on everyone. Ask your youngster to help you make a list of the tasks required (Getting to dance class: fill water bottle, pack bag with shoes, and water bottle, change into gear).

Write down an order, how long each thing will take, as well as who is responsible for each task (get the child helping as much as possible). Decide on how you will cue tasks and what the consequences are for following plan and not following plan. Knowing all of this will help to keep everyone calm in the heat of the moment.



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It's Storytime

As fall is upon us we can get excited for the seasonal change. To celebrate this time of year, here are three books you can enjoy with your child:



Healthy Applesauce Snack for School

INGREDIENTS

- 4 apples - peeled, cored and chopped
- 3/4 cup water
- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

INSTRUCTIONS

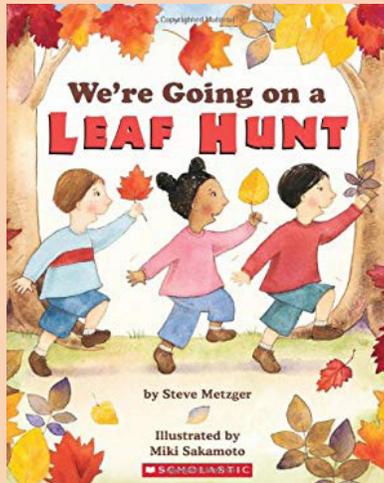
In a saucepan, combine apples, water, sugar, and cinnamon. Cover, and cook over medium heat for 30 to 40 minutes, or until apples are soft. Allow to cool, then mash with a fork or potato masher. Don't mash too much if you love applesauce with chunks! Refrigerate until ready to serve.

<https://www.sixsistersstuff.com>

10 WORDS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN

freehomeschooldeals.com

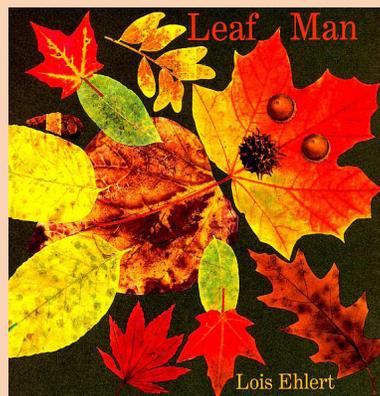
1. I appreciate you...
2. Thank you for helping with...
3. I'm grateful when you...
4. You've really worked hard on...
5. You're fantastic at...
6. You make me proud when...
7. You listened well on...
8. You were responsible on...
9. Spectacular job at...
10. You excelled at...



We're Going on a Leaf Hunt by Steve Metzger

Some days we need to move more! This fun book follows three friends on a colorful leaf hunting adventure, in the fashion of the popular Bear Hunt song with rhyme, repetition, and sound effects. Children will enjoy going on the journey over the mountain and through the forest to collect different kinds and colors of leaves. Jumping and playing in them at the end is the best part!

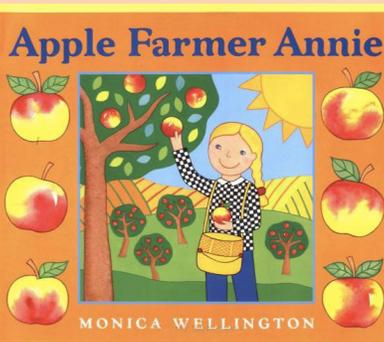
Extending the Learning: Go outside on a leaf hunt! Collect leaves of different colors. (For extra fun, plant a stuffed skunk or a picture of a skunk outside ahead of time. Re-enact the story when the students find it.)



Leaf Man By Lois Ehlert

Leaf Man is a fall favorite as the beautiful real images and die-cuts of leaves just make them pop right off the pages! This text will take you on the imaginative journey of where leaves may travel with the wind.

Extending the Learning: Provide leaves (real or silk) and other natural items so children can create their own leaf man or masterpieces from their imaginations (see crafts on opposite page).



Apple Farmer Annie by Monica Wellington

In this autumn tale, toddlers will go apple picking with Annie, and then make some delicious pies, applesauce, and more. From there, Annie goes to the farmers market to sell her homemade harvest. Learning about counting and sorting, preschoolers will enjoy this fun adventure with Annie.

Extending the Learning: Have a tasting party with a variety of apples. Make applesauce or try recipes at the end of the book.

LEAF CRAFTS TO TRY AT HOME

Fall is a perfect time to create nature-inspired crafts, especially as the leaves start to change colour. For this craft, you will want to take your preschooler on a nature hike. Perhaps, you can plan to do this after reading the books on the opposite page! While outside, collect leaves of different colours and sizes and try to find leaves from a variety of trees.



handsonaswegrow.com/leaf-people-fall-craft

Using the leaves you collect, your child can create their own masterpiece. Some suggestions are shown on this page. If your child would like to make leaf people with googly eyes, you will need colourful leaves from outside, googly eyes with adhesive backing and a black marker. You may use non-adhesive googly eyes and glue to attach them to the leaves, but using the adhesive back type makes this activity super simple and great for all ages. Working on these leaf people is a great

way to incorporate fine motor skills into a fun and easy craft. By pulling the googly eyes from its backing sheet, kids will develop and strengthen a pincer grasp while strengthening the intrinsic muscles of the hands. These skills are needed for many tasks including pencil grasp and clothing fasteners. Sticking the eyes onto the leaves works on eye-hand coordination skills that are necessary for written work and scissor use. If you don't have googly eyes, then you can also create a leaf lion by glueing leaves to a piece of paper and drawing a face in the middle (see photo on the right).



craftymorning.com



Print out a picture of a squirrel and have your child glue leaves on the tail!



Have your child glue leaves to the top of a tree picture.



Why Early Childhood Development Is Important

What happens in early childhood affects a child throughout life. Their experiences, relationships and surroundings can be opportunities for influencing their lives positively as well as be risks for influencing their development negatively.

- Most young children in Canada are developing well. But by the time they go to kindergarten, about 25 per cent have difficulties with basic tasks such as holding a crayon, following instructions and getting along with others.
- A greater percentage of children who grow up in poverty and with other social disadvantages are vulnerable. However, the greatest number of vulnerable children comes from middle-income homes, because of the size of the middle class in Canada (75 per cent of all families).
- Getting children off to the right start reduces juvenile delinquency, addictions, school dropout rates, learning disabilities, obesity and many other problems.
- **Investing in the early years pays off. By one estimate, every \$1 invested in the early years saves \$3 in spending for school-aged children and \$8 for adult education.**

Source: Early Child Development Mapping Project Alberta



As the season for coughs and colds approaches, reinforce the habit of a healthy lifestyle by singing and acting out this song with your child:

This is the Way We Wash Our Hands

(Tune: Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush)

This is the way we wash our hands, wash our hands, wash our hands.
This is the way we wash our hands so early in the morning.
This is the way we brush our teeth, brush our teeth, brush our teeth.
This the way we brush our teeth so early in the morning.

(Other: Wash our face, Change our clothes, Eat our food)

Fall Hikes With Your Preschooler

As the air is turning brisk and the temperature colder, the changing colours of the leaves are not to be missed! Fall hiking with your children can actually be really fun! Thanks to local blog authors, Annika from [Born to Be Adventurous](#) and Tanya from [Family Adventures in the Canadian Rockies](#), we have a list of some easy fall hikes to share with you.

Before heading out with your little ones in the colder weather, Annika suggests these three tips:

1. Bring a toque, mitts, warm packable jacket and warm pants or full suit.
2. Keep the hike short
3. Bring Hot Chocolate

She also reminds families to start with some of the easier hikes, especially if the weather is colder and to make sure to check out the trail report to know the condition of the hike before going (Alberta Parks Trail Report www.albertaparks.ca). Four hikes Annika suggests are:

Tiger Lily Loop

Easy- 1.4 km 70 m elevation – *Stroller Friendly – 38 minutes from Downtown Calgary. Located just 38 minutes from downtown Calgary at Glenbow Ranch is the Tiger Lily Loop. From the parking lot head west. Take a right through the fence to head onto the trail or take a minor detour and head straight to enjoy the look out of the valley. Once through the fence the trail takes you down through the trees. Enjoy the changing colours of leaves before looping around and climbing up past the park office back to the

parking lot. Learn more about Tiger Lily Loop [HERE](#). *A stroller could go on the path but would need a lift over top of the fence that is meant to keep out bikers.

Forget-Me-Not-Pond

Easy – 2 km, 0 elevation – Stroller friendly – 1 hr from downtown Calgary – Closed December 1st- May 14. Located in Bragg

Creek at a Day use area is this beautiful short hike around Forget-Me-Not-Pond. This hike offers beautiful views of the surrounding mountains. When the sun shines on the pond at mid-day, it turns a lovely turquoise colour. New walkers can try to tackle this hike on their own two feet. All children will enjoy the many different spots where they can throw rocks into the water. We like going around the lake counter-clockwise, so we cross the two bridges at the end of our hike! *Note: There are many benches and picnic benches along the trail around the pond to stop and rest.*

Eau Claire Hiking Trail Loop

Easy – 1.5km, 0 elevation – 1 hour 21 minutes from downtown Calgary. A short flat interpretive trail that is perfect for early walkers and located in Kananaskis Country. The trail starts at the Eau Claire campground. The hike shows views of the surrounding mountains, takes you alongside the river and ends by looping back through the trees. This trail is fun to trail run with your little ones or to take slowly and enjoy throwing rocks into the water. Learn more about the Eau Claire hike at Annika's blog: www.borntoBeadventurous.com



Flowing Water Interpretive Trail

Easy – 2km RT, 105 m elevation – 56 minutes from downtown Calgary. The Flowing Water Interpretive Trail begins at Willow Rock Campground in Bow Valley Provincial Park in Kananaskis. It is located just off of the Trans-Canada Highway. Enjoy views of the surrounding mountains and the Kananaskis River. This trail is close to Canmore which means quick access to amenities and a great place to go after the hike for some hot chocolate or tea.

Tanya, from *Family Adventures in the Canadian Rockies* blog, also has some suggestions for fall hikes you can do with your preschooler. Here are two of the hikes she lists:

Paddy's Flat Interpretive Trail

Elbow Valley, Kananaskis. Great if you're camping at Paddy's Flat Campground. 4km one way. Hike as far as you want and return the same way. It's possible as well to do a 2km loop with the Interpretive trail. Trail is Chariot friendly, bike friendly, and has secret little pocket beaches.

Beaver Flats Interpretive Trail

Elbow Valley, Kananaskis. This is a great trail if you are camped at the Beaver Flats Campground. At 2.6km return, most small children should have no problems with this easy hike. It's well maintained, Chariot and bike-friendly. On the walk, you'll have plenty of opportunities to look for beavers as you pass a series of beaver ponds along a creek.

You can find Tanya's complete list at <http://www.rockiesfamilyadventures.com/p/best-toddlerpreschooler-hikes.html>

