



What to Teach a Child

When I was a young kindergarten teacher, prospective parents would ask me what they could do to prepare their children for kindergarten, expecting I would give them a list of reading and math exercises. As I look back now, I can see that my responses were vague and far from satisfactory. Now, these many years later, I would say something like this:

They will need to know their colors - the blue of the sky, the green of the grass, the colors of the rainbow. And numbers. Count with them: the squirrels in the park, the petals on a flower, how many acorns can be held in one hand. In two hands.

Share with them the wonder and the beauty of the world around them - the sliver of the moon that grows night by night until it is full and round. The snail that travels with his house on his back, and leaves a silvery trail wherever he goes. Or the spider who spins beautiful, intricate patterns overnight.

Encourage them to be creative and different. Walk in the mud together with bare feet. Howl at the moon like wolves. Wriggle or slide through the grass like worms or snails.

Teach them tenderness as they gently stroke a kitten, or pick up a worm after the rain, and replace it carefully in the soil. Encourage their sense of responsibility as you plant seeds together and tend them regularly.

Teach them to read - to read the weather and tell if it will be windy or rainy today. Or to read the world around them - the changing colors of the leaves, the many kinds of seeds, the many colors of flowers.

Introduce them to the magic of stories, both listening to them and telling them. Let their imagination soar. Do this, and *I can teach them to read!*

