

The Role of Nonacademic Skills in Early Learning

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As parents, we tend to get hung up on teaching our kids their ABC's and 123's. We focus so much on the academic skills kids need to prepare for schooling, that we often forget that there are other likewise important skills that our children need to master. These are nonacademic skills, the oftentimes looked-over necessities of life.

WHAT ARE NONACADEMIC SKILLS?

In order for a child to become successful in school, they have to master a certain set of skills that form a foundation for later education. Most of the time these skills are learned in infancy, toddlerhood, or at least prior to the time a child enters school. So exactly what are those skills? They include:

- EMOTIONAL SELF-REGULATION

This refers to how kids learn to self-regulate emotions and soothe themselves when they are upset. This helps children to learn how to adapt to change, as well as to know when to put the brakes on any negative behavior or feelings.

- PROBLEM-SOLVING

Many parents in this day-in-age fight the urge to be what is known as “helicopter parents”, that is, a parent who oversees, controls, or even does most tasks for their children.

It’s hard to see our children struggle, and so the temptation to step in sometimes leads to kids who aren’t able solve problems for themselves. When children are given ample time to think about their choices in a given situation, they often develop important problem-solving skills that are important for everyday life.

- FINE MOTOR SKILLS

All kids will eventually learn to write, and fine motor skills help to hasten handwriting skills, which also opens the door to math learning, and branches out to the fine arts and other important disciplines.

Hand to eye coordination assists children to become ready for more advanced learning, no matter what subject or discipline they’re learning, from music to math.

- SOCIAL AWARENESS

At some point, kids should realize that they need to think outside themselves and care about those around them.

Moreover, children learn social awareness to help them regulate their own behavior, thinking about how their behavior and actions affect others.

- LOGICAL REASONING

Closely related to problem-solving skills, learning to think logically help children to come to conclusions and set the foundation for critical thinking and analysis skills later in life.

HOW TO FOSTER NONACADEMIC SKILLS?

Luckily, there are a plethora of ways to foster the learning of these crucial skills. Building in opportunities for nonacademic growth are easy.

Try the following:

- Talk to your children when they're angry or upset instead of simply disciplining them- help them to regulate and understand their emotions;
- Build solid relationships with your kids to enhance and encourage open communication and trust;
- Play games with your children, and be present in their everyday play;
- Offer different types of quality play, from board games to screen media, such as [toddler learning apps](#) for iPad or mobile phones;
- Offer a variety of activities, like [coloring](#) or crafts;
- Teach them that failure is a normal part of life, and encourage them to keep trying at something they think they're not good at.

Most of us are already doing the things that help our children to build a solid set of nonacademic skills, but it's always a good idea to enrich their experiences with as much as possible.

What studies mainly show as the primary catalyst for learning nonacademic skills is simply parental involvement and conversation. Kids can only make sense of the activities and play they explore if there is a parental guide to help them understand or talk about what they experience. Through simple attentiveness, we as parents can lay the groundwork for our children's future academic success.



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