



How quality time in the summer strengthens your child's speech, language and motor skills

Summer is in full swing and it's a great time for some good old fashion family bonding – which is also a great benefit to your child's speech, language, and motor development.

That's why this month, we're taking a cue from our **LEARN-GROW-INSPIRE** motto and give you some inspiration to take advantage of opportunities in your own backyard for family activities that will help strengthen your little one's speech and motor skills.

GROCERY STORE/FARMER'S MARKET SCAVENGER HUNT

Put together a list of items based on descriptors (ex. "something red" or "something that is \$5"), or you can be specific ("red apples").

MAKE A FLAG CAKE FOR JULY 4th

This is a great activity to help learn to follow directions, use the senses (colors they see, how the foods feel, how it tastes...), and practice specific sounds. Here's a "recipe" to get you started, or you could use one of your own.

For this flag, you will need a rectangular-shaped cake, icing, and toppings such as sprinkles or fresh fruit. Here are the directions:

1. Prepare a box cake mix as instructed on the back of the box. Bake the cake in a 9 ½ x 13-inch pan.
2. When the cake is cool, use a knife to spread white icing on the top of the cake.
3. Using blue sprinkles, blue icing, blueberries, or any other blue topping, create a square in the top left corner.
4. Add dots of white to the blue square to represent the stars on the flag. You can use sprinkles or drop little bits of the leftover white icing.
5. Using red sprinkles, red icing, raspberries, or any other red topping, create 7 stripes running horizontally across the rest of the cake. Make sure the first stripe is along the top of the cake and the last is along the bottom edge. Use a picture of an American flag if you need to remember how it should look.
6. Ta-Da! You've made an American flag cake! Talk about the colors you see, how it feels, and how it tastes.

PLAY TIME

We've talked before about different play time activities and how using them while practicing speech will help your child retain the information. Here are some you could do in the summer and throughout the year.

1. Go for a Walk – Talk about things you see such as colors, names of objects (tree, leaves, house, etc...), things they did that day or the day before.
2. Blow Bubbles – See if your child can make them big or small, a lot or a few, blow them high or low, fast or slow.
3. Bounce or Toss the Ball – have your child say words, sounds, or letters as they bounce or pass the ball to you. You can ask them what to say as you bounce or pass the ball to them.

A DAY OUT

Going to place such as the children's museum and out to lunch are not only great for family time and bonding, but it's a fabulous way to strengthen his or her speech, language, and motor skills. Here are a few ways your child could benefit (and have fun!) by visiting the children's museum:

- Pretend play (cooking, fixing cars, dressing up, fishing, working, etc.)
- Increase their vocabulary by describing what they see, what they are doing
- Encourages questions and exploring new ideas
- Increases body strength, coordination, visual memory, and overall motor planning skills
- Sensory input (tactile, visual, auditory)

Below is a great, specific activity to do at a children's museum that will definitely follow the **LEARN-GROW-INSPIRE** motto.

Find the grocery store station and have your child try some of these activities:

- following directions for picking food items to cook or place in basket
- label items
- review colors, shapes, and categories of items
- use functional visual skills to scan to locate grocery item you request and to enter numbers on register
- number recognition on register
- sequencing by asking them to get grocery items in a certain order
- pushing cart provides proprioceptive input (perception or awareness of the position and movement of the body)