

# **Brain Research in Early Childhood: A Primer for Caregivers and Administrators**

## **Section Two: Helping the Brain Grow**



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## 10 Things That Can Boost Your Child's Brain Power (And your child will love every one of them!)

1. Interaction: Your consistent, long-term attention actually increases your child's capacity to learn.
2. Loving Touch: Holding and cuddling does more than just comforting your baby—they aid brain growth.
3. Stable Relationships: Relationships with parents and other caregivers decrease harmful stress.
4. Safe, Healthy Environments: Should be free of lead, loud noises, sharp objects and other hazards which could diminish healthy brain growth.
5. Self-Esteem: Grows with respect, encouragement and positive role models from the beginning.
6. Quality Child Care: Trained teachers and family child care providers can make a positive difference.
7. Play: Helps your child explore the senses and discover how the world works.
8. Communication: Talking with your baby builds verbal skills needed to succeed in school and later in life.
9. Music: Expands your child's world, teaches new skills and offers a fun way to be with you.
10. Reading: Reading to your child from the beginning shows its importance and creates a lifelong love of books.



Adapted from: McCormick Tribune Foundation. (2000). These 10 things can boost your child's brain power. Chicago: Author. Retrieved March 21, 2000, from the World Wide Web: <http://www.rmtf.org/education/10things.htm>

For more information, see the award winning video, Ten Things Every Child Needs.

## High Quality Early Childhood/Family-Focused Programs That Help Promote Healthy Brain Development Look Like This...

- Accessible and affordable programs housed in appropriate facilities.
- Well-qualified staff, trained in early childhood development with ongoing opportunities and requirements for continuous, professional development.
- Developmentally appropriate curriculum and practices that promote school readiness by enhancing a child's language, social/emotional, self-help, physical and intellectual skills.
- Small classes with low ratios of children to teachers.
- Adequate financial and physical resources, including staff salaries and benefits.
- Quality standards for health services, nutrition, social services, family involvement, staff qualifications, etc.
- Coordinated services with other agencies or providers to meet children's multiple needs.
- Ongoing evaluations to ensure program effectiveness.
- Services or resources to foster family involvement.
- Prevention and intervention of at-risk factors associated with poverty.
- Opportunities for families to gain economic self-sufficiency while nurturing their children's development.
- Support continues as children enter elementary school



Adapted from: Education Commission of the States. (1998, March), Policy brief: Why policymakers should be concerned about brain research. Denver: Author.

## High Quality Early Childhood Programs

- Blend funding resources to help families meet the costs of child care (e.g., government funding mixed with parent fees).
- Teach child care providers how to create more responsive and intellectually stimulating environments.
- Expand government funds to support full-day, year-round child care programs.
- Support and encourage accreditation of child care programs.
- Offer financial incentives for child care providers to receive higher levels of education.
- Provide fiscal incentives to encourage districts and schools to offer high-quality early childhood and preschool programs.
- Invest in high-quality early childhood programs.



## Training and Intervention/Prevention

- Provide preventive and primary health-care coverage for expectant parents and their children.
- Require proper immunizations, and conduct vision, hearing and developmental screenings.
- Offer nutrition programs, home-visitor programs, and caregiver training to improve child care quality.
- Create intervention programs aimed at decreasing and preventing teenage pregnancies, children in poverty, runaways and dropout rates.
- Provide economic supports (e.g., tax breaks, subsidies) which either help to increase the proportion of people who are able to access quality and affordable child care or help family members remain at home with young children.

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## What Parents and Caregivers can do to Stimulate Learning in the Early Years

- Show children you care about them by spending time with them
- Establish a stable relationship with your children.
- Establish daily family routines.
- Read, talk and sing often to your children.
- Build self-esteem in your children.
- Show excitement when your children triumph.
- Hold and comfort your children.
- Interact through play with your children.
- Communicate and model positive values and character traits such as respect, responsibility and honesty.
- Make sure your children have regular checkups and timely immunizations.
- Safety proof your home, and encourage safe exploration and play.
- Listen and respond to your children's verbal and nonverbal cues and clues.
- Regularly access community resources such as the local library.
- Promote activities that develop your child's large and small muscles.

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