Grocery Store Literacy for Preschoolers

A simple trip to the grocery store can turn into a real learning experience for your preschooler. Below are some easy ways to build literacy and math skills while getting your shopping done at the same time!

**Focus on reading readiness skills**

Choose a letter as you’re walking into the school. Make a game of finding things in the store that start with that letter. For example, for the letter “p” you could find peanuts, popcorn, pineapple, paper and pizza. Emphasize the letter “p” and the sound it makes with each of your “p” words.

Environmental print is the print of everyday life. This includes familiar symbols, words, and numbers found on signs, billboards, coupons, and stores. They are a natural way for children to learn that print carries meaning. Their understanding that the big K means Kmart and that the Dannon label means yogurt is a first step toward learning to read.

**Focus on vocabulary skills**

Position words are used every day at home and in the classroom. Use the items on the grocery shelf to give your child practice finding something above their belly button, below their nose, on the bottom shelf, and between other items on a shelf.

Opportunities to use superlatives, those little endings that help describe size, are all around the grocery store. Have your child find a big fruit, a bigger fruit and the biggest fruit in the produce section. What’s the smallest item in the cart? The largest item?

**Focus on math skills**

Ask your child, “How many apples do we need so each person in the family gets one?” Encourage him to use his fingers to count the number of people in the family and how many apples to buy. Have him count the apples as you put them into the bag.

Look for shapes (e.g., circles, rectangles, or triangles) as you go through the store. Play a game with your child. Find a shape, such as the rectangle on the front of a cereal box, and then look for other items with the same shape.

You don’t have to do all of these things each time you’re at the store, but while you’re there, find creative ways to turn your grocery store into a fun place of learning.

For more ideas, visit Reading Rockets’ Reading Together section: http://www.readingrockets.org/article/c442/

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