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INDIANA'S GUIDE TO STUDENT SUCCESS

AGES 0-5



SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE

School Readiness Tips!

Planning Ahead

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EARLY LEARNING INDIANA
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A partnership of Early Learning Indiana, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education and Indiana Department of Education



DEAR INDIANA FAMILIES,

Welcome to **Learn More!** We all want the best for our children—for them to grow up happy, healthy and successful. That journey begins now.

Learn More is a resource to help your child start strong and prepare for a successful future. Whether you're thinking about first words, kindergarten or college, there are practical steps you can take to ensure your child is on track. Read through **Learn More** for information about school readiness, including how to start saving for college now. And, check out page 8 to learn how you can win a \$529 CollegeChoice 529 Direct Savings Plan.

If you're thinking about going back to school yourself, there's never been a better time! The Workforce Ready Grant and the Adult Student Grant provide financial assistance to help you start—or finish—a certificate or degree. Visit NextLevelJobs.org to get started today.



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CONTENTS

Imagine & Support Your Child's Future 3

Make Family Time School—and Career—Readiness Time! 4

Planning Ahead 5

College Saving is as Easy as 529 5

Time In With Technology 6

The Value of Feelings..... 7

The Learn More Magazine's Early Childhood Edition is a partnership between Early Learning Indiana, the Indiana Commission for Higher Education, and the Indiana Department of Education. Through this collaboration, Early Learning Indiana's statewide Partnerships for Early Learners team provides written, developmentally appropriate, family-facing information to empower families and early childhood providers as they help their little ones grow and thrive—with an end goal of beginning the process of thinking about higher education before children enter K-12 settings.



IMAGINE & SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S FUTURE

Help your child dream big about careers, college and more—while you boost brain and family connections.

Play together every day! For little learners, play is the best way to build new skills, create strong family connections and spark curiosity—all early factors in getting them career-ready. Take time to play with toys, with words and with silly faces. To build vocabulary, talk about what you each are doing: "You dropped the ball. Then, it rolled across the room!" As you play, take time to encourage both experimentation—"What will the car do?"—and reflection—"What happens if we push this softly? Now really hard!" These little moments help your child build skills that will lead to success in school and life.

Read—and write—about career paths! Any time is a good time for books—and books can be a great way to explore career paths. From board books about interesting people to picture books about what grown-ups do all day, reading about the many different jobs in the world gives children the chance to

dream about their own futures. Want to take it to the next level? Make a "When I Grow Up" book together. Have your child create art about the jobs they want to have and the classes or training they'll need to be successful. Then write down their description of each picture.

Mini-trips build mega-dreams! As you and your little one run errands or take walks together, talk about all the jobs that you encounter. A trip to the store is a chance to talk about who makes clothes, food, packages, shelves and more. At the check-out counter, chat about all the skills required to help people pay, like counting, talking and using technology. Each of these moments builds your child's understanding of the world of work, how others help us daily and what it takes to do jobs well—and they may just inspire a career path.



FAMILY TIME

Make family time school—and career—readiness time!

Hands-on family time tips can build your child's skills and get them ready for success in kindergarten and beyond. Check out the tips below and sign up to receive free ideas every week at BrighterFuturesIndiana.org/bloom-bright!

Bloom Bright Science Tip: Time outside helps your child grow early science skills. Encourage using senses to investigate by talking about sights, sounds and smells. "Do you hear that bird singing? How do those flowers smell?" These little, mindful moments spark big growth—and they might be helping you raise a botanist, landscape designer or poet!

Bloom Bright Arts & Culture Tip: Singing helps little ones express themselves! Ask your little one's teacher what songs they're singing together. Then, sing together for creative and fun family time. Your family jams might be paving the way for your child to become a composer, sound engineer or stage designer.

Bloom Bright Math Tip: Count light poles as you travel or compare fruit sizes at the grocery. This daily math fun inspires your mini-mathematician. As you talk about numbers, patterns, sizes and shapes, you lay the foundation for a lifetime of great math skills. You might just be sparking an interest that leads to being an accountant or farmer.

Bloom Bright Feelings Tip: A great way to help your child manage feelings in tough times is to bring YOUR calm to THEIR chaos. "I know you are really mad. I am going to take some deep breaths so I feel calm. When you are ready I can help you take deep breaths, too." Building their skills to manage tough emotions helps them grow into great work team members. You might even open up a path that leads to a job in psychology, wellness or yoga!



Bloom Bright STEM Tip: Empty boxes offer a fun, open-ended opportunity to explore imagination and creativity. Turn that box into a family project! Use markers, paper, paint and more to make a castle, truck or ramp together. As you make learning fun, you are also building the kinds of skills children need for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) careers. Building with boxes today may result in a job in architecture or city planning in 20 years.



PLANNING AHEAD

Does talking about career and college before kindergarten feel a little silly?

It actually connects directly with Indiana's Early Learning Foundations—the guidelines about what children should learn before they start kindergarten. Check out how your child's growth connects—oftentimes down the road—to understanding her career options.

Babies

Your child is beginning to understand one part of being a citizen by expressing needs and wants—something that we all end up doing in our educational and career paths. Although babies are little, they express their desires pretty well—from squeals and cries to those first smiles and babbles. As you respond to those actions in kind ways, you help your baby figure out who they are today and set the path toward who they will become. You are also helping your baby trust you, which will come in handy when you talk about school and college success.



Toddlers

As your child builds more skills, they can also take on more responsibilities. Helping with small tasks like picking up toys or pulling off socks builds the skills that will lead to school success. In a few years, those tasks will include doing homework and planning for a career. Take the time to make chores and jobs a joyful experience. When we enjoy work, we are more likely to do it—and it will be the same when school adds calculus and chemistry to the mix in a decade or so.

Preschool & Pre-K

Your child's world is getting bigger. As you travel around town, you'll likely hear ideas about where you're going—the park, the store or school. If you live near a college campus, consider making a trip together, with a picnic to eat or a ball to kick around. Take time to talk about why people attend college. "These students are learning the skills they need to get college degrees in lots of subjects. That learning will help them find interesting jobs." An early visit might just inspire an advanced degree down the road.

Want to learn more about your child's learning and growth now? Get them ready for a lifetime of learning by visiting BrighterFuturesIndiana.org. There, you'll find information on what they're learning, on high-quality early childhood programs and on how you can boost brain growth!

COLLEGE SAVING IS AS EASY AS 529!

The Indiana CollegeChoice 529 Direct Savings Plan is an easy way to invest in your child's education tax-free. The 529 plan offers these great features:

Easy setup. It only takes a \$10 deposit to get started. And anyone—friends, grandparents or relatives—can contribute.

Tax benefits. Withdrawals for education—tuition, books and other college expenses—are tax-free. Plus, any Indiana resident who contributes to your child's account can qualify for a state tax credit of up to \$1,000 each year.

Automatic deposits. If you want to make a regular commitment to your child's future, you can set up an automatic deposit from your paycheck. Saving couldn't be easier!

CollegeChoice 529[★] DIRECT SAVINGS PLAN

Shop 'n save. Sign up for **Upromise** at Upromise.com and a portion of your family's everyday spending on household items and restaurants will be deposited in your savings plan.

Simple transfers. What if you save more than your child needs? The account's beneficiary is easily changed to a sibling or other relative. Visit CollegeChoiceDirect.com to learn more.

Learn more tips about saving and paying for college at LearnMoreIndiana.org/cost.

TIME-IN WITH TECHNOLOGY

Today, technology is a part of families' lives in ways that look very different from even a decade ago. From tablets and TV to smartphones and computers, the good news is that screens aren't inherently bad. Children learn the most from educational offerings on any screen when parents follow a few simple guidelines:

- Limit screen time.
- Make tech time a together time.
- Engage with it together.

Here are some ideas on taking a normal screen time experience to the next learning level, especially for preschool and pre-K kids!

Television Time

You probably already pick programs to build the skills your little one needs for school and life. TV shows that focus on letters, numbers, colors and social-emotional skills (like getting along and working as a team) are a great start.

You can make that time even better by talking together as you watch, as well as while the credits roll. What does your child think of a character's decisions? What feelings do they see depicted on the screen? Then, when the show is over, think about recreating the story or the learning activity together.

Tablet and Smartphone Time

Does your child enjoy watching videos or playing age-appropriate games on a hand-held device? Or do you? That's a great time to model how to encourage one another and cheer one another on. "You did great, buddy! When you moved that last piece, you solved the puzzle!"

No matter the type of game, you can continue to learn once it's over by turning screen time fun into a real-life play activity. After you play a round of a building game, get out blocks, magnetic tiles or paper shapes and talk about patterns and shapes.



THE VALUE OF FEELINGS

Little Emotions, Big Skills

As your child's mind and body grows, social and emotional well-being and skills do, too. Children go through a lot of changes and learn a lot of things about feelings from birth through pre-K. You can nurture that growth every day.

Want to learn more about your child's social-emotional growth? Start now by exploring the ways that the toughest behaviors give you the chance to support growth. Then, visit BrighterFuturesIndiana.org and click on your child's age to discover more about the skills that grow from tiny tears to fantastic friendships.



Challenging Behaviors Give You the Chance to Build Connections & Skills

When baby cries a lot...

- Don't hesitate to give lots of hugs.
- Use a calm voice.
- Build word skills: "You are crying. Are you sad that you spilled your food?"
- Take care of yourself if you feel maxed out—taking a break is okay!

When emotional meltdowns happen...

- Let them know their feelings matter.
- Help them calm down.
- Share skills: "You seem very upset. Let's take deep breaths together."
- Know that every person raising children has been there sometime—it's part of growing up.

When preschool pals get mad at each other...

- Talk about your child's feelings.
- Help them think about how the other child feels. "How might you feel if..."
- Encourage your child to talk with their friend.
- Chat together about the importance of talking through conflict.

Another Way to Build Strong Connections in Your Family Is to Have Lots of Conversations

Ask your child these questions and record their answers. The answers may be silly, but each offers a chance to talk about work!

- What is my job?
- What do I do at work?
- What did I have to do to get good at my job?
- What is another job you think I should try?
- How many years did I have to go to school?
- What do you want to do when you grow up?
- What kind of school do you have to go to for that job?
- How much money do people in that job make?



VISIT BRIGHTERFUTURESINDIANA.ORG
TO EXPLORE RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING
YOUR LITTLE LEARNER AT HOME AND IN CARE.



**YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S
FIRST AND BEST TEACHER.**

**IT'S THE PERFECT TIME TO
SAVE FOR COLLEGE.**

YOU COULD WIN

\$529

IN A COLLEGECHOICE
529 DIRECT SAVINGS PLAN

Enter today in three easy steps:

Take a photo of you and your little ones setting the foundation now to be ready for college.

Go to earlylearningin.submittable.com/submit & choose Picture Submission 529 CollegeChoice

Upload your photo and enter your name and phone number.

