

Pointers For Parents

Providing Early Learning Experiences

(NAPSA)—Children start learning the minute they are born and what they learn in the first few years depends on the experiences they have.

Although parents, grandparents and other caretakers understand how important the early years are, they may not know exactly what to do to encourage learning or feel they don't have time to do what it takes to prepare their child for school. But there are lots of fun, easy learning games to play with young children—during everyday activities, such as running errands or doing laundry—that can boost young children's learning.

Currently, half of all children in the U.S. who enter kindergarten have underdeveloped learning skills.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, almost half of kindergartners enter school unprepared and fall behind their peers when learning such essential skills as reading.

The *Born Learning* public engagement campaign was created by United Way, Civitas, the Families and Work Institute and the Ad Council to help parents, grandparents and caregivers create fun learning moments for young children. The campaign includes nationwide advertising and research-based education materials that can be adapted by community organizations and community action support.

"Experts agree that a parent is a child's first and most influential teacher and that they can foster childhood development long before a child enters the classroom," said



Everyday moments are an important way for children to learn about their world while developing emotionally, socially and intellectually.

Brian Gallager, United Way of America's president and CEO. "*Born Learning* provides tangible tools."

Here are a few tips on providing early learning opportunities by playing with your baby:

- Jump right in. Playtime with a caregiver is invaluable to a child—whether you talk baby talk or bounce a toddler on your knee.
- Forget the rules. Add to a child's play experiences by creating imaginative games and finding new ways to use his toys. Use blocks as flying cars and pretend to be a zoo animal.
- Take a break. Although children often learn the most when they interact with others, solitary play gives a child time to understand everything he has been doing.
- Watch out for overstimulation. Stop playing when your baby loses interest. He'll tell you when he's had enough by disengaging, turning his head or starting to cry.

For more tips, visit the site at www.bornlearning.org.