



Children Deserve Attention, Too!

Raising a family today is similar to playing a game of tug of war. Parents are often pulled in a million different directions: working a full time job, running to soccer, picking up children from dance class, or volunteering at school. Most parents find it difficult to cook a balanced dinner or to complete daily household chores such as laundry. More often than not, a typical night in a working parent's household consists of plopping children in front of the television, fighting with them through dinner to eat their vegetables, rushing them through bath time, and collapsing with exhaustion when they finally fall asleep. In all the commotion of daily life, it is very easy to forego family time. "Why do we need family time anyway?" The simple answer is that children crave undivided attention. It is a time for bonding between a child and parent. By spending quality time with a child, lines of communication remain open and feelings of belonging remain. It doesn't mean spending hours on end engaged with your children, but even 20 – 30 minutes a day can prove to be a very rewarding time for both parent and child.

Here are a few ideas to try to help set aside quality time for you and your child:

Set a Date: Make one night a week "family fun" night. By setting a specific date, you are more likely to make an effort to keep your appointment. As working parents, we wouldn't think about canceling a business meeting at the last minute. When push comes to shove, sometimes we cancel out on our kids when they need us the most.

Keep it Simple: Spending quality time with your child doesn't have to be an extravagant event. Sometimes simple gestures mean the most. Try reading a bedtime story to your child every night. Make bath time memorable by adding bubbles or bath

time paints. Go for a bike ride with your family. Try baking or cooking a new recipe with your child. These activities not only foster togetherness, but can also be moments for your children to learn by example.

Make it Individual: While spending time as a family is important, it is also vital to realize children also need to spend one-on-one time with each parent, without their siblings in the mix. Who is to say daddies can't paint nails and mommies don't know how to build a fort? Make an effort to have a date night with your child at least once a month. Take in a movie or go out for ice cream, just the two of you.

For many families today, it is necessary for both parents to work outside the home. In these cases, it is essential to find quality childcare, a place to partner with parents. Research shows the most critical period for children's cognitive development is from birth through five years of age. Both parents may be working outside the home, but there should not be a sacrifice of quality environment or interaction

with the child. It is essential that children develop curiosity about the world, confidence as a learner, creativity, imagination and personal initiative. At Achievements Learning Center, we make every effort to collaborate with parents to ensure that when children are not in a home environment, they are still getting a loving, nurturing environment and interaction with peers and adults.

At Achievements, we believe that children learn best through playful interaction with other children, where hands-on activities are built around children's interests. We believe children's ideas and feelings are represented through pretend play, drama, dance, movement, music, art and construction. We actively engage children in early literacy activities that will foster a love of reading and encourage interest in drawing, scribbling and writing. We believe in providing an environment that will help children develop a positive self-concept and attitude toward learning, self-control and a sense of belonging. With this, we feel that establishing partnerships with parents will develop continuity in the children's experiences at home and in school.

Achievements Learning & Early Development Center is located at 2700 Bobcat Village Center Road, off Toledo Blade Boulevard in North Port. The Center is open from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM, and both part-time and full-time programs are available. For more information on enrolling a child into a free VPK program or the Early Development Center, please call (941) 423-8844 or visit www.achievementslearningcenter.org.