

# Living Education

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**Oak  
Meadow**

K-12 CURRICULUM AND  
DISTANCE LEARNING



## LIFE PREP: GETTING READY FOR THE FUTURE

SPRING 2023

**IN THIS ISSUE:** *LIFE ITSELF CAN BE OUR GREATEST TEACHER \* THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED  
LIFE SKILLS FOR NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN \* SPRING CRAFT: PERPETUAL CALENDAR*



# Welcome.



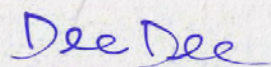
time management  
home repair confidence  
critical thinking typing  
personal finance  
self advocacy cooking  
sewing social skills conflict resolution  
media literacy communication skills  
perseverance automotive maintenance

**A**s parents, teachers, and caregivers, we want our children to grow into independent, successful adults. We help them develop intellectual skills through academic work, but our goals for them don't end there, right? We want them to be well-rounded, so we provide opportunities for them to develop communication skills and creativity, emotional intelligence and practical skills. Taking kids camping, cooking meals together, shopping on a budget, and tending a garden—in these ways and so many more, we teach children how to live life.

In an informal survey of Oak Meadow staff and faculty, we asked, “What necessary life skills do you wish you had learned in high school?” The number one answer was personal finance, which was mentioned by nearly every one of the respondents. (The word cloud gives a visual of all the responses.) Other skills that bubbled to the top were social skills, self-advocacy, and communication skills. These can all be grouped into the category of social-emotional skills, and you'll find these mentioned in several of the articles in this issue. When we asked “What life skills have you found most useful in your adult life?”, communication skills and personal finance were mentioned most frequently, along with cooking, typing, time management, and media literacy.

It's never too early or late to start teaching kids what they'll need to know for life beyond school, so this issue is packed with ideas and hands-on activities you can use right away. You'll find ways to help your children develop empathy, grow from challenges, form healthy habits, manage stress, adapt study skills to address unique learning needs, use the environment to build literacy skills, and become media savvy. We hope you'll find some inspiration along the way!

Happy reading,



DeeDee Hughes, Editor





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# WANT to TEACH REAL-LIFE SKILLS? USE REAL LIFE!

BY ALYSSA LONGHI

**P**reparing our children with essential life skills can vary from family to family. In fact, one of the main reasons we chose to homeschool was so our children could experience real-life situations and conversations daily. Here are some of the essential skills that are part of our daily life.

## HOUSEHOLD SKILLS

In our family, it is important to us to teach our two boys (ages 9 and 5) about food. Here are just a few of the many food topics we address:



- nourishment
- proper hydration
- understanding where our food comes from
- local versus commercial farming
- local farm relationships
- the importance of in-season foods for our bodies
- how to read ingredient lists

Every summer since they were babies, we have had a garden. Every year, we purchase seeds as a family and each of my boys picks out something we have never grown before! Sometimes the plants do great, other times they don't, depending on our zone. Regardless of the outcome, it brings them closer to understanding how to sustain themselves through growing our own food. We also grow herbs from seed that can be used medicinally, and we create our own herbal body products and remedies to help support our immune systems in the colder months. If you are new to gardening, container gardening and patio gardens are a great place to start.

Getting the kids in the kitchen is another way to work on

vital life skills. I have found that when a child is able to prepare a snack or a meal on their own, they are more likely to eat it and share it with others. I allow my kids (and myself) to play with our food! This lets us explore our senses before we even taste the completed meal: touch, smell, visualization, sound (think sautéing), and, finally, taste. Allowing children to have control in the kitchen (age appropriately, of course, and always keeping a close eye!) is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. Start small with homemade cookies, scrambled eggs, or sandwiches. Encourage creativity!

Another life skill that is important to our family is housework. We all share our home, and we all take pride in caring for it. Our reward as a family unit is having a tidy, cozy space to share. The life skill that is applicable here is self-responsibility: making the bed, putting dirty clothes in the hamper, putting clean clothes away, and cleaning your own personal space. Keeping expectations age-appropriate builds our children's self-confidence. We are animal lovers, too, so teaching our kids how to care for different types of animals is part of our daily routine on our half-acre homestead.

## FINANCIAL SKILLS

Understanding the value of money is something my oldest has recently been drawn to. He desires to save money and put it towards a big goal, so this past autumn, he began his own leaf raking business. He decided what his time was worth based on the amount of work he was doing (learning the value of time and money), how many yards he could handle in a day/week (time management), the days and times he could do them (scheduling), and who





he could ask for help (collaboration). He had to decide how much to charge per yard to be able to pay his friends and still make a profit for himself. Once this plan was in place, he brought it to his friends (all ages 9–12), and it was incredible to see how each of the children brought their own strengths to this business idea. Two did a “practice run” raking my backyard while another timed them, one wrote down the names, addresses, and times scheduled for raking neighbors’ yards, and my son kept track of income. Without being told, they honored and respected each other’s roles in supporting their goal. They pooled the money earned and split it evenly. Afterward, I expected my son to purchase a toy with the money he earned, but instead he put it back into his business by purchasing a small leaf blower for next year!

If we as parents can take a step back and support our children’s big ideas, we may come to find that they already have it all figured out. They may want to bounce ideas off you, but they are not coming to ask whether or not their plan is going to work. There will be some trial and error, of course, but in real life there is trial and error every day. Our job is to be their support system so they can learn what they are capable of.

### SELF-CARE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Every morning when we begin our school day, we sit on the floor and take some time to connect to our bodies. As a yoga teacher, conscious movement and breathwork are very important to not only me, but also to my boys. We sit in a circle and practice deep belly breaths. We go through our bodies to check for any physical tightness or discomfort. Sometimes this is a bruised knee from falling off their bike, sometimes it’s an actual growing pain, and some days their bodies just feel tight and we need some stretching. It is important to slow down and ask the body for what it needs.

After a handful of yoga poses and a fun meditation, we talk about our emotions. For this, we use a beautiful emotion wheel and emotion charts. For example, if someone is feeling happy, we head over to our chart and look for ways to express the nuances of the emotion. Is it joy? Excitement? Kindness? Connectedness? Discussions flow from there.

We encourage boundaries and clear communication in our household. This means asking for what you need or

want. If someone needs some time before they are ready to open up about how they are feeling, we honor that. If they choose to not speak out loud about it, each child has a journal they can use instead. They may share these writings or drawings with me immediately or they may wait a few days—regardless, their choices are always honored. Our children’s rooms are always their safe space, but we also offer a cozy “Peace Corner” in our school/playroom. When our children are reassured that their big emotions are natural, they are more comfortable processing and communicating how they feel; they are also more comfortable with the emotions of others. We share self-love affirmations and gratitude lists to complete our morning circle time.

### MORE SKILL BUILDING



There are so many more skills that can overlap with home life. For instance, you can give your children a clock and the responsibility to wake themselves up and get ready for the day or to go to bed on time. Here are some other skills you might address:

- mechanical skills (car maintenance and repairs, fixing small appliances, taking care of bicycles, dirt bikes, or go-carts)
- household maintenance and repairs (replacing lightbulbs, fixing a screen door, leveling a shelf or large appliance, hanging a picture)
- civic responsibilities (community involvement, being an informed voter, volunteering at an animal shelter)
- respecting and caring for our planet (conservation, resource management, eco-friendly purchases)

Sharing all the aspects of daily life is the best way to help children learn the skills they need to live to the fullest!

Alyssa Longhi is a homeschooling mother of two curious little boys. A parent ambassador for Oak Meadow, she has loved guiding her children through the curriculum for four years. Located in Connecticut, she and her family enjoy hiking, exploring the outdoors, gardening, reading, cooking, kitchen dance parties, and caring for their many animals.





# RAISING EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT CHILDREN BEGINS WITH EMPATHY

BY ABBEY GLASURE



An often overlooked key to success in adulthood is a highly developed level of **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**. Here are some exercises that focus on helping children build empathy, navigate personal relationships, establish friendships, and strive for kind, understanding treatment of others.

## INTRODUCTION

The following is an activity you can use to help your children develop empathy. First, read the "Script for Introducing the Concept of Empathy" aloud as a family, discussing the questions together. Use the answer prompts to help build a vocabulary around articulating feelings and emotions. Then, use the empathy-building scenarios to help children learn to recognize their own feelings as well as identify and respond to the feelings of others.

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### *Script for Introducing the Concept of Empathy:*

You are a unique person with a story of your own. You have experiences that are happy and sad, times when you win, and times when you struggle.

#### **What does it feel like when you're happy?**

Answer Prompts: giddy, bouncy, excited, joyful, hopeful, buzzy, jittery, calm, relaxed, peaceful, content, wanting to shout, wanting to dance, wanting to sing, butterflies in stomach, heart beating fast.

#### **What does it feel like when you're sad?**

Answer Prompts: upset, grumpy, alone, hurt, painful, crying, heartbroken, unhappy, down in the dumps, not wanting to do much, not wanting to talk, wanting to cry, wanting to give up, wanting to take a rest, feeling achy, feeling pressure in head.

#### **What does it feel like when you're angry?**

Answer Prompts: mad, frustrated, irritated, afraid, grumpy, feeling hurt, feeling like things are unfair, wanting to stomp, wanting to cry, wanting to yell, feeling hot, chest pounding, body feeling tense, head hurting.

Just like you, other people experience joy, sadness, anger, and a whole spectrum of emotions. Understanding what other people are feeling and being able to share those feelings with them is called empathy.

Empathy can help you be a better friend, a good listener, and a helpful support system to all those around you.



## EMPATHY-BUILDING SCENARIOS

Each of the following scenarios can be used to spark a discussion around empathy. Introduce them one at a time, allowing plenty of time for children to absorb, reflect, and express their thoughts. The individual scenarios can be used any time: in the car, over a family meal, on a walk, or in between lessons. Encourage your children to consider how they'd feel in a similar situation to help them build mutual understanding.

- Rose has just joined your soccer team. Now that practice has ended, the rest of the team is sharing a snack while Rose sits alone on a bench. How do you think Rose may be feeling? What could you do to help Rose feel more included?
- You and your friend Luca both submitted drawings to an art contest. Luca's drawing won the contest, and he is jumping up and down. How do you think Luca may be feeling? How can you share in Luca's feelings even if you feel disappointed that you didn't win?
- At the playground, Sanjay fell and scraped his knee. He's grasping his knee and crying. How may Sanjay be feeling? What could you do to help Sanjay feel better?
- You've just taken the last slice of cake when you notice Ava walking up to the empty cake stand. How might Ava be feeling? Is there something you could do to show Ava kindness?
- Your sister Maya is sick, and neither of you will be able to go to the movie you've been dying to see. What do you think Maya could be feeling? Is there a way to show understanding to your sister even when you're feeling upset?
- Your friend's little brother Mateo has come to your birthday party. When he sees your gifts, he wants a gift, too. How do you think Mateo could be feeling? Has there ever been a time that you didn't understand why you couldn't have something?
- Chloe has been working hard on a math assignment for a long time, but she can't seem to solve the final problem. She's groaning with her head in her hands. How might Chloe be feeling? What helps you when you're feeling the same way?
- Carter said something yesterday that really hurt your feelings. Today, he's come to apologize and ask for your forgiveness. How might Carter be feeling? Has there ever been a time that you hurt someone else's feelings and needed to apologize?

## EXPLORING EMPATHY IN STORYTELLING, FILM, AND LITERATURE

Here are some additional activities to further explore the concept of empathy.

- Read the story of Goldilocks together as a family, then prompt your learner to retell the story from the perspective of Baby Bear. How may Baby Bear be feeling about Goldilocks coming into his home? If you were Goldilocks, how might you approach the Bear family differently?
- On movie night, have each family member choose a character at the start of the film. When the character comes on screen, discuss aloud what the character may be feeling and how you can tell what they're feeling. When the movie is done, talk through any real-life scenarios in the family that may be similar to moments from the film.
- Have your learner write an empathy-focused book report. Instead of having them analyze the plot, have them identify the character's emotions, why the character may have been feeling that way, and what they could do to help someone in a similar situation.

Highlighting empathy in childhood can bolster your future adult's path to success with kindness, compassion, and valuable emotional intelligence.

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*Abbey Glasure has over a decade of experience writing deeply researched, human-centric content regarding creativity, wellness, science, technology, and feminism. She lives in New York City and is currently working towards publishing her debut novel. To learn more, visit her website at [www.abbeyglasure.com](http://www.abbeyglasure.com).*







|| FROM THE ARCHIVES ||

# THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED

BY LAWRENCE WILLIAMS



*The following is excerpted from the graduation address given by Dr. Lawrence Williams at the Oak Meadow High School commencement exercises on June 9, 1995, in Blacksburg, Virginia. It speaks to essential life skills that are just as valuable today as they ever were.*

Recently, as I was thinking about this graduation, I remembered one of my favorite poems, “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost. The last three lines have special significance for me:

**TWO ROADS DIVERGED IN A WOOD, AND I—  
I TOOK THE ONE LESS TRAVELED BY,  
AND THAT HAS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE.**

All of you have taken this road in your education—“the road less traveled”—and that has indeed made a difference in who you are now as human beings.

What does it mean to take “the road less traveled”? First, it means not doing what comes easy. Traveling the road that thousands of others have traveled may be the easiest route to take, but it is not always the most rewarding. As one of our graduates here today says, “Life begins at the offramp.” When we take the road less traveled, we leave the interstate highway and explore the backroads. And it’s on the backroads that we find the best that life has to offer.

To take the road less traveled also means we endure a certain amount of criticism. Those who venture off the beaten path learn to rely upon themselves and not upon the opinions of others. If we are to express our unique gifts as human beings, we must learn to appreciate—but not be ruled by—the opinions of others. A certain amount of criticism is inevitable whenever we try to express our uniqueness, so learning how to handle criticism positively is an important lesson for all of us. The road less traveled is not found in a particular place; it is found within ourselves—in a commitment to express more of our own unique excellence.

So, as you weave your way through life, how do you find the road? The best way is to aspire to excellence. A less-traveled road never leads to mediocrity. But excellence doesn’t happen all at once; it’s something we create a little at a time, every day of our lives. By never settling for

less than our very best in everything we do, we create excellence in every moment, and the road opens wide before us.

Next, you can find the road by not avoiding hard work. Taking the road less traveled doesn’t mean you have an easy ride. On the contrary: less-traveled roads are more challenging. However, it’s good to remember what Thomas Edison, one of the world’s greatest inventors and a frequent flyer on roads less traveled, said about hard work: “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.”

Third, you can find the road by not being afraid to dream. Dreams inspire us. Dreams give us direction. And dreams help us create new possibilities for us all. But ultimately, our dreams must have roots in the earth if they are to blossom into reality, so this brings us to the fourth way to find the road: by not being afraid to fail.

To turn our dreams into reality, we have to gather the knowledge and skills we need, but ultimately, we have to act. This takes courage and a willingness to take a risk. Taking the road less traveled means we must develop the courage to rise above our fears. Doing something different always makes us a little afraid because we feel alone, but every time we face that fear and move ahead in spite of it, we grow in strength and courage. We’re all afraid of something. What matters is whether we shrink from that fear or rise to meet it. Courage is not the absence of fear but the will to persevere in spite of it.

Finally, we find the road by following our hearts—that “still, small voice within” that guides us and inspires us throughout our lives, if we give it a chance. This is really the best friend we’ll ever have. By listening to it and following its guidance, we can weave our way through all the difficulties that we will face, and we’ll always find the road less traveled.

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*Lawrence Williams co-founded Oak Meadow in 1975, along with his wife Bonnie, in order to homeschool their own children. Since then, Oak Meadow’s curriculum and distance learning school have helped families around the world create successful homeschooling experiences.*





# LIFE ITSELF CAN BE OUR GREATEST TEACHER, LET IT BE

BY LANDIS CAREY

When I think about preparing my children for their future, I whimsically envision exploring passions and practicing reading, writing, arithmetic, and cooking while tucked into our little farmhouse with a fire going.

But what happens when we don't have the luxury of such a carefully crafted experience? What happens when life interjects with fiery episodes?

I'm here to share our recent experience with the hopes of encouraging you to lead by example as you navigate life's flames. Show your children the way, and give them context; don't shield them. Life's challenges can be our greatest teachers.

I don't recall the last time I cried so much. My heart was truly broken. It was early September, and I was filling out paperwork to enroll our children in our local school district instead of preparing our homeschool space for the year ahead. Our fourth year homeschooling was supposed to be filled with road trips, field trips, and mornings in our pajamas, but most importantly, we were welcoming my youngest child as a Kindergartener into our daily routine.

I was disassembling our plans and grieving what might have been.

After my first cancer diagnosis in 2018, we transformed our life into one of connection and deeper meaning, and I was terrified the news of my cancer recurring would reshape all that we'd built. I was also terribly sad because I knew I could not forge ahead on the cancer road with

three homeschooling children in tow. I knew I needed time to rest and heal myself back to a stronger version of me.

Our kids were devastated. My husband and I were as well. We homeschooled because we loved it, and we wanted any possible decision to return to school to be one of excitement and readiness.

This experience was not that.

People frequently asked if our children knew of my illness, and my answer often surprised them. I broke the news of the recurrence to my husband and our three children at the same time. It was a beautiful late summer afternoon. We sat around our unlit fire pit. There was no hiding the news or filtering it. Anxiety would result whether I was open with them or if I filtered parts of the truth. From that moment on, they knew everything I did, and they trusted that I shared with them, with all of them, the same salient points. Their level of trust is incredible.

As I write this, we are two months into the school year. I'm post-surgery, and we're finding our way. It hasn't been a smooth road, but our oldest is thriving, and our younger two are having fun. The academics aren't what I hoped for, but I'm reframing my thoughts. It's no longer an either/or in my mind, but an *and*. They go to school, and they homeschool. They spend time with friends and learn at school, and we incorporate parts of our homeschooling curricula when they are at home. I'm extremely proud of their confidence, courage, and resilience as they face the unexpected and embrace change.





Earlier in the year, I was online, scrolling through a local parent group, when a post caught my eye. A mom was wondering if she should tell her children their beloved family pet would be put to sleep while they were on vacation. Should she tell the kids before the trip so they had time to say their goodbyes? Or should she wait until after the vacation to avoid any sadness while they were away?

My internal response was visceral; I had an opinion before I had a chance to take a breath.

I suggested she tell her children as soon as possible, so they could express their love to their pet and say their goodbyes in their own way. There would be tears and sadness, but I implored her not to rob them of their chance to say goodbye. It wasn't her grief to manage. Instead, it was a teachable moment for her to show her children these uncomfortable emotions and help them process the situation. It would only make them stronger, and delving into those emotions together would strengthen their bond.

So, here I sit, encouraging you to allow your children to experience life, all of it, even the most difficult, heartbreaking, fiery parts.

Please don't curate their childhood with so many sparkles that you forsake the hard emotions of life. Teach them how to navigate difficulties just like you would teach them a new math skill. Show them how to get their anger out. Yell with them—perhaps out in the woods and at top volume. Model sincere apologies, both in word and in

written form. Get in there, and do the difficult emotional work with them. Cry with them, and celebrate the flip-side of difficult periods. They will come out stronger, more resilient, and ready to tackle the world ahead.

Our children will face a world with deep challenges including climate change, inequities, educational gaps, food shortages, and so much more. We need empathetic future leaders who won't shy away from the difficult stuff. If we, as parents, get it right, our children will feel those uncomfortable feelings and recall they've been there before. They will feel our support and strength within themselves, and they won't shy away from the challenges ahead. If they've walked through the fire with you, they will feel comfortable doing it themselves.

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*Landis Carey lives in New Jersey with her husband and three children. She began homeschooling in 2019 to reconnect with her children after she battled a rare cancer.*

*Today she is well and thriving alongside her children as they find their passions and deepen their connections. Writing and walking are her therapies. She makes pottery when time allows. Follow her on Instagram at @landiscarey.*





## CURRICULUM SPOTLIGHT:

# HEALTHY LIVING FROM THE START



### HABIT FORMING

#### Activity from lesson 10, Healthy Home

Sometimes we want to form a new habit, but it's hard to know how to begin. Help your child identify something that they would like to begin doing regularly. Choose something simple, like getting into the habit of hanging up a jacket or putting away shoes when coming inside, brushing the dog each day, or putting books back on the shelf after reading time. Next, brainstorm ways to support the forming of this habit, which may include some or all of the following:

- Put up a reminder where it will easily be seen.
- Connect the new habit to one that is already formed. For instance, your child probably closes the door every time they come inside. Add onto this close-the-door habit by putting a shoe rack there so that closing the door and taking off shoes will become a two-step process. If it is already a habit to give the dog a treat after coming in from a walk, then put the dog brush next to the treats.
- Create a system that rewards the behavior when it is completed, such as favorite fuzzy slippers that are kept where the shoes belong—when the shoes are put away, the fuzzy slippers can be put on. Or perhaps after the dog is brushed, your child can give the dog a treat, which is as fun for the child as it is for the dog!
- Put into place a speed bump of sorts so that if the behavior hasn't been done, the next (desired) thing can't happen. For instance, a snack can't be served until the shoes are changed, and the dog isn't allowed into the living room until it has been brushed.
- Celebrate each success. Do a happy dance, pat them on the back, or recite a little chant or song, like "I did it! I did it!"
- Keep practicing until the behavior becomes automatic—a new, healthy habit.

Check back in a week to see how well this habit is being integrated into daily life, and find new ways to support it, if necessary.





TAKE A  
PEEK  
INSIDE!

*Healthy Living from the Start* is Oak Meadow's comprehensive health curriculum for grades K–3. Each lesson includes activities to choose from for each grade level, giving families a wide range of options for exploring each topic. Here is a selection of activities to explore.

### **WALK OUT LOUD**

**Activity from lesson 17, Stress Management**

It's hard to hold on to stress when walking outside and talking, or better yet, singing. Take a hike together and start talking or singing, encouraging your child to do the same. When you see your child begin to relax, invite a conversation about handling stress by talking about your own experience. For instance, you might say, "Whenever I'm feeling tense about something, it always helps me to take a walk. I usually start feeling better right away, like a heavy weight is lifted off my shoulders, and I can take a deep breath and relax. Do you ever feel that way?" You don't have to try to bring your child's attention to it any more formally—just a simple conversation like this can help your child begin to develop effective stress management skills.

### **HAND SIGNALS**

**Activity from lesson 27, Public Safety**

Even if your child doesn't yet ride a bike, hand signals are good to know (and fun to use). Find a place outdoors where you can pretend to be driving cars or riding bikes, and play Follow the Leader. Maneuver along an imaginary route that is full of turns and stops. Use hand signals to warn the person behind you of what you are doing next: left arm held out to the left, palm facing forward, for a left turn; left arm bent at the elbow, hand pointing up, for a right turn; and left arm held down (slightly away from body), palm facing back, for slow down or stop. Take turns being the leader and using the hand signals to indicate your actions.





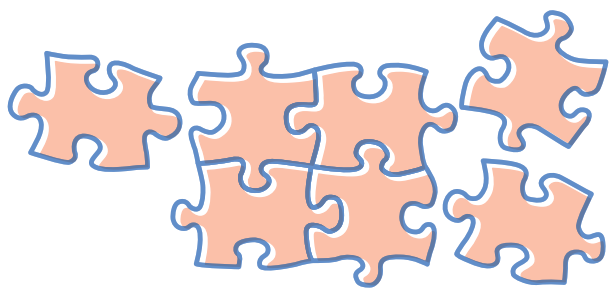
# LIFE SKILLS FOR NEURODIVERGENT CHILDREN

BY JULIA CONNOLLY



**D**o you have a child who needs more direct life-skills teaching than other children? I am a young adult who needs to be taught skills in an explicit manner. I have non-verbal learning disorder, which means I have good verbal skills and poor visual skills. I also have trouble with sensory sensitivities, social skills, and executive functioning skills, such as planning, organizing, and managing time. The National Institute of Health estimates that 15–20% of people have some neurodivergence. For people like me, visual, sensory, social, and executive functioning issues can get in the way of learning important life skills.

For example, if I would like to eat, I'll need to see what ingredients I already have in the house and make a grocery list, but it will take a while for me to find things in the cupboard due to a lack of visual perceptual skills. I might become sensorily overwhelmed in the grocery store, and again, it will take me a while to find things. After I figure out the spatial puzzle of putting groceries in the fridge, I have to time-manage to know when to start cooking. When I cook, I have to plan, organize, multitask, and hopefully, visually remember what I did so I can do it more easily next time.



Do not assume that life skills will be easily and automatically absorbed by your child. Whether or not they have a learning challenge, you might have to experiment to discover the best way for them to learn essential life skills. Here are some tips that have helped me—you might find them useful too:

- Tasks that others find quick and easy might need to be broken down into smaller increments. It can help to have information verbally or visually presented step by step.
- I use lists to keep track of what needs to be done. You can help your child create lists for the day's tasks, steps of an activity, or the materials needed for a project.

*Do not assume life skills will be easily and automatically absorbed by your child. Whether or not they have a learning challenge, you might have to experiment to discover the best way for them to learn essential life skills.*

- When learning something visual and procedural, I ask the person to demonstrate it slowly.
- Sometimes I supplement the learning with YouTube videos, which I can pause and rewind. (You can find videos about everything from how to make an omelet or pump up a bicycle tire to how to fold a sweater and organize a closet.)
- I ask someone to watch me perform the procedure to make sure I am doing it correctly.
- After I do it with them, I write down the steps for future use. Sometimes I take pictures and add them to the instructions.

As you might imagine, it can be overwhelming for me to learn all the necessary life skills, so I found some checklists online to help me know what I need to practice. (An online search for “life skills checklists for young adults” will bring up many resources.) The checklists I found are helpful for anybody, not just those with learning challenges. If you use a checklist, you can focus on one or a few skills at a time—the checklists help you know that you will get to everything eventually.

If your child has a learning difference, they may not be able to learn life skills by osmosis, but that does not mean that they cannot learn the skills. Keep trying new methods until you find what works best for your child.

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*Julia Connolly is a homeschool graduate who likes to write and educate others about life with non-verbal learning disorder. She also likes to dance, hike, kayak, cross-country ski, and make pictures with leaves and ink pads.*





# TIME MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR STUDENTS

Students (and adults!) often end up trying to play catch up with the weekly to-do list. Here are a few tips to help students learn to manage their time, stay organized, and get everything done on time.

## 1. BE ORGANIZED.

- **Begin each day with a short to-do list.** Each day create a new list, making sure to include those things that didn't get completed the day before.
- **Prioritize your list.** Focus first on the things that need to be done today or ones that can be done quickly and crossed off the list.
- **Use a calendar or weekly planner** to keep track of long-term assignment deadlines, vacation dates, social or work commitments.
- **Have an organized workspace** (and organized computer files) so you never have to hunt for your textbook, your research notes, graph paper, etc.

## 2. ALTERNATE BETWEEN FOCUSED STUDY AND BREAKS.

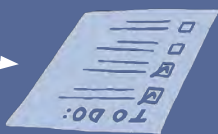
- **Set a timer** for one hour of distraction-free, focused study time. Turn off your cell phone, log out of chat windows, and ignore incoming email.
- **Take a ten-minute break each hour.** Stretch, get a snack, check your phone, or just relax. Set a timer for your break, too, and when it rings, begin another distraction-free, focused hour of study.
- **Eliminate time wasters throughout the day.** Figure out what takes time away from your work (Phone calls? Social media? Conversations? Fiddling with playlists?) and reclaim that time for productive work.
- **When you get stuck, do something physical to refresh your brain.** Take a walk. Do jumping jacks or push-ups. Run. Bike. Dance. Get your blood pumping. It's good for the brain.
- **Keep your breaks short** so you don't lose your momentum. Keep your daily goals in mind (check your to-do list). Enjoy your break fully, and then set the time again and get back to work.



KEEP YOUR SPACE  
ORGANIZED



MAKE A  
TO-DO LIST



SET A  
TIMER



### 3. TACKLE LARGE PROJECTS ONE STEP AT A TIME.

- **Divide large, time-consuming projects into smaller tasks.** Work on one task at a time.
- **For difficult or dreaded tasks, use the 10-minute rule:** Work on it for ten minutes at a time (use a timer), take a break or work on something else, and then do another ten minutes.
- **Take the time to do a quality job.** Correcting mistakes on sloppy work will cost you more time in the long run.
- **Don't waste time fussing about unimportant details.** Nothing is ever perfect. Just do your best, and then move on.

### 4. EAT WELL, SLEEP WELL, AND EXERCISE REGULARLY.

- **A healthy lifestyle** will improve your focus, concentration, and productivity. And you'll just plain feel better.

TAKE SHORT BREAKS TO STRETCH  
+ MOVE YOUR BODY



USE A CALENDAR  
OR PLANNER





# CHILDREN LEARNING FROM ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT

BY SATOMI IZUMI-TAYLOR, PH.D. AND CATHY MEREDITH, ED.D.

**D**id you know that young children generally learn to read environmental print before they learn to read books? Environmental print is the print that we see every day in the world around us, including on cereal boxes, shampoo bottles, clothing, posters, billboards, and traffic signs. When children engage with environmental print, they can enjoy and develop literacy skills while learning to recognize and interpret information all around them.

Children encounter environmental print in the form of words, logos, or graphic symbols everywhere in their surroundings. Because we are surrounded with this kind of print, it can be easily incorporated into your children's daily routines. This print is readily available, easy to use, and is meaningful to children because they see examples of this everywhere and every day.

To help you get started, here are some examples of how children and families can use environmental print to develop important skills.

## USING ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT TO SUPPORT LEARNING TO READ

To promote children's literacy skills, you can point out logos and writing on clothing. Children can pick out letters, identify objects, or make associations with similar words, images, or designs they see in their surroundings.

- Ask your children when they are getting up and dressing, "What shirt do you want to wear today? What does it say on your shirt?"

- Ask children who are putting on their shoes, "Do you see letters on your shoes? What are those letters?"
- At breakfast time, ask, "Which cereal would you like to eat? What does it say on the box?" Point out letters and words as the child identifies what cereal they will have.
- You can pick out letters on food labels, in magazines, and on other household items. You and your children can compare how the letters appear. You can ask them "Do letters always look the same? Do certain letters sometimes have different forms?"
- Point out items that children see around the house that have identifying letters. For instance, children might notice the words identifying your computer or appliances. Point at the words and connect the words with the items. To extend their learning, ask the children to find something in their room that has some of the same letters.
- Before taking a walk, you can ask, "Which jacket do you want to wear? Does it have any letters on it? What are those letters? What is the word on your jacket? Does it have your name on it?"
- When taking a walk, you can identify words on signs and point out beginning letters and sounds. Children can be asked if their names have the same letters as those they see on the signs.

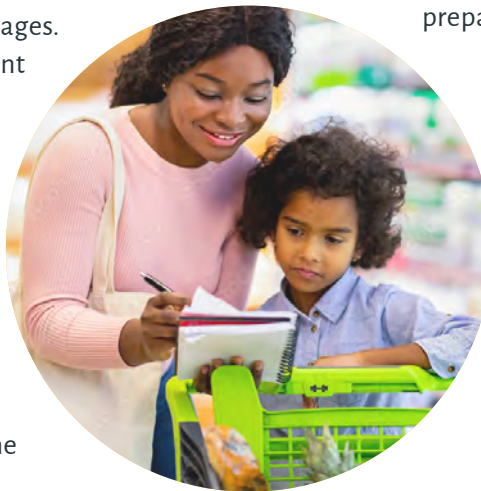




## USING ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT TO DEVELOP MEDIA LITERACY SKILLS

Environment print can be used to help children become aware of the media messages all around them. You can begin by identifying whether the text provides an instruction (like traffic signs), gives information (like food labels), or intends to influence behavior or opinion (like ads or political signs).

- You can use cereal boxes to make the connection between words and images. For instance, if there is an oat plant on the box, you can ask children, “Can you find the word *oats*?”
- Talk about how sometimes images can give a clue to what is inside the box, and sometimes the images can be deceiving. You can ask children, “If we see the picture of a bowl of cereal with strawberries on top, does that mean strawberries come inside the box?”
- When you are making a grocery list, look at advertisements from a grocery store with your children. Reviewing ads is helpful because you can point out what you and children will buy at a store, and children can begin to connect the words to the items and informational texts to actions.
- You can also point out how sales ads are designed to encourage people to make certain purchases or to buy more than one item to get a discount.
- When shopping, you can ask, “What do you think this store is selling when you look at its signs?” or “What does that sign about donations mean? Can you tell what kind of donations it refers to?”
- When taking rides in cars or on buses, signs can be identified and children can learn the names of stores, restaurants, etc. that they see often in their community. Introduce children to the fact that these places often have familiar images or logos that go with the words. For instance, whenever you see the golden arches, you can look for the name McDonalds.



- You can point out signs your children see every day that give instructions (such as *Stop*, *Enter*, *Push*, *One Way*, and *Yield*) and signs that give information, such as street names, store hours, or open/closed signs.

These are a few of the many easy and fun ways to involve children in environmental print. By playing with words and what they represent, children will become more literate and more aware of their environment. Through playing with environmental print, children can prepare themselves for a successful life.

*Children encounter environmental print in the form of words, logos, or graphic symbols... Because we are surrounded with this kind of print, it can be easily incorporated into your children's daily routines.*

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\*SPRING CRAFT\*

# Perpetual Calendar

A perpetual calendar lists the months and number of days but doesn't include Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc., so it never goes out of date and can be used year after year. It is commonly used to keep track of birthdays each month. You can use the following template or create your own.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Make 12 copies of the template, adding the month name on each one. Modify the template as needed for the correct number of days each month. (Include 29 days for February to accommodate leap years.)
2. Create or find a picture for each month of the year.
3. Cut the pictures to fit your template, and glue in place.
4. There are different options for binding together your calendar pages:
  - Clamp the pages together with a large clip (such as an alligator clip or a chip clip). When it's time to turn the page, unclip the pages, flip the page, and reclip.
  - Punch holes in the top two corners, making sure to line up the pages. Attach metal rings or wire bent into a circle. Make sure the rings are large enough to let you turn the pages easily.
  - Punch holes in the top two corners, making sure to line up the pages. Cut two thin strips of sturdy paper (such as watercolor paper or an index card). Curl each strip into a circle and thread it through the holes. Tape the ends together to close the circle.
- Punch three or four holes along the top edge, carefully aligning each page. Tie the pages loosely together with ribbon or string, making a small bow to secure each set of holes or weaving the ribbon along the entire top edge before tying it off. (If you tie the ribbon too tightly, it will be difficult to turn the page each month; in that case, simply untie the ribbon, change the calendar page, and retie.)
5. Write in names for birthdays, anniversaries, and other special annual events.
6. Hang your perpetual calendar where everyone can see it.

Each month, create cards to send to friends and family members to mark special occasions. Watercolor paintings cut into a small rectangle and folded in half make beautiful cards.

Click here to download  
a printable pdf





[PLACE ART HERE]

MONTH NAME

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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The background of the entire page is a photograph of a young girl with curly hair, wearing a light pink tank top, sitting in a field of tall green grass. She is smiling and looking up at the camera. Several thin, tall stalks of grass with small white flowers are in the foreground, partially obscuring her face.

Wherever your  
student is going,  
Oak Meadow can  
get them there.

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