

# family



## JERRY CAMMARATA FATHERS DIARY

### Parents can guide their children to reach learning milestones

All parents, at one time or another, study books on the developmental milestones of children and try to understand what our children are supposed to be doing at a particular age. Some children do, indeed, follow the classic patterns, but most parents find such books general informational guides at best.

Maybe what is needed rather than books on child development is a book of learning experiences that will help your child reach those milestones. The Instructo Division of McGraw Hill, Inc., has recently published "Infant/Toddler: Introducing Your Child to the Joy of Learning," by Dr. Earledeen Badger, which is destined to be the bible of teaching very young children to develop their motor and sensory skills.

"Infant/Toddler" matches appropriate learning activities, toys and educational materials — bought, improvised or found around the house — to the young child's developmental interests and abilities. A step-by-step teaching model shows the adult how to pro-

ceed. Beginning with mouthing, the infant moves through 20 levels, including such landmarks as visual following, releasing or letting go, fitting parts to form a whole and matching.

Each activity begins with the learning operation and discusses the role of repetition, incidental learning and discovery learning. A list of appropriate materials is followed by a carefully outlined presentation. Ways and methods of observing progress are presented, with space devoted to recording the observations. Variations are suggested and ideas are also offered for supplemental materials and activities.

During the first half of a child's first year, eye-hand coordination is a priority of learning. Don't just wait to see if it will happen. Badger suggests you get busy and encourage the child to grab by hanging noise-producing toys from a string across the baby's crib. The baby, intrigued by the color and form of the toys, will reach and grab — and achieve a milestone.

When my wife and I presented a

rattle or brightly colored large toy to our girls during their infancy, we often held it in our hands in order to have more control and give them a better chance to set their sights and be successful at touching or grasping it.

Now we have a little boy, Gerald, and it's back to holding rattles and helping him achieve eye-hand coordination. Truthfully, the other day I was working on this very task and he missed the rattle — but he did very well at squeezing my nose good and hard.

Another trick for eye-hand coordination is to change the position of the toys so the child has to negotiate different positions. Don't confuse the child, however; if he or she can successfully grab in one position, just create some variety and excitement.

Through trial and error the child will move his hands and in time will have the kind of perception that reach-and-grab skills demand.

Badger tells us — and I agree — that the secret of learning is allowing such an activity to be performed for short periods several times a day. This is a realistic approach in view of the shortness of a child's attention span.

Starting at around 3 years old, your child is supposed to begin developing an ability to classify words and things and thus better understand relationships, associations and functions. Parents can encourage classification by following Badger's program of sorting blocks of animals, buildings, trees, people and vehicles. Join your child



Children learn from doing and parents can provide a stimulating atmosphere to promote that learning.

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playing freely and creatively with all blocks and discuss the features. Your child will learn what properties make some things animals and what make other things what they are.

The secret of Badger's program is to play and have fun. Kids do not want to work at learning. So make it a product of fun and involvement.

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