

4 ways to jump-start early education success with crucial caregiver conversations

Young learners enter school with wide-ranging needs, and the pandemic-driven disruptions to learning and socialization opportunities over the past few years may have only exacerbated the disparity. These foundational differences can leave many caregivers uncertain about whether their child aligns with typical development or needs additional supports.

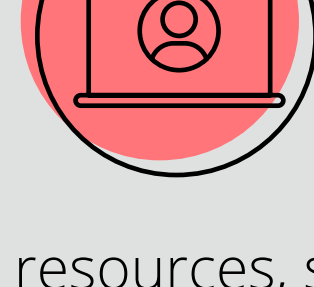
How do we set up little learners for a bright future?

Building educator-caregiver partnerships can help foster an enriching environment at home and school. Here are four conversations educators can have with caregivers to empower them to support positive developmental growth.

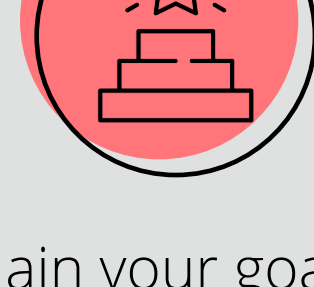
1 Mastering Milestones

“Is my child on track?” is the question on most caregivers’ minds. Introducing them to milestone benchmarks can help level set expectations.

Tips for helping caregivers master milestones:



Share resources, such as the “CDC’s Developmental Milestones.”¹



Explain your goals to address emerging skills in the classroom.



Provide regular written updates on individual milestone progress.



Suggest at-home activities that promote skill development.



Remind caregivers that each child navigates their own path on their own schedule.

2 Honing Habits

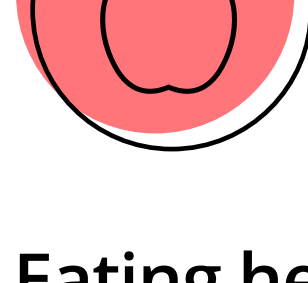
Caregivers are a child’s first and best teachers, placing them in a prime position to instill healthy habits and initiate easy activities that support them, such as:



Staying active.

Tips for helping caregivers hone habits:

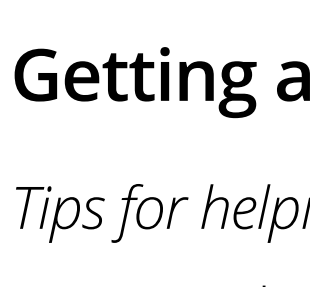
- Offer suggestions for safe indoor and outdoor activities.
- Provide a map of local indoor play spaces and outdoor parks.
- Have children chart their physical activity time as a class project.



Eating healthy foods.

Tips for helping caregivers hone habits:

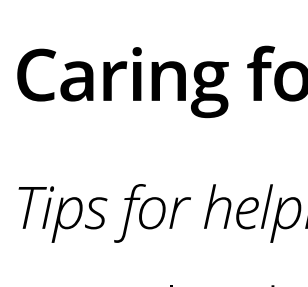
- Distribute handouts with nutritional information and easy kid-friendly recipes.
- Suggest swapping water for juice, soda and other caloric beverages.
- Encourage caregivers to offer a colorful array of fruits and veggies at every meal.



Getting adequate sleep.

Tips for helping caregivers hone habits:

- Remind caregivers that preschoolers need 10 to 13 hours of sleep.²
- Suggest a consistent bedtime routine to help kids wind down.
- Discuss the importance of limiting screen time, especially at sleep times.



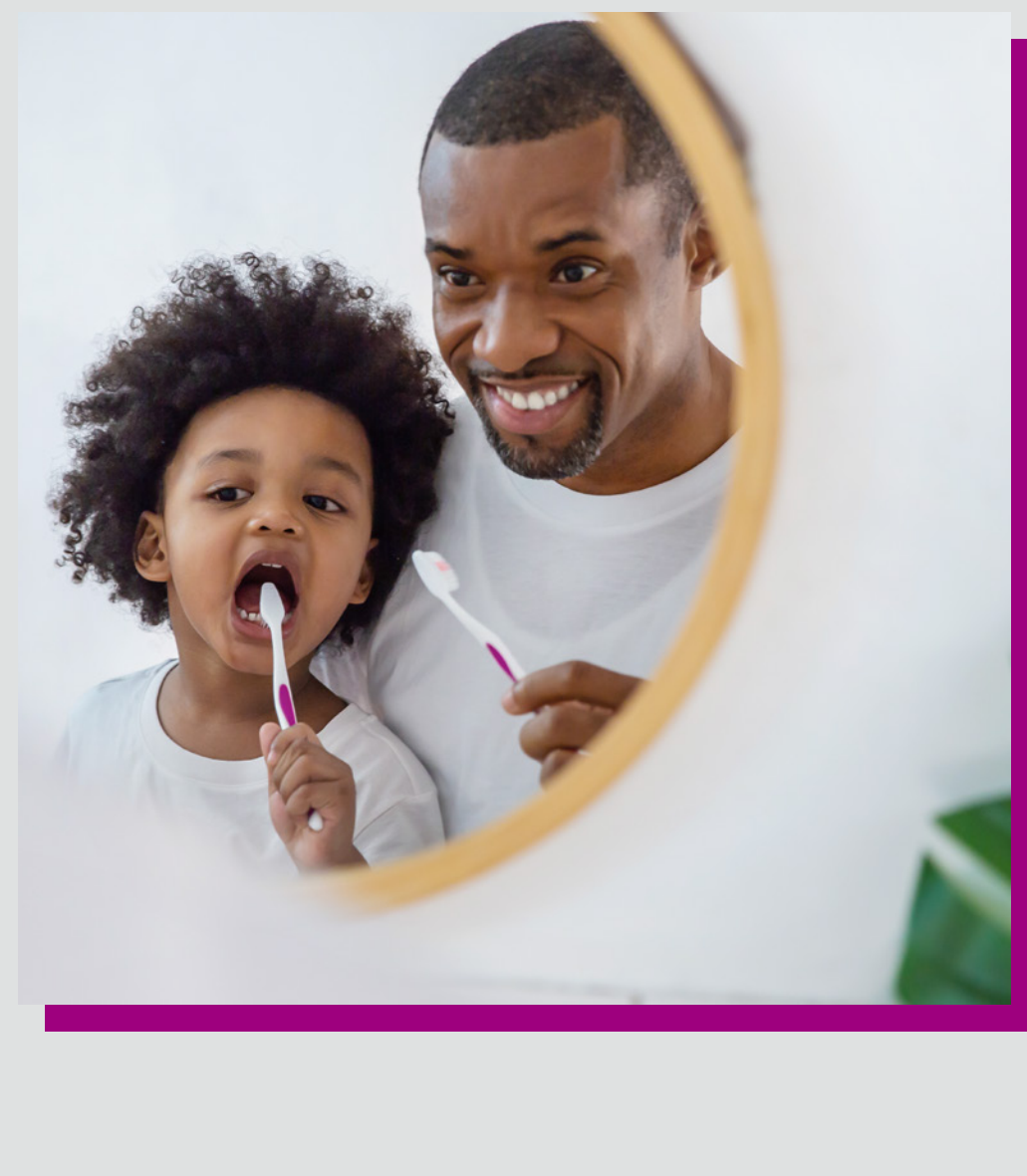
Caring for others.

Tips for helping caregivers hone habits:

- Explain how household chores showcase responsibility and community contribution.
- Recommend picture books where characters explore social-wellness traits.
- Make a mood chart as an art project, which kids can then use at home.

3 Rallying Routines

Routines have the power to empower kids and make home life smoother. Help caregivers implement this tool by highlighting these four times for daily routines and suggesting supportive activities:

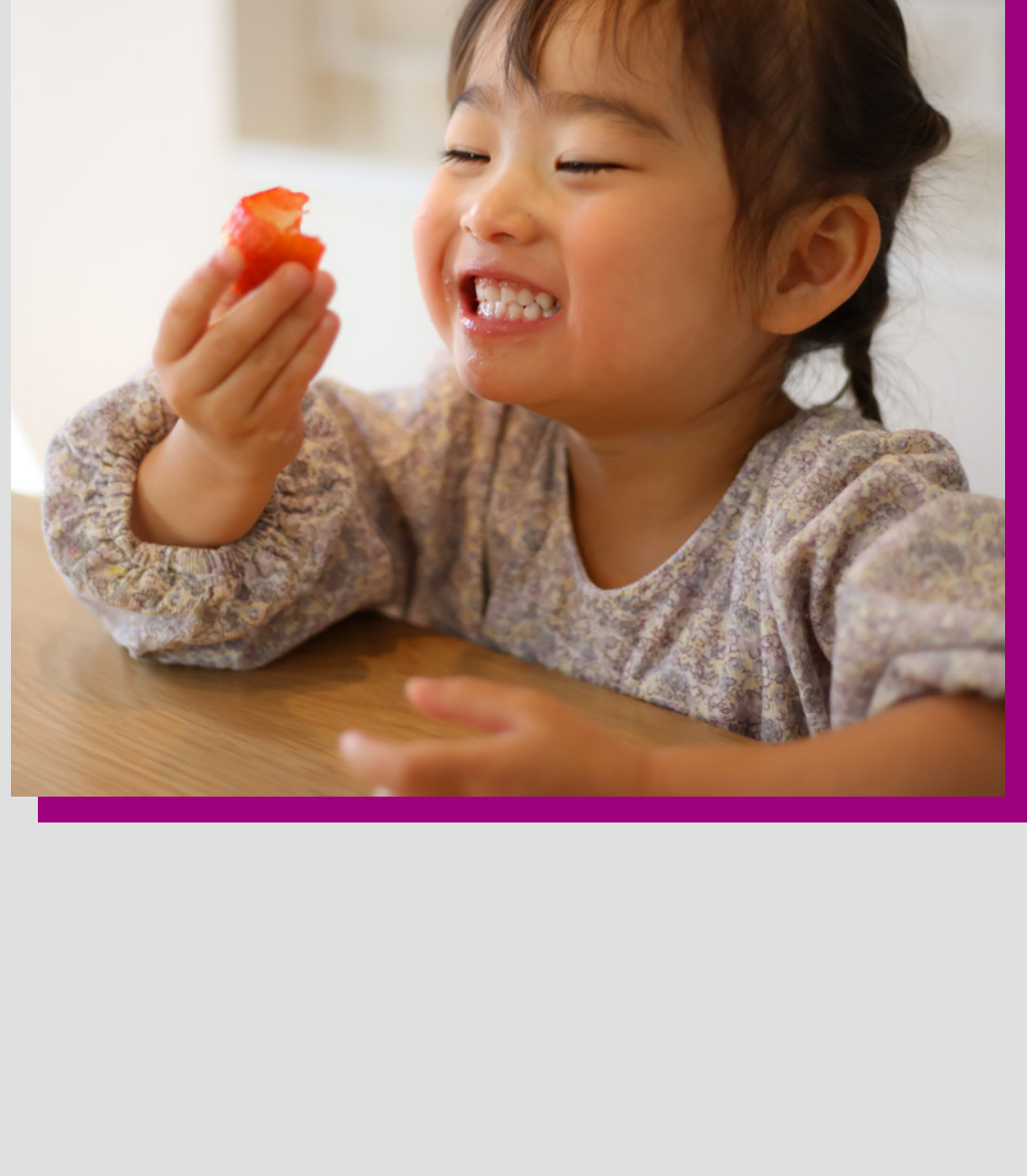


Morning time

- Allow preschoolers to ready themselves (dressing, brushing hair/teeth, etc.).
- Gather for at least a few minutes as a family with a quick, but healthy, meal.
- Create a positive goodbye ritual to kick-start the day.

After-school time

- Incorporate quiet time to regroup, with a healthy snack to refuel.
- Create a picture schedule that illustrates upcoming activities to ease transitions.
- Establish active play and designated one-on-one time.



Dinnertime

- Invite kids to help with safe activities like tearing lettuce and setting the table.
- Leave screens behind and turn off the TV.
- Ask all family members to share the highs and lows of their day.

Bedtime





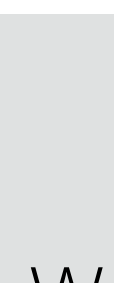




- Help kids wind down with a story.
- Say goodnight to family members (including pets and stuffed animals!).
- Express gratitude for the day’s events.



4 Addressing Assessments

Discussing developmental concerns with a caregiver can be daunting, but coming from a place of empathy and compassion helps them see you as a fellow partner in working for their child’s success.

Tips for broaching the conversation about assessments and interventions include:

-  Monitoring development and documenting potential concerns with examples.
-  Scheduling time for a private, one-on-one conversation.
-  Starting with positive statements about where the child excels.
-  Asking the caregiver to share their observations.
-  Explaining the benefits of early intervention.
-  Discussing potential next steps, such as an assessment.
-  Encouraging questions and validate concerns and fears.
-  Offering resources from vetted sources.
-  Providing reassurance and support as you end the meeting and reiterate next steps.

Want more information on how to build bridges with caregivers and equip them to reinforce lessons at home?

Check out our playbook, “Nurturing Early Childhood Development — At Home and At School” and visit our [Early Childhood Development Resource Center](#).

GET THE PLAYBOOK



Sources

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

2. <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/sleep-preschool.html>