
HEALTHY ENRICHMENT FOR

Pre-K, Primary and
Elementary Students



Many parents are curious about how to enhance their children’s learning experiences, and whether or not it is too early or too late to start. The truth is, healthy extracurricular enrichment for your student can have positive effects at any age. Enrichment, simply put, is just combining learning experiences with age appropriate fun. These days there are so many opportunities to have your child participate in extracurricular enrichment activities – all catered to your child’s age, interests and abilities.



One common myth is that enrichment is only for high achieving students or that it involves supplying extra or harder work. Healthy enrichment works on a very different theory. Enrichment opportunities work by honing in on your child’s natural talents and interests while providing assistance in deficit areas. As a result, students tap into their creative side, which can fuel them in all areas of learning. Enrichment can both spark a new passion for learning and help children meet challenges in everyday life.

One-on-one tutoring along with appropriate extracurricular activities will significantly help your child reach maximum potential.

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Preschool Enrichment and Kindergarten Readiness

Preschool tutoring is a fairly new intervention, which has raised interest as well as some eyebrows. Some critics might argue that parents are pushing their children to learn at too early an age. Certainly this may be the motivation for some parents, but others simply want to enhance their children's natural abilities while giving them a head start for kindergarten and beyond.

When Should Enrichment Begin?



The optimal time to offer Pre-K enrichment is in the year just prior to kindergarten. At 4-years old, children begin to show interest in specific areas and develop their "favorite" lists. Most children this age have strong opinions about their preference for a color, song, game or book. While showing preference in this way is a big step in their cognitive development, it is also important at this stage to offer several choices to your child.

For example, an easy step might be to have them help pick out their own clothes for the day. However, instead of offering their entire wardrobe, offer only a few options and let your child make the final decision.

Musical Enrichment

The same holds true for music. Offer a few selections of music and let your child decide what to listen to in the car or at home. Do you have a budding musician in the house? You can find out by taking your child to music classes or concerts. Music experts recommend going to a music store and letting them try out some instruments, rather than forcing an instrument upon them. Children who begin music instruction at an early age often find an instrument and stick with it. Throw in a little music theory. Children as young as four can learn to read music, and studies have shown this will help them in all academic areas.



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The Value of Reading

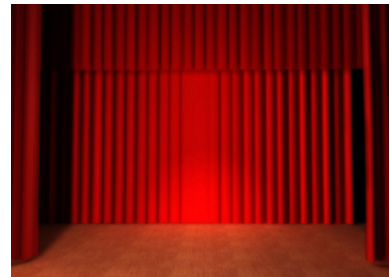
Take your child to your local library or bookstore to have them peruse the shelves. This helps to foster a good relationship with books and your child. Do some online book shopping by letting your child scroll through a list of age appropriate books (this also introduces beginning technology skills). Your preschool child is at the ripe age to learn how to read for pleasure. This is possible without pressuring. Reading with your child and making it fun can get them excited to learn and to read to others in the future. Visit the library and choose some step 1 reading books. When reading with your child, explain the setting of the story, talk about the characters, discuss feelings described and examine illustrations. Truly engaging with the text and encouraging your child to ask questions is a key step in their growth as a learner.



When a book isn't available, make sure to point out street signs, store signs, labels on food containers, etc. Download a list of beginning sight words and make a game out of learning them. Post-It Notes can provide a fun and interactive labeling game for your child by simply labeling the objects that surround them (fridge, table, lamp, mop, door, etc.).

Movies and Theatrical Performances

Attend plays or rent video recordings of plays. Children's theater performances are often a fun activity for the whole family. Open the world of acting for your child. After watching a play, challenge your child to create a set of their own. They will engage in the tactile experience of creating an environment from their imagination. Or, you can have them act out scenes from their favorite stories. Check out what is in your town; many park districts and local YMCAs offer performance-based classes for your Pre-K student.



Don't underestimate the power of movies for your child. Talking with your child about the characters, their motivations and their feelings can be a great way to have your child learn from various social dynamics.

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Math and Science for Pre-K Children

Teach your child the value of coins and currency by having them earn an allowance and save for a special treat. This also fosters beginning math skills. Add a fun piggy bank or coin counting machine and your child will begin to really enjoy the process of saving money.



If your child is interested in numbers and patterns, you can offer many activities in this area with a small amount of time and energy. While fixing a snack, make patterns with food items such as crackers, cheese and fruit. Then have your child complete the patterns. Small toys, puzzles or counters also are great for early math exploration.

In addition, offer up some science enrichment by conducting safe and fun experiments with food. Never underestimate the amazing power of food coloring or the incredible combination of baking soda and vinegar.

Need More Ideas?

Get out in nature and explore the flora and fauna around you. Investigating insects and plants can provide opportunities to talk about shapes, sizes and the act of growth. If your child shows great interest in this area, you can have them make a slideshow on the computer explaining the characteristics, colors, sizes and fun facts about the insects or plants they love the most. They could also just practice drawing what they see on their journeys outdoors. Either way, they will enjoy sharing their work with family and friends.

If you find yourself strapped for time or ideas, consider having a tutor meeting with your child twice a month. Preschool tutors are experienced in working with children at the Pre-K - Kindergarten age. Chicago Academic works with certified teachers and students in teacher training programs to deliver quality instruction



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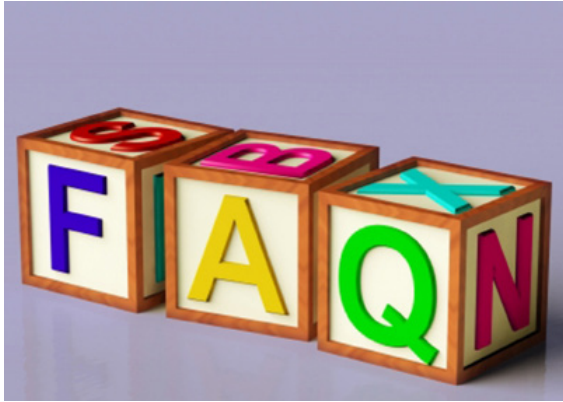


to our youngest students. Your child will enjoy meeting with a tutor for one-on-one instruction and enrichment activities. In addition to enrichment, tutors can prepare students for the kindergarten learning experience as well as offer practice for kindergarten entrance exams.

Overall, Preschool is the perfect time to develop your children's natural talents and to give them a head start in developing a love of learning. Whether you are integrating learning activities into the everyday, or seeking them outside of the home, your children will benefit from adding healthy enrichment activities to their lives.



Healthy Enrichment for Kindergarten and Primary Students



What are good after school activities for Kindergarteners?

Why are first grade children so tired after school?

What should second grade children read for fun?

Kindergarten Programs

Kindergarten, first and second grades are very different in terms of development. As such, it is better to consider what is right for your child at that particular age.

Kindergarten programs vary by school type and by school district. While some schools offer a full or 5 hour day, others only offer the traditional half day, or 3 hour program. Whether your child is in a half day or full day program, there are plenty opportunities for healthy enrichment.

We use the term healthy enrichment to describe activities that serve to enhance your child's learning experience.

If your child likes nature, consider making a nature journal. This can be achieved in many ways depending on your child's current skill level. The journal can simply be leaves and stones collected into envelopes or an elaborate project combining electronic content along with live samples. The key to success is letting your child lead the way. He or she should provide the initial plan and determine the complexity. Your job as the parent is to guide the project and set realistic limits. For example, you will have to explain that you can't go to the moon for moon rock.

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Students at this age will benefit greatly from a parent allowing for more autonomy. Self-guided lessons are a great stepping stone for their development and identity as learners. Suggestions are always welcomed, but letting your child complete a task independently will have a positive effect on their problem solving skills. For instance, if you suggest that your Kindergartener should make a birthday card for a friend, you might provide them with the materials they could use. Then, allow them to actively engage with the materials on their own (within reason when glue and glitter are involved). Provide guidance when it is asked for, and then begin weaning yourself away from these smaller activities. Students will find they have more confidence with independent activities in school.



First Grade Programs

Parents of first grade children have more of a challenge finding healthy enrichment opportunities due to the demands of school day curriculum. For many first grade children, a full school day raises new challenges. In most schools, not only is there a full day but a whole new set of classes to attend. More time is devoted to art, music, language and physical education. In addition, reading becomes a large part of the school day.

First graders usually want to come home and play or do anything that does not involve books and paper. Your child may be the outlier, but in most cases these six year olds have met their match with the first grade curriculum.

You may try some extracurricular activities such as short plays, children's museums, nature parks, zoos, etc. Your child can keep a trip journal or scrapbook souvenirs from each visit. This is the perfect age to give your child a camera and see if you have a budding photographer in the family.

You will, however, want to practice reading with your child as this makes school reading more enjoyable. Let your child choose reading materials. Take turns reading pages. Talk about the book you are reading and make connections. You can even choose books about places you have visited. Finally, choose a chapter book you can read daily to your child. Talk about key components of the book.

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It is never too early to introduce your young reader to great literature. In fact, there are now age appropriate versions of some of the best of adult literature. Either way, reading to your student from a book without pictures will allow for your student to begin imagining what they read and contextualizing it in a different way. This will help when they make the transition towards reading chapter books in the years to come.



Second Grade Enrichment

Find out what kind of music your second grade son or daughter likes and take them to a concert. They can learn about everything from ticket purchase prices to how many people it takes to set up the event. You can teach your child how to create a playlist of music they will want to listen to on the way. While you are waiting for the event

to begin, you can talk about what it takes to make it in the music business. Talk about all the people in the band, the lights, songwriting and all the components of the show. You can even have your child make a movie about all the things he or she learned at the show (a rockumentary of sorts). Experiential learning is a great way of adding enrichment to your second grader's learning.

Tips for Implementing This Enrichment

Whatever grade your child is in, planning interactive activities based on their interests will result in healthy enrichment. Many of these activities can be worked in during a regular school week. Keep in mind that primary students often enjoy ongoing projects. They look forward to working on the project each day – anticipating the completion and, of course, the showcasing.

Busy parents may have the desire to incorporate healthy enrichment activities into the lives of their children but are not sure what to offer or where to find the time. Parents can always consider a private tutor to offer enrichment. There is a perception that tutors should only be used when a child is struggling with academics; however, tutors are also trained in offering guidance with enrichment as well. No matter how you offer enrichment, keep it healthy and fun!

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Healthy Enrichment for Upper Elementary Students



Elementary Challenges

As your child continues on through elementary school, the amount of work and challenges are bound to increase. This is also a time when social pressures start to arise. The combination of school and extracurriculars can leave pre teens in a state of exhaustion. You may ask, why then is any type of enrichment

needed? The answer isn't always so clear. We use the term "healthy enrichment" to describe activities that enhance your child's learning experience because that is what enrichment should be – healthy. Sometimes enrichment can be confused with additional or more difficult work. Healthy enrichment, however, taps into your children's natural talents while challenging their creativity. Even if your children are over scheduled, they can benefit from some activities that spark their creativity and keep them engaged in learning.

Where Do I Begin?



As with other age groups, determining your child's interest is the first step. Around the middle to late elementary years, parents will begin to see emerging athletes, dancers, musicians, scientists, writers and artists. It is important to nurture these talents at an early age.

It may be as simple as having a movie night and choosing a film that includes the subject of your child's interests. Don't underestimate the power of your local library to help your student discover the world. If you find your student gravitates towards science fiction stories or fairy tales, there is certainly no shortage of books for them to read. Ask a librarian for suggestions. Most librarians

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are eager to help young students find new adventures and to satisfy their curiosity through books.

Consider playwriting for your young author. Check out some scripts from your local library for reference. Help your child map out setting, plot and characters. Once your child has written the play, you can put on a production in your living room or backyard

with neighbors or friends to serve as their enthusiastic audience. This project can be ongoing for several weeks, so even busy families can support it.



Open a savings account for your junior financial analyst. They can balance the account, learn about earning interest and even make purchases with savings. A project such as this will engage pre-teens as well as touch on

math and social studies lessons and skills that are covered in the middle grades.

It is not only acceptable but encouraged to preview lessons that will be taught later on. Your child will have more success in school if they are engaged and connected with the concepts that are being taught. Teachers appreciate healthy enrichment in the home and will often support you by letting your child present projects at school for extra credit.

Private Tutoring Benefits

Hire a private tutor! Tutors are experienced in all subject areas and can offer enrichment activities that support your child's learning, as well as academic success. Tutors are mostly thought of to support struggling students, but they can also intervene by working with achieving students.

No matter how you provide healthy enrichment, it is important to remember that these activities should be exciting for to your child and not laborious. Here at Chicago Academic we aim to instill a love for learning in students of all ages. Enrichment is just one way to ensure academic success for your child.

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Additional Resources

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT EARLY ENRICHMENT?

We can help you.

Chicago Academic is dedicated to serving the families of northern Chicago and the North Shore as a source of guidance and educational support.

We maintain a roster of exceptional educators to serve as private tutors and class instructors for students requiring more individualized attention with different areas of their education

In a learning environment that's both supportive and productive, Chicago Academic is available to help you!

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