

**The ABC's of Learning**  
August 2011

# Parenting *Rules!*

## **What Do Kids Need to Learn?**

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In just a few short weeks many schools will be back in session. It's time for parents to start thinking about the new school year and ways to encourage and help our kids to learn. The three most important things children need to learn are: **a**dequate sleep, a **b**alanced diet and **c**reative play.

## **Adequate Sleep...**

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According to the National Sleep Foundation, children ages 5 to 12 years old need at least 10-11 hours of sleep each night to soak in what they learned in school that day.

Here's how you can make sure your child is getting the proper amount of sleep each night:

- Create a bedtime routine that will help your child to relax and takes place at the same time every night.
- Set a bedtime that will give your child at least 10 hours of sleep before they need to get up for school.
- Seriously consider keeping television and computers out of your child's bedroom.
- Teach your child the importance of sleep by setting a good example.



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## Balanced Diet...

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A child's diet plays a very important role in the development of their brain. Children need the fuel a balanced diet gives to enable them to focus and absorb what they learn at school.

Here are some ways to help your kids eat a balanced diet:

- Always provide a healthy breakfast. Avoid sugar sweetened cereals and go for good choices like fresh fruit, oatmeal or yogurt.
- Limit your child's intake of sugary soft drinks and "junk food"; give them healthy snacks like vegetable sticks, fruit, cheese or whole grain crackers.
- Make sure your kids get the right amount of fruits, vegetables, proteins and dairy foods. Go to the US Department of Agriculture's website at [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov) for tips and information on providing healthy meals for your family.

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## Creative Play...

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Free, unstructured playtime is an important activity for children of all ages. Creative play helps kids develop social, emotional and motor skills. It also teaches children about the world around them, relationships and problem solving skills. Kids need time everyday to play in a way that will let them develop their creativity and independence.

Here are some tips for parents:

- ✓ Purchase creative toys for your child like play dough, paints, crayons, blocks and other toys that will encourage your child's imagination.
- ✓ Allow your child to choose what he/she will play with.
- ✓ Don't criticize your child – encourage imagination.
- ✓ Play **with** your child, don't just watch.



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## Resources for Parents...

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### **USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion**

3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302-1594  
888-779-7264      [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

### **Kids Health**

[www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition\\_center/index.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/index.html)

### **National Sleep Foundation**

[www.sleepforkids.org](http://www.sleepforkids.org)

### **The American Academy of Pediatrics**

141 Northwest Point Boulevard, Elk Grove Village, IL 60007  
847-434-4000      [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

## ABOUT PARENTING RULES! E-NEWS...

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Please share this information with the  
families in your programs. Thank you!