Ways to Encourage Cognitive Development

Cognitive development means how children think, explore and figure things out. It is the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions, which help children to think about and understand the world around them.

Fostering your child's cognitive development as soon as he/she is born provides the foundation for success in school and later in life. Here are ideas to encourage cognitive development through different activities.

0-6 months

- Talk to your baby while making sure he/she can see your face and eyes.
- Read books to your baby using different voices and show him/her the pictures.
- Change activities when or before your baby becomes fussy (which is usually when he/she is bored).
- Place toys within sight but just out of reach of your baby.

1 year old

- Begin naming colors and shapes, and asking your child to point at certain objects.
- Hide toys, and encourage your child to find them.
- Provide simple directions, such as "pick up your ball."

2 years old

- Play simple games of hide and seek within the same room.
- Ask your child to name colors, shapes or animals when you point to them in a book.
- Give your child simple two-step directions, such as "pick up your ball and put it in the basket."

3 years old

- Encourage your child to take part in pretend play.

- Play parade or follow the leader with your child.
- Teach your child simple songs like "Itsy Bitsy Spider," or other cultural childhood rhymes.

4 years old

- Allow your child to help with simple chores, such as wiping the table.
- Begin counting together.
- Ask your child to tell you parts of a story or tell you about his/her day.
- Give your child choices and prompt him/her to make thoughtful decisions.

5 years old

- Help your child develop good language skills by speaking to him/her in complete sentences and using "grown-up" words. Help your child to use the correct words and phrases.
- Draw people and animals based on real family members and pets.