LEARNING TO GROW
CENTER ON THE FAMILY ❤ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I

Complex Thinker

Raising A School-Ready Child

As parents, guardians, and/or child care providers, you have a powerful influence on children's learning. Children's love of learning begins at home. Your active involvement in providing positive early learning experiences gives them a solid base to build on when they enter school. It also makes an important contribution toward creating strong, positive home and school partnerships that help children succeed in school.

Each month, *Raising a School-Ready Child* will provide you with ideas on how to engage young children, especially 3-and 4-year olds, in everyday activities that help them develop the characteristics, positive behaviors, and skills that lead to success at home, school, work, and in life. These activities will be linked to one of the six General Learner Outcomes (GLOs) identified and used by Hawai'i's Department of Education to evaluate students' performance in all grade levels and all academic disciplines.

This month's readiness activities focus on GLO #3:

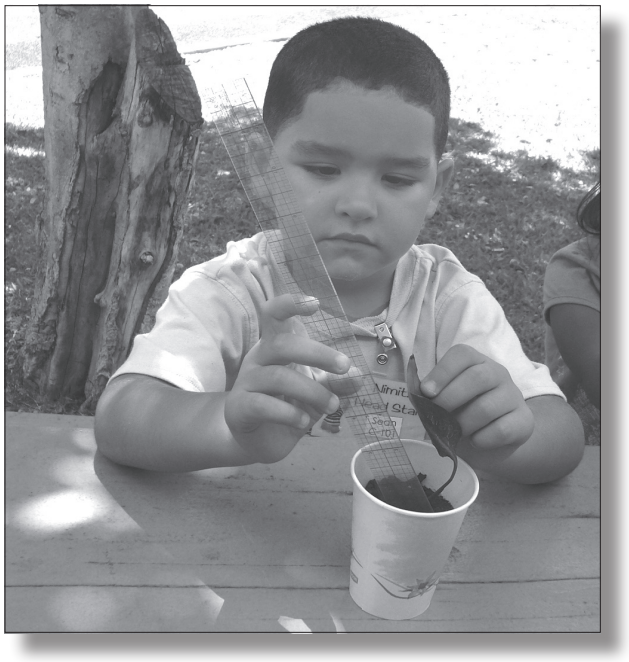
Complex Thinkers demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving strategies.

When you encourage children's curiosity and help them to question, explore, experiment, and problem solve, you help them develop:

- ❤ critical-thinking skills,
- ❤ problem-solving skills, and
- ❤ creativity.

These are important readiness skills that will help children be ***complex thinkers*** in school. In kindergarten, children will be expected to:

- ❤ **use prior knowledge and experiences to solve problems,**
- ❤ **explain answers and make adjustments, and**
- ❤ **solve problems in different ways**.



See the back of this sheet for suggestions of activities you can do with young children. As you involve them in these types of activities, you give children the practice and encouragement they need to become ***complex thinkers***. In addition, you help them develop their physical, social-emotional, language, and cognitive skills.

Does It Float or Sink?*

WHAT YOU NEED:

- ❤ Beach objects such as driftwood, coconuts, rocks, shells, and seaweed
- ❤ Paper
- ❤ Pencil

WHAT TO DO:

1. While at the beach, find several natural objects to use for your experiment. Ask the children to describe each object's appearance and texture. If the children have difficulty, prompt them with questions such as, "What does it look like?" "What color is it?" "How does it feel?"
2. Have them guess which objects will float or sink in the water, then have them toss each one into the water to find out what happens to it.
3. After each toss, talk about the reasons why objects float or sink: "Did the rock sink because it was heavy or light?"
4. Make a chart to show which objects floated and which sank.
5. Have the children count the number of objects that floated and the number that sank.

*Adapted from *Learning to Grow Early Learning Activities for Young Preschoolers*, produced by the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's Center on the Family.

Other Activities:

1. **Plant Growth:** Plant seeds in a paper cup. Explain that plants need sun and water to grow. After daily watering and watching, measure the growth of the plants.
2. **Guessing Games:** Play guessing games during everyday activities such as how many pages in a book, how many pieces of cereal in your bowl, how many red blocks. Then, count to find the answer.
3. **Cause and Effect:** Find ways to test a hypothesis or theory. Talk about what might happen, test it, and discuss what really happened. For example, "Does ice melt faster in the shade or in the sun?" Or mix colors, using paints, food coloring, or crayons.
4. **Saving Money:** Help children learn how to save up for something – either for themselves or as a gift for someone, for example, a piece of fruit, a new pencil, or a small chocolate milk. Count the amount needed and make the purchase together.
5. **Bread Experiment:** Put one slice in a sealed bag or jar. Leave one slice on a paper plate, uncovered. Let the children guess what will happen to each piece. Every day or two examine the bread and talk about the changes, similarities and differences. Try the same thing with different fruits and vegetables.

These types of activities also help children:

- ❤ Learn through their senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching (Physical Development)
- ❤ Feel important and good about themselves (Social and Emotional Development)
- ❤ Learn to ask and answer questions (Language and Literacy Development)
- ❤ Develop their thinking and problem-solving skills (Cognitive Development)*

IMPORTANT REMINDER

The knowledge and skills children learn at an earlier age provide the foundation for more complex learning as they get older. To encourage children's love of learning:

- ❤ focus on having fun rather than improving specific skills,
- ❤ follow their interests; select activities they enjoy, and
- ❤ adapt activities to match their capabilities, making them more challenging as children mature.