Natural curiosity is vital to learning and healthy development. Knowing how children develop is important so that we can help them develop.
When we talk about child development, we address several areas of a child’s growth. These areas are language, cognitive, physical, and social/emotional development. Knowing how children grow is important so that you can help them develop. Learn how educational children’s programming can be a powerful and purposeful introduction to exploration and learning.

This workshop includes the following sections:

- Learning Triangle Activity Sheet
- Why Is This Important to My Child?
- What Can I Do for My Child?
- Book List
- Activities
- Additional Resources

Special Thanks

KBYU Eleven gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations that contributed to the design and creation of this workshop and the thousands of workshop participants whose questions and suggestions inspired our work: Stephanie Anderson, Carrie Allen Baker, Barbara Leavitt, Aubrey McLaughlin, Theresa Robinson, Public Broadcasting Service, and United Way of Utah County.
What Is KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn?

Children are born equipped for learning. Parents and caregivers can help children enter school with the essential skills and knowledge they need to be ready to learn. KBYU Eleven provides children and parents with three related services:

1. **Quality educational television programs.** Children who consistently watch these programs enter school better prepared to learn, and once in school they perform at a higher level.

2. **A safe and fun online environment** offering engaging activities, games, and videos that teach and reinforce key skills and concepts.

3. **Online video workshops** that provide insights into how children develop and demonstrate how to combine media with reading and hands-on activities to greatly enhance children’s learning.

What Is the Purpose of the KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn Workshops?

The 12 KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn workshops help parents become their child’s first and best teacher. The workshops were created over several years by experts in early childhood education and offered in partnership with schools, libraries, and community organizations throughout Utah. In creating these workshops KBYU Eleven built on the national Ready To Learn initiative sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), PBS, and the Ready To Learn Partnership (RTLP). You can learn more about the national Ready To Learn effort at pbskids.org/read/about.
What Are the 12 KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn Workshops?

1. Benefits of Media and the Learning Triangle
2. Rhymers Are Readers: The Importance of Nursery Rhymes
3. Music Is a Must!
4. Storytelling: You Can Do It!
5. The Brain: How Children Develop
6. The FUNdamental Powers of Play
7. What Do You Do with the Mad That You Feel?
9. Math Is Everywhere!
10. Learning Through the Early Years: The Benefits of Repetition and Variation
11. Shared Reading: Tools to Bring Literacy to Life
12. Building Blocks: The Sequence of Emergent Literacy Skills

How Can I Participate in a KBYU Eleven Ready To Learn Workshop?

Video versions of the workshops are available online at no charge. While they are sequentially based—with each workshop building on the previous one—they can also be viewed independently. To watch a workshop, visit kbyueleven.org and click on Ready To Learn under the Kids & Family section.

What Are the Four Areas of Child Development?

1. **Cognitive development** includes thinking, information processing, problem solving, remembering, decision making, understanding concepts, and overall intelligence.

2. **Physical development** is rapid following birth as children learn to control large and then small muscle groups. The sequence of stages is important, and providing an environment children can physically explore while they are growing is critical to all ages.

3. **Language development** is most intensive during the first three years while the brain is developing rapidly and is stimulated most by exposure to sights, sounds, and being talked to.

4. **Social/emotional development** is critical to all other areas of development, because how children perceive their world (their ability to give and accept love, be confident and secure, show empathy, be curious and persistent, and relate well to others) affects how the brain physically develops and how they learn and process information.
The Learning Triangle is a three-part learning pattern that helps reach all types of learners by teaching through a variety of activities. The three points of the Learning Triangle are View, Read, and Do.

- **VIEW** with your child an educational program that teaches a concept or skill.
- **READ** with your child age-appropriate books that reiterate the new concept or skill.
- **DO** an activity that reinforces the concept or skill and allows your child to practice what she or he has learned.

As you use the Learning Triangle you will see how each point reinforces the others. The workshops provide suggested Learning Triangle activities, but more important, they teach you how to build your own learning triangles to best meet the needs of your child.

**How Do Children Learn?**

The Learning Triangle is built on how we learn. Using our senses we gather information and then process it into our memory. Some learners rely more on one sense than another.

- **Auditory learners** use their sense of hearing. They process information better when they can hear the information.
- **Visual learners** use sight as a key tool for processing information.
- **Kinesthetic (or hands-on) learners** process information best by physically performing a task that incorporates the new information.

While learners can have a strong affinity to one type of learning, it is more effective to teach using a combination of all three. As a parent or caregiver, it is important to understand what types of learning work best for your child so that you can guide them to become better learners. For young children, ages 0–3, learning is holistic, meaning that they use all three types of learning. PBS developed the Learning Triangle to help reach all types of learners and enhance their learning through repetition. According to Dr. Bruce Perry, repetition is key to the development of a child’s brain. Repetition leads to skill mastery, which increases confidence and builds self-esteem.
Cognitive development includes the processes of thought that your child develops over time. These include tasks such as acquiring, processing, storing, and retrieving information. Even infants engage in cognition as they take in information about their environment, their brains forming new connections in order to make sense of the information.
The Brain: How Children Develop

Why Is This Important to My Child?

Language Development

Early childhood is what is known as a critical period for language development. A critical period is a window in development when certain experiences must be present so that your child’s biology can develop properly. Children must be exposed to language during their early years in order for their brains to develop the necessary connections for speech. You can support this development by speaking to your infant, toddler, or young child as you go about your daily activities.

Describe what you are doing as you change a diaper, give your child a bath, or prepare a meal. Another way to help your child express his or her thoughts and needs is by teaching simple signs for key words such as “help” and “milk.” Your child will soon learn to communicate verbally.

Cognitive Development

Cognitive processes develop rapidly in the first few years of life. At birth your baby’s brain is only 25 percent of its adult size. By age three your child’s brain will be 80 percent of its adult size, and by age five it will have reached 90 percent of its adult size.

Because of the incredible amount of growth that occurs during these early years, it is important that young children are exposed to experiences and activities that will help their cognitive abilities develop properly. A child’s brain has a trait that scientists refer to as plasticity. This is in reference to a young child’s ability to rapidly adapt as he or she acquires large amounts of new information. While adults retain some plasticity, a child’s brain can develop much more quickly and can retain new information more easily. This is a positive trait if the child is provided with a nurturing and enriching environment.

References

www.zerotothree.org/child-development/brain-development/healthy-minds.html
www.healthofchildren.com/C/Cognitive-Development.html
The Brain: How Children Develop

Why Is This Important to My Child?

Physical Development

Young children develop cognitive abilities primarily through their physical senses. Babies often put things in their mouths to understand the taste, smell, and texture of an object.

It has been said that play is a child’s work. This means that children learn about their world as they explore through play. For example, when young children topple a tower of blocks, they learn about gravity and cause-and-effect. Children learn new concepts best if they are concrete and applicable to their own life.

Encourage play by getting down on the floor and playing with your infant during tummy time or by playing “pretend” with your young child. Physical activity is also critical to cognitive development. Physical activity increases oxygen and blood flow to the brain, promoting healthy brain functioning. Be sure to provide your child ample opportunity for movement and exercise.

Social/Emotional Development

As you acknowledge and respond to your infant’s cues, your baby learns that the world is a safe place where his or her needs will be met. This helps infants develop a sense of trust and provides them with the confidence necessary to explore their world.

In the early years of life, it is critical that infants form secure attachments with loving, nurturing caregivers. This primary caregiver relationship will be the foundation for healthy relationships later in your child’s life. Understanding cognitive development is key to understanding your young child’s social interactions.

Young children think in egocentric ways. This means that they feel that they are the center of their world, and their actions often evidence this belief. You can help your child understand the way another person may be feeling by asking questions about how your child would feel in the same situation. This helps your child begin to acknowledge the needs and feelings of others.

References

www.healthofchildren.com/C/Cognitive-Development.html

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The Brain: How Children Develop

Why Is This Important to My Child?

Benchmarks for Normal Development

As children grow, it is expected that they will develop the skills and abilities listed below. If you notice your child is having problems developing in any of these areas, contact your local 211 service for information on how to help your child.

**Physical Development**
1. Large motor skills
2. Fine motor skills
3. Hand-eye coordination
4. Large and fine motor skill development equal
5. Body movements—quick or slow
6. Child at-home in his or her body, as opposed to clumsy, stiff, and unsure
7. Physical development affects behavior or personality

**Social Development**
1. Child’s type of play
2. Acceptance or rejection from peers
3. Visible reasons for behavior
4. Displays specific social behaviors: shy, withdrawn, pushy, loud, etc.
5. Relates to other children
6. He or she seeks out other children or specific children
7. Avoids other children
8. Waits to be sought out by other children
9. Responds to other children’s invitation to play
10. Spends a lot of time observing other children
11. Generally a leader or a follower

**Emotional Development**
1. Expresses emotions
2. Causes for specific emotions
3. Amount of emotion expressed through his or her body
4. Emotional expression through facial expression
5. Change or variety of facial expression in various activities

**Discipline and Guidance**
1. Uses and reacts to positive and negative guidance by peers
2. During situations requires adult intervention
3. Atmosphere—calm and reasonable
4. Adult’s emotional response to or during discipline
5. Direction of misbehavior into acceptable channels
6. Discipline techniques—variety or singular

**Language and Concept Development**
1. Environmental influences on language development
2. Influence of media (TV, radio, movies, etc.) in language and concept development
3. Influence of toys and/or play equipment on language and concept development
4. Role play of adult behavior
5. Teaching technique of taught skills
6. Child’s interest in learning new skills
7. Child’s response to instruction
8. How many lessons required to learn the new skill
9. Child’s physical ability to learn new skill

**Summary of Child’s Cognitive Development**
1. Mastery of new skills
2. Developmental change over time
3. Progression in areas of development (social, physical, intellectual, emotional, personal behavior)
4. Child’s behavior, learning ability, response to adults and other children, reaction to treatment by others, ability to adjust to new situations (conditions of life), ability to cope with problems (challenges)
The Motor Skills Checklist: Identify skills that you observe in your child.

Alternates feet going down stairs
Walks steady
Runs
 Stops accurately when running
Skips
Hops
Pushes self on wheeled toys
Rides tricycle
Throws ball
Builds tower of eight blocks

Climbs objects
Alternates feet going up stairs
Jumps off bottom step
Jumps up and down
Balances on one foot
Walks on tiptoe
Catches ball
Turns pages of book one at a time
Screws lids off and on containers

Strings large beads

Draws horizontal lines

Draws vertical lines

Draws circles

Draws recognizable pictures

Cuts with scissors

Uses fork and spoon without spilling

Makes bridge of three blocks

Kicks ball
The Domains of Child Development

The Brain: How Children Develop

Cognitive development is acquiring and processing information. Children’s ability to understand and think is shown through curiosity, memory, attention span, problem solving, recognition, and beginning reading.

Language development is the ability to exchange one’s thoughts and needs, verbally or nonverbally. Cries, coos, gurgles, laughter, babbles, eye contact, and body language are all characteristics of early communication. One-word sentences evolve into three- or four-word sentences and eventually into complex sentences.

Emotional development is the ability to deal with both positive and negative feelings about one’s self. Relationships with others help children to define their self-concept, self-esteem, and ability to express feelings.

Social development is the ability to get along with others in a group. Interacting with others allows children to begin to develop a sense of fairness and understand abstract concepts like sharing with others.

Physical development is the process of mastering control and coordination of one’s body. There are two areas of physical development: gross motor (sometimes called large muscle) and fine motor (sometimes called small muscle).

Gross motor activities involve movement of the entire body or larger parts of the body. Examples include creeping, crawling, rolling, running, jumping, and dancing.

Fine motor activities involve movement of smaller parts of the body, like hands and feet. Examples include grasping, reaching, holding, banging, spinning, clapping, and hand-eye coordination.

References
Why Is This Important to My Child?

The Brain: How Children Develop

Children’s brains develop at a rapid speed during the first three years of life. Use this handout to help you remember the elements that make up everyone’s brain. It is important to consider the plasticity of children’s brains and that their experiences and environment will determine what cells stay and which cells are pruned.
The Brain: How Children Develop

Why Is This Important to My Child?

Building Neurons

Each neuron is made up of four different parts:

1. **Cell Body**
   a. Is the command center of the neuron.
   b. Can be star-, pyramid-, or pear-shaped.

2. **Nucleus**
   a. Is located inside the cell body.
   b. DNA is stored inside.
   c. Cytoplasm is the fluid circling the nucleus.
   d. Mitochondria, which provide energy for the cell, are oval-shaped bits swimming around the cytoplasm.

3. **Dendrites**
   a. Surround the cell body like branches.
   b. Connect the neuron to other neurons.

4. **Axon**
   a. Is a long extension off of the neuron.
   b. Can be almost three feet long.
   c. Myelin is the protective sheath that covers the axon.
   d. The impulses in the brain are passed through the axons.

A healthy diet is essential to brain development and myelination. Poor diet can have long-term effects on a child’s behavior, sensory abilities, and ability to acquire and manipulate knowledge.

Myelination refers to the building of fatty substance surrounding the axons of brain cells, promoting faster and more efficient signal transmission.
The Brain: How Children Develop
What Can I Do for My Child?

For Babies to Toddlers (0–2 years)

• Help your child learn about object permanence by playing “peek-a-boo” or by hiding a toy under a blanket and then searching for the toy together.

• Make a small photo album for your child with pictures of key people in his or her life. Look at the pictures together and talk about the individuals and activities represented in the pictures.

• Read to your child every day. Reading to children helps them develop the foundation blocks of language that are necessary for speech. Use board books with colorful pictures.

• Go on a walk or look out your window together and point out what you see. Use descriptive words such as “blue” sky or “fast” car.

For Toddlers (2–4 years)

• Preschool age children love finger plays such as “Five Little Monkeys.” Incorporate songs, finger plays, and nursery rhymes into your day.

• Make time each day for your child to participate in a sensory activity. This could be as simple as digging in the dirt while you garden, rinsing dishes together, playing with play dough, or baking cookies together. Hands-on, sensory activities allow young children the opportunity to explore their world through their five senses.

• Read aloud with your child every day. Also, take your child to the local library for storytime and allow them to pick out books they are interested in.

• Provide time each day for your little one to move, move, move! Movement and physical activity increase blood flow and oxygen to the brain, thus improving cognition. Go for a walk, play at the park, or dance together in your house.

For Older Children (4–5 years)

• Encourage imaginative play by providing your child with household props and dress-up clothes that they can use to reenact their favorite stories or shows.

• If your public library allows young children their own library card, help your child sign-up to receive one. Help them learn to care for the books they borrow and return them on time.

• Continue reading aloud with your child every day.

• Provide time each day for your child to be physically active. Movement and physical activity increase blood flow and oxygen to the brain, thus improving cognition. Go for a walk, play at the park, or dance together in your house.
# The Brain: How Children Develop

## Book List

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
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<td>Nancy Carlson</td>
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<td>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day</td>
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<td>Little Blue and Little Yellow</td>
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# The Brain: How Children Develop

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<td>(reprinted as Harry and the Bucketful of Dinosaurs)</td>
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<td>Seeds! Seeds! Seeds!</td>
<td>Nancy Elizabeth Wallace</td>
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<td>Skidamarink</td>
<td>G. Brian Karas (Illustrator)</td>
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<td>“Slowly, Slowly, Slowly,” Said the Sloth</td>
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<td>Sometimes I’m Bombaloo</td>
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<td>Ten in the Bed</td>
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<td>Ten Sly Piranhas</td>
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<tr>
<td>White Rabbit’s Color Book</td>
<td>Alan Baker</td>
<td>Cognitive</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

This is a small reference sample of books that can be found at your local library.
The Brain: How Children Develop

Activities

You don’t have to purchase an expensive sensory table to provide your child with hands-on learning. Here are some fun and inexpensive ways to expose your child to different textures and mediums.

**Water sensory:** During bath time, allow your child time to play with bath toys or household items such as cups and mixing spoons. Use descriptive words to talk about the properties of water such as wet, warm, cold, slippery, and so on. Play a game where you show your child an object and ask them if they think it will float or sink. Then place the object in the water and talk about the result.

You can also expose your child to water sensory experiences by allowing them to help you rinse and wash dishes, bathe the family pet, and water plants or your yard. When the weather is appropriate, your child can splash in puddles, play in the rain, swim in a pool, or run through the sprinklers.

**Play dough:** Children often enjoy the squishy, moldable qualities of play dough. Provide your child with cookie cutters, rolling pins, or other safe kitchen items to use with the play dough.

**Finger paint:** Provide your child with nontoxic finger paint and a smock or old shirt to protect their clothing. Allow them to paint paper or cardboard items such as empty cereal boxes and paper towel rolls.

**Sand:** You can use a shallow storage bin filled with sand as a small sand box. You can also use the lid to cover the sand and protect it from stray pets and rain. Provide a variety of cups, spoons, or shovels for your child to dig and pour with.

**Dirt:** Plant a garden with your young child. If you don’t have the space for a garden, you can plant potted flowers or herbs.

**Shaving cream or whipped cream:** Lay wax paper on your table and dress your child in a smock or oversized shirt. Use shaving cream only if your child understands that it is not edible. Allow your child to squish the cream in their hands and draw pictures in it with their fingers.

**Make your own sensory table:** You may have seen the sensory tables provided in many preschools and day cares. Such tables are convenient, but they can be very expensive. You can provide your child with the same experience by using a much less expensive storage bin. The variety designed for use under a bed are often shallow and long—perfect for use as a sensory table. Place a waterproof tablecloth or a sheet under the bin to protect your floor and provide easy cleanup. You can then fill the bin with any of the following items:

- Dry rice or dry beans and cups, bowls, spoons, etc.
- Scrap paper and magazines with child-safe scissors for cutting practice.
- Sand, water, or any of the other items mentioned above.
The Brain: How Children Develop

Activities

**Dramatic play:** Imaginative play is one of the best ways to promote cognitive growth in young children. Provide props to encourage dramatic play, such as clothes for dressing up, paper and writing utensils, toy phones, and so on. You can even choose a theme like “office” or “fire station.” Read books about these places, take a family field trip to visit them, and then make a pretend setting out of a large cardboard box. Children often base their play off of activities they have seen or read about. This is why children love classic dramatic play such as “house” and “school.”

**Math:** Incorporate mathematics into your day by counting the stairs as you climb or the cars as they drive by your window. Practice simple addition and subtraction by adding to or taking away from a small pile of blocks and counting the new total. Help your young child memorize his or her phone number and address. Point out your house number on mail and on your house.

**Music:** Music is a wonderful way to boost your child’s cognition. Even very young babies respond to instrumental music and singing. Provide your child with age-appropriate music such as lullabies, silly songs, and instrumental music. Your child doesn’t care what your singing voice is like, they just care that you are sharing something special with them.

**Healthy touch:** Touch is critical to your child’s developing cognition. Healthy touch such as massage, snuggles, kisses, and hugs reduces stress in infants and young children. This healthy touch also creates connections in your child’s rapidly developing brain.
Texture Activity

Cut out the octagons and glue on the specified items. Let your child experience the different textures.
After reading *Caps for Sale*, by Esphyr Slobodkina, cut out the hats and the monkeys. Let your child have fun placing the caps on the monkeys’ heads, then sort the hats according to type.
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Additional Resources

**PBS Parents**
Use our child development tracker to get insight on the stages of growth and key milestones for kids ages 1–9. Then find out how you can help sharpen your child’s early learning skills with these fun games or use our PBS KIDS Activity Search to explore further.
www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopment

**Help Me Grow**
Help Me Grow is an information line that can connect parents of young children (0–8 years) to community services. The Help Me Grow website provides parents, health care providers, and educators—or anyone else—with a single point of access to multiple community resources and services available to children in Utah County.
helpmegrowutah.org/what_is.html

**Welcome Baby**
Welcome Baby is a free community service designed to promote a healthy, secure, and enjoyable beginning for parents, new babies, and their family members.
www.unitedwayuc.org/welcomebaby

**This Emotional Life: Attachment**
Learn how attachment is vital for your child’s social and emotional health and development.
www.pbs.org/thisemotionallife/topic/attachment