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## 10 Expert Tips to Ensure Young Children Succeed

Valley of the Sun United Way offers 10 simple tips, inspired by its School Readiness Kit, to prepare your child to succeed in Kindergarten and beyond:

1. **Sort it all out!** Point out letters, colors and shapes when you are at the grocery store, and ask your child to sort the groceries by similar characteristics (cans, boxes, vegetables, colors, etc.). This helps children recognize key concepts and words in their everyday environment – a precursor to reading.
2. **Practice writing letters.** Put a small amount of finger paint, shaving cream or pudding on a piece of wax paper. Help your child make the letters of his or her name. Using their fingers in art activities helps children learn pre-writing skills, which will help them hold a pencil.
3. **Feel the rhythm.** When listening to music, dance to the beat with your child – dance slowly for slow songs and quickly for fast songs. Put on music with a constant, repetitive beat, and beat sticks or spoons in time to the music. This encourages physical activity and enjoyment of music.
4. **Get crafty.** Use beads or pasta to make a necklace or bracelet. Create objects with clay or play dough. Paint with watercolor, making swirls, zig-zags and straight lines. Art allows your child to be creative, which builds confidence.
5. **Read...Read...and Read some more!** Read aloud to your child every day. Talk with your child about the pictures in the book, and ask him or her about the objects and colors that are on each page. This will help your child learn how to link pictures and words – an important pre-literacy skill.
6. **Make the local library your home away from home.** Meet the people who work at the library and ask them to show you around. Sign up for a library card, and ask your child to pick out books to read at home. Ask about fun children's events at the library. You'll teach your child about all the library has to offer and make literacy fun!
7. **Flip through family photos.** Show your child photos of your family, including those with your child, and talk about the people in your family. Ask your child who is in each photo, what they are doing and what faces they are making. This teaches children about themselves and helps them understand emotions and daily activities.
8. **Count together.** When you are at the grocery store, count fruits and vegetables with your child. Count the number of people you see at the store. Ask your child to count the pieces of mail each day. Math teaches your child to solve problems every day.
9. **Go for a nature walk.** Go for a walk outside or take a trip to the park. Listen for sounds like leaves blowing and birds chirping, and talk about how trees grow and where birds live. Science allows your child to be curious and ask questions.
10. **Wash your hands together.** Teach your child how to wash both hands with soap and water. Talk with your child about why it is important to wash your hands after going to the bathroom, after coughing and sneezing, and before cooking and eating. Developing good hygiene skills is important to your child's overall health.

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