

Turning Food Preparation into Math Games

By Kayla Connelly, Elementary Teacher - Montessori Centre Academy

Daily conversations with both the parent and the child about early math concepts, centered on food, can promote higher order thinking.

There is a fun way to create concepts in math for young children. A lively conversation and demonstration about food can create points of interest in math concepts. The demonstration becomes a form of play and increases the understanding in math and logical reasoning. These become not only fun but also fosters risk-taking strategies.

Food

With young children, turn dinner prepping and after school snacking into a math lesson. Parents can enhance children's natural interest in math and the uses of their physical and social worlds by integrating mathematics with daily activities. For example, create a homemade pizza for dinner and have the child become the master chef. Once the pizza is topped and is fresh from the oven, ask your child how much they would like for dinner. Prompt the child with asking, "Would you like one whole pizza?" Push the pizza pan to the child, the child will giggle and say, "No that is too much". Next, cut the pizza in half and ask "Would you like one-half of the pizza?" the child will say, "No, that's too much." Continue cutting the pizza using the math language until the child using dialogue is able to communicate how much of the pizza they would like for dinner. Have the child tell you how many people will be eating pizza. Then cut the pizza into the number of slices are needed. Parents can use their imagination on the lesson as long as they call it by its fractional parts - whole, half, quarter, and eight. (Demonstrate that two eights would equal a fourth)

The fun can continue in the kitchen with snack time. For example, while prepping snacks take three bananas. Ask your child would they like one whole banana, one-half of a banana, or one-third of a banana for a snack. After your child makes their decision, show the child through hands-on interaction the three options. First, hand the child a whole banana and say "One whole banana". Next, take another banana and cut it in half. Give the child one slice and say "One-half of a banana". Finally, take the last banana and cut it into three equal parts. Give the child one slice and say "One-third of a banana". After hearing the math language and then visually interpreting the question, children can make a logical decision that one whole banana is larger than one-third of a banana.

Games

Promoting board games with elementary children, parents can promote strategic games at a young age in which children begin



to create visual discriminations. Sorting Lego's by color, size, and shape enables the child to choose their building by design rather than helter-skelter. **Visual discrimination** can turn playing games into a strategy of choice. Next, play basic board games such as Chutes and Ladders, Connect Four, or simple card games such as war. Basic games will show the child how to follow sequence and look for the next step in problem solving. Progress game night into introducing chess. Chess, improves children's problem solving and thinking skills, essentially giving the brain a "workout". Strategic

games, such as chess, can improve a child's visual memory, spatial-reasoning, and how to plan ahead by making logical decisions.

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