

Benefits of Early Childhood Education

By Cassie Rice

THE ECONOMIC TIMES we are in are tough, but it is not time to cut back on the education and early learning of our children. Children are our future and our society depends on their development. Without early education we are not giving our kids the head start they need. The early years are learning years. The foundation of a child's intellect and personality is formed by age 5. Children with high-quality learning experiences and nurturing care develop competence that helps them succeed in school, including better social skills and a solid foundation for language. Early movement classes help develop coordination, body awareness, better balance, increased strength and an overall confidence that we all seek for our children.

We all want to give our kids self-confidence, but that sometimes involves taking

risks. It takes a self confident child to volunteer to go first at bat, to try a new activity, or to slide down the fire pole on the playground and although we don't want our children to get hurt, we need to encourage taking that risk in order to develop that confidence. Sometimes parents are very well-meaning but they undermine this confidence by predicting doom before the effort is made. If your pre-schooler is running into the living room with a glass of water, what do we do first? Tell them to stop, "you're going to spill". Instead we should tell them it's a good idea to walk when carrying a glass of water. When they try walking on a high wall, instead of telling them they are "going to get hurt", educate them on the safe way to do this activity. For example, make a rule that they can walk along any wall that is lower than their bottom (or whatever is

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safe for your child), but if it's higher, they need an adult with them to help them in case they lose their balance.

The benefits to starting early in movement or other early education are numerous including:

- Younger kids are more accepting in trying new activities
- Fears of new experiences are typically reduced for younger children
- Younger bodies and brains are more malleable and this early development helps form brains and bodies that are more coordinated and quicker at learning
- Social development is improved for kids who are in classes at a young age
- Gross and fine motor learning skills are improved which aids reading readiness
- Starting kids in movement classes at a young age helps them continue an active lifestyle later in life

It's up to us parents to give our children experiences at an early age that will help them develop skills which will enable them to have a head start in life. Consider enrolling your child in something to aid in this development. Although early education is best, it's never too late to improve your child's development.

Cassie Rice has been working with children and their parents for more than decade. She has received numerous awards and accolades; most recently US Gymnastics named Cassie the 2009 Regional Coach of the Year.