



Kiddie Whisperer

FORMER FASHION INDUSTRY executive-turned-toddler expert Karen McLaughlin loves to tackle the tough developmental years—ages two to six—and she's good at it. Her four-year program, Little Learning, divided into three age groups with four or five children per class, has students reading and writing proficiently by the end of their kindergarten year. "If a child has difficulty reading in the early stages, they're going to have difficulty learning any subject," explains McLaughlin, adding, "At the end of the second grade, a child goes from learning to read to reading to learn, and that's a very critical stage."

In her once-a-week hour-long class, she gently introduces kids to a structured learning environment and hones their motor, concentration and focus skills. "At the age of two, kids are independent already and they're also sponges, so it's important to present age-appropriate tasks they can accomplish in a small-group setting," she explains.

By age three to four, kids start to understand letters and their vocabulary explodes as their self-esteem develops. Little Learning immerses them in the world of letters and ensures that their language and self-esteem development are on track. "I feel good when a mom says, 'My child is associating learning with fun,'" McLaughlin says.

The Little Learning Reading List is popular citywide and any parent can call up Bank Street Books (*Broadway and 112th Street, 212-678-1654*) to order the books. "I feel that it's our job as adults to be ambassadors of classic literature for the children in our lives," she says. "There's so much to be learned from the simple reading of a book." Visit littlelearning.com.

—CRISTINA GREEVEN CUOMO

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