

Continent of Learning

This activity helps you see your child's learning differently—to let go of the worry that your student is somehow not getting the *right* education. It also helps you capitalize on making connections between what your child is doing easily and happily, and how that interest relates to traditional school subjects—the ones needed for academic advancement.

Directions

Make a list of traditional school subjects. (A starter list is below.) Break it apart even further by categorizing the types of math (geometry, long division, accounting) or the eras of history (ancient, medieval, American, Far East) or the aspects of writing (grammar, spelling, formats, revision).

- Reading
- Writing
- Math
- History
- Science
- Philosophy
- Religion
- Foreign language
- Art
- Music
- Social science
- Physical education

List your child's current passions. For instance, like these:

- Piano
- Minecraft
- Disney Channel
- Fan fiction
- *Phineas and Ferb* (cartoon)
- Lemony Snicket (the novel series)
- Soccer
- Greek myths
- Board games
- Airplanes
- Zoo animals

If you believe your child doesn't have any interests, check yourself. You may be judging the interests as unworthy. Observe your child for a day. Even if the interest seems insignificant to you (watching the Disney Channel), put it on the list.

Next, tie the child's passion to subject areas as specifically as you can.

Follow These Steps

1.
Look at the primary subject and examine it for all its properties—vocabulary about the subject (reading, spelling, grammar), its history (origin, location, reason), its relationship to history (geopolitical context, religion, conflict or war), notable persons related to the subject (creator, inventor, participant, monarch, military personnel, practitioners, scholars), controversy (conflict), its role in society or religion or politics, and so on. Books and poems, artwork and plays, movies and television series—include them all.
2.
Match these properties to traditional school subjects (using your list).
3.
Now draw a bubble in the middle of a sheet of paper; write the child's interest inside the shape.
4.
Adjacent to the bubble, draw additional shapes.
5.
Enter one of the school subject names and bullet list how it relates to the child's key interest.
6.
Add additional "country shapes" in your Continent of Learning. Make an outer ring with more connections (see illustration).

Watch a Continent of Learning emerge! Save this drawing. We'll refer to it again throughout the book.

Example

Child's Central Interest: Piano

- Music: composition, theory, performance, musical styles and pieces
- History: classical composers and jazz musicians, the history of the piano
- Religion: compositions for religious services (hymns), relationship to the organ
- Science: physics of the keys and pedals; vibration and sound; writing music while deaf (Beethoven)
- Foreign language: Latin for musical language like "tempo" and "adagio"
- Sociology: various uses in society (church, bars, royal court)
- Math: scales, keys, transposing, composing, arranging, time signature, musical notation, rhythm
- Literature: *The Cat Who Loves Mozart* (Patricia Austin), *The Piano* (William Miller), musical literature (the pieces themselves)
- Film/theater: *The Piano*, *Amadeus*

See illustration: the piano is at the center and borders other subjects adjacent to it and to each other.

