Rosetta & Carter: 
School Readiness is a Family Affair

Having parents engaged in a SPARK lesson makes all the difference in the world.

As Rosetta took the book from their SPARK Parent Partner Missy, she turned to her son Carter and said “the name of this book is Bunny Cakes. Who do you think makes the cake in this book?”

“Bunny rabbits,” he replied.

Rosetta paused after reading each page and asked Carter a question. Sometimes his eyes strayed to the other items on the table, but Rosetta always brought him back to the book by asking a question or having him point to an item on the page. Together, they read and talked about how the bunny made a cake for her grandma.

For each activity Missy brought, mom and son engaged together. The Bunny Cakes lesson uses the cakes in the book to teach counting, sorting, shapes, and colors. Carter named the shapes of various cakes, and then Missy asked him which cake was his favorite. He said, “The Spiderman cake, and I know my mom would like the heart-shaped cake.” Rosetta agreed.

Missy asked Carter to come up with ingredients for a cake he would like to make. He decided his cake would require one dozen eggs, five cups of sugar, a hundred teaspoons of jelly, one bag of chips, seven sticks of butter, two cups of flour, and seven cups of honey.

Mom and son then used measuring cups and spoons to place the imaginary items in a bowl, counting as each ingredient was added. With some help from mom on 60, 70, 80, and 90, Carter happily counted to 100. Rosetta had him mix the imaginary ingredients by telling him to “use those muscles you always show me to stir.”

When Missy asked Carter to draw a cake in his Journal, he said, “Mom, you draw a cake too.” And she did.

Rosetta’s a single mom with three young children. She appreciates that the SPARK lessons give her uninterrupted time to be just with Carter. They’re working together to be ready for kindergarten.

CARTER’S CAKE

Ingredients
- One dozen eggs
- Five cups of sugar
- A hundred teaspoons of jelly
- One bag of chips
- Seven sticks of butter
- Two cups of flour
- Seven cups of honey

Instructions
Mix ingredients together, using the muscles you always show your mom. Bake.

YOUR SUPPORT helps SPARK families like Carter’s as they work to be ready and eager to start kindergarten.

For more information or to give securely online, visit ecresourcecenter.org
Carter and his mom Rosetta are in SPARK's pilot program for boys living in southeast Canton. Families in the pilot program have SPARK visits twice a month (or more often), instead of the typical once-monthly lesson.

The pilot program was established when the SPARK team noticed that the test scores of African-American boys were lagging behind the scores of other groups. The team looked to research for an explanation and decided to see whether tweaking program delivery would improve the scores.

Typical SPARK lessons last for one hour. During that hour, the parent, child, and parent partner sit quietly at a table to go through a SPARK lesson.

However, research indicates that young boys, who are more active, learn better when activity is woven into learning sessions. So for this pilot program, the one-hour SPARK lessons are broken up into two visits that incorporate activity breaks into the lessons.

Although the activity breaks also incorporate learning, they're met with much enthusiasm. For Carter's brain break, he was given a small car and asked to drive it along a numbered road to reach a stated number. Carter was eager to drive and said “zoom zoom!” as he moved his car. He was quite particular about the car, always turning it to face front as he moved it up and down the numbered road.

While results are not yet in on the effectiveness of the pilot program, the SPARK team believes that incorporating activity breaks into the learning can only help with school readiness.