

A Parent's Guide to a Successful Kindergarten Transition

Today's Kindergarten

Current kindergarten classrooms hardly resemble those of your childhood memories. Today's kindergarten classrooms have high expectations for children's academic achievement, social skills and independence. Parents should also have high expectations.

Good kindergarten programs:

- Support and encourage all children, regardless of prior preschool experience, culture, language, ability, or disability.
- Use teaching practices that are challenging, but appropriate, for kindergarten-aged children
- Encourage children's enthusiasm about learning
- Provide a balanced curriculum with activities in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, art, and physical education
- Invite parents to participate in their child's education

What can I do to prepare?

Having a child entering kindergarten can be a time of excitement and stress for parents. Planning ahead will make this time less stressful for you and your child. To get ready you should:

- Decide which kindergarten program your child will attend
- Request an enrollment packet from the school – notice important dates and deadlines
- Schedule an appointment with your child's pediatrician to make sure that his/her immunizations and health screenings are up-to-date
- Give your child's current preschool program permission to share documents and information with the new school
- Attend an open house or schedule a tour of your child's new school before classes start
- Meet your child's new teacher and share your ideas about your child's interests, strengths and any areas of concern
- Find out how you can become involved in your child's classroom, school committees and the PTA

What can I do to prepare my child?

Kindergarten will be a time of many changes for your child. He/she will have to adjust to new teachers, new children, new schedules and routines. Having a successful entry into kindergarten will help have a positive attitude about school learning. To get your child ready you can:

- Read books about starting kindergarten

- Talk enthusiastically with your child about starting kindergarten
- Reassure your child’s feelings or anxiety or fear
- Plan for your child to visit his or her new school
- Tell your child about the kinds of work he or she will be doing in kindergarten
- Talk about and practice new routines
- Spend extra time on the first day of school, but do not “drag on” saying goodbye

What should I know about transitioning a preschooler with special needs?

If your child has special needs, you may have additional decisions to make about the length of your child’s school day, school site, or programs. It is important to begin working with the school team as early as possible so that everyone, especially your child, feels comfortable with all the changes that will occur. For incoming kindergarteners with special needs, the federal education law Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows school officials to develop either an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). However, no matter which plan your child has, it should be appropriate for a kindergarten-aged child rather than a preschooler.

Resources/Books

- Mrs. Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten. Joseph Slate, Ashley Wolff.
- The Night Before Kindergarten. Natasha Wing, Julie Durrell.
- Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come! Nancy Carlson.
- What Do We Say? What Do We Do? Vital Solutions for Children’s Educational Success and Creating Positive Home School Connections. Dorothy Rich.

Online Resources

- “The Top Signs of a Good Kindergartener” www.naeyc.org
- “Tools You Can Use”

Organizations

- National Education Association
- National PTA