

IS MY CHILD READY FOR KINDERGARTEN?

KNOW YOUR CHILD

Each child is unique and will progress at his or her own pace. Your child may be moving somewhat slower or faster than the average. Expecting more of a child than she/he is developmentally ready to handle can create frustration in the child and parent as well.

Child development occurs in a very orderly, highly predictable sequence. However, the *timetable* may vary. Consequently, school entrance based on a child's "birth-age" is the least effective indicator of school readiness. "Birth-age" measures the child's age in years, "developmental age" measures behavioral maturity.

WHAT DOES THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER EXPECT?

Twenty years ago the kindergarten format centered on preparing the child for his "formal education" which began when he/she entered first grade. Over the past decade, kindergartens have become increasingly academic in nature. In addition to teaching letter names and sounds, instruction includes vowel sounds, blending sounds into words, sight words, journal writing and phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear sounds that make up words and to rearrange sounds to create new words.

For optimum learning to occur, most kindergarten teachers expect the child *entering* school to be able to:

Self Help Skills

- Child uses appropriate bathroom skills (flush toilet, wash hands)
- Child can dress self (snaps, buttons, zippers, attempts tying shoes)
- Child is learning to take responsibility for own belongings (coat, school bag, lunch)

Language and Listening

- Child can verbalize his/her first and last name and age.
- Child can complete a two-step simple direction.
- Child can share an idea, experience or description.
- Child has heard a variety of stories and has participated in follow-up discussions.
- Child practices accepted patterns of speech (irregular verbs are still emerging.)
- Child can engage in a socially appropriate conversation.
- Child can participate in informal dramatics (playhouse, puppets, role-playing etc.)

Large Muscle Skills

- Child has had experience with log rolls, jumping, standing on one foot, galloping, skipping, hopping and swinging.
- Child has had experience throwing and catching balls.
- Child has had experience in block building.
- Child has had experience in painting at an easel.
- Child can identify body parts (back, stomach, head, legs, etc.)

Small Muscle Skills

Child has been encouraged and tries to grip crayon correctly.

Child has had frequent experience cutting with scissors and holding scissors correctly with scissor thumb oriented up.

Child has had experience playing with clay.

Child has had experience playing with puzzles.

Child has had many experiences coloring, drawing, pasting, etc.

Writing and Spelling

Child recognizes his/her first name.

Child tries to write his/her first name.

Child can copy, draw, and reasonably trace a line and a circle.

Social Skills

Child can usually inhibit body movements and keeps hands to himself/herself while in line and during circle time.

Child is learning to respect other students.

Child participates in clean-up activities.

Child is able to work in small groups.

Child verbalizes or tries to verbalize his/her frustrations and problems rather than physically acting out.

Child attempts to complete a teacher assigned task.

Child chooses a free choice activity and maintains his/her involvement in the activity 10-15 minutes.

Child can take turns.

Child can listen attentively to a story (15 min.)

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

READ, READ, READ!

Probably the most important thing you can do for your child is to read to him or her. Reading to the child not only stimulates the child's desire to learn to read, but also improves language skills. Toddlers love to snuggle next to a grown-up, listen to a story and enjoy the undivided attention. The same is true for preschoolers; it is never too late to start reading to your child. Become familiar with your library and visit it often.

Make Motor Skill Activities Available

Supply materials and the opportunity for cutting, tracing, coloring, clay activities, etc.

Use balls for catching, kicking, bouncing.

Help with bicycle and scooter skills. Don't forget skipping!

Use ropes for hopping, jumping.

Consult With Your Preschool Teacher

Don't insist on placement in kindergarten just because your child is five. Don't hold him/her back to give him an "extra advantage" if he/she is ready. The preschool teacher and principal want what is best for your child. Listen to their advice.

Listen To Your Heart....

Parents know their children the best. Are you uneasy about your child's readiness? Is your child reluctant to leave you? Is she/he easily distracted? Are small or large motor skills undeveloped?