

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARENTS WHO WANT TO HELP THEIR CHILD BE PREPARED FOR KINDERGARTEN

As parents and teachers, we want to make each child's year in kindergarten a valuable and positive experience. Parents can help their children by doing some preparation before they start kindergarten.

Before children come to school, it would be helpful if they:

1. Know their full name and are familiar with their address and telephone number.
2. Can fasten their own coat, shoes, and boots. Tying shoes, however, is a skill which is often learned during the kindergarten year.
3. Know the best and safest route to and from school.
4. Know how to use the toilet unassisted.

These four suggestions will provide for children's safety and allow them to be reasonably independent in caring for their own needs at school. However, there are a number of other ways that parents can help insure their child's success in school. They are generally more comprehensive and time-consuming, but are well worth the effort.

5. Talk with your child and listen to him/her.
6. In your conversations with your child, discuss things which will require the child to think, and ask questions that require more than one-word answers. Ask the child for their opinion and listen to response. For example: instead of asking your child whether the traffic light is telling you to go ahead or stop the car at a traffic intersection, you might ask, "Why do you think there are traffic lights at some intersections and stop signs at other intersection?"
7. Read to your child regularly.
8. Let your child see you reading books, magazines, or newspapers.
9. Make regular visits to the library together.

Learning to read is a gradual process that starts long before a child enters school. Language is the basis of reading, and children need an endless amount of experience with both spoken language and written language (print).

10. Make arrangements for your child to play with other children approximately the same age.
11. Encourage imagination play by providing children with interesting props (dress-up clothes, cardboard boxes, etc.) and enough time to allow them to become deeply involved.

Making friends and getting along with others is important to all of us, adults as well as children. The skills required to do this are learned; they don't simply happen with the passage of time. In the beginning, one playmate at a time may be all your child can cope with. Parents will be called upon to settle disputes, but try to encourage the children to think about ways they can satisfactorily settle their own problems.

12. Encourage children to be creative by providing materials for them to work with and time for them to complete their projects. Designate a specific place such as a drawer or low cupboard to stockpile such materials as pieces of fabric, pieces of cardboard, used wrapping paper, glue, scissors, tape, cardboard tubes from paper towels, buttons, etc.
13. Provide lots of opportunity for children to participate in physical activities, such as climbing, running, jumping, skipping, swimming, etc.

It is important for children to have a concept of their own bodies, of themselves in space, and what they can direct their body to do. Good coordination, balance, and body image may enhance a child's academic learning.

14. Provide situations where your child can make choices appropriate to his/her age level. It might be appropriate for a three-year-old to choose between two articles of clothing whereas a five-year-old might be allowed to choose something to wear from their entire selection of clothing.

Making choices is an important part of learning. This skill will be further developed in school, but it should be emphasized in the home as well. Allowing children to make choices helps boost their self-confidence and make them feel their ideas are important.

15. With your child, select at least one task for which the child can easily assume responsibility; i.e. making the bed, putting the napkins or silverware on the table, bringing in the morning or evening paper, getting the mail or feeding a pet. Be careful not to select such a cumbersome task that s/he doesn't get done or that a parent is constantly nagging the child about the job.
16. Help your child select several television programs that may be favorites but do not allow him to watch television endlessly. Television certainly has its place in a child's life. But it should be viewed selectively for education and/or entertainment.