The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

MOVING ON TO KINDERGARTEN

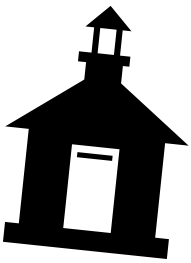
Change is both an opportunity and a challenge.

From your child's point of view, going to kindergarten is a very big deal. It's like starting a new job. Your child has gotten that long-awaited promotion, but that means going to a new building, with a new boss, with new co-workers, with a new transportation plan, with harder work, and with higher expectations.

This job comes with new job descriptions for both you and your child – and they are very different than the ones you and your parents had when you went into kindergarten.

Information you need

- Check with your school district to find out the specific cut-off date for eligibility for kindergarten. Generally a child must be 5-years-old to start kindergarten.
- Locate your child's elementary school – call your school district if you need help.



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- Ask if your school will host an orientation or open house for new kindergarten students and their parents in the spring and again before school starts.
- Ask at your local school if there is a resource booklet that describes what skills kindergarteners are expected to have.
- Find out about enrollment requirements. At a minimum, you will need a registration form, birth certificate, proof of residency and a record of a recent physical exam with proof of immunizations.
- Register your child at the school in the spring or early summer. This helps the school hire the right number of teachers **before** school starts.
- If the language you speak at home is not English, the school may require your child to take a test to show how well he or she speaks English.
- Find out what hours your child will be in school. Some kindergarten classes meet for the

full school day. Others meet for only part of the school day.

- Ask about transportation arrangements, especially if your child will attend a part-day kindergarten.
- Ask for the school calendar so you will know when school holidays are planned. Most schools are open about 180 days a year. Your child care program is probably open at least 250 days a year.
- **Begin NOW to make your plans for before and after-school care and care during school holidays. Child care for school-age children can be hard to find.**

Planning a Successful Transition

There are times before starting kindergarten when your child will feel alone and uncertain. Your child needs you and the other caring adults in his or her life to help make the transition as smooth and successful as possible.

- Continue to attend parent-teacher conferences. Talk regularly with your child care provider so you understand your child's strengths and weaknesses in a group early learning setting.
- Find out how your child care provider handles transition to kindergarten.
  - Will your child care provider take the children on a field trip to see a kindergarten classroom in the elementary school your child will attend?
  - What books is your child care provider reading to the children? What other activities are planned for children moving to kindergarten?
  - Does your child care provider meet with kindergarten teachers?

  - Are there "alumni parents" from your child care program who can talk with you?
  - Does your child care provider follow-up with children after they have entered kindergarten?
- Find out what information your provider shares with the elementary school.
- With your child care provider, write an "Introduction to My Child" for the kindergarten teacher that describes how your child can be successful in kindergarten. Discuss your child's strengths and where your child will need help. Describe what makes your child special/unique.

Plan What Will Work for Your Child

As you plan this big move for your child, think about how your child has handled other transitions. Use this information to make this next move an easier one. Does your child welcome change or does

your child need time to observe? Will your child talk with you about worries or will you need to create a special time? Does your child work best with a partner or does your child prefer to work alone? Will your child need to get into the new routine weeks before school starts or will your child "jump in"? Will you child need more sleep? Planning ahead will make this a successful promotion!

Is Your Child Ready?

When schools talk about children being *ready,* they're talking about whether children have specific skills and information that will help them succeed in school. The following are skills that kindergarten teachers look for in new

Skills Expected of Average 5-year-olds

Social and Emotional

- Expresses thoughts and feelings
- Makes choices
- Takes turns and shares with others
- Uses self-help skills (dressing, toileting, eating)
- Uses self-control
- Tries new things and finishes new tasks
- Stays with an activity for 15 minutes or more
- Follows simple directions

Physical

- Hops, jumps, gallops, runs, leaps, climbs, balances, pedals
- Throws and catches a ball
- Alternates feet when walking up steps
- Buttons and zips
- Assembles puzzles
- Uses crayons, markers, pencils, scissors

Oral Language, Reading, Writing

- Knows full name, address, phone number, parents' names
- Shares thoughts and opinions and answers simple questions
- Listens to stories read each day
- Retells and discusses a familiar event or story
- Recites some nursery rhymes
- Participates in word play
- Identifies colors
- Pretends to "read" a book
- Identifies some letters in the alphabet
- Writes his or her first name
- Attempts writing by using scribbling, print-like marks, or strings of letters

Mathematics

- Identifies some shapes
- Notices similarities and differences
- Matches, sorts and classifies objects (e.g., socks, shoes, mittens, gloves)
- Uses math language (e.g., bigger, smaller, tallest, shortest, heavier, lighter)
- Plays counting games
- Counts to 10 and beyond

students. If your child does not yet have a skill or is behind in any one certain area, it doesn't mean that he or she is not ready to go to kindergarten. Discuss your child's development and progress with your child care provider and pediatrician to get a complete assessment of your child's abilities.

For more Information

- **Child Care Aware**, http://www.childcareaware.org/en/, includes practical resources for parents. The brochure, Making the Transition from Child Care to Kindergarten: Working Together for Kindergarten Success, offers guidance for a smooth transition.
- **PBS Parents, Child Development Tracker,** www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopment, is a tool for parents with age-by-age snapshots considered by child development experts to be "widely-held expectations" for what an average child might achieve within a given year. Use it to consider them in the context of your child's unique development and what kinds of activities you may want to try with your child in exploring their various intelligence types.
- **The Center for Parent Involvement**, University of South Florida http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/institute/pubs/pdf/cfs/fcpi/transition.htm, provides information for both parents and providers about school readiness and the transition to kindergarten.

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