

Ready For Kindergarten?

Children who do well in kindergarten are ones who can:

- 1. Make choices.** Children will be given many opportunities in school to make choices. They will choose what to play on the playground. They will choose activities and books in the classroom. Children who have been given autonomy at home in developing preferences and making meaningful choices from limited options are able to transfer this skill to the school setting, thereby exerting confidence in making wise choices within the classroom setting.
- 2. Make connections.** Classroom discussions and individual learning are enhanced by students who have the ability to relate events, topics and experiences that they have had outside the classroom to what they are learning about in school. Parents can support the development of making meaningful connections by participating in responsive conversations with their children about what they are doing, experiencing and reading. Parents may point out links, commonalities and contrasts in every day interactions and ask questions that solicit thinking that compares and contrasts information.
- 3. Self-advocate.** Children who are able to state their wants and needs in a clear and polite manner tend to transition more easily to school. Parents do their children a favor in the long term when they consistently model and expect good manners within the family and discourage whining and tantrums. "Yes please" and "No thank you" are phrases that serve children well as their worlds expand.
- 4. Take turns and handle disappointment.** In school, children will have to wait, and no one can always be first or have their own way. When children have had practice at home in learning the important life skill of patience, sportsmanship and understanding that life may not always seem fair, they will have increased success in their transition to school where they will be sharing space and attention with at least 20 other children.
- 5. Sustain attention.** Children are expected to pay attention and listen within the classroom setting. Children who are accustomed to listening to books being read from start to finish and participating in conversations about the book are well prepared for Kindergarten. Parents can support the development of this skill by incorporating reading aloud into their regular routine. Family meals also provide an excellent opportunity to practice sitting still and participating in conversations by taking turns and listening until all participants are finished and ready to move on to the next activity.
- 6. Work cooperatively.** Can he work together with others as part of a group? The ability to put his needs second, to compromise and join in a consensus with other children, is a part of emotional competence.
- 7. Independently dress themselves.** When children can dress and undress themselves into their shoes and jackets, they will have more time to play and participate in classroom activities. Time spent at home practicing putting on and taking off jackets, shoes, gloves and hats, as well as independently mastering toileting is well spent. Children should also be able to wash their own hands and to open and close lunch/snack bags and containers. Children who have mastered these skills have the advantage of not having to wait for help.
- 8. Basic knowledge of the alphabet and numbers.** Although these subjects will be covered as part of the kindergarten curriculum, it is beneficial to be able to recite the alphabet and count to 20.
- 9. Listen to instructions and then follow them.** Children need these skills to function in class, to keep up with the teacher and with their peers.
- 10. Fine motor skills.** Can he hold a pencil? Cut with scissors? He will need these fine motor skills to begin working on writing the alphabet and to keep up with classroom projects.
- 11. Social Skills.** Does he get along well with other kids? Does he share and know how to take turns? He'll be interacting with other children all day, so your child's social skills are particularly important for success in school.

In addition to the traits listed above, I would encourage parents to cultivate the habit of reading books aloud on a daily basis.