

# Kindergarten

## Connection

WORKING TOGETHER FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

Premiere Issue

CLARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS



### KIDBITS

#### Things will get better

If your child becomes shy or tearful, or starts sucking her thumb during the first weeks of kindergarten, don't be alarmed. Almost any reaction is normal. Reassure her that things will be better as she gets used to school and her teacher. If her anxiety continues, contact the teacher.

#### Dream team

Get to know your child's teacher as soon as possible. If you can't meet in person, introduce yourself with a note. When the two of you team up, your child is the winner!

#### Take a look

Now that your child has started kindergarten, here's a great habit to begin: Sit down with him each day to look at the items he brings home from school. *Benefit:* You'll see what your child is doing and your interest will encourage him.

#### Just for fun



"I thought you said we were going to use elbow grease. This looks like glass cleaner."

## The Adventure Begins!

### Off to kindergarten

Imagine that you're starting a new job tomorrow. You've never met your boss or your co-workers. You aren't even sure what your duties will be.

Wouldn't you be a bit nervous — as well as excited? That's probably how your child feels about starting kindergarten.

How can you help him get off to a great start? Here's what several kindergarten teachers have to say:

#### Simple clothing is best

"Send your child to school in comfortable clothing. One-piece outfits with buttons or buckles are hard to handle in the bathroom. Shoes with soft soles, such as tennis shoes, are safer on the playground than sandals and flip flops. Also, please label boots, hats, and mittens."

#### Practical book bags

"Get a book bag your child can open and close by himself. It should be big



enough to hold a large library book. Label the bag with your child's name, the teacher's name, and room number. And notice what he takes to school. For example, toys can be a real distraction."

#### Make lunches easy

"Can your child open his own lunch box, thermos, and food containers? If he has to wait for the teacher to help, he may not have much time to eat. If he's having trouble with hard-to-open containers, find some that are easier. If he can't open his thermos, get one with a spout."

Once your child learns to handle his own belongings, he will be better prepared to try new things in kindergarten! ♥



### ASK YOURSELF

- Do you know your school's policy on arrival and dismissal, late drop-off, early pick-up, lunch, medicine, and transportation?
- Does your child know her first and last name, her parents' or guardians' first and last names, the names of her teachers, her phone number, bus number, and where to go when she arrives at school?
- Does the school know how to reach you in an emergency? If not, give your home and work numbers as well as the number of someone to call when you can't be reached. ♥





## ACTIVITY CORNER

### Bath math

You can help your kindergarten child learn math while he splashes around in the tub. How?

Fill the tub with water and add plastic containers of different sizes (no glass, please).

Old milk containers work well for quart, half-gallon, and gallon sizes. Toss in an 8-ounce measuring cup and a pint-size container as well.

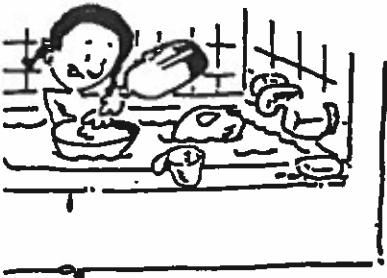
Now the fun begins. As your child splashes, ask questions such as:

Which holds more water—the cup or the pint?

How many cups of water will it take to fill the quart? The half-gallon?

How many quarts of water does it take to fill the gallon?

Not only will your child have fun and clean fun—he will also learn a little deal about sizes and measures. ♥

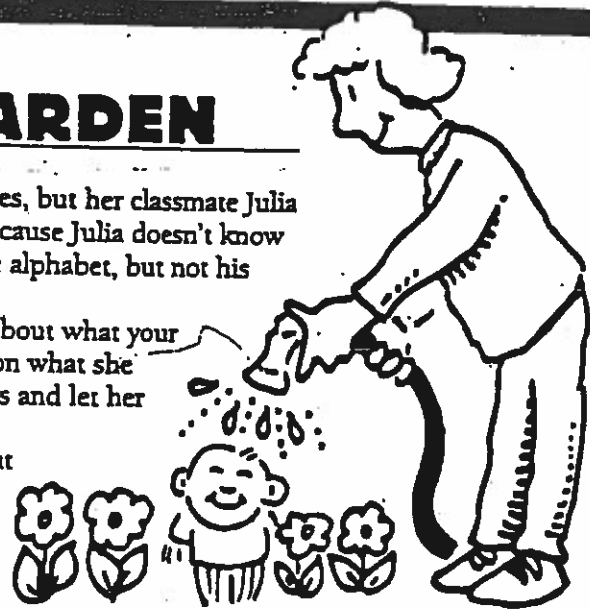


## Kinder-GARDEN

Your child can't tie her shoes, but her classmate Julia can. Julia's mother worries because Julia doesn't know the alphabet. Keith knows the alphabet, but not his colors.

It's time to stop worrying about what your child can't do. Instead, focus on what she can do. Find her special talents and let her know you think she's great!

Like plants, children grow at different rates. Some bloom early and others bloom late. Remember, there are no weeds in kindergarten. ♥



## Read all about it!

When you read to your children, they get the message: "Reading is important!" If you have time, read a children's book aloud. But if time is short, read whatever is handy.

Examples: While cooking and using a recipe, read some of the directions. If your children want to know what's on television, read from the TV guide. At the grocery store, try reading labels. In the car, you can read billboards and road signs.

When you "read all about it," your children will, too. ♥

## PARENT TO PARENT

### The First Day

I didn't know who was going to cry on my daughter's first day of kindergarten—her or me.

We had planned and prepared. We visited the classroom and met the teacher in advance. Then we practiced walking to the bus stop. At home, I labeled my daughter's backpack with her name, address, and phone number. We even practiced tying her gym shoes and zipping her jacket. We were ready!

She gratefully gripped my hand as we walked to room 101.

"Can you come in with me, Mommy?" she asked, not letting go of my hand. My heart sank—I knew she was about to cry. Before I could answer, one of her classmates called out from the classroom. "Hey Kate! We've got the same teacher!"



## Q&A

**Q.** How can I help my son be more responsible and confident now that he's started kindergarten?

**A.** One good way is to let him help out around the house. For example, your kitchen is full of opportunities for little hands to do real work.

Give him a small broom and dustpan for sweeping—especially under the table, after eating.

At mealtime, he can unload silverware from the dishwasher or drain, and place it in a drawer.

After grocery shopping, ask him to help you empty grocery bags and put items away.

He can also assist with meal preparation by mixing, kneading dough, washing and tearing lettuce for a salad, and setting the table. ♥



## OUR PURPOSE

To provide kindergarten parents with practical ways to promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.



# REPORT TO PARENTS

## Preparing for Kindergarten

**T**he move from preschool to "real" school is exciting (and often tearful) for both children and parents. There's a lot you can do to make the transition to kindergarten enjoyable.

**Making Friends with the School.** Point out the school as you drive or walk past, and say, "That's your school." Attend kindergarten orientation together, taking the opportunity to tour the school and meet the principal and teachers. Take your child to play on the school's playground after school, on weekends, and during the summer.

**Learning Social Skills.** *Sharing* is a regular part of the day in kindergarten. Help your child learn to take turns by sharing toys, crayons, and games with friends and family members. *Waiting* is tough for preschoolers, but you can help them get used to it by saying things like, "We'll go to the park after lunch." Teach your child to *communicate* with words, not actions, when upset. Emphasize that screaming, crying, hitting, kicking, and other "temper tantrum" behavior is not acceptable.

**Listening Is Important.** Looking at the person who's talking to you is more than good manners when it's the teacher who's doing the talking. Work with your child on paying attention and following simple directions: "Please put your pillow on your bed, and then put your shoes in your closet."

**Loosening the Apron Strings.** If your child isn't already attending preschool or day care, look for ways for them to spend some time apart from you. Trade off with a friend, or sign your child up in a community or church program for preschoolers.

**Who Am I?** Kindergartners should know not only their full names, but the first and last names of their parents and caregivers. Memorizing your phone

number and address may be a little easier for a preschooler if you set them to a familiar tune, like "Mary Had a Little Lamb."

**All by Myself.** Your child should know how to zip, snap, tie, button, and fasten Velcro. Be sure that your little one can also take care of his or her bathroom needs well before the first day of school.

**Begin with Basics.** Go beyond teaching your child the "ABC" song by working on letter recognition, especially letters that spell out his or her

name. It's also helpful if your child can recognize isolated letters and those not in alphabetical sequence. Talk about the colors and shapes around you—the round clock, the red umbrella. Make simple counting a part of your preschooler's day by

counting aloud as you put each piece of silverware in the drawer, climb stairs, or bring in bags of groceries.

Help your little one learn important concepts by "acting out" the differences between up and down, in and out, high and low, over and under, small and tall.

**Ensure a Healthy Start.**

Make sure your child's immunizations are up to date. A complete physical before the start of school, including vision and hearing tests, is also a good idea. Start your preschooler on a school day regimen of bedtime and wake-up time several weeks before school starts. At this age, a child should have ten hours of sleep.



Most importantly, understand that your child is unique and will learn at his or her own pace. So don't become frustrated if your child fails to master simple skills right away. The best thing you can do to prepare your preschooler for kindergarten is to invest as much time as possible helping him or her learn new skills. The long-term results will be worth your efforts. ☺



# REPORT TO PARENTS

## Holding Children Back

**W**hen, if ever, should a child repeat a year of school? It's an issue that educators and parents have been grappling with for decades. More than two million children are "held back" every year in the United States, but that doesn't necessarily mean that retention is the right decision for all, or even most, of them. Children who repeat a grade in school face serious and long-term social, emotional, and intellectual hardships, and some drop out before graduating.

There are important things you can do if your child is having trouble in school, and you fear that he/she may be asked to repeat a grade:

### AT SCHOOL:

- Make an appointment to talk to your child's teacher, either in person or on the phone.

Find out exactly where the problems are: Reading? Writing? Math? Does your child make lots of careless errors, or have problems following directions?

- Meet with the school counselor to see if your child can be tested to find out his/her learning style. Some children have an easier time learning from printed material, others learn best with verbal instruction, and still others need hands-on help.

- Ask for suggestions of things you can do with your child at home that will help. Have the teacher be very specific: What kind of flash cards should you use? What types of books should you read together, and how often?

- Check to see if there are tests available at school that could identify a learning problem, such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder.

- Find out about any special programs that your school, district, or community offers for children who are having trouble in school, like summer school programs, tutoring, or one-on-one workshops.

- Talk to the principal about your concerns for your child, and ask to be kept informed of his or her progress.

- Let the principal and teacher know that you want to work with them as a team to help your child succeed, and that you consider repeating a grade only a last resort.

### AT HOME:

- See that your child goes to school regularly and on time.

- Make sure you provide lots of support for your child, and look for as many ways as possible to help him/her understand the school work.

- Have your child's eyesight and hearing checked.

- Help your children prepare to learn by giving them nutritious food, getting them proper medical care, and making sure they get plenty of sleep every night.

- Let your child know that education is important, and that you will do everything you can to help. Be positive. Never think of your child as a failure.

Finally, there are cases when repeating a grade may be the right answer. Almost always, it's when a child is young, small, immature, or has missed a lot of school due to illness. But be sure the school tells you exactly what and how it plans to help your child catch up. Simply repeating the same lessons in the same way is *not* the right answer. ▲



## Beginning Kindergarten - A Bittersweet Milestone

I enthusiastically prepared my children for kindergarten with assurances of how they were "going to love it!" Then, when my oldest child bounded out of the car and up the schoolhouse steps with barely a backward glance that first day, I just sat there and bawled. I would have been terribly embarrassed to be caught bawling like a baby in public if I had been anywhere else, but looking around I saw only sympathetic smiles and teary-eyes among the other parents dropping off their children for the first day of kindergarten. The beginning of school is also the ending of babyhood and transitions such as this must be grieved as well as rejoiced.

When my second child started kindergarten, I went straight home and called some friends to go to lunch with me. I only had to say, "Bonnie started Kindergarten today". They knew immediately that I needed the comfort of good friends. If you are facing this transition in the life of your family this month, don't do it alone. Enlist the support, advice, and listening ears of your family and friends. Relish the joy of your child's accomplishment of the transition to school, but don't cut yourself off from the feeling of loss. Life's experiences are so much richer when we embrace all our emotions.

This transition for the child begins with the first visit for kindergarten registration in the Spring. Another visit to the school will usually be held prior to the first day to "meet the teacher." It's nice if both parents can go to these orientation visits. Walk around the school together. Peek in the rooms, speak to the secretary, the custodian, the principal and teachers. Visit the playground, the lunchroom, the office, the bathroom, and of course, the classroom so that your child will begin to feel comfortable with her surroundings. Then, it will all seem familiar to her on that whirlwind first day.

A fun ritual at our house is the buying of school supplies each August. Though your kindergarten child will not likely need many school supplies, he will surely enjoy buying a new backpack, colors, scissors, and glue. Make school shopping a special outing just for him. In addition to the school-recommended supplies let him pick out a colorful folder to keep at home for his special papers.

Your young child will probably be very tired when he comes home from kindergarten for at least the first month. If he goes to daycare after school, make sure that they are sensitive to this. If he comes home after kindergarten each day don't be surprised to find him asleep within minutes. Let him get plenty of rest during this time. You will also want to reduce any potential stressors for him during these early stages of the transition to daily school. You may notice that he is extra-irritable with younger siblings or that he cries easily over minor things. Chalk this up to stress but keep an eye on him for signs of overstress.

### If There Is a Problem. . .

Address it immediately. If your child is crying because she doesn't want to go to school, you need to deal with it quickly. Is it separation anxiety? Perhaps she feels lost or unsure about something at school and is afraid to ask the teacher. If your child is very sensitive she will absolutely need a compassionate teacher and small class size. Schedule an appointment with the teacher first. Working together, you and your child's teacher can probably work it out. If the problem continues, ask to meet with the school counselor. Is she also struggling with the tasks she is expected to complete in school? You will want to consider getting a complete evaluation from a Child Study Center, local Mental Health Center, or the school. Don't panic. Children have different temperaments and the range of normal development is very wide at this age.

If your child is having the opposite problem with school adjustment - fighting, overactivity, difficulty following rules or paying attention - you will probably hear from the teacher a lot sooner. If you get a note from the teacher, follow-up immediately. Call her that very day or the next. She will be a lot more willing to work with you if she sees that you are responsive and concerned. Consider if your child has exhibited this same type of behavior in preschool or daycare. It doesn't necessarily mean ADD but you would be wise to have your child evaluated sooner rather than later.

It's almost time for that first day of school, so get some film for your camera, load up the video recorder, and make it a special day that you will all remember.

# Preparing your preschooler for kindergarten

by Gayle Peterson, Ph.D. MSSW

Five is an age of wonder and change. For most five year olds, the concept of the future does not extend too far forward. A young child is focused on day-to-day experiences. Consider the following points for helping your preschooler make the an easy transition to kindergarten:

- **Establish excitement about the upcoming classroom experience** by taking a trip to the primary school your child will be attending. After graduation rituals, familiarize your preschooler with a concrete example of the kind of experience that lies ahead. Create a positive experience for your preschooler by introducing the playground and showing examples of what will be learned at school.  
  
Popular shows like Sesame Street or one of the many educational computer games for kindergartners can help to build your child's excitement and readiness for learning.
- **Make room for feelings!** Your child needs to be able to release tears and express "negative" feelings, too. "Easing" the transition does not mean ignoring necessary emotional pain that accompanies growth.
- **Rituals are invaluable to your child's adjustment**, whether it is a family move, a graduation or some other type of life transition. A graduation party marks the end of one chapter in life's journey. A farewell party with your preschooler's friends allows for celebration of this period, honoring the growth of the preschool experience, before moving on to the next level.
- **Prepare your preschooler for saying "good-bye" to current friendships**, but not too far in advance. While some children may "tune out" information before they are ready to hear it, others may become overly worried about their future if information is given too far ahead. One month can seem like an eternity to a child of this age. While leaving, refrain from elaborating on the details of this transition more than a couple of weeks before school starts.
- **Maintain some of your child's old friendships through the transition.** Consider the possibility of inviting old friends over for birthday parties or future play dates for a sense of continuity. Encourage sharing with friends about the different schools they will each attend in the fall. Talking about the new experiences they are about to embark upon eases the transition. The change can become a shared "rite of passage", rather than a lonely journey.

# ABC's Of Reading Aloud

**A** ALLOW time each day to spend reading with your child.

**B** BE a reading model! Let your child see you reading.

**C** CREATE an interest in reading by reading aloud books suitable to your child's age and interest.

**D** DO start out with short stories-- gradually build your child's attention span.

**E** ENRICH your child's learning experiences through books.

**F** FOCUS your child's attention on the book you are reading by showing and discussing the pictures.

**G** GLANCE through the book before you read it to your child so that you are familiar with it

**H** HAVE your child sit close to you when you are reading so that you are sharing the book.

**I** INCREASE your child's listening and speaking vocabularies by explaining unfamiliar words.

**J** JOIN your public library so that you have access to a variety of books.

**K** KEEP your child's books in view in easy-to-get-to places.

**L** LISTEN to your child tell stories from books, even if he/she can't read all the words in the book.

**M** MENTION the author and title of the book each time you read to your child.

**N** NURTURE your child's imagination by selecting different kinds of stories such as rhyming books, fairy tales, animal stories, mysteries, and adventures.

**O** OPEN the door to the world of reading. Read daily to your child.

**P** PASS ON the pleasure of reading by building memories your child can treasure.

**Q** QUOTE the characters in a story meaningfully by changing the tone of your voice.

**R** READ, read, read! STIMULATE interest before reading by sharing experiences.

**T** TALK about the books you have read together

**U** USE expression when reading aloud so that the story will come to life.

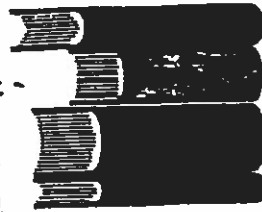
**V** VISIT a bookstore often and give books as presents.

**W** WHENEVER you can, create...

**X** EXCITEMENT about reading: it's great.

**Y** YOU can encourage reading with

**Z** ZEST!



Be excited and the books will do the rest!

-Author Unknown

Karen Bonieski/Artist

