

Parents = the Difference

a monthly parenting newsletter

With amazing fortitude and persistence, we continue to weather our 13th month of pandemic life! This year will forever be part of your child's educational blueprint. Parents continue to fret over kindergarten readiness, especially now that placements have been announced. The fact of the matter is no one knows exactly what kindergarten will look like next year, however there is every reason to believe school will be in-person. Children will walk into the classroom with a variety of readiness experiences and teachers are prepared to do what they always do—differentiate and meet every child where they are. This newsletter focuses on what you as a parent can do help your child prepare for their important transition into kindergarten.

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The Number One Skill Needed for Kindergarten Success

Ask a kindergarten teacher what they think children should know to be successful in their classroom. The answer might surprise you. Overwhelmingly, kindergarten teachers want children to walk in on Day 1 with skills of independence. The ratio between teacher and child in kindergarten tends to be 25:1. The child who is able to care for many of their own needs wastes less time and has the mindset of *"I am one who can."*

Here are some things you can do to foster responsibility and independence in your soon-to-be kindergartener:

Have them care for their personal belongings:

- Taking off and hanging up their own coat
- Unzipping and zipping their backpack
- Carrying their own backpack to and from school



Have them clean up after themselves:

- Cleaning up toys after playing with them
- Throwing their own trash in the trashcan
- Wiping their own mouths after eating
- Cleaning up their own plates and bowls from snack/lunch

Foster self help skills:

- Washing and drying hands thoroughly
- Wiping their own noses when runny

Using the bathroom:

- Wiping themselves after toileting

- Pulling up their own pants/underwear/skirts after using the bathroom.

Clothing:

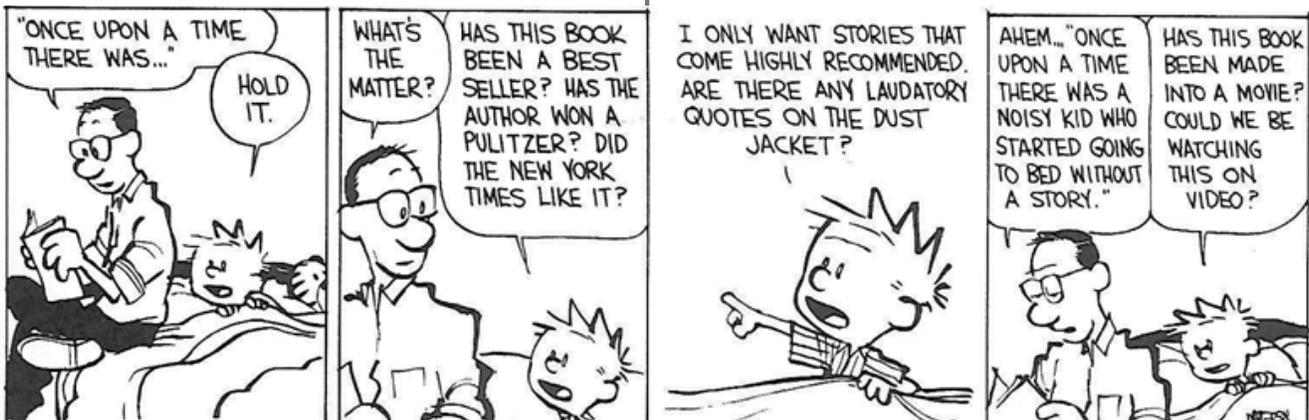
- Dressing themselves (with kid friendly fasteners)
- Wearing face masks properly

Chores:

- Assign household chores to match their capability (see below)
- Show your child how to perform the tasks to ensure success and promote self-confidence

Something to remember when fostering independence is to keep things simple to ensure success. Low hooks make hanging coats easier. Most children this age really love to prove themselves by helping out at home. Great chores for young children include clearing dinner dishes and putting them in the sink, sorting socks, setting the table, and helping to prepare meals. When children do things on their own, they develop belief in themselves and pride in their abilities.

Children have a natural drive for independence. They want to do things for themselves. Surely you have experienced meltdowns over, *"I want to do it myself!"* When you encourage your child to try something hard, you tell them you believe they are capable and worthy. When you encourage them to try and solve their own problems and make their own decisions they come to believe *"I am one who can."*





New York State Pre-Kindergarten Standards

(what your child learns in Pre-K 4)

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/earlylearning/standards/>

While every school has its own unique curriculum (how children learn), every school is guided by the exact same New York State Standards (what they learn). The goal is that every child walking out of Pre-K will have learned the same thing.

The Standards are broken into 5 domains or areas of learning.

Domain 1: **Approaches to Learning.** How children become involved in learning and acquire knowledge: engagement, problem solving, creativity, curiosity, persistence, focus, etc.

Domain 2: **Physical Development and Health.** Children’s physical health and ability to engage in daily activities, both outdoors and inside.

Domain 3: **Social and Emotional Learning.** The emotional competence and ability to form positive relationships that give meaning to children’s experiences in the home, school, and larger community.

Domain 4: **Communication, Language, and Literacy.** How children understand, create, and communicate meaning.

Domain 5: **Cognition and Knowledge of the World (Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Arts).** What children need to know and understand about their world and how they apply what they know.

As you can see, there is a lot to learn in Pre-K! Never has there been a greater need for school and home to work together to ensure our children are ready for kindergarten.

As a parent, you extend your child’s learning everyday—probably without realizing it. For additional supplemental ideas, look no further than the monthly parent-child activity calendar published by the Division of Early Childhood.

<https://sites.google.com/strongschools.nyc/manhattanecfamilies/home-page>

As an example, the April activity calendar suggests:

Domain 1. **Approaches to Learning:** April 11th. *Let your child help you make breakfast.*

Domain 2. **Physical Development and Health:** April 18th. *Take a walk. Count how many steps it takes to get to the corner of the block.*

Domain 3. **Social and Emotional Learning:** April 12th. *Ask your child to draw a picture of herself today. Was she feeling happy, sad, confused, angry?*

Domain 4. **Communication, Language, and Literacy:** April 23rd. *Build vocabulary. How many different words can you think of to describe rain?*

Domain 5. **Cognition and Knowledge of the World (Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Arts):** April 22nd. *It’s Earth Day! Plant wheat berry seeds in potting soil.*



Domain 4:

Communication, Language and Literacy

No matter how adamantly teachers state Pre-K is about social-emotional learning, parents tend to focus on their child’s acquisition of ABC’s and 1-2-3s; specifically, “*When will my child learn to read?*” Reading readiness falls under Domain 4 of the NYS Learning Standards. Let’s break down what Domain 4 states.

Reading Begins with Language

Building strong communication skills and vocabulary is all about learning to read. Children need to hear conversation and practice speech with adults and peers to strengthen their communication skills. When children hear and use a lot of language through classroom instruction, spontaneous interactions, and play, they learn new concepts, build background knowledge, and gain meaning from print. The ability to hold a meaningful conversation lays the groundwork for reading comprehension.

Communication is important in so many ways. The ability to express yourself in words allows a child to better regulate their behavior, feel understood, and connect with others. Children should be encouraged to describe events, retell stories, and play.

Reading Foundations

Your child needs to take many steps before truly learning to read: decode letters, turn letters into sounds, and understand words strung together in a sentence has meaning.

Foundations to reading means being able to demonstrate an understanding of the organization and basic feature of print: recognize words are read right to left; recognize spoken words can be written; recognize and name all upper and some lowercase letters (especially the letters of their name); recognize that grouped letters form words; and differentiate letters from numbers.

Phonological awareness asks children demonstrate an emerging understanding of spoken words, syllables and sounds; recognizes and matches spoken words that rhyme; recognizes individual syllables within spoken words; isolates and pronounces the first sound in a spoken one-syllable word (the b in ball).

Phonics and word recognition asks that at the end of the school year children demonstrate one-to-one letter-sound correspondence by producing the primary sound of some consonants.

Reading

Pre-K reading expectations include being able to participate in a discussion about a book read-aloud; retelling a story or sharing information about it; developing and answering questions about characters and major events; showing an interest in learning new vocabulary; describing the relationship between illustration and text; and making a connection between self, text, and the world.

Writing

Pre-K students are expected to use a combination of drawing, dictation, oral expression, and emergent writing to state their opinion, supply information about a topic, narrate an event, and respond to a story. Writing is used to respond to child-centered, authentic, play based learning.

These are the reading skills taught in Pre-K to make young children “kindergarten ready”. Learning to read is a developmental process. Children learn to read at their own pace as their developing brains grow. One of the way to support your child’s literacy skills is to read a bedtime story every night.