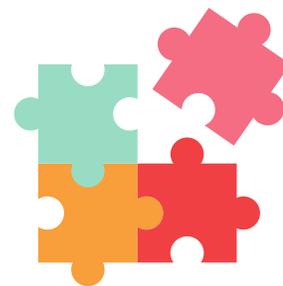


GETTING READY FOR THE FIRST DAY OF KINDERGARTEN

BY ROSE STOLZ



Preparing for the first day of kindergarten begins well before the first day of school. Talk to your child about kindergarten and what they can expect. Children often have a lot of questions. The more details children have the less anxious they will feel. Reading stories about starting kindergarten can be helpful in starting discussions of how your child feels about starting school and what will happen when they enter kindergarten.

Take your child to his/her pediatrician for a check-up to insure all their required immunizations are up to date. Children who are healthy find learning easier and miss less time from school. Students who miss 15 days of school or more during the kindergarten and first grade years are less likely to read at grade level by the end of third grade. Children who are chronically absent are at serious risk of falling behind in school and being unable to reach many of the early learning milestones.

Develop strong daily routines at home. Routines help children learn, it makes them feel safe and in control of their world and fosters their self-confidence and provides a sense of belonging within the family.

**Columbia Child
Development
Program Head Start
Bloomsburg, PA**



Bedtime routines - ensure that children get a good night sleep and are ready for the next day's adventures. If you have been letting your little one stay up later during the summer months consider starting your school time schedule about a month before school starts by putting your child to bed a few minutes earlier each night. Two weeks before school starts your child should be going to bed at their regular time and waking up on their school day schedule.

Morning routines - Get the next day's clothing out and ready to go. It is a lot less stressful than running around looking for a lost shoe in the morning. Also have your child pack their backpack with their homework and other supplies and place it in the same place each night so everything is organized and ready to go. If the children eat breakfast at home allow enough time for your child to eat an unhurried breakfast. You may want to schedule a "dry run" to see how long you need including the time it takes to get to the bus stop or to drive your child to school.

Create a lunch plan - Will your child buy lunch at school or will they be carrying their lunch? When you decide then you can buy what you need to pack lunches and snacks and make these a part of your weekly grocery list. Cost of milk and lunches are usually discussed at the kindergarten orientation program scheduled at your school just before school open.



Decrease or phase out nap times - During the first few weeks of school kindergarteners may be allowed to rest, but that quickly fades away and children will be expected to be ready to tackle a full day of learning activities.

Make a plan for before and after school - Where will your child go before and/or after school? Make sure your child knows the plan and when he/she she will be reunited with you. Discuss how they will get to the childcare center or babysitter, if that is what is needed. How will they get to and from school? Will they take a bus and who will be at the bus stop in the afternoon? Many schools require that kindergarten children have an adult meet the bus before allowing the child to exit. Be sure to have a back-up plan in case an emergency occurs, or you are running late.

Develop a homework plan - What are your expectations? May children play outside for a short time before needing to come in to do their homework or will they be expected to do it as soon as they get home? Where will they do their homework? Do they have the supplies they need to complete the required tasks? Set up an evening schedule that includes a homework routine as well as time to relax.

Plan to attend your child's kindergarten orientation. Kindergarten orientation is generally held a week or two before school starts. The orientation letter will provide the time and details for the event. It often tells you who your child's teacher will be. Attending this event allows your child to meet his/her teacher and classmates. Often the children separate from their parents to do a fun activity in the classroom and take a tour of the building. Parents will talk to school district officials and learn about school policies and important information about their child's school. Attending the school's meet the teacher night is also important. It helps you begin to develop a connection with your child's teacher. This will help your child transition into their new school and all of you adjust to different styles and policies.

Help your child get excited for school, by allowing them to go shopping with you to pick out new school supplies. While the teacher may send you a list of required items your child may be able to select the colors or style. There nothing like new school supplies when you are getting ready for kindergarten.

Once your child starts school, talk to your child about their day. Talking about school will give you the opportunity to learn what your child is doing in school and how they feel about school. It will also communicate to your child that school is important. Here are some suggestions to get the conversation started.

- Ask your child to tell you one new thing they did or learned about in school that day.
- Ask your child what was one thing that they liked and one thing that was difficult about school that day.
- Ask your child about who they played with and what games they played.
- Create a family routine around talking about your day. For example, at mealtime or another time when you are spending time with your children, you can model how to talk about your day by sharing one or two things that you did that day and asking your children to share one or two things about their day.

BOOK CORNER

