

Preparing Your Child for School

GENERAL REMINDERS FOR THE YEARS PRIOR TO KINDERGARTEN

■ Provide your child with time, availability, and love.

You have many demands on your time and may live in a rushed and time-pressured world. It may be hard to turn off the pressures once at home. Yet your child's self-confidence and motivation to succeed and to respond to challenges can be enhanced if he knows you are available for the moments when he feels fragile and needs comfort. He also needs to feel important enough to you to share his everyday accomplishments and wonder about the world. Availability, nurturing, and support take time and are ideally provided without other preoccupations.

■ Kind words are important.

Your child's motivation is increased when her efforts are rewarded by kind, encouraging words, even if she did not succeed. Showing disappointment in a harsh way when your child's efforts are unsuccessful may make her unwilling to try again.

■ Don't push.

Introduce new skills naturally in small doses, making them fun through conversations and play. If learning a new skill is not fun for your child, it is likely that you are trying too hard or that the skill is too difficult for her to master at



this point. Come back to it at a later time.

■ Small surprise rewards are helpful.

They reinforce learning. They are not bribes, because your child receives them after the accomplishment, not before.

■ We learn best by doing.

Your child learns best about concepts like the number five by counting five

crayons or raisins rather than from a verbal explanation. Likewise, he will learn how to say "thank you" from reinforcement and reminders at the appropriate moments (e.g., when being given a cookie) rather than from a speech about manners.

■ Repetition works.

Skills are habits that take time to form and are acquired best through reasonable repetition.

■ Value questions.

Often, questions take more initiative and are more beneficial than answers. Praise your child for asking questions. It's OK if you don't know the answers. You can try to find the answer together with your child (e.g., by looking a word up in the dictionary).

■ Make learning a joy.

When your child knows that learning is a joy, she has received a gift that will last a lifetime.

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