

How to Prepare for a Great Kindergarten Experience!

You have a very important role in your child's education. In fact, your child has been learning since birth and you've been teaching from the very start!

This booklet introduces the skills and habits that will help prepare your rising kindergartner for success in school and provide a strong academic foundation for the years to come. Read on to find out more about what your child will learn during kindergarten and how you can support your child's learning at home. We encourage you to talk to your child about what he or she is learning.



Language Arts in Kindergarten

Learning to read and write is the basis for all learning. In kindergarten, students work on beginning reading and writing skills that will lead to success in all classes and build the foundation they will need in the classroom for years to come. Activities include interactive read-alouds, shared reading and writing experiences, small-group guided reading, and independent reading and writing times— all within the context of a balanced literacy classroom.

Students entering Kindergarten should be able to:

- **Listen to and respond, on topic, to conversations** and group discussions.
- **Connect new vocabulary** to prior experiences.
- **Effectively communicate** wants and needs.
- **Use spoken language** that can be understood with ease.
- **Make predictions before reading**, using prior knowledge, story title, and pictures.
- **Listen to and differentiate between sounds** that are the same or different.
- **Identify and produce rhyming words.**
- **Recognize and name some upper and lowercase letters.**
- **Track words** from left to right, top to bottom, and page to page.
- **Point to the title and author of a book and where to begin reading.**
- **Draw pictures** to communicate ideas.
- **Use writing tools** to copy letters and numbers.
- **Write some letters** of the alphabet.



A child starting kindergarten typically can...

- recognize some letter sounds and knows many letters by sight.
- talk in complete sentences in an understandable voice.

Here are some ways you can support your child at home:

- **Read, read, read with your child!** Reading together regularly helps children learn that print contains a message. For new readers, point to each word to reinforce the left-to-right pattern and connect the words in print with words heard.
- **Choose books that rhyme, repeat phrases, or have predictable stories.** Get your child involved by guessing a rhyming word, repeating the recurring phrase, or making predictions about what will happen next. Before starting a book, look at the pictures and have your child predict what the story might be about.
- **As you read with your child, ask open-ended questions** and respond to comments she is making. When reading favorite books, ask your child to use the pictures to retell the story.
- **Use everyday conversations to build your child's vocabulary.** Expose your child to new words and talk about what words mean. For an unfamiliar word, explain it in a child-friendly way. Relating new words to your child's personal experience also supports vocabulary development.
- **Help your child learn the letters of the alphabet...** in order and out of sequence. Use magnet letters or letters on cards to spell her name and other familiar words. Practice copying and writing letters.
- **Reading is everywhere...** When riding in the car or venturing out in the community, ask your child to identify logos, find the letters of her name in signs, or point out other environmental print. (*There's a sign for the zoo. This big green sign says the name of the street where we need to turn.*) You will reinforce that letters make up words and words have meaning.
- **Have fun writing and drawing with your child.** Ask him to draw pictures about books you have read together. Your child can draw the characters, his favorite part of the story, even an alternative ending.
- **Play word games with your child.** Games for rhyming families— the fat cat caught a rat in a hat— are especially fun and help develop the early letter awareness skills that children need to learn to read.
- **Give your child access to lots of books!** Help your child apply for her own library card. Regular trips to the school or public library give your child a wider variety of reading materials. Help your child build his personal library. Visit the used book store, garage sales and book swaps, and school book sales.
- **Keep favorite books handy** for waiting rooms, travel time, and any place you might have downtime and need a distraction.

Mathematics in Kindergarten

We want our students to grow into confident, competent problem-solvers. Learning Mathematics in kindergarten focuses on developing number sense, understanding and using numbers through mathematical operations, geometry, measurement and data, and algebraic thinking.

Students entering Kindergarten should be able to:

- **Recognize numerals.**
- **Use counting as a way to determine quantity.**
- **Match a set of items to a number**, for instance, match a picture of three cats with the numeral 3.
- **Touch and count— one by one— at least 10 objects.** An example would be counting 10 grapes like this, *one grape, two grapes, three grapes, etc.*
- **Compare objects** using two or more attributes such as size, color, length, weight, etc.
- **Sort and classify objects** using one or more attributes, for instance, putting all the blue toys or all the toys with wheels together
- **Understand and use appropriate directional language**, for example, knowing left and right, in front and behind, top and bottom.
- **Recognize and name common 2-D and 3-D shapes** such as a circle and sphere.



A child starting kindergarten typically can...

- demonstrate appropriate school behavior, including
 - when to use an “inside” voice
 - when to wait for a turn
 - how to share with a friend

Here are some ways you can support your child at home:

- **Point out numbers in your child's everyday environment...** On billboards, license plates, store ads and signs, television, and marquees.
- **Look at the calendar**, and count the number of days until an upcoming event.
- **Ask your child to count items at home during routine activities.** Count out four forks to set the table, seven T-shirts to put in the dresser, three pets to feed, etc. At the store, ask your child to count items in your basket or select a certain number of potatoes or yogurt tubs. Traveling in the car, count the number of dogs you see or the blue cars along your route.
- **Another grocery store math idea...** Ask your child to organize items in the cart, grouping them in some way (maybe things in boxes, yellow things, or cold things) so you can place additional items in the right group. Try making a mistake in placing an object so your child can show you the "right way."
- **Make it a game to find shapes in the environment.** When identifying shapes, talk about the number of sides or other attributes that identify the shape.
- **Look for comparisons and use math vocabulary** like *higher*, *lower*, *more*, *less*, *greater than*, *less than*, *greatest*, and *fewest*.
- **Repetition and patterns foster mathematical thinking.** Point out visual patterns. They're all around us... Think walkways, wallpaper, tiles, and windows. Clapping patterns can help your child discover sequences and predict what comes next.
- **Play card and board games that involve numbers and counting.** Chutes and Ladders, tic-tac-toe, dominoes, checkers, matching card games, and puzzles all reinforce math learning.
- **Have at least one clock with a standard clock face** in your home. Talk about time in conversation and point out how the hands of the clock move.
- **Empty a pocketful of change** and have your child identify and group the coins. Talk about their value.
- **At the laundromat or in the laundry room**, ask your child to help sort clothes by color. Talk about measuring the soap. Use math language when pairing socks and folding sheets and towels in half, in quarters, etc.

Science in Kindergarten

Kindergarten Science takes a hands-on approach to learning. Through inquiry-based exploration, students learn about the earth, life, and physical sciences. Students also are introduced to scientific strategies for making observations, collecting and analyzing data, making measurements, and describing the world around them.

Students entering Kindergarten should be able to:

- **Use their senses** to observe, classify, and learn about their environment.
- **Record observations** through drawing or describing to someone.
- **Make a prediction related to scientific properties**, for example, *This puddle will freeze into ice when it gets very cold outside.*
- **Make simple observations** related to seasons.
- **Compare day and night.**
- **Distinguish between and be able to identify living and non-living things.**
- **Describe materials** by physical properties— for instance, temperature, hardness, etc.— and states of matter (ex., liquid, solid, gas).

Here are some ways you can support your child at home:

- **Welcome and encourage your child's questions** and praise her curiosity for the world around her.
- **Encourage your child to use their senses** to explore his environment.
- **Ask your child to describe the world around her** in various settings. *How is the kitchen different than the park? Different than a store?*
- **Ask your child to predict what will happen next** when reading a story. (Predictions are important in developing scientific thinking.)
- **Use everyday activities** such as cooking or working in the garden to discuss changes in states of matter and properties of water.
- **Take a walk in your neighborhood or the woods.** Talk about plants and animals and the changes that occur in living things. Listen... Are those natural sounds or man-made? Look for signs of animal life. Collect and compare leaves.
- **Observe the weather** and how it affects your neighborhood (new flowers, changing leaves, ice in puddles).
- **Play games** that involve moving objects.
- **Talk with your child about living and non-living things.**

Social Studies in Kindergarten

GCPS' Social Studies program prepares kindergarten students to understand their role and responsibility as citizens in our democratic society. They discover America's heritage and relate the past to the present. They learn the similarities and differences between nations, cultures, and peoples of the world. Students use maps and globes, process information, and solve problems.

Students entering Kindergarten should be able to:

- **Follow rules** and engage in appropriate social behavior.
- **Describe his or her family structure.**
- **Describe similarities between self and others.**
- **Draw or build representation of a home and community** and describe it, for instance, describe the elements in a drawing of houses, the school, and other buildings, or talk about a building made with blocks or LEGOs.
- Describe the **roles and responsibilities of a variety of occupations.**
- **Describes a sequence of events**, differentiating between the past, present, and future.

Here are some ways you can support your child at home:

- **Set routines and rules** for everyday activities.
- Use pictures of family members to **talk about similarities and differences** between people.
- **Read fiction and non-fiction books** that feature different occupations.
- **Model good citizenship.**
- Use pictures to **talk with your child about the past, present, and future.**
- **Serve others together.** Contact United Way (dial 2-1-1) or other community agencies to connect with a worthwhile project.
- **Take part in community celebrations** of civic holidays, including parades and festivals. Discuss your own family's celebrations and customs.



A child starting kindergarten typically can...

- sit and actively listen for 10 minutes or more at a time.
- follow multi-step directions.

More Tips for a Great Kindergarten Year

- **Encourage activities that involve sharing**, taking turns, listening, following directions, and taking part in conversations. Children playing and sharing with others builds important skills that will be used throughout the school day.
- **Set expectations for appropriate school behavior.** Kindergartners love to move and enthusiastic learners like to share what they're learning. However, being in school also means learning *when* to move and *when* to share. Make sure your child understands the importance of following classroom rules, and knows that you expect good behavior at school.
- **Teach your child to handle personal needs**, such as going to the bathroom without help, washing his hands, blowing his nose, feeding himself, tying his shoes, and buttoning and zipping his clothes. Until your child has mastered tying shoelaces, consider athletic shoes that slip on or have other fasteners for school days.

Your Child's Teacher Welcomes You as an Active Partner in Your Child's Education.

Here are just a few ways to get involved:

- **Use your Parent Portal account for safe and secure online access** to key information about your child's academic career, 24/7. Go to www.gcpsk12.org and click on the Parents tab at the top.
- **Stay informed on school and class happenings.** Read newsletters and reports that come home. Look for regular communication from the teacher by email, on teacher course pages, or in your child's bookbag. Check the school website and the district website for updates.
- **Attend parent-teacher conferences** to discuss your child's progress.
- **Learn how you can help at home**, using resources posted to the district's Early Learning web page, other links on the Parents tab of the GCPS website, and on the district's Pinterest account.
- **Know the adults who work with your child daily**, including teachers, principal, other administrators, office staff, counselor, clinic worker, cafeteria staff, bus driver, and others.

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