A Parent's Guide

Is My Child READY for Kindergarten?

MAISD
Muskegon Area Intermediate School District

The INCREDIBLE Years

Kindergarten is such an exciting time. It will be an incredible new world for your child—full of exploration, learning, and new friends.

But Kindergarten can also be a scary thought for many parents. In this fast-paced society, parents often wonder, "Is my child ready for Kindergarten?" Such apprehension is normal. After all, Kindergarten is a "big step" in your child's life.

This guide is intended to provide parents and family members a general outline of what is commonly expected of children as they enter Kindergarten. Go through these pages to gauge your child's development and today's readiness expectations for Kindergarten entry.

Most importantly, always remember YOU are your child's first and most important teacher. Research shows that the years leading up to Kindergarten are the most important developmental years of your child's life. Be an ENGAGED parent. READ to your child each and every day. Be WARM, LOVING, and NURTURING toward your child. The bond you form with your child in these early years of life builds the foundation of your child's success in school and in life.

Kind regards,

David L. Sipka

David Sipka

Superintendent, Muskegon Area ISD

How a child APPROACHES LEARNING forms lifelong skills.

A child ready for Kindergarten demonstrates many of these skills…

- ☐ Shows an eagerness to learn; asks many questions
- ☐ Is interested in new things; likes to explore; has a curious mind
- ☐ Uses imagination during play and when telling stories
- ☐ Completes tasks and projects after starting them; does not get easily frustrated when encountering a problem
- ☐ Works toward solving problems on his or her own
- ☐ Chooses toys to play with and projects on his or her own
- ☐ Creates art projects using own ideas and imagination
- ☐ Follows simple rules
- ☐ Carries out a set of three instructions without an adult guiding him or her

LANGUAGE and EARLY LITERACY build the foundation of Kindergarten readiness.

A child ready for Kindergarten demonstrates many of these skills…

- ☐ Enjoys listening to stories read to him or her
- ☐ Retells information in sequence from books read to him or her
- ☐ Holds a book correctly; beginning to use reading-like behaviors with books and other printed materials
- ☐ Is beginning to understand reading and writing concepts, such as "top-down" and "left-to-right"
- ☐ Knows the difference between print and picture
- ☐ Draws a picture and is able to tell you about it
- ☐ Uses at least two or more simple sentences in a row
- ☐ Knows the letters of his or her first name as well as the beginning letters of familiar words. A child knowing at least 10 letters of the alphabet shows a beginning readiness for Kindergarten.
- ☐ Understands that letters are combined to create words; can identify familiar words in written form (words such as his or her own name, "mom," "dad," words on common signs, etc.)
- ☐ Recognizes and says simple rhymes (hat/cat, etc.)
- ☐ Connects letters with sounds
- ☐ "Writes" his or her name or other meaningful words (neat penmanship does not matter!)

Early MATH SKILLS are a key predictor of school success.

A child ready for Kindergarten demonstrates many of these skills…

- ☐ Counts to at least 10
- ☐ Counts objects and states how many
- ☐ Counts two small groups of objects and states which one has more
- ☐ Identifies basic shapes (circle, square, rectangle, triangle)
- ☐ Sorts objects by color, shape, or size
- ☐ Knows common colors (red, green, blue, yellow, orange, black, white)
- ☐ Uses comparison words to describe objects (smaller, larger, more, less, same, different, etc.)
- ☐ Understands positional concepts and words (up/down, before/after, under/over, top/bottom, small/smaller/smallest, big/bigger/biggest, etc.)
- ☐ Understands general times of day and days of the week

A child's **SOCIAL EMOTIONAL** development is key to forming strong relationships and a positive sense of self.

A child ready for Kindergarten demonstrates many of these skills…

- ☐ Expresses his or her own wants and needs; does not rely on an adult to express desires
- ☐ Forms relationships with adults and family members close to him or her
- ☐ Talks about emotions (happy, sad, excited, frustrated, worried, etc.)
- ☐ Plays well with other children; makes friends on own
- ☐ Takes turns and shares without being told to do so
- ☐ Recognizes and responds to the feelings of others
- ☐ Resolves conflicts with other children without harming others
- ☐ Calmly ends one activity and moves to another activity without major disruptions, emotional outbursts, etc.
- ☐ Pays attention in group activities for at least 10 minutes

A **HEALTHY** child develops into a child ready to learn & succeed.

A child ready for Kindergarten demonstrates many of these skills…

- ☐ Takes care of basic personal needs on own (dresses, washes hands, uses toilet, cleans up after self, etc.)
- ☐ Uses fingers and hands for fine motor tasks—as seen when using blocks, beads, crayons, scissors, etc.
- ☐ Holds a pencil correctly
- ☐ Hops, jumps, gallops, kicks, catches, rides a tricycle, and throws a ball
- ☐ Visits a doctor and dentist regularly
- ☐ Sleeps on a regular schedule for at least 10 hours per night
- ☐ Is physically active and exercises everyday in his or her play

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY impacts the world around your child

A child ready for Kindergarten demonstrates many of these skills…

- ☐ Explores materials and activities using the five senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch.
- ☐ Holds a basic understanding of the natural world (rain is wet, sun is hot, snow is cold, humans have an impact on their natural world, etc.)
- ☐ Knows the difference between living and non-living things
- ☐ Observes the outside world and can explain simple natural concepts (leaves change colors in the fall, water and sun make plants grow in the summer, snow melts and turns to water, etc.)
- ☐ Describes objects by using concepts such as "hot/cold, hard/soft, up/down, wet/dry," etc.
- ☐ Has an exposure to technology as a learning tool; is able to use basic functions of a computer on his or her own

Give your child the GIFT of Learning…and your child will be ready to enter Kindergarten

The number one key to preparing your child for Kindergarten: **Take time to read aloud to your child EVERY DAY from birth onward!**

Plan an outdoor **scavenger hunt:** Hunt for 4 leaves, 2 sticks, 1 bug, 6 stones, etc. Count them, name their colors, sort them into piles, play a matching game, etc. This is an easy way to develop math skills.

Science is fun and easy for kids!
Plant a seed inside and talk about it each day. As it grows, measure the growth and keep a chart. Or build a small indoor snowman… count the three balls it takes to build the snowman, watch it melt and talk about how nature makes snow (hot/cold, water turning to snow and back again, etc.).

Trips in the car can be educational.
Count the number of red cars while driving to Grandma's house (or wherever). Yell "banana" when you see a yellow car. Point out the color and the letters every time you see a stop sign. Repeating concepts with young children over and over again works.

Remember, **learning happens everywhere!**

Teach **shapes** while grocery shopping. Have your child find a circle, square, and rectangle while shopping. Or play a counting, letter, or color game the same way. Stores are a great place to play learning games (and perhaps distract your child from all the other temptations!).

Find a puddle after a rain storm and learn **what floats and what sinks.**

When doing laundry, have your child **count socks.** Then **match colors.**

When eating a meal, have your child count 3 crackers, 2 carrots, 5 peas, etc.

Playing board games designed for young children is a great way to build both math and early social skills (the lessons of winning and losing, expressing appropriate emotions, etc.).

Read it again and again. Children need and enjoy repetition with books. It builds vocabulary and word recall.

Be a reading role model: Children need to see their parent(s) reading and enjoying it.

Have your child count his or her toes. Then fingers. Then eyes. Then his or her nose. This game can begin as a toddler with help from an adult.

Help your child write his or her first name on paper. Then again and again over time work with your child identifying the letters in his or her name. This repetition with a familiar word will build basic letter recognition skills.

Sing children's songs around the house that have simple rhyming words—like "Apples and Bananas." Have your child fill in silly words.

Practice the sounds letters make. This is a concept many children struggle with as they enter kindergarten. Playing with rhyming words and groups of words helps develop this awareness. Nursery rhymes are great stories to read aloud and together.

Let your child "write" and draw often. Children love to draw, paint, scribble, etc. This helps develop all different kinds of early development skills.

A PARENT'S COMMITMENT to Preparing a Child for Kindergarten

- ☐ I will have a warm, loving, and nurturing relationship with my child.
- ☐ I will regularly encourage and recognize my child for doing the right thing.
- ☐ I will read to my child at least 20 minutes per day. There will be books in my house which my child enjoys and uses often.
- ☐ I will prepare healthy meals and snacks every day complete with fruits and vegetables.
- ☐ I will take my child to the doctor and dentist as scheduled.
- ☐ I will speak with my doctor if I have concerns about the pace of my child's development.
- ☐ I will use discipline methods that are not emotionally or physically harmful to my child.
- ☐ I will introduce my child to age-appropriate technology to expand his or her learning.
- ☐ I will limit the amount of my young child's "screen time" (television, computers, etc.) to no more than one hour per day.
- ☐ I will create a healthy sleep schedule for my child (young children need at least 10 hours of sleep every night).
- ☐ I will have my child run, play, and exercise at least 60 minutes per day.
- ☐ I will not expose my child to adult media or other influences that are not age-appropriate (violent or other adult-oriented movies, tv shows, images, etc.).
- ☐ I will laugh with and enjoy my child **EVERY** day!

Engaged Parents

+

Quality Early Childhood Programs

+

Committed Communities

=

Children READY for Success in Kindergarten & Beyond!

Great Starts Here

ECIC

Early Childhood Investment Corporation

Great Start Collaborative – Muskegon

early Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana

Where Bright Futures Begin

Head Start of Muskegon/Oceana

The first step to a brighter future