Getting Ready for School Begins at Birth
How to Help Your Child Learn in the Early Years

School Readiness

Most parents watch proudly as their 5-year-old grabs her backpack and heads out the door to her first day of kindergarten—her “official” start into the world of education and learning. Few might imagine that their child has actually been preparing for this day since she first opened her eyes.

With so much emphasis today on preparing children for school, parents are eager to know how they can help their young children learn. This booklet is designed to help you understand what you can do to get your baby or toddler off to the best start by using your everyday interactions to teach the basic skills she will need to cooperate, get along with others, and be an enthusiastic learner.

Children are born ready to learn. Children are naturally curious beings who are motivated to make sense of the world around them. The brain is the only organ that is not fully formed at birth. During the first 3 years, trillions of connections between brain cells are being made. A child's relationships and experiences during the early years greatly influence how her brain grows.

Children learn best through their everyday experiences with the people they love and trust, and when the learning is fun.

Remember, children develop at their own pace and in their own way. If your child’s development is delayed, you can adapt the information in this brochure to meet your child’s individual needs. If you are at all concerned about your child’s development, consult a health care provider.

NOTE: Kindergarten teachers report that a child’s social and emotional “literacy”—the development of self-control, respect for others, a sense of confidence and competence—is vital for success in kindergarten. Without these skills, children are at a greater disadvantage in school.

~ Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children’s Learning, 1994.