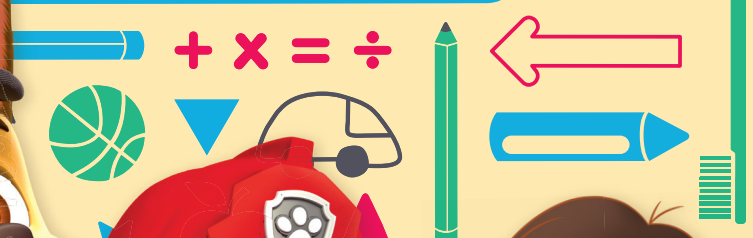
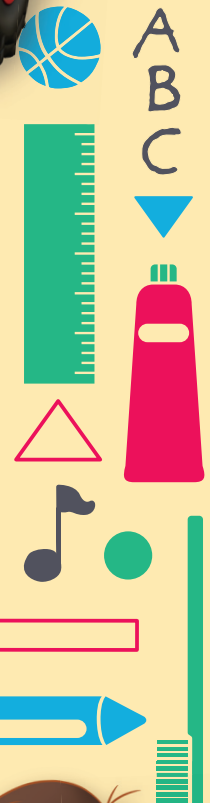




nick jr. BEYOND *the* BACKPACK

YOUR GUIDE TO *Kindergarten* READINESS





This Book Belongs to:

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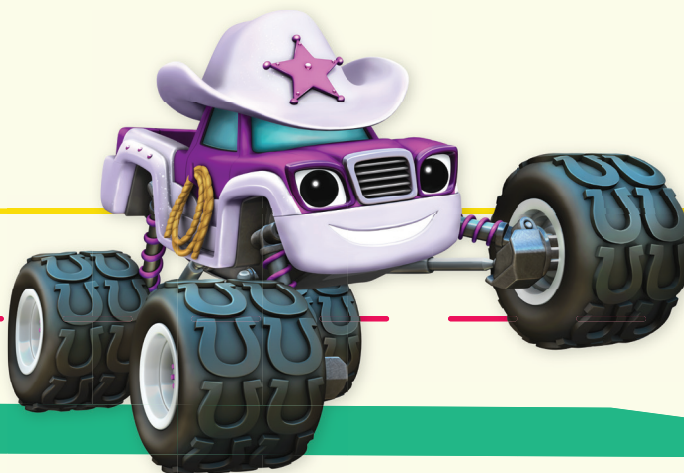
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For more resources and a customized learning plan, please visit beyondthebackpack.com



Beyond the Backpack

GET READY FOR KINDERGARTEN!

Nick Jr. invites you to be part of a great adventure: Beyond the Backpack, a nationwide initiative to promote early kindergarten readiness for preschoolers.

Getting ready for school requires more than having a backpack and the right school supplies. It also means getting your child ready to learn in five key areas: Family Engagement, Health and Wellness, Literacy, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) and Social/Emotional skills. This Toolkit has been developed to support and strengthen all of these early learning areas so every child has the tools they need to enter kindergarten ready to learn!

To develop this guide, Nick Jr. has teamed up with early childhood experts at the Boston Children's Museum, incorporating their extensive knowledge of families, early childhood and the latest in school readiness research. Boston Children's Museum educators bring learning and expertise from their own "Countdown to Kindergarten" classroom — a life-sized model classroom where parents and children can experience going to school together! Families can participate in a circle time complete with stories and songs, counting and calendar games. They can try out activities at typical kindergarten-style learning centers, and even pretend to drive a school bus!

Beyond the Backpack complements Nick Jr.'s curriculum-based preschool programming by providing parents with tips, activities, and resources that focus on the five areas. It also offers lots of helpful tips to get your little ones ready for kindergarten. Check out [BeyondtheBackpack.com](https://www.beyondthebackpack.com) for additional resources and to complete the Kindergarten Readiness Check-In to get your personalized game board.

All families want the best for their children and starting kindergarten is a true milestone on the path to lifelong success. We hope you find this Toolkit a useful and fun way to start this exciting journey with your children!



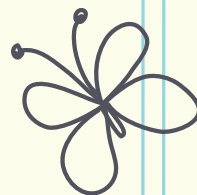
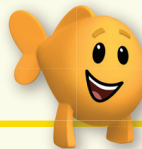
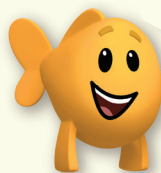
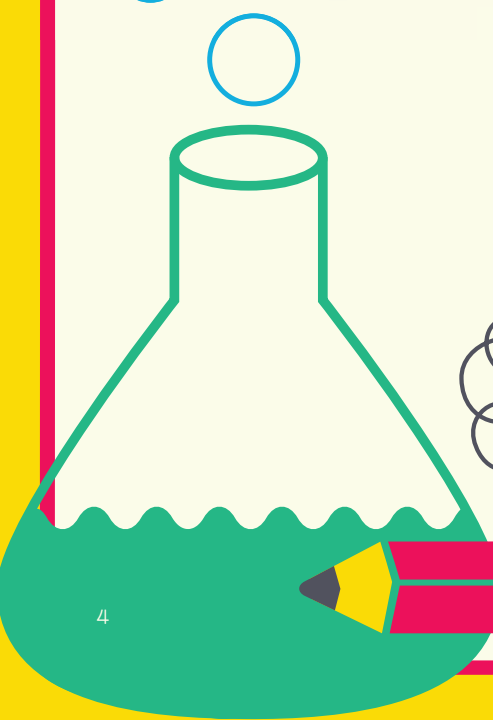
WHY IS *School Readiness* SO IMPORTANT?



School readiness sets the stage for a lifetime of learning, and that learning begins long before the first day of kindergarten. In fact, 80% of all brain growth happens in the first three years of life! So, it's super important to pay attention to what children are learning and experiencing in those early years as they begin to develop the skills and tools they will need to ensure a smooth transition to kindergarten and the beginning of their kindergarten through high school adventure and beyond!

To begin, we'll focus on **five learning areas**:

- FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
- HEALTH & WELLNESS
- LITERACY
- SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SKILLS
- STEAM





The quantity and quality of school readiness resources and support can vary widely among families of different income levels. Making carefully designed school readiness programs and strategies available to all children and families based on current “best teaching practices” research is an essential part of closing this gap and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to enter school fully prepared for learning.

Beyond the Backpack



WHAT TO LOOK FOR!

In this toolkit, you'll find ideas, activities, and resources that will help you prepare your child for school. Here's a quick overview to get you started.

1

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Follow these suggestions and make learning a priority.

- **Embrace** conversation! Talking to each other increases vocabulary and will help your child learn to read.
- **Visit** public libraries, children's museums and other places in your community with resources and activities for families to learn and play together.

2

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Check out these suggestions and make well-being a priority in your family.

- **Make** breakfast part of your child's daily routine. Encourage fruits and vegetables whenever possible, and say "Yes" to active physical play.
- **Talk** to your pediatrician about your child's overall physical, emotional, and developmental needs including sleep, nutrition, vaccinations, and behavior. Don't be afraid to share stories and ask questions!

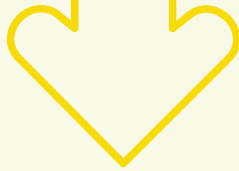
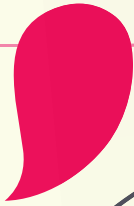
3

LITERACY SKILLS

Help get your child's reading and writing skills on the right track.

- **Read** with or to your child every day.
- **Talk** about what you're doing and **identify** objects with your child while doing daily activities to help build vocabulary.





4

STEAM SKILLS

Expand your child's science, technology, engineering, arts and math learning by encouraging their natural curiosity.

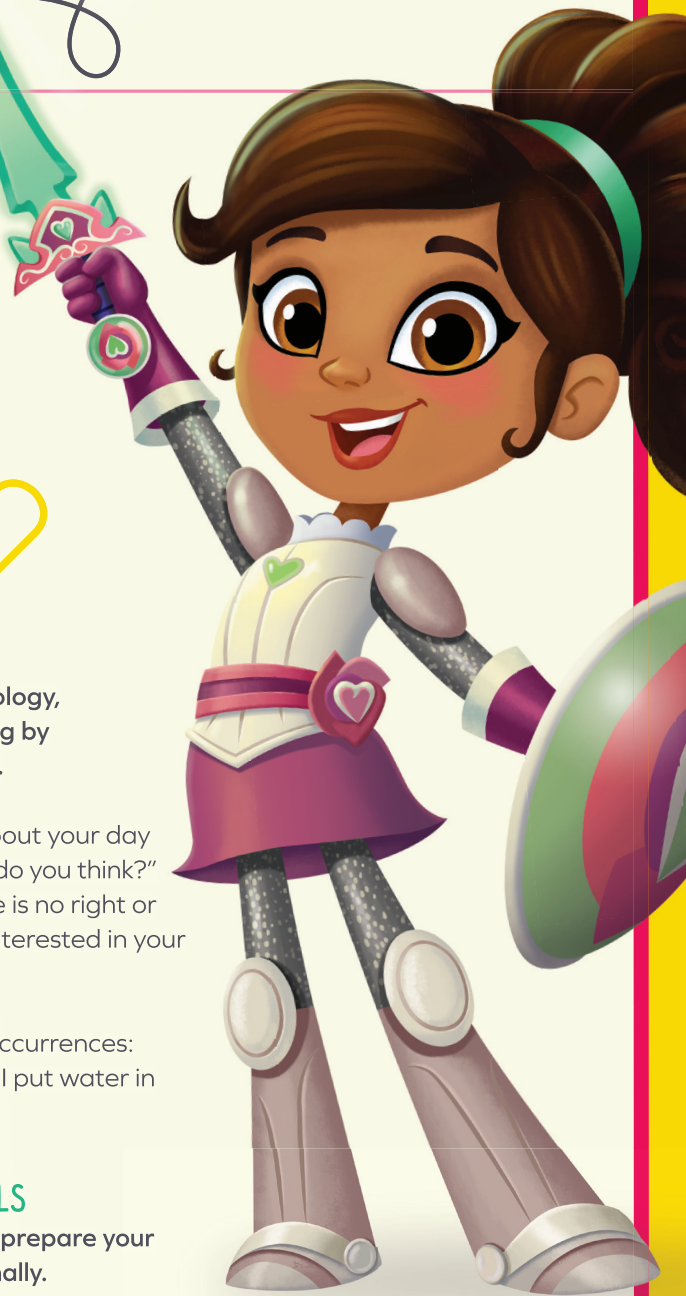
- **Ask** lots of questions as you go about your day or evening. Ask your child, "What do you think?" Questions like this show that there is no right or wrong answer and that you are interested in your child's opinion.
- **Model** curiosity about everyday occurrences: "I wonder what will happen when I put water in the flour to make pancakes?"

5

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Put these tips into practice to help prepare your child for school socially and emotionally.

- **Go to** public story hours sponsored by your local library, bookstore, or at a museum, or have your child attend a pre-school program. In these social settings they can try out important school skills such as sitting in a circle, raising their hand and taking a turn.
- **Model** empathy by asking "I wonder how that person feels?" Encourage your child to describe their own feelings: sad, mad, happy, excited, scared, etc.



Family Engagement

A
B
C

YOU ARE YOUR CHILD'S FIRST TEACHER

"Family Engagement" is rooted in the many ways you support your child's learning and development. As your child's first teacher, you have lots of great opportunities to practice family engagement. As little as 20 minutes a day can have a big impact on your child's school readiness.



Tips

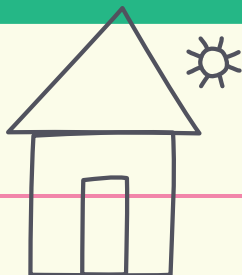
While you are waiting in line at the supermarket, walking to the bus, or simply sitting together over a meal you can help your child develop these important skills:

- Talking back and forth - having conversations together gives children practice listening and responding, and gives them confidence that their ideas matter.
- Creating and following daily routines - this helps children feel secure about what is coming up and will help them adapt to the many routines they will learn in school.
- Safely exposing them to new experiences - this will help children learn how to manage and get the most out of all the new things they will see and hear in school.
- Connect with your child's preschool teacher or child care provider, or with the children's librarian at your local library. You will gain confidence and skills as you take advantage of these resources for your family.



DEVELOPING SKILLS:

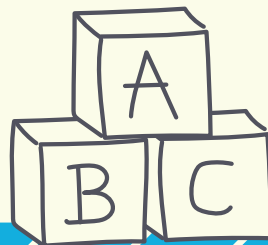
Communication, understanding and developing routines, managing new experiences, building family trust and support, creating awareness of outside supports.



ACTIVITIES



- **Visit** the school and play on the playground. If an orientation isn't already scheduled, call to set up a visit and to meet the kindergarten teacher or principal. If your child has any special medical needs, you could also make an appointment to meet the school nurse. Find out where your child will be having breakfast, lunch or snacks and try to have that included on your tour as well.
- **Borrow** lots of books about starting kindergarten from your local library to help your child understand that everyone goes to school and it's an important and exciting time for your child and the whole family. (See *Sample Kindergarten Day* in pull-out section.)
- **Set aside time** every day for a quiet cuddle or face-to-face conversation with your child. Ask them leading questions and tune in to their answers to help them learn to listen and respond — a skill that they will need in school.
- **Find out what your school registration process is and when it begins.** Check your district's website or contact the main office of your local school to find this information and to get support if needed, in filling out the paperwork.



Health and Wellness

Physical well-being is a key factor in every child's learning and long-term success. For children and families, this means developing healthy habits and making good lifestyle choices, including eating right and being active.



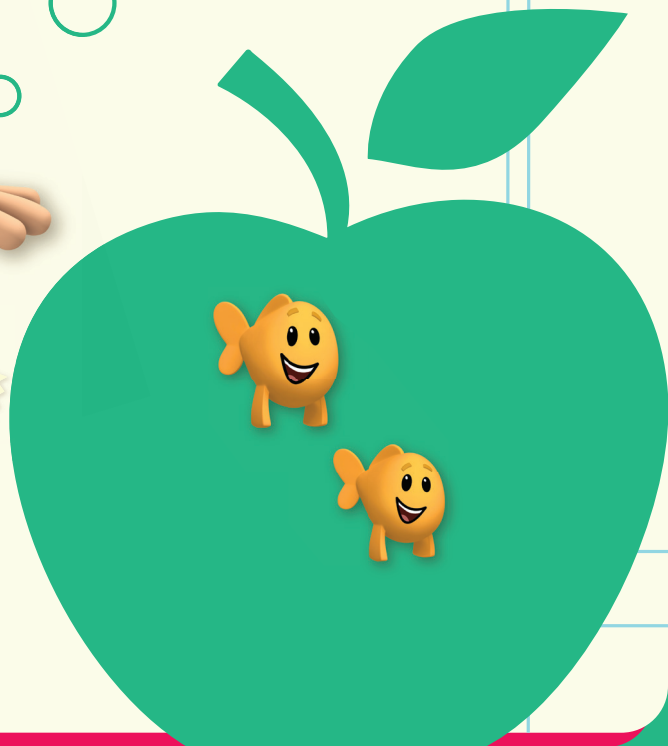
Tips

- Kindergarten is all about structure and routine. Help your child become comfortable with following routines by creating your own structures around wake-up time, lunch time, and bed time. It can be as simple as reading a bedtime story or singing a wake up song!
- Immunizations are also crucial to keeping children healthy. Be sure to check with your pediatrician to make sure your child's vaccinations are up to date.



DEVELOPING SKILLS:

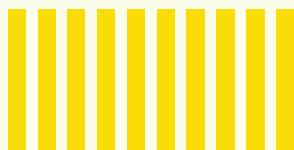
Self-care, learning to make healthy life-style choices, understanding and adapting to routines.



ACTIVITIES



- **Use the chart on page 25** to help your child develop healthy habits and routines. Note the healthy habits listed on the left and add some of your own! Place a smiley face, check mark or sticker in the box each time your child engages in one of these, and point out why it's important. (Also, see *Sample Before and After School Routines* in pull-out section.)
- **Catch your child making good choices.** Praise them often, even for small accomplishments like playing nicely with siblings, helping to pick up toys, waiting for his or her turn, or being a good sport.
- **Make time for a routine** that includes regular family meals when parents and children can sit and talk about their day together. Play the "high-low" game, taking turns sharing the best and not-so-good parts of the day.
- **Set limits for your child** around safety, screen time, regard for others, household rules and routines that are important to you. If you have difficulty setting limits, ask your pediatrician for tips.



Literacy Skills

ABC

Believe it or not, early literacy — learning to read and write — begins in the first three years of life. It is closely linked to a child's earliest experiences hearing and using language. Reading books and telling stories are great ways to engage your child. Young children's interactions with early literacy materials offered by caring adults has been shown to be a powerful predictor of long term literacy and school success.

Tips

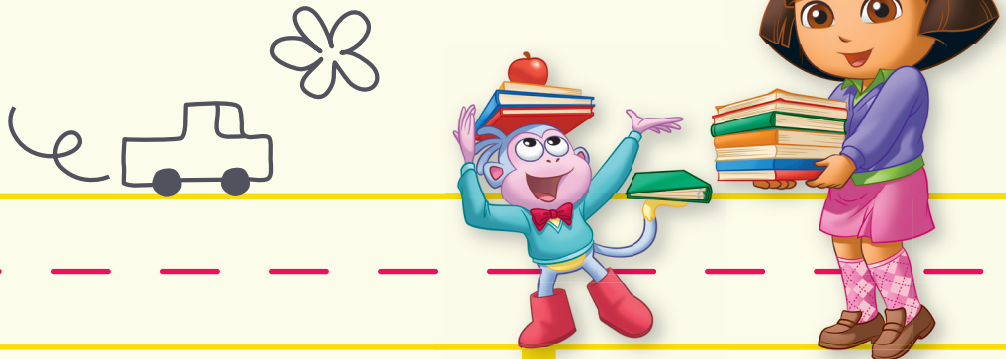
Read to your preschooler and stop once in a while in the middle of a story to talk about what is happening in a story. Ask them questions that go beyond the text to help them develop an enjoyment of language, books and writing, such as "Where do you think the bunny is going?" and "Why does the little girl look sad? Do you ever feel sad?"





DEVELOPING SKILLS:

Foundational skills (building vocabulary, understanding what letters are and what print means, and making marks on paper starting with scribbling), finding connections in stories, making predictions, using imagination, and enjoying interactive reading with an adult.



ACTIVITIES

- **Embrace conversation!** Talking to each other increases vocabulary and will help your child learn to read. Chat with your child while doing family activities. In the grocery store you can ask, "What fruits and vegetables shall we buy?" "What color are those apples?" and "How many bananas do we need?"
- **Ask questions** as you read books together and help your child identify words during play, as you walk through your neighborhood, or at the grocery store. Help your child describe things and events, and play with sounds and letters in words.
- **Read with** or to your child every day. You can build this into a regular bedtime routine or keep a small book in your bag and just read together whenever you can — while riding the bus, in line at the store or waiting for water to boil.
- **Set out** recycled paper and a box of crayons for your child to use anytime they are ready to scribble, draw or write. Scribbling is the first step to writing as it teaches a child how to hold and control a crayon to create marks on paper. It takes practice, so give children lots of opportunity and encouragement so they'll keep at it.

STEAM Skills

$$2+2=4$$

STEAM - Science, technology, engineering, art and math all provide building blocks for how children learn and build on what children already do naturally: explore and experiment, work with all kinds of tools (e.g. toothbrush, paintbrush, fingers), problem solve, compare things and create. As children's first teachers, parents can expand this learning by supporting their natural curiosity and drive to explore.

Tips

- Ask lots of "what" questions. These focus on what is happening, what you notice and what you're doing. Other great STEAM questions include: comparing: "Is it longer or shorter?", attention focusing: "Did you notice ...?", measuring and counting: "How many? How long?", and problem solving: "Can you find a way to ...?"
- Technology involves using tools. Make a game out of walking around your home with your child looking for all different kinds of tools (hint: a toothbrush is a tool for cleaning your teeth!)
- Engineering involves designing and building. Something as simple as building a block tower counts as an early engineering project!
- This skill set used to be known as STEM. The addition of art acknowledges the importance of visual expression in the creative problem solving process, since a lot of STEM exploration and practice involves symbols, designs, and pictures.

1

DEVELOPING SKILLS:

Observing, describing, categorizing, experimenting, predicting, solving problems, using tools, communicating, working together, and developing new vocabulary.





ACTIVITIES



- **Science: Air can move things.** Have your child practice blowing air on their hands and then have them try blowing cotton balls across a flat surface. Next, have your child use a straw to blow the cotton balls. Talk with your child about their observations — "which method blew the cotton balls further?" Experiment with blowing on other objects and talk about what happens and why.
- **Technology: Scooping.** Using scoops from the kitchen or sandbox, have your child practice moving dry materials like sand, dirt or flour from one container to another. You can ask questions such as "Which material feels heavier in the scoop?", and "Which spills more easily?" Experiment by substituting the scoops with other household materials such as paper cups or serving spoons.
- **Engineering: Recycle Build-It.** Collect clean household recyclables and let your child build three-dimensional structures with them. (Hint: egg cartons, toilet and paper towel tubes, and Styrofoam packing material make super building materials). Use tape, glue, string, paper clips or rubber bands to keep things in place.
- **Art: Make a Mark.** Have your child choose a crayon and piece of paper. Let them mark the paper, encouraging them to try making different types of marks (squiggles, zigzags, "pecking" dots), and using different grips (full fist or holding like a pencil). Have your child try marking on other types of materials such as piece of wood, stone or tile, and talk
- **Math: Likes Go Together.** Assemble a set of toys and have children sort them into groups; e.g. cars with cars, blocks with blocks. Repeat using different rules — they can match colors, shapes or sizes! Expand this activity by having your child collect any types of items (e.g. rocks, dishes, shoes) and then come up with new ways to sort them.

Social and Emotional Skills

How young children feel, interact with others, and think about themselves is a critical part of their ability to learn and succeed in all other developmental areas. Although children feel angry, sad, frustrated, nervous, happy, or embarrassed, they often do not have the words to talk about it. This becomes important as children become more independent and want to express their needs to others outside of the house.



Tips

- Be a role model for your child by talking with them about your own feelings. Let them see how you manage conflicts with others and how you deal with daily stress in a healthy way.
- Provide a safe, loving environment where your child feels comfortable to talk about their fears and worries, and also the things they are happy about or proud of.



DEVELOPING SKILLS:

Recognize, name and express emotions; engage in a positive way to build relationships with others; learn to reflect on actions and make thoughtful decisions.

ACTIVITIES

- **Talk** about your feelings and encourage your child to do the same. "Today I was frustrated because I spilled the milk, but I was proud of myself for getting a sponge from the sink and cleaning up my mess!" Have them give you an example of something they did during the day and how they felt about it.
- Each night at bedtime, reflect together about the day, then have your child fill in one box on the pull-out **calendar on page 28**, to describe what kind of day he or she had.
- **Practice waiting.** Set your kitchen or cell phone timer as your child waits their turn to play with something or waits for a snack or a meal. Practicing waiting helps children learn to manage frustration and distress. When the timer goes off and your child has been waiting patiently, you can say, "Wow, great job waiting your turn!"
- **Help** your child approach others with expectations of a positive interaction. He or she might ask another child, "Can we play together?" Join a social group at your local library or your family's faith community to help make connections with other children.



Partner Resources

FOR PARENTS



ASCD is a global community dedicated to excellence in learning, teaching, and leading. Comprising 140,000 members, ASCD's innovative solutions promote the success of each child. To learn more, visit www.ascd.org.



The Association of Children's Museums (ACM) is a professional development society that champions children's museums worldwide. As a community of more than 400 children's museums, individuals, and supporting organizations, our members share a vision of a world that honors all children and respects the diverse ways in which they learn and develop. To find a children's museum near you, visit www.FindaChildrensMuseum.org.



Founded in 1913, Boston Children's Museum carries on a 100-year legacy with exhibits like "Countdown to Kindergarten," where children and their parents are invited to experience a typical kindergarten setting and ask questions about how to get ready to start school. BCM is delighted to contribute kindergarten readiness content to Beyond the Backpack. To learn more and plan your visit to BCM, go to www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org.



Children's Defense Fund

The Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. The CDF provides a strong, effective, and independent voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. The CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investments before they get sick, drop out of school, get into trouble or suffer family breakdown. Learn more at www.childrensdefense.org.



Common Sense Media is dedicated to helping kids thrive in a world of media and technology. We help families make smart media and tech choices by offering the largest, most trusted library of independent age-based and educational ratings and reviews for tv-shows, movies, games, apps, and more. Learn more at www.common sensemedia.org.



Children first.™

Jumpstart is a national early education organization working toward the day every child in America enters kindergarten prepared to succeed. Jumpstart delivers a research-based and cost-effective program by training college students and community volunteers to serve preschool-age children in low-income neighborhoods. By participating in Jumpstart's year-long program, children develop the language and literacy skills they need to be ready for school, setting them on a path for lifelong success. To learn how you can help put children first, visit www.jstart.org.





everychild.one voice.

National PTA comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. National PTA is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in National PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health and welfare of children and youth. Learn more at www.pta.org



P21 PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

P21, a Washington DC-based non-profit founded in 2002, serves as a catalyst for 21st century learning by building collaborative partnerships among education, business, community, and government leaders so that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills they need to thrive in a world where change is constant and learning never stops. For additional information please visit www.p21.org.



where great stories begin™

Reach Out and Read is an organization of medical providers who promote early literacy in pediatric exam rooms nationwide by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud. As a result, Reach Out and Read families read together more often, and their children enter kindergarten better prepared to succeed, with larger vocabularies and stronger language skills. Learn more at www.reachoutandread.org.



Too Small to Fail, an initiative of the Clinton Foundation, promotes early brain and language development by supporting parents and caregivers with tools to talk, read, and sing with their young children from birth. Through partnerships with pediatricians, hospitals, faith-based leaders, community-based organizations, businesses, entertainment industry leaders, and others, Too Small to Fail is meeting parents where they are to help them prepare their children for success in school and beyond. Learn more at toosmall.org. Find resources for parents and caregivers at talkingtoteaching.org.

Understood

for learning & attention issues

Understood.org is a free resource and community supporting parents of the 1 in 5 kids with learning and attention issues. Understood empowers millions of parents through personalized resources, daily access to experts, interactive tools and a supportive online and on-the-ground community.

UNIDOSUS

STRONGER COMMUNITIES. STRONGER AMERICA.

UnidosUS serves the Hispanic Community through our research, policy analysis, and state and national advocacy efforts as well as in our program work in communities nationwide.

Our work in early childhood education is based upon a research-to-practice approach that promotes high-quality programs for Latino children and dual language learners and their families. For additional information please visit <https://www.unidosus.org/issues/education/ece/>



Notes:





Kindergarten READINESS CHECK-IN

Children are ready to go to kindergarten when they have most of the developmentally appropriate skills that will enable them to be successful in a school setting. Strong family engagement in this process is key to helping a child get set with these critical skills.

BY THE TIME YOUR CHILD ENTERS KINDERGARTEN, IT IS HELPFUL IF THEY CAN:

→ Health and Wellness

- ☐ Do most of these – jump, run, hop on one foot, throw or kick a ball.
- ☐ Hold and use a pencil properly, cut with safety scissors, and put together simple (4-9 piece) puzzles.
- ☐ Do the following independently: go to the bathroom, get dressed, brush teeth and wash hands.
- ☐ Follow safety rules: recognize warning symbols (stop sign, poison symbol, etc.) and recite his/her full name, address and phone number.



→ Literacy Skills

- ☐ Write their initials or full name, using upper and lower case letters correctly.
- ☐ Hold and "read" books both by themselves and with an adult.
- ☐ Correctly grip a pencil or crayon and "write" letters, words, or stories by drawing or scribbling to express ideas.
- ☐ Speak in complete sentences and make up or retell stories.



→ STEAM Skills (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, ART & MATH)

- ☐ Observe and explore objects and materials both indoors and outdoors; ask and answer questions about what they see.
- ☐ Recognize basic shapes e.g. circle, square and triangle, and sort objects by shape, size or color.
- ☐ Use a wide variety of school tools, such as paint brush, safety scissors, pencil and crayon.
- ☐ Count out loud from 1 to 10 in order, recognize a few 1-digit numbers by sight and use sorting and making patterns to support early math skills.

→ Social and Emotional Skills

- ☐ Talk about basic feelings (anger, sadness, happiness, etc.).
- ☐ Cooperate with others, share, and take turns.
- ☐ Listen well and concentrate, follow directions that have 2 to 3 steps, and focus on a task independently for 15 minutes.

For more resources and a customized learning plan, please visit beyondthebackpack.com

Please note: this list is intended merely as a guide for parents, highlighting skills and benchmarks that will help their preschoolers prepare for kindergarten. Kids develop at their own pace, so some preschoolers will master many of these skills before kindergarten, while others will learn them in school. Parents should contact their child's school for specifics on school entry requirements.



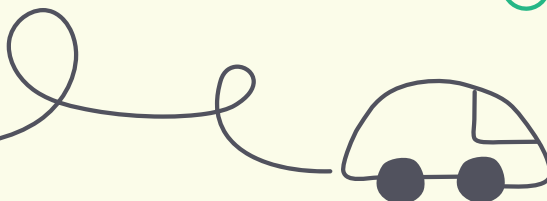
Family Engagement: SAMPLE KINDERGARTEN DAY

This is an example of a typical kindergarten day adapted from two different states' samples.

Kindergarten Day SAMPLE SCHEDULE



- 8:30 – 9:20** **MORNING ROUTINES:** sing a song, go over the calendar and weather, review the schedule for the day, beginning of the day announcements and morning messages
- 9:20 – 9:45** **READING TECHNIQUES INSTRUCTION:** phonics, vocabulary, word work
- 9:45 – 10:15** **ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA):** integrate Science, Social Studies or Health and Wellness; shared reading and read-aloud, guided reading lesson, writer's workshop
- 10:15 – 11:00** **LITERACY CENTERS:** games with letter names, sight word puzzles, small group work and instruction
- 11:00 – 11:30** **LUNCH**
- 11:30 – 12:00** **RECESS**
- 12:00 – 12:40** **SPECIALS:** music, theater, computers, physical education, organized active play
- 12:45 – 1:00** **QUIET TIME:** resting, drawing, writing
- 1:00 – 1:30** **MATH (USING MANIPULATIVES)**
- 1:30 – 2:00** **ELA**
- 2:00 – 3:00** **CHOICE TIME: READING, ART, DRAMATIC PLAY, FREE PLAY**
- 3:00 – 3:15** **GET READY FOR DISMISSAL:** clean-up, check backpacks to go home, end of day announcements or songs





Family Engagement or Health and Wellness:

SAMPLE BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL ROUTINES

Consistent routines are key to school success. Even on the weekend, it is a good idea to continue the same schedule for morning and bed times, so children don't have to adjust when the school week begins.

Before School

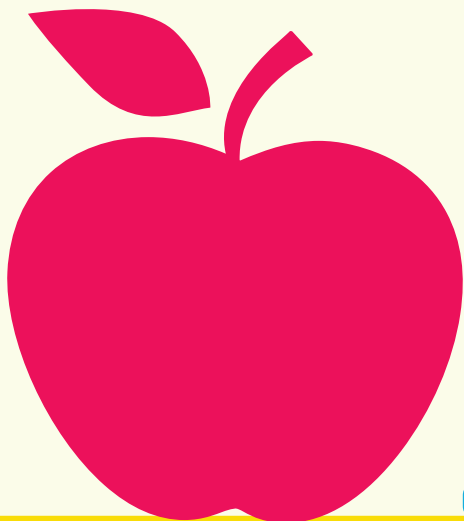
ESTABLISH A CONSISTENT MORNING ROUTINE.

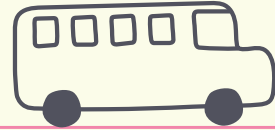
Children do best when they know what to expect. Whatever your morning routine is – getting up at the same time every day, washing up, brushing teeth, dressing, eating or having a food plan in place, packing the backpack for the school day -try to stick to it on a regular basis.

HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE FOR BREAKFAST AND LUNCH.

If your child isn't eating breakfast at home, most schools have a cafeteria or breakfast option, where there is usually a school-subsidized plan as well, for breakfast and lunch. Note: Sending food that your child is familiar with is key for ensuring they'll feel comfortable eating their lunch in the school setting. It's also great to have them practice opening their food containers so they'll be able to manage their own lunches at school without help.

CHECK THE BACKPACK. You can do this in the morning or evening; see backpack notes in the After School section.





After School

MOST SCHOOL SYSTEMS HAVE AN AFTER CARE OPTION for children to remain at school up until 5:00 or even 6:00 pm. Contact the school in the spring or early summer to find out how to register, and if they have transportation options available if needed.

GO THROUGH YOUR CHILD'S BACKPACK. Teachers use the backpack to send home important notices for you to read or paperwork to sign, and/or homework for your child to do at night. If you need notices translated into your home language, let the school know; most schools will have a translation service available for you. Other important backpack items to look for can include: wet clothes from accidents or outside play, and uneaten food or dirty containers from the day.

ESTABLISH A CONSISTENT BED-TIME ROUTINE. Children do best when they know what to expect. Whatever your night time routine is - brushing teeth, quiet story or cuddle time, a song or talking about the day; try to stick to it on a regular basis. Note: any type of screen time before bed can make it harder for a child to fall asleep. Try to limit screen time to an hour or two before lights out so they can get the solid rest that they need.

A green speech bubble shape containing two pieces of white lined paper, one above the other, for writing.

Healthy Habits Chart



Use star stickers to fill out this chart to help your child develop healthy habits.

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

BRUSH
TEETH

GET
DRESSED

PICK UP
TOYS

EAT A
HEALTHY
SNACK

**Healthy Habit ideas: set the table, play outside with a ball, tucked in to bed*

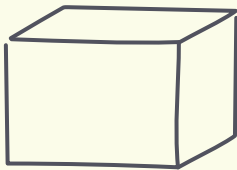
Early Literacy:

DRAMATIC PLAY - ANIMAL TALES

This early literacy activity gets children excited about using words to tell stories while playing with toy animals.

Materials

- Stuffed or plastic toy animals
- Props for the story; these can include empty boxes, plastic dishes or cups, yarn or large buttons.



Activity

1. Have your child pick an animal and give it a name, that's the beginning of the story!
2. You can ask many other questions that are "story starters", helping your child reach into their own imagination to create more ideas. For example, "Your cat looks hungry, what can it eat?" Your child can put yarn into a cup, stir it with a fork and feed their animal "spaghetti". Have them tell you all about what they're doing, to encourage their story telling skills.
3. Your child can look around the room for all kinds of objects for their animal-story play. Blankets can be bunched up into mountains, shoe boxes can be beds, and bowls can be bathtubs. Ask them about the adventures their animal is having!
4. Throughout the play time, ask your child questions that let them continue to make up stories about what their animal is doing, and what they might do next. This is a great way for your child to use lots of words and put them into sentences. You can help them by suggesting new words such as is your cat sleepy or wide-awake?, Excited or bored? Does your bunny like to walk or hop; can it fly?



STEAM Skills

COLOR AND SHAPE DETECTIVE

This STEAM activity gives children lots of practice using crayons and scissors while they learn about shapes and colors!

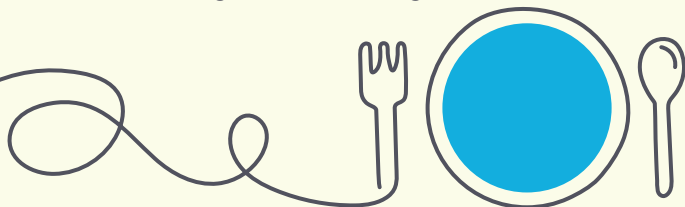
Materials

- Colored paper with shapes drawn for children to cut out (e.g. circle, square, triangle)
- Scissors
- Crayons or markers
- Popsicle sticks or straws
- Tape



Activity

1. Talk with your child about the different shapes and paper colors. If they don't know the names, this is a great opportunity to have them practice.
2. Have your child pick a shape to cut out. Depending on their level of scissors skills, you can help them with the cutting, or cut for them. Note: If they aren't able to cut on a line yet, let them practice by making little "feathering" snips at the edges of the paper.
3. Once they have a shape cut out, help them tape it onto a popsicle stick or straw. This is their shape finder detective tool!
4. Next, have them explore the room to locate the same shape and color that they have on their shape stick. Talk with them the about differences and similarities between what they find and their own shape. Is the plate (circle) bigger or smaller than their circle? Is the book longer or shorter than their rectangle?
5. You can extend this activity to include counting by having your child to count how many objects they can find that match the color or shape of their shape finder. Challenge yourself to do this along with them to model having fun while learning!





Feelings Chart



In addition to giving your child a great place to share his or her feelings every day, this calendar can help with math skills by serving as a reminder of how days and weeks work. Children will also be learning about the calendar in their daily circle time in kindergarten, so this early exposure will help them feel more comfortable with how it works.

(fill in month)

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<p>The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt _____ today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt happy today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I am glad today is Thursday because _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The coolest thing I learned today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Today I laughed when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>I am glad today is Sunday because _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt _____ today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt happy today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The coolest thing I learned today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Today I laughed when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Today I laughed when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt _____ today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt happy today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I am glad today is Thursday because _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The coolest thing I learned today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I am glad today is Monday because _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt _____ today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt happy today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The coolest thing I learned today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Today I laughed when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Today I laughed when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt _____ today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I felt happy today when _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>I am glad today is Thursday because _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The coolest thing I learned today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>