

Ensuring a Successful Transition to School

Life is full of important transitions from one stage of development to the next. One of the most important transitions for a child is moving from early environments into school. Whether the child has spent most of the time at home or has been in child care or preschool classrooms, moving into “big” school can be a major adjustment, for both children and their parents.

Parents play an important role in ensuring that this transition goes smoothly—and in establishing the foundation for an on-going partnership with the school in encouraging a child’s academic success. Here are a few tips for navigating this transition:

- **Before enrolling your child, visit the school your child will attend,** giving your child a chance to explore and develop some familiarity with the school and its routines.
- **Once your child is enrolled and receives an assignment, visit with the teacher.** Introduce your child to the teacher before school starts. Take the teacher information identifying your child’s interests, experiences, learning style, and family background.
- **Volunteer as your circumstances and time allow.** If your work schedule does not allow you to participate during the day, attend evening events and conferences; offer to make or find helpful items needed in the classroom.
- **Communicate regularly with the teacher.** Exchange telephone and email information. Stay in touch, focusing on positive interaction with the teacher and letting the teacher know of any special circumstances in your child’s life.
- **Create a learning environment at home and support your child’s learning, but avoid over-involvement; respect and encourage your child’s independence in completing assignments.** Establish a time and place for your child to do school work. Be available to help, but ask questions that encourage the child to think through and solve challenges.

Work to ensure that you and the teacher are partners in your child’s education!



Recognize the five areas of readiness that are important for school success.

Being ready for school includes *all* of the following:

- **Approaches to learning:** It is important that a child arrives at school with their natural curiosity intact. During the early years, children should be encouraged to explore their environment, to ask questions, to engage in creative play. Eagerness to learn is essential for school success.
- **Cognitive development:** Critical thinking skills develop when appropriate stimulation is provided in the context of nurturing relationships. A few guidelines: Can your child sit and listen to a story and begin to recognize letters, numbers, colors, shapes, and names in print?
- **Language development:** A child who has engaged in conversation with parents and has enjoyed looking at/listening to books arrives at school with a strong foundation. Talk with your child every day about events and activities and read to them every day. Encourage your child to initiate and engage in conversations, describe experiences and ask questions.
- **Social-emotional development:** In the first few years, a child develops a sense of personal worth, the ability to trust, and growing skills in relating to others. If your child has experience in following simple directions and rules, as well as playing with and taking turns with other children, adjusting to school will be easier.
- **Physical development:** Help children develop both large muscle development through active play and small muscle coordination through coloring, drawing, working puzzles, and building things.