



Help Your Preschoolers Be...

Kindergarten Ready

The emphasis in the early education field has become *SCHOOL READINESS*, which involves you, the child care provider or preschool teacher. Yet, what do Kindergarten teachers consider “ready,” and how do early educators help children become ready to learn in the Kindergarten environment?

Quality Preschool

According to local and nationwide research, children who learn at quality preschools are better prepared for Kindergarten, which leads to life-long success... period! So, what is “quality”? Quality can be one of those I-know-it-when-I-see-it things. The child care industry is beginning to try to define it. Quality is an age-appropriate, stimulating environment. It is curriculum that is... 1) based on child development principles, 2) offered through a variety of activities throughout the day, 3) adaptive to learning styles, and 4) taught within the context of everyday experiences. Quality is also staff that are well-educated and well-trained, who enjoy learning and being with

children, who have the ability to translate knowledge into facilitating activities, and who model caring, consistent, respectful relationships.

Learn Through Play

Play is the natural mode for three and four year old learning. Curiosity, discovery and firsthand experience is the best context for language development and concept understanding. So have fun, and integrate numbers, colors, shapes, letters and new words to their play.

Story Time

Reading and telling stories is a crucial exercise in learning to read and understand language. Read out loud in groups every day. (See Bibliotherapy article.)

Social Skill Support

Kindergarten teachers hope that children enter their classroom ready to... approach new relationships with confidence, take turns and share, make compromises, work independently as a member of a group, listen to a story, follow rules, care for his belongings and respect others’ belongings... all the social skills they learn with you now!

Individualized Teaching

Children enter Kindergarten—as they enter early care settings—with varied background and skills. Assessing the skills and special needs of the children in your care can be part of an early intervention in getting them the educational support they need to succeed. Adapting your care and instruction now can also allow children to acquire the skills they need to be ready for school. (More on this topic in our Spring ‘06 Newsletter.)

Introduce Kindergarten

Young children always feel more comfortable when they know what to expect. (Don’t we all?) Talk with the children about the excitement of Kindergarten, about meeting the teacher and visiting the classroom. Discuss how it will be different (e.g. bringing a backpack) and the same (e.g. a teacher who cares).

See the back of this newsletter for resources for early educators and parents to help children be Kindergarten Ready.

Inside this issue:

Kindergarten Ready!	1
Encouraging Cooperation	2
Bibliotherapy	2
A Dozen Indoor “Ya Ya” Activities	2
Using TV In the Classroom	3
Cold and Flu Season	3
Resources for Early Educators	4

The focus of this issue...

The Winter issue focuses on helping young children get ready for school. We review what Kindergarten teachers are looking for in a prepared child and how early care programs are instrumental to this preparation. We provide information on valuable resources—books, TV, web-sites—to give you what you need in your job. And, we share ideas on activities, social skills, and health that you can implemented today.

Encouraging Cooperation

Children need to know more than numbers and letters before Kindergarten, they also need to have important social and emotional skills. The School Readiness newsletters will feature one of the following skills each issue:

- Confidence
- Curiosity
- Intentionality (wish to impact)
- Self-Control
- Relatedness
- Capacity to Communicate
- Cooperativeness

This issue will focus on cooperation, which is the ability to balance one's own needs with someone else's. It is often thought of as doing what an adult wants, but that is compliance. Cooperation involves give and take. To develop a cooperative spirit, children must learn to understand that requests and rules are beneficial for everyone.

Take turns. As early as six months, caregivers can begin modeling turn taking. Babies love to imitate. Place a block in the bucket and then wait for him to imitate you (or take a turn). Practice taking turns as often as you can.

Explain reasons and do chores together. Children as young as two or three understand simple explanations. "When you help me put away the books, I finish quicker and then we can play."

Offer suggestions. Giving children suggestions, not commands, brings about coop-

eration. "You need to wear a hat outside. Would you like to put it on or would you like me to?"

Give choices. Choices allow the child to practice making decisions. Keep the choices within the child care rules. "Teeth need to be brushed after lunch. Do you want to do it before or after you use the potty.?"

Give praise. Explain why what he offered was important. This helps him see his skills and value.

Next issue: Self-Control

Cooperation & Problem Solving

Problem solving and cooperation go hand in hand. Here are 5 steps to teach both:

1. **State the problem.** "You want to draw on the wall, but I say no."
2. **Ask a question.** "Where else could you draw?"
3. **Try a solution.** Offer 2 options that are okay with you. "Would you like to draw on this blank paper or in a coloring book?"
4. **Set limits.** If she insists on drawing on the wall. "I'll put the crayons away until we agree on a place to draw."
5. **Then re-direct.** "Let's make block towers on the carpet."

Bibliotherapy

Most child care providers think about literacy when they envision reading books to a young child. But books can also be a tool to help children solve problems and learn new emotional skills... called bibliotherapy.

Just like adults, children are faced with real problems. Yet, with children, they do not have the emotional maturity or personal experiences to apply coping skills or even make sense of what is happening to them.

The bibliotherapy process involves 1) identification, 2) catharsis, and 3) in-



sight. First, the book engages the reader and provides a means to identify with the character/event in the story.

Second, the child becomes

emotionally involved in the story and is able to experience the feelings associated with the problem.

Third, as the story's character reasons through her problems, the child is walked through the steps of understanding and coping with the situation in which both the reader and character are faced.

Bibliotherapy can be done with individuals or groups. In the early care setting, this typically involves small group readings of books that meet the development level of the child, plus address and resolve the presenting problem. After the story is read, the children are given a few minutes to think about the story, and then are asked a few leading questions about the lessons learned.

Follow-up activities for young children may include...

- Drama—role playing or reconstructing the story with puppets
- Art—drawing pictures of the event or the feelings of the main character, draw-

ing a map illustrating story events, or creating a collage

- Storytelling—Resolving the story in a different way, making up a different story with the same lesson

Bibliotherapy can also be used for more than problem solving. It can also guide the development of behaviors, character, self-concept, as well as teach new skills to support her in adjusting to new situations in the future.

Books on Loss for Youngsters

Coping with loss—whether due to the death of a pet or divorce— is extremely difficult for children. Search for books online or with local bookseller (www.lyonbooks.com, and www.barnesandnoble.com)

A few we suggest on these topics...
Death: I Miss You, The Next Place, Lifetimes, and Sad Isn't Bad
Divorce: I Don't Want to Talk About It, Dinosaurs Divorce, Two Homes, and It's Not Your Fault

A Dozen Inside “Ya Ya” Activities

My mom used to order me to “run around the block” to get my “ya yas out!” We all know the vibration of a child needing to be physical. The following are one dozen, easy inside activities to get the “ya yas” out on rainy days:

- Bake a cake (or cut out cookies) and decorate it
- Play hide and seek inside
- Play charades—make your own list of objects, animals, and activities children are familiar with
- Read a story and then act it out
- Dance—have the children match

their dancing to the speed and rhythm of a variety of songs

- Make a tunnel to climb through
- Learn to do somersaults
- Make up a song about rolling and then sing it while rolling on the floor
- Create a zoo — imitate the animals using large movements
- Organize a rock band or a marching band with shakers, drums and tamborines—dancing and wiggling encouraged
- Hold a yard stick or broom stick up high and see if the kids can jump



high enough to touch it, then hold it lower and limbo, finally rest it on the ground to hop over it on each foot, frontward and backward

- Do an alphabet treasure hunt –put letter flashcards or fridge magnets in a bowl; the children find items that start with the letter drawn

Using Television In The Classroom

According to KidsHealth, 70% of child care centers use TV during a typical day. Granted, TV shows can be educational, as well as entertaining, but it is watched makes a lot of difference.

Both the quality and quantity of TV watching can significantly affect young children. Remember that preschool children do not differentiate between reality and fantasy, so select shows that teach them about themselves and what they can understand about their world.

Young children should not watch more than two hours of TV per day. They

need to do imaginative and full body play to support their developmental growth.

Choose programming carefully. Thoughtfully and intentionally choose specific quality, educational shows.

(Of course, avoid age inappropriate content and commercials.) PBS shows such as Sesame Street,

Reading Rainbow, and Mister Rogers' Neighborhood are quality shows for young children. Become familiar with free teaching materials that support those programs too.

For example, Mr. Rogers' website and his Plan & Play Book (available through

KIXE) offers thematic activities to accompany the shows. You can also search his materials for your own themes: winning and losing, relationships, competition, fears, etc.

TV gives options while the adults make choices for what is best for our children.



Who is teaching the children? The average child spends 900 hours in school and nearly 1,023 hours in front of a TV each year.

Cold & Flu Season

No one knows the agony of cold and flu season like the child care provider! We'd do anything to avoid it! But other than washing hands, what else is there?

California Child Care Health Program suggests establishing a routine of a daily health check—upon the arrival and departure of each child. This will help you establish what is “normal” for each child, so that you can quickly identify when a child is getting sick.

Look for the obvious and subtle signs:

- Change in mood or behavior
- Fever
- Skin rashes, swelling, bruising
- Complaints
- Change in activity level or appetite

It can be a difficult challenge to determine whether a child should stay or go home. Parents rely on you to care for their child in order to work. It is your decision, and your responsibility to

the other children and families, to keep them well cared for.

Hand washing really is the best preventative action:

Wash hand with soap for 10 seconds (sing the ABC song), scrubbing all surfaces, and rinse with warm water. Turn off water with a paper towel. Dry hands with a fresh paper towel, and discard in a lined, foot-pedal canister.



580 Manzanita Avenue, Suite 12
Chico, CA 95928
530-879-7450 Phone
530-879-7449 Fax
www.bcoe.org/ess/cd/schoolready



School Readiness Resources for Early Educators and Parents

Developmentally Appropriate Practice In Early Childhood Programs. FREE. www.naeyc.org

Everyday Goodbyes: Starting School and Early Care—A Guide to the Separation Process. \$18. www.naeyc.org

First Class: A Guide for Early Primary Education. FREE. www.cde.ca.gov

Heart Start: The Emotional Foundations of School Readiness. FREE. www.zerotothree.org

Prekindergarten Learning and Development Guidelines. FREE. www.cde.ca.gov or 800-995-4099

School Readiness Assessment. FREE. www.naeyc.org

Starting Out Right, A Guide To Promoting Children's Reading Success. \$10 download, \$16 softback. www.nap.edu

Zero to Three: School Readiness. FREE. www.zerotothree.org

Resource To Offer Parents:

Helping Your Child Become a Reader. (Also in Spanish) FREE. www.ed.gov

Helping Your Child Succeed In School. FREE. www.ed.gov

Helping Your Preschool Child. (Also in Spanish) FREE. www.ed.gov

Raising a Reader, Raising a Writer. FREE. www.naeyc.org

Ready or Not: Preparing Young Children For the Classroom. FREE. www.naeyc.org

Ready to Go: What Parents Should Know About School Readiness. In \$5 package of family brochures. www.naeyc.org