



PARENTING POSTS

A newsletter for parents of kindergarten students.

First Grade: Ready or Not?

Your child has nearly finished kindergarten and may or may not be ready for first grade. Kindergarten has provided a rich and challenging learning environment for your child. School, like life, is a continuation of the learning that has been occurring for your children every waking moment of their lives.

First grade will continue much the same as kindergarten with the addition of a more structured day, higher academic expectations and possibly homework. First graders still will have time for play and shared learning as well.

Readiness is a process of growth and change, not something a child does or does not have. All children develop and mature at their own pace and not necessarily according to the school's calendar.

Readiness refers to a child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development at a particular time. A child's unique differences should be welcomed and accepted. Any group of children will have members with a variety of capabilities and readiness levels.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals has recommended standards for primary grades that include:

- Young children learn best by using their senses. Lessons for young learners should include hands-on experiences combined with teacher instructions.
- Research recommends a ratio of one adult to 20 children in elementary classrooms.
- Children should be assessed using multiple methods, including informal observations.
- Reading activities at home will enhance the school learning experience greatly. Parents can ask children to retell stories, act out what they have learned, and describe the setting, characters and events from a book or from a recent happening in their own life.
- Adults should ask children questions that cause them to think or ponder before answering.



Supporting Your Child

For education to have a positive, long-range impact on a child's life, parents and teachers should work as a team. A high-quality program recognizes that parents, teachers and the child are all members of a team contributing to the student's growth and learning.

Parents can help by:

- Providing a rich learning environment at home
- Keeping in regular contact with the teacher
- Attending parent-teacher conferences
- Going through the child's backpack daily to show interest and plan time for homework
- Attending parent workshops on child development, parenting and school success

Most importantly, respect and support your child's unique characteristics and abilities. Children need to feel accepted, valued and loved for who they are. Parents are uniquely privileged and responsible for encouraging and supporting their child's growth and progress.

Kindergarten Benchmarks

Teachers generally suggest that students entering first grade ought to be able to do the following:

- Interact with adults and classmates appropriately
- Take turns speaking and listening in conversations
- Share ideas in clear, audible sentences
- Know when and how to ask for help or to get information
- Read grade-level sight words in text or a sentence
- Use grade-level sight words in their writing
- Read their own writing
- Identify story elements: characters, events, scene
- Recognize, name and print uppercase and lower case letters of the alphabet
- Say all alphabet letter sounds
- Identify long and short vowel sounds
- Identify and name upper- and lowercase letters
- Have knowledge of rhyming words
- Recognize and produce rhyming words
- Count to 100 by one's and ten's
- Identify and write numbers to at least 20
- Count backwards from 10 to 1
- Demonstrate one-to-one correspondence by counting up to 20 objects
- Identify objects in a group of up to 10 as greater than, less than, or equal to the number of objects in another group
- Fluently add and subtract within 5
- Name shapes and solids and identify them as two-dimensional or three-dimensional
- Segment and blend parts of spoken words
- Use letter sounds in decoding (reading) and encoding (writing) processes
- Follow directions to use computing devices for a variety of tasks
- With guidance, use technology in safe and correct ways

Stress Less Activity

Stress is part of everyone's life. Even young children! Try this activity with your child to help reduce stress and enjoy time together.

Teach your child box breathing. Breath in for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, breath out for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts. Draw a square in the air to illustrate the box as you count and breathe.



Assessing Your Child

You know your child best. Your child's teacher, pediatrician or child psychologist knows about children and the school setting. Together you can discuss and evaluate what will benefit your child. Remember also that making the decision to send a child to first grade is not merely about academic preparation but also must include a child's social and emotional readiness in areas such as attention span, listening, following directions and getting along with others.

More serious concerns may be addressed by having your child evaluated. Feedback about your child's development can provide you with more information for making an informed decision. Observations are made by a school or private professional. Your student's progress is reported to you, the parent. This process assesses your child's readiness skills and behaviors in areas including language proficiency, interpersonal skills, and physical and mental health. These items are important for finding success in school. Your child's kindergarten teacher also has valuable information that should be considered. Your school may offer resources or agency referrals for additional help and support.

You may need to ask for extra support your child may need to develop skills. Children need to be supported during each stage of development. Parents and schools guide this process to help each child develop at his or her own pace.



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