

Starting Off on the Right Foot!

Establish a routine.

This includes a healthy bedtime and breakfast. Make sure you communicate with your child about his/her schedule and always let them know ahead of time if that routine will change. Even if your child has been in a full day program before, this is a new experience that will require an adjustment. Plenty of rest and good food will help ensure your child is ready for a great day at school.

Encourage independence.

Now is the time to begin to encourage your child to do more. Getting themselves dressed each day, clearing dishes after meals, and cleaning up their own toys are all ways to foster independence.

Talk with your child about the school day.

Talk with them about their day at a time when they are relaxed and engaged. Let them share what is on their minds without too many probing questions. The more you demonstrate you simply want to listen to what they have to say, the more willingly they will share.

Make family mealtimes meaningful.

Play *Peaches and Pits!* Each family member in turn shares two things about their day: one *Peach*, something good that happened, and one *Pit*, something they wish hadn't happened. Teaching your child to focus on the positive in addition to the harder parts of their day helps everyone to keep a healthy perspective. It is also a great way to get specific details about what is happening at school.

Give a positive goodbye each morning.

Giving a happy goodbye sends the message that you are excited about where they are going to spend their day and helps to ease any natural worries they might have. Make an effort to follow the school drop-off procedure and establish carpool routines right away. Doing so will lessen the time it takes for everyone to adjust to their new school setting.

Avoid making comparisons.

Avoid comparing your child to other children. Kindergarten is a year of huge growth and development with a wide range of abilities. Accepting that your child will grow at his or her own pace sets the tone for a happy year of learning.

Stay healthy.

Keep your children healthy by following the school policy for illness. If your child is sick he/she should be at home where he/she can properly rest and recover. It is difficult to play and learn at school when you are feeling under the weather.

Spend time reading together.

Reading is one of the most impacting activities you can do with your child to foster learning. In addition to you reading to them, give them a chance to share stories with you. Look for familiar words, words that rhyme, and ask questions about the storyline and characters found in the book. It is also important for them to see you reading. Tandem reading, where you sit together each enjoying your own book, sends the message that you find reading a valuable way to spend your free time.

Pack a powerful lunch.

Pack a healthy and familiar lunch each day. Limit choices and amounts. School is not the place to try something new. It is far better to pack the same item day after day that you know is healthy and will be eaten. Portion sizes should be small and manageable. Lunchtime in kindergarten is a fun time to socialize and relax with friends. Make it successful by sending familiar choices in small quantities.

Practice fine motor skills.

This is a great time to encourage small motor development at home. The following two websites contain many fun and engaging ways to help your child strengthen muscles necessary for fine motor tasks at school.

www.therapiststreetforkids.com

www.theimaginationtree.com

Talk with the teachers.

We are all in this together! Each of us shares the same goal—to give your son or daughter a great year of learning. Partnership is the surest way to make sure your child spends each day in an environment where they feel safe, challenged, and valued for who they are as an individual.