



A WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION  
FOR ALL STUDENTS

## Preparing for Kindergarten – Parent Guide

*A Resource for Parents, Educators and the Gresham-Barlow School District Community*

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By now, you and your child may already be talking about kindergarten. Your child may seem enthusiastic one day, then curious or uncertain the next. As a parent, you may also have mixed emotions about your child's first public education experience.

The information in this guide is provided to help you and your child look forward to school with confidence and enthusiasm. As you prepare for the coming year, imagine kindergarten as a place to expand upon your child's education rather than begin it. Working together, at home and at school, we can help your child develop a love for learning that will last a lifetime.

### **How Will I Know if My Child is Ready for Kindergarten?**

There is no single test that guarantees that a child is ready for kindergarten. In general, if your child is five years old by September 1 of the school year, he/she is ready to begin school. In addition, the information listed below describes where most students are developmentally before beginning kindergarten.

Keep in mind that each child will come to school with a variety of skills and strengths. Think of the list below as a way to identify your child's strengths, rather than using it to decide whether he/she is behind or ahead of other children. If you want to help your child prepare for success in kindergarten, try the activities suggested in this guide. And once the school year begins, know that his or her teacher will create a learning environment that gives each individual student an opportunity to thrive and learn new skills throughout the school year.

### **Good Health and Physical Well-Being**

My child:

- Runs, jumps, plays outdoors, and does other activities to help develop large muscle skills.
- Works puzzles, scribbles, colors, paints, cuts, pastes, and does other activities to help develop small muscle skills.
- Has bathroom and self-help skills.
- Eats a balanced diet and gets plenty of rest.
- Receives regular medical and dental care, and has had all necessary immunizations.

### *Social and Emotional Preparation*

My child:

- Is curious and motivated to learn.
- Spends short periods away from family.
- Enjoys being with other children.
- Can follow simple instructions.
- Helps with family chores.
- Respects adult leadership.
- Is encouraged to think of ideas for solving a problem.
- Is learning to share and to wait their turn.
- Is learning to finish tasks.
- Is learning to use self-control.

### *General Knowledge*

My child:

- Plays counting games and enjoys counting.
- Is learning to identify shapes and colors.
- Is encouraged to sort and classify things.
- Is learning name, address, and phone number.
- Can identify 10 alphabet letters, especially those from his/her own name.
- Recognizes symbols and print he/she sees daily, such as signs, logos, and advertising.
- Shows an interest in books and reading.
- "Writes" by scribbling messages when playing.
- Likes to show off his/her "reading" and "writing" attempts.

- Knows the difference between pictures and print in a book.
- Pays attention to the order of events in stories, by asking or thinking about what happens next in a story.
- Connects information and events to life experiences, when he/she hears a story.
- Asks questions and makes comments that show he/she understands the literal meaning of a story being told.
- Is beginning to recognize beginning or rhyming sounds in words, such as words that begin with "B" or words that rhyme with "cat."
- Pays attention to repeating sounds in language, such as those heard in rhymes and songs.
- Uses new vocabulary and develops correct grammar in his/her own speech.
- Understands and follows verbal directions.
- Knows that alphabet letters make words.
- Understands that different writing is used for different reasons, such as "lists are used for groceries."

### **What Can I Do to Prepare My Child for Kindergarten?**

In kindergarten, your child will develop skills in each of the following areas below. However, kindergarten makes up only a small part of each week. The key to a successful school year is a strong partnership between home and school.

Review the activities below and congratulate yourself on how much you are already doing to prepare your child for kindergarten. Then select a few new activities you can introduce to your child. Place emphasis on trying a new activity rather than mastering the skill. By emphasizing that you can learn by playing, you will show your child that learning is fun as well as important!

#### *Reading Readiness and Language*

- Read to your child every day.
- Read by yourself to set a good example.
- Give your child many reading materials to explore and writing materials to use.
- Visit the library often, and participate in story times and other activities there.
- Read aloud signs like "No Parking" and "Exit" and talk about what the signs mean.
- Sing songs and say nursery rhymes together.
- Play with alphabet letters, and help your child to identify letter names and words that begin with the sound the letter makes.
- Use new and different words to describe what you see, hear, and feel.
- Encourage your child to write notes using scribble writing and pretend spelling.
- Turn a shoe box into a mail box and use it to send notes to each other.
- Take turns reading what you have "written."

#### *Math Readiness*

- Make a simple recipe together. Count and measure ingredients. Note how long it takes to complete your creation.
- Use a calendar to plan special events. Count the days until an event happens.
- Use a growth chart to measure height.
- Play simple math games with dice, cards, and dominoes.
- Practice saying your phone number and address together.
- Count forward and backward with your child. For example, "Three, two, one, let's go!"
- Find things to count with your child, such as...
  - How many bites does it take to eat a banana?
  - How many things at home are shaped like a circle? a square? a triangle?
  - How many shoes or books are in your home?
  - Count objects such as blocks, spoons, pennies, etc.
  - How many steps does it take to cross a room?
  - How many steps does it take to climb up stairs?
- Add to the fun, by stapling paper together and making a "How Many?" book to keep track of what you have counted.

#### *Health Education*

- Make hand washing and tooth brushing a regular part of your family's routine.
- Use "Mr. Yuk stickers" on dangerous items in your home. Talk about what the sticker means.

### *Physical Fitness*

- Practice fastening clothes and shoes with snaps, buttons, zippers, and laces.
- Visit parks, playgrounds, and swimming pools.
- Play games that encourage your child to move different body parts on command.

### *Music*

- Sing songs together. Try humming or clapping to the music as well.
- Make up songs with your child. Take turns singing verses.
- Encourage your child to listen to children's songs. (Raffi, Sesame Street)

### *Visual Arts*

- Experiment with Play Dough, crayons, paints, paper and scissors to develop small muscles in the fingers and eye-hand coordination.
- Pick a place to display "masterpiece" creations at home.
- Ask your child to tell you all about his or her artistic creations.
- Find ways to learn about basic colors.

### *Social Studies*

- Practice taking turns and listening respectfully with your child by playing "I Wonder." For example, start with "I wonder what it would be like to be a bird." Ask your child to answer. Then take your turn answering.
- If your child wants to say more, encourage him or her to wait until your turn is finished.
- Look at family photos together, and talk about what makes your family special.
- Practice problem solving together by asking, "How can we solve this problem?"

### *Science Readiness*

- Play "Sink or Float" with your child by finding a number of small items. Predict which will sink, and which will float. Try each one and write down what you learn.
- Collect items such as stones, leaves, buttons, or shells, and sort by color, shape, size or any other characteristic your child selects.
- Play "I Spy." Say "I spy something smooth (bumpy, round, blue, orange, ...)." Have your child guess what it is, then make up his/her own.

### **The Basics of Kindergarten in the Gresham-Barlow School District**

Kindergarten in the Gresham-Barlow School District is a one-half time program. Schools are all on an AM/PM Kindergarten schedule. Bus transportation is generally provided if walking distance to school exceeds one mile for a kindergarten age student. In most cases, your child will attend the school within your neighborhood's school boundary. If you do not know your neighborhood school, call the Gresham-Barlow School District at 503-618-2450. A list of elementary schools, contact information, and maps are available at the District Office or on the District website.

### **Age Eligibility**

The State Board of Education has adopted a common entry age for kindergarten and first grade students.

- A child must be 5 years old by September 1 to enter kindergarten.
- A child must be 6 years old by September 1 to enter first grade.

***A birth certificate is required at registration to verify your child's birth date.***

The Gresham-Barlow School District has an early entry policy and procedure. Parents interested in this procedure should contact the building principal.

### **Registration**

- When registering your child bring;
  - proof of residence such as a utility bill,
  - all telephone numbers for parents (home, work, mobile, and/or pager),
  - the names and telephone numbers of emergency contacts (family members, friends, or babysitter),
  - all your doctor and dentist information (name, telephone).
  - A record of your child's immunizations

### **Immunizations**

**Oregon Law requires Kindergarten students to have at least one dose of each required vaccine or an appropriately signed exemption before school attendance. The list of required vaccines will be provided at the time you register your child or can be requested from the school or District Office.** By February of their kindergarten year, students must have all the required immunizations or must be on a schedule to update their immunizations.

### **Orientation Events and Registration**

Kindergarten orientations are information meetings for parents to meet school staff and learn about the school's kindergarten program. Some school orientations take place in April and May, others are in early September. To find out when your kindergarten child's orientation takes place, contact your neighborhood school.

### **Enrolling Outside Your Neighborhood School Boundary**

Requests for in-district transfer are generally accepted from early May until the end of the school year in June. Applications are available at and should be returned to your neighborhood elementary school or the district office. Because of the unpredictability of kindergarten enrollment, decisions on transfer requests are often not made until late August or early September because of the changing kindergarten registration right up until school starts.

### **Special Education**

Special education services are available for children who have a disability. Eligibility is determined by standardized evaluation and a district team decision. If you have concerns regarding your child's development contact the Special Services staff at your child's school.

### **Safety First**

Any discussion about going to kindergarten should include how to be safe while away from home. Here are just a few ideas of what you can do to make your child's first year a safe one.

- Help your child to know his or her complete name, address, parents' names, phone number, and where to go or call in an emergency. If your child cannot remember this information yet, write it down and choose a place for your child to keep it and find it at all times, such as inside a backpack or jacket.
- If your child will be riding the bus, talk about the importance of staying seated and sitting quietly on the bus. In the spring before kindergarten begins, walk to a bus stop with your child and watch children getting on or off the bus. Talk about the things you see that children are doing to be safe.
- If your child will be walking to school, your child should know about traffic lights and how to cross streets. Other important messages include, "Walk, don't run," "Cross only in crosswalks," and "Wait for a green light or safety patrols to stop traffic before walking."
- Practice walking or driving the route from home to school or bus stop before the school year begins. Time your trip to arrive at school no more than 5 minutes before the start of class.
- Help your child make personal safety decisions by role playing "What would you do if..." Make sure your child understands what a potentially dangerous situation might be, how to protect himself/herself, how to say no, and how to find help in an emergency.

### **Other Tips to Ease the Transition to Kindergarten**

Whether your child is excited or reluctant to begin kindergarten, you can help make the transition from home, preschool, or child care a successful one by doing the following:

- Visit the school playground with your child during the summer. Encourage your child to imagine kindergarten. How will it be like home, preschool, or child care? How will it be different?
- If you know other children who will be attending kindergarten at your child's school, try to get them together in the summer. Your child will enjoy knowing a friend at school.
- If your child has health care needs that require advance planning, be sure to share that information with the school nurse when you register.
- Provide your child's kindergarten teacher with any transition information you have from home, preschool, or child care.
- Inform the school as names and/or phone numbers change throughout the year.
- Before kindergarten begins in the fall, visit the school with your child. Meet the secretary, principal, and custodian. On your way home, talk about how much fun kindergarten will be!
- Many children experience separation anxiety when they enter school. Talk with your child's teacher if he/she is having a difficult time adjusting to school.