



# Getting Ready for Kindergarten

**Kindergarten readiness begins at birth.** It's not about memorizing ABCs or counting to 10, instead it's about developing strong social-emotional skills. These skills, which form the foundation for becoming successful and productive adults, start taking shape in the first five years of life. When children have solid social-emotional skills, they can work well with others, show kindness, build friendships, collaborate within teams, adapt to change, be responsible, and respect themselves, others, and property. Along with healthy social-emotional growth, executive function skills are considered among the most important for school success. These skills include following directions, delaying gratification, thinking critically, and showing persistence and curiosity.

When kindergarten teachers were asked what skills they needed children to have before entering their kindergarten classroom, they didn't mention academics because these teachers knew they could teach all the academics right in their kindergarten classroom. Instead, they requested that children arrive with strong social emotional skills. Here are some of the most important skills teachers hope children will have when they begin kindergarten.

## Social and Emotional Development

- Work and play cooperatively with peers
- Be non-disruptive, take turns, respect others, and share
- Be able to work alone
- Be able to focus on a task for short periods of time
- Manage transitions and adapt to change
- Resolve conflicts appropriately
- Follow simple rules and directions
- Express emotions in an appropriate manner
- Demonstrate enthusiasm and curiosity when approaching new activities
- Participate successfully in circle time, listen, focus, and be engaged
- Relate appropriately to adults other than parent/caregiver

## Self-Care skills

- Manage small items such as crayons, paintbrushes, buttons, zippers, etc.
- Ask for help when needed
- Take care of personal belongings

- Use the toilet independently
- Perform self-care tasks: dressing, eating, washing hands, and covering mouth when coughing/sneezing
- Fasten clothes and shoes independently
- Move with respect for self and peers' personal space

## Communication and Literacy

- Use communication that can be understood by others
- Listen and understand what is being said or requested by others
- Ask for help
- Communicate wants and needs
- Use words, drawings, and writing to express a meaningful experience
- Look at pictures, then tell stories
- Respond to pictures and symbols, such as a stop sign or food label
- Understand and interpret a story or other text read to them
- Discuss or retell familiar stories, poems, or rhymes
- Attempt or imitate rhyming
- Express an idea or story through symbols or pictures

## Cognitive Development and General Knowledge

- Count 10 objects
- Match items, sort and create patterns
- Make meaning of patterns
- Explore attributes like shape, size, and color
- Anticipate routine, identify and sequence events in that routine
- Show curiosity and a desire to learn

## Physical Development and Motor Development

- Appear physically healthy, well-rested, and nourished
- Manipulate materials such as a pencil, crayon, table block, scissors, eating utensil, and puzzle pieces
- Open packages and containers, such as a lunch box
- Run, stop, hop, gallop, skip, and change direction
- Move with balance and control

At Margaret's House, we weave social-emotional learning in all we do, from infant years to preschool. We are intentional, from the organization of the classroom, to the books we read, to the routines we follow, to the tone we use, to the positive responses we give, to the repetition of the expectations, to the genuine care each teacher has for the children in their classroom group, in all this we are teaching positive social emotional skills. If you would like to support this growth at home, it's easy. Here are some ideas:

## What Families can do at home to support this growth

- **Encourage Positive Interactions**

- Respond to your infant's cries
- Be polite to others, role model this behavior
- Narrate what emotions your child may have, then teach your child to verbalize their emotions rather than using physical means
- Bring your child to events where they can engage with other children, i.e. playdates
- Surround your child with positive people and experiences

- **Develop communication skills**

- Talk to your child all day long. Narrate what you are doing, when you change diapers, when you make dinner, while you drive.
- Include your child in your conversations with others
- Encourage your child to listen, practice give-and-take conversations, teach your child when it is their turn to speak

- **Build a strong vocabulary**

- When your child sees reading as a special time with their loved ones, they will organically develop a love of books, and that in turn opens doors to all kinds of learning and growth which builds over time and supports a healthy successful productive adult, years later
- Read to your child every day, read multiple books, read familiar books, re-read books
- Sit your infant on your lap and read to them, let them explore pages/pictures/colors, encourage them to turn pages. Use board books when they are very young so they can explore the pages and practice turning them without adult worry
- Read, read, and read some more. Develop a true love of books in your child. The time for this begins on day one, not the year before your child's high school SAT exam, or the year before kindergarten. Read books every day from birth
- Even as a baby, bring your child to the library
- Teach your child new words by reading a variety of books and by talking.
- Ask your child questions about stories, build on their understanding
- Sing to your child, this helps them learn about rhythms, words, language and rhymes

- **Encourage a curiosity and love of learning and discovery**

- Use everyday moments to teach your child, describe what is around your child. Identify letters and colors, look at letters on a cereal box, food item, or sign
- Show your child that curiosity is valued, teach them how to ask questions
- Encourage your child to explore when it is safe, but be patient if they are reluctant

- **Explore early math concepts**

- Count your child's fingers and toes out loud
- Count when you cook, count how many eggs you use, measure ingredients and count
- Safely count cars when you are in the car
- Count when naturally available, such as when a store sign reads 5/\$1, count the 5 items together

- **Encourage persistence and resilience**
- Help your child explore new places
- Allow for and expect mistakes, teach your child that mistakes are part of learning
- Allow your child to attempt new tasks, try showing them how step-by-step
- **Encourage creative ways of expression**
- Talk to your child in silly rhymes
- Dance around the house together
- Share your feelings, this begins to teach the words for their emotions
- Engage in creative play together, sing, paint, draw, color, build, and pretend together
- **Support hands-on activities**
- Help your child get creative using blocks, paper, cardboard, glue, paint, markers, crayons, and tape
- Give your child time to play alone too; not unsupervised, just independently
- Ask your child to help you, they can help set the table, put away toys and help with simple household tasks
- **Encourage independence and self-help skills**
- Teach your child words that other people will recognize when they are sick, hurt, or need to go to the bathroom
- When they show readiness help your child learn how to use the toilet, dress themselves, and tie/strap their own shoes
- Let your child wash their hands and make sure they are getting clean
- When your child asks for help, encourage them first and then provide help before they are too frustrated
- Set limits, but only ones that you can/will enforce; then follow through every time
- Give your child breast milk, formula, water, or milk instead of any sugary drinks
- Give your child safe places to be physically active every day
- **Prioritize Self-Care**
- Take time for yourself
- Nap when your child does, you will have more patience when you are rested
- Show your child that asking for help is a sign of strength, connect with other parents
- Be a model for a healthy lifestyle, your child is watching, listening and learning from what you do, sometimes more than what you say

We are honored to partner with you in supporting your child's growth and learning. We recognize that this is a critical stage in their development, and that the foundation for future academic success and adulthood begins now.