Kindergarten

2014 – 2015
Dear Kindergarten Parents/Guardians:

Today is a special day for you and your child as you visit the school that will become your child’s “home away from home” for the next six years. We are confident that you will both depart from today’s experience with information, anticipation and excitement about entry into Kindergarten in September. To complement the information provided to you today, the attached is for your reference.

Children enter kindergarten with differing levels of skills and abilities. Our teachers view children as individuals. This means that they meet children at their respective levels and move them to subsequent levels throughout the year. This will allow your child to flourish and enjoy a successful kindergarten experience.

Parents often ask how they can help their children at home with the development of reading and math skills. Skills develop along a continuum and children make differing levels of progress at various rates along this continuum. The attached suggestions should prove helpful as a guide for you to support your child with a good foundation for becoming a lifelong learner.

The kindergarten teacher, school principal and I look forward to forming an alliance with you throughout your child’s years in elementary education. By joining together in a partnership to offer the necessary support, guidance and resources, your child will be able to prosper in every area of development and maximize his/her potential.

Please do not hesitate to call us to share ideas, discuss concerns or develop plans that will benefit your child.

Warm Regards,

Diane Pandolfi
Director of Elementary Education
TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL KINDERGARTEN YEAR!

- If you do not already have one, start with **establishing a routine for bedtime**. This will help your child to get a good night’s sleep so that they will be better able to attend and learn.

- Be aware of your own emotions as your child enters kindergarten. **Remain calm and positive to send the message that all is well to facilitate your child’s separation from you.** Negative or ambiguous messages are difficult for little ones to process.

- Know your child’s daily schedule (snacks, gym sneakers, projects, and returning books on library day). **Our kindergarten children receive four 25 minute classes each week in Art, Media, Music and Physical Education.**

- Please **check your child’s backpack daily** for homework and important notices, forms, and deadlines.

- Partner with the teacher to support your child’s development. **A conference is scheduled in November to discuss your child’s progress.** Throughout the year, you may also request a conference with the teacher should you have any concerns.

- **Encourage age-appropriate independence**—putting on a coat, using the bathroom, tying shoes, buttoning clothing, unpacking snack containers, cleaning work areas, packing backpack, etc.

- **Ensure that your child understands that you expect appropriate behavior** and that learning and school are important.

- **Establish expectations** that smooth the way as your child matures—sitting quietly, waiting one’s turn to speak, making eye contact when speaking to another person, using “please” and “thank you”.

- **Model kindness and consideration** for ALL individuals so that your child will respect the personal space and belongings of others.

- **Consider making a “date” for some one-on-one time** with your child, especially if there are siblings at home.

- Please check your school’s website to locate the listing of suggested authors for **summer reading** for students entering kindergarten.
Language Arts

In kindergarten, students will learn the alphabet and the basic features of letters and words. They will break down spoken and written words into syllables and letters and identify the sounds each letter makes. These important skills will enable your child to learn new words and to read and understand simple books and stories. Students will also learn to write and share information in a variety of ways, including drawing, writing letters and words, listening to others, and speaking aloud. Activities in these areas will include:

- Naming and writing upper and lowercase letters
- Matching letters to sounds and using other methods to figure out unfamiliar words when reading and writing
- Learning and using new words
- Identifying words that rhyme
- Reading common words such as the, of, you, are, she, and my
- Asking and answering questions about a story the teacher reads aloud
- Identifying characters, settings, and major events in a story
- Recognizing the person, place, thing, or idea that an illustration shows
- Participating in discussions by listening and taking turns speaking
- Using a combination of drawing, speaking, and writing to describe an event, give information about a topic, or share an opinion
- Taking part in shared reading, writing, and research projects
- Expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly
In kindergarten children will read literature:
  • With help from the teacher, students retell stories, including key details.
  • With help from the teacher, students name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

In kindergarten children will read for information:
  • With help from the teacher, students ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
  • With help from the teacher, students identify what person, place, thing, or idea a picture shows.

In kindergarten children will write:
  • Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing, students name what they are writing about and supply some information about the topic.

Math

In kindergarten, your child will focus primarily on two important areas in math. The first is learning about numbers and what numbers represent. This includes counting, reading, and writing numbers as well as developing basic place value understanding. The second is addition and subtraction to build fluency and solve word problems. Students will also learn to identify and work with shapes within their environment as well as measure, compare, and classify attributes of objects.

Activities in these areas include:

  • Counting how many objects are in a group and comparing the quantities of two groups of objects
  • Comparing two numbers to identify which is greater or less than the other
  • Understanding addition as putting together and subtraction as taking away from
  • Adding and subtracting within the number 5 fluently and accurately
  • Breaking up numbers less than or equal to 10 in more than one way (for example, 9=6+3, 9=5+4)
  • For any number from 1 to 9, finding the missing quantity that is needed to reach 10
  • Representing addition and subtraction word problems using objects or by drawing pictures
  • Solving addition and subtraction word problems involving numbers that add up to 10 or less or by subtracting from a number 10 or less
Children will develop skills and strategies as they solve word problems by:

- Representing addition and subtraction with objects, fingers, mental images, drawings, sounds (such as claps), acting out situations, verbal explanations, expressions, and equations
- Adding or subtracting numbers up through 10 using objects and drawings

Children will work with numbers and learn to think of ten as a unit—important building blocks for understanding place value. They will be able to:

- Count to 100 by ones and tens
- Understand that numbers from 11 to 19 contain a ten and some leftover ones (for example, 14=10+4)

Helping your child learn math outside of school

- Use everyday objects to allow your child to count and group a collection of objects.
- Encourage your child to construct numbers in multiple ways. For example, what are some ways that you can make 10? Answers might include 5+5, 6+4, 8+2, etc. Have your child explain his or her thinking.
- Have your child create story problems to represent addition and subtraction of small numbers. For example, “Ann had eight balloons. Then she gave three away, so she only had five left.”
- Encourage your child to stick with it whenever a problem seems difficult. This will help your child see that everyone can learn math.
- Praise your child when he or she makes an effort and share in the excitement when he or she solves a problem or understands something for the first time.

The mathematical experiences that we provide our kindergarteners will guide them in developing a positive disposition toward mathematics.
COMPONENTS TO READING DEVELOPMENT

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Children learn how to discover and use appropriate sounds to create words. Phonemic awareness is developed by children listening for repeating certain sounds. Once children understand the concept of making words from different sounds, they can start to explore the world of identifying words and reading. A fantastic resource to develop this is the use of www.starfall.com.

- **Phonics:** Phonics is the understanding that written letters can represent the sounds of the letters. As children’s phonemic awareness develops, they are ready to begin to look at words and break them apart by their letter sounds. Children use phonics when they sound out an unfamiliar word. Practicing the use of word families is a great way to develop phonics skills. An example is the –at word family. The words in that word family include cat, hat, bat, sat, mat, and rat.

- **Sight Words:** These are some of the most frequently used words in the English language. As referenced in the Top 12 Reading Tips, students who immediately recognize these sight words (sometimes called Dolch words) often develop into confident readers.

- **Reading Fluency:** As children become comfortable with phonics, they can begin to work on their reading fluency. Reading fluency suggests a mastery of reading and that a child is reading the text with speed, accuracy, and expression.

- **Vocabulary:** Continue to expose your child to new words through conversation and books that you are reading. Talking about a new word and asking your child to use that word in a sentence will help cement that word in your child’s ever growing vocabulary.

- **Reading Comprehension:** After reading a book with your child, as stated earlier, encourage him or her to retell the story in his or her own words. This will help your child remember, understand, and analyze the book.
1. **Model reading regularly** and make sure your child sees you reading. Spend time sharing your favorite childhood books with your child.

2. **Locate stories that match your child’s interests.** Introduce comic books, magazines, novels, poetry, plays, nursery rhymes, and other types of reading that encourages your child to figure out what he or she likes to read.

3. **Read to your child and have him or her read to you every day for at least 15 minutes.** Pick out words that might be new to your child or words that have multiple or complex meanings. Discuss those words and how they add to what the writer is saying.

4. **Ask your child to retell a story in his or her own words** by telling what happened first, second, third, etc.

5. **Ask your child to think about what the message of a story may be** or what he or she learned from an informational book or article.

6. Look for opportunities in everyday places to **build your child’s vocabulary.**

7. **Use real-life applications to encourage literacy** such as reading recipes, menus, directions, maps, store ads, etc.

8. **Help your child with learning sight words** as they are taught throughout the year. Sight words or “Dolch word lists” are the most common words in print. Here is a website that you can navigate to find the lists of Pre-Primer and Primer sight words: [http://www.dolch-words.com/dolch.html](http://www.dolch-words.com/dolch.html).

9. **Label your child’s environment.** Use index cards to identify things around your house (door, sink, chair, etc.). Seeing words regularly helps children develop word recognition skills.

10. **Be sure your child has a library card.** Children should select books in which they are interested to develop a passion for reading. Many libraries have book clubs and family activities that make reading fun for the entire family.
11. **Play word games with your child.** Rhyming games, word sorting games, word matching, word searches, crossword puzzles, and ABC order games all help with literacy.

12. **Use technology to help build your child’s interest in reading.** There are several websites where students can read books or articles online. The computer will help with words the student cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers students can use to access those sites. Feel free to ask a librarian or teacher for suggestions.

**Whatever you do, reading should be enjoyable!** Be patient—please do not push or pressure. Children learn at different rates. Use resources at your disposal such as having older siblings or other relatives read to and with your children.

Have fun with shared reading experiences: read in silly voices for different characters, have your child chime in on certain words or repeated phrases, and share a hug at the end of the story!
WORDLESS BOOKS

Wordless Books are a source of learning for you and your child, allowing you to work together to create a story and have fun.

Below is a quote about the value of wordless books for emergent readers from the Notes on the "Jack" series by Front Street.

"Stories without words provide emergent readers with the opportunity to use pictures to orally tell or dictate a story. Wordless books can easily be integrated into writing as children can add dialogue boxes or summaries to the pictures they see. This builds vocabulary, comprehension, communication skills, and sparks creativity and imagination...."

The Jack Series from Front Street Publishers offer wordless books:
- Breakfast for Jack by Schories, Pat - Front Street, p2004, c2004
- Jack and the missing piece by Schories, Pat - Front Street, p2004, c.2004
- Jack and the night visitors by Schories, Pat - Front Street, p2006, c2006
- Jack wants a snack by Schories, Pat - Front Street, p2008, c2008
- When Jack goes out by Schories, Pat - Boyds Mills Press, p2010, c2010

Other wordless books:
- The adventures of Polo by Faller, Regis - Roaring Brook Press, p2006, c2006

A large list of wordless stories is also available on Amazon.com. This list will make it easy to find and select wordless stories for very young children.
INTERNET WEBSITES FOR YOU AND YOUR KINDERGARTEN CHILD

Below is a list of websites recommended for Pre-School and Kindergarten age children. Using these sites at home for a few minutes a week will not only be fun, but reinforce skills that will be used in the classroom.

**Game Goo**  [http://www.earobics.com/gamegoo/gooey.html](http://www.earobics.com/gamegoo/gooey.html)
This website offers literacy activities that are geared for many levels of learners. Includes alphabet skills, real or fiction, matching skills and more.

**Starfall**  [http://www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)
This site offers phonetic reading opportunities for kids. In addition, there are activities geared for each phonetic reader, and several of the readers have a movie to watch. Lots of fun and educational activities.

**PBS for Kids**  [http://pbskids.org](http://pbskids.org)
Starring all your favorite characters from PBS kids shows, plus great activities to learn with. Coloring pages also included.

These science activities include butterflies, animals, weather and more! Perfect for the budding scientist in your kindergartener!

For the younger user, this site teaches about the alphabet, creates music and even lets you download music to your MP3 player.

**Softschools**  [http://www.softschools.com](http://www.softschools.com)
These math games are for Pre-K all the way up to middle school. These are a fun way to test your math skills while playing at the same time.

**Storyline Online**  [www.storylineonline.net](http://www.storylineonline.net)
Listen to an actor or actress read aloud using streaming video. This site is sponsored by the Screen Actors’ Guild. Follow up activities are listed on the site as well.
**Funschool**  [http://funschool.kaboose.com](http://funschool.kaboose.com)
This website features changing activities from online coloring books with printable pages to age appropriate arcade style games.

**Crayola**  [http://www.crayola.com](http://www.crayola.com)
This famous crayon manufacturer sponsors this fun site containing hundreds of printable coloring and activity pages, craft ideas for you and your children to do, a card maker, and online coloring tools.

**Yahoo Kids!**  [http://kids.yahoo.com](http://kids.yahoo.com)
This site sports a lot of pop culture from the movies and the entertainment world, but in a fun educational way. This search engine is a safe way to search the internet with your little one watching over your shoulder.

**Bats for Kids**  [http://www.bats4kids.org](http://www.bats4kids.org)
Is your child batty for bats? Visit this great site to find out more about our webbed-winged friends of the night.

**The Learning Planet**  [www.learningplanet.com](http://www.learningplanet.com)
This site offers educational games for Preschoolers to sixth grade. It has games to test your alphabet the number knowledge, word searches, fractions, geography, etc.

**I Know That**  [http://www.iknowthat.com/com](http://www.iknowthat.com/com)
This site offers “learning skills for life” by grade level. Free registration is required to play.

**ABC Mommy and Me**  [http://www.lil-fingers.com/abc/by.html](http://www.lil-fingers.com/abc/by.html)
Using Macromedia Flash, this site has a simple alphabet game that has pre-readers listening to and viewing letters of the alphabet.

**The Literacy Center**  [http://www.literacycenter.net/lessonview_en.htm](http://www.literacycenter.net/lessonview_en.htm)
This site is perfect for Preschoolers and Kindergarteners to learn letters, create music and more.