

## Kindergarten Here I Come!

Although school doesn't start until September, if you are heading into the kindergarten year, you may have already registered for kindergarten. And, like most parents, you will be wondering how this challenging this transition will be for your child (and for you).

At the recent Family Services of Central Alberta Parenting Conference, I co-presented with an experienced kindergarten teacher about helping prepare children for the big step of kindergarten entry. We offered parents the following information;

The parent is the child's first and most important teacher. Upon arrival at kindergarten, each child is welcomed into the classroom as a unique individual with his or her own talents and areas to develop. Kindergarten supports and respects the family and encourages family and parent participation in your child's education. Kindergarten provides learning experiences that meet the developmental needs of all children.

Parents often ask, what should I do to help prepare my child for kindergarten? First of all, there are no expectations for your child to come to school knowing a variety of skills such as letters and numbers. What parents can continue to do is to make time for play and discovery. Play is how young children learn-by doing, exploring, problem-solving, and imagining.

However, there are some tips that can help with the transition to kindergarten.

- Take time to talk with your child  
Talk about events, weather, daily happenings, play games
- Read to your child every day  
Go to the library, model reading as an activity of choice, build up a home library
- Develop or strengthen routines  
Have regular routines for bed time, meals and hygiene
- Encourage self-help skills/independence  
Let your child choose clothes, select snack.  
Let your child clean up after himself, after eating, or playing with toys  
Make time at home for drawing, cutting and crafts
- Teach your child his first and last name  
Talk about emergency situations, e.g. what to do if lost,  
It is helpful to know the home phone number
- Provide opportunities for social interaction  
This can happen through play groups, play dates, organized sports, preschool, games.  
It is helpful for a child to have had experience in groups of children of various ages,  
and to have had adults other than a parent spend time with them.
- Encourage self-control of behaviour.
- Be sure your expectations of behaviour are clear  
Help your child to develop strategies to manage emotions  
Plan for your child to be successful in behaving in appropriate ways by providing  
healthy nutrition, good sleep habits, and exercise and fresh air.

Attend kindergarten orientation events at your child's school, and talk about what a typical day will be like. Explain your routine clearly to the child- who will take him to kindergarten, what will happen during the time there, how long he will be there, and who will pick him up. Respect your child's emotions and listen to any possible worries. Avoid suggesting that it may be scary or difficult, or anything that may plant a fear in a child's mind.

With some preparation, the transition to kindergarten will be a happy positive experience for you and your child!

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