

## Families and Teachers Working as Partners

In many ways, the adjustment to formal schooling is similar to your child's first transition into preschool or child care. These changes can leave a child feeling uncertain; however, providing support and information can help a child feel secure in his or her new school and understand daily routines.

For many children, the entrance into formal schooling means different transportation, new classmates and teachers, larger classes, experiences with older children in higher grades, navigating the layout of a large school building, encounters with the school nurse, principal, secretaries, custodians and others.

Formal school offers challenges to all children in the areas of literacy, mathematics, and social skills. Research shows that success during this first year may predict later school success. Adults view kindergarten as being more focused than preschool, with greater academic expectations and increased independence.

As a family member of a transitioning student, you may have questions of your own! Below are some questions to guide you through the processing of getting the information you need for yourself and your child.

### Questions to ask formal school teachers

- How can I prepare my child?
- How will my child spend his or her day?
- Are there opportunities for children to choose their own activities?
- What are the academic goals?

### Strategies for Parents

There is a wide difference in the development of children transitioning into formal schooling. Some children will be taller than others, some will be sociable, and some will be shy. Some children will be reading, while others may not be able to write their names. Whatever your child's stage of development, there are some guidelines on readiness for kindergarten.

Children are usually ready for kindergarten if they can:

- Leave their families without too much difficulty
- Go to the bathroom by themselves
- Play well with and respect other children
- Follow simple directions and rules
- Resolve some conflicts with classmates without needing the teacher
- Work independently for at least five minutes
- Sit and listen to a story for ten minutes

- Talk in complete sentences

Think about activities you can share with your child to help get him or her ready for kindergarten. Some examples are:

- Find the picture of the red beans on the can at the supermarket
- Think of ten words that rhyme with *can*
- Give the cashier the money and count the change
- Cook together and learn to measure ingredients
- Sort the nuts and bolts from the tool bench
- Let your child tell you a story while you both fold laundry
- Put a sticker or a mark on the calendar as each day goes by
- Take a look at the *Kindergarten, Here I Come!* Activity guide and the *Learning is Everywhere Calendar* (at [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com)) to discover additional ways you can help your child prepare for kindergarten.

### **Making More Than One Transition**

Families, teachers and schools should work together to support children's successful transition into kindergarten. In many communities, kindergarten may be a 2 ½ hour school day. Even full day kindergarten may not meet the needs of working families. Some children will require child care before and after kindergarten. For some families, this may mean multiple child care situations every day. It can be difficult for children to understand and relate to so many changes. Look for a routine that will offer consistence and the fewest number of transitions during the day. To find before or after school care, visit COMPASS and the Pennsylvania child care provider search website at <https://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/ProviderSearch/pgm/PSWEL.aspx>

Whether the programs in your community are called wrap-around care or after-school care, this transition for your child is as important as the start of kindergarten. Try to be available and flexible for the first few days of school.

Mark down the important dates and notices coming home—there may be many! This of ways you can support your child and his or her kindergarten year. Now is a good time to get into the practice of investing in your child's education. Many children visit their families at work. Give them a chance to take you to the school where they work!

Your child will eventually be able to meet the new expectations and adapt to new routines. That success builds new confidence and a positive self-image. It is important for families and teachers to know how and when to assist. Good communication between you and your child's teacher both at school and after school is essential to developing an effective partnership for succes