

Getting Ready for Kindergarten/Transitional Kindergarten

Kindergarten is a Wonderful, New Adventure!

Starting transitional kindergarten (TK) and/or kindergarten is an exciting adventure for children and families. It is a new opportunity for learning, developing friendships, building confidence and independence.

You can help your child make a smooth transition to TK or kindergarten by becoming informed. When you are informed, you are better able to tell your child what to expect, express confidence in your child and provide calm reassurance. It is typical and normal for both children and parents to feel anxious about starting TK or kindergarten.

We hope this booklet will provide you with key information that will help you and your child transition smoothly to TK or kindergarten.

Make the transition a smooth one.

Going to a new school means changes in daily routines. You can take steps to reduce any stress you or your child may feel... and add to the fun!

Where will my child go to school?

There are a number of kindergarten or TK options for you to consider. Your child could attend your neighborhood school, a charter school, private school or you can choose to home school. You are encouraged to visit the schools you're interested in. Call in January to find out when they will be registering children for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten. To learn more about district boundaries, visit hcoe.org

Your child can go to a school in your neighborhood

Most of the time, your child will attend the school in the neighborhood where you live. Every district has boundaries set up for each school. Some districts have more than one school to choose from, including charter school options.

Your child could go to a charter school

Charter schools provide an alternative public school option. They may have a theme or use other teaching methods. Some charters offer programs that will allow your child to learn at home.

Your child could attend a private school or you could teach your child at home

Look online or refer to the phone book for locations and phone numbers of private schools in your community. In California, teaching your child at home is an option if you are a credentialed

teacher or if you file a Private School Affidavit with the California Department of Education stating that you will meet all state requirements for private schools. For more information, contact the California department of education at 916-319-0800. The Private School Affidavit is online at www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ps.

Admission requirements

School Registration

Register your child at your local school office. This usually takes place in the spring before your child goes to kindergarten. Call your local school for registration information and orientation events and procedures. Register your child as early as possible.

Age

If your child turns five before September 2nd of this year your child is eligible for kindergarten. If your child turns 5 between September 2nd and December 2nd of this year your child is eligible for transitional kindergarten or TK. This is the first phase of a two-year kindergarten program that uses age-appropriate curricula aligned to the California State Standards. Transitional kindergarten acts as a bridge between preschool and kindergarten and is designed to provide our youngest learners with the skills and experiences needed for success in kindergarten.

Immunizations

State law requires either documented proof of immunizations or an exemption at the time of registration. No child will be placed in a class until required immunizations or exemptions are complete. The public health department can assist you.

Physical Examination

All students are required to have a physical exam before entry into first grade. However, many school districts ***strongly recommend*** that this examination occur prior to entry into TK or kindergarten. Please make arrangements for a physical exam as soon as possible and return the completed form to the school office promptly. The school can help you find a medical resource, if necessary.

Dental Examination

State law requires a dental exam by May 31st of the child's first year of TK or Kindergarten,

Successful learners attend school regularly.

Children are expected to attend school unless they have an excused absence.

What can I do at home to prepare my child for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten?

Before the first day of school:

- Visit the teacher, classroom and playground with your child.
- Help your child find the restrooms at school.
- Make sure your child understands how he/she will get to and from school.
- Find out where your child will keep personal belongings such as coat and lunch box.
- Check with your child's school or teacher about snack and lunch procedures.
- A week or more before school starts begin waking your child up at their new morning wake up time.
- Set aside a place at home for your child to keep a backpack, books, school work and writing materials. This can be as simple as a dresser drawer, a box or a desk.
- If you suspect your child will have a difficult time separating from you on the first day, talk with your child's teacher and make a plan.
- Label personal belongings by writing your child's name on the inside tags of sweaters, coats, backpack and on the inside of their lunch box.
- If you need to send money to school with your child, put it in an envelope and label it with your child's name and the purpose (i.e., lunch, milk, book order).

Remember to give your child lots of time to play. It's how children learn best.

Set a consistent school schedule for your child

- Lay out clothes, make lunch, check backpack the night before
- Go to bed early (plan on 10-12 hours of sleep for your child)
- Get an early start
- Eat a good breakfast
- Arrive at school on time
- Take time to give your child a hug and wish your child a good day
- Avoid a stressful start to the day.
- Both you and your child need to adjust to early bedtimes and rising times.

Help your child have a great start!

Is my child "ready"?

This is an exciting time of year... preparing your child for transitional kindergarten or kindergarten! As your child's first and most important teacher, your support for your child and his/her upcoming school experience is critical. Being "ready" includes many areas of your child's development: physical, emotional, social, language and general knowledge development. Research shows that children grow and learn at different rates and that they learn best when actively involved.

The following list is a general guideline of school readiness skills based on the Preschool Learning Foundations that will help your child succeed in TK or kindergarten. At hcoe.org/lccpc you will find a three month summer calendar of activities you can use with your child to reinforce their readiness skills. Most children grow a great deal the summer before going to TK and kindergarten. If you have concerns about whether your child is really ready, you should contact the school.

Physical Development Skills

Your child:

- Jumps with two feet, hops with one foot
- Kicks a ball
- Catches a ball with two hands
- Draws and colors beyond scribbling
- Cuts on a line with scissors
- Can zip, button and snap
- Manages own clothing and toileting

Make time to have your child actively play and exercise. Visit the park and encourage your child to run, jump and climb. Play with balls of different sizes. Support your child's fine motor development by providing lots of opportunities to strengthen his/her hands and fingers. Mold with playdough, draw with paint, crayons and pens and cut up magazines with child safe scissors.

Social and Emotional Skills

Your child:

- Feels comfortable in new situations and has a positive approach to new experiences and learning; is curious and excited about school
- Shares and takes turns; uses good manners
- Participates in group activities, is learning to resolve conflicts
- Cooperates with family, friends and teachers
- Separates from parents easily
- Can talk about his/her feelings
- Can concentrate on activities and pay attention for at least 10 minutes

Encourage your child to share their ideas, talk about their feelings and solve their problems. Being ready for school means knowing how to be a part of a group and follow the routine. Provide opportunities for your child to work cooperatively with other children and adults. Preschool, playgroups and play dates are wonderful environments for children to practice these skills.

Early Math Skills

Your child:

- Knows their age
- Counts to 20
- Counts up to 10 items, pointing at each one
- Knows numbers 1-5 by sight
- Understands that numbers mean quantity (I want 2 toys)
- Sorts and classifies items (sorts cars, foods); compares groups, understanding which group has more, fewer, or the same as
- Solves simple addition and subtraction problems with small numbers of objects (if you have 3 crackers and you eat 1, how many are left?)
- Identifies shapes: circle, square, rectangle, triangle

Math is everywhere around us. Help your child learn to count by counting things in their environment and talking about numbers and quantity. Have your child sort their toys when they clean up or help sort laundry or silverware. Point out the names of shapes in the environment as you a walk or drive through town.

Early Reading Skills

Your child:

- Has been read to often. Knows how to hold books appropriately, how to turn pages and demonstrates an increasing enjoyment of books
- Knows words, not pictures are read and have meaning
- Recognizes his/her first name and other familiar words
- Names at least 12 letters
- Comprehends details of a story (can answer questions about a story you read to your child)

Help your child learn to enjoy books. Visit the library and surround your child with books every day. Refer to books when your child asks a question and model reading for them by reading yourself. Play games with letters and have your child's name written where it can be seen and recognized daily.

Early Writing Skills

Your child:

- Holds a pencil with a finger grasp (not fist)
- Writes letters or shapes to represent words
- Writes his/her first name
- Draws pictures of him/herself

Provide the materials for your child to explore the magic of writing. Writing can take place with a paint brush and water on the sidewalk or with a stick in the sand at the beach. Your child may need help learning to write their name. Make this a fun experience so your child will enjoy writing when they go to school.

Language Skills

Your child:

- Uses language to communicate, problem solve and seek information
- Speaks clearly and is understood by others
- Has conversations with others, using full sentences, maintaining the topic discussed
- Asks and answers questions
- Names colors and shapes
- Listens to, remembers, and follows one and two step directions (please close the door and bring me the book)

Language skills are thinking skills. The more children hear words and practice them, the better they will be at learning in school. Family conversations during dinner, telling stories about your day, playing imagination games with friends and reading books are all great ways to build language skills.

According to local kindergarten teachers, the following are the most important skills:

- Your child can use the toilet, wash hands, dress, eat and blow nose by themselves
- Your child stays focused and pays attention for 10-15 minutes at a time
- Your child asks for help when he/she needs it
- Your child can hold a pencil, use a crayon and cut with scissors

When a child can take care of personal needs and pay attention in the classroom, they are ready to learn other skills.

Questions to ask

Some questions to ask the TK/kindergarten teacher include:

- How many children are in the class? Who are the adults working in the classroom?
- What are the class rules, school rules, bus rules? Is there an established school policy, or booklet, concerning such things as vacations, emergency closing procedures, medical emergencies and transportation?
- How will the children be welcomed to kindergarten during the first few weeks? Am I expected or encouraged to stay? Or should I drop my child off?
- If my child has some problems adjusting or needs some extra help, how will you let me know so I can be a part of the solution?
- How will you handle conflicts between children?
- How will you handle discipline in the classroom?
- What is the usual daily routine (recess, circle, lunch time, etc.)?

- When will children work in small groups and independently?
- Will my child be given homework? If so, how can I help?
- What special events or field trips do you have planned? How can I participate?
- If my child is not feeling well in the morning, or was sick the night before, should I keep my child at home? What happens if my child gets sick at school?
- What is the best way for us to keep in touch? Can I reach you by phone or email?
- When can I visit the classroom? How can I help in the classroom?
- Is transportation available?
- Do you have early release days?
- What are the snack and lunch procedures?
- What time does school begin and end?
- Is afterschool child care available?
- If your child attends a child care program, consider asking the provider to share information about your child's development with the TK/kindergarten teacher.

How can I help at school?

Studies show that when parents are involved, children feel better about themselves and learn more.

- Get to know your child's teacher
- Volunteer in the classroom and on field trips
- Attend parent-teacher conferences
- Attend school events such as Back-to-School Night, Open House, Science Fair and Book Fair
- Join your school's parent-teacher group (PTA, PTO)
- Attend parent groups such as School Site Council

Show an interest in school activities and your child's work

No one knows your child better than you.

You know how your child responds to stress and how to effectively help your child through challenging situations. Communicating this information to your child's teacher will support your child through the transitional kindergarten and kindergarten transition.