

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO KINDERGARTEN?

In the past, kindergarten focused on socialization and play. Formal instruction was delayed until the child entered first grade. Over the years, kindergarten has become increasingly academic in nature. Many schools now teach math and reading at the kindergarten level.

WHAT ARE DEVELOPMENTAL TIMETABLES?

Child development occurs in a very, orderly, highly predictable sequence. All parents are aware of motor development in the infant and eagerly watch for each new accomplishment. The infant rolls over, sits without support, crawls, stands and eventually walks. The order of emerging skills is predictable, but the timetable may vary. The average toddler walks at 13 months, but some walk alone at 11 months, while others take their first independent steps at 16 months or later. Development in other areas may not be as easily observed; nevertheless, all behaviors emerge in a predictable, sequential order.

IS MY CHILD READY FOR KINDERGARTEN?

FBCS policy states that children must be 5 years old by August 31 in order to enroll in kindergarten. However, not every 5 year old is ready for school, and kindergarten entrance is not based on *birth-age* alone. *Birth-age* measures the child's age in years; *developmental age* measures behavioral maturity. Most educators agree that a *developmental age* of five is necessary for kindergarten entrance.

WHAT WILL SCREENING TELL US?

The purpose of screening during the spring before kindergarten entrance is to discover the child's place in the developmental sequence in order to effectively continue his education. The screening not only looks at what the child knows, but more importantly, assesses his readiness and ability to learn.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL KINDERGARTEN STUDENT LOOK LIKE?

The following checklist describes an *average* child about to enter kindergarten. Please remember that your child will not exhibit every characteristic. However, should your child differ significantly, you may want to consider the possibility of delaying kindergarten entrance.

Intellectual Development

- Identifies first, last and middle position
- Counts by rote from one to twenty
- Names a part of a picture that is missing, is inappropriate, or that doesn't belong
- Matches one-to-one when manipulating ten items
- Understands the concepts of behind, beside, next to
- Understands the concepts of long and short
- Stacks ten blocks in imitation of a pyramid
- Draws a person with a head, a trunk, and four limbs
- Identifies color of a given object
- Matches letters and numbers
- Knows eight colors
- Names the missing object when it is removed from a group of three
- Describes objects as light or heavy
- Enjoys rhyming words and repeats familiar rhymes
- Tells when during the day certain activities occur
- Remembers four objects seen in a picture
- Reproduces a triangle, cross and square
- Sorts objects
- Follows a series of three simple directions
- Pairs objects together
- Uses compound sentences
- Identifies top and bottom of objects
- Uses contractions
- Is interested in the world beyond home and school
- Enjoys questioning
- Uses imagination creatively
- Describes opposites using analogies
- Relates familiar story without picture clues

Social Development

- Selects friends
- Demonstrates sensitivity to others
- Comforts playmates when they are upset
- Enjoys interacting with four to five children without continual supervision
- Has difficulty distinguishing fantasy from reality
- Thinks about ideas and designs own projects and dramatic play
- Explores a variety of roles through creative play
- Dramatizes sections of stories
- Cooperates in group games, following rules
- Adds to adult conversation
- Works independently for 20-30 minutes
- Takes turns with groups of other children
- Enjoys competition in play
- Prefers to play in groups
- Enjoys showing off

Physical Development

- Dresses independently
- Cuts two-inch circles
- Draws representational pictures (house, man, tree)
- Pastes and cuts simple shapes
- Cuts along a curved line
- Prints name
- Swings independently, pumping by himself
- Balances on one foot 4-8 seconds
- Changes direction while running
- Walks across a balance beam
- Hops backward with both feet
- Plays bounce and catch with a big ball
- Walks down stairs, using alternating feet
- Maneuvers tricycle around corners
- Can hop on one foot five successive times

WHAT SHOULD MY CHILD KNOW?

You can't give children a crash course in *kindergarten readiness*. Most of the things they should know will have been learned in a gradual way during the first five years of life. But if you uncover small deficiencies, a bit of practice will help.

There are two categories of things to know: survival information and academic information. Survival information is essential to success in kindergarten while minor gaps in academic information is not cause for alarm. There will be plenty of time to learn these things in kindergarten.

Survival Information

- State full name and age
- State house number, street and phone number
- Know parents' first and last names
- Know how to button, zip, snap, tie, and get in and out of clothing
- Take care of all toilet needs without help, including washing hands
- Know how to put things in and take them out of backpack independently
- Separate easily from parent
- Make their needs and wants known in short, simple sentences
- Interact well with peers
- Follow and repeat simple directions
- Respect and obey adult authorities
- Sit quietly for a 15-20 minute lesson/story
- Work steadily at one activity for 10-15 minutes

Academic Information

- Know basic shapes: circle, square, triangle, oval, star, diamond
- Know basic colors: red, green, blue, purple, orange, yellow, white, brown, black
- Count to 10 and identify numbers 1-10
- Identify a majority of the letters of the alphabet
- Know how to write their first name, first letter capitalized and the rest in lower case
- Use correct pencil grip
- Understand the concept and be able to underline and/or circle an item
- Trace over dotted lines
- Cut with scissors
- Draw a person
- Understand opposites
- Sequence objects

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

■ Read, Read, Read!

Probably the most important thing you can do for your child is to read to him or her. Reading to the child not only stimulates the child's desire to learn to read, but also improves language skills. Toddlers love to snuggle next to a grown-up, listen to a story, and enjoy the undivided attention. It is never too late to start reading to your child.

■ Know Your Child

The developmental timetables inside this folder list some of the behaviors that typically appear at a given age. If your child shows a significant lag in development, you may want to discuss his or her progress with the teacher or pediatrician.

■ Provide Learning Opportunities

Each child is unique and will progress at his or her own pace. Your child may be moving somewhat slower or faster than the average. Expecting more of a child than he or she is developmentally ready to handle can create anger and despair in the child and impatience and frustration in the parent. However, not providing the child with new challenges when he or she is ready, deprives the child of the confidence gained in learning new skills and acquiring knowledge.

■ Consult with the Teacher

Don't insist on placement in kindergarten just because your child is five. Don't hold him back to give him an *extra advantage* if he is ready. The teacher and administrator want what is best for your child. Listen to their advice.

Remember, the child who begins kindergarten when he or she is developmentally ready is more likely to have a successful educational experience.

This material adapted from:
Barbara Ball, *Is My Child Ready for School* (Academic Consulting and Testing Service, 1989).

Elaine McEwan, *Will My Child Be Ready for School?* (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing, 1990): 178-182.



First Baptist Christian School

WEYMOUTH

Where faith and learning connect

Is My Child Ready for Kindergarten?

40 West Street • Weymouth, MA 02190
Voice: (781) 335-6232 • Fax: (781) 335-7901

www.fbcsweymouth.org