

Getting School Ready in Minnesota

*"I want to be ready for kindergarten."
"How can kindergarten be ready for me?"*



A guide for parents, family members, caregivers, and teachers of children who will be attending kindergarten in Minnesota

Acknowledgements

In 2003, the Northland Foundation and the five other Minnesota Initiative Foundations created the Minnesota Early Childhood Initiative. Together, they have developed more than 90 community coalitions to strengthen local resources for young children and their families.

Minnesota Initiative Foundations

www.greaterminnesota.net

Northland Foundation www.northlandfdn.org

Northwest Minnesota Foundation www.nwmf.org

Initiative Foundation www.ifound.org

West Central Initiative www.wcif.org

Southwest Initiative Foundation swifoundation.org

Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation smifoundation.org

MINNESOTA EARLY CHILDHOOD



INITIATIVE

a campaign for our youngest children

Getting School Ready In Minnesota was created by the Northland Foundation with the Early Childhood Initiative coalitions in northeastern Minnesota: Aitkin County, Carlton County, Fond du Lac Reservation, Hermantown-Proctor, Itasca Area, Koochiching County, Mesabi East School District, Ely, Hibbing, Quad Cities Area, Two Harbors, Silver Bay, and Cook County. Special thanks to everyone who helped, including early care and education professionals from Early Childhood Family Education, Early Childhood Special Education, Family Services Collaboratives, Head Start, School Readiness, and Child Care.



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Contents



Social and Emotional Skills
Social and Emotional Skill-Builders

3



Words Skills
Word Skill-Builders

5



Number Skills
Number Skill-Builders

7



Learning Skills
Learning Skill-Builders

9



Safety and Health Skill-Builders

10



Family, Culture, and Language

11



Communication Among Grown-ups

13

If children could tell us, here's what they might say:

*"I need grown-ups to work together
to help me get school ready."*

How are you already helping?
Read on to see.

Getting School Ready In Minnesota

- *What do children need to be ready for kindergarten?*
 - *What can families and caregivers do to prepare children for kindergarten, while the school is getting ready for them?*
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Children learn through many activities and experiences, and every child is different. There is no perfect formula to know when a child is ready for kindergarten, but this guide can be used by parents and other caregivers, child care providers, and teachers to make good decisions in helping a young child be ready for kindergarten. Checklists and helpful hints in this guide are broken into sections that are color-coded:

- **Blue = checklists of skills**
- **Purple = things grown-ups can do to help children build those skills**
- **Green = things your local school should do to help your child and your family feel welcome and excited for kindergarten**

Children benefit when their families are involved in their learning and development, but it takes everyone working together—parents, caregivers, schools, and communities—to help children be confident and successful learners!



Social and Emotional Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children

Children entering kindergarten should be able to take care of themselves and their personal things and work independently.

- Hang coat on a hook
- Put on and take off shoes
- Be able to use the bathroom
- Pick up toys and put them away
- Follow a daily routine
- Separate from familiar adults and adjust to new settings
- Be able to choose activities on their own

Children going into kindergarten should learn to make friends, solve problems with others, show empathy, and negotiate.

- Join one or more children in play
- Be comfortable talking with familiar adults
- Begin to recognize and respond to the feelings of others
- Use words and phrases, such as “Can I play with you?” or “Please stop. I don’t like that.”

Children entering kindergarten should have a growing sense of self to take risks as a learner.

- Show growing self-direction and independence
- Begin to have a sense of family and tradition



Social and Emotional Skill-Builders



Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to feel excited and comfortable about starting kindergarten.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Let me know you're excited about me starting kindergarten.
- Give me a chance to visit my school before I start.
- Listen to my thoughts and ideas about school.
- Help me pretend I'm in school, so I get comfortable with it.

“I need to know what kindergarten will be like.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Teach me to follow directions by giving me one or two simple steps at a time.
- Help me to learn how to share, stand in line, wait my turn, and sit in a group.

“I need to feel good about myself.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Pay attention to me and listen to my ideas.
- Help me feel good about things I can do.
- Praise me for my strengths.
- Be patient and let me develop at my own pace.
- Teach me that all my feelings are okay, but not all my actions are okay.
- Teach me ways to calm myself when I get frustrated.



“I need to get along with others.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Show me ways to make new friends.
- Help me understand how I can be friends with children who are different than me.
- Teach me to use words when someone hurts my feelings, such as, “Please stop. That hurts my feelings.”

“I need to know how to talk and listen to others.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Talk with me about things I find interesting. Listen closely when I talk.
- Teach me how to know when it’s my turn to speak and when I need to listen.
- Teach me to use words to describe my feelings and needs and when to use them.

Word Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children



Children entering kindergarten should be able to listen to stories and have conversations.

- Listen and understand stories, conversations, and directions
- Start conversations
- Ask and answer questions
- Recognize rhyming words
- Use and understand more words over time

Children entering kindergarten should be able to recognize their names, interact with stories, re-tell stories, and make guesses using pictures.

- Recognize and name some letters of the alphabet, especially the letters in their name
- Guess what will happen next in a story, using pictures as a guide
- Begin to be interested in and understand written language by asking, "What does that say?"

Children entering kindergarten should be able to hold a pencil, write their names, and express themselves using pictures.

- Use scribbles, shapes, and pictures to represent thoughts or ideas
- Begin to copy or write their own name

Word Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

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"I need to be familiar with words and books."

Things grown-ups can do:

- Teach me new words.
- Show me words and symbols in my language and the sounds they make.
- Read to me, take me to the library, and bring me books and magazines.
- Ask me questions about stories to help me understand their meaning.
- Sing songs and teach me rhymes.
- Write down my words or stories as I tell them to you.

Number Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children



Children entering kindergarten should be able to count, sort, create patterns, and group things that are alike.

- Count objects such as cups or bowls when setting the table
- Sort objects like blocks by color, size, or shape

Children entering kindergarten should be able to identify colors and shapes around them.

- Describe simple shapes – circle, square, triangle
- Identify colors
- Play matching games

Children entering kindergarten should be able to use language to describe math concepts.

- Use words that describe time, such as “today or tomorrow”
- Describe people or objects with words, such as “big, little, short, tall, long”



Number Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to know shapes, sizes, and colors.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Give me things to sort by shape, size, or color.
- Help me find and name shapes and colors all around me.

“I need to learn to count and understand that numbers have meaning.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Help me play counting games.
- Let me count things at home.
- Show me how numbers are used in the world around me.



Learning Skills

Checklist of general expectations for children



Children entering kindergarten should have experiences through play to become confident learners.

- Use their imagination when playing
- Play for a period of time
- Stick with a task, even when faced with a challenge
- Use new ideas in solving problems or exploring objects
- Try to figure things out
- Ask for and accept help from others when needed
- Apply their knowledge and experiences to new situations

Learning Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to be excited about learning.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Encourage me to explore with my senses – to see, touch, hear, smell, and taste.
- Give me fun, exciting choices: “Do you want to play a game or go to the park?”
- Give me lots of time to figure things out. Be patient while I try.
- Encourage me to play outdoors.

“I need to learn to try things and keep trying even when it seems hard.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Give me activities that hold my interest.
- Help me explore and try new activities.
- Help me learn new things step-by-step.
- Teach me that making mistakes is part of learning.
- Show me different ways to understand my world.

Safety and Health Skill-Builders

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers



“I need to be safe and feel safe.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Help me practice saying my name, address, and phone number.
- Teach me about crossing the street and watching for cars.
- Teach me about not talking to strangers and who is a safe person to ask for help.

“I need to have bathroom and self-help skills.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Teach me the words to tell other grown-ups when I need to go to the bathroom, or when I am feeling sick or hurt.
- Help me learn to go to the bathroom and wash my hands by myself.
- Teach me to get dressed.
- Help me develop fine motor skills so I can learn to tie my shoes when I am ready.
- Encourage me to try things before I ask my teacher for help.

“I need to have my basic needs met before I come to school each day.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Make sure I eat healthy food, get plenty of rest, and dress for the weather.
- Take me to all my check-ups, and make sure I see the doctor and dentist before I start school.
- Teach me how to brush my teeth.

“I need to be able to use my hands and fingers to do small tasks.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Help me to pick up, hold onto, and use pencils, crayons, markers, paint brushes, and scissors.
- Help me make things with blocks, paper, cardboard, and tape.

“I need to be able to use my arms, legs, and body to make big movements.”

Things grown-ups can do:

- Encourage me to run, jump, climb, dance, and move to music as I am able.
- Give me time each day to play outdoors.
- Limit my TV and computer time.

Ready Schools: Support For My Family, Culture, and Language

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“I need to feel good about my family and culture, and to learn about other cultures.”

Things grown-ups and my school can do:

- Show me books, tell stories, and sing songs about my culture and other cultures.
- Take me to places that teach me about my culture and other cultures.
- Use the language(s) I know to help me understand and learn.



“I need my school to welcome my family.”

Things my school can do:

- Put up welcoming signs in the language I speak at home.
- Learn about my community and culture before I get to school.
- Let my family know who to talk to about their ideas or questions.
- Invite us to participate in the school, classroom, and PTA.

“My family and I want all the grown-ups at my school to know and respect my culture, my learning style, and my family.”

Things my school can do:

- Understand that school may be my first introduction to cultures and languages other than my own.
- Let me know if my classroom teacher and others at school can speak my home language.
- Invite my family and me to share information with my teacher and classmates about my family or culture.
- Support my family culture by putting me in a class with other children who share my home language and culture.
- Let me know that speaking my language strengthens all my language skills.





Ready Schools: Communication Among the Grown-ups in My Life

Helpful hints for parents, caregivers, and teachers

“My school experience will be best if my early childhood teachers, kindergarten teachers, school staff, parents, and family members work together.”

“I need my family to know what is happening at my school, what I am learning, and what I am expected to know.”

Things grown-ups and my school can do:

- Talk with each other.
- Share things happening in my life that might affect how I feel and act.
- Participate in Early Childhood Screening.
- Find out about any special abilities and needs I have.
- Learn about services that are available at school and in the community.
- Volunteer at school.



*Ensuring that all young children thrive
and have a healthy life of learning,
achieving, and succeeding.*

Produced by



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