



WHAT KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS EXPECT OF OUR CHILDREN



LESSON No. 5

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION: Every year a large number of children enter kindergarten, but not all of them are equally prepared to succeed in their new academic and social setting. Parents and other caregivers who are a part of the child's daily life have a unique opportunity to facilitate their transition from home to "school."

WHAT IS KINDERGARTEN?

Kindergarten is the stage before elementary school. As such, its primary function is to prepare children for the first grade. The kindergarten curriculum promotes not only the development of social skills, but also includes activities that will prepare children intellectually and academically.



In kindergarten, children go through the process of learning about routines and acquiring the skills to work in groups, share, and communicate with others. Children participate in a great variety of learning activities related to reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and art. They also practice listening to stories and poems, writing, assembling puzzles and building blocks, and learning games that develop hand-eye coordination.

TEACHER'S EXPECTATIONS

Kindergarten teachers consider it very important that when entering school, children understand what they're told or asked. Otherwise, children may have difficulties following instructions and learning. It is equally important that children know how to communicate their needs and ideas in order to be understood by those around them. For these reasons it is helpful for children to be able to do the following upon entering kindergarten:

1. Give basic information about themselves: first and last name, age, home address, telephone number, parent's names, sibling's names, mother's and father's profession, etc.

2. Listen and follow instructions: pay attention when someone speaks to them; sing songs; listen attentively for at least 5 minutes when someone is reading to them; follow multi-step instructions, (i.e., "Please go to the kitchen, open the silverware drawer and bring me a fork.>").
3. Share personal experiences, express ideas and form questions: speak in short sentences; receive a message and pass it on to someone else; use new words correctly; tell a story to another student; describe their drawings; ask "why" or "how" questions; recognize their own emotions such as happiness, anger, sadness, and fear.
4. Speak clearly and politely: use "please" and "thank you;" remember to not interrupt a person that is speaking; and know how to ask for permission to use the restroom.

OTHER SKILLS EXPECTED OF CHILDREN BEFORE STARTING KINDERGARTEN

Another type of skill relates to MOTOR SKILLS. Children need to develop both gross and fine motor skills.

- a) Gross motor skills: At birth, babies have very little muscle control. They cannot raise their heads or focus their vision. As they start growing, their brain and muscles begin to develop. Babies will go from **crawling**, to **standing up**, and later on to **walking**, and eventually **running** and **jumping**. In the same way, they go from moving their arms and hands with little control to more precise motions like **bringing a spoon to their mouth** and **throwing and catching** a ball.



- b) Fine motor skills: These skills involve the use of small muscle movements controlling the hand, fingers, and thumb, usually in coordination with the eyes. In the first months, babies start developing these skills by discovering their hands. It's through maturation and experimentation that they develop basic grasping, manipulation and holding. Refining these skills will become important in kindergarten because many of the activities like, **drawing**, **painting**, **holding a pencil**, **cutting**, **pasting**, **putting a puzzle together**, **using building blocks**, and **turning the pages of books** involve the use of fine motor skills.

Through **touch**, children acquire a lot of important information. For example, they learn the concept of hot and cold and they can distinguish rough from smooth surfaces. Combining tactile experiences with other means of learning is very useful for children's development. They not only learn from **what they hear** and **see**, but also from what they **feel**.

The task that we and other caregivers have is to provide children with a variety of daily activities that will help them develop **both** types of motor skills.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Every child behaves differently when they start kindergarten. There are some children who, upon arrival, begin talking to other children. Others sit quietly until they are called upon to do an activity. Then there are those who cry and refuse to let their parents leave. It's been found that a child's emotional development has a significant effect on his or her academic success than any other skill already mentioned.

Every child is unique. We can see that even siblings begin to display very different behaviors from birth. A parent's temperament also influences a child's emotional development. For example, if a mother is very anxious, she can transmit certain insecurities and fears to her child. Fortunately, tranquility and optimism can also be passed on. As parents, we can help our children develop **self-confidence**.

What can children with self-confidence do?

A child with self-confidence can seek help when needed; can look at someone in the eye when talking to him or her; can take "no" for an answer without getting upset; knows how to initiate a conversation; is able to work independently when asked; is able to be away from his or her parents for a few hours and be okay; and enjoys trying new things.



Every child likes to feel accepted by his or her peers in play activities.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Just as with emotional development, social development will also vary from child to child. Fortunately, parents and other adults can help children develop social skills by giving them the opportunity to spend time with other children of the same age; teaching them to share, wait for their turn, and ask for things in a polite way. We can also teach them how to "negotiate" and understand that they won't always get their way. It's important that we also teach them empathy and how they should support and encourage other children. Social skills will not only be important for children to have in kindergarten, but also for the rest of their lives.



IDEAS TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

1. Show our children we love them. This will help them develop self-confidence.
2. Do fun learning activities with our children that will help them develop, grow and prepare for school.
3. Help stimulate our child's development without pressuring them.
4. Remember that not all children learn at the same pace. We should pay close attention to identify their strengths and help them develop other areas.
5. Give our children nutritious meals; make sure they get plenty of sleep; provide a safe place for them to play; and take care of their health. This is an essential part of preparing them for school.
6. Before our children begin kindergarten, we can go to the school and request to meet with our child's future teacher to discuss their expectations and what we can start doing now to prepare them.
7. If possible, enroll our children in a pre-school program.
8. Keep in mind that preparing our children for school begins at birth!

REMEMBER:

"It is not necessary for our children to master all of these skills before they enter kindergarten. However, it is true that the better prepared our children are, the more likely they will be successful in school and the more confident and happy they will be."

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