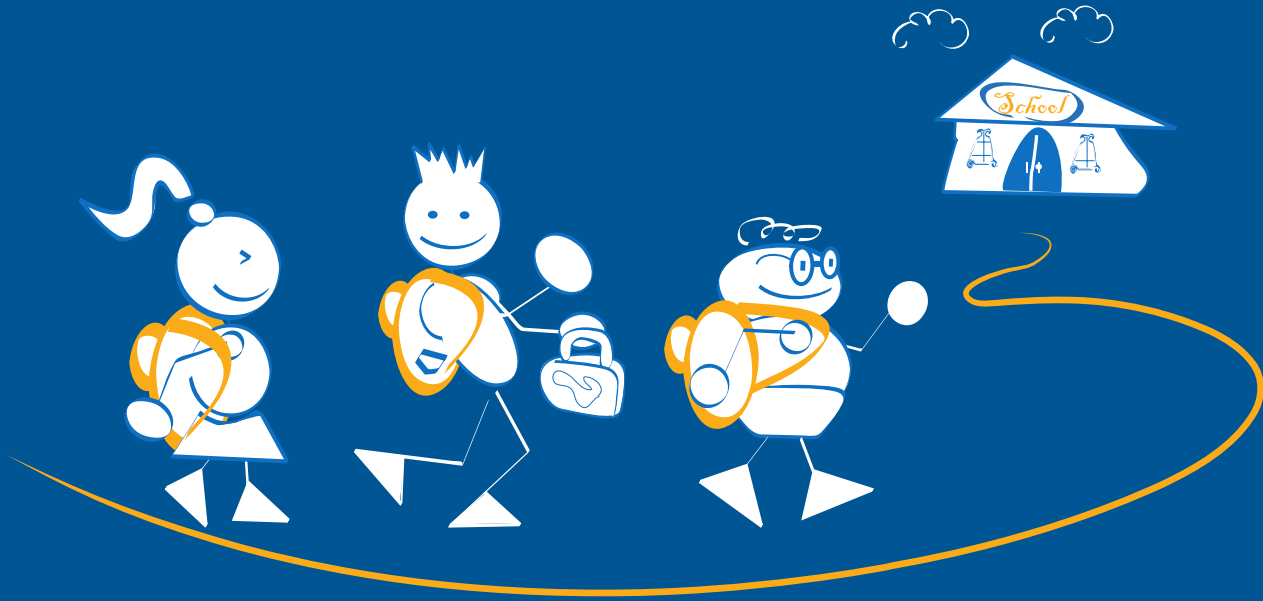


# I'm Ready for Kindergarten



## A Parent/Teacher Handbook

Preparing Children for a Successful Kindergarten Adventure





W, I'm ready for kindergarten!"

There is a really neat playground! There is a really neat playground!

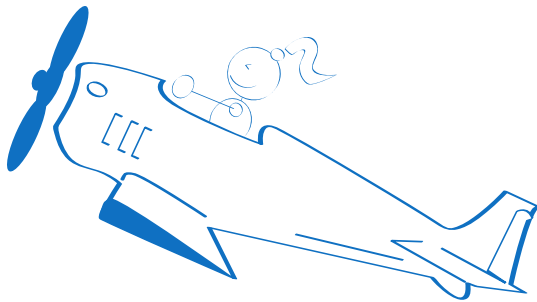
"I'm going to learn math! I'm going to learn math! I'm going to learn how to read! I'm going to learn how to read!"



Santa Clara County  
Office of Education

*Parents often ask me what they should specifically do to get their child ready for kindergarten and are surprised to learn that ABCs and 123s do not top the list. My recommendation is that all parents and caregivers read the I'm Ready for Kindergarten Parent/Teacher Handbook to position their child for success in kindergarten and throughout life.*

**Dr. Charles Weis**, Superintendent of Schools, Santa Clara County



**FIRST 5**  
SANTA CLARA COUNTY

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Revised March 2010  
For electronic version visit:  
[www.first5kids.org](http://www.first5kids.org)



# Launching into an Adventure!

Starting kindergarten is an exciting adventure for kids and families. It is a new beginning for learning, developing friendships, confidence and independence.

However, it is typical and normal for both children and parents to feel anxious about starting kindergarten as well.

Children are often anxious about what it will be like to go to the “big kid’s” school.

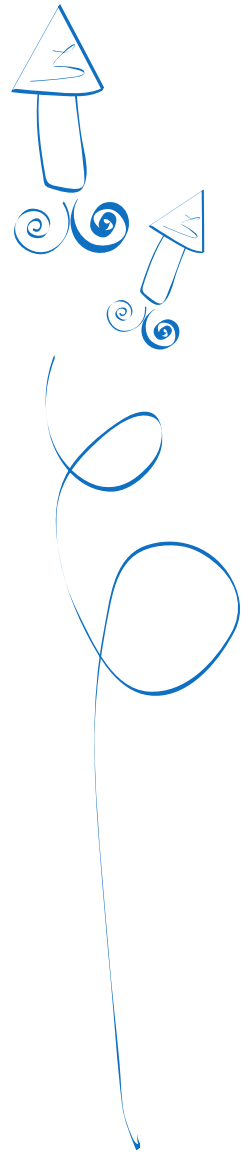
- *Who will be my teacher?*
- *Will I make friends?*

As parents, we often have concerns too.

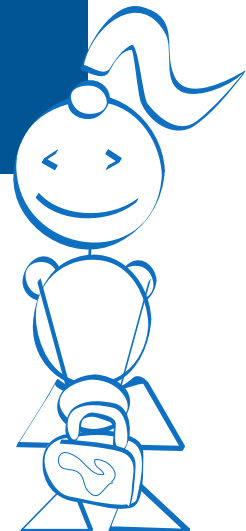
- *I won't be able to protect my child at the school.*
- *Who will help my child tie his/her shoes?*
- *What happens if my child is teased on the playground?*
- *What if my child doesn't understand the teacher?*

It is important that our children are excited and proud on their first day of school. We want them to walk through the classroom door ready to take their place in the “big kid’s” school.

FIRST 5 Santa Clara County, in collaboration with the Santa Clara County Partnership for School Readiness, is pleased to provide this handbook to help parents and caregivers prepare children for a successful launch into the kindergarten adventure!



“I’m ready for *big kid’s* school!”





## What is Kindergarten Readiness?

Kindergarteners are still growing and developing. At age 5, children have lots of energy and they love to learn! Some are focused on running and climbing at the playground. Others might have physical challenges that make running hard. Some children like to draw pictures or play with blocks or toys or sing songs. Others might find it hard to hold a pencil or to hear the music. Every child is unique in their own way and most children will be strong in some skills, and struggle with others.

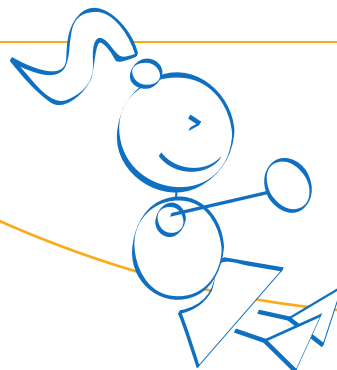
In Santa Clara County we are committed to helping EVERY child be prepared for success in school. It works best when parents and teachers work together to understand each child's strengths and help them develop a balance of skills in each of the four Building Blocks of Kindergarten Readiness.

### **Building Blocks of Kindergarten Readiness**

- Social and Emotional Development
- Self-Care, Physical Well-Being and Motor Skills
- Language Development
- Early Academics

While readiness is different for every child, getting ready for school isn't only for the children. Families need to be ready by:

- Preparing for new routines
- Planning for their role in supporting their child, teacher, classroom and school
- Having a positive and enthusiastic attitude about starting kindergarten





## What is the Right Age for Kindergarten?

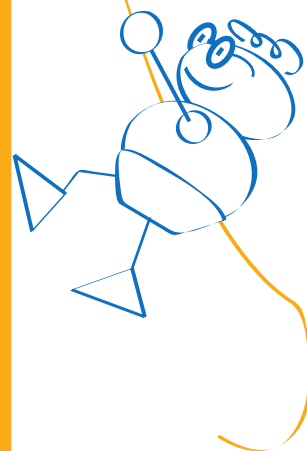
Children who turn 5 on or before December 2<sup>nd</sup> of the school year, are eligible to enroll in kindergarten.

*The youngest children will be 4 years 9 months old and there will be some children who are approaching their 6<sup>th</sup> birthday.*

Some parents wonder if they should wait an extra year before enrolling their child in kindergarten – especially if their child has a birthday that is in late summer or autumn. To help you decide what is right for your child:

- Compare your child's skills with those outlined in the Building Blocks of Kindergarten Readiness found in this handbook
- Talk to your family doctor or your child's preschool teacher
- Visit the kindergarten where your child will be attending – Watch what the children are doing and imagine your child in that classroom
- Talk to parents who have kindergarteners or children in elementary school, trust your instincts

Some publicly-funded preschools may no longer continue to provide services to your child, once your child is old enough to register for kindergarten. Check with your preschool provider if you have questions.



# Social and Emotional Development

## Sharing and Caring!

Children who can share their ideas and feelings are able to solve problems.

When children have confidence in their own abilities to work and play in a group, they are more successful in school. Some children may struggle with the new expectations for behavior that teachers call “self-regulation” – *the ability to control your own behavior and emotional responses.*

Your child should be working on moving smoothly between activities – like playing outside, to activities that require focused attention – such as chores or drawing.

## I'm ready when...

I talk to adults and ask for help.

I take turns, share and help others.

I try new activities and ask questions.

I stay focused and pay attention for 10-15 minutes at a time.

I follow one and two-step directions – *Please put away your crayons and then bring me your paper.*

I work and play both independently and in a group.

I use imagination games to practice resolving conflicts or to prepare for new activities.

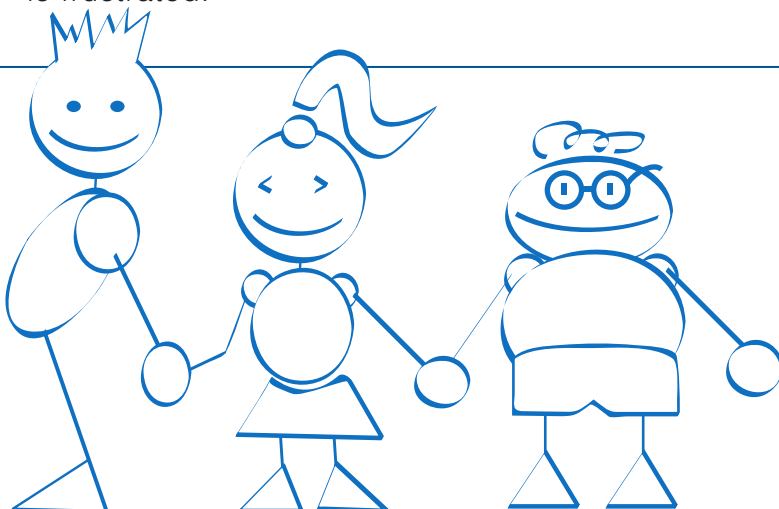
I have coping strategies for when I am frustrated, or angry or sad.

“Ask me to imagine how someone else feels.”



## Tips for Parents

- Set a good example for your child – They will imitate what you do - If you speak with an “inside voice,” your child is learning to speak with one too.
- Use positive statements to help your child know when he or she is on track. For example, “I like how you shared your toy with your sister.”
- Teach your child that all feelings are “okay,” but not all actions are okay. For example, it is okay to be upset, but not to hit someone.
- Help your child talk about his/her feelings and to imagine what others are feeling.
- Set limits for your child – Your child will feel safer and more self-confident if he or she knows you are paying attention and helping him or her to behave appropriately.
- Make time for playing with friends – When children play together, they learn to take turns, share and respect each others’ feelings.
- Set routines and be predictable – Children have an easier time cooperating when they know what to expect.
- Help your child to feel proud of his or her efforts and accomplishments.
- Help your child learn from mistakes – When things go wrong, help them think about what to do better next time.
- Help your child find ways to calm down when he or she is frustrated.





## Self Care, Physical Well-Being and Motor Skills

### Fuel for School!

A good night's sleep will help your child grow and be ready to pay attention during the day.

Also, your child is ready to learn in the classroom when he/she can take care of personal needs, like going to the bathroom, washing hands and dressing.

Now is also a great time to reinforce healthy eating habits. Your child needs to have energy and be alert for school. Focus on healthy choices for breakfast, lunches and snacks.

Make time for active play and exercise. Exercise will help your child cope with the new structure and expectations of school.

### I'm ready when...

I am healthy and my immunizations are up to date.

I have good oral health and I have visited the dentist.

I get 10-12 hours of sleep every night.

I can use crayons, pencils and paint brushes.

I can button, zip, and tie or Velcro shoes.

I can kick balls, hop on one foot and climb a ladder at the park.

I can use the toilet, eat, wash hands and blow my nose by myself.



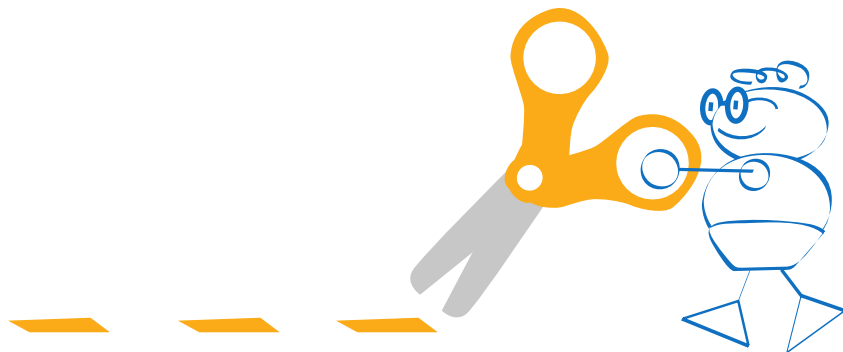
Building Blocks  
of  
Kindergarten  
Readiness

## Tips for Parents

- Provide healthy meals and snacks including whole grains, protein, fresh fruits and vegetables. Limit fats, sugars and sodas.
- Make sure your child has 30-60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Set a schedule that includes early bedtime.
- Go outside with your child, walk a straight line and climb on a jungle gym at the park.
- Use home objects for activities like the “kitchen band” using kitchen utensils, pots and pans.
- Turn off the TV and talk with your child.
- Visit your child’s pediatrician and dentist at least once a year.



“I need 10-12 hours of sleep each night!”





# Language

## Use Your Words!

Language skills are thinking skills. The more children hear words and practice using them, the better they will be at learning in school.

In kindergarten, the teachers will use words to describe things, to think about math (e.g., bigger, smaller, add together, subtract from) and to learn about ideas like telling time and rules in the classroom.

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.

## I'm ready when...

I hear and understand the meaning of words, stories and songs.

I use words to talk about thoughts, wants and needs.

I speak clearly enough so that other people understand.

I use complete sentences and connect ideas together to make longer sentences.

I can say or sing nursery rhymes and familiar songs.





## Tips for Parents

- Talk to your child as often as possible. Use the time during daily activities to engage your child in conversations. For example, talk about the textures of the clothes in the laundry, or the colors of the vegetables in the grocery store.
- Make reading part of the daily routine. Try to find 10-15 minutes every day to sit down, read and talk about a book.
- Get a library card and visit the library weekly so you will have lots of books to choose from.
- Ask your child questions that make them describe things, events or feelings.
- Play storytelling games with your child and encourage your child to tell you stories.
- Play listening games – Hide a small object and then give your child directions on how to find it.
- Be a language role model for your child – Talk with your child about many different ideas so they learn new words.
- Listen carefully when your child is talking – Ask questions and show you care about what he/she is saying.
- Try to speak clearly so your child can hear how the words are meant to sound.

*\*Remember, a language-rich environment is key to learning...sing, play, read and talk often with your child.*



“Talk with me!”

# Early Academics

## ABCs and 123s!

Kindergarten is a year of much growth and development.

During the kindergarten school year, children will be well on their way to reading and will be starting to write their own sentences. They will learn to tell time, add and subtract.

You can help your child be ready to become a student by playing games. It is easy and fun to use games to learn about letters, numbers, colors, shapes and solving problems.

## I'm ready when...

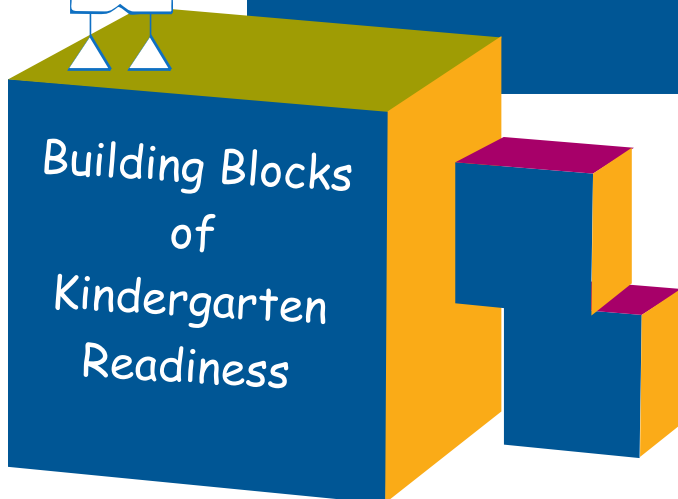
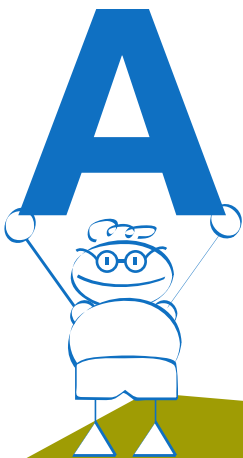
I know the letters of the alphabet and can write my own first name.

I count 10 objects correctly – *Please put 10 blocks in the basket.*

I know rhyming words – *Pat, hat, cat, bat.*

I know how to use a book – Where to start, which way to turn pages.

I know colors and shapes – *Red, yellow, blue...a circle, square, triangle.*



## Tips for Parents

- Children learn through play – look for ways to learn while playing games together.
- Play memory games that help children practice storing and organizing information – Draw five sets of matching pictures on separate pieces of paper, turn them face down and mix them up. Have your child turn them over one by one to find the matching pairs.
- Look for shapes – The windows are rectangles, tracing a penny makes a circle.
- Sing songs and play rhyming games.
- Keep pencils, crayons and paper where children can get to them easily.
- Point out letters and numbers in everyday places like cereal boxes, store signs and books.
- Help your child learn how to sort, match and compare – You can talk about colors, textures and sizes.
- Teach your child to count – How many places at the table, how many steps to the bedroom.
- Offer your child lots of encouragement. Children who are self-confident learn to read and write more easily.



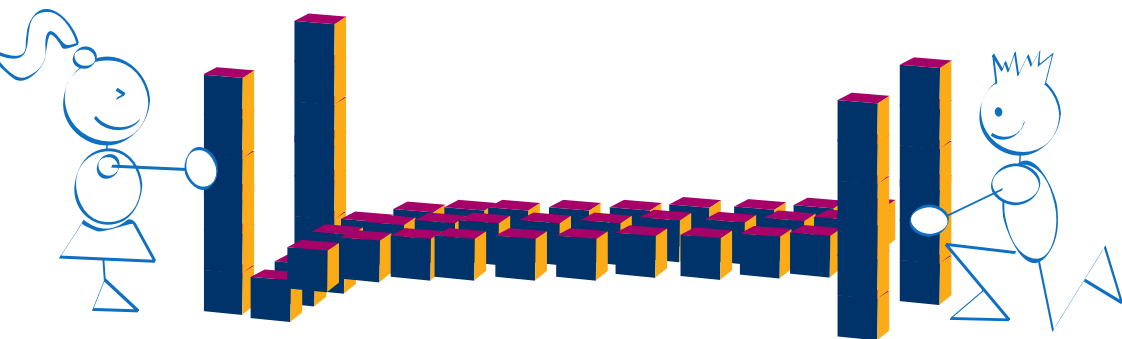
## Building Bridges for Dual Language Learners

The ability to speak more than one language will help your child throughout life. As your child learns more English, encourage their growth in your home language as well.

Home language helps children to value the connection to their culture, which then contributes to a strong sense of identity. Positive self-esteem and a strong sense of identity help children have more positive learning experiences in school and throughout life.

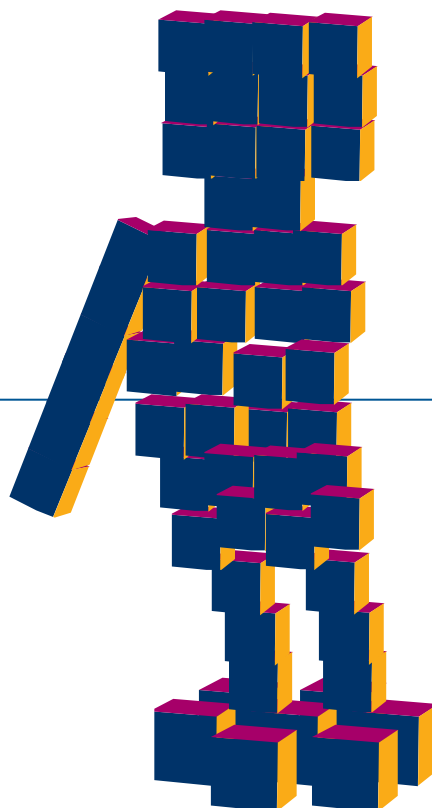
Use the parent tips from the Language Building Blocks on page 9 to help your child build skills in the language you use at home. In any language, more words are better. Children will learn new languages quickly – especially if they already have strong speaking and listening skills in their home language.

### Kindergarteners in Santa Clara County Speak Many Languages

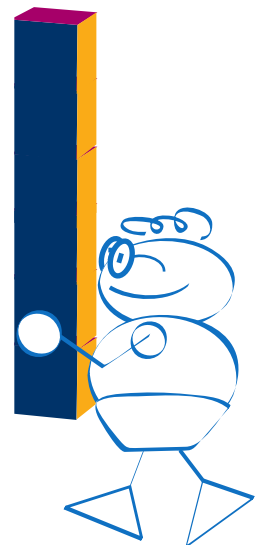


## Tips for Parents

- Speak frequently in your home language – Children learn by hearing both languages.
- Find out what your child will be doing in the classroom – If they are going to be talking about animals, you can read stories, or talk about animals at home in your language.
- Learning a new language in kindergarten can be fun but it can also be tiring – Allow your child time each day to relax, think and talk in your home language.
- Don't be surprised if your child mixes and matches words from the two languages – It is part of the learning process.
- Encourage your child to feel proud of your home language and culture. Chances are there will be other children in their class who are also learning English as a second language.



13





## Building Family - School Partnerships

Remember that helping your child prepare for school is just the beginning of the adventure! As parents, you play a key role in the success of your child at school.

Education is a partnership between parents, teachers and the child. There are many ways you can participate.

## Tips for Parents at Home

- Ask your child questions about his or her day that will encourage more than a yes or no answer. What did you talk about during circle time today? Who did you play with at recess? What was the most fun thing that happened today?
- Continue to read aloud with your child each day.
- Structure family routines to support homework. Talk to your child's teacher about homework assignments if your child spends more than 10-15 minutes/day completing the work, or if it is causing a lot of stress and frustration.
- Read notes from teachers, complete all paperwork required of parents and return promptly to the school.
- Enforce the rules of the classroom and school - If there is a rule you don't understand, ask the teacher about it.
- Don't forget the important *Fuel for School*: healthy food, early bedtimes and plenty of playtime.



## Tips for Parents at School

- Introduce yourself to your child's teacher and check in often. Ask the teacher how your child is doing and how you can help.
- If your child has special needs or an individualized education plan (IEP), make sure the school and teacher know about them and are prepared to help your child succeed.
- Talk to your child's teacher about ways you can share your home culture at school.
- Get to know the other children in your child's class and their parents.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences. If communicating in English is uncomfortable, ask if the school can provide you with an interpreter. In Santa Clara County, almost half of all kindergarteners speak a language other than English at home.
- Parents can help make the schools more welcoming for all children. Find the parent advisory groups at your school and join them. Attend school activities and volunteer to help when you can.

### Find A Language Buddy

- Try to find your child a "buddy" who speaks your home language and English – this may be an older child or a friend. It can be especially helpful if your child can learn some of the English words used in common playground games, such as jumping rope or playing tag.
- If your child is a strong English speaker, encourage him or her to be a Language Buddy for a child who is just learning.



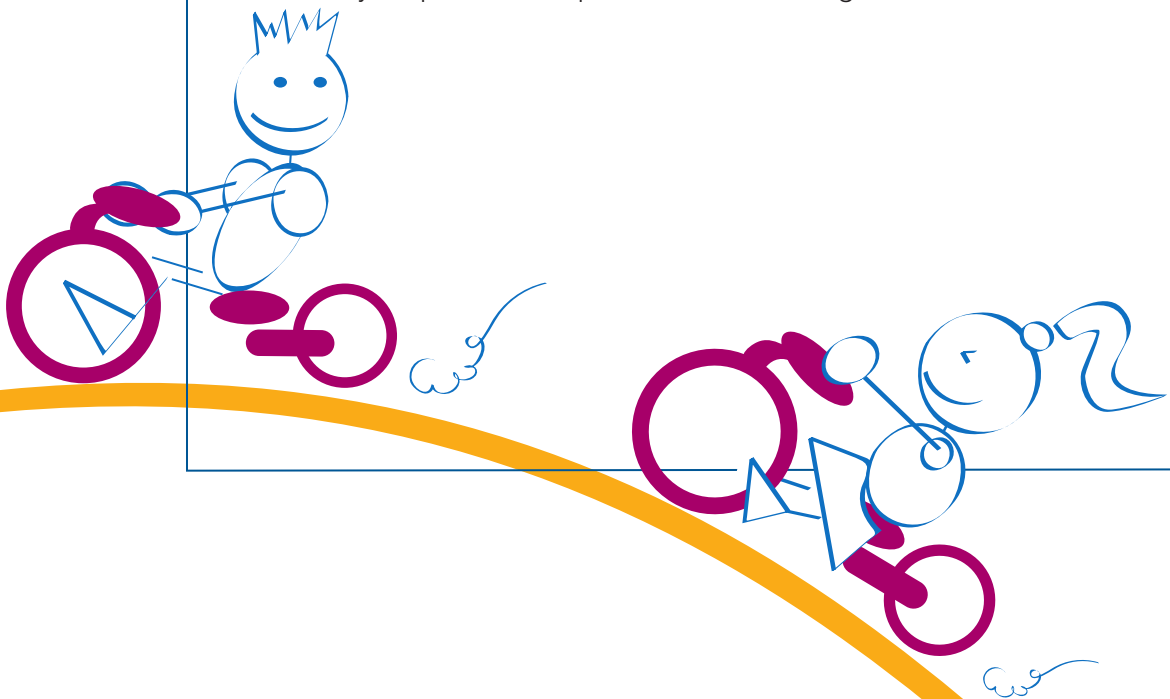


## Getting Ready ~

### Are You Worried Your Child is Not Ready?

Remember, that readiness looks different for each child. You know your child better than anyone. Make a list of things your child is best at. Then make a list of the areas where you think your child needs to improve. If your child attends preschool, speak with your child's teacher. There may be simple things that you can work on at home to help. Other parents will also have ideas that you can try. See if your child improves.

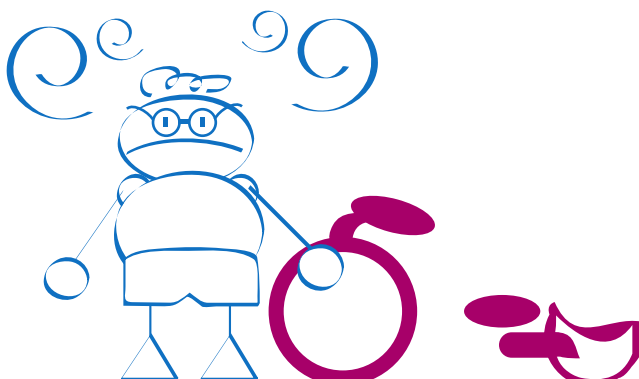
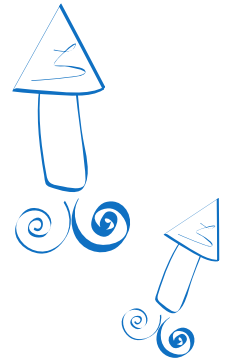
Then, trust your instincts. Parents are usually the first to suspect that a child is struggling. If you still feel like your child's development is very different from other children the same age, discuss your list of concerns with your child's doctor. You can also contact your local school district and request a developmental assessment of your child any time after his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. Some districts in Santa Clara County require the request to be in writing.



## Talk to Your Child's Doctor if You See a Few of the Following Behaviors\*:

- Frequent temper tantrums.
- Difficulty with normal changes in routine or when moving from play time to quiet time.
- Overly aggressive behavior with other children.
- Your child is withdrawn.
- Restless behavior compared to the other children and is easily distracted.
- Difficulty holding a crayon or pencil or copying basic shapes.
- Trouble hearing or understanding when others are talking.
- Difficulty remembering sequences such as numbers, alphabet or days of the week.
- A very small vocabulary.
- Doesn't remember new words.
- Difficulty pronouncing simple words – People outside your family have difficulty understanding your child.

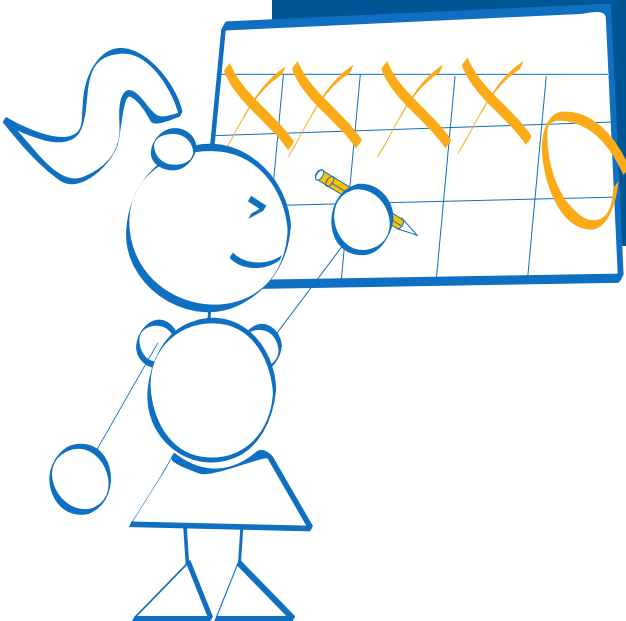
*\*Remember, many children have some of these behaviors. Watch to see if they happen all the time, or if there are specific situations where they are more likely to occur. If you are concerned, consult your pediatrician.*



# Countdown to Kindergarten Calendar

A final check before starting kindergarten

- |                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>January</b>  | Find out about kindergarten registration and enroll your child            |
| <b>February</b> | Make reading a priority   |
| <b>March</b>    | Vaccinate before it is too late   |
| <b>April</b>    | Practice basic skills – Holding crayons, using scissors, counting, etc.   |
| <b>May</b>      | Give your child the chance to make decisions and smart choices            |
| <b>June</b>     | Talk to your child about what a typical school day will look like         |
| <b>July</b>     | Set a schedule at home including early bedtime and healthy meals          |
| <b>August</b>   | Visit the school and meet the teacher – Shop together for school supplies |



## For safety, your child should know...

- First and last name
- Full names of parents and childcare provider
- Phone number and address
- Who will be picking him/her up after school
- Whether he/she has any food allergies and what food restrictions are required
- To walk away and find an adult he/she knows if approached by strangers
- How to find the classroom, bathroom, and the school office

## California requires check-ups

Before you can register your child for school you will need to show that your child has recently had a:

- Dental check-up
- Health check-up
- Tuberculosis skin test
- Up-to-date immunizations for Polio, DPT (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus), MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella), Hepatitis B and Chicken Pox





## KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT

Visit [www.first5kids.org](http://www.first5kids.org) for enrollment dates by district. Call your local school district or visit [www.sccoe.org](http://www.sccoe.org) to find your school district – Be sure to check enrollment requirements.

## PARENT RESOURCES WEBSITE

### **FIRST 5 Santa Clara County**

[www.first5kids.org](http://www.first5kids.org)

### **ArtsopolisKids**

[www.first5kids.org/artsopoliskids](http://www.first5kids.org/artsopoliskids)

### **2-1-1 Santa Clara County**

Dial 211 for Community Services

[www.211scc.org](http://www.211scc.org)

## HEALTH CARE IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

### **Children's Health Initiative**

Free/low-cost Health Insurance

**P:** 888.244.5222

### **Medi-Cal – County of Santa Clara Social Services Agency**

Assistance Application Center

**P:** 408.271.5600

### **Maternal and Child Health Services**

**P:** 800.310.2332

## DENTAL CARE

### **Santa Clara County Dental Society Referral Line**

**P:** 408.289.1480

### **Health Mobile**

[www.toothmobile.org](http://www.toothmobile.org)

## FAMILY RESOURCE CENTERS (FRC)

Visit [www.first5kids.org](http://www.first5kids.org) for information on a FRC in your neighborhood

## SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN SERVICES

### **Early Start – County Office of Education**

**P:** 800.404.5900

### **San Andreas Regional Center**

**P:** 408.374.9960

### **KidConnections/KidScope**

**P:** 408.793.5959

### **Parents Helping Parents**

**P:** 408.727.5775

[www.php.com](http://www.php.com)

### **Inclusion Collaborative**

**P:** 408.453.6756

[www.sccoe.org/programs/inclusion](http://www.sccoe.org/programs/inclusion)



## COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA SERVICES

### **Parents Place**

**P:** 650.688.3040

[www.parentsplaceonline.org](http://www.parentsplaceonline.org)

### **County of Santa Clara Department of Mental Health Services**

**P:** 800.704.0900

[www.sccmhd.org](http://www.sccmhd.org)

### **County of Santa Clara Department of Alcohol and Drug Services**

**P:** 800.488.9919

[www.sccdads.org](http://www.sccdads.org)

### **Child Protective Services/Child Abuse Hotline**

**P:** 408.299.2071

## LIBRARY RESOURCES

### **County of Santa Clara**

**P:** 408.293.2326

[www.santaclaracountylib.org](http://www.santaclaracountylib.org)

### **City of San Jose**

**P:** 408.808.2000

[www.sjlibrary.org](http://www.sjlibrary.org)

### **Silicon Valley Library System**

[www.librarycat.org](http://www.librarycat.org)

## CHILDCARE FINDER

### **Community Child Care Council (4 Cs)**

**P:** 408.487.0747

[www.4c.org](http://www.4c.org)

### **Choices for Children**

**P:** 408.297.3295 ext. 244

[www.choices4children.org](http://www.choices4children.org)

### **Professional Association for Childhood Education Alternative Payment (PACEAPP)**

**P:** 408.278.1214

## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

### **Emergency-Dial 911**

### **The California Poison Control System**

**P:** 800.222.1222

[www.calpoison.org](http://www.calpoison.org)

### **Suicide and Crisis Center**

**P:** 408.279.3312

[www.suicidehotlines.com/california.html](http://www.suicidehotlines.com/california.html)

### **Parental Stress Hotline**

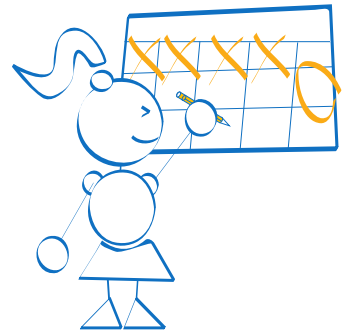
**P:** 408.279.8228

### **Support Network for Battered Women**

**P:** 800.572.2782

[www.snbw.org](http://www.snbw.org)

# Notes



What is my child best at?

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What skills should we be working on at home?

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What questions do I have for my child's doctor?

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## Kindergarten Registration Information

My School: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Location: \_\_\_\_\_