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***READY for SCHOOL Parent News:***  
**Beginning “School Skills”**

Typically around this time of year, parents of preschool and kindergarten children begin thinking ahead to the next school year and wondering if their child is ready for school. There are many things that parents can do to help assist their child in preparing for kindergarten or first grade. This new newsletter feature will offer regular ideas for helping your child get ready for elementary school.

The key to preparing a child for school is to *export more* from him or her, *a little more* in very gradual increments. The kinds of skills that typically help children transition easily into a school setting include:

- The ability to pay attention for extended periods and focus on tasks
- The ability to adapt to a new environment and new rules
- The ability to work independently

Some ideas follow for ways to support children in developing the above skills:

- To increase your child’s attention span, read together daily or several times each week. Kindergarten children may begin to enjoy reading “chapter books” which will be read over a series of days or weeks. Visit the library or bookstore together to check out a chapter book. *Charlotte’s Web*, *Stuart Little*, or *Trumpet of the Swan*, all by E.B. White, are great classics to start with. As you begin a new chapter on subsequent days, encourage your child to summarize where you left off the last time you read together.
- Take small steps to increase attention span. Take cues from your child as to how long they can attend. At the beginning of kindergarten, teachers might expect children to attend to a group activity for about 20 minutes. Towards the end of kindergarten, the expectation might be 30 – 40 minutes. You can use similar guidelines for length of reading time.
- Introduce your child to new experiences. Visit a children’s museum or attend a children’s play at a local theater together. Give gentle guidelines about respecting the rules of the new environment – when it is appropriate to talk and when it is not, when you have to wait your turn, etc.
- Assign easy chores to your child to complete independently – such as unstacking the utensils from the dishwasher, setting the table or sorting the socks in the laundry basket.
- As you complete paperwork tasks at home such as paying bills, invite your child to write while you write – offer pencil, paper and envelopes and opportunities to practice copying and writing letters and numbers, and drawing pictures of his/her own choice.

As much as possible, offer your child natural opportunities to build skills that will enhance his/her readiness for school. Keep the activities fun and interesting. Avoid making readiness activities drudgery or unpleasant. The goal is to keep your children excited about learning new things.