

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

Just as all children develop on unique schedules, all schools follow a unique curriculum and all teachers have their own expectations for the students in their classes. However, the following is intended to provide you with a basic explanation of what skills **most teachers** expect **most students** to have at the beginning of preschool and at the beginning of kindergarten. This information is not intended to be used as a checklist of skills for your child to master by a specified time. Instead, it is intended to give you a glimpse inside the classroom.

GROSS MOTOR

Beginning of Preschool

When children enter a preschool program in the fall, teachers will expect them to have control over their large muscles groups, those in their legs, arms and torso. This includes understanding the boundaries of their personal space and being able to avoid accidental collisions with other children, furniture or walls. While this last part may sound funny, any teacher of young children will tell you that there are always a few children each fall that do not yet understand the boundary of their personal space and are constantly bumping into people and things.

Children are expected to walk in a single-file line, without touching the children behind or in front of them and without touching the tempting bulletin boards lining the hallway. As children walk single-file during this early part of the year, it is typical to see big gaps of space between children in line, as many children are not accustomed to walking at a pace set by another person.

Teachers expect that students will be able to sit comfortably and attentively for approximately 15 minutes. This may occur while a story is being read or a lesson is being introduced. During this time, children are expected to be able to keep their hands and legs still and away from other children. Also, children

are expected to remain seated for the entire 15 minutes without repeatedly swinging or twitching their legs or standing up to stretch. Many children may still have difficulty maintaining focus and eye contact with the teacher during the entire 15 minutes.

After a few weeks of school, having been introduced to the materials in the room, children are expected to handle school materials with ease. This includes moving baskets or bins containing toys, games or other learning supplies without routinely dropping or spilling the contents. During this early part of the year, as the children learn about the different tools in the classroom, it is still common for children to have difficulty maneuvering a bin that was unexpectedly heavy and accidentally spill the contents.

On the playground or in gym class, children should be comfortable running, jumping on both feet, kicking a stationary ball, and throwing from a stationary position. Many children will begin the year already comfortable with more advanced gross motor skills such as skipping, galloping, kicking a moving ball and throwing while running. For other children, those skills may be just emerging. Children should be comfortable walking up and down stairs unassisted. Some children may place two feet on each step before stepping onto a new step with the leading foot. This is normal. Some children may also need to hold the handrail for added support.

Beginning of Kindergarten

At the beginning of kindergarten, teachers expect that children will be able to sit quietly for approximately 25-30 minutes without becoming restless. This includes sitting with their hands in their lap or on the table in front of them and not allowing their legs to swing or tap. Children may not yet be able to maintain eye contact with the teacher for the full 25-30 minutes, but they should develop this skill within the first few weeks.

When lining up at the end of the day or to walk to a special classroom, children are expected to stand in front of and behind classmates without bumping, pushing or touching their peers. While walking in a line through the halls, they are expected to not only control their own bodies, but also keep an equal and constant amount of distance between themselves and the child in line in front of them. Children should not need reminders while walking and teachers will likely not walk alongside the children to monitor them and will, instead, walk at the front of the line only.

Children are expected to handle large bins or baskets with ease. Even when working with a tub or basket for the first time, children should know to first look inside and then to assess the weight of the materials inside the basket so they can anticipate the heaviness or lightness of the basket. As a result, there should be few, if any, accidental spills.

The majority of children at this age will walk up and down stairs smoothly by placing only one foot on each step. Some children may still need to hold a hand rail for support, but they should be able to reach for the rail themselves and not require an adult's hand. All children will be expected to comfortably engage in gross motor activities, such as running, climbing and playing on playground equipment. Children should be able to climb up a 4- or 5-rung ladder with ease or use a teeter-totter (pushing off with both feet simultaneously as they near the ground).

Soon after the start of the kindergarten year, teachers hope that their students will know and accurately name the right and left sides of their bodies.

FINE MOTOR

Beginning of Preschool

When children begin preschool, they will be asked to draw, paint or use crayons on a daily basis. Children should be able to use crayons, pencils and paint brushes comfortably using the proper grip. At the start of the year, drawings typically consist of imprecise scribbles "outside the lines." This is normal and children will improve on their accuracy as their fine motor skills develop during the year.

Children are expected to at least attempt to write their first names using upper case letters. Children may print some letters in reverse (such as writing a J as an L). This is a common mistake as children learn to print letters. Practice with the correct model will eventually correct any mistakes as your child's fine motor skills progress.

Preschool teachers expect students to hold scissors correctly and be able to cut on a straight or slightly curved line with moderate accuracy. Children are expected to handle small pieces of paper and paste them on larger sheets. Children are also expected to manipulate beads or other small items by threading them on a lace or rope (where the dominant hand holds the bead and the non-dominant hand holds the lace).

Beginning of Kindergarten

At the beginning of the kindergarten year, children are expected to be able to properly print their first name in upper case letters. Children may still be forming some letters incorrectly (such as flipping a J to look like an L), but this should be happening less and less frequently. Children may be attempting to write their last names and, depending on the number of letters in their name, may be successful. They should be able to accurately copy a few words from a teacher's example placed on their work table. (Copying words from a model on a chalkboard is a more challenging task and is a skill that is developed only by the end of the kindergarten year.)

Children in kindergarten are expected to use crayons with control, staying close to the lines and adding color with small, precise movements rather than with large scribbles. Drawings should be colorful and recognizable with detailed figures and objects. Children should also comfortably handle small objects such as counting rods, beads, or beans and easily manipulate buttons, snaps and zippers on clothing. Children are expected to cut along a printed line to cut out pictures or shapes. Children should use their dominant hand to open and close the scissors and then use their non-dominant hand to turn the paper.

During the kindergarten year, children should begin tying their own shoes. Shoe tying is a complicated skill for young children as it requires extremely precise movements from a child's little fingers. While this may differ from teacher to teacher, a general guideline among my colleagues is that teachers assist with shoe tying until the Thanksgiving break or winter break of the kindergarten year. After that time, children are expected to tie their own shoes. (While each teacher may have a slightly different style, I instruct parents to first teach their child how to tuck one lace under and around the second lace to make a half-knot. Then to make two long loops (bunny ears) with the laces and repeat the "loop over and tuck through the hole" motion - known to many as the "around the tree and through the hole" method - to finish tying the laces.) Children should handle buttons and snaps on clothing with increasing independence and be able to dress themselves with pull-on clothing.

AUDITORY PROCESSING

Beginning of Preschool

When children start preschool classroom, they are expected to understand and be able to follow two-step commands. For example, when a teacher directs children to put the puzzles away and join her on the story rug, it is expected that the students will follow the directions without needing reminders or additional requests. Even early in the year, teachers will not repeat directions. Children will be introduced to other adults in the school community, including librarians, music, art or P.E. teachers. Children are expected to interpret information and instructions from these less-familiar adults as well as from their classroom teachers.

A child will be expected to accurately interpret his teacher's words as she explains new concepts and gives directions for expected behavior. For example, a child will be expected to understand and comply with a teacher's request to "Be polite," even though it does not require a specific physical action. A child should also understand and incorporate classroom routines such as going to the "welcome circle" or getting ready for "recess time" within a few weeks of starting school. This means that when a teacher says "It's recess time," a child should know to go to his cubby, put on his jacket, and line up at the door, for example, without the teacher repeating those three steps each day.

Early in the preschool year, children are expected to interact comfortably and independently with peers in play and work situations. This includes listening to and understanding comments or directions from other students, and responding appropriately. It is expected that children may need some adult supervision and assistance to help initiate peaceful and productive group work. Teachers expect to occasionally help mediate disagreements between children.

Beginning of Kindergarten

At the beginning of kindergarten, children are expected to consistently and accurately understand verbal directions. This includes following multi-step directions with ease, whether from familiar or unfamiliar people. For example, a child may be asked to color a worksheet, place it in a specific tray when it is completed, then line up to go outside. A teacher will give all three directions at the same time and expect a child to remember and execute all three steps without being reminded of what comes next at each stage of the activity.

Children are also expected to respond appropriately to verbal questions such as, "What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?" Although this is a basic question, it is not uncommon for a child with poor auditory processing skills to respond with the answer, "In a cup" or "I eat ice cream all the time." A child with weak auditory processing skills likely heard the words "ice cream" and maybe the word "favorite" but was unable to process the sentence correctly.

Kindergarten children will be taught reading skills, number concepts, and science and social studies concepts through verbal explanation and visual demonstration. Children are expected to understand and process the information presented in these lessons.

Children are expected to interact comfortably and independently with peers in play and work situations with little or no adult assistance. This requires listening to a peer's directions and responding appropriately. An adult may be needed to begin the group work by suggesting a game or preparing the materials required for an activity. However, once the activity has begun, children should be able to complete the activity without a teacher's assistance by listening to the other children's comments and responding appropriately.

VISUAL DISCRIMINATION

Beginning of Preschool

When children begin preschool, they are expected to observe their new surroundings and use visual cues to help them learn the classroom routines. For example, if children are assigned specific places for hanging coats, listening to a story or working with crayons, they will be expected to take note of these locations and procedures and remember them.

Children are expected to remember the names of their classmates and teachers by identifying distinguishing characteristics such as hair color, height, eye color, and physical stature. After one or two weeks in the classroom, your child should be able to point to the other children in his class and tell you each one's name. It is common for there to be two children of the same name in a class, and your child will be expected to recognize the differences between the similarly named students.

Teachers will introduce information, particularly during science lessons, through visual demonstrations and experiments. Children are expected to observe and understand the demonstrations.

As part of the pre-reading curriculum used in many preschool classrooms, children will be introduced to the 26 letters and 10 numerals early in the school year. Visual discrimination skills are vital for learning to distinguish and name each letter or number. After seeing a letter or number two or three times, children are expected to remember the number or letter's name.

Beginning of Kindergarten

At the start of kindergarten, children are expected to observe their new classroom and become familiar with any new routines and procedures. This includes learning the names of new friends, using observations about eye color, hair color or height to help. After two weeks, children should be able to remember where all materials are kept, where their locker is, and where they are assigned to sit during a group lesson.

Children should be able to complete basic games that require visual discrimination, such as the classic matching game where children take turns turning over cards trying to select two cards that have the same picture. Children should also be able to complete worksheets asking the child to draw a line between two identical pictures or to draw a line between a picture and its outline. Lastly, children should be able to follow basic instructions such as "color the top of the house blue and the front door of the house green," by easily distinguishing between the two colors.

The names of all 26 letters and 10 numerals will be reviewed early in the school year, but children are expected to remember this information from the preschool curriculum. Children should be able to distinguish between similarly formed letters (such as B and P or J and L) and similarly formed numbers (such as 10 and 100 or 9 and 6).

Children are expected to use visual discrimination skills to help them understand information presented during science or social studies units of study. This includes observing a demonstration, remembering any steps in the procedure and remembering what the final outcome should look like. Children may be expected to replicate an experiment or activity at their own work station.

LETTER AND WORD AWARENESS

Beginning of Preschool

When children start preschool, they are expected to recognize their first name printed in upper case letters. A child's first name will be written on his locker and any folders or worksheets he uses. Also, a child should know the name of each letter in his name and be able to dictate the proper spelling of his name to an adult. Many children in the classroom will be able to write their first name with varying degrees of accuracy.

During the year, depending on the pre-reading program used in the school, teachers will likely introduce the names of all 26 letters. Children are expected to quickly learn this information and be able to name letters shown to them. Teachers will also begin teaching the children how to write all letters by introducing the proper method for forming each letter. This instruction typically starts by directing the child to write a letter by tracing over a printed model. Then children are expected to write letters freehand by following a guide at the top of the page.

Children are expected to understand that words are groups of letters separated from other words by a space before and after the word. Children should be able to point to and count the number of words in a sentence or on a page.

When teachers read books with large print and repetitive text, children are expected to identify and remember frequently repeated words. Also, labels (such as "door" or "clock") and classmates' names will likely be posted in many areas of the classroom. After seeing these words each day for several weeks, children are expected to add these words to the list of words they are able to identify on sight (their "sight word vocabulary").

Beginning of Kindergarten

At the start of kindergarten, children are expected to recognize both their first and last names written in upper case letters, and accurately spell aloud both their first and last names. They are expected to comfortably point to and count each word in a printed sentence, demonstrating their knowledge that a word is a group of letters with a particular meaning.

As with the preschool year, children will see words posted on bulletin boards, on a “word wall” or as labels in the classroom. They are expected to incorporate these new words into their “sight word vocabulary”.

Letter names and sounds will be reviewed at the beginning of the year to make sure that all children, regardless of their preschool background, have this knowledge. Even children who did not attend a preschool program should be able to identify all 26 letters and remember each letters’ corresponding sound(s) within a few months.

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Beginning of Preschool

When children start preschool, they are expected to recognize individual sounds in a single word and repeat those sounds. For example, a child should be able to suggest a word that starts with the /b/ sound. Children will also be expected to understand the concept of rhyming and should be able to identify when two words rhyme. (Later in the year, children will be asked to complete the more complicated task of suggesting rhyming words.)

Children are expected to identify distinct words in a spoken sentence and count the number of words as a sentence is said aloud.

In many preschools, teachers may introduce the sound each letter makes. If this is part of your child’s preschool curriculum, your child is expected to accurately hear each sound the teacher makes when introducing a letter and repeat the sound properly. Children will be expected to remember what sounds each letter makes.

Beginning of Kindergarten

At the start of kindergarten, children are expected to be comfortable with the first five stages of phonemic awareness development. This means a child is expected to (1) recognize sounds in individual words, (2) count words in a sentence, (3) recognize words that rhyme, (4) count syllables in words, and (5) identify the beginning consonant in each word.

In many cases (and based on the school curriculum), children are expected to attempt inventive spelling to communicate their ideas through writing. Children

should be able to consistently identify the first letter or beginning consonant of each word they are trying to communicate, as well as any ending consonant or strong vowel sounds. As a general rule, a kindergarten child's inventive spelling should be advanced enough that an adult could look at the letters written by the child and, by sounding out the letters written, guess the intended words in the sentence. At this point in the year, children are not expected to spell words correctly. As such, the letters C and K or Z and S, for example, will be considered by children largely interchangeable due to their similar sounds. This understanding is absolutely expected and permitted.

MATH AND NUMBER AWARENESS

Beginning of Preschool

When children start preschool, they are expected to recognize the written numerals 1 through 5. (Writing numerals correctly is a Fine Motor skill that is taught in preschool and reinforced in kindergarten.) They should also be able to apply one-to-one correspondence when counting five objects, counting each item only once. Children are expected to count accurately from one to ten, even if they are counting by rote memorization and are unable to apply one-to-one correspondence to amounts greater than five.

Children are expected to recognize and continue simple repeating patterns. To begin, children will be introduced to the ABAB pattern (for example, apple, banana, apple, banana or red bead, blue bead, red bead, blue bead). After a few weeks, children are expected to recognize and continue more advanced patterns such as ABCABC and AABAAB.

Children are expected to sort a small group of objects into two or three groups according to visual characteristics. This includes, for example, taking a bowl of buttons and sorting them into groups based on color, size, shape, or material.

Beginning of Kindergarten

At the beginning of the year, children are expected to identify numbers 1 through 20 by sight. They are also expected to know the amount each numeral represents and properly apply one-to-one correspondence when counting a group of up to twenty objects. Many children may be able to count, perhaps

with some hesitation, by ones, twos or tens up to 100. Other children will develop this ability during the kindergarten year.

Children should recognize and identify increasingly complex patterns, such as AABCAABC or ABBCDABBCD. They should be able to extend these patterns for several additional repetitions using colored blocks or beads to represent each letter. They should also be able to create, without a model, their own simple pattern with several repetitions. After creating a pattern, children are expected to label the pattern for a teacher or other adult using descriptive words such as “blue, blue, green, yellow, blue, blue, green, yellow” or “square, circle, circle, triangle, square, circle, circle, triangle.”

Children should be able to consistently sort a group of objects into three, four or more groups based on the objects’ dominant characteristics. For example, a child in preschool may have been expected to sort a pile of buttons into two piles: large buttons and small buttons. In kindergarten, a child will be expected to sort the same pile of buttons into four piles: large blue buttons, large yellow buttons, small blue buttons, small yellow buttons. In addition, children will be expected to articulate their thought process when sorting, such as explaining how some of the buttons were big and some were small and how there were two shades of blue, for example.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Beginning of Preschool

During the first week of school, teachers understand that many children will be anxious when separating from their parents. However, teachers expect that children will separate from their parents with some hesitation and be willing to engage in the activities presented by the teacher. Even for children who become upset at the moment their parents leave the classroom, teachers expect that these children will calm down within five or ten minutes.

After just a few weeks of school, children are expected to interact comfortably with their peers by sharing classroom materials, taking turns and cooperating in play and work situations. Children will likely need some adult supervision and assistance to help initiate or facilitate peaceful and productive group work. Additionally, some children may need assistance from an adult to calm down during a stressful situation, such as when another child is working with an item they wish to have or when a child is unable to complete a specific task. With

an adult's assistance, children should be able to calm down within a few minutes.

Children are expected to display patience and self-control. This includes, for example, following directions to remain seated and wait patiently while the teacher is working with another child. Some children may need to be reminded to wait patiently. However, after receiving one reminder, teachers expect that children will wait patiently without becoming upset. Children are expected to follow all classroom rules and to respect all property in the room.

Beginning of Kindergarten

Teachers understand that children may feel nervous during the first week of school. They are in a new classroom and may use a more flexible routine from the summer. As with the beginning of the preschool year, it is not uncommon for some children to cry on the first day of school. However, by the second day of school, it is expected that children will recall the familiarity of a classroom environment and enter the room without hesitation. Even children who did not attend a preschool program should be comfortable in the classroom by the second or third day of school, as they see other children working confidently. Children are also expected to separate easily from their parents on the occasions when parents visit the classroom to drop off a birthday snack, to read a book to the class or for other special events.

Children will be expected to interact comfortably and independently with peers in play and work situations without adult assistance. An adult may be needed to begin the group work by suggesting a game or preparing the materials required for an activity. However, once the activity has begun, children will be expected to productively complete the activity without needing further assistance.

Children should attempt to solve personal problems (from locating a missing jacket at recess time to resolving minor conflicts with friends) independently before asking a teacher for help. Kindergarten students are expected to demonstrate empathy by recognizing others' feelings and being willing to help a friend who is upset or needs assistance.

Children are expected to share materials, take turns, respect others' ideas and collaborate comfortably with a group of their peers. Children are also expected to be able to wait patiently for needed help, if the teacher is working with

another child. It is expected that children will not cry when they are frustrated or disappointed.