



kindergarten / readiness

Introduction to the foundation skills children should know so they arrive at school prepared for academic success.



Introduction

Congratulations for wanting to learn more about foundation skills children will be faced with in our fast paced global 24/7 society that is very much their environment.

The sheer fact you are reading this information, indicates a parent who is aware and interested in their child's development and school preparedness.

The Granby Early Childhood Council (GECC) is a collaborative of diverse individuals who have teamed up to pool expertise and knowledge as child care providers/centers, kindergarten educators, and school administrators to formulate a set of guidelines to help children. Along with their parents, children will be transitioning into being kindergarteners. It is with the parental partnership (P²) that this formulation of guidelines succeeds. Being the closest and most integral model for your child's life is a space reserved for you. Children watch and learn the things they are exposed to and the members of this consortium want to help re-support those developmentally appropriate steps.

The belief that **“All children arrive at school healthy and socially and emotionally prepared for academic success and life-long learning”** is what GECC is funded to do by the Graustein Memorial Fund. For more information, consult the website (www.granbyecc.org). The Granby community has experienced many different successes in recent times. From the updating of Granby schools with state-of-the-art facilities to The Vanguard School Award, (the only one awarded in the State of Connecticut), it is the community of parents that send their students ready to learn and succeed which makes this all happen and surely be proud. Elaine Collins states, “We are here to help students succeed – it's that simple.”

As previously stated, this document is structured to focus on the pre-school student making the transition into kindergarten. The information below is a guideline *only* because as we know, all children develop and grow at a diverse pace. Your primary care provider can coordinate with you the preparedness and the kindergarten teacher can assist in explaining the goals at timed conferences. GECC can re-support and suggest ideas and activities your child can learn from in different ways through this document.

Health and Safety is paramount at community school setting, a health form is required by the school. This needs to be completed before your child enters kindergarten which a doctor signs. (see attached sample letter)

In addition, below are some items that will also be important for kindergarten from a health and safety perspective and parents can encourage regularly.

- Eats at regular times each day, schools have set schedules for lunch and snacks
- Gets eight or more hours of sleep at night and is well rested for learning
- Can run, jump, climb, swing and use balls so as to interact and play with others
- Has had a health check-up, see letter and information from the school nurse
- Has had all required immunizations, signed doctors form required by school

- Receives medical care when sick and can tell a teacher when feeling unusual
- Receives dental check-ups regularly to become more comfortable with a dentist

Independence is a life long skill for young learners to achieve. At this transition time the following are areas which promote self governance supported by parents.

- Can wash own hands and dry to further resist illness and spreading germs
- Can eat unassisted and stops conversation while chewing
- Can use silverware appropriately
- Recognizes own possessions: jacket, lunchbox, etc. and learns where to place them
- Will put away toys when asked and remains focused on the task
- Can take off and put on coat and, in time, will attempt buttons and zippers with support
- Is independent in using the toilet, can snap, button, zipper or belt own pants
- Can blow nose, cover sneezes in the elbow to minimize the spread of germs and illnesses
- Can follow a multi-step direction, such as, ‘wash your hands and brush your teeth,’ then move to additional steps.
- Can tie shoes*

*This is a category when each child develops at their own levels especially today with Velcro.

Socially children are interested learners and look for boundaries and parameters to operate within. When expectations are met, it is cause for a positive support comment to the child.

School Psychologists have set the following benchmarks for parents to review.

- Can sit for short periods (15 min.) to listen to a story for example
- Will listen to an adult and do as told by carrying out the request with appropriate action
- Can play with other children without hitting or biting and enjoy others’ company
- Can cooperate with other children as needed for interaction
- Can follow a rule once it is explained
- Can understand that changes happen and the changes can be good
- Understands and follows oral directions that are developmental appropriate

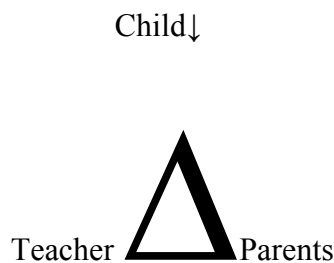
Teachers appreciate students ready to learn and the following are guidelines for the learning process.

- Can communicate personal needs
- Shows an interest in books and reading
- Holds book and turns pages correctly
- Knows some songs, rhymes with recognition, recalling and repeating
- Participates in rhyiming games with vocabulary or action
- Knows first and last name (street and phone number are a bonus!)

- ___ Identifies some letters (especially those in their own name)
- ___ Identifies labels and signs in the environment they are familiar with
- ___ Pretends to read and write using imagination
- ___ Knows names of family members, this can include pets
- ___ Can tell about an experience using recall and vocabulary
- ___ Can tell and retell familiar stories such as books that have been read many times
- ___ Has had a variety of experiences such as library, park, zoo, grocery store, post office
- ___ Can use crayons, pencil, scissors as their “tools” to achieve their end result
- ___ Expresses ideas with drawings with appropriate colors
- ___ Is willing to try to complete a task with encouragement

Parent Partnership (P²) with language and modeling are the strongest messages that students receive from parents and extended family members. Below are some hints as to what a parent can do to help re-support their child’s care providers and the transition to kindergarten learning environment.

The Triangle Model of parent to child, child to care provider/teacher/ and primary care provider to parent is the formulation that has success. See model below. As a parent partnership, parents will understand their role and responsibility in their child’s education, as a partner with the child’s teacher.



**** We recognize that children come to kindergarten with a wide range of skills. Therefore we know many children may enter kindergarten with beginning skills above this level.

What if my child has strong academic skills, but is not ready emotionally and socially? He has separation anxiety and carries his favorite stuffed animal with him everywhere. Is he ready for kindergarten?

A child needs to be ready emotionally before moving on to academic skills. A parent should take cues from their child and preschool teacher if their child attended preschool. A problem that may affect a child’s ability to learn can be identified in kindergarten or earlier and appropriate services can be provided. Kindergarten instruction promotes learning of many skills that are the foundation of the curriculum. Stuffed animals and blankets are not allowed in the classroom, but can stay in the child’s backpack.

How do I talk to my child about the fact that he/she might not be going to kindergarten until the following year?

Be confident in your decision, be positive and optimistic about whatever your child will be participating in and convey those feelings to your child. Do not let your child pick up on any feelings of regret or indecision you may have. Parents will be educated about what is the best age for THEIR child to begin kindergarten. Consulting professionals is very appropriate at this time. Ask your care provider/kindergarten teacher/health professional/principal for advice.

Children are quick to learn and imitate or “pick up” behaviors, hence, at a time when this is so pronounced, it would be prudent to allow access to all learning styles and concepts so there is experience for the child.

Parental Observations Socially

Below is a guide for parents to use when observing and interacting with their child. This guide stresses the four going to be five year old entering the kindergarten environment.

- Four year olds are friendly, talkative and “bubbly;” they like playing with a friend or near one.
- Four year olds learn directly from modeling and *their* behaviors reflect what they have seen and experience.
- They make decisions based on what interests them, however, at times, need adult assistance and help in expressing their thoughts.
- Being selected to do a “job” is exciting for them and positive comments are nice where appropriate.

Parental Observations Physically

- With the ocular nerve developing, four year olds can focus on things that are far away in distance and they like activities to participate; such as seeing a game being played by other children and wanting to join in the game/activity.
- Because motor skills are also developing, there may be times of being clumsy and some collisions as well as awkwardness in using a writing utensil and other fine movements.
- Sitting for short periods only is common; children like to move.

Parental Observations Cognition

- Great amounts of learning take place through exploring and experiencing. One such productive vehicle for this is role/drama playing and dress up.
- Frequent movements from one venue to another is normal as four year olds like to be active and moving.
- Speaking to a four year old through story readings, telling tales and explanations of situations are thought producing fodder for a four year old. They love to be read to.

- While paper and pencil can attract a four year old for short periods helping fine motor skills to develop, the activities such as dancing, tumbling, easel painting and math manipulative pieces are appropriate.

Parental Hints

Things to keep in mind ...

Pediatrician's offices are very busy in the summer. Appointments may be hard to make if you wait until the summer. "Kindergarten shots" (immunizations, i.e., DTP, Polio, MMR, Varivax) can be given any time after the child is 4 years old. You do not have to wait until the summer before they start kindergarten.

Pediatrician's offices are often swamped with requests for school forms in the summer. You may have to wait 7-10 days to have your form filled out even if all your information is current and you do not need to see the doctor.

Parents with Children

When picking up your child from the care provider, make an inquiry as to what was done during the day to show the child you are interested in their day and what they have done. This can create conversation amongst you and your child. It can support increased vocabulary; try some new words with them that pertain to the subject matter you are talking about.

Sing numeracy songs "One two buckle my shoe," and "One little, Two little, Three little Indians." All children like to sing and chant.

The domestic scene is the place children feel comfortable and safe. It is also the place where they are most likely to take risks and experiment to discover things. Make this work for them. If baking cookies, help them measure out the ingredients; they will understand the parts make a whole. If making fruit salad, let them mix it together; they will understand blending and colors associated with taste. If your child observes another putting something together, have the person explain what they are doing and perhaps the child can help.

While traveling on the roads, have your child identify the things seen and describe them; such as the color, size (big, small), shape, how many, their purpose. If it is a simple word like tree; spell the word for them. It is helpful for children to distinguish their right from their left. One way to explain this to demonstrate/model this for children is for them to hold their hands out in front of them with their thumbs extended away from the index finger. The left hand assimilates the letter 'L' for left and therefore the other hand is the right hand.

Children enjoy the “I Spy” game; this can be played at any point and at any place. It increases vocabulary and uses their higher order of thinking skills (HOTS) for problem solving.

If scheduling errands to places such as the post office, grocery store, dry cleaners, bank, pharmacy, restaurant and especially the library, bring your child with you. These experiences are the beginning of their global knowledge. Conversations about money at the bank; retrieving things from the dry cleaners, health and wellness at the pharmacy, food and nutrition at the restaurant; maps and directions at the post office; planning at the grocery store and the always important reading at the library are conversations that are plain and understandable to a four year old.

Reading is a skill that is paramount. Reading to your child is important. Reading can be from a story that has been read time and time again or a new and exciting book. While reading to your child, use the index finger to point to the words you are reading on the page. While simplistic in nature, the benefit is immense. Then discuss the pictures with them. Make believe you are both at “Book Club.”

Practicing routine matters, such as “please” and “thank you” with manners, speech and discussion; one person talks at a time and following simple and precise directions (the child understands), are re-supported by care professionals and kindergarten teachers. Having a model in both places makes it a valid behavior for the child to participate.

With meals on the go with most families, introduce vegetables first. Having patience and encouraging “smart and strong” choices is one way to support wellness. Try to have your child open to exploring vegetables first; some children may prefer them raw.

January

There is a good chance snowflakes will fly and no two snowflakes are the same, just like people. This is an opportunity to speak to children about diversity. Everyone is different and differences should be celebrated. While there are differences, there are also similarities. This discussion could be about compare and contrast.

February

Our society and culture capitalize on the concept of love for this month. St. Valentine’s Day is widely celebrated, but more importantly children can be taught about kindness and compassion for others. Explain to children that they are cared for and loved. There are safe and secure places that they should feel comfortable.

March

Muddy March or March Madness; either way, spring is coming and the frozen earth will begin to thaw. Show children the three states of matter; frozen, liquid and gas. Many times the mud is frozen and will become mushy with the warm sun becoming higher in the sky. If you are lucky and the sun really penetrates the black road surface, there is a chance steam can be observed. Muddy footprints can happen; be sure to take off your shoes before entering the house. Watch for shadows and play a short game of shadow tag for a few minutes.

April

Living in the northeast; weather changes rapidly. Make a point of telling your child this and dress accordingly. It may be cool in the morning and warmer in the afternoon. Children will want to shed their coats while outside at play and it is a good time to reintroduce good healthy foods with the start of vegetables and fruits coming into season in the supermarkets.

May

May traditionally brings Mother's Day and is a perfect time to talk about respect of people in children's lives. It is a time for parents to share their views of the concept of respect of others as well. Personal stories and experiences that involve extended family members children are knowledgeable of make an impact.

June

The calendar indicates the end of another school year. This is a time when students can relate to the nice weather and their surroundings. Speaking to children about the beginning and ending of things such as stories, movies, plants in the garden, the day itself, the alphabet, and a life cycle are all examples children can experience first hand in their environment with the theme of beginning to end.

July

The Fourth of July is celebrated in our country. Timing is judicious for talking about the United States of America. Developmentally, children will lack the understanding of the concept; however, introducing the appropriate music with patriotic themes is totally appropriate. Listening and becoming familiar with the words helps the children with recall not to mention how charming children appear when they wear the country's colors of red, white and blue.

August

Dog Days of summer usually mean vacation and if not available, consider water play. The water hose with different size containers and a big pail make for entertainment.

Children love to fill the containers and pour them into others. Being environmentally conscience, ask children to water the flowers, vegetable garden and be sure to play with water on the grass. Running through the sprinkler may be old fashioned, but children find it non-intimidating and can do this activity with a friend. Remember to mention the benefits of being hydrated by water.

September

As the days cool and grow shorter, children may relax and find they have grown out some of their favorite clothes. It could be a good time to talk about growing and new expectations on behavior and trying new things. Meeting new people and using manners come with practice and modeling.

October

Harvest colors with changes in leaves are noticeable. Children like to pick up leaves and talk about the different colors they can be. This time of season is complementary to the world going to sleep and bedtimes for children. Explanations as to why it is important to get rest and eat correctly to keep children healthy should be considered. Staying healthy promotes growth and brain activity.

November

Wildly anticipating in the holiday of Thanksgiving parents can talk about how things were long ago, what we have today and predict when children grow up are all discussions that can use imagination. A sense of humor and thankfulness woven with family traditions can increase a child's vocabulary.

December

This month is reserved for simplicity since schedules can be busy. It is a good time to review with children their growth and accomplishments. Discuss with them, all the wonderful things that they did in the past year. If pictures are available to reminisce and recant is a great way to end the year.

Naturally, all these things can be revisited and reviewed at any time. They are however, the spring board or launching pad which gives parents the ideas to talk about. Once the discussion begins, the sky is the limit.