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#### Introduction

One of the most exciting and life changing moments is about to occur in your child's life, the entrance to school and the beginning of Kindergarten. Together, parents and educators need to work hard to make sure that children are ready for school. I have conducted two parent interviews to gather information to pinpoint parents' needs as they prepare their children for an early childhood program. Included in this handbook are information, activities, and games to support your child's learning and help develop the essential skills needed for a most successful start to Kindergarten. (Refer to the Research section of this handbook for what research indicates as readiness.) In order to make the use of this handbook parent-friendly, a glossary has been included in the back.

This handbook is designed to help prepare four and five year old children for school. Readiness is a combination of experience, growth, and age. Children grow and mature at different rates and not all children are ready at the same time. Ideally the kindergarten class should be ready for the child, rather than the parent having to prepare the child for kindergarten.

The activities in this handbook can be completed in any order and can be revisited as often as desired. Young children, especially, need a lot of praise and encouragement. A great deal of confidence is gained when children feel successful. Mastery of these skills is NOT a pre-requisite to entering kindergarten. If at any time the child appears to be frustrated, please discontinue the activity. The activities should be fun for the parent and the child to do.

Remember...parents are their child's first and most important teacher!



#### Research

Essential elements of an effective early childhood program must focus on developmentally appropriate skills (Berger, E., 2004; Bredekamp S., & Copple, C., 1997; Dockett, S., & Perry, B., 2003). Although basic skills are important for children to learn, such as: alphabet, numbers, colors, shapes, and writing ones name, other areas of development are equally important. According to Bredekamp and Copple (1997), "a high-quality early childhood program is one that provides a safe and nurturing environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual, and language development of each child while being sensitive to the needs and preferences of families" (p. 8).

Teachers in early childhood programs should be ready to service any child that enters the classroom. For a program to be highly developmentally appropriate, the teacher must take into account each individual child in the classroom and pay particular attention to his or her needs (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Early childhood programs should look slightly different because of the students being serviced. "Recognition that individual variation is not only to be expected but also valued requires that decisions about curriculum and adults' interactions with children be as individualized as possible" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 10).

Working collaboratively with parents and establishing a partnership with two-way communication, respect for one another, and support for one another will allow the parent, the teacher, and the child to achieve the best outcome. "The links among home, school, and parental involvement are recognized as very important" (Berger, 2004, p. 23).

While "parents are their child's first educators" educational programs and teachers can help supply parents with information needed to support their children at home (Berger, 2004, p. 32). As described by Berger (2004), readiness skills for early development should include "five dimensions: (1) physical well-being and motor development; (2) social and emotional development; (3) approaches toward learning; (4) language development; and (5) cognitive and general knowledge" (p. 29). On the other hand Dockett and Perry (2003) define eight areas that affect children in their transition to school: "knowledge, social adjustment to the school context, skills, disposition, rules, physical attributes or characteristics, family issues, and education environment" (p. 30). The parents interviewed made reference to the social, behavior, and knowledge aspects of preparedness for school but did not reference emotional adjustment, physical characteristics, and family issues, of which are equally important.

Knowing skill-based information might be thought by parents as a sound foundation of readiness for Kindergarten. Sources say that the general knowledge is not enough (Berger, E., 2004; Bredekamp S., & Copple, C., 1997). A combination of intelligence, social skills, behavior, language development, and gross and fine motor skills, and many experiences, is that which constitutes a child being ready for Kindergarten.

# Age Characteristics

# Four-year-old Child

The four year old child is very active, full of energy, and extremely talkative. The child enjoys being around other children his or her own age. The four-year-old child frequently uses large muscles to run, jump, climb, and push. The child needs to be independent with firm boundaries established. He or she will probably test what can be done and the difference between right and wrong will be gained. The child is typically not uncooperative, but during a learning stage of life it may seem as such. Patience, understanding and genuine interest on the parents behalf will help guide the child through this stage.

# Physical

The four year old...

- Tumbles, jumps, hops, walks on tip toes
- Throws and catches a ball
- Holds and uses a pencil
- Draws circles and squares
- Cuts and pastes with help
- Dresses and undresses with help
- Decides whether to use right or left hand (don't try to change your child's decision)

# Intellectual

The four year old...

- Speaks in almost complete sentences
- Is moving beyond "baby talk"
- · Enjoys being read to
- Wants to have his or her own way
- Calls friends "names" and may use "bad words"
- Recognizes at least four colors
- Counts to at least ten



### **Emotional**

The four year old...

- Usually pleasant but changes form happy to unhappy for no apparent reason
- Occasionally becomes upset, "shows off," or is "smart alecky"
- · Wants a lot of attention and acts up to get it
- Hits or teases playmates
- Tattles, brags, and sometimes "lies"
- Has a vivid imagination and never-ending curiosity

# Social/Play

The four year old...

- Enjoys other children; may have a "best friend"
- Plays well with two or three other children
- Is willing to take turns
- Likes to make believe and dress up
- Spends time making things
- Wants to help adults with chores



From Source: Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore. (1996). Your child goes to school: A handbook for parents of children entering school for the first time (Report No PS-024793). Baltimore, MD: Maryland State Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED404041)

# Five-year-old Child

The five-year-old child is calmer and less excitable than a four-year-old child. The child is friendly, talkative, and affectionate toward adults. The child is very eager to please his or her parents. The child has developed the understanding that written words have meaning. Recognition of letters and the pretend writing is typical. The child still wants to be independent and again needs limitations. Remember, an ordinary activity for adults is an enormous learning experience for a five-year-old. Routine, including starting the day, choosing clothes, eating breakfast are important for the child to establish. Allow the child to make small but important decisions, such as making choices.

# Physical

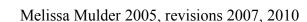
The five year old...

- Moves more smoothly; has better balance
- Skates, runs on tip toes, jumps rope, skips, catches a ball
- Jumps forward on one foot
- Draws a complete person (body, arms, legs, feet, clothes), a triangle
- Prints first name
- Dresses self; may tie shoes
- · Occasionally wets the bed at night

# <u>Intellectual</u>

The five year old...

- Asks good questions
- Continues to talk constantly and holds conversations with others
- Tells simple stories, nursery rhymes, and "silly" jokes
- Connects two or more sentences
- Matches pictures
- Shows interest in the outside world
- Counts to at least 20



### **Emotional**

The five year old...

- "Acts out" or "acts up" less
- Thinks things through
- · Likes challenges
- Takes responsibility for actions
- Says "I can"; is eager to please
- Thinks teacher "knows more" than parent

# Social/Play

The five year old...

- Plays house and dress up
- Plays with five or six children in a group
- Takes as much time as needed (even days) to finish a project
- · Uses scissors and colored paper
- Follows simple game rules
- Likes to experiment with different body movements
- Participates in organized sports activities



From Source: Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore. (1996). *Your child goes to school: A handbook for parents of children entering school for the first time* (Report No PS-024793). Baltimore, MD: Maryland State Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED404041)

# Pre-Kindergarten Skills

The following is a list of skills your child should work on before entering kindergarten.

### Language

- listens attentively to stories and poems
- can tell about stories heard
- speaks in sentences
- follows directions
- recognizes rhyming words
- recognizes letters of the alphabet

# Development

- counts number of objects to 10
- identifies colors
- can match and tell names of shapes
- recognizes his/her name
- writes first name (try for first letter capitalized and remaining letters lowercase)
- buttons
- ties
- puts on coat, hat, boots, etc.

## Physical

- knows basic body parts
- uses scissors, crayons and pencils correctly
- works puzzles of 8-10 pieces
- can hop
- can skip
- turns the pages of book correctly (right to left and one at a time)

#### Social

- shares with others
- waits for his/her turn
- solves conflicts in an acceptable manner
- cares for self in bathroom
- · cleans up after working
- has emotional control
- concentrates on task until complete
- expresses an "I can" attitude rather than an "I can't" attitude
- usually seems happy

<sup>\*</sup>Kindergarten Readiness Skills as presented to parents at "Kindergarten Information Night" for students entering kindergarten in Penn Manor School District in Millersville, PA.

### **Motor Development**

# Gross Motor Activity

Gross motor activities should include the act of bouncing a ball, hopping, skipping, jumping, throwing, and catching.

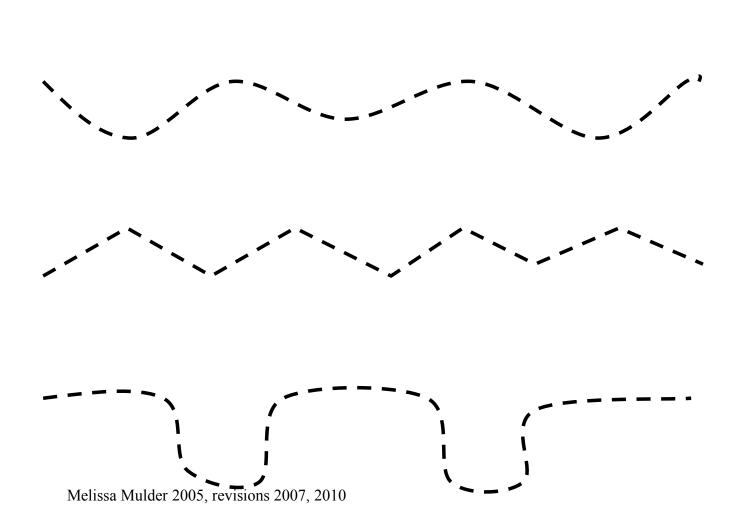
# Fine Motor Activity

To help with the development of your child's fine motor skills your child should practice tracing, cutting, and writing. Use the activities supplied below to provide this opportunity.

# Tracing / Cutting Directions:

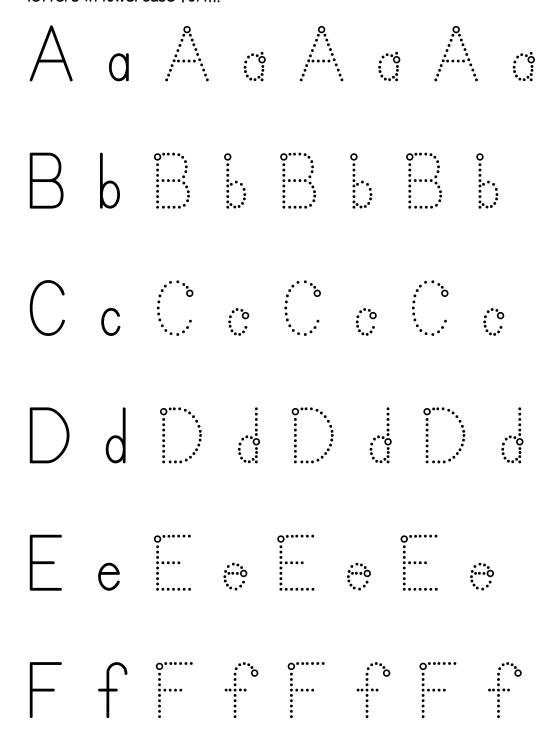
The child should first trace the line with his or her finger. The child should then choose his or her favorite color crayon to trace the line. When finished he or she should use scissors to cut along the line with as much precision as possible.

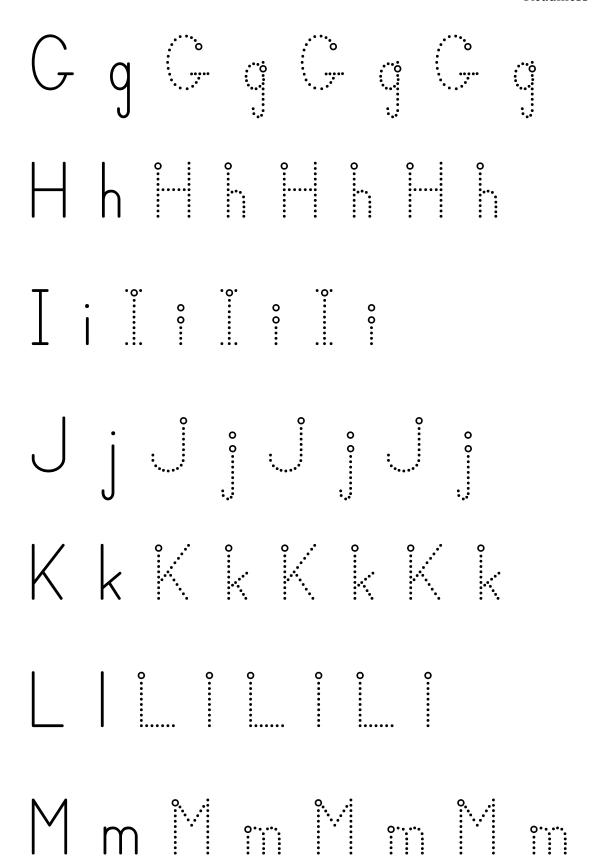




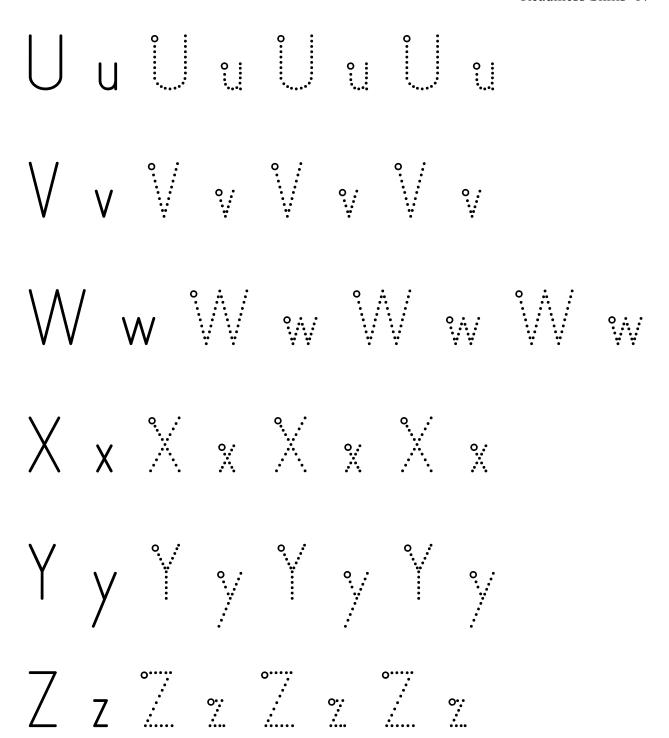


Handwriting: The child should practice tracing the letters with a pencil and then try to write the letters on his or her own. He or she can also try writing his or her first and last name. When teaching your child to write his or her name, be sure to teach them with one uppercase letter at the beginning and all of the rest of the letters in lowercase form.





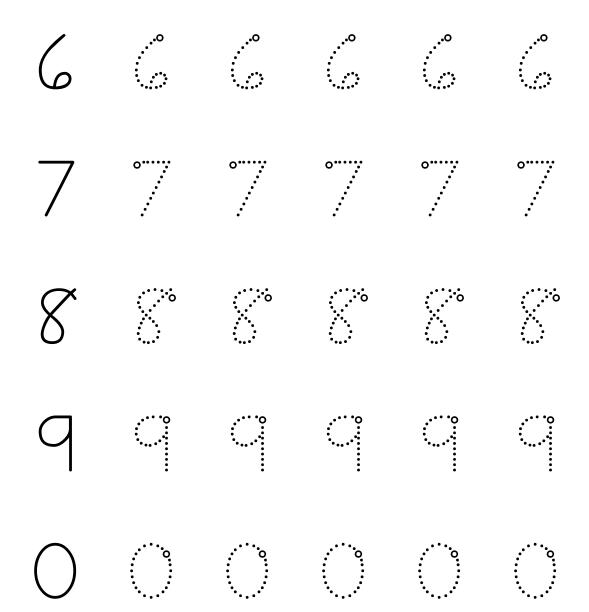
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Handwriting: The child should practice tracing the numbers with a pencil and then try to write the numbers on his or her own. He or she can also try identifying the numbers when an adult asks him or her to find a specific number.

		3 4			
	0	0	0	0	0
2	o	o	o	o	o
3	o''': ::	o***: •:	o***:	o''':	o''':
4	0	0	0	0	0
5	····	····	o	····	o·····



# Social / Emotional Development

# Social Development

It is important for children to be able to talk to adults. Encourage your child to try some of these:

- Encourage your child to do things for him or herself when they are ready.
- Let him or her feed and dress him or herself, and clean up after him or herself even if these tasks take more time and are not done perfectly.
- He or she should place his or her own order when at a restaurant.
- Allow your child to answer questions for him or herself, instead of the parent answering.
- If your child has a question, allow him or her ask the question to the adult.
- Take your child to a Pre-School Story Hour to interact with other kids and adults in a structured environment.
- If possible, set up a neighborhood playgroup or a play date with another child. Include sharing and interactions with children the same age.
- Encourage your child to make decisions by offering choices.
- Encourage your child to take responsibility for some tasks.
- Encourage your child to solve everyday problems.

# **Emotional Development**

Feeling good about oneself and other is important for learning. Children who are confident about their abilities and who like being with others will probably enjoy being in school and work hard. Here are some ways to help at home:

- Make sure your child has many opportunities to be with other children (group setting and one-on-one).
- Encourage your child to follow directions, remember stories, and take turns.
- Give your child tasks to do that he or she can do well and learn in his or her abilities. Praise and encourage your child during and after the task is completed.
- Help your child learn to dress him or herself and take care of personal needs.
- Develop regular routines at home and consistency so your child can understand that these are important.

# Language Development

#### Read to Your Child

A very effective way to help your child's language develop is to read to him or her, and read often. This allows the child to hear fluent reading. A suggested amount of time would be at least 10 minutes a day, every day. For a better payoff try reading with your child 20 minutes a day, every day of the week. Remember, reading should be fun for both you and your child. The goal is for the child to become a lifelong lover of reading.



The f	following is a list of other language development suggestions:
	Talk with and listen to your child as you play and do daily activities together
	Read with your children at a regular time every day and when they ask you.
	I Take your child to the library so that he or she can choose books to read at
	home. Find out about your library's special books and services.
	Create a special place in your home for your child to read and write.
	Keep books and other reading materials where your child can reach them.  Add new books often.
	Keep writing materials such as washable, nontoxic crayons and markers, paints and brushes, and different kinds of paper where your child can reach them.
	Take books and writing materials for your child with you whenever you leave home, so that he or she can read or write at the doctor's office, on the bus and in the car.
	Show your child how you read and write every day to have fun and to get things done.
	Point out to your child the printed words in your home and in the community.  Point out names of stores, gas stations, businesses, restaurants, schools and traffic signs.

# Suggested Reading Titles for Kindergarten Age Children

Nursery Rhymes, Alphabet and Number Books

26 Letters and 99 Cents, Tana Hoban

1, 2, 3 To the Zoo, Eric Carle

Best Mother Goose Ever, Richard Scarry

Eating the Alphabet, Lois Ehlert

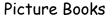
Once Upon A to Z, Jody Linscott

Ten, Nine, Eight, Molly Bang

The Dinosaur Alphabet Book, Jerry Pallotta

The Icky Bug Counting Book, Jerry Pallotta

Tomie DePaola's Mother Goose, Tomie DePaola



The Napping House, Audrey Wood

Runaway Bunny, Margaret Wise Brown

Where's Spot, Eric Hill (and other Spot books)

Books Too Good To Miss

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?, Bill Martin, Jr.

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, Bill Martin, Jr.

Clifford, Norman Bridwell (and other Clifford books)

<u>Curious George</u>, H.A. Rey (and other Curious George books)

Good Night Moon, Margaret Wise Brown

Green Eggs and Ham, Dr. Seuss (and other Dr. Seuss books)

Rosie's Walk, Path Hutchins

The Very Hungry Caterpillar, Eric Carle (and other Eric Carle books)

Where the Wild Things Are, Maurice Sendak

If You Give a Moose a Muffin, Laura Numeroff (and other Laura Numeroff books)

No, David!, David Shannon (and other David Shannon books)

Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type, Doreen Cronin (and other Doreen Cronin books)

The Polar Express, Chris Van Allsburg

Corduroy, Don Freeman (and other Corduroy books)

#### Classics

Chicken Little (any version)

The Gingerbread Man (any version)

The Mitten, Jan Brett (and other Jan Brett books)



# <u>Listening Activity</u>

This activity encourages mental participation, active listening, and using knowledge of previously know sounds. This activity allows your child to use listening skills to focus his or her attention on sounds heard in his or her everyday surrounding. Prepare your child by modeling the difference of listening with open eyes and with closed eyes. Have your child close his or her eyes as you make several different noises, pausing after each noise for your child to name the noise heard.

- loud breathing
- clapping
- banging on a table
- · pouring liquid
- · whistling

- snapping fingers
- footsteps
- snoring
- hammering
- crumpling paper

Variation:	Make two noises	in a row, have	your child	name the	sounds after	both
are heard	. "First I heard	, and th	en I heard	"		

# Phonemic Awareness Activities

Phonemic awareness is not a purely developmental phenomenon but is gained through experience. You can play these games anytime: in the car, during bath time, or at the dinner table. Use the examples given to get you started. Remember to explore the world of sounds with: lots of fun and silliness, many language experiences, rhyme, rhythm, and songs.

# What is Phonemic Awareness?

It is an understanding that speech is composed of a series of individual sounds.

# Why is it so important?

It predicts reading success more accurately than socio-economic status or I.Q.



# Sorting

Sorting activities should begin as early as preschool because they help create connections in the brain. Sorting, classifying, and categorizing are complex cognitive activities that require high levels of thought. Sorting can range from easy (pictures), to more challenging (spelling patterns), to very challenging (ideas). They can also be either parent directed (with support) or child directed (less support), and they usually require parent modeling first. Here are a few ways we might ask children to sort words:

- number of letters
- first letter
- two of the same letter
- last letter
- all short letters

- tall and short letters
- long vowel sounds
- number of syllables
- silent "e" words
- describing words



# Rhyming

Say: We are going to do some rhyming. I will say a word and then you say a word that rhymes with my word. Listen. If I say ball, you could say tall. If I say sand you, could say \_\_\_\_\_(pause for child's response; offer assistance if necessary). Non-words that rhyme are acceptable. Let's try some more.

1.	man	2. hat
3.	sit	4. take
5.	sina	6. red

\*If the child has a difficult time giving a rhyming word, offer a group of three words to choose from. Say: Listen for a word that rhymes with ball...dog, hall, or mom? Yes, ball, hall.

# Initial Phonemes

Say: We're going to listen for words that start the same. Listen for a word that starts like *lake*. Boy, *little*, go. Little starts like *lake*. You say, *lake* and *little*. Yes, they start the same. Listen for a word that starts like *miss*: ant, me, dog. Yes, me starts like *miss*. Let's try some more.

- 1. mom: moon, sat, ice
- 2. she: ride, name shut
- 3. bug: chair, boy, race
- 4. eat: even, fast, red
- 5. name: lost, nose, sing
- 6. car: ham, dad, cat

# Blending

Say: I can say words like "Rocky the Robot": (make the sound of the letters in the //) /f/ pause /a/ pause /n/ and then I can say it fast: fan. Now I'll say a word the slow way and you say it fast. /p/ /e/ /t/. Yes, pet. Let's do some more.

1. /g/ 'o'	2. /g/ /r/ 'a'
3. /b/ 'i'	4./s//t//ew/
5. /b/ 'o' /t/	6. /m/ 'a'
7. /l/ /i/ /v/	8. /o/ /n/
9. /sh/ 'e' /p/	10. /a/ /t/

# Segmenting

Say: This time I will say the word fast and you say it like "Rocky the Robot." If I say weed, you say /w/ pause 'e' pause /d/. Let's try another one. You say play like a "Rocky the Robot". Yes, /p/ pause /l/ pause 'a'. Let's try some more. (This is a slightly more advanced activity.)

1. big	2. up	3. look	
4. dot	5. paw	6. nice	
7. see	8. have	9. off	

# Phoneme Manipulation

Say: I can say late with out the /l/ sound. Listen, late, ate. Do this one with me: can without the /c/ sound, can, an. You say bite without the /t/. Yes, bite without the /t/ is by. Let's do some more. (This is a much more advanced activity.)

2. bit without the /b/ (it)	
3. feet without the /f/ (eat)	
4. stop without the /s/ (top)	
5. board without the /d/ (bore)	
6. mice without the /s/ (my)	
7. mate without the /t/ (may)	
8. list without the /s/(lit)	
9. spilt without the /l/ (spit)	
10. monkey without the /k/ (money	/)



# General Knowledge Development

#### Letter Games and Number Games

The games to follow are to be used with the letter cards or number cards in the appendix. When playing Go Fish and Memory you can choose to use two sets of uppercase letters, two sets of lowercase letters or a set of uppercase letters and a set of lowercase letters combined, depending on your child's developmental ability or two sets of number cards. For My Pile/Your Pile you will need one set of uppercase letters and one set of lowercase letters or one set of number cards. Have fun and enjoy playing these simple, yet highly effective letter and number games with your child!

#### Go Fish

- Shuffle all the cards and deal out 5 cards to each player.
- Put the remaining cards face down for a fishpond.
- One at a time, each player asks for a letter or number that they currently have in their hand.
- The other player gives up that letter or number if he or she has it and if not, tells them to "Go Fish."
- It is always the next person's turn whether they get a match or not. (The player can get a match by drawing the letter or number from the pond too.)

# Memory

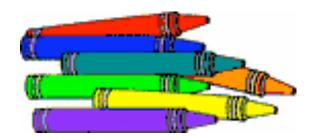
- Lay all the cards face down in even rows.
- The players, one at a time, try to find matches by turning over two cards at a time.
- If the player gets a match, he or she may keep the cards until the game is over.
- If it's not a match the player must flip the cards back over so they are face down again.
- Remind your child to try to remember where the letter or number was.
- The game is over when all matches are found.

# My Pile/Your Pile

- Show each letter or number, one at a time to your child.
- If your child knows the letter or number, he or she may keep it in their pile.
- If your child does not know the letter or number, you put it in your pile.
- The winner is the player who has the most cards in their pile after all the letters or numbers are through.
- \*Bonus When your child can get ALL the cards in his or her pile, it's time to celebrate! Entice them to win all the cards and offer a special reward: ice cream, dinner of choice, pizza or game night, special movie, shopping, etc.

#### Color Game

Choose an object and ask your child to name its color. This activity can be done anywhere: at home, at a restaurant, or in the car. Or this game could be played as an "I Spy" game. Say to your child, "I spy with my little eyes something that is yellow." Your child will look around and name the item that is yellow. Once your child becomes really good at this game, he or she could do the "spying" and you can do the finding.



#### Conclusion

Thank you for your time and effort in preparing your child to the best of your ability. When parents spend time with their children developing motor, social, emotional, language, and academic skills at home it builds a strong bond. I hope you find that using the provided activities in this handbook will make your child's transition from home to school much easier. Please understand that these activities and skills are not requirements for kindergarten students. The skills presented are to give your child a greater chance for early success once they have entered the school environment. If you have other activities that you find helpful please let me know so that others can benefit from them.

Ultimately the decision to send your child to school is your own. You may want to consider talking to your child's Pre-School teacher to find out if they feel he or she is ready academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally.

If you are searching for resources on any other topic, such as child development, discipline, parenting, or health issues, please stop by the school's guidance office to pick up more information or suggestions for other places to look for the information.

# Glossary

- Blending A word made by joining the sounds of letters together.
- Curriculum The subjects taught at an educational institution, or the elements taught in a particular subject.
- Decoding Finding the meaning of something.
- Developmentally appropriate practice Decisions based on day-to-day, minute-to-minute observations of students' development, taking into consideration the child's development and background.
- Early childhood program Early childhood education includes home, childcare, preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades (during the ages of 0-8 years old).
- Evaluation The act of considering or examining something in order to judge its value, quality, importance, extent, or condition; observation; testing.
- Fine motor Relating to small muscle activity, especially voluntary muscle activity, and the consequent body movements. (Ex. cutting, tracing, writing)
- Gross motor Relating to large muscle activity, especially voluntary muscle activity, and the consequent body movements (Ex. walking, running, skipping, jumping)
- Guided reading A small group of students at the same developmental reading level being taught the teacher.

- Letter Sound correspondence Relating the letter to the correct sound that the letter makes when spoken.
- Literacy The ability to read and write to a competent (understanding) level.
- Modeling Demonstrating a behavior to somebody in order for that behavior to be imitated (repeated).
- One-to-one correspondence As a number is said an object is touched, pointed at, or drawn to represent that number.
- Patterning A design or configuration that repeats over and over again (Ex. ABABABAB).
- Phonemes The small unit of speech that correspond to letters of the alphabet, a minimal unit of sound.
- Phonemic awareness The awareness that language is composed of phonemes (small sounds).
- Phonics Associating letters with the speech sound they represent.
- Segmenting Breaking down a word into its individual sounds.
- Sight word A word known automatically by looking at it.
- Syllables Pronouncing a word in distinct or separate syllables, which consists of one or more vowel sound with one or more consonant sound.

# Appendix

A	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>
E	F	<u>G</u>	H
<u>I</u>	J	K	
<u>M</u>	N	<u>O</u>	P
Q	<u>R</u>	<u>S</u>	
U	<u>V</u>	W	X
Y	<u>Z</u>		

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>
E	F	<u>G</u>	H
<u>I</u>	<u>J</u>	<u>K</u>	L
<u>M</u>	N	<u>O</u>	<u>P</u>
Q	R	<u>S</u>	<u></u>
U	<u>V</u>	W	X
Y	Z		

<u>a</u>	<u>b</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>d</u>
<u>e</u>	f	9	h
i	j	k	
<u>m</u>	n	<u>O</u>	<b>p</b>
<b>q</b>	r	<u>S</u>	<u>†</u>
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