



Family News

Summer 2013

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READY, SET, KINDERGARTEN!

Kindergarten – both children and caregivers look forward to that first day with a mixture of excitement, anxiety, and joy. It's a big step to go from preschool to kindergarten, and many parents wonder if their child is prepared. Will he be able to ask for help finding the bathroom? Will she feel comfortable playing with other children? Will he find the cafeteria? Will every other child know their ABCs?

Perhaps the best way to approach the big day is by taking a big breath. Your child is going to be fine. Your child is going to have fun. Your child will come home tired from meeting lots of new friends and playing with lots of new toys. Most children thrive in kindergarten, but if you have concerns about your child's developmental stages, ask your doctor and your school for guidance. Otherwise, a few simple practices can increase confidence in kids and moms and dads.

"I hope that parents will talk positively about school with their children and not try to overdo the school discussions," says Francine Lozeau, retired elementary school teacher. "I'm sure that when I was a parent I talked too long and too often about going to kindergarten and probably created extra anxiety by making it such a big deal!"

As parents, we want to ensure our children know they can talk to us about anything, but sometimes in our eagerness to keep the lines of communication open we actually end up scaring our kids. Take your cues from your child; if they start to seem anxious about kindergarten, ignore the subject for a while in favor of everyday routine.

"Being self-sufficient is important," says Christopher Ashley, early intervention service coordinator at The Family Place, and retired elementary education administrator. "Teachers are happy to help with buttons, but if there are 15 other children who need help, that slows everyone down." Every child learns to tie shoes, fasten buttons and navigate zippers at their own pace, but you can start laying the groundwork by practicing these skills when kids seem perceptive. Velcro is always a great option for shoes!

Both Ashley and Lozeau agree that a visit to the kindergarten classroom before the first day can be a great way to familiarize children with the new environment. Many schools offer a short Open House for incoming kindergarteners; if nothing is offered at your school, give your teacher a call to arrange a visit during the last few days of summer - "Not to talk about the child, but simply to get him or her used to the space," says Ashley.

We've all heard about the increasingly strident academic requirements, and it might be tempting to start your preschooler on flash cards to make sure she knows her letters and numbers by the time kindergarten starts. While teachers appreciate students who have an early foundation in literacy, what they really love is to see children who are excited to learn. There are many ways to introduce letters, numbers, colors and shapes to children:

- Read lots of books, starting when they're babies
- Play I Spy in the car and take turns finding objects of different colors
- Count together – there's lots of opportunity for that at the grocery store!
- Make sure there's plenty of time for drawing
- Sing, and substitute the real lyrics with rhyming words
- Most of all, your children need plenty of sleep, nutritious meals, fresh air, and your love and attention. Then they'll be ready to thrive in kindergarten!

Books about starting school:

- **Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten** by Joseph Slate
- **Mouse's First Day of School** by Lauren Thompson
- **My Kindergarten** by Rosemary Wells
- **Wemberly Worried** by Kevin Henkes
- **Will I Have a Friend** by Miriam Cohen
- **The Berenstain Bears Go to School** by Stan Berenstain
- **The Kissing Hand** by Audrey Penn
- **First Day Jitters** by Julie Danneberg

Our Mission

The Family Place Parent Child Center supports the positive growth and development of all parents by offering services that encourage families to build upon their strengths



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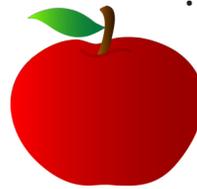
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PACKING LUNCH: HEALTHY IDEAS FOR THE MEAL AWAY FROM HOME

- mini bagels smeared with cream cheese
- cheese cubes
- whole wheat crackers
- individual applesauce
- carrot sticks with a small container of low-fat dressing for dipping
- whole grain breakfast cereals
- water in a water bottle (instead of a juice box)
- Ants on a Log: celery sticks with peanut butter and raisins
- organic fruit leather
- dried fruit
- rice cakes
- hard boiled eggs
- whole wheat wraps with hummus inside



This spring we welcome two new members to **The Family Place Board of Directors.**

Charlie Wheelan is a senior lecturer and policy fellow at the Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College, and author of three books. He brings to The Family Place a passion for public policy, plus an inherent knowledge of the importance of a positive early childhood: he has three children of his own!

Janine Williamson Kanzler is a realtor based in Woodstock, Vt. who also has a strong background in communications. She will act as the liaison between The Family Place Board of Directors and the Windsor County Special Investigative Unit (SIU) Board of Directors. SIUs are multi-disciplinary teams that focus specifically on the investigation, prosecution and victim services for all sexually based offenses against children and adults, as well as serious child abuse.



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