

# Getting School Ready!®

**“I want to be ready for kindergarten.”**



**“How can kindergarten be ready for me?”**

*A Guide for: Parents and Family Members of Children Birth to Age Five, Caregivers, Early Childhood Educators, Kindergarten Teachers, Communities, Schools, and Everyone Who Touches a Child's Life*



# What do children need to be ready for kindergarten?



# What do schools need to be ready for entering children?

The original contents of this brochure come out of 41 community conversations with more than 300 parents, early childhood educators, kindergarten teachers, school principals, and community members. Led by parent facilitators, the conversations took place in seven languages: Cambodian, English, Oromo, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese. They were held in 17 of King County's 19 school districts.

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**If children could tell us,  
here's what they might say:**



**“I need adults to work together to  
help me get school ready.”**

**How are you already helping?  
Read on to see what else you can do!**



# My Social and Emotional Skills

**I need to feel excited and comfortable about starting kindergarten.**

*You can:*

- Let me know you're excited about me starting kindergarten.
- Give me a chance to visit my school before I start.
- Listen to my thoughts and ideas about school.
- Play a game with me to pretend I'm in school already.

**I need to know what kindergarten will be like.**

*You can:*

- Teach me to follow directions by giving me simple steps.
- Help me learn how to share with other children, stand in line, wait my turn, and sit in a circle.

**I need to feel good about myself.**

*You can:*

- Pay attention to me and listen to my ideas.
- Help me feel good about all the things I can do.
- Praise me for my strengths.
- Be patient and let me develop at my own pace.
- Teach me that all my feelings are okay, but not all my actions are okay. For example, it's okay to be upset, but it's not okay to hit others.
- Teach me ways to calm myself down when I get frustrated.



## **I need to get along with others.**

*You can:*

- Show me ways to make new friends.
- Help me understand how I can be friends with children who are different from me.
- Teach me what to do when someone hurts my feelings.

## **I need to know how to talk with others and to listen.**

*You can:*

- Talk with me about things I'm interested in.
- Teach me how to know when it's my turn to speak and when I need to listen.
- Teach me words to describe my feelings and needs, and when to use them.



# How I Learn

## **I need to be excited about learning.**

*You can:*

- Encourage me to explore with my senses—to see, touch, smell, hear and taste my world.
- Give me fun, exciting choices.
- Give me lots of time to figure things out.

## **I need to learn to try things and keep trying even when it seems hard.**

*You can:*

- Give me activities that hold my interest.
- Help me explore and try new activities.
- Help me learn step by step.
- Teach me that making mistakes is part of learning.
- Show me different ways to understand my world.

## **I need many ways to express myself.**

*You can:*

- Help me dance, sing, whistle, play instruments, paint, draw, color, build, invent, and make believe.
- Help me care about others and help them, too.
- Help me notice and talk about flowers, trees, animals, clouds, the sky and water.



## **I need to feel good about my family and culture, and to learn about other cultures.**

*You can:*

- Show me books and pictures of people who look like me.
- Show me books and pictures of people from other cultures.
- Sing songs and tell me stories from my culture and from other cultures.
- Use the language(s) I know to help me understand and learn.
- Take me to places that teach me about my culture and other cultures.



# Using Words and Numbers

**I need to be familiar with words and books.**

*You can:*

- Teach me new words.
- Show me words and symbols in my language and the sounds they make.
- Read to me. Take me to the library. Bring me books and magazines.
- Ask me questions about stories to help me understand their meaning.
- Sing songs and teach me rhymes.

**I need to know shapes, sizes and colors.**

*You can:*

- Give me things to sort by shape, size and color.
- Help me find and name shapes and colors all around me.

**I need to learn to count and understand that numbers have meaning.**

*You can:*

- Help me play counting games.
- Let me count things at home and in my community.
- Show me how numbers are used around me.





# Support My Family, Culture and Language

**I need my school to welcome my family.**

*My school can:*

- Put up welcoming signs in the language I speak at home.
- Learn about my community and culture before I arrive.
- Let my family know who to go to if we have ideas, questions, or concerns.
- Invite us to participate in the school, classroom and Parent Teacher Association.

**My family and I want all the grown-ups at my school to know and respect my culture, my learning style and my family's needs.**

*My school can:*

- Understand that school may be my first introduction to cultures and languages other than my own.
- Let me know if my classroom teacher and others at school can speak my home language.
- Invite my family and me to share information with my teacher and classmates about my family and culture.
- Support my family culture by putting me in a class with other children who share my home language and culture.
- Let me know that speaking my language strengthens all my language skills.





# Keep Me Safe and Healthy

## **I need to be safe and feel safe.**

*You can:*

- Help me practice saying my name, address and phone number in my home language and in English.
- Teach me about watching for cars and not talking to strangers.
- Teach me who to ask for help when I need it.

## **I need to have bathroom and self-help skills.**

*You can:*

- Teach me the words to tell other grown-ups when I need to go to the bathroom, or when I am feeling sick or hurt.
- Help me practice going to the bathroom, washing my hands, dressing, and tying my shoes.
- Encourage me to try things I've learned before I ask my teacher for help.

## **I need to be able to use my hands and fingers to do small tasks.**

*You can:*

- Help me learn to pick up, hold and use pencils, crayons, markers, paintbrushes and scissors.
- Help me make things with blocks, paper, cardboard and tape.

## **I need to be able to use my arms, legs and body to make big movements.**

*You can:*

- Encourage me to run, jump, climb, dance and move to music, as I am able.
- Give me time each day to play outdoors.

## **I need to have my basic needs met before I come to school each day.**

*You can:*

- Make sure I am fed, rested and dressed for the weather.
- Find out who can help with getting what I need to be ready for school.



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# Healthy Body to Learn and Grow

**I need a healthy body to learn and grow.**

*You can:*

- Take me to the doctor and dentist for regular check ups.
- Make sure I get all the shots I need before school starts. Being fully immunized protects me and others from serious diseases.
- Keep me and our family safe from harm. Get help if someone is hurting you, me, or anyone in my family.

**I need good food, rest, and play to have the energy to learn.**

*You can:*

- Make sure I get enough rest every night, even if I don't want to go to sleep. I can't learn if I am grumpy and tired at school.
- Give me healthy food every day, especially breakfast.
- Ask for a form for free and reduced breakfast and lunch if our family needs help getting me the healthy food I need.
- Make sure I have time and safe places to play. Kids need at least one hour of exercise each day. Outdoor play is very important for me!



## A big step with big feelings

**I need you to help me feel ready and eager,  
even if I also feel scared.**

*You can:*

- Make sure we both have time to think and talk about our feelings. Your ideas and feelings shape mine. I need you to show me confidence. This is a big step for our family!
- Help me practice saying goodbye to you so I can get ready to join the school group easily. Kindergarten is different than preschool or child care where you might stay with me for some time until I feel ready to say goodbye. Help me learn to be on my own with my teacher and fellow students.
- Be delighted to see me after my day at school! Be ready to ask specific questions about what we did that day and who my new friends are.



# Families & Schools are Partners

**I need the grown-ups in my family, school and community to work together.**

*You can:*

- See starting school as a big event for all of us! We each have our own ideas and worries.
- Ask me about my thoughts. I may want to know:
  - How high do I have to count?
  - Do I have to write my name?
  - What are the rules at school?
  - Will I have new friends at school?
- Talk with others about your feelings. You may want to know:
  - How easy will it be to say goodbye and let me join my group at school?
  - Will I fit in and learn well here?
  - Will the teacher see how special I am?
- Ask teachers about their thoughts. They may want to know:
  - How well do I do in a group with other kids and few adults?
  - Do I know how to get help when I need it and work on my own when I need to?
  - Can I share the teacher's attention?
  - Am I learning to follow directions and cooperate?



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# How to Enroll and What to Expect

**I need you to let the school know that I am coming.**

*You can:*

- Call and visit my school the year before I start. Each school district has its own rules, so it is important to talk to them. (See the back page of this booklet for ways to contact schools.)
- Visit my teacher and describe what I know and can do.
- Share things happening in my life that affect how I feel and act.
- Tell my school about any special needs I have.
- Learn about our family's rights in the school.
- Learn about school and community services we might need, especially if we speak a language other than English.

**I need you to know what the school expects from me and my family.**

*You can:*

- Meet with my teacher to see what he or she expects me to know and be able to do. School has changed since you went!
- Get an up-to-date list of my immunizations.
- Find out what information my school needs about me and when they need it. My school might need a copy of my birth certificate, immunization record, or proof of address.
- Find out when teachers set aside time to meet with parents. If those times don't work, let them know what times do work.
- Ask the teachers what kind of help they expect me to get from my family at home.
- Volunteer to help at my school.

# About Me!

My name is \_\_\_\_\_

My parents/guardians name(s) are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My address is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My phone number is \_\_\_\_\_

My school district is \_\_\_\_\_

My school is \_\_\_\_\_

My school address and phone number are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My teacher's name is \_\_\_\_\_

I'm excited about school because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My questions about school are these \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My local library is \_\_\_\_\_

**Getting School Ready!®** is a statewide effort of Thrive Washington and its partners to support parents and caregivers as their children's first teachers. A team including parents, early learning experts, community-based organizations, public health and school representatives created and updated this guide.

## For More Information:

Visit **[nces.ed.gov/globallocator](https://nces.ed.gov/globallocator)** to find your child's school information.

Research schools in Washington State at **[reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us](https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us)**.

Call the WithinReach hotline at **1.800.322.2588** or visit:  
**[www.parenthelp123.org](https://www.parenthelp123.org)** for family health information and referrals.

Ask your librarian for books, music, videos, and other resources. Libraries also have programs, such as story times, that can help your child prepare for school.



Guides are available in other languages. To download or order booklets, visit **[thrivewa.org/gettingschoolready](https://thrivewa.org/gettingschoolready)**.

Photos courtesy of Child Care Resources, Talaris Research Institute, Erin Okuno, and Peter Huisenga.