

## **Preparing Your Child *and Yourself* for Kindergarten**

by Nicole Jessel & Pat Fernandez, Woodcrest School Kindergarten Teachers

Kindergarten is an exciting and important time in your child's development and growth. You can play an important role in this wonderful journey. Here's what kindergarten teachers want parents to know:

**1. Your job isn't over when you drop your little one off at school.** Your child's teacher wants to be your partner. Keep us informed about what goes on at home that might affect your child's behavior or academic performance.

**2. Make yourself known.** Come in. Look around. Peruse the textbooks and materials. Knowledge is power. When you know about the subjects your child is studying, you will be able to help her and have a common understanding for discussion. Volunteering is a wonderful way to learn about what goes on at school and to show your child how much you care about what she is doing.

**3. Kindergarten is a time of transition.** Children are moving from a less structured, less academic environment of preschool to one with schedules, new responsibilities and a focus on academics. Kindergarten is the transitional year, and great Kindergarten programs are equal parts academic and developmental, preparing young children for what lies ahead and instilling a love of the learning environment.

**4. The more self-control your child has, the more successful he will be in school.** Children need practice in deciding how and when to express their feelings and needs and when and if to act on impulses. Help him develop and practice these skills at home before he tests them at school.

**5. Your child needs lots of opportunities for play inside and outside of school.** Play is the way in which your child will learn about himself and the people and world around him. Great schools recognize the importance of play, utilizing role playing, puppets or independent time for children to be creative with their peers. Playing both alone and in small groups helps facilitate learning and allows your child to practice skills and concepts.

**6. Read to your child at home and on the go.** Books are the gateway to building vocabulary and developing listening and early literacy skills. When you read, talk about the book. Discuss the characters and setting, make predictions, and create new endings. Point out letters and words in the story and encourage him to recognize rhyming sounds and words and to identify beginning and ending sounds.

**7. Writing exploration is critical.** Your child needs to have opportunities to use pencils, crayons, markers, colored pencils, and other writing instruments as she attempts to build fine motor skills and to express herself in written form. She will begin with scribbles and lines, move on to letters and her name, and then to words and sentences.

**8. Yes, homework begins in Kindergarten.** Homework is one way to teach children responsibility and time management and to prepare them for what they can expect throughout

their student careers. Homework is also a great way for you to find out what your child is studying and how well she is grasping the skills and concepts being taught at school. Talk with your child about her homework. It shows her that you care and value what she does at school.

**9. Limit screen time.** Television and video games use up valuable playtime. The hours spent with these electronic devices could otherwise be spent talking, reading, or actively learning through play.

**10. First-hand experiences are another teacher for your child.** Take her to museums, the zoo, the aquarium, the library, parks, arts performances, and geographic locations such as the mountains, beach, forests, and deserts. Your child will grasp concepts and skills better if she has experiences with the real thing.

At our school, Woodcrest School, a private elementary school in Tarzana, we encourage the close relationships we have with parents. We welcome parent volunteers in the classroom, and we believe that regular interactions and conversations with parents are so important to building the foundation that children need as they move into elementary school and beyond. You are welcome to visit our classrooms anytime -- just call our principal, Luanne Paglione, at 818-345-3002 to schedule a visit.