



PEN Notes: Fact Sheet #14

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Is Your Child Ready For School?

The Wyoming Department of Education school code specifies that children must be 5 years of age on or before September 15 to be eligible for kindergarten enrollment. There is **no** one quality or skill needed to be ready for school, but the combinations of skills that contribute to the success of a child entering school are:

- **Good health and physical well-being**—Young children need nutritious food, enough sleep, safe places to play and regular medical care. Good nutrition begins with good prenatal care and continues through life.
- **Social and emotional maturity**—In kindergarten 5 year olds will need to work well in large groups and get along with new adults and adjust to new routines. They need to develop the following qualities:
 1. **Confidence:** Feel good about themselves and believe they can succeed
 2. **Independence:** Need to do things for themselves—dress, eat, wash, etc.
 3. **Motivation:** Want to learn
 4. **Curiosity:** Are and must remain curious in order to get the most out of learning
 5. **Persistence:** Finish what they start
 6. **Cooperation:** Get along with others, share, and take turns
 7. **Self-control:** Learn appropriate ways to handle anger (not biting, hitting, etc.)
 8. **Empathy:** Have an interest in others and understand how they feel
- **Language skills**—Children should be able to participate in activities requiring language i.e., answer questions with more than a “yes” or “no” answer, tell the ending to a story.
- **Problem solving and Creative thinking**—These skills develop through play.
- **General Knowledge**—Playing with others teaches children to get along and work out differences with each other.



Two important things to remember when working with children:

- Children develop at different rates.
- Most children are stronger in some areas than in other areas.

Kindergarten children are in the “want to learn” mode; let’s educate them!

As parents we can help develop these skills:

- **Talk to your children:** Beginning at birth, talking with children broadens their understanding of language and of the world.
- **Listen to your children:** Children have their own thoughts and feelings, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. By listening to them, we show them that their feelings and ideas are valued. Children show us what they know and don't know and how they think and learn.
- **Answer and ask questions:** This helps children compare and classify thoughts. If we don't know an answer, we say so, and together we find the answer.
- **Read aloud to children every day until they can read to us, and then read to each other:** We don't have to be excellent readers to read to children. We might also take them to a local library that offers story hour.
- **Make reading materials available:** i.e., cereal boxes, newspapers, road signs, advertising, etc. This develops an interest in reading and language.
- **Monitor television viewing:** This includes the amount of time and type of programming.
- **Be realistic about abilities and interests:** We must set high standards and encourage preschoolers to try new things. Children who aren't challenged become bored, but pushed too quickly, they become frustrated and unhappy.
- **Provide opportunities to do and see things:** The more varied the experiences, the more children learn about the world (museums, libraries, zoos, making music, dancing and painting).

How to ease those starting-school jitters:

- **Enthusiasm is contagious**—If we convey confidence and anticipation, our child is more likely to be comfortable beginning kindergarten.
- **Survey new territory**—Visit the school with children before the first official day and try to arrange a meeting with the new teacher.
- **Find a familiar face**—Plan a one-on-one play-date or outing with another child from the class or program before school begins.
- **Create continuity**—Start a daily routine a few weeks before school begins and involve the child in the process of packing his lunch or choosing his clothes.
- **Prepare ourselves**—Pay attention to child separation so we'll know what to expect on that first day of school.
- **Help the child to ease in**—If the teacher encourages parents to spend some time in the classroom the first day, we can look around with our children and maybe even talk to the gerbil. Remember to back off and let them get involved with other kids and adults.
- **Always say good-by**—Be loving but firm as we leave and never make a child feel foolish about being upset to see us go.



Sources: "Helping Your Child Get Ready for School" www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/GetReady_ForSchool/Activities.html
"Ready To Go" National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington DC