

2021 CUSD Kindergarten Readiness Guide

Thank you for registering for CUSD's Kindergarten Informational Webinar. As promised, we are providing you with detailed information to assist you and your child for starting Kindergarten in the fall. If you have any additional questions, please contact Peggy Baerst, Executive Director, Elementary Education, at pabaerst@capousd.org.

What is Kindergarten Readiness?

Kindergarten readiness is the condition of your child as they enter school in relation to:

- Cognitive thinking skills
- Behavioral skills
- Social and emotional development
- Physical development
- General knowledge

How well children learn and develop and how well they will do in school depends greatly on their health and physical well-being, their social and emotional preparation, and their language skills and general knowledge of the world.

Prior to entering Kindergarten your child should:

- Have many opportunities to engage in learning experiences with other children and adults in which they can talk, listen, and play.
- Attain prerequisite skills in early literacy and math.
- Attain suggested social, emotional, and physical development in order to participate in Kindergarten activities.

Why is Kindergarten Readiness Important?

- Current research on the topic suggests that:
 - Children who enter Kindergarten with the appropriate skills, knowledge, and behaviors are **more likely to experience early school and academic success**.
 - It is necessary for all children to have an **early foundation for learning** prior to formal schooling in which they can **learn and grow upon**, especially English language learners (ELLs).
 - The academic and social success of ELLs often relies on the level of school readiness they attain prior to school entry.
- Kindergarten teachers across the country witness children who come to school **prepared and ready to learn** have a more successful Kindergarten year academically, socially, and emotionally.
- The transition into Kindergarten is often socially and emotionally difficult for young children. The more you know and **talk to your child about this transition**, the better they are likely to do.
- In general, today's Kindergarten classrooms are focusing more and more on academics and your child will be expected to participate in many classroom-learning activities. The

more skills your child has to learn and grow upon, the **more success** they will experience in Kindergarten.

Why is Parent Involvement Important?

- Parents are their child's first and most important teacher. Your involvement is critical to your child's success in school. Studies have shown that when parents are involved, children feel better about themselves and have the potential to learn more.
- If you feel your child is ill prepared for Kindergarten, there is much you can and should do between now and August that will enable your child to have a more successful Kindergarten transition. Reading this guide is a great start to helping prepare your child for Kindergarten!
- Not only do children need to be ready for school, parents do also. By making sure you are informed of school expectations and understanding what your child will need in order to have a happy and successful Kindergarten year, you are already increasing the likeliness of school success for your child.
- It is important that you create a positive attitude towards school that your children can learn from and model. School is meant to be a safe-haven for children and their families, and we have your best interest in mind. Frequent communication with school staff and your child's teacher is recommended and welcomed.

School Expectations

Prior to entering Kindergarten, your child should attain most of or all of the Kindergarten prerequisite skills. If they can't, now is the time to start working with your child on these skills in order to prepare them for their upcoming Kindergarten year.

Social Skills and Behavior

Your child should be able to:

- Separate from a parent or caregiver and stay with another adult.
- Cooperate and share with others.
- Play and work independently.
- Keep their hands and bodies to themselves.
- Show respect to classmates and adults.

Listening and Speaking Skills

Your child should be able to:

- Sit still and listen for 10-15 minutes.
- Follow simple two-step directions.
- Verbally express their personal needs.
- Engage other children and adults in conversation.

Motor Skills

Your child should be able to:

- Tie shoes or close Velcro by themselves.
- Dress yourself (zip, button, and snap).

- Feed and clean up after themselves.
- Carry, open, and close their backpack.
- Use and hold pencils, crayons, markers, and scissors.

Personal Hygiene

Your child should be able to:

- Attend to their bathroom needs with total independence.
- Wash and dry hands.
- Use a tissue to wipe their nose. Cough into an elbow or tissue to avoid spreading germs.
- Be able to use hand sanitizer.
- Wear a mask.

Reading

Your child should be able to:

- Recognize his/her name.
- Recognize and name uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet.
- Write their name in uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Know most letter sounds.
- Show an interest in print and books.

Mathematics

Your child should be able to:

- Recognize shapes and colors.
- Count, recognize, and write numbers from 1-10.

How Can Parents Help?

The following list suggests ways you can instantly start enhancing the social, emotional, and physical development of your child in order to prepare them for what they will experience in Kindergarten:

- Enroll your child in a preschool program, or other early literacy development program, in order to provide them with a solid foundation for school-based learning.
- Take time to read with your child each day.
- Help your child to learn to respect the rights and property of others.
- Encourage your child to behave in positive and non-aggressive ways.
- Provide your child with opportunities to play and interact with other children in a supervised environment.
- Help your child assume responsibility at home (e.g., helping out with household chores, cleaning up after themselves, putting their toys or clothes away).
- Share an interest, hobby, or sport with your child and interact with them daily.
- Take your child to places of interest and talk with them throughout the day about what they are experiencing.
- Encourage your children to share their daily experiences. Ask specific questions about their day that will encourage more discussion.
- Provide your children with nutritious snacks and meals and encourage daily exercise that will enhance your child's motor skills.
- Praise your child regularly at home for all their efforts and accomplishments.

- Talk with your child often about their upcoming transition to Kindergarten so they know what to expect, and show excitement about this transition.
- Engage in the educational activities suggested in this guide in order to enhance the literacy development of your child!

Learning Activities for the Home

The following activities are designed to enhance the early literacy skills and development of young children. Participating in these activities provides parents with a fun and engaging way to get involved in and encourage their child's learning in the home.

Scribble, Draw, Paint, or Glue Me A Picture

Give your child a way to naturally express themselves and spark their imagination. Scribbling and drawing are great ways to prepare your child for using writing to express their ideas. Holding crayons, pencils, scissors, and paintbrushes can also help your child to develop the fine motor skills necessary for Kindergarten.

What You Need

- Crayons, markers, pens, pencils
- Different kinds of paper (construction, various colors, big, small, etc.)
- Tape
- Paste or glue sticks
- Finger paint
- Safety scissors
- Fabric or objects that can be glued to paper (string, cotton balls, yarn, cereal)

What to Do

Give your child different kinds of paper and different writing materials to scribble with. Crayons are good to begin with. Markers are fun for your child to use because they don't have to use much pressure to get a bright color. Tape a large piece of paper to a table and let your child scribble away.

Spread out newspaper over a table and tape a large piece of construction paper on top. Cover your child with a large painting smock or apron and let them finger paint. Have your child glue fabric pieces or other objects such as yarn, cotton balls, or paper pieces into any pattern they like. Let them feel the different textures and describe to you what they did.

Letters All Around

Exposing your child to the alphabet can help them begin to learn the letter names, recognize their shapes, and link the letters with the sounds of spoken language.

What You Need

- Alphabet book

- Alphabet blocks
- ABC magnets
- Paper, pencils, crayons, markers
- Glue
- Safety scissors

What to Do

- With your child sitting with you, print the letters of their name on paper and say each letter as you write it. Make a name sign for their room or other special place. Allow your child to decorate the sign.
- Teach your child “The Alphabet Song” and play games with them using the alphabet. Some alphabet books have songs and games that you can learn together.
- Look for educational DVDs, CDs, and TV shows/YouTube videos that feature letter-learning activities for young children. Watch programs with your child and join in with them on the rhymes and songs.

NOTE: Educational DVDs and TV shows for young children will be discussed in further detail on Pages 12 and 13 of this guide.

- Place alphabet magnets on your refrigerator or on another smooth surface. Ask your child to name the letters they play with and have them try to spell words.
- Whenever you are with your child, point out individual letters in signs, billboards, posters, food containers, books, and magazines.
- Encourage your child to spell and write their name. At first, they may use just a few letters in their name, but allow them to practice and have fun with it.
- Line up several alphabet blocks and have your child say the name of each letter. Have them use alphabet blocks to spell their name or other words.
- Give your child pages from old magazines and have them circle letters on the page. Provide your child with a variety of print materials such as magazines, newspapers, and books for them to browse through and talk about what they see.

Rhyme Time!

Rhyming helps children start to pay attention to the sounds in words, which is an important first step in learning to read.

What You Need

Books with rhyming words, word games or songs.

What to Do

- Play rhyming games and sing rhyming songs with your child. Many songs and games include bouncing and tossing balls. Listening to songs is a good way to learn rhyming words along with your child.
- Read nursery rhymes to your child. As you read, stop before a rhyming word and encourage your child to fill in the blank. When they do, praise them.

- Listen for rhymes in songs that you know or hear on the radio, TV, or at family or other gatherings. Sing the songs with your child.
- Around the home, point to objects and say their names, for example, *sink*. Then ask your child to say as many words as they can that rhyme with the name. Other good easily rhymed words are ball, bread, rug, clock, dog, cat, book, and tail.
- Say three words such as *cat*, *dog*, and *sat* and ask your child which words sound the same-rhyme.
- If your child has an easy-to-rhyme name, ask them to say words that rhyme with it: *Ken-ben*, *men*, *pen*, *jen*, *ten*.

If a computer is available, encourage and assist your child in visiting age-appropriate educational websites and play rhyming and letter games.

NOTE: The website www.starfall.com is a great resource.

Learning Letter Sounds A-Z

Listening for and saying sounds in words helps children learn that spoken words are made up of sounds, which gets them ready to match spoken sounds to written letters. This, in turn, gets them ready to read.

What You Need

Old magazine or reading materials and a book of nursery rhymes.

What to Do

- Say four words that begin with the same sound, such as big, ball, bug, and balloon. Ask your child to tell you the first sound in each word, /b/.
- Say four words that end with the same sound, such as stop, top, mop, and hop. Ask your child to tell you what the last sound is in each word, /p/.
- Give your child an old magazine. Sit with them and point out objects in the pictures. Ask them to say the sounds that the objects start with. Change the game by saying a sound and having them find an object in a picture that starts with that sound.
- As you read a story or poem, ask your child to listen for and say the words that begin with the same sound. Have them think of and say other words that begin with the same sound.
- Help your child make up silly sentences with lots of words that start with the same sound, such as, “Tom took ten toy trucks to town.”

Sounds and Letters Matching Game

Matching all the letters with their sounds is an important skill for Kindergarten students to learn. Give your child a head start and help them out with this activity.

What You Need

Pieces of paper and paper bag

What to Do

- Say some sounds for letters, such as /p/, /h/, and /t/ and have your child write the letter that matches the sound.
- As you read to your child, point out words that begin with your child’s name. Use other familiar names, such as family members names, to continue playing the game.
- Write letters on pieces of paper and put them in a paper bag. Have your child take a piece of paper from the bag and say the name of the letter and the sound. Try and have them say a word that begins with that sound.
- Sit with your child and play “I Spy.” Look around the room and say, “I spy something that starts with /s/. What is it?” Give your child clues to help them guess the object, such as, “We wear them on our feet.” (socks)
- Provide your child with a variety of letter manipulatives, such as magnet letters, foam letters, letter beanbags, and letter flashcards. Then have your child practice picking letters at random and saying their names and sounds.

Me, Myself, & I Book

Many young children like to talk and have a lot to say. Although most can’t yet write words themselves, they can draw pictures and communicate stories for others to write for them.

What You Need

- Paper
- Hole Puncher
- Safety scissors
- Pencils, pens, crayon
- Yarn or string
- Glue Stick or tape

What to Do

Make a book of five or six pages. Your child can help you punch the holes in the side and thread yarn or string through the holes to tie and keep the pages together. On the outside cover of the book, print your child’s name. Explain to them that this book is going to be a book all about them.

Let your child talk about what they will draw on each page. Print on each page what they say. Here are some examples:

- People in my family
- My favorite foods
- My favorite toys
- My friends
- My house
- My pets
- My favorite place

Encourage your child to draw in their journal often. Allow them to share their journal with other members of the family or friends.

Read to Me: Learning About Print and Books

Reading to your child is a perfect way to help them learn what print is. Have fun with it and read a variety of stories.

What You Need

- Books, books, and more books!
- Books on CD or audio books

What to Do

Find a comfortable and quiet spot to sit down with your child and read them a story. Before bed is always a great time to snuggle up with a book.

- As you read aloud, stop now and then to talk about the pictures and point to letters and words. Your child will begin to understand that letters form words and that words name pictures.
- Point to individual letters in the story and ask your child to say the letter name and sound. This is one of the most important things your child can know when learning to read.
- Use your finger to point to the words as you read them. Your child will begin to understand that printed words go from left to right.
- Talk about the different parts of a book. For example:
 - A book has a front cover.
 - A book has a title page.
 - A book has pages and pictures.
 - A book has pictures and words.
 - A book has a beginning and an end.

When your child sees you handle a book, they will begin to understand that a book is for reading, not tearing apart and tossing around.

Hands-on Math at Home

Hands-on activities that include counting and using number words are a good way to introduce your child to math.

What You Need

- Blocks
- Dice or dominoes
- Cereal, such as Cheerios
- Small objects good for counting, such as marbles, beans, noodles, pennies, and buttons

What to Do

Talk about numbers and use number concepts in daily routines with your child. For example:

—“Let’s put on your socks, one, two. Two socks!”

—“Let’s set the table for dinner. How many plates do we need on the table? Four plates, one for mommy, one for daddy, one for sister, and one for you.”

—“Let’s count the number of pillows on the bed”, or, “Let’s count the number of clothing pieces as we fold the laundry.”

- Talk about numbers that matter most to your child, such as their age, your home address, your phone number, their height and weight.
- Talk about the time with your child. Hours, days of the week, months of the year, years (older and younger), yesterday, today, tomorrow. These concepts of time are important for young children to be exposed to.

Provide many opportunities for your child to learn math as they play and count with objects. For example:

- Playing with blocks can teach your child to classify objects by color and shape. Blocks can also help them to start thinking about and noticing different shapes, weights, heights, and lengths.
- Counting small objects, such as beans, or cereal, can help your child develop one-to-one correspondence (matching numbers to objects).
- Playing games that have scoring, such as tossing balls into baskets, requires your child to count. Introduce them to games using dice and dominoes. Let them roll the dice and count the dots. Do the same with dominoes.

Talk to Me About Kindergarten!

Talk with your child often about their upcoming transition to Kindergarten. Let your child know what to expect and help them understand that this is a fun and exciting time.

What to Do

Learn as much as you can about the school your child will attend before the school year begins. For example:

- Find out the principal’s name
- Find out the name of your child’s teacher
- Introduce your child to other children who will attend the same school, especially those also starting kindergarten
- Visit the school with your child

Talk with your child about school and make positive comments about school. Show excitement about this big step in your child’s life. Let them know that starting school is a very special event and will be lots of fun.

Talk with your child about the teachers your child will have and how they will help them learn new things. Help your child to understand that teachers are helpful friends in school and should be listened to and respected.

Explain to your child that they will have to go to school every day. Let them know that school is important to you and you want them to learn and do their best.

Talk with your child about the important and exciting things they will be learning-reading, writing, math, science, art, and music.

Consider volunteering and helping out at your child’s school (NOTE: This is currently not allowed due to COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. However, district approved volunteers will be permitted to support students remotely through virtual platforms such as Zoom or a hangout).***

Healthy Home Environments for Learning

Providing your child with a healthy home environment that is conducive to learning is an essential component to your child’s overall well-being and school success. The following section contains helpful hints and suggestions for making your home environment one in which your child can learn and develop in.

Create a Learning Space

- Set aside an area of the home, such as your kitchen table, a floor space, or bedroom, for your child to work in.
- Provide your child with various school materials and supplies for the home, such as:
 - Pencils, crayons, and markers for writing and drawing
 - Paper or notebooks to write on
 - Safety scissors to practice cutting
 - Glue stick or paste and paint for arts and crafts
 - Puzzles and games
 - Alphabet blocks or other manipulatives
 - Books, books, and more books!
 - Alphabet and number flashcards
- Set up a “Writing Station” for your child to practice writing, scribbling, or drawing. Make sure they have a sturdy table to write on and that there is plenty of paper and writing tools for them to experiment and have fun with. By having your child hold and use different writing tools, you are helping them to develop their fine motor skills.
- Try to provide your child with the opportunity to engage in educational activities and play daily, ideally in a quiet and non-disruptive area. Even if it is just for a short time, the benefits will be tremendous.

Television in the Home: Good or Bad?

Good television programs can spark children’s curiosity and open up new worlds to them. Television is also a great way to expose children who are learning English as a second language to the English language. However, families must be careful to monitor how much time their child watches TV, as well as what programs they watch.

Here are some helpful tips to make sure your child’s television viewing is both educational and beneficial in helping them to learn:

- Think about your child’s age and make sure that what they view on television is both age appropriate and contains things you want your child to see and imitate
 - Look for TV shows that
 - teach your child something,
 - hold your child’s interest,
 - help your child learn more words,
 - make your child feel good about themselves,
 - introduce your child to new ideas and things.
 - Choose educational TV programs that aim to enhance the literacy development and general knowledge of young children, such as:
 - Sesame Street
 - Nick Jr. Blue’s Clues
 - Between the Lions
 - Cat in the Hat
 - Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood
 - Dora the Explorer
 - Clifford the Big Red Dog.
 - Arthur
 - Reading Rainbow (Streaming now on multiple channels)
 - Word World (YouTube)
 - Barney and Friends (YouTube)
 - SuperWhy
 - Paw Patrol
 - Mickey Mouse Clubhouse (on Disney Jr)
 - Curious George
 - Zoboomafoo (YouTube)
- NOTE:** Many of the above television programs air on PBS Channel 50 in most areas, or check your channel guide.
- If you have a DVD player you may wish to seek out educational DVDs and children’s stories to play for your child in the home. A few suggestions are:
 - Leapfrog’s “Talking Letters Factory.” (Available on Amazon)
 - Leapfrog’s “Talking Words Factory.”
 - As a follow up activity, go to the library to find books that explore the themes or characters of the TV shows that your child watches.

Health and Nutrition in the Home

A healthy and physically fit child is one who is truly ready to learn and succeed in school. By following a few helpful hints, your child can be on their way to a more healthy and happy Kindergarten year. The following are a few suggestions to help keep your child healthy and active:

- For optimal growth and development, make sure your child eats a well-balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables.
- Try to limit your child’s daily sugar intake. Instead of sodas and fruit juices that contain a lot of sugar, offer them low-fat milk or water instead.
- Make sure your child is well fed in the morning prior to entering the classroom. Studies show that children who eat a healthy breakfast are able to focus better and learn more in school.
- Keep healthy foods in the house (i.e., string cheese, yogurt, nuts, pretzels, fruits) and try to limit the availability of high-calorie, high-sugar foods (i.e., candy, chips, cookies, sodas, greasy foods). Instead, try to provide your child with a variety of low-calorie and nutrient rich food and snacks.
- Increase the amount of exercise and movement your child engages in daily. Encourage your child to live an active lifestyle by doing so yourself. Take a walk outside or play ball at the park.
- A Kindergarten age child should be able to roll, throw, and catch a ball, and also run, hop, jump, swing, and gallop. Give your child a head start in their physical development and assist them in learning how to do these skills.

Give Your Child Enough Sleep and Rest at Home

Sleep helps kids grow strong and healthy. It is important that your child is getting enough sleep and is well-rested for school. The following is a list of suggestions to make sure your child is getting the sleep they need in order to experience optimal school success.

- Set a fixed time for going to bed and establish a bedtime routine. A preschool or kindergarten age child should sleep about 10 hours for each 24-hour period.
- Allow your child to wind-down about a half an hour before their bedtime. Reading a story or talking to your child about their day is a great way to do this.
- Use the bed only for sleeping, not for watching TV.
- Limit food or drink intake and avoid giving your child sugary snacks or treats

School and Community Resources

Community Resources

CUSD Early Childhood Education/Preschool Program

The Early Childhood Education Program provides children ages 3-5 with a safe, positive, and educational environment in which children can develop and learn. This challenging environment benefits children’s intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development, as well as encourages curiosity, exploration, problem solving, language development, and positive self-image. There are 24 state-funded and fee-based preschool programs at various school locations. For information contact the Early Childhood office at (949) 234-5341.

CUSD Family Resource Center

The Capistrano Unified School Districts Family Resource Center provides families with a comprehensive and family-centered support system using community resources to meet the individual and unique needs of children and their families. Services include parent education, counseling, educational workshops, family support services, and referrals. For more information contact the Family Resource Center at (949) 234-5597.

Technological Resources

Kid-Friendly Websites:

- Starfall (an excellent website for children to learn letter names and sounds).
<http://www.starfall.com>
- Arthur: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/arthur/>
- PBS Kids: <https://pbskids.org/everything/>
- Disney: <http://disney.go.com/park/bases/familybase/today/>
- PBS Homepage: <http://www.pbs.org/kids/>

Parent-Friendly Websites:

- Capistrano Unified School District:
<http://www.capousd.org>
(The CUSD website provides parents with important information and schedules).

Educational DVDs:

- Leapfrog “Letter Factory” and “Talking Words Factory” DVDs.
(An excellent resource to help teach your child the letter names and sounds of the alphabet. Available at online and at Costco, Wal-Mart, and Target).

Stay Connected!

CUSDINSIDER.ORG: *Experience what’s happening inside*

