

Culture Matters

Teachers must be able to *CONNECT* with their learners before they can share core content. Teachers teach learners, not subjects. To truly engage learners, we must reach out to them in ways that are culturally & linguistically responsive and appropriate, and we must examine the cultural assumptions and stereotypes we bring into the classroom that may hinder interconnectedness.



Parents' Guide to Support Learner Success

EMPOWERING PARENTS TO SUPPORT THE COMMON CORE CHALLENGE AT HOME

KINDERGARTEN

As practitioners in education and facilitators of cultural competency training, we know that in order for learners to be successful in today's schools, parents need to be knowledgeable of the most effective ways to support learning at home. Educators can work collaboratively to assist their learners to be more successful, by tapping into support from home. This guide, which provides an overview of what your child will learn by the end of each grade level in English language arts/literacy and mathematics, prepares your child to be ready to succeed in the next grade level. This guide is based on the new Common Core State Standards, which have been adopted by 44 states (*at time of publication*). The Common Core State Standards are much more rigorous than the previously held standards amongst the states. In order to compete globally, our nation needs to increase critical thinking skills in our children.

This guide is designed to offer parents with creative ways to become involved in supporting their child's education as well as ways to communicate the expectations of the Common Core State Standards. If your child is meeting the expectations outlined in these standards, he or she will be prepared for the 1st grade.

WHY ARE ACADEMIC STANDARDS IMPORTANT?

The academic standards are important because they help ensure that all learners, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in college and in their chosen careers. Rigorous standards provide an important first step – a clear roadmap and process for learning – to be utilized by a collaborative team of facilitators of learning, parents, and learners. Having clearly defined goals helps families and facilitators of learning work together to ensure that learners succeed. They also will help your child develop critical thinking skills that will prepare him or her for college and career.



A Snapshot of What Your Child Will Be Concentrating on in Kindergarten

English Language Arts & Literacy

In kindergarten, learners will learn important skills which will enable them to learn new words and to read and understand simple books and stories. These important skills include learning the alphabet, and the basic features of letters and words. They will break down spoken and written words into syllables and letters and identify the sounds each letter makes. In addition to these essential skills, they will also learn to write and share information in a variety of ways, including drawing, writing letters and words, listening to others, and speaking aloud. Activities in these areas will embrace:

- Naming upper-and lower-case letters
- Matching letters to sounds and using other methods to figure out words that aren't familiar when reading and writing
- Learning and using new words
- Identifying words that rhyme
- Reading common words such as *the, of, you, are, she, and my*
- Asking and answering questions about key details in a story or other information read out loud – using question words (i.e., *who, what, where, when, why, how*) in discussions
- Identifying characters, settings, and major events in a story
- Recognizing the person, place, thing, or idea that an illustration shows
- Participating in discussions by listening and taking turns speaking; speaking clearly to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas including descriptions of familiar people, places, things and events
- Using a combination of drawing, speaking, and writing to describe an event, give information about a topic, or share an opinion
- Taking part in shared reading, writing, and research projects
- Expressing thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly
- Learning to recognize, spell, and properly use those little grammatical words that hold the language together (i.e., *a, the, to, from, I, is, are*)



Partner with your child's teacher to have a focused conversation about learning

When you talk with your child's teacher keep in mind that you and your child's teacher are partners; a part of a team which includes your child. You are an important part of your child's education. Time may be limited and you can't cover everything. Therefore, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In kindergarten for literacy, these include:

- Using knowledge of letters and letter-sound correspondences to figure out how to spell words as they sound
- Reading and understanding a story designed for early readers
- Ask to see a sample of your child's work
- Be prepared to ask the teacher questions like:
 - Is my child at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
 - In what areas is my child excelling?
 - What do you suppose is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
 - What can I do to help my child with upcoming work?
 - If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside of the classroom?

Mathematics

In kindergarten, learners will focus primarily on two important areas. The first area is learning numbers and what numbers represent. The second is addition and subtraction. In addition to these essential skills, they will also learn to identify and work with shapes. Activities in these areas will embrace:

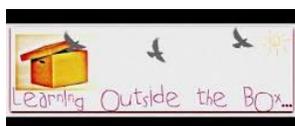
- Counting how many objects are in a group
- Comparing two numbers to identify which is greater or less than the other
- Demonstrating the understanding of addition being putting together and subtraction as taken away from in a manner as such of acting out addition and subtraction word problems and drawing diagrams to represent them
- Adding and subtracting very small numbers quickly and accurately
- Splitting up numbers less than or equal to 10 in more than one way (such as, $9=7+2$, $9=4+5$)
- For any number from 1 to 9, finding the missing quantity that is needed to reach 10
- Using objects or by drawing pictures, represent addition and subtraction word problems
- Accurately naming shapes regardless of orientation or size (i.e., a square positioned as a "diamond")



Partner with your child's teacher to have a focused conversation about learning

When you talk with your child's teacher keep in mind that you and your child's teacher are partners; a part of a team which includes your child. You are an important part of your child's education. Time may be limited and you can't cover everything. Therefore, keep the conversation focused on the most important topics. In kindergarten for mathematics, these include:

- Counting to tell the number of objects (this will be an observation from your child's teacher and not demonstrated in written work)
- Solving addition and subtraction word problems
- Be prepared to ask the teacher questions like:
 - Is my child at the level where he/she should be at this point of the school year?
 - In what areas is my child excelling?
 - What do you suppose is giving my child the most trouble? How can I help my child improve in this area?
 - What can I do to help my child with upcoming work?
 - If my child needs extra support or wants to learn more about a subject, are there resources to help his or her learning outside of the classroom?



All learning does not take place in the classroom, nor should it. Learning must continue at home, encouraging learners to "think outside the box." Try to create a quiet place for your child to study, and set aside time *every day* when your child can concentrate. You should also set aside 15 to 30 minutes each week to sit down with your child, while he or she completes homework. This will help you to stay in tuned with what your child is working on, and it will help you to be the first to know if your child needs assistance with specific topics. Furthermore, here are some activities you can do with your child to support successful learning at home:

English Language Arts & Literacy

- Read to your child and have him or her read to you *every day* for no less than 15 minutes. Highlight words that might be new to your child or words that have multiple or complex meanings. Discuss those words and how they add to what the writer is saying.
- Ask your child to retell a story in his or her own words by telling what happened in sequence, *first, second, third*, etc.
- Ask your child to think about what the message of a story may be or what he or she learned from an informational book or article.
- Look for opportunities in everyday places, (i.e., restaurants, doctor’s office, library, grocery store, etc.) to build your child’s vocabulary.
- Make sure your child has a library card. Take him or her to the library on a weekly basis. Children should select books in which they are interested to develop a love for reading. Many community libraries have book clubs and family activities that make reading fun for the entire family.
- Use technology to help strengthen your child’s interest in reading. Ask your child’s teacher for suggestions of websites where learners can read books or articles on line. The computer will help with words the learner cannot read independently. Libraries also have computers learners can use to access those sites.

Mathematics

- Ask your child questions that require counting as many as 20 items. For example, ask, “How many books do you have about baseball?”
- Ask your child questions that require comparing numbers. “Who is wearing more rubber bands, you or your sister?” (Your child might use matching or counting to find the answer.)
- Encourage your child to construct numbers in multiple ways. Such as, what are some ways that you can make 10? Answers might include, $4+6$, $7+3$, $5+5$, etc. Have your child explain his or her thinking.
- Have your child create story problems to represent addition and subtraction of small numbers. For example, “Tyler had nine stickers. Then he gave three away, so he only had six left.”
- Encourage your child to persevere, “sticking to it” whenever a problem seems difficult. This will help your child see that **everyone** can learn math.
- Praise for your child’s efforts in solving problems or understanding something for the first time.



For more information go to www.corestandards.org
the official online home of the Common Core State Standards