

# Making the Move to Kindergarten

*A Guide for Pre-K and Kindergarten Teachers in Charlotte-Mecklenburg*



## 5 for 5 Five Ways To Help Five-Year-Olds (and Fours!) Transition to School

A Publication of  
*Building Bridges to Kindergarten*,  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools/Child Care Resources Inc. Partnership for Kindergarten Transition



*inside*

**1 Plan the daily routine and activities to support children’s development** — Consider ways to adjust the daily routine in your class so that children benefit from a natural progression of skills leading up to the kindergarten year. Remember to plan activities to support children’s physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development (see inside for scheduling tips and suggested activities).

**2 Read books about going to school** — It’s common for children to experience feelings of sadness and resistance as they prepare to leave a familiar setting. Reading books about children in similar situations gives children the opportunity to explore and express these feelings. Allow time for children to ask questions (ex: When do we eat? Where is the bathroom? How will I get home? Will my friends be in my new class?) Try to provide a clear, simple answer when possible.

**3 Take a class trip to kindergarten** — There’s no substitute for the real thing! Children will feel more comfortable making the move to kindergarten if they have had some experience in “Big School” before the first day arrives. Plan a class trip to visit kindergarten at a local elementary school, even if it’s not the school where most children in your class will

attend. A class trip is a concrete experience that offers young children a brief but powerful opportunity to experience and begin to understand something new and unfamiliar that will soon be a part of their life. For help in planning a trip, call the Kindergarten Transition Specialist at (704) 376-6697 ext. 107.

**4 Keep a record of children’s growth and celebrate their accomplishments** — Consider making a scrapbook of memories with each child from photos collected throughout the year. Use this book to look back and talk about how much children have grown. You might ask children to bring baby pictures and talk about what they can do now that they are four and five years old. Plan an event near the end of the year to celebrate with family and classmates. Assure children that they are, indeed, ready for kindergarten and share your excitement with them!

**5 Support families before, during, and after the move to kindergarten** — Start early to help families prepare for the move, and follow up with families after school begins. A phone call or e-mail in the first few weeks of school goes a long way to helping families feel supported during this time of change. Encourage families to ask questions, attend events, and stay involved.

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# Supporting Children's Development Beginning of Pre-K Year



## Physical Development

### ▶▶ *Gross Motor Activities*

1. **Throw and Catch** — Play throw and catch with one child or a small group, forming a circle to take turns. Use a ball that is at least six inches in diameter (they're easier to catch). For a challenge, try balls of different sizes and weights.

2. **Balance Beam Alternatives** — Use tape to make a line on the floor. Encourage children to walk along the line without "falling" off. For a challenge, add curves, loops, and corners. Set up the line between activities/areas and use it during transitions too.\*

### ▶▶ *Fine Motor Activities*

1. **Cutting Cards** — Put several small boxes in the art area; provide a different type of cutting task in each box (ex. paper with straight lines, paper with curves, and basic shapes for cutting). Allow children to use this cutting activity as they wish, replenishing the supply of paper patterns as needed.\*

2. **Name Writing** — The big question for parents — When will my child learn to write his or her name? Here are some meaningful ways to encourage name writing:

- **Start with drawing** — Children's writing develops as children's drawing develops, so be sure to provide many

opportunities for children to draw with crayons, markers, colored pencils, pens, and chalk (don't forget the sidewalk — a childhood favorite!) Offer to write children's names near their drawings. When they see you writing, they might be inspired to try writing too.

- **Paint at the easel** — Why not suggest that children try writing with paint? Easel painting is fun and it strengthens the shoulder, arm, and wrist (necessary for the development of handwriting skills). Even if children just explore with paint, they'll be developing the fine motor skills they need to write their names when they are ready.

- **Keep a waiting list or sign-in sheet** — Create a waiting list for popular items (ex: computer). Show children how to write their names on the list when they must wait for a turn. Encourage children to write their own names, honoring all attempts, even if children scribble at first. With practice, they'll begin to make letter-like forms and conventional letters. Do the same using a sign-in sheet at arrival.

## Intellectual Development

- ▶▶ **Science Activities** — Children learn about the world around them in many ways:

- **Collections of natural objects** — Set out a collection of natural objects such as seashells, rocks, or leaves, and magnifying glasses for children to explore similarities and differences. Add paper/writing supplies to encourage drawing/writing too.

- ▶▶ **Math Activities** — Children learn math concepts through daily routines such as:

- **Setting the table** — Have children apply number concepts and one-to-one correspondence when setting the table (How many plates do we need?)

**Pre-K Support** continued on page 3

## Children's Books About Going to School



*Back to School With Betsy.*  
By Carolyn Haywood.

*Best Friends.*  
By Miriam Cohen.

*Billy and the Big New School.*  
By Catherine and  
Laurence Anholt.

*Changes, Changes.*  
By Pat Hutchins.

*Clifford's First School Day.*  
By Norman Bridwell.

*Curious George Goes to School.*  
By Margaret Rey.

*Do You Want to Be My Friend?*  
By Eric Carle.

*Friends at School.*  
By Rochelle Bunnnett.

*It's Back to School We Go.*  
By Ellen Jackson.

*Leo the Late Bloomer.*  
By Ruth Kraus.

*Look Out Kindergarten,  
Here I Come!*  
By Nancy Carlson.

*Red Day, Green Day.*  
By Edith Kunhardt.

*School Bus.*  
By Donald Crews.

*The Day the Teacher  
Went Bananas.*  
By James Howe.

*Will I Have a Friend?*  
By Miriam Cohen.

## Suggested Daily Routine for Four-Year-Olds Beginning of Year



**Large Group Times**  
Preschool games, music and movement last ten minutes.

**Small Group Times**  
Teacher-facilitated art, math, science, and language activities last fifteen minutes.

**Center Time**  
Allow children to freely explore **varied, open-ended activities** that interest them. Take time to interact with children and **engage children in conversations** that stimulate their thinking as they play.

**Meal Time**  
Encourage children to use **self-help skills**. Four-year-olds can eat well with a fork, and cut easy foods with a plastic knife. Give children enough time to try these skills and praise their efforts. Include children in the clean-up process as well.

**Transitions**  
Moving from one activity to the next can be difficult for some four-year-olds. Use songs, movements, and clean-up games to encourage children to participate. When you leave the classroom as a group, have children practice **holding hands with a partner** (forming two lines) as they walk with you.



### Pre-K Support continued from page 2

How do you know? Give everyone five crackers. Will we have enough?)

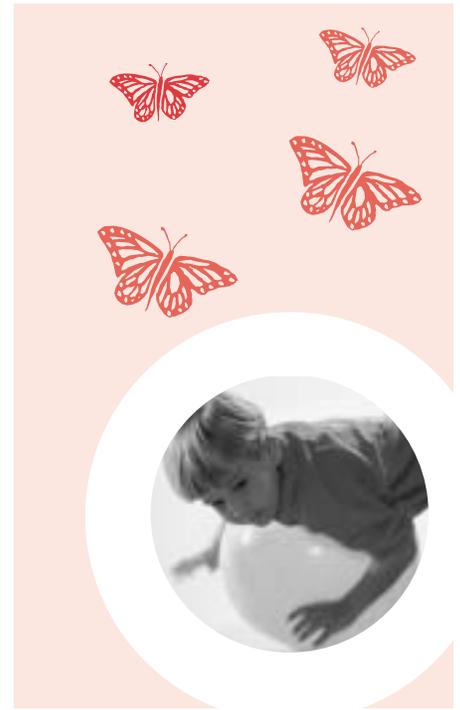
- **Counting with paper chains** — Make a paper chain to show how many days until a holiday or birthday, and display the chain where you meet for circle time. Each day have children remove one link and ask them to predict how many days are left. Count to check their predictions.

» **Language Activities** — Four-year-olds need words to understand what others are saying, to think about ideas, and to talk about their own ideas. Ways to support language development:

- **Ask children about their creations** — Join a child who is making something and ask about it. Help children use words more precisely and think more clearly about their artwork, sand play, block building, and other activities.

Ask them “How did you make (build) that? What did you use? Which part did you do first? Did you work alone or did someone work with you?”

Occasionally write children’s words and read them back to show that words can be spoken and written.



- **Play a game with names** — Play music during circle time and have the children pass a ball. When the music stops, ask children to name the child who is holding the ball. Keep playing until everyone is named. Or sing a special greeting song each day that names each child in the class to help children learn their classmates’ names.\*

### Social-Emotional Development

» **Pro-Social Behaviors** — Children need to learn many pro-social behaviors (i.e. social skills) to be successful with their peers. It’s helpful to break down each skill into simple steps children can learn. Use role-play, visual supports (charts), practice, and positive feedback to teach children new skills. Make a picture icon to represent each step (ex: two eyes represent “Look” in Step One below). Two skills to teach:

- **Listening**

- Step 1: Look at the person
- Step 2: Stay still
- Step 3: Think (about what they say)

- **Waiting for a turn**

- Step 1: Say to yourself, “It’s hard for me to wait, but I can do it!”
- Step 2: Choose — Wait quietly? Do something else?
- Step 3: Go do it!

# Supporting Children's Development Mid-Year in Pre-K Classes

## Physical Development

### ▶▶ *Gross Motor Activities*

**1. Bunny Hop** — This old favorite provides practice hopping in a variety of ways. Pretend to be bunnies as you hop around the room on one foot, two feet, slowly, quickly, forward, and backward. Allow children to lead the group.\*

**2. Backward Time** — This activity can be a good option during transitions. Have a short time where children walk backward instead of forward. Remind children to move carefully so that no one gets hurt. Children might try moving backward in different ways. Talk about how each movement feels as you move backward.\*

### ▶▶ *Fine Motor Activities*

**1. Buttons and Zippers** — Provide various dress-ups with buttons and zippers in the dramatic play area and encourage children to use them during play. Provide doll clothes and dressing boards for additional practice.

**2. Tying Knots** — This important skill can be practiced in a number of ways:

- Let children tie the knot as the first step when you are tying their shoes 
- Provide ribbons in the dramatic play area for children to tie on doll clothes and hair
- Add wrapping paper and ribbon to the art area for children to practice wrapping and tying
- Do a small group activity with children, giving them colored cord or thick string to make knot bracelets\*

**3. Collages** — Children gain practice in cutting and gluing when they make paper collages. Set out strips of colored paper and small scissors.

Have children snip the paper strips into smaller pieces and paste them onto a larger piece of paper to make a collage. The sticky side of clear contact paper works well for collages too.

## Intellectual Development

### ▶▶ *Science Activities*

• **Living Things** — Create opportunities for children to care for and observe living things such as plants in the classroom or a class pet.



• **Nature/Science Books and Toys** — Provide books with realistic pictures or photographs of animals, plants, the human body, and the solar system. Add a few games and toys that teach about these concepts in realistic ways too.

### ▶▶ *Math Activities*

• **Teaching with blocks** — Help children discover geometric relationships in block area. Talk about how many triangles make a square, how many squares make a rectangle, and how shapes fit together to form new shapes.

• **Walking along numbers** — Use chalk to draw a few huge numbers outside on the sidewalk. Show children how to walk along the numbers, describing the shape of each number as you walk ("The top of the nine is a loop, now we make a long, straight line down"). Encourage children to jump or clap on a number to show how many it is (clap four times on four).\*

### ▶▶ *Language Activities*

• **Have fun with rhyming words** — Before children can make their own rhymes intentionally, they need many opportunities to hear rhymes. Point



Mid-Year Support continued on page 5



## Suggested Daily Routine for Four-Year-Olds *Mid-Year*

### Large Group Times

Whole class gatherings last **fifteen minutes**.

### Small Group Times

Opportunities for active exploration of varied materials last **fifteen to twenty minutes**.

### Center Time

Provide magnetic letters and numbers, puzzles, drawing and writing materials, and math and science toys. **Add books and writing materials to all centers** to promote literacy skills through play. **Highlight new materials** to generate interest and encourage use.

### Meal Time

Continue to encourage children's **self-help skills** during meal times. If tooth brushing is part of your program, show children how to put a small amount of toothpaste on the brush and guide them in brushing.

### Transitions

Have children practice **walking next to a partner (without holding hands)** as you move from the classroom to another area outside of the classroom.

It takes practice for fours to walk without touching someone else! Soon they'll be ready to walk in a "kindergarten line."



## Mid-Year Support continued from page 4

out and repeat words children say or hear that rhyme. Read simple poems often and do finger-plays that rhyme. Sometimes choose stories with rhyming words to read at story time. Sing silly songs like *Down By the Bay* and have fun making up silly, nonsense rhymes too.\*

- **Add name cards to three or more centers** — Children need many opportunities to see their names in print and to work with their names in fun and engaging ways. Add name cards to at least three centers to encourage reading and writing names during play activities.

## Social-Emotional Development

### ▶▶ *Pro-Social Behaviors* — Two more skills to teach:

- **Following directions**
  - Step 1: Listen
  - Step 2: Think about it
  - Step 3: Ask questions (if you don't understand the directions)
  - Step 4: Do it!
- **Sharing a Toy**
  - Step 1: Stop
  - Step 2: Make a sharing plan (trade, take turns, use it together)
  - Step 3: Ask ("Is that OK with you?")
  - Step 4: Do it!

### ▶▶ **Supports for Social Skills** —

Two ways to teach children to work together:

- **Group effort** — Set up an activity that encourages all of the children to work together such as a class mural or a project using a large box. Make a house, a vehicle, or whatever the children think of!
- **Problem-solving approach** — Conflict is inevitable in any classroom, but it is also an excellent teaching opportunity. When a conflict occurs, stay calm and help children explain what happened. After giving each child a chance to speak, state the problem and ask children how they might solve it. If children have difficulty generating their own ideas, help them by suggesting a few possible solutions. Encourage children to choose a solution together and help them follow through with it. Stay close by to assist them as needed.

Adapted with written permission from *Skillstreaming in Early Childhood* by Ellen McGinnis and Arthur P. Goldstein (Research Press).



# Supporting Children's Development End of Pre-K Year

## Physical Development

### » *Gross Motor Activities*

**1. Broad Jump** — Set up a yard stick or measuring tape along a soft, grassy area outside. Show children how to stand at the beginning of the tape and jump as far as they can. Use the yard stick or tape to show how far the child was able to jump. Encourage children to try again and see if they can beat their last jump.\*

**2. Little Bouncy Balls** — Show children how to use small (1-inch) bouncy balls to play a game. Children can sit on the floor and drop the ball, letting it bounce and catching it. Do this activity on a hard floor in a corner area (to trap balls that would otherwise roll away). Encourage children to challenge themselves, seeing if they can clap before catching the ball, or dropping the ball so that it lands in a small can or box.\*

### » *Fine Motor Activities*

**1. Making Signs for Block Area** — A good way to get children writing is to connect writing to children's daily activities. Suggest that children make signs for their buildings in block area. Have books and pictures of signs available for children to look at in block area, and encourage them to use paper, markers, craft sticks, and tape to make their signs. Help children to write the words they want to add to their signs.\*

**2. Jars and Lids** — Set up a small group activity with various-sized jars and lids for children to practice putting on/taking off. Threading a lid on a jar is a complex fine motor task that requires coordination. This activity will assist children in managing some of the self-help skills they will need in kindergarten.

## Intellectual Development

### » *Science Activities*

- **Sink and Float** — Encourage children to experiment with things



that will sink or float in water. Chart the children's results.

- **Magnets** — Set up an activity with things for children to experiment with using magnets.
- **Sound Matching** — Set out several cans that are filled with different materials for children to shake and match or compare sounds.

### » *Math Activities*

- **Identifying numerals on playing cards** — Have a few decks of playing cards available in the math center. Show children how they can match cards with the same number. Children will be able to match numerals before they can name them. As children put cards together, point out and name the numerals for them ("You found a five. Can you find other cards with the number five?") It may be helpful to start with the cards for 0-5, and add 6-10 as children are successful.\*

## Suggested Daily Routine for Four-Year-Olds *End of Year*

**Large Group Times**  
Should last no longer than twenty minutes.

**Small Group Times**  
Activities last **twenty minutes**. If children show interest, allow them to continue working by placing the materials in centers.

**Center Time**  
Embellish your centers to **teach new skills through play**. For instance, add maps and blueprints to block area or turn dramatic play into a post office with themed props. If you visited a kindergarten class recently, set up an area for children to "play school" and reenact the trip.

**Meal Time**  
If possible, **practice some kindergarten lunch routines** (walking with a tray and clearing your own place). If trays are not available, use plates instead. Practice will help children become proficient and at ease with this new demand in kindergarten.

**Transitions**  
Teach children **how to walk "in a kindergarten line"** as you move from your classroom to another area. Make this activity fun by adding a song:

(Sung to the tune of *Down by the Station*)

*Down by the kindergarten  
Early in the morning,  
See the little children  
All in a row.  
See Ms. (Insert teacher's name here)  
Lining up her students.  
Puff! Puff! Toot! Toot!  
Off we go!*

**End of Year** continued on page 7



## End of Year continued from page 6

• **Cooking** — Simple cooking activities teach many math concepts as children read a picture recipe; count the number of spoons or cups they add to the recipe; talk about full, half-full, and empty; and set a timer.

### ▶ **Language Activities**

• **Remembering** — Take the opportunity to ask children about their play activities immediately after center time. This helps children to think in the past and to talk about events that have ended. It may be helpful to take notes during center time so you can remember what children did and ask the right questions. Use this remembering game at other times during the day to help children talk about a story you read, a snack they ate, or their play outdoors.

• **Playing with letters** — Here are two ideas: 1) Make up songs using the children's names, for example, use the tune B-I-N-G-O and substitute the letters of each child's name.

2) Set up an activity with magnetic letters and dry-erase boards. Prepare in advance by spelling each child's name on a board and setting it on a table. Have children read the names to help one another). Provide dry-erase markers for each child and encourage them to write on their boards. Encourage all attempts, and remember that children develop writing skill through fun, engaging activities.

## Social-Emotional Development

▶ **Pro-Social Behaviors** — Continue to teach social skills and remember to "catch" children using these new skills. Make positive comments to increase the likelihood that the behavior continues.

\*From *Active Learning for Fours* by Debby Cryer, Thelma Harms and Adele Richardson Ray ©1996 by Pearson Education, Inc., publishing as Dale Seymour Publications, an imprint of Pearson Learning Group.

## Did You Hear?

North Carolina's first-ever early learning standards have been published! *Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers and Strategies for Guiding Their Success* is available on the web. Visit [www.NCpublicschools.org/success](http://www.NCpublicschools.org/success) to download a free copy, or purchase copies online (\$8.50 each).



# Helping Children and Families Transition to School

## Just for Pre-K Teachers

1. Extend **children's experiences** at Big School (ex: CMS Beginner's Day; Pre-K Class Trips to Kindergarten). Use circle time activities, dramatic play, art, music, and picture books to help children recall and talk about their experiences.

2. Access the **Kindergarten Transition Kit** through Storytimes To Go! at the public library. This kit includes picture books, music, activities, and a resource guide to support children's transition to school. For more information, contact Susan Pflug at ImagineOn: (704)973-2715.

3. Share your knowledge and experience! Complete the **Child Profile Form** for each child in your class who will be going to kindergarten (see insert). On the reverse side of the form you'll find portfolio suggestions too. When children exit your program, give their families the forms and any work samples you've collected so that they can bring these items to the kindergarten teacher when school begins.

4. Families need support even after the big day! During the first few weeks of school, **reach out to kindergarten families** through a phone call, email, or note to follow up on their transition to school.



## Just for Kindergarten Teachers

1. Consider sending "**Summer Surprises**" to the children in your new class. This welcome package might include a photo and/or brief profile of the teacher and a personal note to the child, along with information for families (ex: the daily schedule and ways to communicate with the teacher). Add a framed page for the child to draw or attach family pictures to bring to school for classroom display.

2. **Greet each child** individually, and be sure that your classroom reflects the children and their diverse cultures. Ask families to provide photos or take some of your own to display.

3. Collect the **Child Profile Forms** from families when school begins (see insert for sample form). There are two forms—one completed by the child's family and one from the child's pre-K teacher—giving families and teachers the opportunity to share valuable information about the children in your new class.

4. Expect the transition to go well. **With time and support**, children and families typically make a smooth transition to school.

*For more information on the web, go to [www.terrifictransitions.org](http://www.terrifictransitions.org) and click on "Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers."*

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**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools**  
**Instructions for Children's Portfolios**

**CMS is asking teachers in four-year-old classrooms to develop a portfolio for each child. Please include a work sample in as many of the following categories as possible. Remember to date all samples by attaching a date label to the reverse side or elsewhere on the sample:**

- ❑ **Creative Representation (Art, Building, Dramatic Play)**—Include something three-dimensional that the child has constructed using art materials or building materials. It may be necessary to take a photograph of the child's creation due to the size and/or materials used. A photograph of the child's dramatic play (role play/pretend) may also be used as a sample in this category. The idea is to capture a sample of the way the child thinks about and represents the world around.
- ❑ **Drawing**—Include a sample of the child's drawing. Include any language the child used to describe his or her drawing by attaching a quote from the child.
- ❑ **Writing**—Include a sample of the child's writing and/or attempts at writing. All forms of writing are included in this category, for example, scribbling, letter-like forms, invented spelling, and conventional forms. If the child's writing is on a dry erase/chalk board or the sidewalk, consider taking a photograph to be used as the sample.
- ❑ **Language**—Include dictation from the child. For example, you might write what a child says as he or she tells a story or describes an event that happened. Sometimes teachers record the child's words on a tape recorder or the computer (using a computer microphone and a CD, if available). Samples of written and/or recorded language are included in this category.
- ❑ **Social/Emotional Skills**—Include an anecdote (brief narrative) about a social interaction in which the child engaged with peers or adults. If a photograph is available, that may be used with the anecdote. The idea is to capture a sample of the child's social-emotional development in pictures and/or words. Consider anecdotes that illustrate the way this child attempted to solve a problem with peers, or how the child engaged with peers in cooperative play.
- ❑ **Physical Development**—Include an anecdote (brief narrative) about a new motor skill that the child has mastered. This skill may be a small-muscle (fine motor) or large-muscle (gross motor) skill. Photographs are not necessary but may be included, if available.

**Teachers: Please give the portfolio to the child's family when they exit your program, and ask the family to bring the portfolio to the child's kindergarten teacher at the start of the new school year. Thank you.**

