

6 things your kindergarten teacher wish you knew

Is your child entering kindergarten unprepared?

According to local teachers, one in six kids are. And that can lead to problems academically for years. But you can help your child succeed. And it may not be in the way you think. It starts with knowing more about what kindergarten is actually like today. Here are a few things local kindergarten teachers wish you knew:

Kindergarten has changed since you were a kid.

Today, kindergarteners learn some of the things taught in first grade when you were a kid. Things like the alphabet, simple math and telling time are now taught in kindergarten. And most area programs are full day classes with more students. "It's a very full, long day for young children," says Berni Carmack, a Rock Island kindergarten teacher with over 35 years of teaching experience (including seven in a kindergarten classroom).

"There is rarely time for a 'rest time' as in the past."

This means that the more parents can do at home to help children learn key concepts, the better.

Social skills trump almost everything else.

Emotional intelligence is really one of the most important skills a kid needs to understand before entering school. This includes understanding emotions, recognizing emotions in others, and displaying empathy.

"There is more to kindergarten than just learning to read words," explains Joanna Smith, a teacher at St. Paul Lutheran School in Moline.

Berni agrees. "Help your child learn ways to express himself/herself appropriately. I tell the students that it's ok to feel angry, for example, but you need appropriate, safe ways to express it."

Academic requirements are much tougher for today's kindergarteners.

Because expectations have increased for kindergarten students and teachers, it's more important than ever for parents to work with kids at home.

"Since kindergarten is much more academically rigorous, help your child learn foundational skills," Berni explains. "(This includes) print concepts, alphabet recognition, and reading environmental print." (Environmental literature includes words and sentences in everyday life - on billboards, cereal boxes or a menu, for example.)



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And the more parents and teachers work with kids on concepts, the more exciting it is when the student masters it.

Joanna remembers one of the most rewarding experiences she's had with a student who had been struggling and practicing for months with her and his parents: "The day he succeeded without extra help was exciting day for all of us."

Attendance matters.

Being in class (and on time) is a habit that starts early. Even in these early years, solid attendance can lead to better skill building and even future success.

And regular attendance is even connected to higher level reading skills.

Keep reading.

Research continues to confirm that reading to kids is one of the best things you can do as a parent for future academic success.

As kids enter school, reading doesn't become any less crucial.

"It's the best way to expose your children to learning about story elements, to introduce new vocabulary words, and to establish an early love of literature," Berni explains.

Your teacher really cares.

Maybe it's our cynical nature, but it's easy to forget that your child's teacher really cares - about the classroom, about your child and even about your family. That's why they choose to enter the classroom every day.

Teachers choose the profession for many reasons - but most would agree that helping children reach their potential is a highlight. And this is particularly true in kindergarten, when kids are just beginning to develop skills that will stay with them for years.

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Kindergarten is the beginning of a child's educational journey. Teachers and parents can help kids succeed - in kindergarten and in the future.



Originally posted on the Now What? Blog 10/6/15. The Now What? Blog served for nearly 7 years to

- 1. Normalize parents seeking support and help as a manner of child abuse prevention*
- 2. Engage community in how they can work to prevent child abuse*
- 3. Work to build resiliency in families through promotion of the 5 protective factors*

Maybe you coach a baseball team or you help care for the neighbor kids from time to time. You are investing in the safety and security of the children in our community. Because it truly does take a village to raise our children, we want to offer the tools needed to bring awareness and education to preventing child abuse.

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