

HOW TO HELP YOUR KINDERGARTNER AT HOME

The nature of Reader's Workshop, Writer's Workshop, and Math Workshop (Math Investigations) is such that the students do their school work in a workshop format. This format consists of a Mini-Lesson, Work Time, and a Closing. There are very few traditional worksheets used, so this school work is difficult to make up at home. There are, however, many things that you as a parent or guardian can do at home to help your youngster.

READING

Help your child to identify rhyming words. Say a word, then ask your youngster to tell a word that rhymes with that word. If you say "cat", then your youngster says "rat", "mat", "fat", "gat", "wat", that's okay.

Help your child to learn the letters of the alphabet. By the end of kindergarten, students need to be able to name all 26 capital and lowercase letters. By the end of the school year, students should know the sounds of all the letters, as well.

Read to your child often. Our standards recommend that you read two to four books to your child each day. After you read a book, take time to talk about the book. Ask your child to retell the story. We want to work towards our students telling these things without being prompted. This is the one of the most important parts of our comprehension assessment as students move from one reading level to the next in kindergarten.

WRITING

Kindergartners begin writing with pictures. We begin writing by drawing our stories. We encourage students to write letters and words as they are able. About halfway through the school year, we expect most kindergartners to go beyond the pictures and start writing letters and/or words, though pictures are going to be a big part of their writing all year. In kindergarten, we do not tell students how to spell words. When they ask the teacher how to spell a word, our response is always, "What sounds do you hear?" You can help at home by doing the same thing. Do not tell your child how to spell words; rather ask him/her to write the sounds he/she hears. At this stage of writing, it is acceptable for children to spell words wrong.

Encourage your child to write for a variety of purposes at home. Please remember that learning to write is a process which takes a great deal of time. Our goal in kindergarten is for the students to feel comfortable about writing.

MATHEMATICS

Our "Math Investigations" is a hands-on based approach, which encourages students to explore for themselves. Sorting is a good beginning activity for kindergartners. Find things at home which your child can sort. For example, you can give your child a pile of socks, and he/she can sort them by color.

Encourage your youngster to practice counting. There are two different types of counting he/she needs to do. One is rote counting. This involves just reciting the numbers. By the end of the school year, we hope that kindergartners would be able to count up to one hundred, and understand what comes after one hundred. The important thing here is that your child understands the pattern of counting, and that this pattern goes on forever. The other type of counting is counting objects or pictures. This is called one-to-one correspondence and can be difficult for some children. It is important to teach your child to point to the items as he/she counts it. Children also need to be able to name the numerals up to thirty. Make or buy flash cards up to thirty. About halfway through the school year, we begin to work on beginning addition and subtraction in kindergarten. You can help your child practice at home by using toys. "Four dinosaurs are eating in the swamp." (Put four dinosaur toys out.) "Three more dinosaurs come to the swamp to eat." (Put three more dinosaur toys out.) "How many dinosaurs are eating in the swamp?" Teach your youngster to count the objects or pictures to determine how many there are all together.

Talk with your youngster about shapes. Besides the four common shapes of circle, triangle, square, and rectangle, children are being introduced to the oval, diamond/rhombus, pentagon, hexagon, and octagon. In

kindergarten, we also learn about three-dimensional shapes, such as pyramid, cube, cylinder, and rectangular prism! It is fun to look for shapes on signs, stores, and vehicles, as children are riding in the car.

We hope these activities will give you some ideas for working with your kindergartner at home. Please remember to talk with your child's teacher for further suggestions.