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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Getting Ready for Elementary School ¹

Suzanna Smith²

In recent years in the U.S., there's been a great deal of discussion about school readiness that points to children, schools, families, and communities all playing an important role in preparing children for school.

Part of the transition to school involves helping children learn basic numbers, shapes, and letters. But that's not all. Kindergarten teachers surveyed in the U.S. want kindergartners to be prepared for the classroom environment, to be able to communicate their needs, follow directions, care about other children's feelings, and be enthusiastic and curious about learning new things.

For young children starting elementary school, the transition to kindergarten is a big change, even if the child has been in a preschool program. Stress may be brought on by longer days away from parents, a more structured classroom routine, and being separated from friends. Parents should be aware of signs of stress in their children and be prepared to help them make a comfortable transition during this exciting time.

To help your child start school with less stress, go to the meet-the-teacher day or any special programs for incoming kindergarteners. Keep lines of communication open. Ask simple questions about the day. Help children see the upcoming changes as exciting and

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fun. Keep the normal bedtime and mealtime routines that help young children feel a sense of comfort and predictability, and be extra supportive during the first week or so of school. Being prepared to help your children navigate those first few weeks can help them get their school year off to a successful start.

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