

Off to a  
Good Start

As Your  
Child Enters  
Kindergarten





## Project Enlightenment

Since 1969, **Project Enlightenment** has offered prevention and early intervention services to young children in Wake County. We are dedicated to promoting children's success in school and life. Project Enlightenment provides a comprehensive array of early childhood services and has been recognized nationally as a model program.

### OUR MISSION . . .

Project Enlightenment promotes the optimal development of young children by providing a unique blend of quality services to the Wake County community.

### OUR VISION . . .

Strong families, superior classrooms, successful children.

### WE SERVE . . .

#### **Children**

- birth through kindergarten

#### **Teachers**

- from childcare centers, preschool and kindergarten classrooms

#### **Families**

- of children birth through kindergarten

#### **Adults and Community Groups**

- involved in the lives of young children

### WE PROVIDE . . .

- Classroom consultation
- Developmental screenings
- Demonstration preschool classrooms
- Parent education
- A resource center for teachers and parents
- Training for early childhood professionals



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**Written by Rosalyn A. Alexander. Edited by Charles Kronberg and Val Wilson. Revisions by Alice Burrows with contributions from Willi Webb and Julia Smith. 2006 revision by Deborah Connell and Caroline Tatum-Carter, Kindergarten Transition Specialists.**

**Design by Jill Fournier.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Kindergarten entry is a time when children put together all of the learning, growing, development, and experiences of their preschool years. It is extremely important for your child to understand that kindergarten is a special place where each child can participate in many enjoyable learning experiences and make new friends.

This booklet is designed to help you and your family as you begin to prepare for kindergarten and the beginning of formal school. The more your child understands and can anticipate what will happen, the more positive the experience will be. As a parent you must be well informed so that you can relay a sense of confidence and security to your child.

There are no magic answers for getting off to a “good start.” However, this booklet provides information to help make a smooth transition from home to school. The format will address questions that parents ask as they prepare their children for taking the giant step into that special place called school. Keep in mind that no two children are exactly alike; nor are any two kindergarten classrooms. The questions and answers that follow are based on many years of parent counseling and consultation experiences of Project Enlightenment's staff, as well as information collected from various community education and health professionals. Research findings have also been incorporated into the responses.





# SECTION 1

## FIRST THINGS FIRST



Wake County offers a full day kindergarten program. Nearly all parents choose to enroll their 5-year-olds in kindergarten even though the state does not require children to be enrolled in school until the age of 7. In order to attend kindergarten, **children must be five years old on or before August 31** of the current school year. In accordance with state law, gifted children who are age four by April 16 can also be considered for admission.

### How do I register my child?

All incoming kindergarten students must participate in the choice enrollment process to be enrolled for kindergarten and assigned to a school. If you need information about the choice list for your address or the choice process, you can visit [www.assignment.wcps.net](http://www.assignment.wcps.net), contact any school, the Office of Student Assignment at 919-431-7333, or the Center of International Enrollment at 919-431-7404.

### What do I bring?

- Parent or legal guardian photo ID
- Proof of residence in the form of a current electric, gas or water bill, signed lease agreement or closing statement in the name of the parent(s) or court-appointed guardian with a closing date within 45 days (telephone, cable television bills and driver's license do not qualify).
- A certified copy of your child's birth certificate, which can be obtained from the county or state health department where the child was born.



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## Additional items will be required once your school assignment has been made. This includes:

- An updated immunization record. Medical evidence of the following immunizations must be submitted.

**Diphtheria-Tetanus-Pertussis (DTP or DtaP):** 5 doses. If the 4th dose was given on or after the 4th birthday, the series is complete.

**Polio (OPV):** 4 doses. If the 3rd dose is given on or after the 4th birthday, the series is complete.

**Measles:** 2 doses received at least 30 days apart: one dose on or after 1st birthday and a second dose before enrolling in school (k-1) for the first time. (Commonly given as MMR)

**Rubella and Mumps:** 1 dose of each on or after the 1st birthday. (Commonly given as MMR)

**Haemophilus Influenza type b (Hib):** 1 dose at or after 15 months or the complete series. Hib is not given if the child is 5 years or older.

**Hepatitis B (HBV):** 3 doses

**Varicella:** 1 dose for children born on or after April 1, 2001 without documented history of disease.

If you do not have a certified immunization record, contact your physician or Wake County Human Services. A new series of shots can be administered. If a record of completed immunizations is not received after 30 days, the principal is required by law to suspend the child from school on the 31st day until evidence of immunizations is presented.

- A completed Kindergarten Health Assessment form. North Carolina law requires that a kindergarten health assessment be completed on or before the first day of school before a child can enter kindergarten. The health assessment must be completed no more than 12 months prior to the date of entry. Physical examination forms are available at Wake County schools, area doctors' offices or at the Wake County Health Department. Parents whose children do not have a regular physician can get





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health assessments and immunizations through the Wake County Health Department. First time appointments should call 919-250-3947.

## What are the different types of schools?

### **Traditional Schools**

Schools that follow the standard course of study for NC and operate on a “typical” school calendar - beginning in late August and ending in early June with the summer months off - are referred to as “traditional schools.”

### **Magnet Schools**

In addition to the traditional elementary schools, Wake County offers families magnet program options. Magnet programs enhance the North Carolina Standard Course of Study taught in all schools by offering innovations to the curriculum based on a theme or an approach to learning. Current magnet school programs in Wake County include:

*Active Learning & Technology*

*Center for Spanish Language/IB PYP*

*Creative Arts & Science*

*Engineering*

*Gifted & Talented*

*Gifted & Talented/AG Basics*

*International Baccalaureate*

*International Studies*

*Leadership*

*Montessori*

*Museums*



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There are no special performance standards or test scores required for admission. (Admission to the AG Basics Middle School Program is the only exception). Families new to Wake County or with a rising kindergartner must enroll for school before submitting a magnet application.

For more information about magnet school programs in Wake County, visit [www.wcpss.net/magnet](http://www.wcpss.net/magnet) or contact the Magnet Resource Center, located at 5625 Dillard Drive, Cary, NC 27518. The Magnet Resource Center (open Monday - Thursday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.) has full-time staff ready to answer questions and offer information about the magnet schools. For information or directions, please call 431-7355 or e-mail the Resource Center at [MagnetCenter@wcpss.net](mailto:MagnetCenter@wcpss.net).

### **Year-Round and Modified Calendar Schools**

Year-round and modified calendar schools reschedule the traditional 180-day school calendar to keep the learning process continuous and to maximize the use of school facilities. Students have periodic, short breaks rather than one long summer break.





## SECTION 2

# GETTING READY

When parents show enthusiasm for what the school experience can mean, the child is more likely to look forward to going to kindergarten. Treat going to school as something that is expected of your child and accepted by you as part of the normal course of events.

Some specific activities to encourage school adjustment include:

- Call your school to find out about a spring parent and child orientation or other opportunities to visit before school begins.
- Read books about school. Talk to your child about things that will be familiar more than things that will be new or different.
- Drive by the school regularly to let your child become familiar with the location. If your child expresses any concern, provide encouragement and support as needed.
- Prepare your child for the structure of school by providing daily routines for dressing, eating, sleeping, playing, and cleaning up. A predictable sequence of events each day gives young children a sense of control over their lives. It also allows them to anticipate what things are going to happen and when.
- Develop a simple daily schedule that lists routines, chores, and activities.
- Help your child develop a sense of time. Most children can measure time by the length of a special TV show. A five-year-old who asks, “How long will it take?” will understand the



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parent who says, “The same amount of time it takes to watch 'Dora the Explorer' or any TV show your child enjoys.

- Arrange for an older sibling or a neighborhood child to be a special buddy to your child going to and from school.

### **What if my child is not eager to start school?**

If your child does not seem eager to start school, encourage him/her to talk with you and share any concerns. Many children have the mistaken idea that they should know how to count and read before going to school. Others worry that they will get lost or not remember all of the rules.

As your child expresses doubts and worries, take them seriously. Try to answer all of the questions in a positive, reassuring manner. Stress to your child that there will be friendly people at school to help out as needed. Continue to talk about school in a realistic and positive way. It is important for your child to know what to expect at school, to feel that you have confidence in his/her ability to cope with school, and to be sure you are available to listen.

### **What skills do children need and how can I help?**

The family is the key to providing an enriching and stimulating environment in the child's early years. While there are no academic requirements to enter kindergarten in Wake County, the child who enters with certain skills, behaviors, and knowledge is more likely to experience success. Parents can prepare their children for school success by giving them many opportunities to practice the following skills.

#### **Approaches Toward Learning**

- Is curious and confident in ability to learn
- Ask questions to find out more about an interest
- Pays attention for a short period of time (~15 minutes)



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- Persists with a task even when difficult
  - Accepts limits set by adults

### Social and Emotional Development

- Plays cooperatively and participates appropriately in a group (able to share or take turns)
- Follows basic rules, routines, and adapts to small changes
- Demonstrates some degree of independence and can separate from parents
- Respects people and property
- Begins to identify and express own feelings appropriately

### Language Development

- Speech is understandable to unfamiliar adults
- Asks and answers when, where, why and how questions
- Follows 1, 2, and 3 step directions
- Recognizes rhyming words and similar sounds
- Recognizes familiar alphabet letters (knows letter of own name)
- Is interested in books and can tell or retell a story

### Health and Physical Development

- Has had vision/hearing screened and all required immunizations
- Eats a well-balanced diet and gets 10-12 hours of sleep a night
- Can run, jump, climb, swing, throw and catch balls
- Demonstrates self help skills such as independent use of



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toilet, eat unassisted, snap, button, zip or belt own clothes, blow nose, cover sneeze, wash hands, etc.

- Holds scissors appropriately and cuts; uses pencils and crayons

## Cognition and General Knowledge

- Identifies self with first and last name
- Knows basic colors
- Draws a picture of self and identifies basic body parts
- Names some numbers and rote counts to 10
- Names some shapes (circle, square, triangle, rectangle)

*Adapted from Foundations: Early Learning Standards for North Carolina Preschoolers, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction with contributions from Wake County Kindergarten Teachers, Ready to Learn Centers, and Project Enlightenment staff.*

## Some ways you can help:

- Read to your child every day, both old favorites and new stories. Children enjoy reading the same story again and again. Have books and magazines available.
- Talk with your child about everyday experiences. Ask open-ended questions like, “What would happen if...?” “What do you like about...?”
- Answer your child's questions. Share your knowledge about topics of mutual interests. Tell family stories.
- Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children; encourage cooperation and sharing.
- Take your child to places such as parks, grocery stores, museums, and libraries. Get a library card for your child.



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- Model reading and writing using shopping lists, family messages, birthday cards, and letters.
  - Provide toys, games, and household objects, which encourage exploration and dramatic play. Join in play with your child.
  - Monitor and limit television watching.
  - Help your child recognize familiar signs like “STOP” and logos on restaurants, stores, or cereal boxes.
  - Count everyday objects with your child - bottle caps, shells, pennies, books, or cars.
  - Help your child set the table, matching the number of places to the number of people eating.
  - Let your child measure as you prepare food.
  - Play board games.
  - Say, “I love you” every day!

### How can I deal with my feelings?



Children are not the only ones who have to make adjustments when school starts. Parents have adjustments to make as well. Some become nervous and sad about sending their child off to school, especially if the child is the only child or the first to go to school. While sending a child to school can create a sense of loss, it can also be an opportunity for growth and change. Rather than feeling sad, some parents feel relieved or excited. All of these feelings are quite natural.

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Parental feelings and reactions need not be conveyed to the child. Some children develop negative feelings about school if they feel a parent will miss them too much, or they may feel rejected by a parent who is relieved to send them to school.

If you find your reactions troublesome, it could be helpful to talk with other parents who have had to deal with similar concerns, or talk with a professional counselor to help sort out your feelings. It will also be reassuring to attend orientation programs to meet other parents and learn more about your child's school. Parents' reactions and attitudes go a long way toward determining how a child will feel about school.





## SECTION 3

# THE KINDERGARTEN CHILD



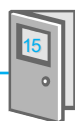
Children move through fairly predictable developmental stages. While there is no truly typical child, there are characteristics common to each age group. However, each five-year-old is unique and will not necessarily display all of them. Some typical developmental characteristics follow:

### Physical Characteristics

- Is active, restless, and energetic
- Has short attention span, needs frequent change of activities
- Is developing a sense of balance
- Enjoys climbing, swinging, acrobatics, dancing, marching
- Is farsighted; finds it hard to focus on close-up materials
- Is slowly developing eye-hand coordination
- Often reverses numerals and letters
- Is developing preferences for right or left hand; dominance may not yet be determined

### Mental Characteristics

- Learns best through play; usually enjoys dramatic play
- Is imaginative; combines fact and fantasy



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- Loves to talk, try out new words, ask questions
  - Is curious and eager for information and new facts
  - Has vocabulary of 2500-4000 words
  - Speaks in complete sentences
  - Enjoys being read to, especially humorous stories
  - Is learning to pay attention to details
  - Thinks literally, not logically
  - Likes to touch, handle, explore; more interested in process than results
  - Solves simple problems

### Social/Emotional Characteristics

- Enjoys helping
- Is eager to please; likes praise
- Is sensitive to criticism; feelings are easily hurt
- Exhibits extremes in emotions and behaviors
- Enjoys cooperative play but prefers small group to large
- Understands concept of sharing but finds it hard to wait for turn
- Has difficulty making decisions
- Needs help keeping track of belongings
- Accepts simple responsibilities
- Likes routine



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## What if I have concerns about my child's development?

Children who appear to have significant problems or developmental delays that interfere with learning can receive developmental screening as preschoolers. If you have concerns or questions about your child's development, behavior or readiness for kindergarten, discuss them with your child's doctor. If your child attends a child care or preschool program, also talk with your child's teacher.

Prior to your child's entry into Wake County Public Schools as a kindergarten student, you can request a developmental screening by calling Project Enlightenment at 856-7774. Share your concerns as a parent, including specific areas of concern which may include speech, language, motor, behavior, hearing, vision, health, social/emotional, and cognition/learning. Through screening, you can learn about home activities to support development, as well as Project Enlightenment services and other community resources to support your child.

If your child has already turned 5 years old and is about to enter kindergarten (within the next 3 months), share your concerns directly with members of the school's Student Support Team (SST) when you visit the school. A variety of school specialists are available to serve elementary students including the following professionals: public health nurse, guidance counselor, social worker, special education teacher, hearing specialists, learning disabilities specialist and speech-language pathologist.

If you are new to Wake County and you have a child who has already been receiving special education services, please provide Wake County Special Education Support Services, 110 Corning Road, Suite 2100, Cary, NC 27518, (919) 431-7700, with documentation of your child's special needs (i.e., a copy of private evaluations or the student's Individualized Education Program) as soon as possible. You will also want to share this information with the school when you enroll your child.



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## Who are school specialists? How can they help?

School specialists are specially trained staff members who work with children, provide support to the classroom teacher, and serve as valuable resources for families. Kindergarten teachers in Wake County also have Teacher-Parent Consultants from Project Enlightenment available to assist them with they have classroom concerns.

The appropriate specialist(s) can be helpful if a child needs assistance due to one or more of the following characteristics:

- Strongly resists going to school or going into the classroom after the first month
- Has difficulty speaking or communicating clearly; cannot make certain sounds or does not state needs and ideas so that others understand
- Has health problems or needs medication during the day
- Seems upset and angry much of the time
- Has trouble making friends
- Expresses excessive anxiety about a change in family life, such as separation, divorce or death
- Is not learning at the expected rate
- Has difficulty learning in a specific area

School specialists welcome parent involvement. Keep in mind that the earlier a child with a difficulty receives help, the greater the chance is for school success.



## SECTION 4

# THE HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION

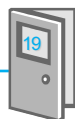


The school day begins at home. It is important for your child to arrive at school on time. Being late is often interruptive to classroom routine and can make a child feel left out or embarrassed. Routines help mornings move smoothly. Set a morning schedule that works for your family. Allow enough time to accomplish everything. Keep the television off, as it can be very distracting.

Many families find it helpful to select school clothes and to organize book bags, lunch (or lunch money) and “show and tell” items the night before.

Most five-year-old children need ten to twelve hours of sleep each night. A well-rested child is in a better position to be cooperative in the morning and to be alert throughout the school day. It is sometimes tempting to let children sleep a little longer, but parents usually find that having more time works better. When mornings are rushed, it is hard not to have problems. It is useful for children to have a personal alarm clock to help them get up on their own.

By kindergarten age, children should be taking increasing responsibility for themselves. If they have not already started, children can work on learning the following skills:



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- getting themselves up in the morning
  - choosing clothes and getting dressed
  - cleaning bodies, faces, and hands
  - remembering papers, notes, homework, lunch money, books
  - helping to prepare lunch or snacks

Remember, new routines and responsibilities require a settling-in period. During this time, children may test limits by failing to follow through on responsibilities. When young children test limits, remain consistent and firm. Your reward will be a more pleasant morning, and your children will be more self-reliant and self-confident as they take care of their own needs.

### **How Should My Child Dress?**

The rule of thumb for dress is neat, clean, durable, easily laundered, and comfortable clothing. Young children need to have their names on personal items. Children need to feel that they can make some of their own choices. If most of the children wear jeans and sneakers and if your child feels comfortable in these and wants to wear them, by all means allow it. In cold weather, layers are preferable to one bulky garment, so your child can remove or add clothing as needed. Most teachers ask children to bring a change of clothing in case of emergency.

### **How Much Structure Will My Child Need After School?**

As your child spends more time in a structured school environment, it is important to allow more time at home for free play. When both parents work, good after-school care is essential for young children. The setting should provide fun activities with ample time for running and other active play.



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Often children who attend a full-day kindergarten are either tired or “revved up” when they get home. A snack, some quiet time, or active playtime can help children adjust to their new schedule. As the year progresses, most children adapt to the longer day and more easily make the transition from school to another setting. Kindergarten usually provides enough structured activity for a child to handle; therefore, it is often best to delay other organized activities such as music lessons, dance lessons, scouting, or organized sports until a child has completely adjusted to the school schedule.

Be aware of the amount of time your child spends watching television or playing video games. It is important to establish viewing rules at the beginning of the school year. When a young child has more than one to two hours of “screen time” a day, there is little time for free play, reading, thinking, and spending quality time with the family.

### **What if my child will not talk about school?**

Be sure there is time to talk about school each day if your child wishes to do so. Do not be upset if your child answers the question, “What did you do at school today?” with, “I can't remember,” or, “Nothing,” and seems uninterested in talking about the school day. This is normal for kindergartners. Children usually will share feelings when it is important for them to do so.

Specific questions such as, “Which friends did you play with at school today?” or “What story did you read?” may get better responses than less specific questions. Also, expressing your pleasure about drawings and other work done at school may stimulate conversation.



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Another way to encourage children to talk is to plan a “sharing time” each day. During this time, perhaps at dinner or before bedtime, each member of the household talks about the best or most unusual thing that happened during the day or something of interest to all. Some children may still not participate. Respect their silence, but let them know you are available to listen.

### **How do I stay involved?**

Most schools have PTAs. Some have other extensive parent involvement programs through which parents are encouraged to help in many areas of the school. Others have less formal programs. Some examples include serving on school improvement committees, volunteering in the classroom, preparing classroom materials at home, assisting with field trips, and helping in the school office or health room. Find out what your child's school offers.

In addition to being involved with the school, it is important to work closely with your child's teacher. Let the teacher know about home situations that may affect your child. Family life has changed over the last few decades. Many children no longer live with two biological parents. They may live in a single parent family or foster family. Some children divide their time between two homes. A sensitive teacher, with accurate family information, can be supportive of children in all types of family situations.

Teachers need to know the basic facts about your family, but there is no need to discuss issues you feel are private and personal. However, if you are separated or divorced, it is important to tell teachers how parent conferences and other school functions should be handled.





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Maintain contact with the teacher through email, written notes, telephone calls, and reviews of your child's work. Most teachers will schedule a parent-teacher conference early in the year to discuss your child's adjustment and progress. If you have questions or concerns at any time, contact your child's teacher.

Do not wait until a major problem develops. Email, written notes or phone calls to share information are helpful ways to communicate questions or to provide information that the teacher needs to know about your child. Giving prompt attention to problems can prevent them from becoming more serious.







## SECTION 5

# A HEALTHY AND SAFE BEGINNING

With the excitement and challenges of school, new demands are made on your child. To get the most out of kindergarten, children need to be physically ready for this new experience. Healthy children have an advantage in school by...doing better work...having more fun...getting along better with others...being less tired...having fewer absences.

These are ways you can promote good health habits:

- Make sure your child has a good breakfast. Eggs, oatmeal, fruit, cheese sandwich, and even soup are foods that will provide more nourishment than sweet buns or sugar coated cereal.
- Start the day with a routine that allows plenty of time for breakfast and dressing. A schedule that avoids rushing will help your child leave home in a happy frame of mind.
- Help your child select appropriate clothing for the weather.
- Arrange bedtime to provide ten to twelve hours of sleep, depending on your child's need. Because kindergarten children are very active and growing rapidly, they need lots of rest.
- Provide your child with nutritious meals and snacks. Each day a five- to six-year-old child needs:



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<b>Grains:</b>	<b>6 Servings - (5 ounces)</b>
<b>Vegetables:</b>	<b>3 Servings - (1 1/2 cups)</b>
<b>Fruits:</b>	<b>2 Servings - (1 1/2 cups)</b>
<b>Dairy:</b>	<b>2 Servings - (2 1/2 cups)</b>
<b>Meat and Beans:</b>	<b>2 Servings - (4 ounces)</b>

- Make sure your child has plenty of opportunities for running, jumping, climbing, and other exercise.
- Demonstrate proper hand washing procedures. Children need to understand the importance of washing hands, especially before eating and after using the bathroom. Hand washing reduces the spread of contagious diseases.
- Teach children how to blow their nose, use a tissue, and cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.
- Help your child to brush and floss teeth daily. It is recommended that a child see a dentist every six months.
- Follow your doctor's advice about how often your child needs a physical examination.
- Inform the teacher if your child has any chronic illness or physical handicap requiring special attention or activity restrictions at school.
- Discuss with your child's teacher any medications your child needs to take at school. Schools have special policies about medications to be given during the school day.

**Note:** Some of the health information in this section was reprinted from the booklet *A Healthy Beginning*, with permission from Wake County Human Services. Also visit [MyPyramid.gov](http://MyPyramid.gov) for further information about child nutrition.



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## What should I do when my child is not feeling well?

If every parent kept every child with a runny nose at home in the winter, schools would have to shut down. However, children who are contagious, running a fever, or are too sick to participate at their regular level of activity need to stay home. Usually, if children are fever free for 24 hours, they can return to school, but it is always best to check with your doctor.

Colds and communicable childhood diseases, which begin with symptoms resembling those of a cold, are most contagious in the earliest stages.

Keep your child at home and consult your doctor if any of the following symptoms are present:

- fever
- cough with fever
- watering or discharging eyes
- skin rash or spots
- sore throat with fever
- nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea

Sometimes sick children will cry and beg to go to school. Other children will try to resist going back to school even when they are healthy enough to do so. Parents need to judge when a child is ready to return to kindergarten.

Call the school and let them know when your child is sick. Send a note to the teacher when your child returns, explaining the reason for the absence. When children miss a great deal of school, it can be helpful to ask the teachers for some work or activities the child can do at home.



## Some Common Contagious Diseases

Disease	Time from Exposure to Onset of Disease	Symptoms	Period of Exclusion from School
Chicken Pox	14-16 days	cold symptoms, fever, red bumps with blisters that form scabs	for 5 days after bumps first appear or until all sores are dry
Pink Eye	1-7 days	red, watery eyes, swollen eye lids, yellow drainage	after 24-48 hours of treatment prescribed by doctor
Impetigo	not definite	sore(s) with yellow crusting drainage	after 24 hours of treatment prescribed by doctor and sore(s) are dry
Scabies	not definite	bumps, usually between fingers, on wrists, elbows, thighs, around waist - severe itching	until treatment is done as prescribed by doctor
Strep Throat <i>(with or without rash)</i>	1-7 days	sore throat, fever, may have almost solid red rash, especially in skin folds	after 24 hours of treatment prescribed by doctor
Fifth Disease		fine rash (like sunburn) mostly on cheeks and exposed areas of arms and legs	not necessary unless running fever (after diagnosis is known)



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## What safety issues should I teach?

As young children enter kindergarten it is an important time to review safety habits and make sure they understand ways to take care of themselves.

### Teach your child:

- their full name, address and phone number, their parents' names, especially if different from theirs
- 911, the emergency assistance number
- never to go into anyone's home without your permission
- to walk with and play in groups (a child is most vulnerable when alone)
- that adults do not usually ask children for directions (if someone does ask for directions or tries to give them things, they should refuse and go to a safe place)
- that if someone is following them they should go to a place where there are other people, such as a neighbor's home or a store
- never to go near a car with someone in it or enter a car without your permission
- to tell you if any adult or older child asks them to keep a "secret"
- to yell "Help" if they are in trouble, not just to scream

### As parents, it is important to:

- know your children's friends
- never leave children unattended or alone in a car
- know where your children are and what they are doing
- listen when your children tell you they do not want to be with someone and find out why
- be sensitive to changes in your children's behavior or attitudes; encourage open communication; never belittle any fear or concern they may express to you
- tell your children to ask for help immediately from a trusted adult if they feel threatened or in danger, even if this involves only another child





## How do we really get off to a good start?

- Feel good about your child's beginning school experience and convey that attitude to your child.
- Build competencies by letting your child do more and more things independently. Teach your child how to take care of basic needs. Make your child feel confident, important, and needed.
- Help your child learn about friendliness, courtesy, and acts of kindness by modeling them at home. These are usually not taught as well as they are modeled. Encourage your child to make friends and develop good social skills.
- Get to know your child's teacher. Teachers are very special people in young children's lives. Good parent/teacher communication is a key to school success.
- Become involved with the school. Serve as room parent, a PTA member, or a class or school volunteer. Such involvement can keep you in better touch with your child's school experience.
- *Relax.* Enjoy the year! Parents are a vital link in the education process. Nobody expects parents to know it all, say it all, or be perfect. You and your child's teacher have the same goal in common - the best education possible for your child. We are all working together to help children get **"Off to a Good Start!"**





## Suggested Reading

### **Books about Transitions, Changes, Feelings . . .**

- Cain, Janan, The Way I Feel. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2001.
- Kraus, Robert, Leo the Late Bloomer. New York: Windmill Books, 1971.
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- [www.smartstart-nc.org](http://www.smartstart-nc.org)
- [www.MyPyramid.gov](http://www.MyPyramid.gov)  
(US Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion)



## **Project Enlightenment**

501 S. Boylan Avenue

Raleigh, North Carolina 27603

919.856.7774 • [www.projectenlightenment.wcpss.net](http://www.projectenlightenment.wcpss.net)



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