



Transition to Kindergarten

Activity Calendar for Families



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

WINTER 2020





Get Ready for Kindergarten! Activity Calendar for Families

The first day of kindergarten can be so exciting for families, especially when they know what to expect and how to prepare for the changes coming their way! The move from an early learning setting to kindergarten is an important transition for young children and their families. What will help make it an exciting day and wonderful year for your entire family?

You and your family play a key role. Your child's Head Start program and receiving elementary school play a role, too, in this important change. When you work together as partners, it can make a big difference for your child. When families engage in transition activities, the research shows that children are more likely to become successful in school, both socially and academically.

That's what this calendar is all about! It gives you concrete activities to help create partnerships with your child's educators, so that your child can arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and grow.

Many people play key roles in a child's move from an early learning setting to kindergarten. This calendar can help you with your role.

Let's get started!

Activity Calendar for Families

Everything in this calendar is geared toward helping you and your child be more prepared for the changes that are coming. The activities are about making strong connections between your family and your child's schools. They highlight research-based ideas for how to work together to help children get ready for kindergarten. Each month you can choose from activities that are organized into three groups:

Goals Related to Preschool Activities:

- Build a positive relationship with the educator.
- Set goals with the educator to make sure your child will be ready for kindergarten.

Goals Related to Family Activities:

- Spend time together having fun with stories and books.
- Turn family routines into opportunities for learning.
- Use community resources to discover more ways to learn.

Goals Related to Kindergarten Activities:

- Become familiar with the new kindergarten, including the school, the early learning setting, and the educators.
- Help the new educator get to know your child and family.



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

This document was developed with funds from Grant #90HC0012 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, and the Office of Child Care by the National Center for Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.



How Do You Get the Most Out of This Calendar?

Make it simple: Choose activities you know are going to work for your family. Find those that everyone can enjoy. It can be spontaneous or planned in advance. You can also use these ideas to think of your own activities. The important thing is to learn what your child and family need for a successful transition to kindergarten. Then choose those activities that will work best for the whole family.

Be realistic: It can be useful to set reasonable goals. For example, you can make it a goal to do one activity every month toward getting your child ready for kindergarten. You can also do a November activity in February if that is better for your child or family. Do you need support? A friend or family member might be willing to help.

Expand when possible: As you and your family become more comfortable doing these activities, you can add new ones. Be creative and include your own family traditions.



Why Start Now?

Does kindergarten feel far away? You may be surprised at how fast the time will fly through preschool. Starting with these activities now will give you more time to work with early childhood educators and help build the skills your child will need in kindergarten. School is a lot more than letters and numbers. Children also need to learn complex skills such as waiting for a turn, making friends, problem solving, sticking with challenging tasks, and dealing with disappointment. Which skills do you want your child to get better at before the first day of kindergarten?

How to Get Started

It's simple! First, write in the number for each day of the month. Ask your child to help and make the calendar their own. Your child's educator can give you ideas too about how to use the calendar. Choose the activities that are best for you and your family each month.



More About What the Research Says

We know from several large-scale studies how important a quality transition is for children. When families talk with early childhood educators and engage in school activities, children do better in kindergarten. The change is less stressful for them and they are more successful socially. That first week of school can be especially important for kindergarteners as it can set the foundation for learning and social interactions. A number of children miss the first day, sometimes several days, when they are not prepared for the changes. Everyone plays a related role—child, family, friends, school, and community—in helping a child be prepared for the first day of school and to do well there.

How Important are Family Activities to Your Child's Success in School?

School readiness is a phrase often used when talking about what is needed to support a child in making a smooth transition to kindergarten. When it comes to *school readiness*, the research also confirms the importance of family activities. Whether it is math, science, reading or writing, you and your family make a difference! How much you know about these topics does not seem to make a difference. It is your family's activities and attitudes that do. Everyday conversations, routines, storytelling (all in your home language), and more will add up to your child's readiness for school.

This calendar will support you in your role. Get started today!



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

August



Preschool Activities

Call the early learning program to introduce yourself and your family.

Ask if there will be a Head Start open house or orientation.

Make a transportation plan, and a back-up plan, for getting your child to preschool on time each day.

Family Activities

Observe how your child does things. What is easy? When is help needed?

Visit the public library and ask if they have activities for young children. Do any family members need a library card?

Kindergarten Activities

Start to explore your family's choices for kindergarten. Do you know what is available in your community? Can any of your friends tell you about the different choices?



Danielle's
Morning LIST

- Wake-up
- SNUGGLE
- DRESS (shoes, too)
- Eat
- Walk Dog



Preschool Activities

Help the educators get to know your family. Ask questions and share hopes or concerns.

Let the educators know the best way to contact you. Do you prefer to talk in person, or receive a note, phone call, text, or email?

Family Activities

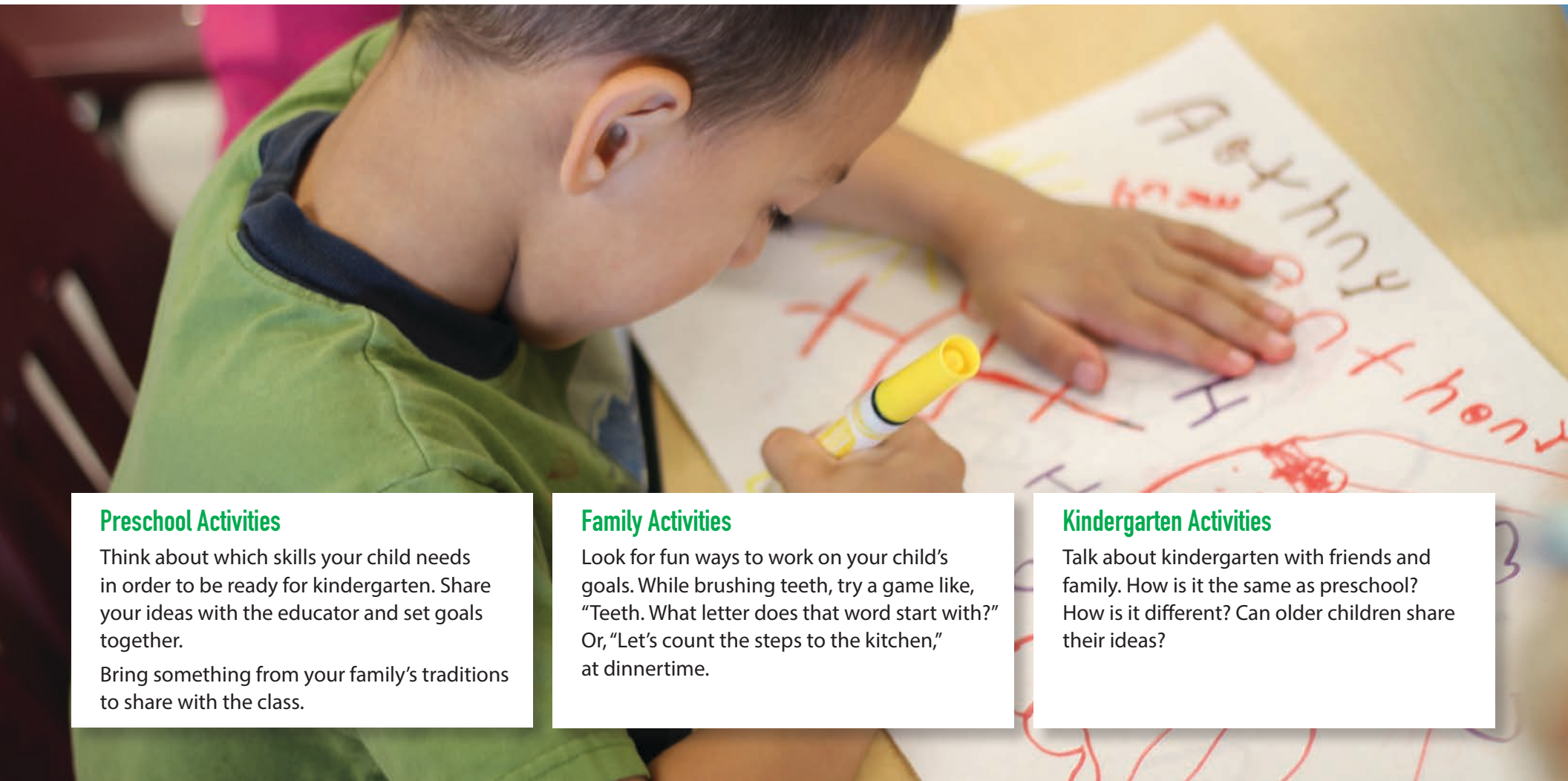
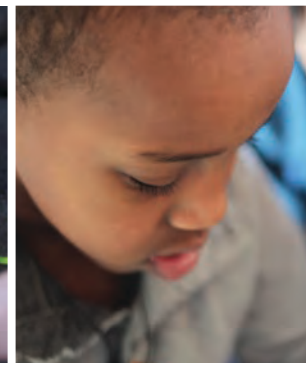
Ask your child to make a drawing of your family for the early childhood educator.

Work together to make a checklist of steps in a daily routine. A checklist can help children get ready in the morning or go to bed at night.

Kindergarten Activities

Find out if friends or family are familiar with the school your child will go to next year.

Ask if they know about programs or activities at the school that your family could attend.



Preschool Activities

Think about which skills your child needs in order to be ready for kindergarten. Share your ideas with the educator and set goals together.

Bring something from your family's traditions to share with the class.

Family Activities

Look for fun ways to work on your child's goals. While brushing teeth, try a game like, "Teeth. What letter does that word start with?" Or, "Let's count the steps to the kitchen," at dinnertime.

Kindergarten Activities

Talk about kindergarten with friends and family. How is it the same as preschool? How is it different? Can older children share their ideas?

November



Preschool Activities

Ask the educator how you or your family could help with a project or activity.

Share one of your family's favorite songs or stories (in your home language) during circle time.

Family Activities

Spend family time with books from the library or preschool (in English or your home language). Ask, "What do you see in the picture?" Make up the story together! Or try creating voices for the different characters and pointing to the words as you read.

Kindergarten Activities

Call the school to ask when kindergarten registration opens. Are any special events planned for new students and their families?

December



Preschool Activities

Have a conversation with your child about preschool. "What do you see when you first walk in? What do you hear at mealtime?" Talk about sights and sounds that are different from home.

Family Activities

Focus on writing skills with your child over the winter break. Try different ideas, like painting the names of friends. Include family traditions in your child's learning with songs, stories, or dances.

Kindergarten Activities

Read children's books about kindergarten with your child. It's not too early to be excited about going to kindergarten! Watch for information about a kindergarten open house.



Preschool Activities

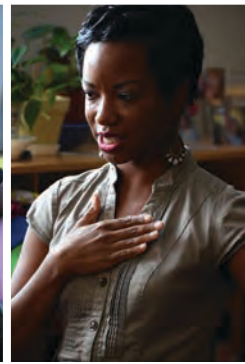
Review the goals that you and the educators set for your child. Ready to celebrate any newly acquired skills? Are the goals still challenging but within reach?

Family Activities

Find ways your child can help with easy tasks. How about sorting the laundry by color? Or rinsing the dishes? It's a great way for children to feel important and capable, and learn new skills!

Kindergarten Activities

Ask what your child's educator knows about the local schools and kindergarten classrooms. Discuss what the new school and kindergarten teachers will want to know about your child.



Preschool Activities

Think about ways your family could be involved at school. The educators might suggest helping in the garden, or cutting out letters, or making a bulletin board for parents.

Could you share a family tradition with the class?

Family Activities

Add to your child's word "bank." Use and explain new words. Play word games, sing songs, and make up silly rhymes like giggle, wiggle, jiggle.

Help your child label emotions when different feelings arise (happy, sad, mad, disappointed).

Kindergarten Activities

Complete the kindergarten registration forms at home or school (where your educator can offer you support). Do you have questions about the kindergarten program? Call the new school for information or check out their website.



Preschool Activities

Find out if spring field trips are planned to a farm, park, or garden.

Discuss your family's interests in growing flowers or food with the educator.

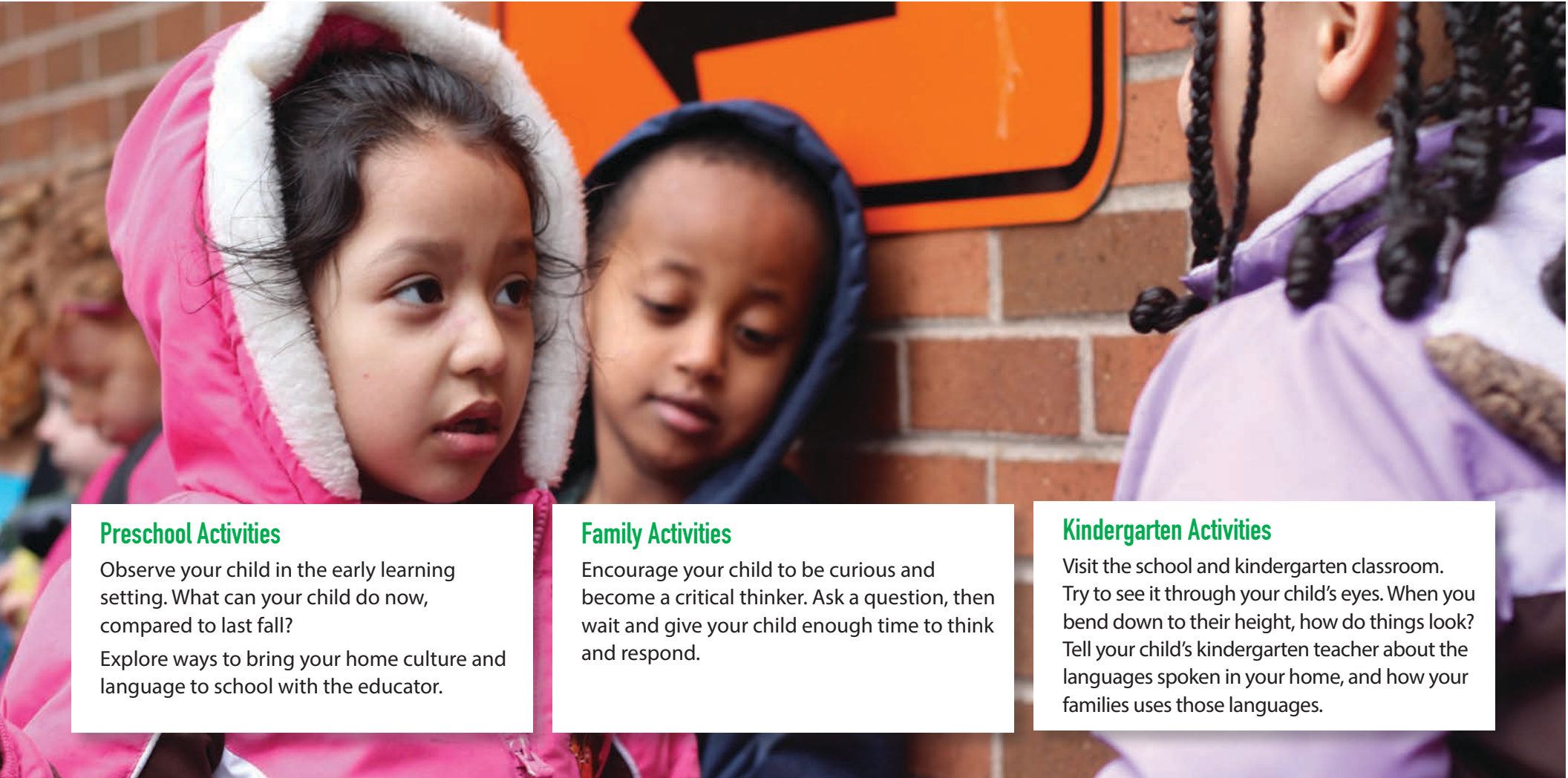
Family Activities

Look for shapes (circle, square, triangle), patterns (red, green, black ... red, green, black), or numbers with your child when you drive, ride the bus, or go on walks.

Kindergarten Activities

Ask early childhood educators about what they expect of kindergarteners. Do children sit at desks and raise hands? Write their names by themselves? Count to ten?

Go to the elementary school website, or contact the principal, to find out about the attendance policy and transportation options when your child starts kindergarten.



Preschool Activities

Observe your child in the early learning setting. What can your child do now, compared to last fall?

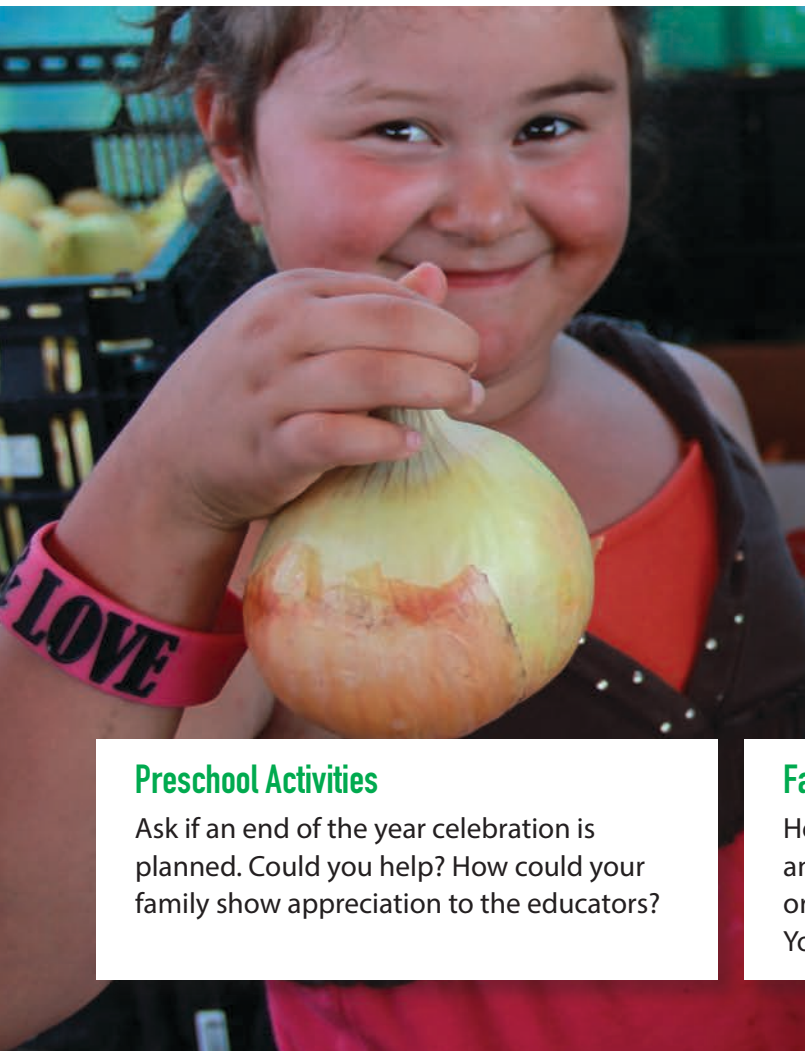
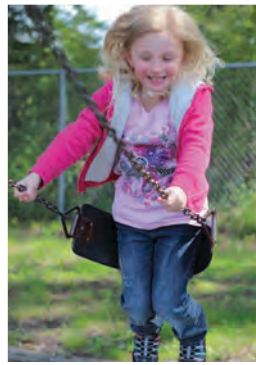
Explore ways to bring your home culture and language to school with the educator.

Family Activities

Encourage your child to be curious and become a critical thinker. Ask a question, then wait and give your child enough time to think and respond.

Kindergarten Activities

Visit the school and kindergarten classroom. Try to see it through your child's eyes. When you bend down to their height, how do things look? Tell your child's kindergarten teacher about the languages spoken in your home, and how your families use those languages.



Preschool Activities

Ask if an end of the year celebration is planned. Could you help? How could your family show appreciation to the educators?

Family Activities

Help your child continue to learn anytime and anywhere. Play "help me find the number" or "look for the letter A" at the grocery store. You can do this throughout the summer.

Kindergarten Activities

Visit the new school with your child. Share ideas about what will happen in kindergarten. What might be the same as preschool, or different?



Preschool Activities

Look around the early learning setting for ideas to bring home. For example, put a tub by the door for the things your child needs to take to school. Label things around the house, such as "door," "sink," "cup," etc.

Family Activities

Ask your family to help your child memorize your address, phone number, and neighborhood street names. Make it into a game.

Kindergarten Activities

Talk about the fun things that children learn when they are old enough to go to kindergarten.

Ask family and friends for favorite school stories and share your own.

Make an attendance plan for getting your child to kindergarten on time each day in the school year ahead. What kind of transportation will you use? Do you have a back-up plan?



Preschool Activities

Arrange playtimes with friends over the summer.

Ask your child, "What did you like best in Head Start? What do you look forward to in kindergarten?"

Family Activities

Do something special together. Try cooking (for measuring and math) or a puppet show (for language and literacy). Encourage new ideas and share traditions!

Kindergarten Activities

Begin to get ready for the first day of kindergarten! What school supplies are needed? Can your community help provide them? Do you know how to contact the school and educator?



Selected Children's Books About Kindergarten

- *A Place Called Kindergarten* by Jessica Harper
- *Countdown to Kindergarten* by Alison McGhee
- *David Goes to School* by David Shannon
- *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg
- *Froggy Goes to School* by Jonathan London
- *I Am Too Absolutely Small for School* by Lauren Child
- *Kindergarten Rocks!* by Katie Davis
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I come!* by Nancy Carlson
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I come!/Preparate, kindergarten! Allavoy!* by Nancy Carlson
- *Mae's First Day of School* by Kate Berube
- *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate and Ashley Wolff
- *Off to Kindergarten* by Tony Johnston
- *Que Nervios! El Primer Dia de Escuela* by Julie Danneberg
- *School's First Day of School* by Adam Rex
- *Splat the Cat* by Rob Scotton
- *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- *Un Beso en Mi Mano* by Audrey Penn
- *Welcome to Kindergarten* by Anne Rockwell
- *Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes





Are You Ready for Kindergarten?

We hope this Kindergarten Activity Calendar will help you answer **Yes!** You play a key role in your child's smooth transition. By simply doing these three things, you can make a big difference:

- 1. Build positive relationships with the early childhood educators.**
- 2. Spend time as a family having fun with stories and books.**
- 3. Help the new early childhood educators get to know your child and your family.**

Kindergarten is an important, exciting change for your whole family. When you and the school staff work together to support this transition, *your child can have a wonderful kindergarten experience!*



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning

WINTER 2020

