

Getting Ready for the First Day of Preschool & Kindergarten

Starting preschool or kindergarten is a special day for parents and children, and there's a lot you can do in the weeks before to get ready for the first day. But try to keep your efforts low-key. If you make too big a deal out of this milestone, your child may end up being more worried than excited. Here are some ideas from Zero to Three.org to keep the focus on fun.

- **Use pretend play to explore the idea of school.** Take turns being the parent, child and teacher. Act out common daily routines, such as saying good-bye to mommy and/or daddy, taking off your coat, singing songs, reading stories, having Circle Time, playing outside, and taking naps. Reassure your child that school is a good place where he will have fun and learn. Answer his questions patiently. This helps children feel more in control which reduces their anxiety.
- **Read books about the first day of school.** There are many books about going to preschool and kindergarten available from the public library in your area. For example "Maisy Goes to Preschool" or "Look Out Kindergarten Here I Come" Choose several to share with your child over the summer before school starts. Talk about the story and how the characters are feeling. (Roanoke City Libraries are also offering free "Kindergarten readiness" storytimes throughout the month of August! Call your local library or visit www.roanoke.macaronikid.com for dates, times and locations)
- **Make a game out of practicing self-help skills** like: unzipping her coat, hanging her coat on a hook, putting on her backpack, fastening her shoes. When you play school together, you can give your child the chance to practice taking off her coat, zipping her backpack closed, and sitting for storytime. If your child will be bringing lunch, pack it up one day before school starts and have a picnic together. This will give her the chance to practice unzipping her lunch box and unwrapping her sandwich—important skills for the first day!
- **Play at your new preschool or elementary school.** Visit your child's school together. Ask when you can tour the school with your child. Play on the school playground a few times before your child starts the program. These visits increase your child's comfort with and confidence in this new setting.

For more information about the importance of school readiness, visit
www.smartbeginningsroanoke.org



Did you know you can call 2-1-1 for free information on health and human services in your community? When you dial 2-1-1, you will be connected with a trained Call Specialist, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. They will listen to your situation and suggest sources of help. 2-1-1 has one of the largest databases of health and human services in Virginia. Information and resource listings are also available at their website: www.211virginia.org