

Dear Almost Kindergarten Student & Parent,

We are so excited to know that your child will be starting Kindergarten in September! We know that when most adults think of preparing their child for school, they typically think of reading, writing and math skills in the 'traditional' sense of the word. We also want you to know about the importance of play, outside exploration and fostering independence in your child is preparing them for school.

Play helps children develop language skills, social skills, fine motor skills, literacy skills, math skills and more. Providing time for your child to play and engaging them in play will prepare them for school. These opportunities for play can be structured, like music classes, swim lessons, soccer or hockey, or dance classes. Structured play can help introduce your child to new things and allows parents and caregivers to expose children to a variety of activities they may not discover on their own. It can help build strength, balance and coordination. Structured play activities can teach language skills and promotes social and emotional skills like turn taking, respecting boundaries and self-regulation. Opportunities for play can also be unstructured. Unstructured play is any activity that is child directed and focused. It is chosen by the child and the rules and games can change and morph as the play progresses. This type of play allows children to take creative risks, learn to problem-solve, encourages a use of imagination, develop a sense of independence and self-reliance, and navigate social interactions. While structured play teaches children social rules, unstructured play provides opportunities to observe, respond, and adapt to ever-changing social situations. Providing time for both types of play, will help set your child up for future success.

Outdoor play is good for your child's physical health, development and self-confidence. Outdoor play provides more space and freedom for big movements, like running, jumping, kicking and throwing. These physical activities are good for your child's health, fitness and physical development. Outside activities could include playing tag, hide-and-seek, crawling through tunnels or over tree branches, moving in different ways (hopping, jumping, skipping, running etc.), making mud pies, going on a walk and talking about the different colours you see, or climbing trees. The possibilities are endless!

Fostering independence is one of the greatest skills you can instill in your child to prepare them for school. This includes: being independent in the bathroom, washing hands, being able to put on their own shoes, putting on their jacket/coat and zipping the zipper, being able to open containers in their lunch. Offering a variety of foods for lunch and encouraging your child to make independent healthy eating choices. We all love a treat, but need to know what a treat is and to eat this after a healthy choice. Zipping and buttoning clothing not only helps foster independence, but also helps to develop coordination and fine motor skills.

Reading with your child every day will also help prepare them for school. Taking the time to discuss the pictures in a book, reading a variety of books and even reading the same book over and over again, while exhausting for the adult provides children with important skills. They begin to learn that print has meaning, and this remains the same each time text is read. The words on the page don't change each time you read the book. The repeated reading also allows children to memorize the text and to 'read' it back to an adult. This memorized reading is the first stage of reading!

Please watch for an invitation to meet in the summer on the school playground to join in a story, engage in fun activities and meet some new school friends.

We look forward to getting to know your child and the adventures we will have together as they begin their school career.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marie VanDalfsen, Principal Sandy Hill Elementary

And the Kindergarten Teachers at Sandy Hill Elementary