



Five Simple Strategies to Prepare Your Child for Kindergarten

Your kitchen set the stage for their first science experiment, and your living room was their initial library. Home has always been your child's classroom, and you are their primary teacher, but now the transition to elementary school is approaching. Like many parents, you may wonder how best to prepare your child for this change. How can you enhance their learning while your child is still at home?

According to Utah's Early Childhood Standards, "Children's first and most influential teachers are their parents/family. When parents, educators, and caregivers work together in the education and well-being of a child, a partnership forms that will influence the best possible learning outcomes for the learner."

Belinda Burningham, kindergarten teacher and developer/coordinator of Cache County School District's Time Together program, shared the following strategies which she believes will help parents to foster learning and development at home:

1. Read with your Child Frequently

While reading to your child, especially if they are a beginning reader, use strong emotion and expression. If you have older children, starting a chapter book is an excellent way to continue the learning process and enjoy quality time together. Avoid missing valuable reading time by including a bedtime story into your child's nightly routine.

2. Use your Natural Vocabulary

Don't simplify your vocabulary when speaking with your child. Using advanced words will help them achieve a higher level of thinking before they can actually read or write these types of words. For example, when gardening use the words *soil*, *cultivate*, and *moisture* to explain the process.

3. Listen with Empathy

Listening to your child validates their feelings and self-worth, and fosters an attitude of learning and growth. Confirm your child's point of view by expressing statements of understanding. Share similar experiences you had in your youth, followed by questions such as "How did you feel when that happened?" to show concern and empathy.

4. Encourage Problem Solving

"How do you think you could do that differently?" or "What do you feel would work better?" are wonderful questions to ask your children. Don't rescue your child. Working through challenges allows them to develop skills and acquire knowledge they wouldn't learn otherwise.

5. Incorporate Learning into Playtime

Playtime is a win-win scenario. Your child will have fun while gaining the opportunity to explore various types of learning. Creativity blossoms when children play, which leads to inventive problem-solving. Encourage your child to use their imagination to determine what happens during playtime. Let them lead. It is essential for children to participate in both social play and solo play. When they interact with peers, social learning such as sharing and communicating can take place. Alone time lets youth explore their own creativity.

As you apply these five strategies in your home, your children will not only be better prepared for school, but they will also achieve a deeper love of learning that will continue throughout their education.

Inset: To empower and educate parents in better preparing their children for school, Cache County School District has implemented the Time Together program. During the program, parents of children who will be attending kindergarten in the fall attend a series of three free workshops held at Canyon, Lincoln, Lewiston, and White Pine Elementary Schools. These workshops focus on reading and math readiness, along with listening and self-reliance. Each parent who attends a workshop is given a kit filled with take-home learning materials. If you would like more information about the Time Together program, visit ccsdut.org.