



Keys to Kindergarten

Our Time Together

Introductions – a little bit about us and a little bit about you.

Discussing the concept of readiness.

Learning behaviors – what are they?

Self-regulation/executive functioning and its importance.

Academics and strategies to support young learners.

- Writing, spelling & concepts about print
- Reading to children & Interactive Read Aloud
- Math
- Fine and Gross Motor
- Social/ Emotional

Handouts & Questions





The Concept of Readiness

There are several viewpoints regarding what *readiness* means:

The appropriate chronological age, a view which assumes that the necessary physical growth and psychosocial growth are related to age.

Maturation, a view that biological development (“an internal timing mechanism”) is responsible for school readiness.

Prerequisite skill acquisition, a view that readiness requires acquisition of cumulative skills as a prior condition for learning.

The state of preparation for school attained from a combination of growth, maturation, and social experiences.

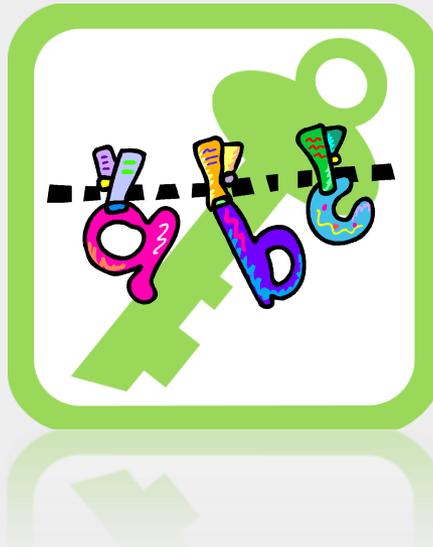
Readiness

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in their publication *School Readiness - Preparing Children for Kindergarten and Beyond*, notes that the concept of school readiness typically refers to the child's attainment of a certain set of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive skills needed to learn, work, and function successfully in school.

Unfortunately this common philosophy of “ready for school” places an undue burden on children by expecting them to meet the expectations of school.

A more constructive way to consider school readiness is to remove the expectations from the child and place them onto the schools and families.

Young children have wide ranging needs and require support in preparing them for the high standards of learning they will face in elementary school.

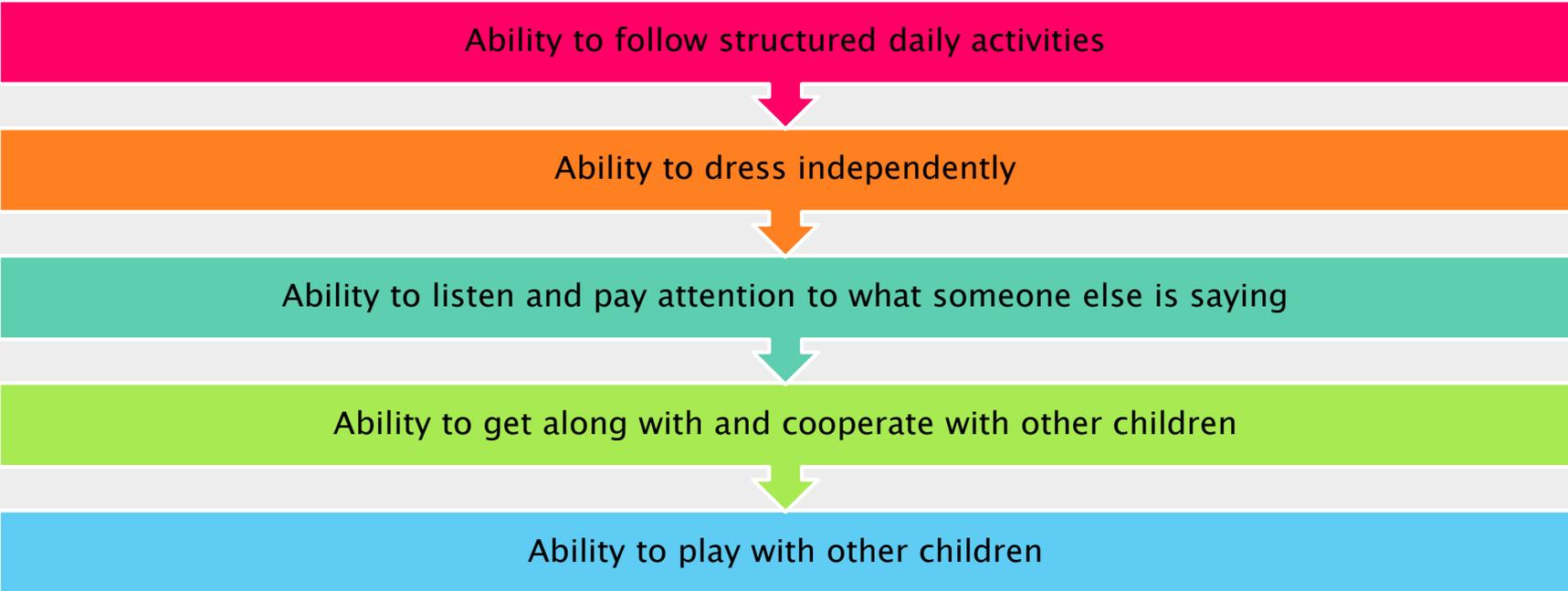


So What Does This Mean for Us
as Parents and Early Childhood
Educators?

What behaviors provide a
foundation for learning?

Learning Behaviors

Children will be entering a social environment that is primarily focused on education. Research has suggested that many aspects of children's lives influence their preparation for formal school learning, including cognitive, social, emotional, and motor development, and, most importantly, early home, parental, and preschool experiences. The NASP has identified some behaviors and/or characteristics often associated with early school success.



Ability to follow structured daily activities

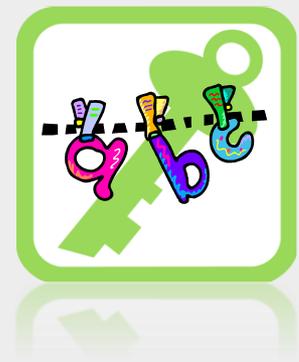
Ability to dress independently

Ability to listen and pay attention to what someone else is saying

Ability to get along with and cooperate with other children

Ability to play with other children

Learning Behaviors



Ability to follow simple rules

Ability to work with puzzles, scissors, coloring, paints, etc.

Ability to write their own name or to acquire the skill with instruction

Ability to count or acquire the skill with instruction

Ability to recite the alphabet (or quickly learn with instruction)

Ability to identify both shapes and colors

Ability to identify sound units in words and to recognize rhyme

Within the ability to follow classroom routines is the ability to pay attention to the teacher so that you will remember and use the information presented. This is particularly important in kindergarten as a larger percentage of the instruction is presented in a **large group or whole group** format as opposed to in a preschool setting or at home.

Learning Behaviors

Skills Needed for Large or Whole Group Instruction

Behavioral demands are high, and children are typically expected to follow such rules as taking turns, responding to teacher questions, responding to teacher directions, waiting to be called on before answering, and staying in their places.



Follows classroom rules

Listens to gather information

Understands and follows directions

Stays on adult-directed tasks for 10 minutes

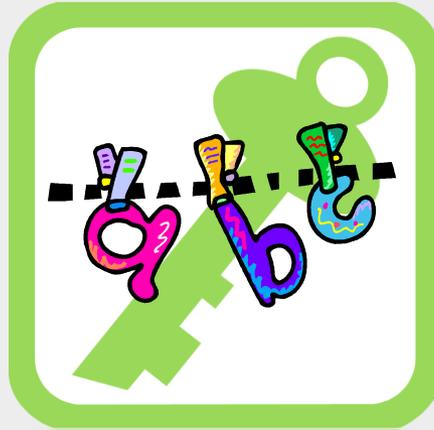
Accepts guidance and limits



Self-Regulation

In today's kindergarten classrooms the demands for academic learning are higher than ever before. Kindergarten teachers often rate "difficulty following directions" as their number one concern. Teaching 5 year old children to regulate their own behaviors is sort of like adding another "R" to the list of basic skills children learn in kindergarten.

What is self-regulation?



Self-regulation is a deep, internal mechanism that enables children as well as adults to engage in *mindful, intentional, and thoughtful behaviors* (Bodrova & Leong). It includes both the ability to inhibit a behavior and the ability to engage in a particular behavior on demand. Self-regulation is used not just in social interactions (emotional self-regulation) but also in thinking (cognitive self-regulation).

Self –regulation/Executive Function

The following information is taken from Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning; a series of brief summaries of essential findings from recent scientific publications and presentations by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

In the brain, the ability to hold onto and work with information, focus thinking, filter distractions, and switch gears is like an airport having a highly effective traffic control system to manage arrivals and departures of dozens of planes on multiple runways.

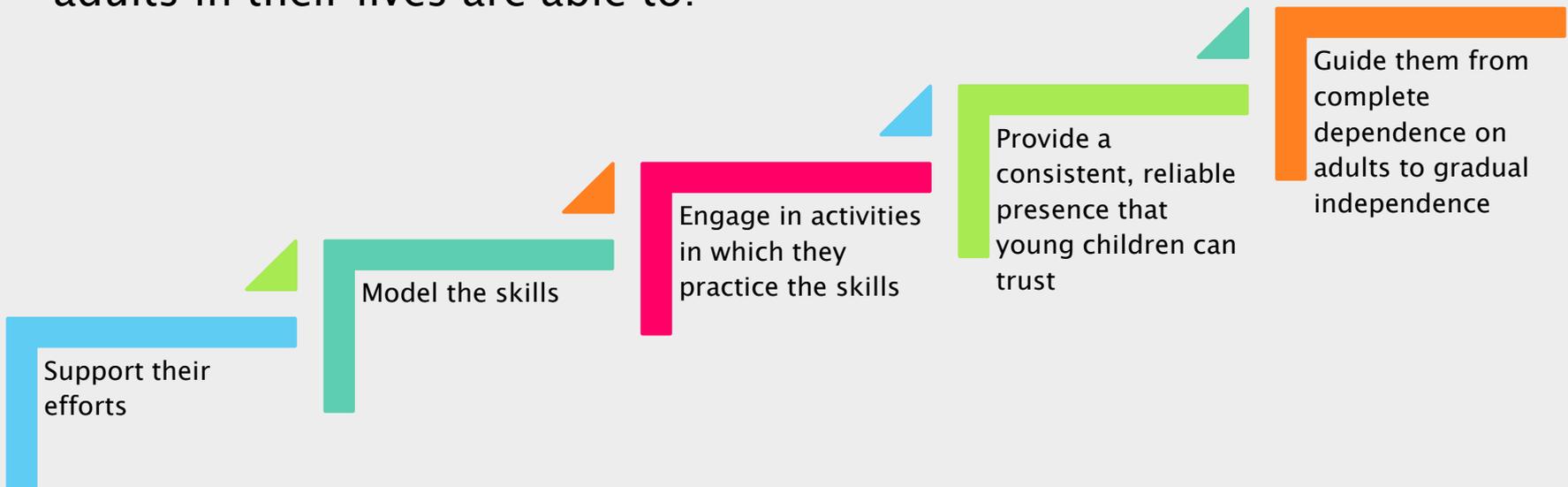
Executive function and self–regulation – a set of skills that relies on three types of brain function: working memory, mental flexibility, and self–control.

Children are not born with these skills – they are born with the potential to develop them. The full range of abilities continues to grow and mature through the teen years and early adulthood.

Critical Factors

The critical factors in developing a strong foundation for these essential skills are children's relationships, the activities they have opportunities to engage in, and the places in which they live, learn, and play.

Relationships – Children develop in an environment of relationships. This starts in the home and extends to caregivers, teachers, medical and human services professionals, foster parents, and peers. Children are more likely to build effective executive function skills if the important adults in their lives are able to:



Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning; a series of brief summaries of essential findings from recent scientific publications and presentations by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

Critical Factors

Activities – Building these abilities in young children requires communities and caregivers to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical development broadly, including a range of strategies that:

Reduce stress in children’s lives, both by addressing its source and helping them learn how to cope with it in the company of competent, calming adults.

Foster social connection and open-ended creative play, supported by adults.

Incorporate vigorous physical exercise into daily activities, which has been shown to positively affect stress levels, social skills, and brain development.

Increase the complexity of skills step-by-step by finding each child’s “zone” of being **challenged but not frustrated**

Include **repeated practice of skills** over time by setting up opportunities for children to learn in the presence of supportive mentors and peers.



A Closer Look at Academic Skills

Emerging Literacy Skills

As stated earlier, relationships and interactions are the foundation of learning for young children. Almost every interaction in a child's world is preparing her or him to become a reader and a writer. Young children move through a series of stages as they learn to read and write. These stages reflect the child's growing knowledge of the conventions of literacy (letters, spacing, sounds, etc.) Knowing what stage a child is at is very important as we want to support further learning without frustrating him/her (zone of being challenged but not frustrated). As is often the case, there will be variations in the way kids move through stages of learning.

- *Drawing and/or scribbling
- *Horizontal scribble writing or letter-like forms and shapes
- *Letters
- *Letters and spaces
- *Pre-phonemic spelling
- *Early phonemic spelling
- *Letter- name spelling
- *Transitional spelling (invented spelling)
- *Conventional spelling



When engaging in writing, young children often mirror what they see around them – adults writing lists, notes, text messaging. They are observing the way writing is used in our everyday lives.

Keep materials available and allow lots of practice!

Markers, crayons, and unlined paper.

Point out print in the environment.

As the child grows, add different types of paper including memo pads, envelopes, lined paper, smaller pencils and pens. Also foam letters and letter magnets. Involve child in reading and writing activities – i.e. making a shopping list together, reading a menu.

Give child meaningful, purposeful writing opportunities/experiences. (Sign-ins, label “things” w/ their name, thank you cards, etc.)

Talk about what you are doing/writing – make the obvious explicit.

Read books!!!

Read and make alphabet books.

Read lots of books with rhymes.



Some ways to encourage print awareness:

Read with your child every day!



Play “I Spy” games in the car, at home, or in the grocery store to “discover print”



Read yourself! Model reading books, magazines, newspapers, etc.



Let your child see you write; tell them what the words say as you put them on paper.



Cook with child and let them help follow recipe.



Provide print materials such as menus, tickets, maps, and catalogs for use in pretend play.

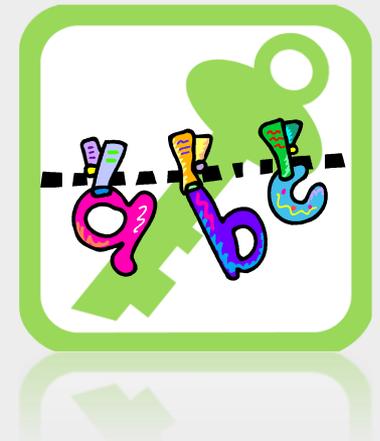


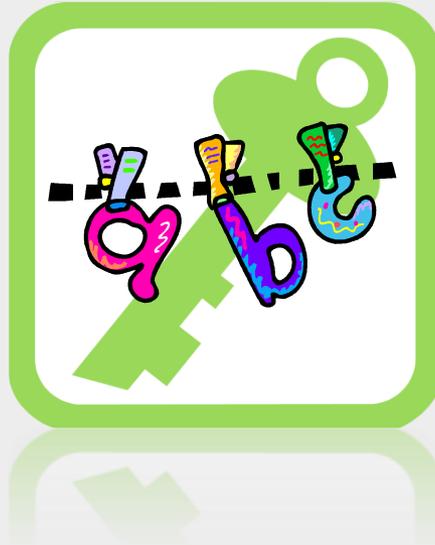
Subscribe (your child) to a children’s magazine.

Does Reading Aloud Really Matter?

- ❖ More than one in three children arrive at kindergarten without the skills necessary for lifetime learning.
- ❖ Research shows that reading aloud is the single most important thing you can do to help a child prepare for reading and learning.
- ❖ More than 15% of young children, 3.1 million, are read to by family members fewer than three times a week.
- ❖ Only 48% of young children in this country are read to each day.
- ❖ Is 15 minutes a day enough to make a difference?
 - Reading 15 minutes a day for 5 years = 27,375 minutes or 456.25 hours (hours of practice).

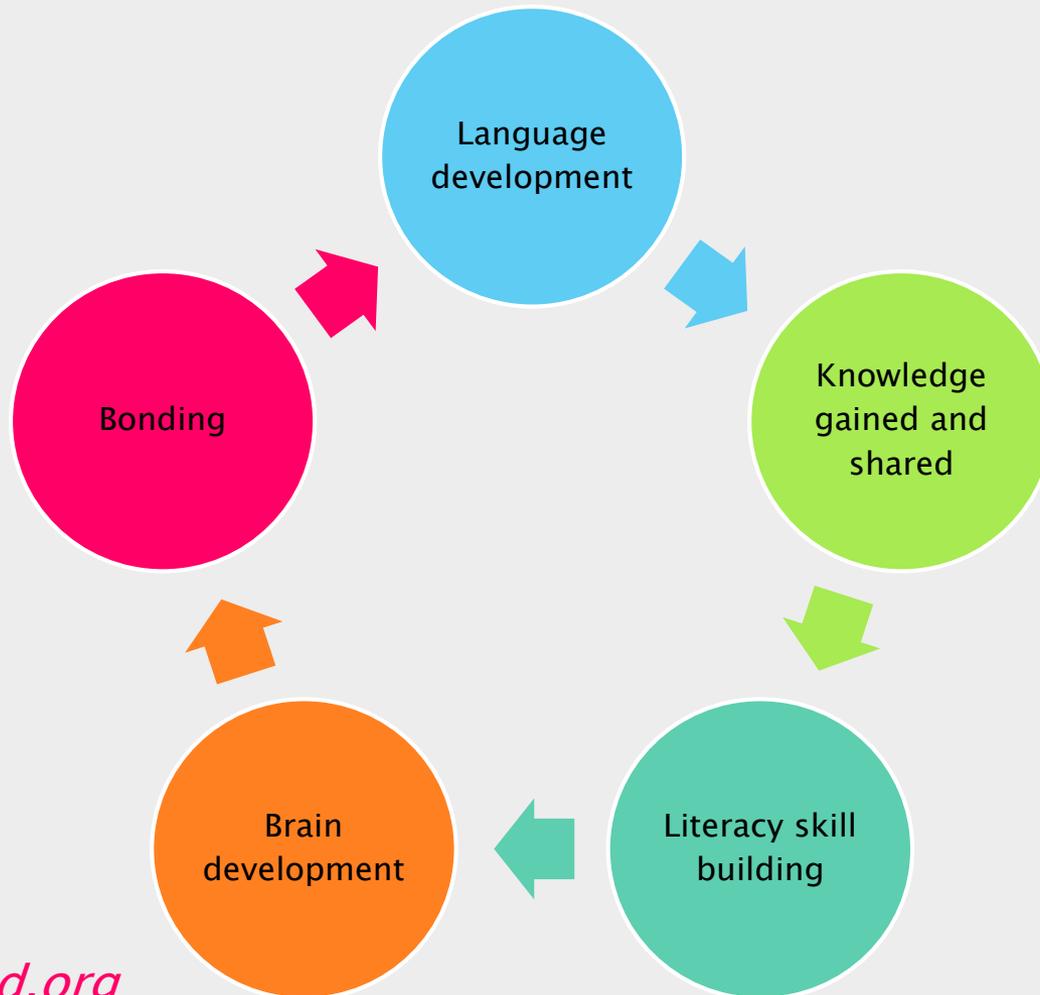
www.ReadAloud.org





Interactive Read Aloud

Why Read Aloud?



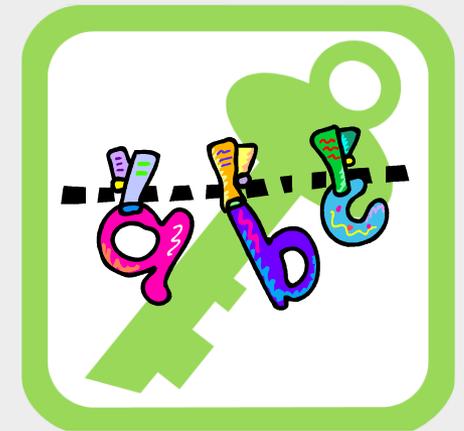
www.ReadAloud.org

Reading aloud with children is known to be the single most important activity for building the knowledge and skills they will eventually require for learning to read.—Marilyn Jaeger Adam

Interactive Read Aloud

A Definition

According to Fountas and Pinnell, Interactive Read-Aloud is “A teaching context in which students are actively listening and responding to an oral reading of a text.”



The Continuum of Literacy Learning

Successful Interactive Read-Alouds...

Get kids to think and have ideas about texts

- ❖ I think...
- ❖ I wonder...
- ❖ This reminds me of...

Get kids to continue each others' thoughts or ideas (a conversation)

- ❖ I agree because...
- ❖ I disagree because...
- ❖ I would like to add...
- ❖ I also think...
- ❖ I think that is important because...
- ❖ Another example is...

Get kids to monitor for meaning

- ❖ I'm not sure I understand what you mean...
- ❖ Can you say more about that...?
- ❖ What do you mean...?
- ❖ I think you are saying...
- ❖ Can you give an example...?



Successful Interactive Read-Alouds...

Get kids to push each others' thinking

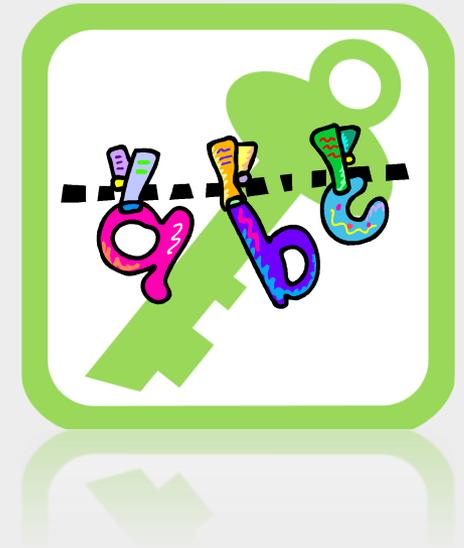
- ❖ Why do you think that?
- ❖ Is that always true?
- ❖ I think this might be a pattern because...

Get kids to think critically

- ❖ Or maybe...
- ❖ I don't think that's fair because...
- ❖ If I was the character...
- ❖ You should never...

Get kids to respond to the character

- ❖ I agree with the character because...
- ❖ I disagree with the character because...
- ❖ I don't know why he/she would...



THINK ABOUT TRICKY VOCABULARY

Emerging Math Skills

- *Identify numbers 1–100
- *Work with numbers and amounts 0–20
- *Identifying 2–dimensional and 3– dimensional shapes
- *Adding fluently to 10
- *Subtract fluently within 5
- *Sorting and classifying by attributes
- *Measuring



Some Ways to Encourage Math Awareness:

- *Read number and shape books
- *Playing number games i.e. Uno
- *Look for numbers when driving in the car
- *Sorting toys, sorting jobs around the house
- *Singing number rhymes
- *Counting items in the grocery store

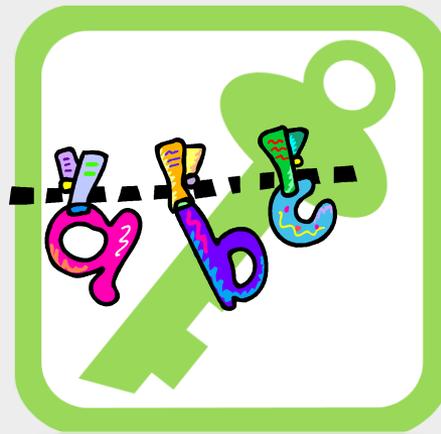


Emerging Fine Motor and Handwriting Skills

The Agawam Public Schools utilizes the Handwriting Without Tears curriculum which is multi-sensory, developmentally appropriate curriculum with a research-based implementation of instruction.

www.hwtears.com

- *Print first and last name with correct formation
- *Appropriately use crayons and pencil to draw and write
- *Successfully use scissors and other fine motor tools
- *Zip, button, tie and open simple containers



Some Ways to Support Fine Motor Skills:

- Lacing beads
- Coloring
- Play dough/clay
- Using scissors
- Activities that encourage use of pincer grasp (tweezers, eye droppers, golf pencils)

Emerging Gross Motor Skills

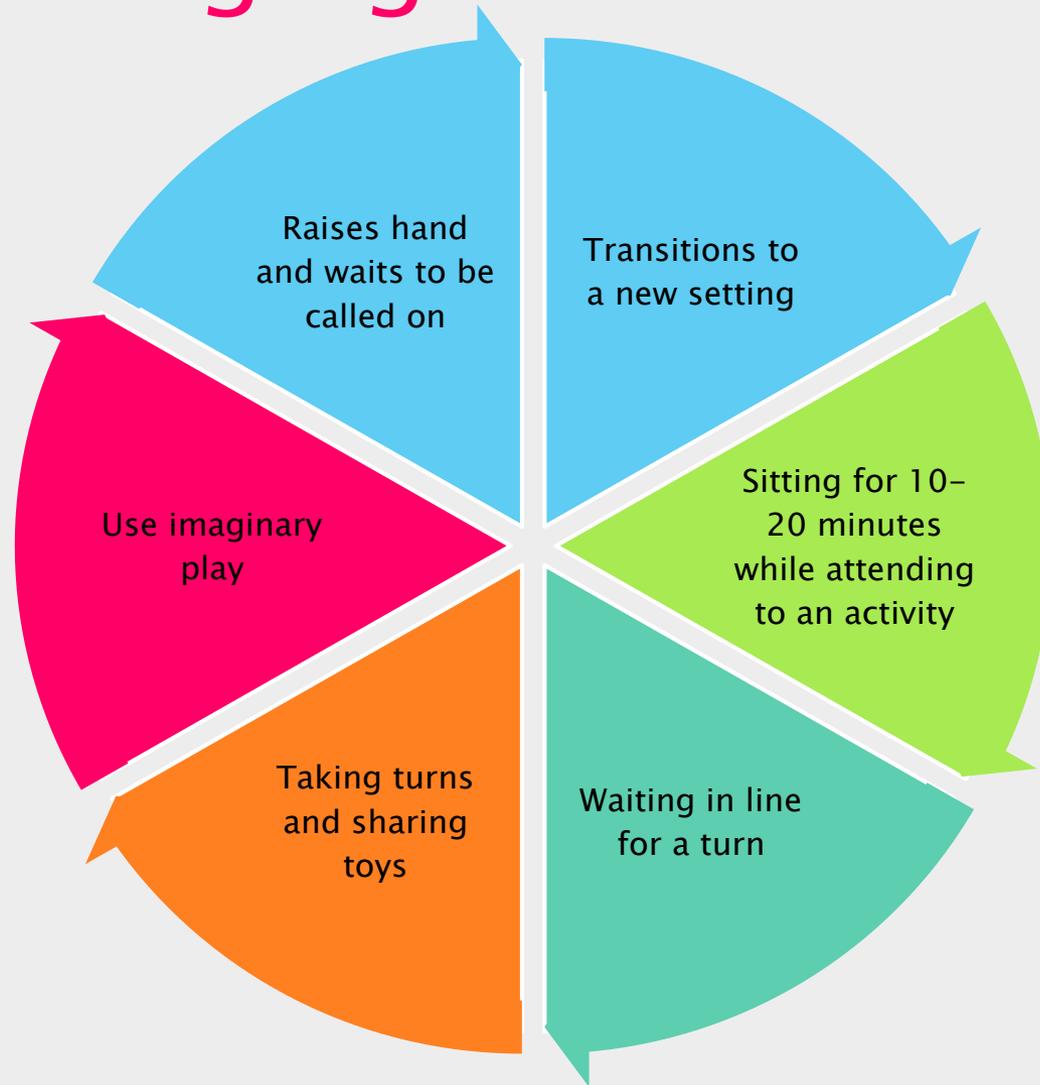


Some Ways to Support Gross Motor Skills



Go outside and play every day!

Emerging Social Skills



Some Ways to Support Social Skills:

Attend story time at the library

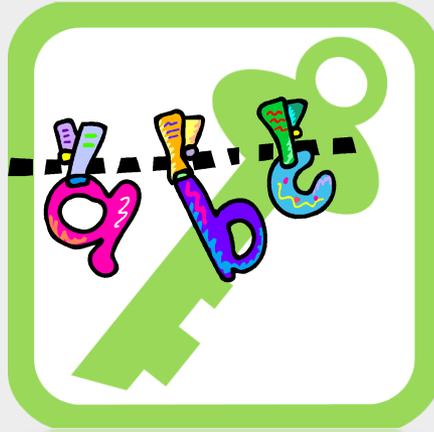
Attend parent/child events available in the community

Encourage you child to interact with adults in the community

(ordering their own food at a restaurant, greeting family members or friends, asking a librarian or store employee for help)

Arrange play dates with neighbors or other friends

Play school at home



If you have any questions regarding this presentation, contact Robin Fernandes, Director of Early Childhood, at 821-0597 or rfernandes@agawampublicschools.org.

Thank You.