



Pre-K Here We Come!

The summer before beginning Pre-K can be a fun and exciting time, but also may be a time of worry and anxiety as parents and children wonder about what the expectations will be for Pre-K and whether they will be ready for this big step into school. This guide was developed to help reduce the anxiety, and provide some fun ideas for activities that can help to get ready for Pre-K.

Myths about expectations: For many Pre-K may be a child's first school experience. For others it may be the year following a toddler or Nursery School program. There will be diversity in the Pre-K class in terms of prior school experience, levels of development, experience with socialization with other children and more. It is important to remember that each child is unique and therefore the skills that your child has entering Pre-K may be different from those of his/her classmates. In Pre-K we will work with your child to develop literacy, math, fine motor, socialization, self- help, and other skills based on the skill level that your child arrives with.

Children entering Pre-K do not need to be able to write their name independently. (Some children will be ready for this skill, but others may not. Developmentally this skill is based on fine motor skills, which for many are just developing at the start to Pre -K). When your child arrives in Pre-K, we will be introducing him/her to a name card that has the name written "Kindergarten style" (with the first letter capitalized and the rest lower case). This is mainly for recognition. By the end of the school year our goal is to have the children be able to write their name "Kindergarten style". **To best prepare for Pre-K you can work on fun activities to try and build up the fine motor skills needed to**

be able to write letters. A list of fun fine motor skills can be found at the end of this handout. You can work with your child on recognizing their name, the first letter in their name, and the letters in their name. There may be some children who are not ready for this step prior to Pre-K and others who are able to write their name. Both of those scenarios are "age appropriate" so don't worry about which category your child falls into. Our goal in Pre-K is to work with your child from his/her individual starting point. Trying to have a child practice writing his/her name when the fine motor skill development is not up to this step can be stressful and will not be enjoyable to the child.

Children entering Pre-K do not need to know how to recognize all of the letters of the alphabet. Learning and recognizing the letters and the sounds that they make is the first step towards reading. This skill is one that we do work on in Pre-K and you can begin working on it at home prior to entering Pre-K, however we do not expect children to be able to recognize all of the letters in September. When we teach letters in Pre-K, we do not follow the alphabet in ABC order. We do so based on units of study and which letters seem to fit in best with each topic. (For example, the letter "A" is introduced during our study of Apples). Research in Early Childhood literature suggests that if students are able to make connections between the letters and other things it will be easier to learn the letter. We also do most of our learning through hands on discovery activities. You can start this process at home as you prepare for Pre-K. One of the best ways for children to learn the formation of a letter is by building it or making it. You can have your child use blocks, any building toy or any small object (even goldfish or buttons) and try to "make the letter" by giving them a model of the letter. You can look for letters when you are out and about. For example, "STOP" on a stop sign, the "M" for McDonalds or the letters on street signs around your house. Ready for Pre-K kids are naturally curious and love exploring the world around them. You can use this to your advantage. If your child is already recognizing letters you can play card games with letters or online games to continue working on this skill. A fun way to work on letter recognition and even formation is to use shaving cream on a table and have your child try and form a letter or letters in the shaving cream. Shaving cream is fun, easy to manipulate in

forming the lines for letters and can be cleaned up with just water. (It is, however, messy).

Preparing for Pre-K Math: In Pre-K we learn about numbers and work on the meaning of a number (for example what does a set of 5 items look like). We work on concepts such as more, less, and equal. We learn about shapes and colors. You can begin to prepare for this by practicing counting things. You can first practice counting from 1 to 20 by rote and then start counting actual objects. This can be a fun activity when you are going for a walk (how many dogs did we see on our walk today for example). You also can work on sorting objects based on characteristics. You can take a collection of Legos, for example, and make piles of all of the red, yellow, and blue Legos. You can begin looking at shapes and trying to build shapes using small objects or building materials. We will be working on these skills in Pre-K.

READ, READ, READ! One of the best ways to prepare for Pre-K is to read to your child. Some families enjoy reading a book at bedtime - this is a great routine to help with getting ready for bed. In the summertime you can also take a collection of favorite stories, a picnic blanket and some snacks and go on a "book picnic". This can even be done in your backyard. Children enjoy reading, and enjoy reading the same stories over and over again. Listening to stories helps the child to begin to develop pre-literacy skills. They will begin to understand that the words on the page correspond to the pictures on the page. When reading to your child you can add to the experience by having your child make predictions (what do you think will happen next?) and having your child retell the story at the end (what was your favorite part, what happened first in the story, what happened next). You also can model for the child the correct way to hold a book and how to turn the pages. Listening to a story will help build your child's interest in reading, will build attention span and literacy skills. It also is a great way to spend time together.

Self-Help skills needed for entering Pre-K: One of the biggest ways that you can prepare for Pre-K is to work on self-help skills over the summer. This will be even more important given the current health concerns that we are now working with. Here are some important things to work on:

- **Handwashing skills:** Your child will need to be able to wash his/her hands using soap and water independently. This is a fun skill to practice - especially in the summertime! You can talk them through the steps. Putting soap on the hands, washing under warm water for an extended time (singing "Happy Birthday" twice works but you can try other songs, and most importantly shaking off excess water and drying the hands completely with a paper towel. Also important would be throwing out the paper towel. You can make this activity more fun by using different scented hand soaps. If hand washing becomes routine for your child, the transition to washing hands in school will be seamless. You can look on our class page under "Resources" for some fun handwashing videos that we have used with our Pre-K class this year!
- **Bathroom skills:** Pre-K kids need to be able to use the bathroom independently. The summer is a great time to work on these skills because if your child is home with you they can spend the day in a bathing suit or clothes that are easy to get off and on to work on these skills. It does take some patience on the caregivers part to work on this skill because our first inclination is to just help them take care of wiping in the bathroom, however in school they really need to be able to do this by themselves. One great strategy to use is to move in progression from doing it for them, to talking about the steps as you do them, to talking them through as they do the steps to finally watching them complete the steps independently. Again, as with other skills these skills also develop at different times for different children. We are completely understanding that accidents do happen to the best of us when we are in school. It still is however a great idea to try and practice this over the summer.
- **Communication skills:** Pre-K students need to be able to make their needs known. While we do always ask about going to the restroom or helping with a coat, students should be able to communicate their needs to others. This

can be encouraged by encouraging your child to "use your words" when they need help with a task and then praising them for doing so. You can say things like "thank you for telling me that you needed help with that" as a positive reinforcement.

- **Little finger skills:** These skills are related to the bathroom skills listed above. Children should be able to dress themselves. In Pre-K at St. Anne's our students do not wear school uniforms, so when they dress for school, they can wear comfortable clothes that can be pulled up independently if using the bathroom. Elastic pants or shorts are great. If a child is wearing button top pants the child should be able to button the button. Many are able to do this - so again it depends on your child. You can work on buttoning, zipping, and putting on a coat or sweater over the summer. Other finger skills to work on would include opening a juice box, water bottle, snack item and Tupperware container (some kids will bring snack in these types of containers). A great way to encourage the development of these skills is to show them how to open a container, talk them through doing it and once they do it really make a big deal out of it. (You can say - "wow - you are so ready for school! You just opened your juice box!") Young learners love acquiring new skills.

Have fun this summer! Summertime should be fun - and the summer before Pre-K is no exception. You can talk about how much fun it will be to be going to Pre-K but be sure that you have fun enjoying spending time together as a family. Pre-K ready students are naturally curious and love exploring the outside and making discoveries. Let your child explore, use his/her imagination and play. Have fun building with blocks or other toys. Make a pretend restaurant in your house and have them serve you or their stuffed toys. The possibilities for summer fun are endless!

Fun Ways to Build Fine Motor Skills:

- **Tweezers, tongs, and small objects:** Young children enjoy using tweezers, and in using them truly strengthen the muscles in the hands. Fun activities to do with tweezers can include using them to sort objects (different

colored pom-poms for example) or transfer objects from one spot to another (place a container of uncooked pasta in a bowl and have them transfer each piece to another bowl). Tongs that you have in your kitchen would work the same way and can be fun to play with something edible like berries, marshmallows, or cookies. Tweezers can be used to manipulate goldfish, cheerios, or other small food items. The activity is fun - and works those muscles at the same time.

- **Cutting paper:** Using child safety scissors can be fun for children. You will have to start by guiding them with how to hold a scissor and how the other hand can be used as a "helping hand" in holding the item to be cut. If you have left over newspaper you can just have them cut pieces and then play with them. Another fun activity is to have them cut pictures out from a catalog or magazine. You can even make an art project with what they cut out. We will work on cutting in Pre-K - but these are fun ideas to try at home as you are getting ready. If you have play dough at home, they also make plastic scissors to use to cut play dough, which can also be fun!
- **Play with clay or play dough:** Playing with clay and play dough is great fun and by using the hands to mold it and squeeze it you are exercising the muscles of the hand. There is a recipe for homemade playdough on our class page already if you want to try making it at home (also a fun activity).
- **Build with building toys:** Building with Legos and other building toys is fun, creative, and also works on those fine motor skills.
- **Exercise and work on gross motor skills:** There is a direct correlation between gross motor skill development and fine motor skill development. Activities such as running around outside, playing ball, riding a bike all work the bigger muscles, which in turn also help with fine motor development. If you are looking for some fun activities to try inside the house, you can try the "**Go Noodle**" link on our class page. This contains a series of fun dancing activities that we use in Pre-K. There also is a link to a kids yoga site on our class page that we love to use in school. When it's too hot to play outside or too rainy, these indoor resources are a great way to break up the day!