

Phase 1: School-Readiness Starts at Home

The often used phrase—"parents are a child's first and most important teacher"—captures the essential role that you as a parent¹ play in your child's life. Your child was born with the capacity to learn, however he² depends on you and other care providers to provide him with consistent, positive interactions and a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment that allows him to grow and thrive. All of his early experiences influence his growth, development, and eventual readiness for school success. His ability and desire to learn develops at home and grows as he becomes a more active member of his schools and communities.

A school-ready child is a child who is prepared to learn successfully in school. This child shows growth over time in his physical, social and emotional, language, and cognitive development. He also shows increasing interests in new experiences and in mastering new skills.

Getting "school-ready" starts long before the weeks or months prior to your child entering kindergarten. By encouraging and supporting your child's love of learning, you help him to be school-ready. Your active involvement in your child's learning makes an important contribution towards creating strong, positive home-and-school partnerships that will help him succeed in school. Without adequate nurturing and support at home, he may face significant disadvantages when he starts formal schooling. These challenges may also affect him later in life.

There are many ways you, as a parent, can positively support your child's learning. The *Learning Continuum: From Home to School* chart shows how you can help your child develop the characteristics, positive behaviors, and skills that lead to success at home, school, work, and in life. These traits are consistent with those that the Hawai'i State Department of Education (DOE) identifies in their **General Learner Outcomes (GLOs)**. The GLOs serve as the basis for evaluating students' performance at all grade levels and in all academic disciplines.³

You can help your child develop these valuable traits by involving him in a variety of everyday activities. Examples showing how simple activities promote skills identified in the GLOs are located at the end of this publication. While each activity focuses on a particular GLO, note that there are many other types of skills and knowledge your child learns from engaging in the activity.

The Learning Continuum—From Home to School

When parents and other care providers:

Give a child age-appropriate responsibilities and teach her how to carry them out, they help her learn to:

- follow directions,
- finish what she starts, and
- develop confidence in her abilities.

See *I Can Help* for a sample activity that encourages self directed learning.

Spend time regularly interacting with and guiding a child—in play or in family activities, they provide her with opportunities to learn:

- appropriate behaviors,
- important values and expectations, and
- how to work cooperatively with others.

See Following Directions for a sample activity that promotes being a community contributor.

Related General Learner Outcomes (GLO)



A Self-Directed Learner

has the ability to be responsible for one's own learning. In kindergarten, a child will be expected to:

- work independently and ask for help when needed.
- organize workplace and materials,
- make productive use of class time, and
- set goals.

A **Community Contributor** understands that it is essential for human beings

essential for human being to work together. In kindergarten, a child will be expected to:

- participate cooperatively and appropriately with others to achieve shared goals,
- show respect and recognize feelings of others,
- follow school and classroom rules, and
- make good choices.

Encourage a child's curiosity and help her to question, explore, experiment, and problem solve, they help her develop:

- critical-thinking skills,
- problem-solving skills, and
- creativity.

See *Does It Float or Sink* for a sample activity that encourages complex thinking.

Create a supportive home environment and provide consistent encouragement for a child—by encouraging her to "stick with it" when she faces challenges, and by giving her positive feedback about her work along with appropriate consequences if she does not do her work—they help her to:

- develop perseverance,
- understand that learning requires practice and persistence, and
- accept responsibility for her actions.

See *Matching Game* for a sample activity that promotes becoming a quality producer.

Use language in many ways with a child—by reading or telling stories together, describing or explaining experiences, asking and answering questions, encouraging expression of thoughts and feelings either verbally or in writing—they help her learn:

- new words and ideas,
- different ways to express herself, and
- the connection between spoken language and written language.

See *Create a Story* for a sample activity that helps children become effective communicators.

Use electronic technology as a supplement rather than as a replacement for interaction and set limits on TV watching and use of computer/video games, they help her learn to use such media responsibly.

See *Tracing Shapes* for a sample activity that helps children use materials/tools properly and become effective/ethical users of technology.

A Complex Thinker

demonstrates critical thinking and problem solving strategies. In kindergarten, a child will be expected to:

- use prior knowledge and experiences to solve problems,
- explain answers and make adjustments, and
- solve problems in different ways.

A **Quality Producer** recognizes and produces quality performances and quality products. In kindergarten, a child will be expected to:

- strive to complete work neatly and correctly, and
- set and strive toward learning goals.



An *Effective Communicator* has the ability to communicate effectively. In kindergarten, a child will be expected to:

- speak effectively in front of a group,
- listen attentively to gain understanding,
- follow directions, and
- contribute effectively through speaking, drawing, and writing.

An Effective/Ethical User of Technology

has the ability to use a variety of technologies effectively and ethically. In kindergarten, a child will be expected to:

- use school materials/tools properly, e.g. books, computers, TV, DVD, crayons, pencils, scissors, glue,
- use various technologies to find information and create new products,
- explain how technology is used every day, and
- use technology in a responsible manner.

Phase 2: Registering Early and Preparing for Kindergarten/Junior Kindergarten

Just as a child needs preparation for school, schools need to prepare for the children they will serve, especially new kindergartners. Schools must know how many children to expect in order to provide the necessary classroom space and to have a sufficient number of qualified teachers to staff them. When you register your child for kindergarten well before the school year starts, you help the school make these preparations.

You can register your child for kindergarten or junior kindergarten in the year in which he turns 5. The registration period usually starts in February of each year. If your child is born on or before August 1, he will be placed in kindergarten. If he will turn 5 between August 2 and December 31, he will be in junior kindergarten, which provides younger students with learning experiences that match their developmental abilities. (Dates subject to change; check DOE website for current requirements.)

To find out where to register your child, call or visit an elementary school in your neighborhood. The school registrar can help you determine which school he should be attending and answer any questions about kindergarten registration or geographic exceptions. Once you know which school he should attend, you will need to take several documents to the school to register your child. These include:

- Health records (Form 14)—your child must have a physical examination, written documentation of required immunizations, and tuberculosis clearance to enter school on the first day.
- Birth certificate—the school requires an original or certified copy to verify your child's age.
- Legal documents—if there were changes to your child's name, custody arrangement, or guardianship, the school needs the legal documents that verify these changes.
- Proof of current local address—the school requires a document such as an electric, telephone, or cable bill, or a housing or rental agreement that shows the address of your child's home.
- Some schools may require other specific forms of documentation.

If your child has been enrolled in any special-needs programs, share this information at the time of registration so that the school can provide him with appropriate services.

An added bonus of registering early is that you and your child will be able to participate in kindergarten transition programs that the school provides. These programs help to acquaint you with the school; its principal, teachers, and staff; daily routines; and expectations. Some transition programs include classes for incoming students to learn and practice skills that they will need in kindergarten.

You can start the transition process even before participating in these school-sponsored programs. Here are some suggestions:

- Talk with your child about going to school, reassuring him that going to school is okay; talk about his feelings about going to school.
- Practice separating—spending time apart—especially if he has little or no experience with being away from you; reassure him that you will return, and return when you said you would.
- Practice school-day routines, e.g., going to bed early, getting up at a specific time, and having breakfast.
- Encourage your child to do things independently, e.g., toileting, putting away toys, or pouring his own cereal into a bowl.



Phase 3: Being Ready for Each Day

Starting school is an exciting time, but requires an adjustment to new routines and expectations for the child, parents, and care providers. Providing a consistent daily school routine can provide your child with the stability and predictability she will need to succeed each day. The following are some simple things you can do to help.

| A Child Needs: | Parents and Care Providers Can: |
|---|---|
| Plenty of rest to support growth and attentiveness. | Make sure your child has at least 8 hours of sleep each night. Have a set bedtime routine such as bathing, brushing teeth, and reading a book together at the same time every night, including weekends. |
| Healthy meals and snacks to support growth and learning. | Provide your child with a nutritious breakfast each morning either at home or through the school's breakfast program, if available. Offer choices with meals when possible, for example, ask, "Would you like an apple or banana with your cereal?" Make sure your child has lunch each day, e.g., home lunch, money to buy lunch, or arrangements for free/reduced-cost lunch. |
| Good hygiene practices for health and safety. | Make sure your child bathes daily and washes her hair regularly. Supervise your child as she brushes her teeth after every meal or at least twice a day. Remind your child to wash her hands frequently, and especially after using the bathroom and before and after meals/snacks. |
| To get to school and be picked up on time each day for consistency and reassurance. | Check that your child's school bag is packed and ready the night before school. Have a set time for her to wake up, dress, eat breakfast, and leave home each morning. Arrange after-school care and pick up for your child; have an alternate plan in case of emergencies; let her know what this plan is. |
| Opportunities to engage in creative, quiet work to encourage imagination and fine motor (small muscle) skill development. | Offer lots of crayons, markers, paints, blunt child-sized scissors, and sheets of paper for her to use to scribble, write, cut, trace shapes draw, and paste. Provide materials such as puzzles, play-dough, large beads (or cereal) to string together, to help your child strengthen her small muscles. Do activities together such as making a book or collage. |
| | UH Center on the Family 5 |

Phase 3: Being Ready for Each Day (continued)

| A Child Needs: | Parents and Care Providers Can: |
|--|---|
| Time to be physically active for exercise, to burn off energy, and strengthen gross motor (large muscle) skills. | Offer opportunities to play inside or outside in a safe environment—to run, jump, skip, dance, climb, or pedal. Play active games with your child. Encourage her to play with other children. |
| A quiet place and time to do homework to help with focus and concentration. | Provide a quiet, well-lit workspace; turn off the TV and limit other distractions. Designate a specific time each day for doing homework and keep to the schedule consistently, e.g., before dinner. Check that your child's homework is done and ready to be turned in to the teacher. |
| Shared family time to strengthen bonds and to build a sense of belonging. | Share at least one meal a day together; encourage everyone at the meal to share about their day. Read with your child at least 10 minutes each day, even when she can read on her own; ask questions or talk about the story together. Go on outings together whether to shop or to borrow books from the library. |
| Regular medical and dental care for good health. | Inform the school of your child's special health needs and/or medications. Schedule regular appointments with her health care provider and dentist. Make sure she is up-to-date on all required immunizations. |
| Opportunities to complete activities independently. | Let your child be responsible for taking dishes to the kitchen sink after eating. Make it easier for her to do a task by herself, e.g., put milk from a jug into a smaller pitcher so she can pour her own drink. Have her put dirty clothes in a designated laundry basket and put away her clothes after they have been washed. |

Phase 4: Building a Family-and-School Partnership

Your involvement in your child's education contributes to his achievement and success in school. Building a positive relationship with your child's teachers and school is an important part of being involved. Here are some ways to do this.

| Scriool is an important part of being involved. Here are some ways to do this. | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Families/Parents Can | You Can Expect or Request from Schools (Teachers, Principals, and/or Staff) | | | |
| Introduce yourself to your child's teacher at the start of the school year, and keep in touch throughout the school year. Keep the school updated on any changes in your child's life that might affect his behavior and/or school performance, e.g., divorce, death, or illness in the family. Make sure to keep the school updated on any changes in your contact information: addresses, phone numbers, and emergency contacts. Promptly respond to inquiries from the teacher or school; return requested forms. | An introduction through an orientation meeting, a note or letter, or a phone call. Information on how to contact the school or teacher if you have questions or concerns. A timely response to your inquiries. Timely contact about issues or concerns regarding your child. Information about school policies, e.g., absences, homework, tardiness, testing. | | | |
| Consider yourself and your child's teacher as partners in your child's education—explore ways that you can work together to support your child. Keep in mind that every child develops at his own rate. Recognize that assessments help the teacher identify your child's strengths and needs. Attend parent-teacher conferences; discuss your child's positive accomplishments as well as concerns about his performance in school. | Suggestions on how you can support your child's learning. Classroom instruction that builds on your child's strengths and meets his needs, based on assessments conducted at the beginning of and throughout the school year. Information about your child's progress—areas of positive growth as well as those needing improvement. | | | |
| Be informed about what's going on at the school; read school newsletters or other materials from the school. Join the Parent-Teacher Organization and participate in its meetings. Offer to volunteer in your child's classroom or assist the teacher or school in other ways. Participate in the school's decision making process regarding curriculum, policies, and school reform. | Information about upcoming events such as parent-teacher conferences and Parent-Teacher Organization meetings through flyers, notes, and/or phone calls. A variety of opportunities to assist with or participate in school and community events. Opportunities to participate in the school's decision making process. | | | |
| Ask about resources and services that can benefit your child, such as: (a) free or reduced-cost breakfast and lunch; (b) after school programs; (c) ELL—English Lan- guage Learner programs; (d) tutoring assistance; (e) parent education classes; (f) assistance for homeless children; (g) transportation services; (h) special education programs; (i) programs for gifted and talented students; and (j) other services. | Information and application forms for services to families, and assistance with completing the forms, if necessary. Follow up to ensure that the child is receiving appropriate supportive services. | | | |
| • Discuss any special needs that may affect your child's learning with your child's teacher as soon as possible. | Information about developmental assessments and special-needs services available to your child, if needed. | | | |

UH Center on the Family 7

Early Learning Activities



There are many ways you can involve your child in everyday activities to positively influence her growth and development before she goes to kindergarten—the activities presented here are just a sampling. You're encouraged to create your own activities, and have fun and learn together in the process. As you do this, keep in mind the following suggestions:

- Select and adapt activities to match your child's capabilities and stage of development, which will make learning fun and meaningful. Adapting activities is particularly important for a child with special needs, who may be at a different developmental level than her age group.
- Follow your child's interest. When she is involved in activities that interest her, she is more likely to spend longer periods of time in them, which will help to extend her attention span.
- Interact with your child. Learning comes from interactions with others. Whether you are playing board games, doing family chores, having meals together, or

- teaching her how to swim, you are her most important role model.
- Build on your child's natural curiosity.
 Encourage her to question, explore, experiment, and problem solve as she encounters new experiences. Ask her why she thinks things happen and provide a simple explanation when she asks questions. Or, find out the answers together.
 Have her count, sort, compare, measure, and create her own "models" and "theories" to practice math skills as well.
- Take advantage of the many opportunities to expand your child's recognition and use of language wherever you are—whether at home, in a store, at the park, or riding on the bus. You support your child's language development when you read or tell stories together, describe and explain experiences, ask and answer questions, and encourage expression of her thoughts and feelings either verbally or in writing.

In addition to providing her with opportunities to develop the traits described in the GLOs, doing these types of activities together helps your child's physical, social/emotional, language/literacy, and cognitive development. For example, they encourage her to:

- use and develop small muscles, e.g., facial muscles, fingers, hands and toes (physical development),
- develop eye-hand coordination (physical development),

- feel important and good about herself (social and emotional development),
- learn to cooperate with others (social and emotional development),
- increase her observation, listening and understanding skills, and attention span (language and literacy development),
- develop early reading skills and a love of reading (language and literacy development),
- develop skills needed for writing (language and literacy development),
- develop her curiosity about how things work (cognitive development),
- understand cause and effect (cognitive development),
- develop her creativity and imagination (cognitive development),

 recognize math concepts like numbers, sizes, shapes, sequences, volume, measurement, and time (cognitive

 develop early math skills like quantifying, comparing, sorting, grouping, and ordering (cognitive development).

development), and

I Can Help

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Cups
- Forks or chopsticks
- Plates
- Napkins

WHAT TO DO:

- 1. Have your child help set the table for mealtime.
- 2. Set one place setting at the table as an example for him to follow. Explain that each person needs one plate, one napkin, one cup, and one fork or set of chopsticks.
- 3. Have him count the number of cups, plates, forks or chopsticks, and napkins needed for mealtime.
- 4. Ask him to place these items in the appropriate places, reminding him to use your place setting as an example.
- 5. Talk with your child about each family member and the tableware. For example, ask, "Is Daddy's cup the same size as yours? Which one is bigger?"
- 6. Talk to him about how it's important to help others.





GLO: A Self-Directed Learner has the ability to be responsible for one's own learning.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- give your child age-appropriate responsibilities to do regularly, e.g., put away toys after use, brush teeth before going to bed.
- create a checklist of his responsibilities and have him check off each that he has completed.
- provide time limits for certain activities; show your child how to monitor the time himself with clocks, watches, or timers.

- work independently and ask for help when needed,
- organize workplace and materials,
- make productive use of class time, and
- set goals.

Following Directions

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Music with a lively beat
- A radio or CD player or a musical instrument such as a tambourine, drum, or homemade instrument

WHAT TO DO:

- Tell your child you are going to play a game with music.
 Tell her that when the music is playing, she can dance,
 march to the beat, or jump around. When the music stops,
 she must stop moving and "freeze" in whatever position
 she is in.
- 2. Turn on the music and encourage her to move around. Then turn it off. When she stops, praise her for listening and controlling her actions. For example, "You did a good job of following directions. You stopped dancing when the music stopped."
- 3. Instead of using music, have her watch you—when you have your hands in your lap, she can move, but when you raise your hand, she must freeze.





GLO: A *Community Contributor* understands that it is essential for human beings to work together.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- play simple board or card games; make your own games or cards.
- encourage "pretend" play, taking on different roles of people in your family or community.
- provide opportunities to play with other children.

- participate cooperatively and appropriately with others to achieve shared goals,
- show respect and recognize others' feelings,
- follow school and classroom rules, and
- make good choices.

Does It Float or Sink?

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Beach objects such as driftwood, coconuts, rocks, shells, and seaweed
- Paper
- Pencil

WHAT TO DO:

- 1. When you and your child are at the beach, find several natural objects to use for your experiment. Ask her to describe each object's appearance and texture. If she has difficulty, prompt her with questions such as, "What does it look like?" "What color is it?" and "How does it feel?"
- 2. Ask her to guess which objects will float or sink in the water, then have her toss each one into the water to find out what happens to it.
- 3. After each toss, talk about why objects float or sink. For example, ask, "Did the rock sink because it was heavy or light?"
- 4. Make a chart to show which objects floated and which sank.
- 5. Have her count the number of objects that floated and the number that sank.





GLO: A Complex Thinker demonstrates critical thinking and problem-solving strategies.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- plant some seeds in paper cups; talk about changes as you watch them grow.
- play guessing games or do simple puzzles.
- experiment with mixing colors, using paints, food coloring, or crayons.

- use prior knowledge and experiences to solve problems,
- explain answers and make adjustments, and
- solve problems in different ways.

Matching Game

WHAT YOU NEED:

- 10 cardboard squares of the same size or ten 3 x
 5-inch index cards
- Jumbo crayons or washable markers

WHAT TO DO:

- 1. Divide the 10 cardboard squares or index cards into five pairs.
- 2. Have your child draw a picture of the same item on a pair of cards—for example, a heart on two cards and a circle on two others. Continue until she has drawn pictures on all five pairs of cards.
- 3. Mix up the cards and put them picture-side down on the floor.
- 4. Explain the rules of the matching game to your child: Each player turns over two cards per turn. The goal is to find two cards that match. If they do, the player keeps the pair and turns over another two cards. If the cards do not match, the player turns the cards over and lets the next person try. The person with the most matched pairs wins.
- 5. Talk about how the cards turned over are the same or different. Name the picture on each card, e.g., "This is a star."
- 6. Remind your child of the rules as needed, and praise her for following them.
- 7. Have your child create different sets of cards, such as one set on colors, another on shapes, alphabets, numbers, or other items. Ask her to name the items on the cards as they are turned over.



GLO: A *Quality Producer* recognizes and produces quality performances and quality products.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- provide paper, crayons, blunt, child-size scissors, and glue; encourage your child to create her own artwork and tell you about it; ask her questions and listen to her responses.
- provide many opportunities to practice new skills, e.g., cutting, gluing, writing.
- have your child create and put on a puppet show for family members.

- strive to complete work neatly and correctly, and
- set and strive toward learning goals.



Create a Story

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Paper
- Jumbo crayons or washable markers

WHAT TO DO:

- 1. Create a story with your child.
- 2. Ask her to think of someone or something; for example, a person or thing she sees often, like her grandpa, or an animal, or a flower.
- 3. Start the story by making up something about the person or item she chose. For example, if she picks "turtle," you might say, "A little green honu (turtle) lived in the ocean."
- 4. Ask her to add the next line to the story.
- 5. Continue taking turns adding to the story. Let her take the lead in directing the story. Don't worry about whether the story makes sense. Have fun with it. If she needs help with ideas, ask a few questions, for example:
 - "What is the honu's name?"
 - "What does she like to do?"
 - "Who does she like to play with?"
 - "What does she see as she swims in the ocean?"
- 6. Write down the story to share later. Have her draw/color pictures to illustrate her book.





GLO: An Effective Communicator has the ability to communicate effectively.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- read books together; involve your child by asking questions about the story, e.g., "What do you think will happen next?" or "How do you think (fill in character's name) feels?"
- sing songs or recite nursery rhymes; play games with sounds, letters, words, colors, shapes, or numbers.
- have your child help you prepare a grocery shopping list and cut coupons from the newspaper.

- speak effectively in front of a group,
- listen attentively to gain understanding,
- follow directions, and
- contribute effectively through speaking, drawing, and writing.

Tracing Shapes

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Small objects of different sizes that will lay flat on a surface such as blocks, cookie cutters, or plastic container lids
- Paper
- A jumbo crayon or pencil
- Blunt, child-sized scissors
- Glue stick or white glue (such as Elmer's Glue®)

WHAT TO DO:

- 1. Show your child how to place an object on a piece of paper and trace it by holding it down and moving the pencil or crayon around its edge. Explain that when the object is taken away, an outline of the object is left on the paper.
- 2. Let your child trace the outlines of a few objects on a piece of paper.
- 3. Ask questions such as: "Which shapes have straight lines?" "Which ones have curved lines?"
- 4. Have her color then cut out the shapes and match the cutouts to the objects that she used to make the tracings.
- 5. Encourage her to combine several cutouts to create something new, e.g., several small circles to make a flower. Ask her to describe her new creation.
- 6. Show her how to use a bottle of white glue or a glue stick to secure the shapes on a sheet of paper.
- 7. Have her put away the supplies she used.



GLO: An *Effective/Ethical User of Technology* has the ability to use a variety of technologies effectively and ethically.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

- have your child measure objects using different tools, e.g., tape measure, measuring spoons or cups, different sized containers.
- show your child how to properly use and care for equipment and tools.
- show your child how to safely and correctly use different types of technology in your home, e.g., phone, microwave oven, computer.

- use school materials/tools properly e.g. books, computers, TVs, DVDs, crayons, pencils, scissors, glue, etc.,
- use various technologies to find information and create new products,
- explain how technology is used every day, and
- use technology in a responsible manner.









Notes:

- 1. The term "parent" refers to any adult who has primary responsibility for a child's care, including a parent, guardian, foster parent, or grandparent raising a grandchild.
- 2. In this article, "he" and "she" alternately refer to the child.
- 3. More information about the GLOs can be found at the DOE website: http://www.doe.k12.hi.us/.
- 4. These activity ideas were adapted from Learning to Grow Early Learning Activities for Young Preschoolers, which the University of Hawai'i's Center on the Family produced. For more activity ideas, the publication can be ordered at www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu.

Suggested Citation:

Fong, G., Hisatake, T., Chang, W., Choy, A., Nemoto, M., & Yuen, S. (2009). *Raising a School Ready Child: A Family Guide*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Center on the Family.

Photo Credits:

The photographs in this publication are courtesy of the following: Learning to Grow Project, Center on the Family; Quality Care Program, Center on the Family

Acknowledgements:

We would like to extend our thanks to the families and early childhood education/education professionals who helped us with the development of *Raising a School Ready Child: A Family Guide*, and to all of the families who provided photographs for this publication.



Center on the Family University of Hawai'i at Manoa 2515 Campus Road, Miller Hall 103 Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

Phone: 808-956-4132 E-mail: cof@ctahr.hawaii.edu Website: www.uhfamily.hawaii.edu