

## WHY ARE MATH SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Whether measuring ingredients for a recipe or finding the right amount of change – **math is everywhere!** During kindergarten, students are beginning to develop the math skills needed for understanding and working with numbers, adding and subtracting, creating patterns, and recognizing shapes. These skills are key to later learning and school success.

## WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

In kindergarten, students are working on...

- Counting verbally by 1s and 10s up to 100 and “skip counting” by 10s
- Counting and comparing quantities of two groups of objects using words like “more and “fewer”
- Solving word problems with sums to 10 and difference within 10, using concrete objects
- Writing numerals to represent quantities
- Dividing objects into even groups between two sharers
- Recognizing common shapes and identifying their attributes (e.g., triangles have 3 sides and 3 angles)
- Identifying, creating, and extending repeating patterns

### How can I promote development of my child’s math skills?

You can help your child learn these math skills by providing opportunities to apply them in real life situations. Below are a few fun ways that you can do this!

**Count and Compare Household Objects:** Count groups of objects around the house (e.g., toy cars, piles of shoes, crayons) or food items at meal times (e.g., grapes, crackers). Talk about which group has more and which has fewer. *“How many grapes do you have? How many do I have? Who has more? How did you know that?”*

**Play “Can You Guess My Number”:** Hide your hands behind your back. Give your child clues to guess how many fingers you are holding up. Possible clues:

- *You can make this number with 3 and 1, or 2 and 2 (answer: 4).*
- *It comes after 6 and before 8 (answer: 7).*
- *It comes after 3 if you are counting backwards (answer: 2).*
- *I have to use all of my fingers to make this number (answer: 10).*

**Go on a Shape Scavenger Hunt:** Ask your child to look for different shapes around the house (e.g., circles, triangles, squares). Have them count the number of each shape that they find. For an added challenge, ask them how they knew they found the right shape. *“How did you know the window was a rectangle? You’re right, it has 4 sides and 4 corners.”*

**Make Patterns:** Ask your child to make a pattern with household items (e.g., blocks, coins, snacks) and tell you what repeats (e.g., red, red, blue block). Make patterns with different movements while walking to the bus stop (e.g., step, jump, clap, clap, step, jump, clap, clap).

**Sharing Fairly:** When you and your child are playing together or doing other household activities, create opportunities for them to share items fairly, meaning everyone gets the same amount. For example, if you are putting out carrots for a snack, give your child six carrots and ask them to share them fairly between two plates. As your child becomes more skilled, you can increase the number of objects to be shared.

## WHY ARE SELF-REGULATION SKILLS IMPORTANT?

**SELF-REGULATION** is the skill to manage one's own attention, emotions, and behaviors when faced with a challenge. This includes skills such as: following directions; waiting patiently; being in control of one's own body; remembering rules; persisting on tasks; and managing emotions. These skills set the foundation for learning. They are the tools that your child uses to deal with challenges that come up at school and home.

## WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

In kindergarten, students are developing and learning how to...

- Direct attention to the teacher during group instruction time
- Follow 2- or 3-step directions
- Show patience, being flexible, and listening to others
- Stay engaged in a task or activity even when it becomes harder
- Complete an activity or task independently
- Taking responsibility for one's own actions

### How can I promote development of my child's self-regulation skills?

You can help your child build their self-regulation skills by using strategies in their daily activities. You can also talk to your child's teacher about how your child is doing at school. How does this compare with their behavior at home? How does it differ? How do you and your child's teacher manage behavior and support self-regulation? If you and your child's teacher use some of the same strategies, it can give your child an extra boost in developing their self-regulation skills. Think about using some of these:

**Appreciate Your Child's Efforts:** When your child is working hard or doing something that makes you proud, let them know! You can do this by smiling, giving them a high five, or saying out loud what they are doing. Here are two tips to make the most of this strategy:

- **Be specific.** Describe in detail what you appreciate.
  - **Good:** "Great job!"
  - **Better:** "Great job – you worked hard picking up the toys!"
- **Focus on effort and persistence.** To increase your child's motivation and persistence, pay attention to *effort* and *improvement*.
  - **Good:** "You did that puzzle perfectly!" or "You finished that puzzle easily!"
  - **Better:** "I like how hard you worked on putting that puzzle together!"

#### **Offer Choice & Effective Commands:**

- Give your child **lots of choices** throughout the day. Then, when choice is not an option, they will be more likely to follow your commands. For example, "It's time to get dressed! What shirt do you want to wear today?" or "It's time for bed! Which book should we read tonight?"
- When you need to give a **command**, make sure it's **clear, simple, and specific**. Your command should be a statement ("Pick up your blocks.") and not a question ("Don't you think it's time to pick-up your blocks?").

**Practice Patience:** Young children are still developing their understanding of time, which can make waiting hard to do. Help your child by first acknowledging their challenge – "It's hard to wait. You are being very patient." Then, explain what will happen to end their waiting by using a when/then statement – "When your brother has his shoes on, then we can walk to the playground."

## WHY ARE SOCIAL SKILLS IMPORTANT?

**SOCIAL SKILLS** refer to your child's developing capacity to work together with others and form positive relationships. These skills include making and keeping friends and working through conflicts. Social skills are important for relationships with other children, as well as adults. Children use their social skills at home with their family, at the park with people they meet, and at school with their teachers and classmates.

## WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING?

In kindergarten, students are developing and learning how to...

- Tell others about their needs and feelings verbally
- Recognize how others are feeling
- Take turns
- Share materials and toys
- Understand what is the same and different about people
- Work to solve disagreements with other children and adults
- Working through emotions during disagreements

### How can I promote development of my child's social skills?

You can help your child build their social skills every day. Talk with them about feelings and friendships and help them figure out what to do when things don't go their way. Learn more about your child's social skills by talking with their teacher! Children often show different skills in different settings. Compare effective strategies and work together to coordinate across school and home. Think about using some of these:

**Talk about their Emotions and Peers' Emotions:** Help your child label their own emotions and recognize emotions in their friends. It's important to talk about both positive and negative emotions with children. Talking openly about emotions helps children learn to manage them over time.

- *"Look at your friend's face. They look sad. Why do you think they feel sad? Is there something we could do to help them?"*

**Help Your Child Manage Emotions:** When your child is displaying a strong emotion (crying, yelling), first show your understanding by identifying the emotion. Then, help them use a calm-down technique.


- *"You are feeling very overwhelmed...let's take three deep breaths together. In-and-out, in-and-out, in-and-out. How are you feeling now? Okay, now let's think about what to do about this."*

**Help Your Child Problem-Solve:** When problems or disagreements come up, encourage your child to identify the problem and brainstorm solutions. It can be tempting to solve problems for children, but it's important that adults don't take over the problem-solving process. Guide your child through these four key steps to problem-solving:

- 1) **Figure out the problem.** --2) **Come up with lots of solutions.** -- 3) **Decide on the best one.** -- 4) **Give one a try.**
- *"Okay, let's think about what the problem is with you and your sister playing this puzzle? What do you think is going on? Hmm, what could we do to make this better? Okay, let's give that a try."*

**Encourage Friendship Skills:** When you see your child displaying positive social skills, be sure to let them know that they are doing a good job!

- *"You are being very kind to let your sister play with you on this puzzle."*
- *"You are working hard to take turns."*
- *"You and your sister are having a great time talking about what that puzzle is going to look like when it's finished."*

-  Information regarding PALS literacy assessments and activities to support literacy development are on the “FOR FAMILIES” tab of the PALS website (<http://pals.virginia.edu/>).