

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE

When your child goes to school, your job as a teacher is far from over. Now is the time for you to become a partner with his teachers at school. Meet the teacher with your child before he starts kindergarten. Tell the teacher about his past experiences with caregivers and other children. Stay in touch and monitor your child's progress. Attend school activities that involve parents.

Ask your child about her day, her classroom and what she is learning. Get to know her school friends and invite them over to play. Staying involved in your child's school will help her learn and adjust.

## What I Need

*Humour me and gently remind me of the truth when I brag and tell tall tales (like saying my dad has a million dollars).*

*I might use swear words to get your attention.*

*Be firm, but don't scold me. I don't really know what these words mean.*

*Give me lots of chances to be actively involved. I love to help you cook, water the plants, put the clothes in the dryer and walk the dog. When you thank me for helping, I learn to thank you, too.*

*Explain disabilities and differences in a matter-of-fact way. Show by example how we can include everyone in our everyday life. Assure me that I am worthwhile, loveable and like other kids if I have special needs.*

*I am ready to play organized games. I cooperate well but I can also be competitive. Teach me that joining in, having fun and making friends is more important than winning. Fairness is very important to me – so make sure we all get the same-size piece of cake.*

## HELP YOUR CHILD SUCCEED

STEPS FOR HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT (5 TO 6 YEARS)

### SAFETY



- Be clear that he is never to use matches. Keep them out of sight and out of reach.
- Make sure your child always wears a helmet when she is biking and necessary equipment when skating.

### SECURITY



- Show your child you like and approve of him as a person. Never call your child "stupid", "bad" or "lazy."
- Include your child in preparing for family gatherings and traditions such as birthdays and religious and cultural events.

### HEALTH



- Give your child healthy snacks and small meals based on the four food groups: grains, milk, vegetables and fruits, and meat or high protein alternative foods, such as beans.
- Call a help line if you are worried about a cold, sore throat or other health problems. This will help you decide if your child needs to visit the doctor.

### LEARNING



- Use the concepts of time and calendar days in your everyday interactions. For example, point to the clock and say "Twelve o'clock, time for lunch." Show him the calendar and say "Tomorrow is Monday, the day you go back to school."
- Make sure your child has a healthy breakfast before she goes off to school. This will improve her ability to concentrate.

### ADJUSTING



- Tell your child stories about his birth and things he did when he was a baby.
- Give your child choices whenever possible. For example, let her decide on the blue or the red sweater, what book you will read together and whether she wants to play outside or inside before dinner.

**What to Expect** *Remember:* Every child develops at his or her own pace. Your child may be slightly behind or ahead of these guidelines. If you are worried, talk with your doctor, a public health nurse or your child's teacher.

- Your child can have long conversations with you and enjoys serious discussions (as well as silly ones).
- He knows the days of the week and is beginning to understand time.
- She will laugh a lot and will still cry easily – sometimes one after the other.
- From time to time he may get tense, anxious or fearful. This is normal. Reassure and support him. His confidence will soon return.
- She knows the alphabet. She can print some letters (maybe her name) and spell some simple words. She will learn to read.
- He makes friends easily and enjoys playing with others. He likes structured games as well as imaginary ones.
- She may suddenly be embarrassed if seen nude. She may ask for privacy in the bathroom and bathtub.

## Take Care of You

Parents have a lot to do. They are teachers, caregivers, cooks, counsellors, workers, chauffeurs and managers. Sometimes a preschooler's schedule of school, outings, lessons, community activities and sports become just too much – for you and your child. Kids need some unstructured, free time to play creatively and just be. So do parents.

Life does not have to be one long series of hurried activities. When you slow down, you and your child can enjoy simple pleasures like going for a walk, making cookies, planting a flower, reading quietly, dancing to music or just watching the clouds roll by. So go ahead. Waste a little time each day. You deserve it.