



Spring into the School Year *Countdown to Kindergarten Begins Now*

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With summer just around the corner, fall is far from the minds of many families. But if your child is starting kindergarten, it's not too early to begin getting ready. First 5 Shasta and First 5 Tehama offer the following information to help parents fulfill entrance requirements and prepare their children for this exciting transition.

Register Your Child. Signing up your child for kindergarten is the first step. Children turning 5 years old before December 2 are eligible to begin kindergarten this year. Deadlines are not until school starts, but registering your child now helps the school to plan ahead and ensure a space for your child. To register, parents can call their child's school. To find out which school your child will go to, contact your school district office or county office through Shasta County Office of Education at (530) 225-0200 or the Tehama County Department of Education at (530) 527-5811.

Prepare Your Child at Home. While pre-kindergarten programs can help prepare a child for learning, there are many things parents and caregivers can do at home to help children make a smooth transition into kindergarten.

- **Read together.** Research shows that children whose parents read to them are better prepared for learning when they start kindergarten. You can jump-start your child's reading skills by finding age-appropriate library books and reading them with him or her. You can find books on topics popular with young children at your local library.
- **Let children decide.** Giving your child choices encourages decision making and teaches responsibility. You can help your child build these skills by involving him or her in choosing which outfit to wear or which nutritious snacks to eat.
- **Set a schedule.** In the last few weeks before school starts, help your child prepare for a new routine by setting a schedule at home that is similar to what it will be like during the school year. This will help your child be well rested, and more prepared for learning, when school starts.
- **Visit the classroom.** Introducing your child to the kindergarten classroom before the first day of school increases his or her comfort in a new environment. Call the school to arrange for a visit and let your child get familiar with the classroom and school campus.

Get off to a Healthy Start. Overall good health is important to your child's ability to learn and succeed in kindergarten. You can help your child get off to a healthy start by scheduling screenings and check-ups to identify and treat child health issues.

- **Brush up your child's smile.** California law requires all children in their first year of public school have a dental checkup. More than half of kindergartners have tooth decay, according to the Dental Health Foundation. Tooth decay can cause painful infections that can make it hard for children to focus or cause them to miss school. Visiting a dentist is important for your child's health, and your school can be a source of information about arranging a check-up.
- **Vision and Hearing Screenings.** Vision screening geared to young children can catch sight problems that may interfere with learning. Have your child's vision checked by a health care provider, an optometrist, or check with your school for other resources. Hearing problems in young children are not always obvious and it is important to have your child's hearing checked by a health care provider using proper screening tools.
- **Vaccinate before it's too late.** Receiving required immunizations is an important step in preventing disease and helping children grow up healthy and ready to learn. Vaccination schedules vary – so ask your health care provider about immunization requirements.

Get a Boost from Local Programs. Surveys of kindergarten teachers show that children attending kindergarten preparation sessions start school with stronger learning skills that can help them succeed in the classroom. Registering your child for kindergarten earlier in the year allows you to take advantage of local programs that may ease your child's transition.

Kindergarten preparation sessions and resources in Shasta County and Tehama County include:

Shasta County

- Happy Valley Kindergarten Boot Camp – A summer program for children entering kindergarten at Happy Valley Primary School. Children become familiar with the classroom, the school routine, and new learning experiences.
Contact: Sandi Garcia (530) 357-4146.
- Family Advocates at Redding School District (serving families with children entering Juniper School or Cypress Elementary School kindergartens) – Assistance during the summer to help families meet kindergarten health requirements.
Contact Therese at Juniper (530) 245-7704.
Contact Stacy at Cypress (530) 225-4915.
- Preschool Summer Camps, Redding Recreation – A variety of low-cost, half day camps designed to meet the developmental needs of children ages 3-5. Some scholarship assistance is available upon request.
Contact: (530) 225-4095.
- Intermountain Area – Call (530) 335-4600 to learn about school readiness activities.

Tehama County:

- Once a child is registered for kindergarten in Tehama County, School Readiness project staff contact parents who may need help filling entrance requirements.
- The Families and Schools Together (FAST) Program is 10 weeks of evening meetings for new kindergarten students and their families. Families meet with teachers and school staff once a week to allow parents to become familiar with the school and meet one another while children practice school activities to build classroom learning skills. Transportation assistance is available. FAST is a national program shown to improve children's behavior at home and in the classroom, and help parents become more involved in their children's education.
- KinderCamp is another program for incoming kindergarteners without classroom experience. Teachers lead the four to six week sessions during the summer, where children participate in three hours of learning activities each day. By giving children an opportunity to learn classroom routines, KinderCamp increases children's confidence to help them do better in school. Transportation assistance is provided for students.

For more information about First 5 funded programs, school readiness, and other family resources, contact your local commission:

- First 5 Shasta, (530) 229-8300, www.first5shasta.org
- First 5 Tehama, (530) 528-1395, www.first5tehama.com

About First 5

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5.

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