



# Reading Explorers Program

## GETTING READY FOR SCHOOL: PARENT ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

### Dear Parents:

The following activities can be done before and throughout your child's upcoming school year. They will help your child build the school readiness he/she will need to succeed. Check off each activity as you complete it. The more check marks you have, the more prepared your child will be for his/her next year in school!

#### Academic Readiness Activities

- ☐ As your child's first teacher, having an encouraging and positive attitude will motivate your child's desire for learning!
- ☐ Establish daily routines around participation in live instruction, class assignments, socializing, and homework/projects. This is especially important if your child is beginning the school year with remote learning.
  - Display a physical daily and weekly schedule to help keep your child on track
  - Identify a quiet space where your child can focus to complete schoolwork
  - Set three to five simple rules, in collaboration with your child, that set expectations for behavior

#### At home activities for rising kindergarteners:

- ☐ Practice drawing and writing
  - Practice appropriate writing form - left hand on paper (if right handed) and correct writing grip
  - Your child should be working towards-  
1) Writing his/her first and last name, and 2) tracing and copying letters onto lined paper
  - If your child is having difficulty with writing, get in contact with his/her teacher or school
- ☐ Practice early number skills
  - Counting, identifying printed numbers, and adding counted objects
  - Rising kindergarteners should be able to count and recognize (in print) numbers 0 to 20

#### For children of all ages:

- ☐ Play board games with number skills (e.g., Chutes and Ladders, Bingo, Yahtzee).
  - Games like these can improve your child's numerical magnitude and his/her ability to reason and apply simple numerical concepts
  - Additionally, playing games as a family also allows children to practice good turn-taking skills



- ☐ Read **daily** with your child for **at least 20 minutes**.
  - Predictable books with patterns and repetitive lines and themes are beneficial
  - Build your child's vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects  
For example, "*Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?*"
  - Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him/her
  - Use humor and expression when reading to him/her
  - Make reading to your child an interactive experience
  - Practice letter names (upper and lower case), sounds, and sight words

## Websites that provide wonderful ideas on how to make reading more engaging for children:

- [www.readingrockets.com](http://www.readingrockets.com)
- [www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org)

## Websites that provide free e-books:

- Miami-Dade/Broward County Public Library System: OverDrive & Axis360
- [www.getepic.com](http://www.getepic.com)

## Building Strong Home-School Connections Activities

- ☐ In the weeks leading up to the start of school, visit your county's public school website. Given the international public health emergency, familiarity with reopening guidelines, back to school checklist, and parent resources will help make sure you feel as informed as possible and can stay prepared for any changes.
- ☐ Find out the name of your child's teacher and know your child's MDCPS/BCPS student ID number
- ☐ Try to contact your child's teacher before the school year begins or during the first week of school to introduce yourself and to find out the best way to stay in touch (e.g., email, digital platforms, phone, scheduled meetings)
- ☐ Know and revisit the school's policies and procedures regularly as they may update in response to the pandemic. These policies and procedures are typically located on the school's website or in the school's parent manual.
- ☐ Check in regularly with your child's teacher
  - A strong relationship with your child's teacher will help your child's overall transition into their classroom
  - If it becomes apparent that your child is not grasping studies and assignments, email the teacher or request a conference

- ☐ If your child is having difficulty with behavior during learning periods, establish a daily school-home communication (e.g., text/email/message in portal) between you and your child's teacher to receive daily reports and consider a home reward program (earning television time, special snacks, time with friends).
- ☐ Enroll for a MDCPS/BCPS Parent Portal account to review progress, attendance and assignments.
- ☐ Get involved at your child's school. Consider volunteering, joining the PTA, or organizing remote meetings with other parents to build and sustain community.
- ☐ Typically the first 9 weeks of any school year are very important for monitoring progress and we now know school will be virtual for a large portion of this time frame. With this in mind, if your child is beginning school for the first time, is young, or needs additional support for learning you or an adult will likely need to remain involved in some capacity. The following may help you and your child in planning
  - Sequential checklists
  - Outlining when you are and are not available (e.g., times, topics you can help with, having another adult as a back up or to assist with particular challenges).
- ☐ Check in often with your child's teacher. If there are concerns, bring them do not delay getting the help your child needs. Even though school is beginning in a virtual format, your child's school community should be able to support you in finding the appropriate services.

## Behavioral & Social-Emotional Readiness Activities

- ☐ Talk about the transition and share what you know about how remote learning will be used. Your child may ask questions about the reason for remote learning. Follow your child's lead when responding and offering honest information that takes into account your child's age, language, and developmental level. Creating an open and supportive environment where your child feels comfortable to express feelings and ask question is recommended. PBS and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry offer more suggestions on ways to communicate with children related to COVID.
  - Describe what the first day might look like
  - Talk about what the rules of the classroom might be
  - Practice school behaviors at home
  - Praise your child for demonstrating good school behavior

- ☐ Practice your school day morning routine several times before the first day.
  - New wake-up time, bathroom routine, dressing routine, breakfast routine, computer and work set-up, and homework routine
  - Adjusting to early rising can be difficult for everyone. If your child finds getting up early challenging, consider warming up to it. For instance, wake him/her up 10 minutes earlier than previously, then 20 minutes earlier, and so on in the days learning up to the first day of school.
- ☐ Model both in-person and digital positive social-emotional skills and behaviors for your child.
  - How to make and keep friends
  - How to manage frustration and stress
  - How to handle bullying
- ☐ Every child needs an area in which he/she can distinguish himself/herself, particularly those with difficulties in school.
  - It is recommended that parents investigate extracurricular activities that their child may enjoy and where he/she can feel a sense of accomplishment like sports, dance, art, and/or music
  - Structured recreational opportunities and after school programs will help to reinforce appropriate social skills and play

## Developmental Readiness Activities

- ☐ Getting the right amount of sleep (10-11 hours) is important for your child's overall development.
- ☐ Maintain a balanced diet for your child and family with healthy fruits and vegetables.
  - Your everyday choices regarding food and physical activity affect your health as well as your child's health
  - Poor nutrition can affect your child's readiness for school
- ☐ For children who have language delays, the following is recommended to build expressive language skills:
  - Use short, simple sentences or phrases
  - Speak slowly and clearly, and wait
  - Exaggerate tone of voice and facial expression
  - Use gestures or other visuals (pictures, objects) paired with verbal language
  - When the child is stressed or upset, reduce your verbal language and increase use of visual supports
  - Imitate what your child says and expand on it slightly
  - When you notice your child engaged in something that interests him/her, use simple language to describe what he is doing
  - Pairing words with actions makes them more meaningful



## Other Readiness Tips

- ☐ Find a community resource that meets your child's need(s) if you are concerned that he/she is not making the appropriate progress.
  - The Center for Children and Families (CCF) at Florida International University (FIU) offers a range of programs to improve the lives of children struggling with mental health concerns, and to support their parents and families as they help their children succeed. For more information, call **305-348-0477** or go to **<http://ccf.fiu.edu>**
  - The Children's Trust funds many academic, infant/toddler, health & nutrition, early intervention, parenting, and youth violence prevention programs. To search for programs, visit The Children's Trust website: **<http://thechildrenstrust.org>**
  - The Parent Academy of Miami-Dade County Public Schools is a district wide initiative designed to support community and family involvement across the district. The Parent Academy partners with local and national organizations to provide a wide range of free resources in an effort to assist parents in becoming full partners in their children's education. The Parent Academy also provides parents with constructive parenting practices designed to support them help their children succeed at school and in life. To find out more about the Parent Academy, please visit their website: **<http://theparentacademy.dadeschools.net/>** or call **305-995-2680**
  - Parent to Parent of Miami is a Community Parent Resource Center serving parents of children with disabilities in Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. They help parents become better prepared to meet the needs of their children. To find out more about Parent to Parent, please visit their website: **<http://www.ptopmiami.org/>** or call **305-271-9797**
  - Switchboard Miami offers direct services such as counseling and crisis intervention as well as a referral service for other community resources
    - Switchboard is available 24 hours a day and offers service in English, Spanish, and Creole as well as other languages
    - For more information, call **305-358-1640** or go to **[www.switchboardmiami.org](http://www.switchboardmiami.org)**

**Here's to a Happy  
& Successful Start  
to the School Year!**