

Language & Learning

Getting Ready For School

Shared Goals For Home And School

The more people who can give your child the same experiences, the faster your child will develop those language and problem solving skills needed to make school a pleasant experience. First, of course, you want to share your child's goals with other family members, including anyone outside the home who sees your child often. In addition, if your child goes to preschool, daycare, Sunday school, or playgroup, you can share your goals with the caretakers and teachers in these environments. In return, they can tell you about the chances for emerging literacy they provide in their settings.

Family members are usually around to talk with, but other adults may be harder to find. A lot of parents send notebooks with their children. We can use these notebooks for a lot more than "John has a cough today," or "Jane has her teddy bear in her backpack." Here are some ideas:

When something exciting happens at home, sit down with your child and draw a picture (stick figures are fine) and collaborate on a few short sentences to write. Send the notebook to school and prime the other adult to ask about the experience. A preschool teacher might sit down and help the child reproduce a personal page of "drawing" and "writing" about the excitement that she can share with the other children or put on a bulletin board.

When your child seems interested in a new kind of print, write it in the communication notebook. "Jane noticed that the logo on the grocery bag was the same as the sign on the grocery store," or "John said that Java Club has the same letter as his name when we bought coffee today." Encourage teachers and caretakers to share similar anecdotes.

When the information in the communication notebook includes personal, safety, or health items, take time to sit down and say, "Ms. Haines says you were dry all day!" or "Look, here it says you fell down. Can I see your band-aid? Does your cut hurt?" Children begin to take it for granted that information is conveyed through print; they will begin to give their notebooks to adults with confidence that the adult will understand. They may also begin to tell an adult, "Write that down for Mom."