



**A Parent's Guide to
Early Primary Grades
At
Garfield School**



Welcome to Garfield School's Early Primary program. Beginning a new grade at a new school means the start of a new social and educational experience in your child's life. The information in this packet is intended to help you and your child make a comfortable transition to this school setting and maintain a successful school experience for every year thereafter.

Garfield takes pride in providing a developmentally appropriate program:

- Each child progresses at his/her own rate along a learning continuum.
- Different stages of development are expected and valued.
- Instruction and curricula are interesting and appealing to young children.
- Assessment focuses on what a child can do, documents growth and guides instruction.
- The environment encourages the child to be self-motivated and self-directed.
- Parents are supported in their role as primary educators of their children.

How are Common Core State Standards part of Garfield's Developmental program?

All lessons taught at Garfield, regardless of subject matter, are aligned with Common Core State Standards.

While we teach according to standards, we recognize that each child will approach the task with differing abilities. The teacher accepts each child's level and provides open-ended assignments that offer a range of challenges for all levels. For example a writing lesson will be approached differently for different children. For one child, the teacher will take dictation as s/he expresses an idea using a simple picture, for another child who has drawn a detailed picture and is just beginning to sound out words, the teacher will assist as the child selects the letters that correspond to the sounds of the words needed, and still for another child who is writing fluently, the teacher might provide a quick reminder about the conventions of starting a sentence with a capital letter and ending the sentence with a period.

The teacher understands the developmental progression or sequence for all academic and core subjects, physical development, and social and emotional development. Key standards are taught repeatedly, throughout the year, allowing many opportunities for



practice and growth with the expectation that each child will reach the standards by the end of the school year. Common Core Standards in Math and Language Arts are integrated throughout all other subjects and visa-versa. We utilize Science and Social Studies themes that are designed to engage children through hands-on exploration and play. We utilize visual, kinesthetic, and auditory modalities for all types of learners.

Early Primary as a two or three year program

We know that no two children develop in precisely the same way or at the same rate. In fact, many educators describe the child's development as having four different domains: cognitive/intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. It's important to understand that these domains within any given child will develop at different rates. This means some children may develop more quickly intellectually, while others progress more quickly socially, physically, or emotionally. All children are unique individuals who are growing, changing and learning all the time.

Since children develop at different rates, they are not all ready for every aspect of an educational program at the same time. The best educational practice is to adapt the classroom and lessons to accommodate all of the children. Even so, there are standards for expected progress within a grade-leveled scope and sequence that a child must meet to ensure success at the next grade level. At Garfield we may advise you to give your child a second year of kindergarten (or first grade) to ensure your child is working successfully within the grade-level standards.

Some parents feel surprised and even upset at the idea of taking an extra year. Parents, extended family or friends may perceive this extra year as retention due to failure, either on the part of the parent, the child, and/or the teacher. According to the most in-depth developmental research, this just isn't the case. Statistics on retention and age has shown that it is usually the youngest children in the class that are the most likely to be retained. Children with birthdays in late summer and early fall are usually the youngest children beginning kindergarten at the age of four, or having just turned five.

In response to these statistics, the California State Board of Education began a process of implementing a Transitional-K program primarily for fall born children who qualify for kindergarten enrollment, but have birthdays so late in the year it clearly puts them at a disadvantage in classes with children 6-14 months their senior. A T-K program provides **two** years of early childhood education before entering First Grade. Garfield School has adopted **Transitional Kindergarten** as a two year kindergarten program for all children whose birthdays Begin September 1 through November 30th.



It's important to remember that even children with birthdays in late summer may be more in sync with a TK program than straight Kindergarten. This is because in early childhood a few months still makes a big difference in a child's brain development. There are other factors that can impact readiness regardless of age, for instance, some slow to warm-up personality types need more time. Children who have experienced trauma or a child who has already been late with developmental milestones may need the extra time. Garfield addresses some developmental disparities by providing the gift of an additional year of kindergarten (or first grade) for any and all children who need it.

Research has shown that a strong foundation at the start is a benefit that continues throughout a child's entire school experience. We adhere to the findings: **a strong early start provides for a strong finish.** Our ultimate goal: every child approach learning with confidence grounded in conceptual understanding; initiate and maintain social relationships appropriately; express emotions, self-regulate (control impulses); resolve emotional discord appropriately; and engage in physical activity with the strength and agility appropriate to the age.

Listed on the following pages are some general indicators of T-K and Kindergarten readiness followed by indicators of First Grade readiness. After the indicator pages are some tips on how you can help to build on your child's strengths and nurture areas of concern. ***One of the biggest predictors of school success is active parenting.*** You can help your child get ready by choosing one thing that you think your child is close to being able to do. Spend a little time introducing the concept. If your child is interested and receptive, take future opportunities for additional practice or recognition in a natural, unforced manner. If your child resists, relax and let it go. Don't force it. At school your child will see other children making attempts and your child will naturally be motivated to try.



Some Indicators of TK and Kindergarten Readiness

Academic



- Recognizes name; may be able to print name or some letters of name (usually in uppercase letters because they are easier to form)
- Recognizes some letters or is aware that print carries meaning
- Counts to 10 and may recognize some numerals
- Counts six or more objects or spaces in a game with one-to-one correspondence (TK's may lose one-to-one correspondence)
- Uses 5-6 word sentences

Social



- Understands the concept of sharing and taking turns
- Is learning to listen without interrupting and wait for a turn to speak
- Follows simple rules
- Has some verbal ability to communicate and resolve social problems

Emotional



- Usually separates from parent/s easily
- Makes needs known
- Usually controls anger and disappointment
- Resists impulses and can delay gratification for short periods
- Works independently for short periods of time
- Is willing to try something new when given time to warm up to it

Physical



- Manages toileting independently
- Speaks clearly using complete sentences
- Demonstrates some large muscle skills through: running, climbing, jumping, dribbling and bouncing a ball, and catching
- Demonstrates some small muscle skills through: cutting with scissors, using glue, coloring, drawing a simple representational picture, and writing real or pretend words.
- Holds a writing/coloring implement in a precise grip (TK's may still prefer fist grips).



Some Indicators of First Grade Readiness

Academic



- Names all letters and their sounds
- Reads short vowel phonemic books with some common sight words
- Prints most upper and lowercase letters independently
- Writes a cohesive sentence independently using inventive spelling
- Counts to 100 and writes numerals to 30
- Adds and subtracts within 10 using manipulatives
- Uses complex sentence structure when speaking

Social



- Understands the concept of sharing and taking turns
- Listens without interrupting and wait for a turn to speak
- Follows classroom rules
- Plays interactively with others
- Stands and walks in line safely and with ease

Emotional



- Separates from parent/s easily
- Takes care of personal belongings and needs
- Usually controls anger and disappointment; knows to take a break when upset
- Resists impulses and delays gratification for short periods
- Works independently for short periods of time
- Tries new things when given time to warm up to it

Physical



- Speaks clearly using complete sentences
- Demonstrates awareness of personal space
- Demonstrates large muscle skills through: running, climbing, jumping, dribbling and bouncing a ball, and catching
- Demonstrates small muscle skills through: cutting with scissors, using glue with control, coloring, drawing a representational picture with details
- Writes and draws using a precise grip and fingers to control movement.



How Can You Prepare?

Social and Emotional Preparation



- Every day take time to hug your child and say, “I love you.”
- When making the transition from home to school, make a plan with your child and stick to the plan. If your child has trouble transitioning, please meet with me before the first day of school.
- Prepare for toilet and other accidents by providing a change of clothes that remain in your child’s cubby. If your child needs help with toileting, let me know and work toward independent toileting over the summer.
- Show an interest in your child’s school activities.
- Listen to your child actively, but without judging. Discuss feelings and help your child express his or her feelings.
- Teach your child to wait for a turn to speak and to not interrupt others.
- Contact me regarding fears, anxieties or any events that may affect your child’s emotional state.
- If your child is having a difficulty with someone or something at school, bring it to my attention sooner, rather than later.
- Encourage your child to try or attempt new things: safe activities, foods, friends, experiences.
- Encourage your child to play with other children. Invite classmates to your home and/or events outside of school. Build friendships with classmates and families over the summer before school starts.
- When praising, use specific praise to let your child know exactly what s/he did so well.
- To build intrinsic motivation, avoid rewards for school work or behavior, instead expect good work and good behavior and know that the reward is in the doing, not in getting something for it.
- Practice responsibility at home. Age-appropriate chores, done regularly, helps build a sense of cooperation, contribution, good work ethic, self esteem, and pride in a job well-done.
- Consider holding off on competitive sports until your child is at least 7 or 8 years old.

Academic Preparation



- **READ** to your child every day.
- Provide access to markers, paper, scissors, glue, tape, staplers, etc.
- Stimulate curiosity by modeling it yourself and by asking questions about what s/he does, or I wonder what would happen if . . .?
- Build in some quiet, *screen-free* time every day. Start with a few minutes each day and build up to 30 minutes. Quiet time can be spent drawing, looking at books, building with Legos, putting together puzzles, but should not involve video games/movies/ television. Quiet time is quiet and focused.



- Discuss the places you visit, helping your child notice important details or features of the grocery store, doctor’s office, etc., thus building vocabulary and enhancing background experience.
- Spend indoor time playing board games, Legos, drawing and writing. Use television and electronic games as special treats or avoid them altogether.
- When using media such as television, video games, or computer programs, select age-appropriate content, paced in “real-life” speed. Limit screen time to no more than 30 minutes a day. Avoid sleep disturbances and disorders by enforcing an end to screen time 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- Allow independent work and play times for block play, drawing and coloring, pretend play
- Include creative writing opportunities, such sidewalk chalk, or water and paint brushes to paint letters on the sidewalk
- Give one and two step directions for your child to follow
- Recite nursery rhymes, sing songs, play rhyming games (or if this isn’t your forte, purchase recordings of children’s music and stories that will do this with your child)
- Play games moving toys using directionality – “Drive it over the chair, under the couch, and around the stool.”
- Tell stories from your own childhood or imaginary stories
- Sing the ABC song, notice letters in the environment, provide magnetic letters on the refrigerator
- Encourage your child to keep collections and to sort and classify them in his/her own way.
- Play comparing games asking how two items are alike and how they are different.
- Ask, “What do you think . . .?” And “Why do you think . . .?” open-ended, no right answer types of questions.
- Count, point out numbers, measurements, and share simple mathematic processes as you use them in meaningful, daily activities.

Physical Preparation

- Begin good eating habits early on. Avoid sugar and food additives. Sugar and food additives affect behavior and focus negatively.
- Make sure your child is exercising every day. Children should get a minimum of 1 hour of strenuous physical activity daily.
- **Dress for success.** Be sure your child is dressed for weather and play. If your child can go out and work in the garden, run in a game of chase, climb on the big rock, or paint and not worry about slipping or ruining his or her clothes, then your child is dressed for Early Primary. Avoid dresses, fancy shoes, headbands, barrettes and jewelry. Long hair should be kept tied back, away from the face.



- Balance indoor and outdoor time. Balance large muscle play such as bicycling, jumping rope, climbing, etc. with sewing, cutting, gluing and drawing.
- Avoid passive activities such as television viewing, electronic games and even Wii games as they rarely provide the real-life, physical, intellectual or social experiences young, developing minds and bodies need.
- Help your child establish a correct pencil grip; use a special gripper if necessary.
- Have your child squeeze balls and toys, shape clay and play dough, screw nuts & bolts, build and take apart Legos and sew to develop strong fine motor muscles for writing.



General Preparation

- Visit the classroom and playground before school starts.
- Read over the playground rules at the end of this packet and teach the rules to your child before using the playground. Enforce the rules while using the playground.
- Label personal belongings including sweaters, backpacks, etc. Some parents prefer to use initials rather than the whole name.
- A few weeks before school set routines for waking and bedtime, eating breakfast, dressing, etc. Be sure your child gets to bed early enough to get a minimum of 10-11 hours of sleep every night. Plan for a wake-up time that allows enough time to get ready for school without feeling rushed and stressed.
- Make sure your child understands the transportation plans for going to school and for being picked up, especially if someone other than you is doing the transporting.
- Plan to take your child to school the first day and to pick up your child from school the first day.
- Read the school handbook when it arrives in your fall packet.



Getting Involved

I encourage parents to volunteer in the classroom, and for the school in any and all variety of ways from helping teach, to helping prepare materials, taking pictures at events, fund raising, gardening, sewing, crafts, shopping – you name it! If you want to help, let me know and I will get you going.

If you have any questions feel free to call: School: 442-5471 Home: 445-0623



Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism, he learns to feel discouraged and may criticize others

If a child lives with hostility, she learns to feel angry and may express anger towards others

If a child lives with violence, he learns to feel afraid and may act out his fear violently

If a child lives with dishonesty, she learns to feel distrustful and may be dishonest in return

If a child lives with judgment, he learns to feel guilty and may be judgmental of others

If a child lives with ridicule, she learns to feel ashamed and may ridicule others in return

If a child lives with disorder, he learns to feel confused and may have trouble organizing

If a child lives with silence, he learns to feel isolated and may have trouble communicating and connecting with others

BUT

If a child lives with clear limits, he learns to feel safe and will take healthy risks

If a child lives with honesty, she learns to feel trustful and will feel comfortable being honest when it counts

If a child lives with peace, he learns to feel calm and will help calm others

If a child lives with sharing, she learns to be generous and will share with others

If a child lives with understanding, he learns to feel empathy and will develop compassion for others

If a child lives with creativity, he learns to express ideas creatively and solve problems creatively

If a child lives with choices, she learns to explore options

If a child lives with community, he learns he has a role to make the community work

If a child lives with accomplishment, she learns to feel confident and enjoy the process of learning

If a child lives with meaning, he learns life is fulfilling and finds meaning in all he does.

If a child lives with unconditional love, he learns to feel tender and is able to express love to others



One of the most common concerns for a parent as their child enters kindergarten: Is my child ready?

Kindergarten Readiness

What does and doesn't determine readiness?

Does:

- Birthdate
- Social and emotional readiness
- Physical health and stamina
- Attention/focus
- impulse control/self-regulation
- Parent's perceptions
- Teacher recommendations
- The school's curriculum

Does Not:

Gender
Opinions of non-parent
Opinions of nonprofessional
What the child wants

