



Update from the Superintendent

To: Parents and Guardians
From: Mark McQueen, Superintendent
Date: February 16, 2024

Although we just began the second semester of the 2023-2024 school year, we're already busily planning the 2024-2025 school year and this week, we're talking about kindergarten readiness and how to ensure your child is poised for academic and personal success before he/she even begins kindergarten.

This week, we opened the application window for our Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK) programs. This marks a crucial step in preparing our youngest learners for success as they transition into kindergarten and beyond. You can complete the application for your child or find out more information about our programs at <https://focus.bayschools.net/focus/apply/>. If you need assistance with the application process or have questions, you can also reach our VPK experts at **850-767-4201**.

The importance of VPK programs cannot be overstated, as they play a pivotal role in ensuring that our students are kindergarten-ready, setting the stage for their success throughout their K-12 educational journey. Academic skills are undoubtedly crucial, but the "executive function" skills students acquire during their time in pre-k are equally important. These skills lay the foundation for a lifetime of learning and success.

LearningResources.com provides a comprehensive list of skills students learn in pre-k, and I would like to emphasize their significance.

Whether learned at home, in pre-k or some combination of both, these are the skills we hope you're focusing on with your four-year-olds, and these are the skills we really want students to have when they enroll in kindergarten.

- **Recognize Name:** This is important because your child's name will be prominently featured in his/her kindergarten classroom.
- **Name the Letters of the Alphabet:** Familiarity with at least half of the capital letters is essential for kindergarten readiness.
- **Hold and Use Scissors Correctly:** Scissor skills are fundamental and support fine motor development.
- **Name and Recognize Colors:** Color recognition aids in one of the earliest basic math skills – sorting.
- **Count and Recognize Numbers to 10:** Counting, recognizing numbers, and understanding one-to-one correspondence are essential for early math skills.
- **Make Rhymes:** Recognizing words that rhyme is a crucial step in literacy development.

- **Play and Share with Peers:** Social development is as vital as academic development, so encourage your child to play and share with others.
- **Take Direction and Learn Resiliency:** Kindergarten involves following directions and learning resiliency, so practice these skills through family games.
- **Complete Basic Hygiene and Self-Care:** Independence in bathroom use, handwashing, and eating are important self-care skills for kindergarten.

Our commitment at Bay District Schools is to provide our students with a nurturing and enriching environment. We understand that a successful educational journey begins with a strong foundation, and our VPK programs are designed to provide just that.

I encourage parents and guardians to take advantage of this opportunity by applying for a BDS VPK program. **Again, if you need help with the process or have questions, we're just a phone call away at 850-767-4201.**

Thank you for partnering with us in preparing our youngest learners for a future filled with learning, growth, and success.