

Winter Edition



# Pathways to Kindergarten

## STEPS TO SCHOOL SUCCESS



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*A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step*  
(Chinese proverb)



# DECEMBER

## Steps towards building language skills!

*"I think, at a child's birth, if a mother could ask a fairy godmother to endow it with the most useful gift, that gift would be curiosity." —Eleanor Roosevelt*

Children learn about language through their everyday experiences. Playing or talking and listening to other children or adults help them develop new words and build the vocabulary that will make them become better readers and writers.

- Help your kindergartener learn new words by giving them lots of opportunities to play and explore with others.
- Young children love to talk about themselves and their experiences, so, give them a chance to tell you a story. Ask them questions and, most of all, read to them so they hear new words and sounds.
- Take turns talking back and forth. Give your child time to listen to what you have to say or to answer your questions. Then, it's your turn to listen to your child.
- Use adult words. Explain what they mean. Help your child learn a new word for a familiar idea. Instead of using "big", try "huge" or "enormous". Instead of "happy", try "glad" or "pleased."



### "I'm Ready for School" Book

*Ask your child to draw a picture of him or herself reading a favorite book. Ask, "If you could write a picture book, what would you write about?"*



Save the pages of "I'm Ready for School" each month. In August you can put them together into a book that marks the fun you and your child had together preparing for kindergarten.

Be sure to date each page. Write the question at the top and the way your child answers the question or tells you about the picture at the bottom. It will make a great story!

- Tell stories together. You start and ask your child to finish the ending. Ask your child to act out a story while you tell it.
- Sing songs and put on finger plays.
- Play rhyme games. Say a word and see how many words rhyme.
- Read, read, read together!



### BOOKS TO READ WITH YOUR CHILD

*Off to Kindergarten*, Tony Johnston  
*Cherries and Cherry Pits*, Vera Williams  
*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, Bill Martin and John Archambault

*Happy Birthday, Moon*, Frank Asch  
*If You Give a Moose a Muffin*, Laura Numeroff  
*Millions of Cats*, Wanda Gag  
*In the Tall Tall Grass*, Denise Fleming

# ACTIVITY STEPPING STONES

## START

 Do a sniff test. Dip cotton balls in different scents. Then put each of the cotton balls in a separate plastic container or plastic sandwich bag. Use perfume, lemon, coffee, onion, your soap, and toothpaste. See if your child can guess what each smell represents.

 When your child talks about a special toy or book that she wants from the store, help her find out how much money it will cost. Then talk about ways she can work to earn some of the money to pay for that toy.

 Talk about the differences in your child from last year to this year – how his appearance has changed and the kinds of things he can do now that he couldn't do before. Ask him to draw a picture of what he looked like last year and then another picture of what he looks like now.

 Hold a pencil or a pen in your hand and ask your child, “what if this pencil was a magic wand?” or, “What if this pencil could write letters in the air without using paper?” Look at other objects and ask your child to imagine other uses for them.

 Play animal doctor or veterinarian. Tell your child that one of her stuffed animals looks sick and ask her if she can make it better. Talk about what kinds of care the animal will need until it gets well. Ask questions – “Does it need medicine? Will it be able to go on walks?”

 Practice writing letters and shapes in salt. Pour salt into a shallow box or the lid of a box. Show your child how to draw or make letters in the salt. You can erase and start over by gently shaking the box.

 Write a letter to a friend or family member to tell them about something special. Then walk to the mailbox or post office to mail it. With your child, write an email then send it. Talk about the different ways to communicate with someone.

 Find time each day to do some exercises together. Jog in place for a few minutes or lay on the floor together and do some leg lifts or sit-ups before you have dinner or get dressed in the morning.

 Play a listening game with special counting instructions. “Simon says, jump up and down 5 times.” Simon says kick your leg 3 times.”

 Use a piece of string, thread or yarn for measuring. Ask your child to measure your feet and then her feet. Then, lay the strings side by side to find out whose feet are bigger! Measure other objects using your string measuring tape.

 Fill a container half-full with water. Measure how much water is in the container and mark it down. Put it in the sun. Measure the container every two days to find out how much water evaporates.

 Use socks in the laundry to practice sorting colors or sizes. Ask your child to help you match all the white socks, all the blue socks, etc.

## Joke of the Month

*What did the mother broom say to the baby broom?  
Go to sweep, dear.*



 Say several objects in a row and ask your child to name the category. “What are these – apples, oranges, bananas?” They are all fruits. “What about a bus, car, airplane?” They are kinds of transportation.

 String macaroni or cereal to make a necklace. Tie a knot at the end of yarn, a piece of string or a shoelace. Put out a bowl of ziti or rigatoni noodles or cereal with holes (Cheerios™) for stringing. Tie the ends together and wear.

 Practice moving like animals. Slither like a snake, hop like a bunny, crawl like a crab, fly like a bird.

## FINISH

 Approaches to Learning	 Motor
 Creativity	 Science
 Language and Literacy	 Social Emotional
 Math	 Social Studies

# JANUARY

## Steps towards getting ready for kindergarten!

*“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.”*

*—Proverbs*

Register with your school early! Schools begin planning for kindergarten in the winter or spring of the year before your child starts school.

- Call your school to find out the registration dates. For Virginia Beach Public Schools, there will be a division-wide Registration Day in April.
- If there is more than one school building with kindergarten, find out which one your child will attend.
- Learn what registration information the school will need. It may be a social security card, birth certificate, shot records and a physical exam record.
- Make sure you attend registration, and bring your child if the school requests. Your child may be screened for basic information.
- Ask if the school offers before or after child care or if they transport to local child care centers.
- Find out if the school has a special schedule for the first few days of kindergarten.

### “I’m Ready for School” Book

*Ask your child to imagine and draw the kinds of things he or she will be doing in kindergarten. Ask, “Do you think they will be hard or easy for you to do?”*



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Be sure to date each page. Write the question at the top and the way your child answers the question or tells you about the picture at the bottom. It will make a great story!

- Learn the school schedule. What time do children need to arrive at school? What time will they be dismissed? Can adults drop them off and pick them up? Are there bus schedules?
- Help your child learn the teacher’s name. Find out if children can visit the school and/or meet their teachers before the first day of school.

### BOOKS TO READ WITH YOUR CHILD

*Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten*, Joseph Slate  
*The Snowy Day*, Ezra Jack Keats  
*Owl Babies*, Martin Waddell

*Koala Lou*, Mem Fox  
*Harold and the Purple Crayon*, Crockett Johnson  
*The Mitten*, Jan Brett



# ACTIVITY STEPPING STONES

## START

 Draw a happy face on one side of a paper plate. Turn it over and draw a sad face on the other side. Then, ask your child to hold the side of the plate that shows how she feels after you describe events or situations. "It's your birthday. Are you happy or sad?" "You fell down and scraped your knee. Are you happy or sad?" Make new plates with scared or angry faces and play again.

 Make snowballs by crumpling paper into small balls. Gently toss them into the air and have a snowball fight.

 Try to make a rainbow by putting a small mirror into a glass of water. Put the glass by a window on a sunny day. Watch to see if the sun reflects off the water onto a wall on the opposite side of the room.

 Ask your child to listen and count, then repeat what you do. Clap two times and wait for him to clap two times. Then, clap two times and pat your head three times. Next, touch your nose four times. Change the body part and the number of times you touch it.

 When you watch TV together, talk about the show you're watching. Ask questions about the characters. What makes them special and why does your child like or dislike them? Ask what might happen next in the story.

 Gather about 6-8 objects with your child. Name them all and put them in a pile on the floor. Ask your child to hide his eyes or turn his back. Take one object away. Tell your child to turn around. Can he guess which one is missing?

 Help your child recognize the letters in his name. Write a letter as big as you can on a piece of paper. Give your child cotton balls, macaroni noodles or beans to glue on top of the letter. Tell your child the name of the letter and the sound it makes.

 Make a snow picture. Glue cotton balls onto paper to make snowmen. Pull the cotton out to make snow for the ground and tear off pieces to make snowflakes.

 Mark a special day like your child's birthday on the calendar. Together, every morning or evening, cross off with a crayon or marker the day and count how many days are left until the big day!

 Draw some lines on some scrap paper for your child to practice cutting. Start with straight lines, then after your child learns how to use the scissors, make some wavy lines or circles for him or her to try.

 "Clean up, clean up, everybody cleans up." Sing this song as you work together to pick up the toys in your child's room. Or, use a timer to make a game out of how fast she puts the toys back where they belong.

 Ask your child to make a decision. Put two of his favorite books in front of him. Ask him which one he would rather read. Ask him to name his favorite character in the book he chose.

 Give your child basic jobs to do. Talk about the things she's responsible for doing and what happens if they're not done.

 Find out how long it takes for ice to melt. Put a small piece of ice in a clear cup on the kitchen counter. Note the time. Together, with your child, check it every few minutes to notice the changes. Mark the time when it is finally melted.

 Make a kitchen band. Use pots and pans and wooden or metal spoons. Gently tap the spoons onto the different pots and pans and listen to the sounds they make. Play along with music.

 Make a map of your house. Draw a square or rectangle on a piece of paper. Together, map out each of the rooms and label them. Talk about what you do in each room.

## FINISH

### Joke of the Month

*What did the ceiling say to the wall?*

*Meet me at the corner!*



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# FEBRUARY

## Steps towards staying active!

*"Childhood is the most beautiful of all life's seasons."*

—Author Unknown

### Let's Get Movin'!!

Moving or physical activity helps children control weight, builds muscle, and strengthens bones and joints. Young children should have 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise a day! Here's how you can help children stay active and healthy:

- Give them toys that get them moving like balls or kites.
- Take walks together every day.
- Have family fun days that involve walking, biking or swimming.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park your car a little further away in parking lots and walk to the door.
- Get up and move during TV commercials.
- Limit TV and computer time.



### "I'm Ready for School" Book

Ask your child to draw a picture of his favorite things to do outside. Ask, "What can you do in different kinds of weather? What can you do outside in the rain? In the snow? When it's hot?"



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### BOOKS TO READ WITH YOUR CHILD

*Kindergarten Kids*, Ellen Senisi

*My Shadow*, Robert Louis Stevenson

*We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, Michael Rosen

*Wallie Exercises*, Steve Ettinger

*Get Up and Go*, Nancy Carlson

*Dancing Feet*, Lindsay Craig

*So Much*, Trish Cooke

# ACTIVITY STEPPING STONES

## START

 It's not too early to teach about earning an allowance. After chores are completed, give your child a small amount of money and help him or her put it into a piggy bank for saving.

 Make your own play dough together by following the recipe in the back of the book. Let your child decide on the color. Then, roll and pound the dough into shapes. Can you make long, thin snakes? Can you make circles of different sizes and put them together? What do they make?

 Make a number chain that marks how many days until a special event. For example, on the first day of February, put 14 loops together to make a Valentine chain. Each day, tear off a loop and count how many loops are left until the special day.

 Make a family flag. Talk about the things that make your family special. Draw them onto a piece of paper and put your last name on the picture. Post it and explain how that represents your family.

 Make a list of yours and your child's favorite things. Talk about how long the list is! Include your favorite color, food, story, clothes, place to visit, game to play, friends, etc.

## Joke of the Month

*What makes more noise than a dinosaur?  
Two dinosaurs!*



 Find out what happens when you mix vinegar and baking soda together. Ask your child to spoon a little bit of baking soda into the bottom of a paper cup. Next ask him to pour just a small amount (a spoonful) of vinegar on top of the baking soda. Watch the bubbles from the chemical reaction!

 Decide together what clothes your child will wear for the next day. Let him choose the shirt that matches the pants. Give him choices. "Would you like to wear the blue or the red shirt?"

 Play a letter search with the beginning sound in your child's name. "Your name starts with B. It sounds like b...b...b...just like banana, boat, book. Let's find things in the house that start with B."

 Be an exercise instructor and practice exercises together. Do sit-ups, jumping jacks, leg kicks, and arm circles. Find some music and count out the times you do each exercise together.

 On index cards, draw or glue pictures of objects that go together such as dog and bone; hand and mitten; sock and foot; leaf and tree; star and sky - one picture on each card. Show your child one card and ask him to find the other card that matches.

 Use the internet to find out a different way of saying common words. How do you say ball or dog in Spanish or Chinese?

 Go outside on a sunny day and look for your shadows. Look at the different shadows that different animals or objects make. Then go behind a tree and notice how your shadows disappear.

 See how many balls each of you can make out of play dough. Make big and small ones. Roll them until they are smooth.

 Find an orchestra concert on television, YouTube or an Internet site. Watch together and talk about the kinds of music you hear. Watch the way the musicians play their instruments; watch the way the people in the audience respond.

 Look at a piece of toast and talk about its shape when it is whole - a square. Show your child how it becomes 2 rectangles or 2 triangles when you cut it. What happens if you cut each of them again?

 Research information about a question your child has on your smart phone or iPad. Together, enter the topic in the search menu and talk about the key words that will lead you to the information you are seeking.

## FINISH

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|  Approaches to Learning |  Motor            |
|  Creativity             |  Science          |
|  Language and Literacy  |  Social Emotional |
|  Math                   |  Social Studies   |

# WINTER ACTIVITIES



## Recipes

### CHILDREN'S PUNCH

Children can join you in bringing in the New Year with this yummy punch. Mix together 1 quart of white grape juice and 1 quart of ginger ale. Garnish with an orange slice. You may also add a drop of food coloring for color.



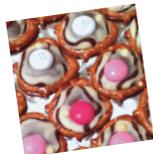
### SNOWMAN BISCUITS



Lay three refrigerator biscuits, one on top of the other, on a cookie sheet to make a snowman. Use raisins to make the eyes, nose or mouth on the face or to add buttons on the snowman. Use pretzel sticks for arms. Bake as directed on the biscuit can.

### CEREAL PINE TREES

Pour 6 cups of honey nut oat cereal into a bowl and set aside. Melt 6 tablespoons of butter or margarine and 5 cups of mini marshmallows in a saucepan, stirring constantly until the mixture is smooth. Remove from heat and stir in green food coloring. Pour over the cereal, mixing until the cereal is evenly coated with the marshmallow mixture. Spray your hands with non-stick cooking spray. Mold about 1/4 cup of the cereal mixture into a tree shape. Add sprinkles if desired. Decorate with gumdrops or other colorful candies.



### HUG AND KISSES PRETZELS

Place a single layer of mini pretzels on a cookie sheet lined with wax paper. Unwrap either Hershey's Kisses® or Hugs® candy and lay one on each mini pretzel. (Hugs® melt faster than Kisses® - do all the same on one cookie sheet). Place the cookie sheet in a preheated 170 degree oven for about 5 minutes or until the chocolate begins to soften. Remove from oven and immediately put a small candy wafer on top, pressing down gently. Allow to cool.

## Arts & Crafts

### PINE CONE BIRD FEEDER

Tie a string or piece of yarn around the top of a pine cone to make a hanger. Next, show your child how to use a plastic knife and spread solid vegetable shortening or peanut butter on the cone. Pour bird seed into a shallow disposable container (pie pan) and roll the pine cone in it until it's covered with seed. Hang your feeder on a tree and wait a few days until the birds come.



### CINNAMON ORNAMENTS

In a small bowl, slowly mix 1/4 cup of applesauce into a bottle of cinnamon. Work the mixture until it is like a thick cookie dough. Sprinkle flour onto a flat surface like the table or counter and roll out the dough just like you'd roll out cookie dough. Use cookie cutters to make cinnamon ornaments. Use a straw to punch a hole for the hanger. Place the cut-out ornaments on a piece of waxed paper and allow to air dry for 3-5 days. Thread a piece of yarn or string through the hole and hang. The cinnamon smell will make the house smell wonderful!



### POPSICLE STICK PHOTO FRAME

Glue together four popsicle sticks into the shape of a square or frame. Use paint, markers or crayons to decorate the frame. Cut out a piece of cardboard that is the same size as the square and glue it to top, back and one side the back of the frame, leaving one side open to slide in a picture. Find a favorite picture, cut it to fit the frame and slide it in between the cardboard backing and the frame. OR, use a favorite greeting card as your picture.



## Reading with your child... BOOKS FOR THE WINTER SEASON

*The Snowy Day*  
Ezra Jack Keats

*The Mitten*  
Jan Brett

*The Tomten*  
Astrid Lindgren

*Time to Sleep*  
Denise Fleming

*The Snowman*  
Raymond Briggs

*Snow Comes to the Farm*  
Nathaniel Tripp



### COFFEE FILTER SNOWFLAKES

Use markers to decorate a coffee filter. Put designs all over the filter. Next, drizzle a few drops of water onto the filter to make the marker colors run. Let the design dry. Next, fold the filter in half. Then fold it half again. Fold it half one more time. Using safety scissors, cut out small shapes from the coffee filter. Then, unfold it. You've got a beautiful and unique snowflake!



### COOKIE CUTTER SNOW STORM

Dip a snowflake shape cookie cutter into white paint. Press the dipped cookie cutter onto a dark piece of construction paper. You can use different sized cookie cutters to create a "Blizzard!"

