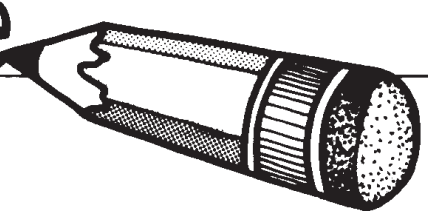
Parenting Pipeline



A newsletter for parents of kindergarten children
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service

School Days

Welcome to Parenting Pipeline.

Parents want to help their children build self-esteem, develop creativity and reach physical, social, emotional and intellectual potential. This newsletter will help you better understand your kindergartner. It will be distributed each month of the school year.

School has the same importance to a child's life that a job has to an adult's. School is where children spend a large portion of their time. It's where failures and achievements are measured in structured ways and where children are compared to each other.

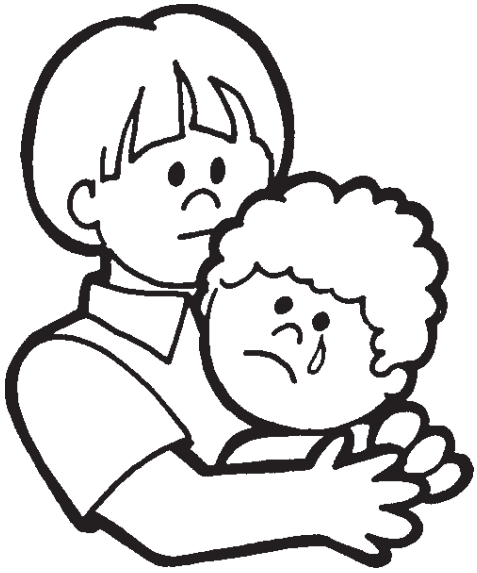
Stress comes from facing the first day, from being in a system that challenges too much or too little, and from dealing with adults (teachers) who are not very well known. Peer and parental expectations can add pressures, too. How can you help?

- Talk to your child about what is happening at school, such things as learning quietly and listening, standing in line to get milk, getting permission to go to the bathroom, and so on. Try role playing and practicing some of this at home. Even though the teacher has probably explained these things, Mom and Dad can reinforce them.
- Keep a positive attitude about school. Your en-thusiasm and positive feelings will be contagious. By the way, your own anxiety (however much you try to hide it) can quickly be sensed by your child. As one child authority says, "Take your child to school cheerfully, then go home and have a good cry if you have to."
- Listen. If your child, from kindergarten on, gets in the habit of telling you almost everything that happens in school, you'll be better able to spot sources of stress for your child and the window of communication will stay open through your child's school days.
- Get to know your child's teacher and the school environment. Find out what teaching and learning methods are used with your kindergartner. These methods vary greatly from school to school. Your interest and input are needed.
- Provide the teacher with helpful information about your child. Teachers appreciate knowing about habits, likes and dislikes.

NDSU
Extension Service
North Dakota State University

What about failures? Sooner or later every child will fail to measure up to someone's standards — teachers', parents' or peers'. Maybe your child will forget lines in the school play or wet her pants in school. Any failure or disappointment hurts. Here are ideas to help your child (and yourself) through these times:

- Resist the urge to "fix" the situation for your child. Kids need the chance to learn how to pick themselves up and move on. Acknowledge that the event happened and that the feelings your child has about it are real and are important. That's much better than saying, "Oh well, it's not so bad." It *was* bad for him. Also, help him move on to new experiences and a "next time."



- Set up as many experiences as you can where your child can be successful. You're the best judge of when your child is ready for a challenge — bicycle riding, tree climbing or intellectual pursuits. Encourage your child to try when ready.
- Make sure your child knows it's OK to fail and try again. To be able to handle failure and disappointment is a very important success in itself. It's a lesson that will be useful throughout life.

An enjoyable, successful first year of school can set the stage for 12 more of the same and a positive attitude toward education for a lifetime.

Kindergarten vs. Primary Grades

Kindergarten is a child's first formal schooling experience. It should be a fun time! Your child is learning to relate to many new people and experiences.

Kindergarten is not the same as first grade. Kindergartners are very different from first-graders and should not be experiencing too much structure and stress. Kindergartners learn best from being involved in their learning and from being allowed to explore their environment. They do not learn best from many workbooks and worksheets.

Being aware of these differences will help you understand the kindergarten experience. It will also help you support and encourage your child in the most appropriate manner for her age.

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with kindergarten children by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other home economics programs.

County Commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating
NDSU is an equal opportunity institution

8/05

This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, 701/231-7881