

PREPARE YOUR KIDS FOR KINDERGARTEN WITHOUT SPENDING THOUSANDS ON PRESCHOOL

By: Quita Jackson • January 10, 2011



Photographer: KNXV

We know kids need to be socially and emotionally ready for kindergarten. But does that mean you have to spend thousands of dollars on preschool?

The average cost of preschool for 4-year-olds in Arizona is nearly \$6,000 a year. That's about \$500 a month... Enough for rent in some one bedroom apartments.

JoEllen Johnson, co-owner of The Goddard School® in Goodyear, says kids don't have to go to preschool to be prepared. She says they simply need to know basic things like letter and number recognition, letter sounds, colors and shapes.

Johnson says these are all things kids can learn at home.

Take your children to the grocery store, let them help sort laundry - these everyday tasks are ripe with learning opportunities. For example, Johnson says ask questions like, "Is this banana a fruit or a vegetable? What color is this apple? Help me put the brown socks in this pile and the white socks in this one."

Another easy thing you can do to help your child is to read to them every night.

Johnson says reading is the gateway to learning. It encourages imagination in a way that TV and other media just can't. Children learn speech patterns, new vocabulary and so much more.

But remember, you still need to keep your kids involved so that they are not missing out on social skills.

Johnson says participate in events such as library storytime, child-focused music or play classes, preschool or other events where an adult other than mom, dad or grandma is leading the group. She says this helps with listening, group awareness and socialization.

Some of the key skills kindergarten teachers like to see their students possess starting on day one is the ability to listen, sit for a group lesson and be able to follow directions.

Johnson adds, "If you stay home with your children, consider joining a group designed for stay-at-home parents. This gives you a chance to share stories and get advice from other parents and allows your children important socialization time."

Also, try and expose your child to as many cultural and educational activities as possible. The best part is many of these are free and great family bonding activities as well.

But do remember, kids are still kids, so don't make everything serious.

Playful learning at home and school are important.

By playing with a child, parents and teachers also can recognize skill levels and individual talents and difficulties.