



Here, they become.

The importance of kindergarten,
and how to be prepared.

The importance of kindergarten

There is nothing more exciting, and nerve-racking, as the first day of kindergarten.

Whether it is your first child heading to kindergarten or your youngest, this is a big transition for any family. The first day of kindergarten is just a mixture of emotions for parents and children, for the teachers as well. They are excited to meet the new students and their parents.

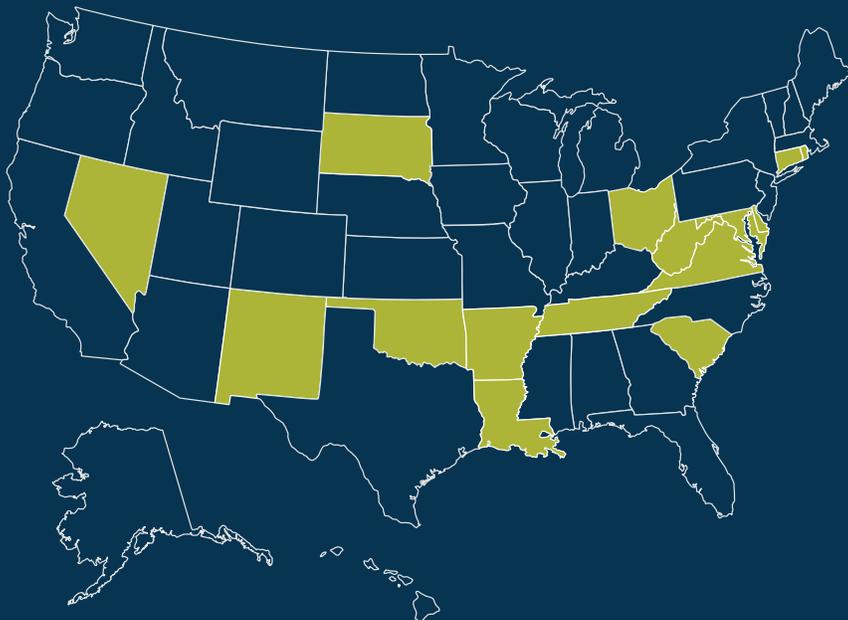
Everyone is excited, especially at The Miami Valley School, where Janice Krochmal and Jennifer George are the first teachers that are ready to greet this new class of students as they begin their journey.



In 35 states, children aren't required to begin school until age six.

Only fifteen states require students to attend kindergarten. Eight states require kindergarten by the age of five, and the rest just require it before the child can attend first grade. For more than a century, people who followed education did not see the benefits in this phase of school. Even the first kindergarten, begun by Friedrich Froebel in 1837, was shut down in 1851. The idea of kindergarten was radical for the time. Students sit in circles, play, and utilize their natural curiosity to educate them. While the idea became accepted around the world, it was not until the 2000s when the true benefits of kindergarten were discovered.

A study done by Raj Chetty, based on the Project Star experiment performed by the state of Tennessee, showed that the lessons learned in kindergarten were important. But not in a way that test scores could measure. He discovered that when students become adults the ones that do well in kindergarten were more likely to go to college. They were more likely to earn more, save more for retirement, and create a stable, two parent household. After sifting through all the data, Raj saw that every class was mixed in terms of socioeconomic background, race, and preparedness for school. The only data point he could discern as the common cause was the impact of the teachers on their students.



Only

15

50

states **require** students to attend kindergarten.

5

years is an important milestone in human growth.

Scientists believe a child's prime learning years occur from birth to five years old. This is where the mind is most elastic and absorbent. A student in a learning environment at this age is learning more than just the basics of math, language, and science. MVS Kindergarten teacher Jennifer George sees the same thing when she is preparing for classes. She understands the "early years are the building blocks, the foundation" for future success. The classrooms at The Miami Valley Schools offer a safe and comfortable environment for learning, which is important to fostering that early growth.

MVS Kindergarten Teacher Janice Krochmal understands that the ins and outs of textbooks and homework are not the only lessons they learn. She makes sure part of the curriculum hits on how to be social with peers and teachers. They are learning to listen to authority figures that are not their parents. Within her class they are building a community, making friends and learning lessons that bind them together in multiple ways.

Students at this age are also forming their opinion of school. A good kindergarten teacher can instill a lifetime love of learning.



A main part of this process includes an understanding of how to handle mistakes. Both teachers incorporate that piece of wisdom in with the other lessons they are teaching. Mistakes are celebrated, giving students permission to try new things. It encourages them to open up to new experiences, knowing that if something does not work they will have the opportunity to fix it. As students go deeper into school, this lesson becomes more important as education tackles more complex issues.

The Miami Valley School's kindergarten **explodes** into new territory.

In the early 19th century, the idea of educating our youngest was proposed because philosophers and scientists saw the potential for learning through play and experience. In the years after this concept was developed, it has been embraced and refined into a way to build a fertile foundation for students to grow. Placing them in an environment that builds them socially and intellectually pays incredible dividends well into their adult life.

Being able to understand how lessons learned in school can be turned into lessons used in life is part of this complexity.

Students at The Miami Valley School start learning in kindergarten about nutrition and food. They begin by learning about food and how it helps to fuel the body. The lessons then build into how the food is created. In the school's Z-Lab, kindergarteners grow some of their own food.

This is where the Miami Valley School's kindergarten explodes into new territory. During the school year, students go on field

trips to a variety of restaurants. They see how the kitchen works, how the meals are prepared, and what the menu is like. They explore everything from the finest dining in Dayton to the finest diners.

Based on what they learn on these immersive activities, they create their own restaurant! A menu is created and the friends and family of the students are invited. They take orders and deliver food, earning money in tips as they do the job.

The money collected from tips is then donated to a local charity of the students' choice. The teachers and parents see the sense of pride in the children as such an incredible accomplishment.

Kindergarten at The Miami Valley School relies on this type of experiential learning to involve the kindergarten students in crafting their own education and following lessons that start as simple as nutrition into valuable life lessons they can carry with them throughout the rest of their education.



Preparing for kindergarten

Schools across the country know that when a new student walks through their doors, anything is possible.

From that first day, educators are always prepared to open the door to new experiences. Children enter kindergarten with a sense of wonder, and when the year is done, they've grown into students embarking on the journey of education.

There are no limits to what children want to explore, and as kindergarten students, they carry the same curiosity they experienced as babies, toddlers and preschoolers, into the classroom with them, making the experience of play-based learning exciting for everyone--teachers included.

Many parents believe that a child's education begins on the first day of kindergarten. What they may not realize is that they are actually the first teachers a child will have. They are around for the most formative learning years, from birth to five years-old. This means that the skills educational experts are seeking will be taught by parents. Those lessons can be intentional, like language and being able to get dressed, or unintentional, through example. Many lessons are even required to be taught before a child enters school.

The state of Ohio has a list of requirements they look for before a child walks through those doors on the first day. They are broken down into Physical, Health and Safety, Personal, and Social and Emotional Needs. All are very important skills to possess.

School is one of the first times children will be interacting with other adults and children without the parental supervision. Experts recommend providing an understanding of some school basics along with the social learning. Of course, any skill is an opportunity for a lesson!

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Ohio Kindergarten Readiness Checklist

Before entering kindergarten, your child should be able to:

- Enjoy outdoor play: running, jumping, etc.
- Draw and trace basic shapes
- Cut with scissors
- Bounce a ball
- Ride a tricycle

In an article for Too Small to Fail, Dr. Bill Frist writes that children that do not develop some language skills in the first five years of life are six times more likely to have difficulty reading.

Fortunately at that age, children are absorbing every interaction. Even 15 minutes a day of speaking with them or reading with them will build their language skills. This includes foreign languages, like Mandarin and Spanish, both of which are taught to kindergarten students at The Miami Valley School. These casual interactions will help them recognize colors, letters, and numbers, helping lay that educational foundation.

When parents interact with young children, they are teaching more than they realize.

15 minutes of speaking per day will help build language skills

Playing is one of the best ways to educate! It makes the lesson enjoyable, and their thirsty minds absorb the lessons that go along with the entertainment. Making crafts on a rainy day can teach art lessons, using scissors and glue, and cleaning up after yourself is important. Spending time in the kitchen teaches a little about food and being safe, but math works its way into every recipe!

Even a game can teach lessons, like establishing who goes first and losing with grace. Cleaning up the paint, glitter, frosting, and flour off a child's clothes is proof of a busy day of learning.



Even greater success can be achieved when students begin combining these concepts to develop an understanding of the world. Reciting the alphabet is a great feat. Knowing what sound each of the letters make is the next step. The same holds true with numbers and recognizing the value behind the symbol. Developing these abilities in small amounts gives children an advantage in math and science as well.

Spending time with your child before they head into kindergarten, educating them through experience, will help with the social and physical standards the state of Ohio has set out. The World Health Organization (WHO) points out that a caring environment provides enhanced brain

development and can help a child's mental and emotional stability. Playing with your child, and taking them to play with other children, teaches them how to interact politely with people while their minds are still developing.

The first five years of a child's life is going to go by faster than you can imagine.

Being with your child through those developmental years will impact them through their entire life. These lessons, initially taught by the parents, will be reinforced when they become a student.

These activities are not just preparing them for kindergarten and the 12 years that will follow. This is preparing them for a lifetime of learning.



**Explore more about kindergarten
at The Miami Valley School visit**

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