



NEXT STOP KINDERGARTEN

REACH HIGHER
shasta | EVERY STUDENT | EVERY OPTION



SHASTA
COUNTY OFFICE OF
EDUCATION



FIRST5
S H A S T A

First 5 Shasta was created in 1998 and is supported by Proposition 10 Tobacco Tax Funding. We are an independent, self-governing commission led by community members with specialized expertise or interest in Shasta County's youngest children. Efforts focus on filling the gaps in early childhood services, and in directing parents, family members, and caregivers to the resources they need to improve the early health, development, and learning of children ages 0-5. We actively work to create partnerships that offer funds, services, and programs that support service providers in their work to help children and families thrive in Shasta County and to strengthen our community for generations to come.

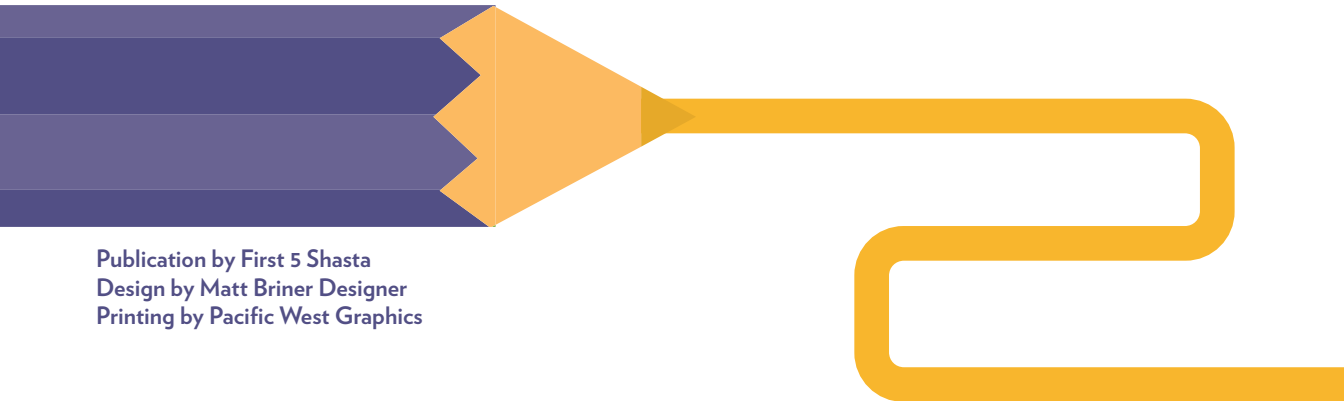
first5shasta.org



Reach Higher Shasta works to create clear pathways from our children's first day in the cradle to their first day on the job. We ensure they're ready for kindergarten, motivated and supported through elementary, middle, and high school, and assisted in the transition to career training or college.

www.reachhighershasta.com

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INTRODUCTION

Your child's early years are filled with moments and milestones forming a foundation for lifelong learning. One of the earliest milestones will be your child's first day of school. Next Stop Kindergarten will help both your child and you with this transition. It will guide you all the way from school selection to your child's first day of kindergarten, that special day when you put your child's school readiness to the test.

School Readiness

School readiness measures a balance of skills that help children start school ready to learn. These skills include:

- Literacy Skills
- Numeracy Skills
- Social-Emotional Skills
- Physical Skills

From the moment they're born, children are growing and learning in ways that are exciting to watch. As a parent, you get to walk alongside them on their journey to adulthood. They are little learners developing the skills they need to succeed, and, before you know it, it's time for school.



In This Guide

- Time to Start
- Determining Readiness
- School Choices
- Enroll in Kindergarten
- Smooth Transition
- Readiness Skills
- Kindergarten Prep Checklist

Time to Start KINDERGARTEN



When is your child ready to start school?

For most children, kindergarten is their first year of school. Some children are perfectly ready for kindergarten when they are age-eligible; they have developed the physical, social, and emotional skills to accompany academic skills typical for their age. Does this sound like your child?

One of the first decisions you'll make is when to send your child to school. Kindergarten is available at age 5, but children can start school sooner. If your child isn't ready for kindergarten, there are other early learning opportunities to explore. Parents can choose the best fit for their child.

In California, children can begin Transitional Kindergarten at age 4, or can start kindergarten at age 5. Transitional Kindergarten is different from preschool which children can start even sooner.





EDUCATION OPTIONS

Preschool

Preschool is early education where young children learn through play. Preschool helps prepare children for kindergarten. Parents may continue with preschool if kindergarten or Transitional Kindergarten is not a good fit for their child.

ELIGIBILITY: Children age 3-4 (traditionally)

Transitional Kindergarten

“TK” is a pre-kindergarten program for children who are 4 years old by September 1st. It is offered by the school district.

Parents with a child who is both 5 years old and eligible for kindergarten may also consider this option if their child needs to build more skills before starting kindergarten. In this case, parents must get permission from the school district.

ELIGIBILITY: Children age 4 by September 1st.

Kindergarten

Kindergarten is where most children begin elementary school. It is a child’s gentle shift from Transitional Kindergarten, preschool, child care, or the home to an academic classroom.

ELIGIBILITY: Children age 5 on or before September 1st.



Determining READINESS



Parents: you know your child best! Your knowledge and understanding of your child will help you choose the education option that's the best fit.

Check all your options and get input from people who know how your child's skills are growing. Other people in your child's life can provide valuable information for you.





TALK TO PEOPLE

It can be helpful to talk with other people as you make important decisions about your child's education. Some people you might want to speak with include:

- + YOUR CHILD'S PRESCHOOL TEACHER
- + YOUR PEDIATRICIAN OR FAMILY DOCTOR
- + OTHER PARENTS

VISIT THE CLASSROOM

It can also be helpful for you to talk to a teacher in kindergarten or transitional kindergarten. Ask to tour a classroom at your local school. Use both your intuition as a parent and everything you know about your child when making this important education decision. And don't be afraid to invite your child along for the visit. When you see the classroom with your child, it will help the child feel safe with a sense of belonging.

Children with Special Needs

Special health, developmental, and education needs can affect a child's learning. School districts and community organizations can offer specialized interventions and support to help children with special needs do better in school.

INDIVIDUAL PLANS

If you already have a written plan, either an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504, it will outline special requirements for a child with special needs. It is created by a team of professionals and the child's parents.

School CHOICES



As a parent, you have many options when choosing a school for your child. Use the following information to help choose the best fit for your family.

Public Schools

Public schools are located in neighborhoods throughout the county. These schools are free. They are funded by tax dollars and are usually run by an elementary school district. Local public schools draw students from a defined area called an attendance zone. Many children go to their neighborhood public school.

Charter Schools

Charter schools are independent public schools. These schools are also free. They run under a charter which gives them permission from a local or state education agency to operate. The charter outlines certain goals and operating procedures for the school.

“It is a good idea to visit the school and classroom you are considering.”

Private Schools

Private schools do not receive public tax dollars to operate. Tuition and other private funds support the school’s operation. Families pay money to send their children to a private school. These schools have the right to select their students.

Homeschool

Homeschooling allows families to take direct responsibility for their child’s education and it may be structured using a variety of approaches from textbook-based learning to hands-on projects. If a family chooses to homeschool outside of an established public or charter school then the family is responsible for making sure the homeschool is operating with the proper legal documents.

Choosing the best fit for your child

Many families send their children to their local neighborhood school. However, if you decide to look at another type of school, you will have many things to consider.

It is a good idea to visit the school and classroom you are considering. If districts in your county offer open enrollment, it may be possible to send your child to a public school outside of your attendance zone. Open enrollment allows families to request an interdistrict transfer.

If you are thinking about requesting a transfer, check with the school in your neighborhood and the school of your choice. Both schools and/or districts are involved in an interdistrict transfer request.



FIND A SCHOOL

CONTACT
your local
County Office of
Education for a
directory of
local schools.



Enroll in **KINDERGARTEN**

Once you have chosen a school and program, you will need to enroll your child. School registration schedules vary, but they typically begin in the Spring. Call the school you have chosen or check online to find out when registration begins and what paperwork needs to be completed.



Enrollment forms for kindergarten and Transitional Kindergarten can be picked up at the school office. They may also be offered online. In general, the forms ask for contact information for you and other adults you specify. They may also ask about your child's prior school experiences, languages spoken in the home, and any special issues your child may have.

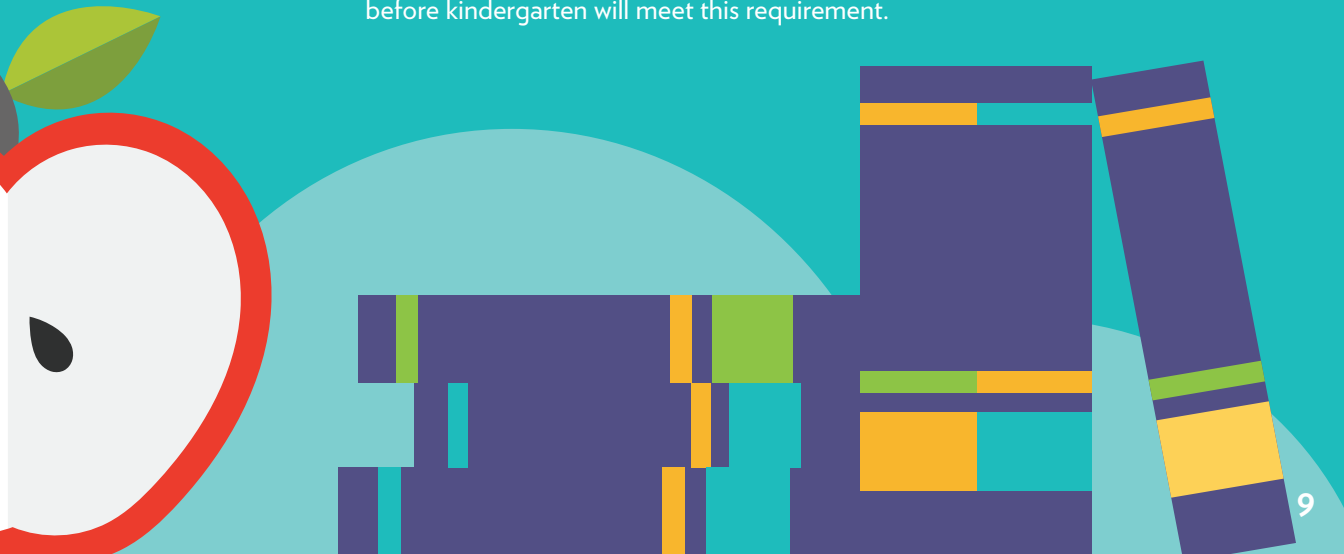
Requested documents for enrollment may include:

- Proof of Where You Live
- Birth Certificate
- Immunization Records
- Bus Sign-up Form
- Wellness Exam
- Oral Health Exam
- After School Enrollment
- Site Specific Forms

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Getting ready to enroll in school includes making sure you have addressed some specific health requirements which may include a well-child exam. These documents may be needed for enrollment:

- **Immunization Record** providing proof your child has received immunizations required by California law for enrollment in public or private schools.
- **Dental Check-up** due by May 31st of kindergarten year. Dental check-ups which happened within the 12 months before kindergarten will meet this requirement.



Get Ready for a SMOOTH TRANSITION

Starting TK & kindergarten **Talk About Kindergarten**

will be a big change for your child. Just being on a school campus and in a classroom is going to be a big deal! There are things you can do to prepare for this change. The more you prepare, the smoother the transition will be for your child and your whole family.



- Begin talking about kindergarten early. Children do better when they know what to expect which will help reduce the first-day jitters. You can start building your child's enthusiasm about going to school. Point out their school when you pass by. Talk about what they will be doing during the school year and talk about their new routine: drop-off, recess, bathroom breaks, and eating lunch on a schedule may all be new for them.
- If you are packing a lunch, practice opening containers and packages ahead of time. Think about packing easy-to-manage items so your child will spend lunch eating food instead of opening things. If your child is eating a school-provided meal, have them practice making choices and carrying their own plate to the table. Encourage them to finish eating on time.
- You can help ease any anxiety about school. Ask how your child is feeling and be ready to listen. Some children find it easier to talk about their feelings when they are creating something. Draw pictures of the school together or build a classroom out of blocks. Consider making a predictable goodbye routine because saying goodbye in a new setting can be scary. Let them know what to expect when you say goodbye to minimize anxiety caused by separation.



- After school begins, it's important to keep talking with your child about their feelings and how class is going. Be sure your child knows their own first and last name, phone number, and any food restrictions like allergies. They'll also need know the full names of anyone picking them up. Your child may not know the full name of their grandparents, for instance.

Get Familiar with your School

- Visit the school your child will be attending before the first day. Call the school or check online to see if it has a "Kindergarten Round-Up" or other type of orientation day. These events give you and your child time to meet the teacher, visit the classrooms, and even see the playground!
- If your child speaks a different language at home, let your child's teacher know about familiar phrases in your child's native language. This can help ease the transition from home to the classroom.
- Meeting the teacher gives your child a face and a name to think about as you keep talking about the start of school. When you check in at the office, be sure to sign in with the front desk and follow any local policies the school has for visitors.

- Once your child starts school, someone will be contacting you regarding your child. Learn how your school prefers to contact you as different schools all have different ways to contact parents. Some methods can include apps, emails, or websites. Other schools prefer phone calls and some even still use snail mail.

Encourage Independence

- Have your child practice getting dressed alone with minimal help in the morning. Let them practice tasks like clearing the plates from the table or filling a water bottle so they can do these things on their own at school.
- Make sure the clothing your child wears is quick and easy to put on and take off themselves. And send an extra set of clothes with them in their backpack. Kindergarten can be messy! Let them know the spare outfit is there and encourage them to use it.

All CA students are eligible for a free Breakfast and Lunch through the CA Universal School Meals Program. Check with your local school for details.

SMOOTH TRANSITION

Establish a Sleep Routine

- Begin your child's school sleep routine a few weeks before school starts. Children this age need around 10 hours of sleep each night. Have your child start going to bed and waking up at school time. This will help your child wake up and get ready more easily on the first day of school.
- With adequate sleep, your child will be more alert and ready to learn. It will help the first few days of school go more smoothly for everyone. A healthy sleep schedule will set the stage for on-time attendance from the first day.

First Backpack

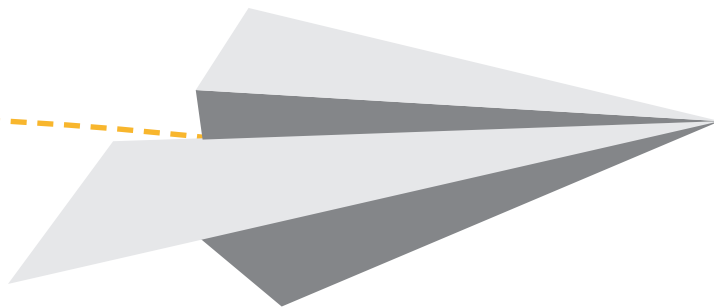
- Your child will need a backpack to carry things to and from school. Get your child a junior-size backpack to carry their supplies, snacks, lunch, homework, and other important papers. It should be big enough to fit a standard student folder. Let your child practice wearing the backpack around the house.
- If you need help gearing up, check with local churches or online groups offering free or discounted supplies. Try to find fun and creative ways to let your child personalize the backpack.

Know What to Expect

- Don't be surprised if your child is tired or more emotional the first few days or weeks of kindergarten. It's a new experience and your child will be working hard mentally, physically, and emotionally. Children are adjusting to all the new parts of their school world. Your patience and understanding will help your child feel safe and secure. It helps with adapting to all the changes that come with kindergarten.
- Also, prepare yourself for all the changes necessary in your own life; parents need to transition too for a life with a child in kindergarten. Be sure you know where and when to drop your child off, whether it's at the bus stop or at the school itself. Also know where and when to sign your child in, and be sure to schedule time for your child's homework.

First Day of School

- On the first day of school, wake up early. Talk through the excitement or nervousness your child may be feeling over a healthy breakfast. Be sure your child is dressed appropriately with shoes tied and noses blown.



- Be patient if your child cries. Lots of children cry on the first day of school. Parents are known to cry from time to time as well: take lots of tissues. Remember to take lots of pictures, or ask your child to draw something to remember the first day and tell your child how proud you are!

First Week of School, and Beyond

- Look for any paperwork that may have come home with your child during the first week of school. Your child's teacher might send a newsletter with information about important dates, school schedules, and meetings and your child may, understandably, forget to give them to you.
- Over time, your child may start feeling homesick. If your child is missing you or the rest of his or her family, talk to your teacher about having a special tool such as a small stuffy or picture in their classroom to help your child cope.
- As time goes by, set aside time to celebrate their excitement about school successes. Let your child share about their days in class. Ask your child questions about their day, and try to make them open-ended. Avoid yes or no questions and instead focus on questions like, "What book did your teacher read today?" Other good questions are, "Who did you play with at recess?" or "What was the most fun thing that happened today?"

Kids love a routine. It comforts them and helps them predict what will be happening on a day-to-day basis. Establishing good habits early on will help your child know what to expect as the days and weeks turn into months and years. The footholds we establish now will help keep them firmly rooted as your child grows.





Kindergarten READINESS SKILLS

Literacy

lit·er·a·cy ('li-t(ə-)rə-sē) n. the ability to read and write

Early literacy skills will help your child in every subject in every grade. From the moment your child is born literacy skills are building, and that growth will continue for life. Language skills, a healthy vocabulary, and learning to communicate are all part of learning to read. You help nurture these skills by reading, talking, and singing to your child.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LEARNING

- Understand a book
- Recognize at least half of the alphabet
- Identify some letter sounds
- Write his or her name and other words
- Identify words that rhyme
- Speak clearly and can be understood

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Read with your child at least 20 minutes throughout the day
- Talk with and listen to your child as you do daily activities
- Keep pencils, crayons, and paper where your child can use them
- Point out letters in everyday places
- Check out books from the library
- Sing songs and play rhyming games





Numeracy

nu·mer·a·cy ('n(y)üm-rə-sē) *n.* the ability to understand and work with numbers

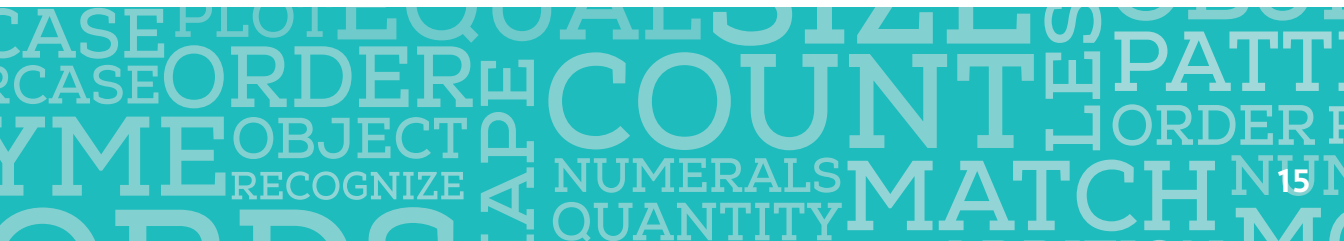
Early numeracy skills will help your child start learning math in kindergarten. Numeracy includes recognizing numbers, amounts, and patterns. It also involves sorting objects and putting them in order. Your child's natural curiosity leads to finding numeracy lessons in everyday experiences. Help numeracy skills grow by doing things together like baking cookies, doing puzzles, or building with blocks.

FOUNDATIONS FOR LEARNING

- Count to 20
- Knowing the number of objects in a small group
- Recognize numbers up to 10
- Write some numbers
- Do simple addition and subtraction
- Understand more, less, and equal
- Sort objects by color, shape, and size

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Count everything: stairs, cars, people
- Point out numbers seen in everyday places
- Talk about colors, textures, and sizes to help your child learn to sort, match, and compare
- Ask your child to help match socks while folding laundry
- Point out who has the most food at dinner; ask questions like "You have 4 grapes. If you eat 1, how many do you have left?"



Social-Emotional

so-cial ('sō-shəl) adj. relating to or involving activities in which people spend time talking to each other or doing enjoyable things with each other

e-mo-tion-al (e-mo-shə-nəl) adj. likely to show or express emotion: easily upset, excited, etc.

Children depend on social-emotional skills to help them handle their feelings and behavior. This helps them focus on learning. Social-emotional skills include management of emotions, appropriate expression of feelings, and the ability to have rewarding relationships with others. Your child has been building social-emotional skills at home by engaging with family members and their first friends.

FOUNDATIONS FOR INTERACTION

- Play well with others
- Focus on a task for at least 5 minutes and work independently
- Understand and follow instructions
- Recognize and manage emotions
- Show kindness to others

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Encourage your child to solve simple problems
- Find activities where your child can interact with other children their age like playgroups, storytimes, or playing at the park
- Help them join in activities by giving them words they can use such as, “Hi! My name is _____. Can I play too?”
- Encourage your child to make decisions by offering choices
- Allow your child to do things for himself or herself when appropriate
- Set realistic expectations and consistent rules for your child
- Develop regular routines at home
- Encourage your child to follow directions and take turns



Physical

phys-i-cal ('fi-zi-kəl) adj. relating to the body of a person instead of the mind

Physical skills children have been developing since birth help them do school work and enjoy outdoor activity at school. As a parent, it is important to check your child's level of physical skill development and keep introducing activities that give them a boost. Children's ability to control their movement will contribute to their success in school.

FOUNDATIONS FOR AN ACTIVE LIFE

- Jump, hop, skip, and balance
- Bounce, kick, throw, and catch a ball
- Dress himself or herself even when clothes have zippers and buttons
- Use scissors, crayons, and pencils
- Wash hands, tie shoes, and zip pants or a jacket

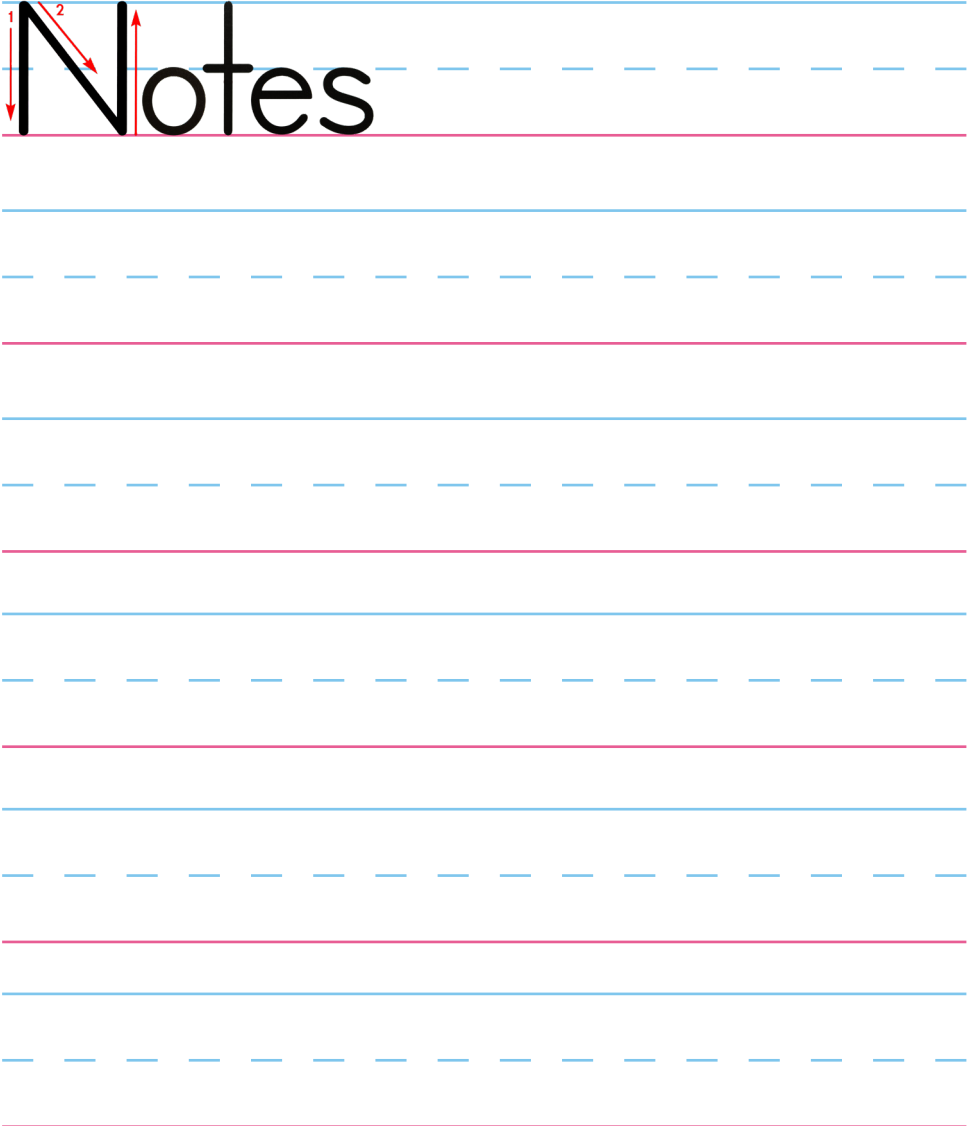
WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

- Play with your child using a ball: kick, throw, catch, roll
- Play with your child using a rope: jump, balance, hop
- Write a wiggly line on a piece of paper and then have your child trace it then cut along the line
- Let your child practice dressing and undressing alone including tying shoes
- Let your child practice going to the bathroom alone
- Using modeling clay to practice making objects



Children's enjoyment of learning will
help them reach higher and higher!

Notes



The image shows a handwriting practice sheet with multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid blue, middle dashed blue, bottom solid pink). The word 'Notes' is written in a large, black, sans-serif font on the first set of lines. The letter 'N' has red arrows and numbers indicating stroke order: a vertical line down on the left (1), a diagonal line from top-left to bottom-right (2), and a vertical line up on the right. The rest of the sheet is blank for practice.

Kindergarten PREP CHECKLIST

☐ SELECT A SCHOOL

Type of school: ☐ Public ☐ Charter ☐ Private ☐ Home School

School name: _____

☐ VISIT THE DOCTOR AND DENTIST

- Child's immunization record
- Dental assessment certificate
- Well-child physical exam

☐ ENROLLMENT IN SCHOOL

- Enrollment forms submitted
- Health documents submitted
- Proof of residence (or other documents requested by school) submitted
- School meal forms related to the Universal Meal Program submitted
- School bus schedule received

☐ MEET THE TEACHER AND VISIT THE SCHOOL

- Kindergarten classroom
- School campus
- Cafeteria
- Playground and Bathroom
- Bus Stop

☐ PREPARE FOR CLASS

- Read together 20 minutes a day
- Practice recognizing letters of the alphabet
- Practice writing
- Count, add, and subtract
- Play with friends, take turns, and share
- Practice tying shoes and zipping zippers

☐ ESTABLISH A SCHOOL ROUTINE

- School bedtime: make the goal 10 hours of sleep
- School wake-up time
- Healthy breakfast
- Dressed appropriately
- Backpack ready

MY CHILD'S KINDERGARTEN START DATE _____

