



DVD „Schools in the county of Zurich – information for parents“

Summary and supplementary information

Kindergarten

Role of kindergarten

Kindergarten has three fundamental roles: To take care of the child's wellbeing and to support their mental, physical and psychological development (supervisory role); to foster good behavior, such as consideration or respect for others (upbringing role), and to facilitate knowledge, skills and the ability to act (knowledge provision).

Learning in kindergarten – with all the senses

Children go to kindergarten to learn – not in the academic sense though, but in a way that is appropriate to their age. Learning takes place holistically, using all senses, and is combined with activities and strong emotions. Children make use of their imagination and creativity, do nature-watching activities, follow instructions or sing sitting in a circle.

Learning through varied play options

In kindergarten, children learn through play. The range of activities is varied so that each child can be encouraged in a way that suits their skills and aptitudes. There is space to experiment and do research. Children can do role plays in the doll's corner (Puppenecke). Puzzles and other board games are available. Children have access to tools and materials so they can develop skillfulness when doing crafts. Anyone who is interested can also play with and learn numbers and letters.

Learning from others

Children do not just learn on their own. They learn from each other. For example, an older child shows a younger child how a certain game works. Children also learn a lot from their teacher. For example, they are taught how to make a fortune teller out of paper. Or they learn about the lifecycle of a frog with their teacher.

Kindergarten for everyone

Children with special needs (for example, children who learn more quickly or more slowly, or children with a disability) can attend regular kindergarten. A special needs teacher joins the class to provide additional support. They not only work with children who need specific support on a one-to-one level, but sometimes with the whole or part of the class.

Encouraging language

Children already learn languages in a playful way in kindergarten. Teachers use high German selectively. Children have no difficulty understanding their teacher and have fun. This allows them to develop a natural connection with the language whose mastery is essential to successful learning later on.

As parents, you can also encourage your child's language development: Speak to them in your native language – whether it is Swiss-German or another language – as much as possible. Tell them stories; look at picture books with them. In this way your child will increase their vocabulary and acquire a rich knowledge of the world.

Discovering the world together

As children want to discover the world with all their senses, there are a lot of trips outdoors. Such trips also encourage children's social skills. For example, one child carries the whole group's morning snack in a rucksack, thereby taking on responsibility. Or children are responsible for their own actions as when they are outdoors, they are not always within sight of the teacher.

You can also encourage your child's development by allowing them to experience things holistically. This happens through everyday experimenting in their own surroundings, through play, learning by doing, or through a family day out to a museum or wood.

Contact between parents and kindergarten

By taking part in a parents' morning, parents show their child: „You are important to us and so is kindergarten. Of course parents' mornings are not the only way for parents and the teacher to get to know each other. Informal chats when parents drop off or pick up their child are also helpful. Such talks are key to your child's development. They also help parents and teachers to build up mutual trust and appreciation. The teacher holds parent-teacher meetings at least once or twice a year to talk to parents individually about their child's development in more detail.

How parents can foster cooperation with kindergarten

As parents, you can help your child's development in kindergarten. The most important thing is for parents to be able to „let go,, and entrust their child to kindergarten. In addition, parents should give their child a healthy snack for their morning break. Parents should instruct their child how to do a few things without any help: going to the toilet, putting on or taking off a jacket, tying up their shoes. It makes for a smooth lesson if you send your child to kindergarten on time, and you should inform the teacher if your child cannot attend class for any reason as soon as possible.

Transfer to primary school

Transferring to primary school is a topic in the second year of kindergarten. The older children are looking forward to becoming „big kids“ very soon. Parents discuss with the teacher whether their child is ready to move up. Different criteria are taken into account: How old is the child? (As a rule, transfer is made in the child's seventh year). Does the child like learning, do they like going to kindergarten? How well can they judge their own abilities? Do they see where they stand compared with others? Do they approach work in such a way that they are able to devote time to a task? Are they patient enough to finish something? Can they make up their own mind when offered a choice? Can they empathize with another child? Can they join a group? Most criteria concern the child's learning skills. If the child's kindergarten teacher, the school management and the parents cannot agree if a child should transfer to primary school, the decision is taken by the school governing board.

For further information, go to: www.vsa.zh.ch/dvdeltern

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