

Kinder Preparation

How we at Harmon Oaks prepare our children for Kinder and primary school:

In order to really understand how to prepare our children and what areas to focus on we must go back to understanding development at this young age within all domains: Social/Emotional, Cognitive, Physical, Language. However, here at Harmon Oaks we also have two additional areas of development we feel are very important- the first, being Self Help Skills, and the second, Intrinsic Motivation to learn.

Within each of these domains there is a slew of areas we focus on, but to prepare for kinder there are a special list of specific skills we look to strengthen.

Social & Emotional:

Transitioning to a large school with less supervision on the yard and a mostly hands-off approach to positive socialization of peers, can lead to challenges when making friends, developing positive friendships, and challenges in understanding how to cope and problem solve when a friend or a peer is not being particularly kind or mindful.

To tackle these challenges we work on the following areas and expect the following developments with our Blossoms:

- Problem solving with peers without a teacher's guidance
 - Telling a friend/peer, "I don't like the way I'm being treated." and/or "You're not being kind. Come back and find me when you're ready." and walking away to find another friend.
 - Understanding that we are all human and we all make mistakes, but to also understand that we have the tendency of making the same mistake until we understand that we made a mistake and how others are affected. In short, when you have a problem, be vocal to make sure you are heard and to make sure the person who made the mistake has the opportunity to 'fix it'.
 - Understanding when to tell a teacher about a friend, classmate or problem. Understand the difference between 'tattling' and 'telling'.
 - Learning to communicate feelings and needs with peers and with teachers in a respectable manner, but still communicating exactly how you feel and feeling comfortable doing so.
 - Learning to take turns and be patient in play and in class. Remembering that being patient and raising your hand allows not only for others to be heard but also ensures that YOU get heard.
 - Learning to cope with anxiousness and nervousness. Learning that these feelings are natural, but also practice making mistakes and getting past imperfections. Understanding that we ALWAYS try our best but that failing and making mistakes is a part of learning.

Tattling vs. Reporting
Complete the checklist.
3 or more checks will decide if you are tattling or reporting.

Tattling	Reporting
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm trying to get someone in trouble.	<input type="checkbox"/> I'm trying to keep someone safe.
<input type="checkbox"/> I can solve this problem by myself.	<input type="checkbox"/> I need help from an adult.
<input type="checkbox"/> It's unimportant.	<input type="checkbox"/> It's important.
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone is not hurt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Someone's actions are dangerous.
<input type="checkbox"/> What happened was an accident.	

If you choose 3 or more boxes in the reporting column, give some details below:



Physical:

Physical development and challenges include gross and fine motor skills inside and outside the classroom.

To tackle these challenges we work on the following areas and expect the following developments with our Blossoms:

- Learning to write lowercases, bringing attention to staying within the line and cutting with scissors more precisely are all fine motor skills we indirectly work on through play, teacher-guided, and self-directed stations every day!

- We play games outdoors and indoors, particularly through music and movement, that strengthen our gross motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and give us the confidence to try new games with peers.

Language:

Language and the acquisition and application of vocabulary is one of the defining markers of success in subjects involving literacy and with math and science! However, language is also used to communicate social and emotional needs, wants, and daily happenings. And sometimes language can be harsh or hurtful.

To tackle any challenges with language we work on the following areas and expect the following developments with our Blossoms:

- Learning to communicate in full sentences.

- Expanding vocabulary and working on applying STEM Language every day!

- Understanding words can be hurtful and how we can also practice mindfulness with our words.

- Having the courage to tell peers and practicing telling them when certain language is unacceptable or hurtful. "I don't like the way you are talking to me and the words you're using."

- Learning to differentiate 'potty' language or 'inappropriate' language. Understanding that we may hear the word, but not to repeat the language. Understanding that some may choose to communicate inappropriately, and that we must tell an adult and make the choice to find a new friend to play with when it continues.

- Learning that we have many many emotions and that all these emotions have names and we can communicate them without using our hands and without hurting people.

Cognitive:

Of course there's so much cognitive growth in various subjects that all revolve around solving problems, applying concepts, and working on somehow showcasing and/or completing the work involved. Typically our children are already working, thinking, reading and problem solving well beyond their age and grade level. Here, it will be the parents' challenge to keep their child challenged and growing in Kinder with regards to literacy and number sense. Children do regress and cognitive growth can be stagnant when not presented with new opportunities for growth.

With that said, other challenges can surface in the form of completing classwork in class, having strict time measures in completing tasks, having lots of dittos (worksheets) to complete, having to work on a computer, and completing "close-ended" art by following strict rules about color use, placement, etc.

To tackle challenges within this domain we work on the following areas and expect the following developments with our Blossoms:

- Learning to follow stricter directions, though at Harmon Oaks we don't fancy close-ended art or activities that aim to have children complete the work and achieve a very particular result (crafts fit this description as well).

- Always teaching our children to think for themselves. Copying is a mistake, even if you feel you're lost and don't know what you're doing. Children are encouraged to instead ask questions, ask friends and teachers, but never allow someone else to complete something for them. "It's ok to ask for help."

- Blossoms will complete homework packets at home the last eight weeks from May-June to practice completing homework each day/week, to have parents practice bringing assignments and completing them at home, and to introduce children to the process of turning things in and having them 'graded'.

- We introduce simple technology at Harmon Oaks but really limit screen time. As such, we only integrate the use of technology in the form of learning tools. For example, we watch a video on the iPad to supplement understanding rocket launches, and independently use digital microscopes to take a closer look at insects or specimens, etc. We learn how to use a ruler, drill, typewriter, and we role play with various technology, but we do not use technology to assess children or to complete 'assignments' or activities. Parents will have to advocate for their child and/or support their child through home use should their kindergarten classroom incorporate the use of computers to complete tasks or assessments (i.e. AR Reading Comprehension exams, etc.)

Self Help Skills:

We do not take self-help skills lightly at Harmon Oaks. In Kinder children will be asked to wipe themselves after using the potty, to put on their own jackets, to pack their own backpack and keep their class folder neat and organized. They'll be responsible for turning homework in, for keeping their belongings safe, for remembering to wash their hands and practicing good hygiene. They won't be encouraged to finish their lunch or try new foods. They will be expected to be independent little beings.

To tackle challenges within this domain we work on the following areas and expect the following developments with our Blossoms:

- Dressing independently... this includes zippers! Though laced shoes are not allowed at Harmon Oaks, we do practice lacing and tie'ing through various activities. With that said, we recommend velcro shoes for ease and to limit distractions through kinder.

- Eating well and trying new foods.

- Cleaning up after yourself whether it be during an activity or through lunch and snack, we're always practicing being responsible for our space and leaving a center or area better or just as clean and organized as before you used.

- Understanding when your body is warm, hot and cold, and understanding what to do as a result.

For example, taking clothes off, choosing to wear a jacket, etc. Also understanding staying hydrated and the importance of taking water breaks.

- Using the potty independently. All Blossoms are asked to practice wiping themselves. The first/second wipe is an independent task and the third from a teacher is to check how well you've done in making sure you're clean. Itchy bottoms are not something we can learn to live with at Harmon Oaks. As such, all teachers help children to understand how and if they've wiped well through the year. The last two months, May through June, we ask the child to wipe completely independently but do make sure they check themselves several times to make certain they are clean.

- Practicing good independent hygiene.

Motivation:

At Harmon Oaks we really place a lot of importance on motivation and confidence. These two skills, if you will, are markers of success in lifelong learning. We want our children to be motivated to learn because it

is something that they have grown to instinctively love and yearn to do- to be curious! What fuels motivation? Confidence. The more confident you grow in any particular task or skill, the more you will say "yes" in practicing/doing that task or skill, and the better you will become. It's a wheel! If that wheel is spinning in a positive manner, it will keep spinning, and growth in that/those areas will be evident. If the wheel is spinning in a negative manner, it will be difficult to shift but must be done in order to stop the lack of growth or negative trajectory of growth (the Matthew Effect...look it up to understand more!)

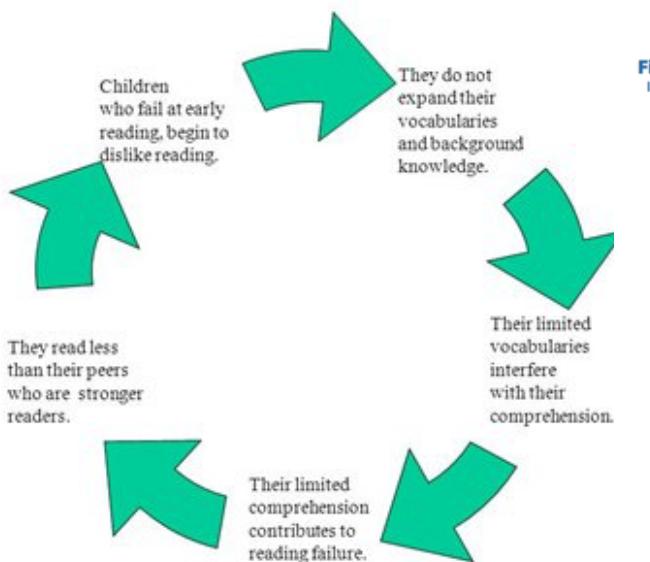
To tackle challenges within this developmental area we work on the following areas and expect the following developments with our Blossoms:

- We help children identify themselves as READERS, WRITERS, MATHEMATICIANS, & SCIENTISTS!

- At Harmon Oaks upon passing color sight words, children are identified as READERS. They then are assigned to be READERS to younger classrooms- leading story time with a book they've chosen. This further supports motivation to read. Literacy specialists and research has shown that motivation and confidence really plays a big part of literacy acquisition. Further through webinars, PD, and training sessions with specialists and researchers, including Dr. Anna Cunningham, a professor at UC Berkely's Graduate School of Education, author, and US National Early Literacy Panel member, we've learned that identifying as a reader, and supporting a child's identity as a reader, supports their growth.

- Fostering and instilling a growth mindset, coined by Dweck in 2007, over a fixed mindset in our children. Growth mindset embraces the idea that our effort is required for us to develop into amazing readers, scientists, and mathematicians! That we may fail but we grow from our failures. That not giving up is the ultimate ingredient to reaching our goals, dreams, and aspirations.

The Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986)



DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET

INSTEAD OF.....	TRY THINKING....
I'm not good at this	What am I missing?
I give up	I'll use a different strategy
It's good enough	Is this really my best work?
I can't make this any better	I can always improve
This is too hard	This may take some time
I made a mistake	Mistakes help me to learn
I just can't do this	I am going to train my brain
I'll never be that smart	I will learn how to do this
Plan A didn't work	There's always Plan B
My friend can do it	I will learn from them

Two Mindsets

