



Hello,

Kindergarten!

Tools to Embrace the First Year  
of Your Child's Academic Journey



PORTSMOUTH  
CHRISTIAN  
ACADEMY  
—AT DOVER—





# The early childhood years always seem to fly.

One day, you're trying to catch first words on video and in a flash, you're thinking about phonics and pre-reading skills. If you have a little one soon to embark on the kindergarten journey, we understand how exciting and overwhelming this season can be. Most parents have a mixed bag of emotions. You might be wondering if your child is ready academically, how he or she will thrive socially, and what type of school will best meet his or her needs, now and in the future.

We didn't write this e-book to convince you of all the reasons why you should choose Portsmouth Christian Academy, though we would love the opportunity to consider your child for admission to our school! Rather, we created it as a resource for parents who have questions about the different types of kindergarten programs, the benefits of Christian education in the early years, and the ways they can prepare their child for a successful transition to the classroom.

On the pages that follow, you'll get an inside look at the kindergarten experience and hear from other parents who have

been in your shoes. At the conclusion, you'll find a list of ways to prepare your child for school, as well as an invitation to schedule a tour at PCA. Tours are invaluable for parents of soon-to-be kindergartners. Spending time on campus lets you experience the learning environment firsthand and determine if a school feels right for your family.

Our fifty-acre riverfront campus is a beautiful place, but more importantly, it's a place where students discover their God-given potential.

We hope to see you soon!



# Is My Child >>> Ready?

There are many different indicators of kindergarten readiness. Some parents feel confident their child is prepared academically but wonder if he or she is ready emotionally. Others have heard that kindergarten has changed a lot over the years and are concerned about their child's ability to keep up. Be encouraged that children learn in their own way and at their own pace. A high-quality kindergarten program will be equipped to meet students where they are and put them on a path to success.

The following readiness indicators are provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education to help parents and caregivers ensure their young children are on a path to school success.

## Academic Readiness

- Follows detailed, instructional, multi-step (2-3) directions
- Speaks clearly enough to be understood without contextual clues; uses complete, four- to six-word sentences
- Has some knowledge of books (top, bottom, front, back, left to right)
- Retells a familiar story in proper sequence, including major events and characters
- Decides whether two words rhyme
- Names letters and matches some letters to their sounds
- Writes own first name (some letters recognizable)
- Uses technology skills (e.g., click and drag, scrolling, on/off, touch screen)
- Identifies numerals to 10 and verbally counts to 20
- Describes basic two- and three-dimensional shapes

- Recognizes and extends simple patterns and duplicates them
- Develops a sense of time (yesterday, today, tomorrow, days of the week, and seasons)
- Shows emergent understanding of family, school, and community
- Uses a variety of art materials for tactile experience, exploration, and expression
- Seeks guidance to continue learning

## Social/Emotional Readiness

- Establishes and sustains positive interactions with peers in small and large groups
- Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations, shares and takes turns
- Engages with trusted adults as resources and to share mutual interests
- Responds to emotional cues; shows empathy

- Accepts peers in the classroom
- Initiates, joins, and sustains positive interactions with individuals or groups of children
- Seeks adult help when needed to resolve conflicts

## Physical Readiness

- Performs self-care tasks independently
- Follows basic health and safety rules
- Practices healthy personal hygiene habits (washing hands and blowing nose)
- Demonstrates fundamental motor skills and body and spatial awareness
- Coordinates movements to perform simple tasks
- Uses small, precise finger and hand movements
- Shows beginning control of writing, drawing, and art tools

*This is just a sampling of the readiness indicators set forth by the State of New Hampshire.  
If you would like access to a complete list, [click here](#).*







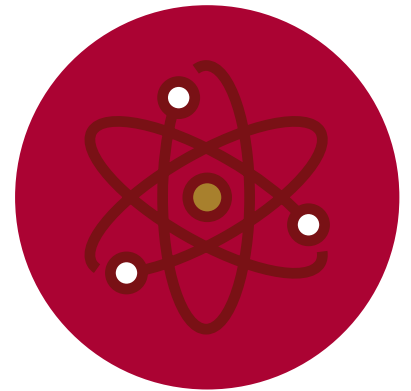
# A Purposeful Balance of Learning & Play



Play-based kindergarten is a common buzz-phrase these days, especially since the State of New Hampshire passed [a bill](#) requiring all public kindergarten programs to be centered on play. Many parents wonder what this means and how it will impact their child. *Will my child miss out on foundational academics? Is a play-based program more beneficial than a traditional academic one?*

## Striking a Balance

For many years, PCA has utilized a continuum approach that serves a variety of learning styles and allows us to meet students where they are in their unique learning journey. Our preschool programs are focused primarily on experiential learning through play. As students begin to master playing with their peers, kindergarten moves them into an environment where academic content is extended through engaging group activities and short stints of direct instruction. We call this our “just right” approach as it allows teachers to individually mentor each student academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.



## >>> What does the balance look like in action?

- Children engaging with hands-on STEM activities (e.g. students exploring kinetic energy exerted as they launch candy corns or engineering houses for The Three Little Pigs)
- Phonics-based instruction, which helps eager students learn to read and write for themselves (introducing the letters as characters, singing songs about the sounds each letter makes)
- Themed centers for exploration across many different subject areas
- Differentiated groups ensure students progress in their reading skills continually, moving from basic alphabetic principles to decoding, fluency, and comprehension
- Manipulatives to help develop number sense (building a structure using only 10 blocks, using finger paints to create 8 spots on a cow)
- Social opportunities to foster positive relationships and self-regulation
- Activities that change approximately every 20 minutes, including seat time, show-and-tell, enrichment periods, free play, music, exploration, outdoor time, and more
- Building each child's identity in Christ through Bible teaching and character emphasis
- Developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn executive skills such as response inhibition, emotional control, flexibility, sustained attention, and task initiation



# Christian Education in the Early Years

## Setting a Foundation

You know that kindergarten sets a foundation for future learning. During this highly formative year, your child will grow academically, socially, and emotionally. There is no better time to tend to his or her spiritual development as well.

Teaching Christian principles to children in the earliest stages of their education provides the greatest benefits. Kindergarteners may not realize this as they're learning each day, but with every interaction, activity, and lesson they experience at school, their identities and worldviews are being shaped. The Biblical foundation students receive at PCA equips them to answer important questions, prepares them for life's greatest challenges, and imparts the following Christian values:

**Leadership**  
Using Jesus as the ultimate example of leadership, students are empowered to make a positive difference in the world.

**Integrity**  
Teaching children that their actions and deeds matter, even when they cannot be seen by others.

**Service**  
Allowing students to practice caring for others through age-appropriate service-learning activities.

**Self-Confidence**  
Developing in each student a sense of self-worth based on his or her identity as a child of God.

**Compassion**  
Showing students how to put empathy into action by serving others in need.

**Love**  
Helping students understand how God's love has been extended to us, and how we can honor Him by loving others.

**Discipline**  
Modeling spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, scripture memorization, prayer, and worship.

**Wisdom**  
Giving students the tools to make sound decisions for themselves.



# Why Parents Choose

## PCA

**They want their child's God-given potential to be recognized and fostered.**

*At PCA, students are known and loved. Their teachers know their unique strengths, learning styles, and struggles, and mentor them to achieve growth and success.*

**They want a variety of activities available as their child discovers his or her unique gifts.**

*As students progress to higher grade levels, they have a multitude of opportunities to explore their interests and talents in athletics, the arts, and missions. Additionally, PCA's after-school Kaleidoscope program allows children to try their hands at activities like karate, ballet, solar engineering, outdoor, pottery, robotics, archery, and more.*

**They want to ensure their child experiences the joy of learning.**

*A child's earliest learning experiences shape his or her attitudes toward education. The kindergarten classroom at PCA is a joyful, energetic place where students develop an authentic love for learning.*

**They want their child to receive individualized attention.**

*With small class sizes, teachers are able to differentiate their approach to meet the needs of a variety of learning styles.*

**They want to be involved in the educational process.**

*At PCA, parents are actively involved in their child's learning. Teachers keep connected through parent-teacher conferences and open channels of communication. Each Friday, parents receive a peek at the week ahead, and they are invited to be a part of class projects, field trips, and other activities.*

**They know that a school's culture will impact their child's growth.**

*PCA is known for its positive culture and close-knit community. This concept is especially evident in our buddy program, which pairs young students with older students to read together, complete projects, and care for one another.*





*“Being able to drive away after dropping off my daughter, and feeling completely peaceful and confident she will thrive is something I hadn’t experienced until PCA. It’s all I could ever want or ask for. It’s priceless.”*

~ SUMMER

*“We were so blessed to have our daughter experience kindergarten at PCA. We saw tremendous growth in her academically and spiritually and know this was because of the amazing teachers that were so invested in her success. We were at peace knowing that our daughter was so loved and cared for whenever she stepped onto PCA's campus.”*

~ ANDREW AND KRISTIN

*“Kindergarten at PCA has laid a solid foundation that has enabled my oldest to succeed in first grade and beyond. My second child is currently a kindergartner. She is thriving despite her social anxiety and eyesight challenges. In fact, the school has been very helpful and preemptive regarding these difficulties. Our family is very thankful for our children’s positive kindergarten experiences.”*

~ MELISSA



# A Day in the Life of a Kindergartener at PCA



**8:00–8:15** The kindergarten **day kicks off** with opening exercises in the gym. During this time, a teacher or staff member shares a short message and encouragement with all students at PCA to frame their day.

**8:20\*** Kindergarteners **move to the classroom** and begin their day with Morning Meeting. Students go over the date, daily weather, and daily tasks. This is also a time of community building and worship. Students learn Bible stories, sing songs, and receive character education.

**9:08** Students begin working on **phonics and handwriting**. The class engages in games and exercises to learn decoding skills, working towards fluency in reading and comprehension.

**10:00** Students have their **first recess** of the day. All kindergarten classes come together (outdoors whenever possible) to enjoy thirty minutes of free play.

**10:30** After students have had plenty of time to be active, they settle down for **math**. Students use manipulatives to visualize numbers. They also engage in counting games or comparing activities to learn how to relate numbers to the real world.

**10:50 Enrichment classes begin.** These include foreign language (Mandarin Chinese and Spanish), library, P.E., art, and music. Enrichments at PCA are intentional opportunities to learn in a focused area. For example, library class is about more than browsing books, it's a time for children to learn how to use a library on their own and to discover a love of reading. Similarly, in music class, children build foundational skills like rhythm, dynamics, and singing together as a group.

**11:37** It's time for **learning centers!** Centers give children an opportunity to move around and engage in different activities in small groups. These are often focused on a learning unit while reinforcing skills in phonics and math.

**12:42 Lunch begins.** Kindergarteners eat in their classrooms with their teachers and peers. This is an intentional choice that allows for community building and socialization within the class. Parents can choose to either pack a lunch or participate in the lunch program.

**1:07** The **second recess** of the day happens after lunch. This recess is shared with the first grade classes so that kindergarteners can interact and build friendships with first graders.

**1:32 Rest time.** This 20-minute break allows students a chance to refuel for the next lesson. During this time, children will often hear a read-aloud story related to the theme of the week.

**1:50 Science and social studies** lessons begin. For science, students will receive in-class instruction which is also complemented by twice-monthly visits in our Creative Design Center to participate in hands-on activities that align with their science unit. For example, the class may build rocket ships and test them to see how far they can fly, hypothesizing why some go farther than others. In social studies, students learn about the value of community.

**2:33** Every day concludes with a **class meeting**, where students go over what they learned that day and get a preview of the rest of the week.

**2:50 Dismissal time.** Some students go home and others head to Kaleidoscope - PCA's program for after-school care, clubs, and workshops.

---

*\*On Tuesdays, this time is reserved for the K-2 singalong, where all three grades come together to sing praise songs.*









# WAYS TO Prepare Your Child FOR SUCCESS

*Parents of preschool-age children always want to know what they can be doing now to ensure their child transitions to kindergarten easily. There are many opportunities to prepare your child for school through everyday activities. Consider the following:*

## Critical Thinking

When tasks are difficult, children should be moving away from toddler tantrums and into problem-solving mode. Encourage your child to attempt new tasks regularly and to persist when problems arise.

## Daily Reading

One of the most important ways to prepare your child for kindergarten is to read aloud together daily. Aim for twenty minutes of daily reading and encourage your child's comprehension skills by asking follow-up questions about each story.

## Impromptu Math

Take advantage of the opportunities to count and sort in daily life. Whether you're counting stair steps, picking out apples at the grocery store, or measuring a surface, these activities provide a foundation for kindergarten-level math lessons.

## Consistent Routines

Students need stamina to finish a kindergarten day. Work on a consistent early bedtime, stick to regular

mealtimes with healthy proteins, and create a visual checklist to guide your child through morning activities.

## Supervised Playdates

Provide plenty of opportunities for your child to play with other children. When issues come up, avoid immediately solving the problem at hand, and encourage the children to come up with their own ideas and resolutions.

## Outdoor Play

Parents may not think that allowing their children to run freely, climb, jump, and skip is kindergarten prep. However, these gross motor skills are vital for success in school. Whenever possible, limit screen time and encourage children to be active.

## Art Projects

Arts and crafts allow students to develop the fine motor skills needed for many kindergarten-level activities. Practice cutting on a line with safety scissors, threading beads onto a necklace, sculpting with play dough, and drawing with a proper pencil grip.



## Schedule a Visit

*You're invited to come tour Portsmouth Christian Academy. Our expansive riverfront campus is located in Dover, NH. We can't wait to show you and your soon-to-be kindergartener around!*

Most parents find that the campus tour is the most helpful part of their school search. When you join us at PCA, you'll get to experience the benefits of our kindergarten program firsthand, meet teachers, explore our learning spaces, and have your questions answered by friendly admissions staff. If you are unable to visit in person, we also offer virtual tour options.

### *Three ways to schedule your visit:*

Register online at  
[pcaschool.org/events](https://pcaschool.org/events)

Email us at  
[admissions@pcaschool.org](mailto:admissions@pcaschool.org)

Call us at  
(603) 742-3617, ext. 121

*See you soon!*

PORTSMOUTH  
CHRISTIAN  
ACADEMY  
—AT DOVER—

*Portsmouth Christian Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, tuition policies, and athletic and other school-administered programs.*