



# CURRICULUM NOTEBOOK

SUMMER 2019





April 10, 2019

Dear Countdown to Kindergarten Teacher,

Thank you for your participation in the Countdown to Kindergarten program. We're delighted that you will be a part of this exciting movement across South Carolina for rising kindergartners and their families.

We know that the transition to kindergarten is an important milestone for both children and their parents. From previous years, we've learned that Countdown to Kindergarten has encouraged parents to gain a better understanding of kindergarten expectations, keep in touch with teachers throughout the school year, support teachers' teaching and behavior management practices, and work more effectively with their children in at-home activities that improve academic skills. It also has helped both children and parents feel confident and excited about kindergarten.

While the Countdown to Kindergarten curriculum entails a weekly activity based on academic content, the program's primary objectives have less to do with student mastery of specific academic content and more to do with the learning of parents. **Parents should be actively involved in each weekly visit, with teachers modeling approaches and strategies that parents can imitate to support their child's classroom success.** Additionally, although this notebook outlines a specific weekly curriculum, we acknowledge that each family is unique and that you as the teacher are the expert in how this curriculum should be delivered. Please feel free and encouraged to deliver this material in the way that is best for each family.

Again, please accept our most sincere thanks for your willingness to serve as a 2019 Countdown to Kindergarten teacher. We invite you to contact South Carolina First Steps or your local First Steps County Partnership if we can offer you additional support.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Georgia Mjartan", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Georgia Mjartan  
Executive Director  
South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness



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## VISIT ONE: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

### Purposes of the visit

1. To become acquainted with the child and his/her family
2. To provide the family with an overview of the Countdown to Kindergarten home visitation program
3. To engage in an interactive read-aloud with the child and family (modeling techniques and questioning strategies that the parents will be asked to use on their own)
4. To begin the process of gathering parental/caregiver feedback that will assist you in supporting the child's academic success

### Materials

- Transition toolkit
- Any enrollment paperwork that was not completed prior
- Family commitment form
- Pre-program family questionnaire
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come* by Nancy Carlson
- Parent handout: *Technology and your Kindergartner*

### Getting to Know the Family

Prior to the visit, both the child and teacher will prepare "Me Boxes," filled with items that represent their individual interests. **When calling to schedule this initial visit, please ask the family to assist the child in the advance preparation of his/her "Me Box."**

### Overview of the Program

Share the goals of the program with the family:

1. To develop relationships that will assist the child as he/she transitions into the formal school setting
2. To enable teachers and parents to establish mutual understanding of familial and classroom expectations that will enable the child's long-term school success – to include an introduction to South Carolina's academic standards for kindergarten
3. **To increase family involvement and strengthen the ties between home and school**

### Planning

Using the **family commitment form**, share the anticipated Countdown to Kindergarten schedule, including 5 home visits and one final classroom visit. If possible, determine dates for your future visits and provide instructions on how to reach you if a family must reschedule a visit. You can write the dates and your contact information on the family commitment form and leave it with the family.

### Introduce the Transition Toolkit

Share the **transition toolkit** with the child and family. Let them know that on each visit you will be bringing materials to share that the child will be allowed to keep for his/her own use. Allow the child

time to explore all the materials in the toolkit. **Most home visitors choose to leave the art supplies with the family at the first visit.** The materials are:

1. Children’s books (three titles)
2. Art materials
3. Manipulatives (Unifix Cubes, puzzle, and magnetic letters)
4. Journal

**Interactive Read-Aloud: *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come***

Read *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come* to the child (in the parent or caregiver’s presence). Discuss child’s feelings and questions about entering kindergarten. Be expressive and take opportunities to pause and connect the story to the child’s own forthcoming entry to school. Ask open-ended questions designed to draw the child into the story and extend his/her expressive language.

Use the crayons and a page in the writing journal to draw a picture of something you would like to learn at school during the upcoming school year. (If child has little to no experience with holding a crayon or pencil, take a moment to show them.)

Take a moment upon completion to make the nature of this lesson explicit to the parent or caregiver present. For example (please use your own words):

“You might have noticed that I paused several times to ask about the story – and to talk to (child’s name) about how the character’s experiences are kind of like his/hers as we get ready to begin kindergarten. This is something I do a lot in class that I’d really encourage you to do as you read together every day. I try hard to ask what I call open-ended questions – which mean that there are lots of possible answers. Things like: ‘What do you think will happen next?’ or ‘What was your favorite part?’”

“The reason these questions are important is that they help children to develop their own ideas and connect what’s happening in the story to something they might understand from their own lives. It takes a little longer than just reading the story from beginning to end, but I find that it really helps the kids to understand the stories in more powerful ways.”

Leave the backpack, *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come*, and the art materials with the child. Explain to the child and the parent(s) that you will be using the art materials throughout the visits. Encourage the child and parent(s) to use the materials between meetings but to return and keep them in toolkit, so that they will be readily available for future visits.

**Gathering Parent/Caregiver Feedback**

During the first visit, please administer the **pre-program family questionnaire**, letting the family know that their answers are anonymous but extremely important for measuring the success of the Countdown to Kindergarten program.

Should time – and the appropriate opportunity – permit, this initial visit presents an outstanding opportunity for you to speak privately with the parent (perhaps as the child explores the toolkit materials) about his/her own hopes, expectations and/or concerns relating to the kindergarten transition.

While not essential to the first visit itself (please use your discretion as to the appropriate times/places) it is important to note that developing mutual understanding is a process that will require as many

opportunities for the parent to speak as to listen over the coming weeks. Several suggested questions are included below:

- I may be the teacher, but I'll never hope to know your child as well as you do. Would you tell me about him/her?
- What does he/she enjoy doing in free time at home?
- Has he/she ever attended any form of preschool?
- **Does your child have any fears I should know about – including any related to coming to school for the first time? (See Social-Emotional Development Tip below)**
- Have you ever had any concerns about his/her development that you think I might need to know about? (If yes, ask the parent whether these concerns have ever been brought to the attention of the child's pediatrician? Is he/she receiving any special services? Would the parent like your assistance in connecting him/her to support services that may be offered through the school district?)
- What do you as a parent hope for him/her to get out of kindergarten as a learner?

### **TIP: Social-Emotional Development**

If the parents bring up that their child is scared or fearful of certain things or even of starting school, you may want to explain to them that many different things can frighten a young child, ranging from starting Kindergarten to dogs to thunderstorms to large bugs. At your discretion as to the appropriate time, talk with the parents about the importance of taking these fears seriously because they're very real to the child. Saying, "Don't be silly. The bug isn't going to hurt you," doesn't validate a child's suffering. Instead parents should try focusing on easing their child's anxiety. Families can try a "show and tell" approach. For instance, if a child is afraid of the dark, they can try going on a night walk together and discussing all the new and interesting things you can see when it's dark. Or if a child has a fear of barking dogs, they can explain to him or her why dogs bark so loudly ("That's just how they talk"). Or if a child is afraid of going to school, showing your child his or her classroom before starting Kindergarten can make them feel less scared – just like we will do in our last visit!

Adapted from the article, *"Emotional Rescue: Activities for Emotional Development"* by Jeannette Moninger from *Parents Magazine*

Look for opportunities to continue these discussions across the summer and throughout the school year. Remember that your own understanding of the child and family is as important to the child's successful school transition as is the family's understanding of classroom and school-wide expectations.



## VISIT ONE: WEEKLY ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS

1. Read a book with your child every day. Look for opportunities to pause and ask your child “open-ended” questions about the story. (Open-ended questions have many possible answers. For example: “What do you think will happen next?” or “Can you think of a time you felt scared like (the character in the book)?”)
2. Use crayons to draw a picture of your family. Sit together and label each family member by name. Talk about the letters needed to write the name of each.
3. Visit your local library with your child. If you don’t have a library card you can sign up for one – they’re free!
4. Review the parent handout *Technology and Your Kindergartner*.
5. Develop a list of your questions about kindergarten and the coming school year for discussion during a future visit. This list may include both your own parent questions and those of your child.



## VISIT TWO: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

### **Purpose of the visit**

To reinforce the importance of daily reading.

### **Materials**

- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. & John Archambault
- Upper and lower case letter tiles
- Journal and Pencil
- Parent handouts: *The Importance of Play* and *Language Strategies for Parents*

### **Warm-Up Activity**

Begin the visit by introducing the child and parents to one or more favorite classroom songs, finger-plays or nursery rhymes. Invite all to participate in their singing or recitation.

### **SC Kindergarten Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy**

One important purpose of this second visit is to begin introducing the parent/caregiver to the concepts in the SC Learning Standards for Kindergarten – which represent the core learning expectations for the state’s 5K classrooms. While teachers should be cautioned against prolonged (or jargon-y) discussion of the standards themselves, the beginning of this visit is a good time to introduce the standards as a “guide” or “roadmap” for the year. For example (please use your own words):

“One of the things I’m going to do during these visits is share some information with you about the things we’ll be learning this year in kindergarten. The state has a set of goals – we call them our “standards” – that serve as our “roadmap” for the year. These standards are what we hope your child will be able to accomplish by the end of kindergarten. Every time I come I’m going to share another section and then we’ll be doing a few quick activities to illustrate how we learn these skills in the classroom. My goal is the same as yours: making sure (child’s name) is ready to go to first grade and shine!”

### **Interactive Read-Aloud: *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom***

This visit’s content begins with an interactive read-aloud of *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. As in the initial visit, please encourage the parent/caregiver to participate and be sure to model expressive reading and appropriate questioning. Begin by connecting the text to both the child’s own experiences and the visit’s second activity, which will entail the use of magnetic letters. For example (please use your own words):

“This is one of my very favorite books. It’s called *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* and it is about a group of letters that have a race to the top of a coconut tree. Have you ever tried to climb a tree? It can be fun, but you have to be careful, don’t you? I think I might be afraid to climb a tree that tall. Can you guess why? That’s right...I think I’d be afraid that I might fall. You don’t suppose that’ll happen to these letters do you? Let’s read and find out!”



“I bet that if you look very closely that you’ll see some of the letters in your name. Do you know what letter your name starts with? Should we see if we can find it?”

Throughout the reading, model “teacher talk” stressing content that will be emphasized in your classroom. A few possibilities might include:

- Discussing the roles of authors and illustrators
- Noting the title page
- Discussing the illustrations, identifying significant letters in the child’s name, your school’s, or your own.
- Inviting the child to share his/her own knowledge related to the story (e.g. “Have you ever seen a tree like the one in the story? There’s one that looks kind of like it on the South Carolina flag. Have you ever seen it?”)
- Encouraging the child and parent to join in reading the familiar “chicka chicka boom boom” refrain. As the child joins in the reading, be sure to recognize him/her for her abilities “as a reader.” Find an appropriate opportunity before the end visit to explain to the parent/caregiver that this type of memorized or anticipatory “reading” is an important form of reading in its own right to be encouraged (never mocked or discouraged) as an important precursor to conventional or “real” reading.

### **TIP: The Benefits of “Lap Reading”**

Before or during reading, explain to the parents the benefit of being in close proximity to their child during the read aloud. For example (use your own words):

“Reading is an activity that you and your child can share for a long time. Sitting on your lap while being read to provides a comforting bonding experience for your child. By reading aloud in close proximity to your child, he or she will develop a strong connection between your voice and books, building him or her into a better reader. While lap reading to your child, he or she will hear and recognize the different emotions in your voice, promoting social development. In addition to listening, reading along, and learning, your child can point to words and ask and answer questions.”

### **Upper and Lower Case Letter Tiles**

After reading (and re-reading as appropriate) *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, introduce the upper and lower case letter tiles. Encourage the child and parent to work together to identify and name the letters in the child’s name. Connect them from left to right to “build” the child’s name and/or other simple words (use the book as a resource as appropriate).

### **Journal**

Using the journal and a pencil, have the student write the letters of the alphabet and begin practicing how to write their name. Model for the parent how to assist the student in this activity, depending on the student’s writing ability.

### **Parent Talk**

Share and review the *SC Kindergarten Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy* and *Language Strategies for Parents* handout.

Here again is an opportunity to encourage the importance of daily reading. You may wish to inquire as to the child’s favorite book(s) and ask him or her to show it/them to you.

**While many parents view school as the place one “learns to read” it is important that you help parents develop an understanding of reading as a developmental process – *and one that they can help to support each day* by immersing their child in written and spoken language in both formal and informal ways.**

### **Questions About Kindergarten**

Before wrapping this visit, refer back to the Home Activity in which the family was asked to develop a list of their questions about kindergarten. Whether this has been developed as a formal written list or not, it is important to spend a few minutes answering these questions (from both parent and child). Remind the family that you’ll be ready to answer additional questions as a part of each subsequent visit.



## VISIT TWO: WEEKLY ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS

1. Continue to read with your child daily and check out the local library for some of these recommended alphabet books:
  - ABC's* by Eric Carle
  - Alphabet Adventure* by Audrey Wood
  - Dr. Seuss's ABC*
  - Alphabet Under Construction* by Denise Fleming
2. Use the upper and lower case letter tiles to create additional words (the name of each family member and/or that of a family pet, for example) and to practice letter recognition. See how many letters your child can name independently.
3. Review the parent handouts *The Importance of Play* and *Language Strategies for Parents*.
4. Use the letter tiles to practice making some of the high-frequency words in the writing journal. Also practicing writing these words in the journal.
5. If you have access to the internet, explore some reading websites and apps. Some suggested ones are:

**Websites:**

ABCYA.com  
Starfall.com  
PBSkids.com  
Seussville.com

**Apps:**

Starfall Learn to Read  
Feel Electric!  
Learn with Homer  
Rosetta Stone Letter Sounds

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS & LITERACY STANDARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN

Learning new language skills is a hallmark of kindergarten. Your child will learn about the alphabet and its role in reading. Your child will practice rhyming, matching words with beginning sounds, and blending sounds into words. Practice with these types of activities is a powerful step toward learning to read and spell correctly. The size of your child's vocabulary is another key factor in his or her ability to read and comprehend books and stories. Your child also will begin to experiment with writing and will be encouraged to use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing letters to share information, ideas, and feelings.

The following is a sample of English Language Arts and Literacy Standards that your child will be working on:

- Naming upper- and lower-case letters, matching those letters with their sounds, and printing them
- Comparing the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories, such as fairy tales and folktales
- Retelling familiar stories and talking about stories read to them using details from the text
- Using a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to describe an event, including his or her reaction to what happened
- Stating an opinion or preference about a topic or book in writing (e.g., "My favorite book is . . .")
- Taking part in classroom conversations and following rules for discussions (e.g., learning to listen to others and taking turns when speaking)
- Speaking clearly to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas, including descriptions of familiar people, places, things, and events
- Asking and answering questions about key details in stories or other information read aloud
- Understanding and using question words (e.g. who, what, where, when, why, how) in discussions
- Learning to recognize, spell, and properly use those little grammatical words that hold the language together (e.g., a, the, to, of, from, I, is, are)

Here are some things you can do with your child to promote English Language Arts and Literacy at home:

- Read with your child every day. (Some suggested books: *Are You My Mother* by P.D. Eastman or *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss.) Ask your child to explain his or her favorite parts of the story. Share your own ideas. To find more books for your child to read, visit
- Encourage your child to tell you about his or her day at school. Keep paper, markers, or crayons around the house for your child to write letters or words or draw a picture about his or her day. Have your child describe the picture to you.
- Play word games like I Spy, sing songs like *Itsy Bitsy Spider*, and make silly rhymes together.

*Adapted from the National PTA*



## VISIT THREE: MATH

### **Purpose of the visit**

Introducing mathematical concepts such as one-to-one correspondence, patterning, sorting, measuring, and spatial relationships.

### **Materials**

- *Ten Black Dots* by Donald Crews
- Unifix Cubes
- Number floor puzzle
- Parent handout: *Have Fun with Everyday MATH!*

### **Warm-Up Activity**

Today's visit relates to mathematics. Begin by singing or reciting a favorite math-related classroom song, poem or finger-play—such as “One, Two, Buckle My Shoe”—with the child and parent(s).

#### One, Two, Buckle My Shoe

One, two, buckle my shoe.

Three, four, shut the door.

Five, six, pick up sticks.

Seven, eight, lay them straight.

Nine, ten, let's do it again!

### **Introducing the Unifix Cubes**

Show the Unifix cubes to the child and parent(s). Allow the child and parent to explore the cubes briefly, incorporating vocabulary around their color and shape as appropriate.

### **“Number Sense” and One-to-One Correspondence**

After the child has had an opportunity to explore the cubes on his/her own for a brief period, begin the activity by modeling the cubes use in developing number sense and one-to-one correspondence – exploring, for example, some of the following questions:

- Can you snap together a tower that has (insert number) cubes?
- How many cubes did you use to make that tower? Let's count them together? (Model, as necessary, the need to count each cube separately – touching each with a finger to demonstrate the activity).
- Have the teacher make a tower and then ask the student to make one that is shorter or taller.

Take a moment to explain to the parent/caregiver that developing a “number sense” (strengthening the connection between the word “three” and the corresponding presence of three objects) is an important foundational concept – one of much greater mathematical significance, for example, than the ability to count aloud by rote. Encourage him/her to look for everyday opportunities to reinforce the development of this concept. (For example, asking the child to place four apples in a bag at the grocery store.)

### **Patterning**

After exploring number sense for a short time, ask the child if he/she is familiar with patterns, explaining (as necessary) that a pattern repeats itself in a consistent way over and over. Model the creation of a simple A-B pattern using two cube colors (e.g. red, blue, red, blue). Ask the child to extend your example or to create his/her own.

Spend a few minutes exploring patterns of increasing complexity as appropriate. (For example, A-A-B or A-A-B-B.) Challenge the child and parent/caregiver to think aloud about other places patterns occur. For example, chances are good that at least one of you will be wearing some form of patterned clothing. Take a moment to discuss the pattern – or to look around the room for other examples.

After making a pattern with the Unifix cubes, help the student use the construction paper and cut small pieces to glue into their journal to recreate the pattern.

### **Spatial Relationships**

Finally, take the opportunity to introduce one final game. Explain that you’re going to ask the child to listen to your words and move the cubes accordingly. Practice with a variety of spatial relationships. For example:

- Can you put the red cube on top of the blue cube?
- Can you put the white cube beneath the black cube?
- Can you put the blue cube next to/beside the red cube?
- Can you attach three red cubes under a blue cube?

Explore your own examples as appropriate. Take a moment to explain to the parent/caregiver the importance you will be placing upon this type of vocabulary and conceptual development in the classroom.

### **Measurement**

Using the Unifix cubes, demonstrate and discuss nonstandard measurement. Show the student how to take an object, such as a spoon or pencil, and measure it using the Unifix cubes. Ask the child to use the Unifix cubes to measure the pencil, crayon, or scissors in their toolkit.

### **Number Puzzle**

Clean up the Unifix cubes and introduce the number puzzle to the child and parent. Spread out the pieces, each facing upward and guide the child and parent in its joint assembly, assisting as necessary.

As you work to assemble the puzzle, incorporate important vocabulary and asking the child to identify (for example):

- Labels – Fish, Panda Bears, Zebras, Flowers, Leaves, Balloons, Eggs, Crayons, Giraffes, Palm Trees, Pumpkins, Dice, Butterflies, Swans, Screws, Clouds, Ants, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Fireworks, Birds

- Colors – Red, Blue, Yellow, Green, Purple, Orange, Black, White
- Numbers – 1-20, Number Words, Least, Most
- Words that classify – Food, Animals, Toys, Tools

Take a moment to explain your intent in doing so (“You probably notice I’m asking a lot of questions. In kindergarten we really work hard on vocabulary development – both in terms of understanding new words that are being introduced and pushing the children to use lots of words themselves. Not only does math have some of its own special vocabulary – but this is an important part of learning to read. So, as you go through the day I always encourage parents to do a lot of talking and questioning. This doesn’t have to be turned into a quiz. Just look for opportunities to introduce new words – like, “Have you ever seen one of those before? That’s called a \_\_\_\_\_ and it’s used to \_\_\_\_\_.”)

Before disassembling the puzzle, take the opportunity to count together, encouraging the child to point to each number as you say its name aloud. If time permits, ask the child to take the puzzle apart and see if he/she can reassemble it on his/her own.

### **Parent Talk**

Introduce the book, *Ten Black Dots*, and encourage the parents to make anytime a good time to talk about math! For example, they can use household containers (small pots, plastic bowls, measuring cups, deli containers) in the tub to help the child explore “empty” and “full” and compare volumes.

### **TIP: Social-Emotional Development**

You may want to tell parents that some of these skills might be hard for their child at first, and it is possible for their child to become frustrated or angry. Young children deal with many of the same emotions adults do. Children get angry, sad, frustrated, nervous, happy, or embarrassed just like we do, but they often do not have the words to talk about how they are feeling. Instead, they sometimes act out these emotions in very physical or inappropriate ways. For example, a child might stomp his or her feet when frustrated or throw toys when angry. Parents can help their child understand and express his or her emotions. Here are some different ways parents can teach their child to act on emotions and feelings:

- Let them know that they can ask for help
- Say it, don’t do it (say “I am mad” instead of throwing toys)
- Take a deep breath
- Describe what they are feeling
- Think of a different way to do it
- Relax and try again
- Walk away

*From the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning at Vanderbilt University*



### VISIT THREE: WEEKLY ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS

1. Continue to read with your child daily.
2. Use the Unifix cubes (or other materials) to create patterns and to practice counting objects. As your child counts, encourage him/her to use a finger to touch each object (as necessary). You want your child to learn that for each number we name there must also be a matching object. Make sure that each object is counted once, but only once.
3. Assemble the number puzzle together, asking your child to join you in naming each number aloud.
4. Try some of the activities included in the parent handout, *Have fun with everyday MATH!*



## MATH LEARNING STANDARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN

Young children arrive in kindergarten with widely varying knowledge in math. By the end of the year, your child must have some important foundations in place. One of the most important skills your child should develop is the ability to add and subtract small numbers and use addition and subtraction to solve word problems. This will rely on gaining some fundamentals early in the year, such as counting objects to tell how many there are. Addition and subtraction will continue to be a very strong focus in math through 2nd grade.

The following is a sample of Math Learning Standards that your child will be working on:

- Counting objects to tell how many there are
- Comparing two groups of objects to tell which group, if either, has more; comparing two written numbers to tell which is greater
- Acting out addition and subtraction word problems and drawing diagrams to represent them
- Adding with a sum of 10 or less; subtracting from a number of 10 or less; and solving addition and subtraction word problems
- Adding and subtracting very small numbers quickly and accurately (e.g.,  $3 + 1$ )
- Correctly naming shapes regardless of orientation or size (e.g., a square oriented as a “diamond” is still a square)

Here are some things you can do with your child to promote math at home:

Look for “word problems” in real life. Some kindergarten examples might include:

- Play “Write the next number.” You write a number, and your child writes the next number.
- Ask your child questions that require counting as many as 20 things. For example, ask, “How many books do you have about wild animals?”
- Ask your child questions that require comparing numbers. “Who is wearing more bracelets, you or your sister?” (Your child might use matching or counting to find the answer.)

*Adapted from the National PTA*



## VISIT FOUR: SCIENCE

### **Purpose of the visit**

The purpose of this visit is to introduce the scientific concepts of observation and inquiry in the SC Kindergarten Learning Standards for Science.

### **Materials**

- *My Five Senses* by Alik
- Magnifying glass
- Parent handout: *The Importance of Sleep*

### **Warm-Up Activity**

Begin as always with a favorite song, poem or finger play from your classroom. Because today's activity will entail looking closely (with a magnifying glass) to gain new a new perspective on small things, one suggested possibility is "Five Little Speckled Frogs" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ff32P24IUCA>). Introduce and read the book, *My Five Senses*. Point out that we use our five senses every day and in many ways.

Introduce "Five Little Speckled Frogs" and finger play:

Five Little Speckled Frogs (*Hold five fingers (frogs) on top of your other arm (log)*)  
Sat on a speckled log  
Eating the most delicious bugs. Yum! Yum!  
One jumped into the pool (*jump a finger off the log into the pool*)  
Where it was nice and cool  
Now there are Four green speckled frogs (Hold up four fingers)

Four Little Speckled Frogs (*Hold four fingers (frogs) on top of your other arm (log)*)  
Sat on a speckled log  
Eating the most delicious bugs. Yum! Yum!  
One jumped into the pool (*jump a finger off the log into the pool*)  
Where it was nice and cool  
Now there are Three green speckled frogs

Three little speckled frogs (*Hold three fingers (frogs) on top of your other arm (log)*)  
Sat on a speckled log  
Eating the most delicious bugs. Yum! Yum!  
One jumped into the pool (*jump a finger off the log into the pool*)  
Where it was nice and cool  
Now there are Two green speckled frogs

Two little speckled frogs (*Hold two fingers (frogs) on top of your other arm (log)*)

Sat on a speckled log  
Eating the most delicious bugs. Yum! Yum!  
One jumped into the pool (*jump a finger off the log into the pool*)  
Where it was nice and cool  
Now there is one green speckled frog

One little speckled frog (*Hold one fingers (frogs) on top of your other arm (log)*)  
Sat on a speckled log  
Eating the most delicious bugs. Yum! Yum!  
It jumped into the pool (*jump a finger off the log into the pool*)  
Where it was nice and cool  
Now there is no more speckled frogs

### **Interactive Read Aloud: My Five Senses**

Today's activities are designed around the science process skill of observation – one important emphasis within South Carolina's 5K science standards. Accordingly, introduce the visit as focused on "looking closely." Suggested language is included below. As always, use your own words.

"One of the things we'll do in kindergarten is learn to think like scientists. Do you know what a scientist is? (Solicit child's responses.) That's right...a scientist is someone who is curious – a person who has lots of questions and works to find the answers. There are lots of different kinds of scientists. There are scientists who learn about animals. There are scientists who learn about rocks, and space, and bugs."

"One of the things that scientists all do is get to know the things they want to learn more about. They call that 'observation.' When you observe something, you use your senses to learn as much as you can. You look with your eyes and listen with your ears. You touch with your fingers and smell with your nose – and if it's safe to do so maybe you even taste this thing!"

"Today we're going to talk about our senses. *My Five Senses* by Alike describes what we can do with our senses."

Read *My Five Senses* with the child and parent. Be sure to incorporate the child's own "reading" of this predictable text.

### **Looking Closely with Magnifying Glasses**

After the reading, connect the text to the idea of looking/seeing and introduce the magnifying glass. Suggested language follows:

"We sure did see a lot of animals in that book, didn't we? Seeing is very important to scientists, because one thing they're always trying to do is look very closely at the things they're studying. Sometimes those things can be very small – and so scientists sometimes use special tools to help them look closely at things they can't always see too well with just their eyes."

"Have you ever seen one of these before? It's called a magnifying glass. When something is 'magnified' it means that it looks bigger so that we can see it more closely. Today I thought we might go on a 'looking hunt' and use the magnifying glass to see if we can find some things that we've never noticed before."

Decide as the situation warrants whether your hunt is best conducted indoors or out. In either case there are many opportunities to explore the otherwise “unseen.” (In fact, some of these don’t even entail your movement. You may wish to begin right where you are – looking, for example, at the lines of your fingerprints, hair follicles on your arm, the individual threads which make up your garments, etc.)

Take several minutes to explore together with the child, questioning and noting your own observations throughout. As you go, model questioning techniques and expansive, vocabulary-building “teacher talk” for the parents, who should be with you as usual. For example:

“Hey, look at what I’ve discovered! I’m noticing that this rock is covered with tiny flecks of something shiny. Look, when you turn the rock back and forth they kind of twinkle in the sunlight. Do you see them? What do you suppose they might be?”

If time permits, finish your hunt by sitting together and drawing/labeling pictures of some of the things you saw. Look for opportunities throughout to connect the child’s activities to those of scientists, incorporating specific vocabulary around “observation” and “looking closely.” Take a few moments as you go to note some of the science-related activities you anticipate incorporating across the coming year.

### **Parent Talk**

Take the opportunity to note that science presents a special opportunity for the young children with whom you work (because of their natural curiosity and wonder) and encourage the parent(s) to support their child’s own exploration of meaningful questions.

Parents can play an important role in nurturing their child’s own natural sense of wonder – not to mention their literacy and other forms of academic learning – through their consistent and active support of these interests. Suggest, for example, that they support these expressions of curiosity with visits to the library, internet searches, etc.

### **TIP: Social-Emotional Development**

Before you go, take this regular opportunity to explore whether the parent has any new questions or concerns. While this portion of the Countdown to Kindergarten experience is highly personal and will vary from individual to individual, remain mindful that the development of respectful, two-way communication is one of the program’s primary goals.

You are visiting with the goal of learning as much or more from the family as they are from you. As such, it is critical that you be on the lookout for opportunities to solicit meaningful conversation with both the child and parent(s). Ultimately it is your deep knowledge of each student that will pay Countdown to Kindergarten’s greatest long-term dividends.



## VISIT FOUR: WEEKLY ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS

1. Continue to read with your child daily.
2. Use your magnifying glass to continue exploring your home and outdoor surroundings.
3. Have a follow up discussion with your child about how scientists are people who want to learn more about something that interests them. Ask your child to consider what he might like to study if he/her was to become a scientist. Visit the local public library or do an online search with your child to learn more about a topic that he or she would like to learn more about.
4. Review the parent handout, *The Importance of Sleep*.

## **SCIENCE LEARNING STANDARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN**

*Students should be able to:*

### **Science and Engineering Practices**

- Ask and answer questions about the natural world using explorations, observations, or structured investigations.
- Develop and use models to (1) understand or represent phenomena, processes, and relationships, (2) test devices or solutions, or (3) communicate ideas to others.
- With teacher guidance, conduct structured investigations to answer scientific questions, test predictions and develop explanations.
- Analyze and interpret data from observations, measurements, or investigations to understand patterns and meanings.
- Use mathematical thinking to (1) recognize and express quantitative observations, (2) collect and analyze data, or (3) understand patterns and relationships.
- Construct explanations of phenomena using (1) student-generated observations and measurements, (2) results of investigations, or (3) data communicated in graphs, tables, or diagrams.
- Construct scientific arguments to support explanations using evidence from observations or data collected.
- Obtain and evaluate informational texts, observations, data collected, or discussions to (1) generate and answer questions about the natural world, (2) understand phenomena, (3) develop models, or (4) support explanations. Communicate observations and explanations using oral and written language.
- Construct devices or design solutions to solve specific problems or needs: (1) ask questions to identify problems or needs, (2) ask questions about the criteria and constraints of the devices or solutions, (3) generate and communicate ideas for possible devices or solutions, (4) build and test devices or solutions, (5) determine if the devices or solutions solved the problem, and (6) communicate the results.

### **Characteristics of Organisms**

- Obtain information to answer questions about different organisms found in the environment (such as plants, animals, or fungi).
- Conduct investigations to determine what plants need to live and grow (including water and light).
- Develop and use models to show how animals use their body parts to (1) obtain food and other resources, (2) protect themselves, and (3) move from place to place.
- Describe how humans use their senses to learn about the world around them.
- Construct explanations from observations of what animals need to survive and grow (including air, water, nutrients, and shelter).
- Obtain and communicate information about the needs of organisms to explain why they live in particular areas.

### **Seasonal Changes**

- Identify weather changes that occur from day-to-day.
- Compare the weather patterns that occur from season to season.
- Summarize ways that the seasons affect plants and animals.
- Define problems caused by the effects of weather on human activities and design solutions or devices to solve the problem.

### **Exploring Matter**

- Classify objects by observable properties (including size, shape, magnetic attraction, heaviness, texture, and the ability to float in water).
- Compare the properties of different types of materials (including wood, plastic, metal, cloth, and paper) from which objects are made.
- Conduct structured investigations to answer questions about which materials have the properties that are best suited to solve a problem or need.

### **Activities**

Have your child:

- Cut pieces of fabric, cork, paper and other such items into similar shapes. With eyes closed, try to identify the different materials based on touch.
- Collect leaves and sort them by size, shape, color, and texture. Have your child invent a way to measure the size using an object other than a ruler such as his hand.
- Go to a zoo and ask your child to predict what animals in the same section of the zoo have in common.
- Track the weather for several days in a row and ask your child to try to predict the next day's weather. Ask him/her to tell you why he/she predicted what would happen.
- Discover what objects will stick to a kitchen magnet.
- Identify an object by the type of material from which it is made (wood, plastic, metal, cloth, or paper).

Here are some suggested science books and websites:

### **Books:**

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle  
*My Visit to the Zoo* by Aliki  
*What Magnets Can Do* by Allan Fowler  
*Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree* by Gail Gibbons  
*The Surprise Garden* by Zoe Hall  
*A Seed Grows* by Pamela Hickman  
*Animal Babies on the Farm* (Kingfisher)

### **Websites:**

National Geographic Kids – [kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com)  
National Wildlife Federation – [nwf.org/kids](http://nwf.org/kids)  
PBS Kids – [pbskids.org/games/science](http://pbskids.org/games/science)  
AAAS Science Netlinks – [sciencenetlinks.com](http://sciencenetlinks.com)



## VISIT FIVE: SOCIAL STUDIES AND WRITING

### **Purpose of the visit**

The purposes of this visit are to introduce the SC Kindergarten Learning Standards for Social Studies (with a specific focus on community rules) and to reinforce the importance of daily writing.

### **Materials**

- *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate
- *Manners at School* by Carrie Finn
- Journals
- Parent handout: *6 Ways Parents Can Encourage Writing*

### **Warm-Up Activity**

As always, begin the visit with a favorite classroom song, poem, or finger play. Because today's visit will focus upon the importance of rules as both a SC Social Studies curriculum standard and kindergarten transition concept, you may wish to choose a song focused upon friendship (or rules) such as "The More We Get Together":

The more we get together, together, together...  
The more we get together the happier we'll be.  
For your friends are my friends and my friends are your friends,  
The more we get together the happier we'll be!

**Rules:** One key focus of the SC Social Studies Standards for Kindergarten is an introduction to the concepts of rules, laws and the consequences for breaking them. This is also an ideal topic of conversation as we prepare for the child's transition into kindergarten. Today's visit is designed to combine this key social studies content with a parental introduction to emergent writing.

Introduce the topic and the journal using your own words. Lesson will begin with a conversation about rules. Explain that rules are what we follow to keep us safe. Help the child think of some rules that he/she must follow at home (e.g., no balls in the house, no pushing his siblings). Record answers or have children attempt to record answers (via pictures).

Give the child a sheet of paper (divided in half width-wise) where they chose a rule; illustrate themselves following the rule (top) and what would happen if no one followed that rule (bottom). Talk more about the consequences of not following the rule.

Have the child consider whether or not they think this would be a good rule for their kindergarten classroom. Ask "why or why not?"



Explain that one of the things that the class spends time talking about in our class at the beginning of the year is our classroom rules. Spend a few minutes talking about what might be good rules for the classroom, helping the child record his/her thoughts.

Besides rules, the other key idea of this session is: Writing is a form of communicating meaning with print.

### **Parent Talk**

Take the opportunity before wrapping for the day to talk with the parent about the developmental nature of literacy development. Just as children gradually learn to read, so too do they mature into conventional writing. You may wish to directly incorporate review of the parent handout, *Developmental Stages of Writing*, noting that emergent writing typically follows a predictable pattern as children develop both knowledge of the printed word and the fine motor skills required to reproduce it in its conventional or “grown-up” form.

Stress the importance of encouraging the child’s early efforts to communicate meaning via print – and of never dismissing it as anything less than “real writing.”

Remind parents to look for meaningful reasons to involve their children in daily writing (letters to grandparents, refrigerator signs, labels, grocery lists, etc.).

Administer the **Post-Program Parent Survey** during this visit OR the sixth visit at the school.

As always, take a few moments to answer any new questions that the child or his/her family may have.



## VISIT FIVE: WEEKLY ACTIVITIES FOR PARENTS

1. Continue to read with your child daily.
2. Spend some time writing with your child in the journal each day. Remember that writing is a developmental process in which your child will gradually progress from using scribble-like marks and/or simple pictures to increasingly conventional or “correct” forms. Honor what your child can do now – never dismissing it as less than “real writing” – while providing many opportunities to help him/her communicate through print. You’ll be amazed at the progress you’ll see in this area over the next twelve months!
3. Review the *two-sided* parent handout, *6 Ways Parents Can Encourage Writing*.

## SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN

### Foundations of Social Studies: Children as Citizens

*Students should be able to:*

- Identify the location of his or her home, school, neighborhood, and city or town on a map
- Illustrate the features of his or her home, school, and neighborhood by creating maps, models and drawings
- Identify his or her personal connections to places, including home, school, neighborhood, and city and or town
- Recognize natural features of his or her environment, e.g., mountains and bodies of water
- Explain the purpose of rules and laws and the consequences of breaking them
- Summarize the roles of authority figures in a child's life, including those of parents and teachers
- Identify authority figures in the school and community who enforce rules and laws that keep people safe, including crossing guards, bus drivers, fire fighters, and police officers
- Explain how following rules and obeying authority figures reflect qualities of good citizenship, including honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness, and patriotism
- Recognize the importance of symbols of the United States that represent its democratic values, including the American flag, the bald eagle, the Statue of Liberty, the Pledge of Allegiance, and "The Star-Spangled Banner"
- Identify the reasons for celebrating national holidays, including Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, and Independence Day
- Describe the actions of important figures that reflect the values of American democracy, including George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Compare the daily lives of children and their families in the past and present
- Explain how changes in types of transportation and communication have affected the way families live and work together
- Recognize the ways community businesses have provided goods and services for families in the past and do so in the present
- Recognize that families of the past have made choices to fulfill their wants and needs and that families do so in the present

### **Activities**

Have your child:

- Identify your city on a local map.
- Point out geographic features in his/her community, such as lakes or mountains, that make it unique.
- Participate in a family game night. Help your child learn to follow the rules of the game, including taking turns. Discuss why following the rules makes the game fun for everyone.
- Point out people in the community who should keep him/her safe, such as the school crossing guard, police officer or teacher.
- During different activities point out American symbols of democracy such as the United States flag, the bald eagle, patriotic songs, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Discuss the significance of these symbols.
- Visit with older members of the family and discuss the ways life was different in the past.

- Identify some goods and services provided by local businesses.
- Volunteer to pick up litter or do something else that helps the community or school. Talk about how this demonstrates good citizenship.
- Read the Pledge of Allegiance to your child and discuss what each part means.

Here are some suggested social studies books and websites:

**Books:**

*Woodrow, the White House Mouse* by Peter and Cheryl Barnes

*House Mouse, Senate Mouse* by Peter and Cheryl Barnes

*Marshal, the Courthouse Mouse* by Peter and Cheryl Barnes

*Woodrow for President* by Peter and Cheryl Barnes

*Benny's Pennies* by Pat Brisson

*The Ox Cart Man* by Donald Hall

*For the Love of the Earth* by P.K. Halliman

*I Read Symbols* by Tana Hoban

*A House is a House for Me* by Mary Ann Hoberman

*Bright Eyes, Brown Skin* by Cheryl Willis Hudson and Bernette G. Ford

*O Say Can You See? America's Symbols, Landmarks, and Important Words* by Sheila Kennan

*Mapping Penny's World* by Loreen Leedy

*Who's Who in My Family?* by Loreen Leedy

*The Statue of Liberty* by Lucille Recht Penner

*Amelia Bedelia's Family Album* by Peggy Parish

**Web Sites:**

Children's Books – [cbcbooks.org](http://cbcbooks.org)

National Geographic - [nationalgeographic.com](http://nationalgeographic.com)

Public Broadcast System (PBS) – [pbs.org](http://pbs.org)

Primary Games – [primarygames.com](http://primarygames.com)

United States Mint – [usmint.gov](http://usmint.gov)

Weekly Reader – [weeklyreader.com](http://weeklyreader.com)

History of the American Flag – [usflag.org/history/pledgeofallegiance.html](http://usflag.org/history/pledgeofallegiance.html)

Lessons for Teaching Citizenship – [goodcharacter.com/pp/citizenship.html](http://goodcharacter.com/pp/citizenship.html)



## VISIT SIX: THE KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

### Purpose of the visit

The purpose of this visit is to familiarize the child and parent(s) with the kindergarten classroom itself.

### Materials

- Kindergarten classroom
- Parent handout: *10 Signs of a Great Kindergarten Classroom*
- Post-program family questionnaire

### Warm-Up Activity

This sixth and final Countdown to Kindergarten visit is a special culminating visit to the classroom itself (and may be done as a group activity designed to provide an introduction to new friends as well). While this visit is obviously one that will vary from teacher to teacher, it is suggested that you spend some time walking the students and parents through the daily schedule and permit some time for free exploration within learning centers.

If possible, you are encouraged to provide a brief tour of the school itself and arrange for the parents to be personally introduced to school administrators. Because forming long-term connections between the home and school is an important Countdown to Kindergarten goal, incorporating information about volunteer opportunities and the school P.T.O. are both strongly encouraged. You may wish to investigate having a P.T.O officer present to greet the parents – perhaps even providing each Countdown to Kindergarten family a complimentary membership.

### Parent Talk

Share the handout, *10 Signs of a Great Kindergarten Classroom*, with the parents. Allow ample time for parent questions.

If you have not already done so, administer the **Post-Program Parent Survey**.