

# Elementary School Principal's Guide

## *Hawaii State School Readiness Assessments (HSSRA)* ***Schools Ready for Children***

An assessment of school's policies and practices that support successful early learning

### **Valid Results Depend on Timely Completion**

- ◆ Please read this ***Guide*** prior to going on-line to complete the HSSRA ***Schools Ready for Children*** survey.
- ◆ **Due Date:** Submit on-line ([www.hssra.org](http://www.hssra.org)) no later than **September 20, 2013.**
- ◆ Kindergarten teachers due date for their on-line assessment, **Children Ready for School**, is also **September 20, 2013.**

"Young children are ready to have successful learning experiences in school when there is a positive interaction among the child's developmental characteristics, school practices and family and community support."

Readiness definition adopted by  
the State of Hawaii

## How to Complete the HSSRA Schools Ready for Children Survey

If you do some "homework" prior to going on-line, you can complete *Schools Ready for Children Survey* in less than **10 minutes**. This is what you will need at your fingertips to respond accurately to the survey items.

### A. Information

- ◆ If WASC accredited school, the length of the term
- ◆ Number of kindergarten teacher positions (K/SPED inclusion classroom is counted as 1 classroom/position)
- ◆ Know contents of school's Transition Plan

Be clear about elements that make up a sound transition plan for kindergarten students and families. Compare the school's written Transition Plan with these elements. Know which elements are in place at the school. For example, all kindergarten teachers should know the school has a plan and their responsibilities for implementing the plan.

See "*STEPS to Kindergarten Transition*" available from the Good Beginnings Alliance.

### B. Direct Observations of Kindergarten Classrooms

The "*Top 10 Signs of a Good Kindergarten*" on the last page of this Guide is useful for your observations of the kindergarten classrooms.

Look for the following when you observe or do your "walk throughs" of the kindergarten classrooms:

- ◆ A variety of hands-on materials and activities available and accessible to the children.

Is there little or no variety in hands-on materials such as manipulatives, puzzles,

legos, paint, etc.? Or is there a great deal of variety? Or is it somewhere in between?

- ◆ Knowledge of **daily** classroom schedule or routine for the children.

Does the daily routine alternate between active and quiet times? Do children spend most of their time in teacher-directed, large group instruction, all doing the same thing at the same time?

Is there small group instruction during the day? Is there time for individual activities?

- ◆ Do children initiate some of the things they will do each day? Do the children have some choice about what activity they will do?

Is there a sense of balance among all of the above? Is there too much of one thing and not enough of another?

Consult with your Kindergarten Grade Level Chair to know more about the daily routine and classroom activities.

### C. Understand the Survey Rating Scale

There is a 3 point scale to rate the extent to which your school has in place recognized policies and practices that support successful learning experiences for young children:

**1** = Not Yet/Beginning

The school has not yet carried out the policy or practice or is just beginning to implement the policy or practice.

**2** = Informal/Depends on Individual(s)

The school informally supports the policy or practice carried out or used by the staff. It changes depending on the individuals on staff.

**3** = Well Established/ Institutionalized

The policy or practice is firmly and officially established at the school. Staff members know and routinely carry out the policy or practice.

## D. Read and Understand the Survey Items

The survey items are listed below. Read them before you complete the on-line survey so that you are clear about what they mean.

1. The school has a special orientation for and/or invites incoming kindergarten children and their families to visit the school *before the school year begins*.
  2. The school has a systematic procedure for providing information between home/preschool and kindergarten teachers *about the strengths and needs of entering kindergarten children*.
  3. The school uses *multiple approaches* to communicate with families such as home visits, newsletters, phone calls, parent workshops, email, etc.
  4. The school *communicates information* to families about:
    - (a) child development and learning
    - (b) opportunities for parents to be involved with their child=s learning and with the school
    - (c) agencies in the community that provide social, health, and other services to families
  5. School has a *variety of ways* for parents to be involved with the school such as classroom volunteers, work at special events, fund raising, telephone tree, etc.
  6. On a regular basis, the school conducts a self-examination of its early childhood curriculum and instructional practices based on current ideas & research in early education
  7. The school has in place a well-developed *family literacy program* and it is accessible to families, well publicized, and on-going.
  8. The school offers *on-going parent workshops* on child development and learning (in contrast to a single event).
- Note: Items 7 and 8 can be done in conjunction with community groups, organizations or agencies.
9. Teachers are given opportunities for professional development *specifically focused on early childhood education*.

For items 10 and 11, direct observation of children in the classroom is necessary.

10. There are a variety of *hands-on* activities available in the classroom for kindergarten children to choose from.
11. The daily classroom schedule provides a *balance* between:
  - (a) teacher-directed and child-initiated activities
  - (b) active and quiet activities
  - (c) independent and guided activities
  - (d) large group, small group, and individual activities
12. The school has a *written* Transition Plan to assist parents and entering children and *includes actions for improvement*.
13. This item deals with how teachers are assigned to kindergarten classrooms

## Use of the Survey Results

### A. Improvement Plans: School Improvement, Accreditation, Academic and Financial Plan

#### Raw Data

Print your responses to the on-line survey prior to exiting the on-line survey. Share the print-out with your staff and your School Community Council. Questions you may want to ask:

- Are there certain items that need improvement?
- How can improvement be accomplished?
- What resources do we have at the school and in the community to help?

#### Categorized Data: School Profile

Group the item response into 5 categories. The items and categories are given below.

Overall, what categories are strengths? Which need improvement? Which should the school focus energy and resources on?

#### Categories and Items

- ◆ Transition: Home/Preschool to Kindergarten  
Items 1, 2, 12

- ◆ Communication with Families  
Items 3, 4 a, b, and c
- ◆ Parent Involvement  
Items 5, 7, 8
- ◆ School Improvement in Early Education  
Items 6, 9, 13
- ◆ Kindergarten Classroom Practices  
Items 10, 11a, b, c, and d

Create a bar graph of the items within each Category. The graph gives you a clear picture of strengths and areas to improve.

See a sample bar graph of the School Profile at the end of this document.

## **B. Track School Readiness Improvement Over Time**

The *Schools Ready for Children* survey data are summarized and the mean/average scores of the five Categories are reported for each school, complex, and state. These HSSRA reports show trend results across three years: SY 2010-11, SY 2011-12, and now this year, SY 2012-13. They are posted each fall on Accountability Resource Center Hawaii at <http://arch.k12.hi.us>

Policy makers of early childhood initiatives look at these data over time to see if the infusion of effort, resources, and funds has made a difference in how our youngest public school children are educated.

## **Have a Question? Contact:**

Good Beginnings Alliance for technical assistance and survey use, call Jacce Mikulanec at (808) 531-5502 or email at [jmikulanec@goodbeginnings.org](mailto:jmikulanec@goodbeginnings.org)

School Renewal and Redesign Section for program assistance, call Geriann Hong at (808) 203-5526 or email via Lotus Notes (Geri Ann Hong).

System Evaluation and Reporting Section for survey assistance, call Tina Winquist at (808) 733-4008 or email via Lotus Notes.

## **Other Resources:**

◆ *Question and Answer Guide to HSSRA* at <http://arch.k12.hi.us>

◆ *Leading Early Childhood Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do* (2005). National Association of Elementary School Principals. Contact [www.naesp.org](http://www.naesp.org)

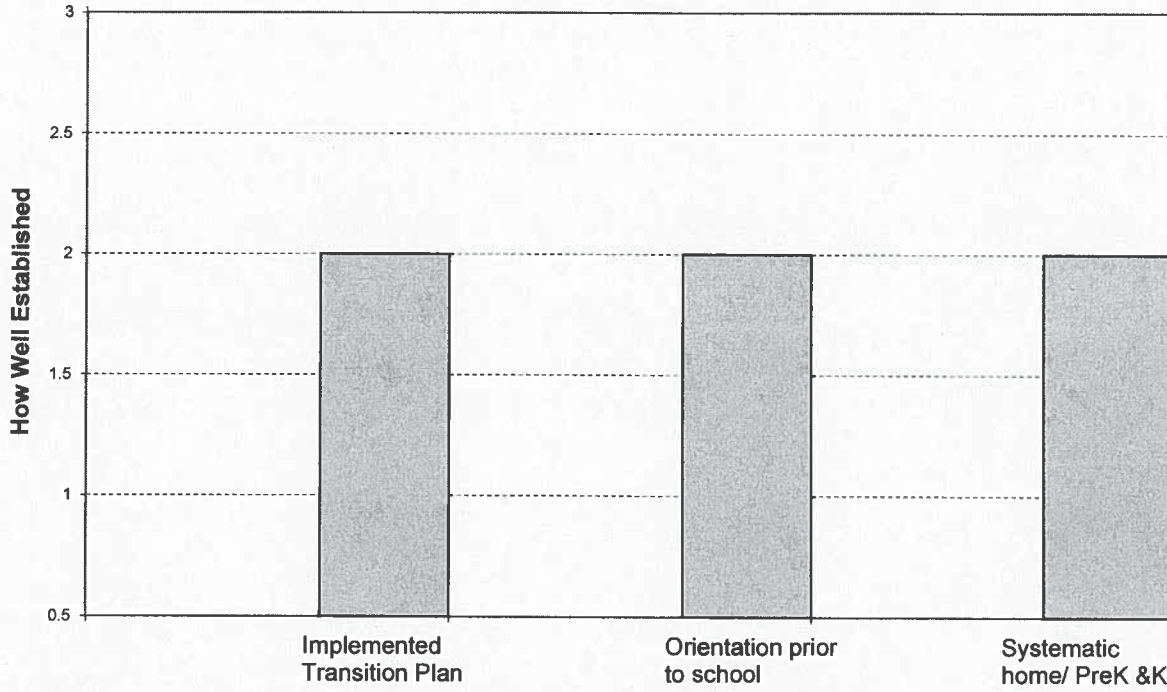
◆ *Steps to Kindergarten Transition: A Guide to a Successful Transition to Kindergarten* (2004). Hawaii School Readiness Task Force, published by Good Beginnings Alliance at

## **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.**

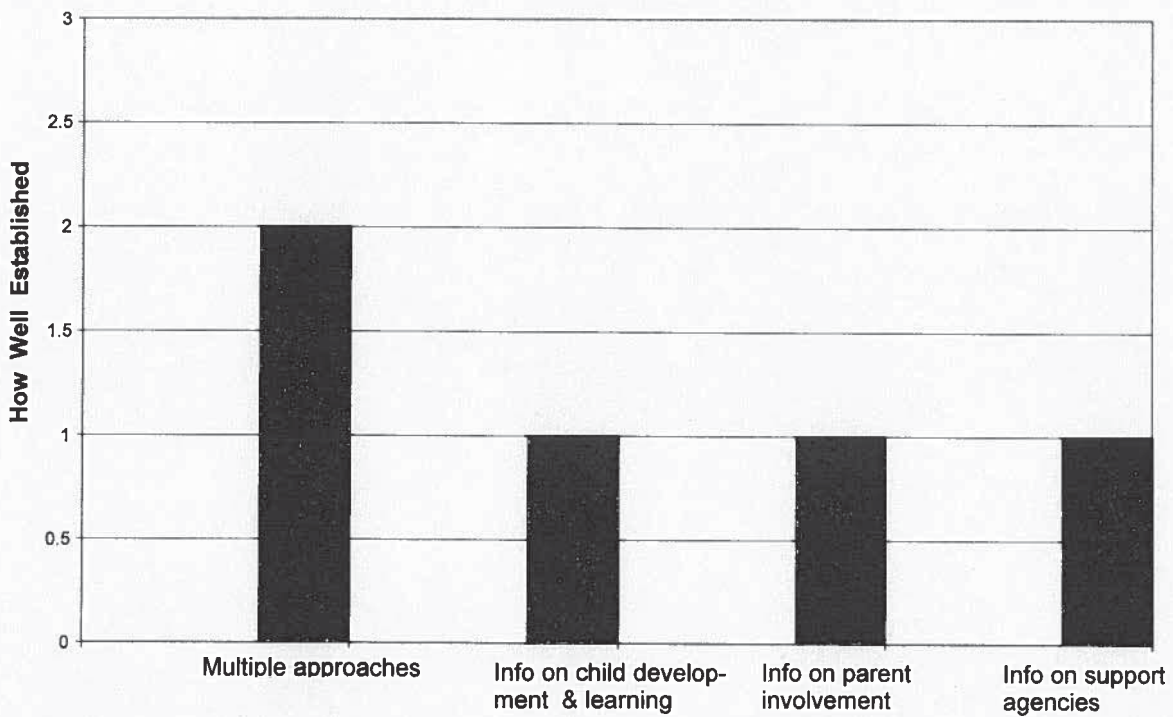
◆ *Are Younger Children Less Capable? Age and Third Grade Achievement in Hawaii* (2006) Hawaii Educational Policy Center, UH-Manoa. Go to [www.hawaii.edu/hepc](http://www.hawaii.edu/hepc)

### SAMPLE of BAR GRAPHS of School Policies and Practices Overall School Mean = 1.7

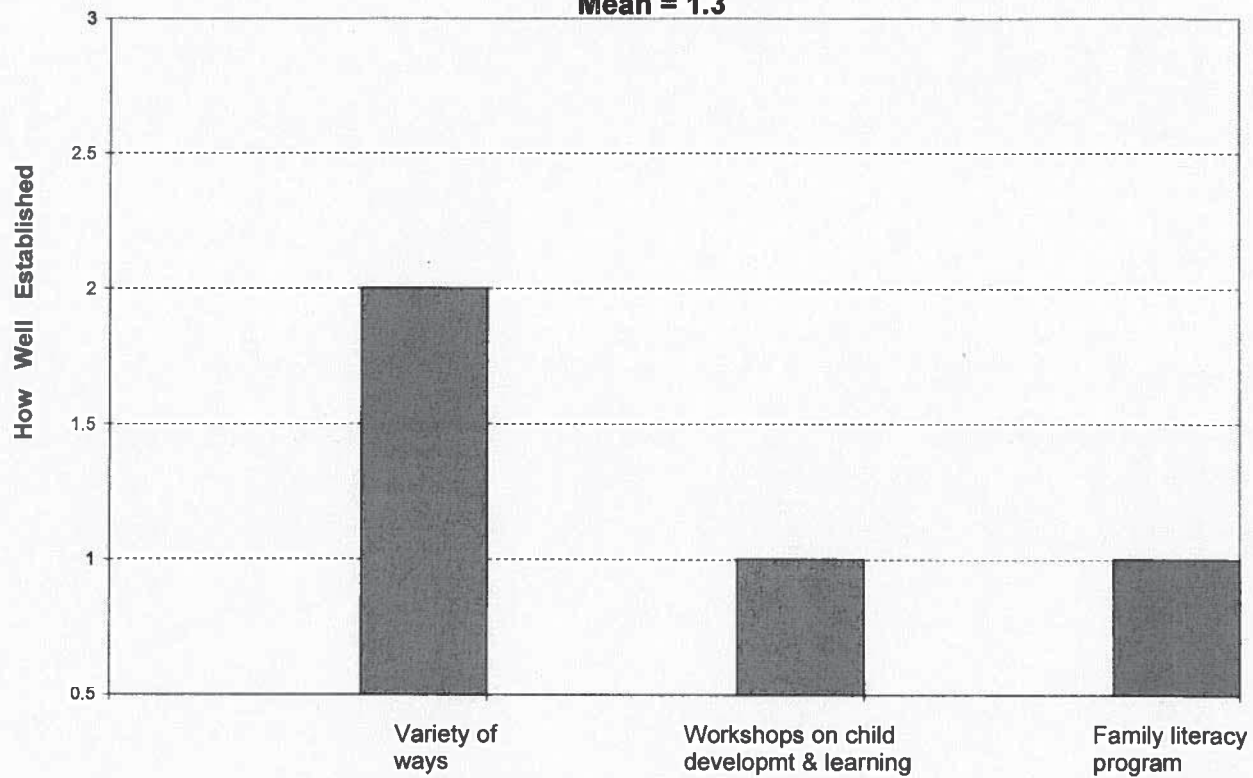
**Transition from Home/Preschool to Kindergarten**  
Mean = 2.0



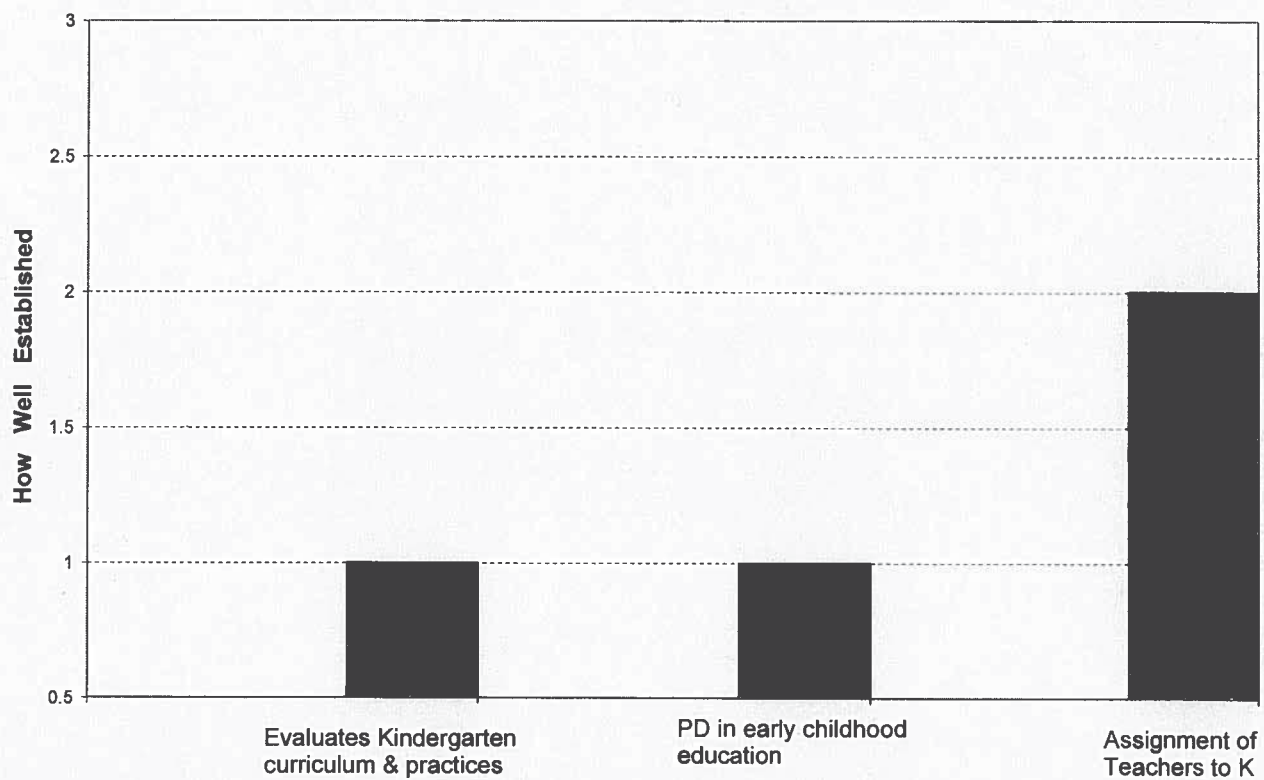
**Communication with Kindergarten Families**  
Mean = 1.3



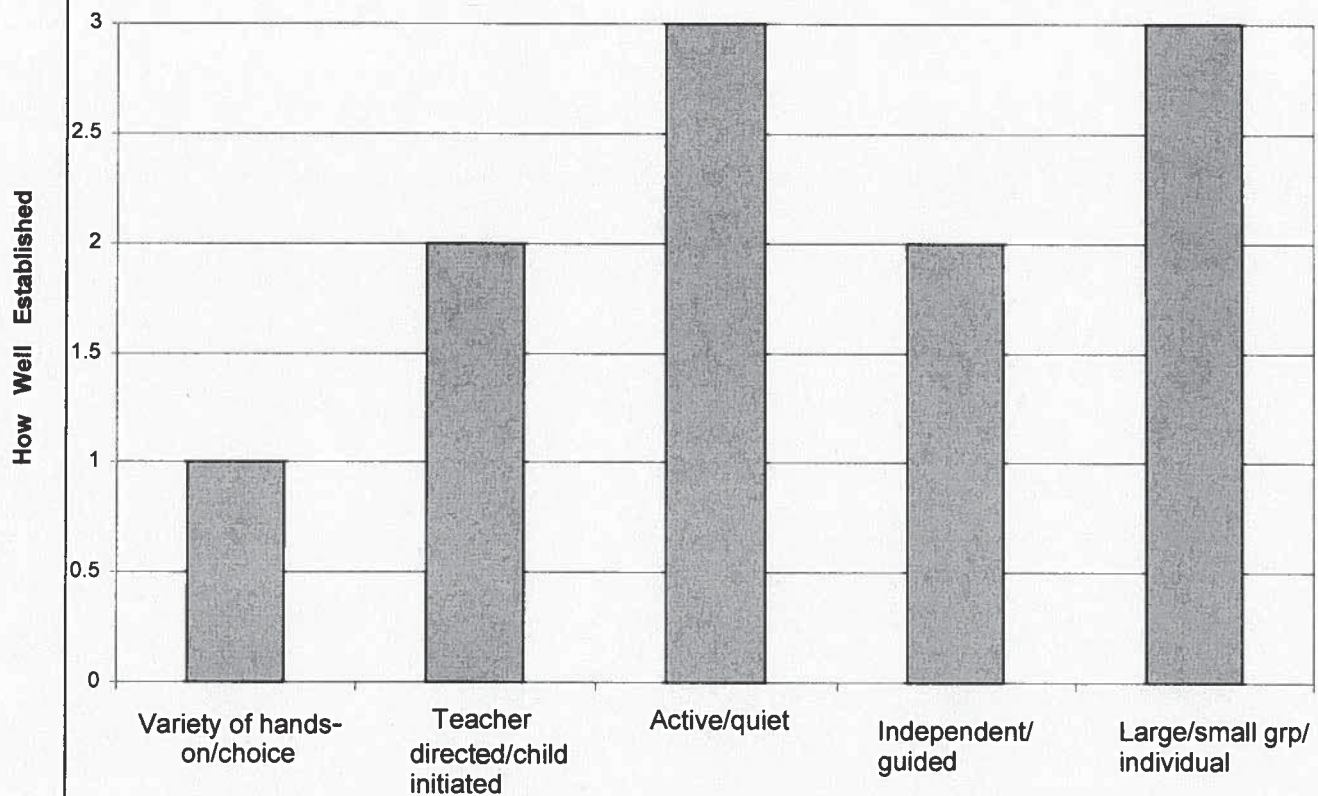
### Parent Involvement Mean = 1.3



### School Improvement in Early Education Mean = 1.3



### Kindergarten Classroom Practices Mean = 2.2



# Top 10 Signs of a Good Kindergarten Classroom

Kindergarten is a time for children to expand their love of learning, their general knowledge, their ability to get along with others, and their interest in reaching out to the world. While Kindergarten marks an important transition from preschool to the primary grades, it is important that children still get to be children—getting kindergarteners ready for elementary school does not mean substituting academics for play time, forcing children to master first grade “skills,” or relying on standardized tests to assess children’s success. Kindergarten “curriculum” actually includes such events as snack time, recess, and individual and group activities in addition to those activities we think of as traditionally educational. Developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms encourage the growth of children’s self-esteem, their cultural identities, their independence and their individual strengths. Kindergarten children will continue to develop control of their own behavior through the guidance and support of warm, caring adults. At this stage, children are already eager to learn and possess an innate curiosity. Teachers with a strong background in early childhood education and child development can best provide for children what they need to grow physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Here are 10 signs of a good kindergarten classroom:

- 1 Children are playing and working with materials or other children. They are not aimlessly wandering or forced to sit quietly for long periods of time.
- 2 Children have access to various activities throughout the day, such as block building, pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as legos, pegboards, and puzzles. Children are not all doing the same things at the same time.
- 3 Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend time only with the entire group.
- 4 The classroom is decorated with children’s original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and dictated stories.
- 5 Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. Exploring the natural world of plants and animals, cooking, taking attendance, and serving snack are all meaningful activities to children.
- 6 Children work on projects and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Filling out worksheets should not be their primary activity.
- 7 Children have an opportunity to play outside every day that weather permits. This play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
- 8 Teachers read books to children throughout the day, not just at group story time. Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help.
- 9 Because children differ in experiences and background, they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way.
- 10 Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel safe sending their child to kindergarten. Children are happy; they are not crying or regularly sick.

Individual kindergarten classrooms will vary, and curriculum will vary according to the interests and backgrounds of the children. But all developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms will have one thing in common: the focus will be on the development of the child as a whole.

Reproduction of this material is freely granted, provided credit is given to the National Association for the Education of Young Children.