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**Preparing your child for kindergarten success starts early**

**PAGE** (July 27, 2016) – For young kids entering kindergarten, now is the ideal time to instill the skills that will make the transition to school smoother. Families can use fun, everyday activities to help kids develop basic skills to build on and prepare them for kindergarten success. First Things First has gathered tips to help families get their little ones ready for success in kindergarten.

“When we look at education as a continuum which begins at ‘the cradle’ and proceeds to a career and beyond, doing all we can to support school readiness ensures better success as a child makes this journey,” said Steve Peru, President/CEO of United Way of Northern Arizona, sponsors of the KinderCamp summer transistion to kindergarten programs across Coconino County. “This effort involves the entire community.”

**Below are tips to help your family have a fun, easy transition to kindergarten:**

* Read with your child at least 20 minutes per day. Try books that repeat words; involve activities like counting, identifying colors, objects or letters; or, are about things your child likes. Ask questions like, “What do you think happens next?”
* Talk with your child everywhere – at home, in the car, at the store. Make up stories or songs about your outings.
* Writing begins with scribbling. Give your child safe writing tools to play with, like crayons, chalk or markers and blank paper. Ask your child to tell you about their drawings.
* Schedule a visit with your child’s doctor and dentist. Health problems make concentrating difficult.
* Teach your child how to use the bathroom by themselves, to wash their hands after going to the bathroom and before eating, to blow their nose and sneeze into their elbow.

**Before the first day:**

* Talk with your child about what to expect during the school day and types of after-school activities they may be involved in. The more details kids know, the less anxious they will feel. Rehearse for the big day with test-runs of the new routine:
  + Wake up with plenty of time to get ready.
  + Fix a healthy breakfast together.
  + Lay out clothes the night before.
  + If your child takes a school bus, walk to the bus stop and talk about boarding and where to sit. If you will drive to school, talk about landmarks along the way.
  + Pack a nutritious, tasty lunch and practice opening things together. Remind them that teachers or lunch staff can help if needed.

Even if you don’t have kindergarteners this year, it’s never too early to start helping kids prepare. Children who have positive early childhood experiences tend to score higher on school readiness assessments and are more likely to do well in school and graduate.

By turning everyday moments into learning moments, we can send our children to school with the skills – and the love of learning – that will help them succeed in kindergarten and beyond!

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**About First Things First** – First Things First is a voter-created, statewide organization that funds early education and health programs to help kids be successful once they enter kindergarten. Decisions about how those funds are spent are made by local councils staffed by community volunteers. To learn more, visit azftf.gov.