



## MACARTHUR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL CLINIC

### Transition to Kindergarten

### What to expect from a cognitive perspective 4-5 year olds

The preschool period is a time of rapid growth along a number of developmental measures, not the least of which is children's thinking abilities, or cognition. Across this time period, children learn to use symbolic thought, the hallmarks of which are language and symbol use, along with more advanced pretend play. Children this age show concentration of thought, meaning their focus is limited to one aspect of a situation or object. Memory abilities come online and children show their own ways of categorising, reasoning, and problem solving. So what do we expect of children when they are transitioning to Kindergarten?

### General milestone guidelines

<b>Cognitive Developmental milestones</b>	
<b>Age 4</b>	<b>Age 5</b>
Take joy in counting up to twenty by memory, and realise the general idea of number up to three	Make drawings with better information, for instance, a house with windows, a door with a roof and a chimney
Is able to sort objects in groups.	Identifies his/her name and makes an effort to write it
Has developed memory skills, for instance, he/she is able to recall a special event, such as when his/her grandparents came some months ago.	Expresses ideas about the past, present and future, with a better awareness of the occasion
Is able to give reasons and find answers to problems.	Is able to speak in his/her manner of speaking and grammatically correct
Puts in much information in his/her drawings, such as joining hands and fingers to drawings of people.	Enjoys very much to be read stories and will then perform them out in detail later, either alone or with friends
Mostly mixes up event with make-up story.	Takes joy in jokes and riddles
Is able to say nursery rhymes and songs, with few mistakes.	Can make a choice for a special sport or craft activity
Performs in puppet shows and scenes he has seen on television.	Plays difficult games on the floor with small portrait physical things small world play
Becomes more friendly and talkative in role-play games with others.	Plays without anyone or with others
Takes joy in role-play, which helps him/her to deal successfully with strong feelings.	Takes joy in expanding role-play with others.

### Private Speech / self-talk

During the ages of 4-5 years of age children are more willing (in fact at times demand) to attempt tasks on their own of greater challenge. During these activities and tasks children begin to talk to themselves. Termed private speech, this self-talk is highly prevalent in children ages 3-7. Thereafter, it becomes inner speech or internal thought.

According to theorists, children's use of language in this way is the foundation of their executive function skills, including attention, memorization, planning, impulse control, etc.

### Concentration ability:

By the middle of Kindergarten, you may notice a shift in the concentration levels of your 4- 5 year-olds. Many have begun to focus on activities for longer periods of time and are even able to return to an activity after a break of a few hours or days. This is one of the major transitions that occur in kindergarten, and it is one that will greatly assist children in later schooling.

It may sound simplistic, but 4-5 year-olds learn to concentrate by doing things that interest them. However, what interests children can vary greatly.

### Factors that affect concentration levels

Children's cognitive, linguistic, and motor-skill levels also affect their willingness and ability to concentrate. If an activity is too challenging in any one of these areas, children either may choose not to participate or may stay with the activity only for a short time. For example, children who choose blocks over art tend to feel more confident in and comfortable with large-motor skills than small-motor skills. The role of parents and educators is to support children in developing concentration for activities of their choosing (by providing ample time for them to choose each day). At the same time, we need to gently encourage children to experiment and stay with activities that challenge skills they're not as comfortable with (by providing entry-level activities that are both inviting and potentially successful).

Children's moods also have an effect on their ability to focus. If a child comes to school upset, tired, or overly excited, he may be too distracted to concentrate on an activity, particularly a new or challenging one. By understanding that his lack of concentration is related to a mood, you can help him deal with the cause (the mood), not the symptom (the lack of focus). Once the cause has been sensitively addressed, the symptom just may improve.

### What you can do to improve concentration levels

Here are some tips to help children learn to concentrate:

- **Provide extended periods of time for children to do independent activities.** Offer a wide variety of activities on different skill levels from which children can choose during independent activity time.
- **Be aware of individual differences.** Find ways for children who tend to do only those activities they feel comfortable with to be successful in a variety of learning experiences.

