Creating young thinkers with great futures

10 tips for preparing your Kindergarten students for Primary School

Worried about the transition from Kindergarten to Primary School? Here are 10 ways to help your learners get a head start!

1. Show them!
Take time during the year to visit their future classroom and meet their future teacher. Walk around the room and talk about the things you can see, similarities to their kindergarten classroom, and the type of activities they might do in first grade.

2. Teach the routines
Talk to the first grade English teacher and find out what routines they use in class. For example, if there is a ‘hello’ song that they use then introduce it to your lessons two months before the end of the year. That way the students will experience something familiar when they join the new class.

3. Get them to try
First graders need to be more independent learners. When you do a new activity in class let your students figure things out for themselves, and wait as long as possible before helping them. Using encouraging language like “You can do it!” or “Let’s try again!” helps them to build confidence in themselves and learn from mistakes.
4. Practice skills
Discover what skills the children need for first grade, and practice them in class. For example, first graders might need to copy from the board, and to practice this skill, you could carry out some tracing activities and then encourage your students to copy words or sentences they have traced independently.

5. Check for dependencies
If you have access to it, look at the first grade curriculum and find out whether your students need any specific language to be successful. For example, if you find that the students will be covering numbers 20 – 100 in the first unit of their first grade course book, then make sure that they leave kindergarten confident in numbers 1 to 20.

6. Teach behaviours
Kindergarten can often be much more chaotic than first grade. Teaching your students to listen to each other, take turns, or raise their hands before answering can help them to meet the expectations of their first grade teacher more effectively. Why not start encouraging the same expectations in your classroom by asking them to wait their turn, or answer their classmates’ questions.

7. Increase their focus
First grade activity times tend to be longer than in kindergarten. A few months before the end of term you can gradually begin to increase the amount of time you spend on each activity, by 30 seconds at a time, and try to build them up from 5 minute to 10 minute blocks.

8. Talk to your co-teachers
You might not have many hours with the students each week, so it is important to talk about what you are doing with your colleagues. If you all work together to prepare the children for the coming year by using similar techniques and routines, then the students will be better supported for the transition.

9. Talk to them
It is possible that the children have worries or concerns about first grade. Use a lesson on feelings and emotions to talk about first grade and answer any questions that might come up.

10. Prepare for summer
Between kindergarten and first grade is summer, and it is easy for children to forget everything they learned in a few short weeks! Why not prepare some suggestions for their parents? Share vocabulary lists, suggest some language games, and send them home with a few first grade songs or books to look at. Encourage their parents to practice English at home so they will feel more confident when the school year begins.