

## **Mother Goose Nursery School's Methods of Preparing Children for School**

It is difficult to give an exact and overall explanation what 'being mature for school' term means; it is used by both psychology and pedagogy. The term usually covers those **physical, psychological (mental and cognitive), and social** functions whose more significant development is possible at the age of 6, and whose appearance is necessary for the adjustment to school life. These functions are inevitable conditions of successful learning at school. Around the age of 6, changes can be discovered in the child's physical and mental development. Of course, every child embodies an individual personality, which means that the time of change cannot be attached to the same period of lifetime uniformly; the interval of change is very wide. The change is set in motion by the process of maturity and ends at the age of 7 or 8 when a state of poise is reached. The child develops as a result of learning which reacts on the process of maturity. The problem arises from the fact that the process of maturity is not fulfilled by the end of the kindergarten age, which means that the child goes to school in the "storm" of changes: new circumstances, new environment, and unknown people. If the child faces requirements that are beyond his or her abilities, the child might fail. In order to ease this transition, the flexible school beginning has been introduced, while our nursery school guarantees activities that help children prepare for school. Preparing children for school is an educational process carried out through the framework of the kindergarten education. This preparation offered by the nursery school eases the child's adjustment to school life, and helps reach that level of development at which the child becomes mature for school. The preparatory process of our nursery school that follows and lives up to the changes of society's expectations is presented bellow.

### **Physical maturity:**

Around the age of 6, the shape and the proportion of the body changes: the body becomes proportionally developed, and the movement is properly arranged. The dominance of either the right or the left hand is stabilized, the child moves surely, the precision movement coordination develops to a great extent, the change of the teeth starts, the rate of demand for movement increases, while that of sleeping declines.

In our nursery school we ensure the physical development with proper nutrition, physical exercises, being outdoors in the fresh air, and with swimming. During physical exercises we strive to make children acquainted with as many forms of motion as possible, help them overcome their fears, develop the ability to think in terms of the consequences of the deeds,

and lay down the bases of their good sense of judgment. During the activities children learn the names of the body parts unconsciously, get to know their bodies, their bearing capacities, they see clear what they are capable of, and they realize that they can develop by practicing. The musculature and coordination develop as well. During the activities feelings also awaken in children, and they learn how to rejoice over their successes, and how to tackle the situation if they fail, etc. Of course, the socializing effect of playing together, success or failure is not a negligible factor. From the perspective of writing, and the way of holding the pencil, the precision motor is very important, and it can be developed especially by arts and craft activities (threading pearls, plasticine modeling) and by different finger exercises. Right hand writing must not be forced, because it requires the reorganization of functions located in the brain, and disturbs the process of development. Apart from the fact that the territories of functions in case of left-handed children are located at different part of the brain, these children do not differ from their right-handed fellows in any other respect. We should not force them use their right hands.

**Psychic-mental maturity:**

By the end of the kindergarten age, the controlling and regulating functions of the cortex increase, the voluntary control and the self-control develops. The intentional attention comes to the foreground, which extends to 2-3 things at the same time, and becomes more and more durable. Perceptibility is more reliable. The child becomes capable to perceive and categorize the shapes and things on the basis of several criteria. The child orientates confidently in time and space. Higher rank of emotions appears such as sense of duty, responsibility and commitment. The rate of emotional aspect of thinking reduces. The child is able to organize its knowledge about the world and about himself to a certain extent, the child communicates clearly and with pleasure. Openness characterizes the child's field of interest. He becomes capable to adjust to the expectations and the norms. The intentional remembrance develops, and the child does revision deliberately for the sake of learning. The signs of maturity for work appear, and this state is characterized by being conscious of the task and persistence. Their ethical sense develops as well.

Making children acquainted with our environment in as complex and thorough way as possible is a basic principle in our nursery school. During the activities we present new knowledge to the children according to topics, as a result of which children acquire a global knowledge about their environment: about mathematical, physical, chemical, biological,

geographical, etc. phenomena, relations, musical basics, arts and craft techniques, or customs, etc.

During the **mathematical activities** children get to know the geometrical shapes and their characteristics, we make operations with quantities and sets (comparison, categorization on the basis of characteristic, learning the meanings of terms such as 'less/fewer', 'more', or 'same'), we practice directions, we familiarize children with relation signs, and we measure quantities. We teach children to count till 20, we prepare sequences, we practice ordinal numbers, we get to know the term 'symmetry' etc. Taking the characteristics of age into account we do not “teach” the writing of numbers, but we begin to teach children to recognize figures in a way that fits their level of development, and to connect quantity with figures. We play logical games.

For the sake of developing **music and poem** fields we make the following activities: the length of the poems and songs is getting longer and longer in the course of time to broaden children's memories, we recognize melody on the basis of initial note, we play question-answer games, we familiarize children with classical music during listening activities, we teach how to play musical instruments, we develop sense of rhythm, we aspire to aesthetic movement by teaching dance-steps, we demonstrate melodic line with our hands, and by the end of the term we get to know the staff.

We dramatize our poems and tales during which the child's fantasy is activated, the vocabulary extends, the stock of expressions becomes richer, and the child overcomes one's fears through playing. The child gets acquainted with puppetry.

Within the framework of **environmental education** children get acquainted with their bodies, their senses, their own rhythm of development, the members of the family, the rules of traffic, the seasons, the parts of the day, the phenomena of nature, the animals, the plants, the protection of environment etc. The implementation of these activities is carried out in a playful way, with talking, excursions, and observations (e.g.: we draw conclusions from physical or chemical characteristics, phenomena). We solve several test-sheets relevant to the topic to develop children's concentration and consciousness of work. In the interest of understanding tasks and their successful solution, the development of the consciousness of work is inevitable. That is why the exercises are getting more complex, and of course, more time-consuming, so children get used to tasks gradually that require more concentration. The primary aim at this stage as well is to make children successful.

During the **arts and craft** activities children's precision-motor and sense of beauty develops, they get acquainted with shapes, colors, techniques, and different kinds of materials. The

child's drawing reveals much about the level of development, the emotional state and the psychic. In the group preparing for school we aim at the proportional drawing, and the reflection of reality. We strive for achieving these aims without disturbing the child's creative imagination. At certain class activities the exact copying of the sample is the aim, which helps develop focusing and the realization of spatial relations and promotes aspiration for precision. All these abilities are essential in the child's further phases of development (e.g.: copying what is written on the board at school).

### **Social maturity:**

Social maturity covers such meanings as independence, the appearance of demand for community, the willingness to adapt to community, rule-consciousness, emotionally balanced state, and the readiness to cooperate not only with the fellows, but also with the teachers. Being mature for work is closely related to social maturity: the child is looking forward to get new exercises, the child is keenly interested in solving them, and the child successfully finishes them. The child's social behavior develops in the process of kindergarten education and in the family through playing and through different kinds of activities. That is why the daily connection with the parents and the teachers' up-to-date knowledge about the changes children go through at home are essential.

In our nursery school for the sake of the development of social maturity, we play such controlled role plays and rule games (e.g.: board games, card games) within the framework of the school-preparation program in which children can test themselves, in which they might get into unfamiliar situations, and in which they can acquire the problem-solving ability. The common playing and the joy of work carried out together strengthen children's community mindedness. For example, the cultivation of bean by the children themselves or the tending of the garden strengthens their sense of duty and responsibility. The teacher's personalized requests awaken in the child the feeling of being important for the group and the feeling that 'I can help others with my work'. These feelings make children have a real sense of achievement. The behavior of the kindergarten teacher serves as a model for children during the entire process of education. That is why we consider the following expectations the teacher's most important duties: the teacher should do his/her best in a way to keep the protection of justice in mind at any time, the teacher should answer children's questions, the teacher should not mislead children, and the children should keep the promises. Our nursery school develops children's behavior by keeping our nursery school's behavior norms and customs. As a result of our moral tales children's sense of ethics develops; the feeling of

solidarity, cooperation and the inner urge to help others appear. We strive for the achievement of total independence, in our group preparing for school children try to tie the shoelaces, we aim at reaching the stage of total self-service during meal and washing, and we aspire for developing the feeling of demand for order and aesthetical environment.

The level of maturity can be measured with examination, but this examination is not obligatory in nursery schools. Of course, at parents' request we carry out this examination.

We hope can be of help with this issue. Feel free to address our teachers with questions and ideas.

MGN Team