



PANEL DISCUSSION- KINDERGARTEN READINESS NIGHT

Panelists

- Sarah Collins– Five Mile teacher and parent of TT grad
- Wendy Morgan- Kindergarten Teacher at STEM K-8 West Seattle
- Genya Scharks–K/1 Teacher at Pathfinder
- Erin Hoener– program supervisor at TT

Thank you panelists for being here tonight!

1. There are many ways for a child to be “ready” for kindergarten. Among the many skills, which skills do you believe to be the most important? Follow up: How did/do you support your child/children to develop these skills?

-S: Academically, my daughter is right in the thick of it but she needs social & emotional support support

-G: Independence, get lunchbox and backpack, get shoes on...

-E: Getting kids ready to learn so their brains are ready for the rest of the day. Competence and High scope steps of conflict resolution.

-W: Take it slow when K begins, take it slow with after school enrichment. Keep life simple the first few months.

-R: You can expect a lot of meltdowns in the first month, be soft and gentle with how your child is feeling and experiencing K.

2. A lot of families feel pressure for their child to be ‘academically ready.’ Can you shed light into academic readiness?

-W: Being able to write at least some of the letters in their name. Basic cutting skills or having experience with tools like scissors.

-G: We’ve noticed in last 3 years especially kids are coming in with more skills. Best thing you can do is just read to your kids. If you know your kid takes a little longer to learn something, you can expose them to it early to make the road a little easier at the beginning.

3. What exposure does Tiny Trees provide to academics in a play-based setting?

-E: Active participatory learning. Letter recognition, letter hunts. Keep joy and curiosity fed.

-S: Name tag letter links. Later will be signing in themselves. Playdough letters, broken keyboards, singing songs, a lot of unexpected learning in TT

-R: Provide authentic learning experiences like going to the grocery store. Provide good learning opportunities. It will propel their understanding of why learning is important

4. There are many, many different kinds of Kindergarten options in King County, ranging from option schools, to private schools, to neighborhood schools----a lot of jargon. Do you have any advice for helping families to decide where to go or what information is helpful for wading through the options?

-W: What's the most helpful is to go to school websites of schools you're interested in. Look for events at those schools and experience the culture. See how it feels. Open houses/tours. Choose schools that are and aren't on your radar to find a good fit. It takes times, but it's time well spent. Go to PTA meetings...Talk to teachers in the higher grade levels. School events are great opportunities to see school as a whole.

-S: Go and check it out. Don't rely on school ratings, which are largely based on irrelevant information.

-E: go and visit the school, meet teachers and staff and understand what the community feels like.

5. For Genya & Wendy, can you share more about your programs?

Pathfinder (option school): emphasizes camping and outdoor education. Gardening and expeditions. Project based learnings, a lot of fieldtrips, projects to make the world a better place. Reading/writing/math/science. social-emotional emphasis has moved district wide.

STEM K-8 (option school): project based learning, similar to pathfinder. Collaboration and teamwork. Option schools are a work in progress, there's excitement from the admin and PTA to create hands-on opportunities.

Home Schooling (from Sarah): Greater Seattle area has a very robust homeschool community. It could be a good option for you- social media presence is big.

6. Parents: What is one thing you wish you had known as a preschool parent going into Kindergarten? Teachers: What is one thing you wish families knew going into Kindergarten?

-G: expect the very worst from your child. They will be a mess when they get home. Tired. The first month, month and a half are rough. Don't overschedule. Recommend jumpstart.

-W: jumpstart is an amazing program. Home connections. Try to schedule it in. remember you're a team with your teacher.

-S: look at recess schedules and think about what amount of time your child is spending outdoors.

-E: understand that your child may crave more outdoor time when they get home.
Recognize teachers want to be on your team. Use time before school starts to make sure your student is set up and supported.

-R: Theme of advocacy. Partner with teachers to set your child up from success.

Final words?

-S: Do everything you can the night before to prep for the next day

-G: your child will land where they are supposed to. As you look for schools, know that it will all end up being okay. You're not locked in for your whole life. Give yourself some room to breathe.

Parent Questions

Bathroom expectations?

G: should be independent. Accidents happen. They should be able to change their clothes on their own. They will get reminders. The distance to bathroom can vary from school to school. K-8 schools will have different bathrooms from middle school kids.

What would be a red flag on an open house? Obviously if you child has an adverse reaction...

G: Gut instinct. What feel do you get when you go?

S: think about your values ahead of time and evaluate as you go to open houses

R: desks in rows is a red flag, or ask questions

Benefits or drawbacks to k-8 vs k-5?

W: look for the schedule to see how much interaction/crossover there is

G: older kids are lovely with the young grades. 8th grade TA. When you get to middle school there are less options than a full middle school (not three language choices for example). K-8 is great because your child can stay at the same school the whole time.

We have a student w/a late August Bday, any readiness cues we can look to if we're on the cusp of deciding?

W: It's a family decision, you know your child best. My first response is: the gift of an additional year of preschool can be a benefit.

E: have that conversation with your TT teacher, but start enrollment process now.

G: It's usually not the academic part but the social/emotional part that's the sticker. If you can accommodate it, I'd recommend it.

S: only 5 once.

How to kids who've had that extra year fair?

W: The seem grounded, calm and not overwhelmed. It's lovely to have that because they have an energy and affect on the rest of the kids, as role models and educators for other kids. It creates a positive exchange, they are still learning and being challenged, but more confident.

R; today's K is yesterday's 1st grade.

How to schools, teachers and parents support a wide age range of children?

G: small group work. Hit them where they're at. Lessons are more diverse and open ended to target kids where they're at.

How can you help an underperforming school?

G: Get involved. Go to the school and ask them what you can help with.

How can we help highly spirited energetic children?

W: Simple things come to mind. Get used to storytimes at libraries to get used to sitting still with other kids around. Give them opportunities to practice for short amounts of time.

Celebrate it.

E: Talk to your teachers and learn their techniques.

R: games or songs promoting a delay in gratification.

G: look into school schedule. The playground opens 15 minutes before school, maybe they can run ahead of time.

Will there be open houses before registration opens?

G: Yes, there should be! Check with the schools to find out when. Recommend attending