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## Is Your Child Ready for Kindergarten?

*Submitted by Theresa Mahoney*

Kindergarten is an exciting time for kids, but it can fill parents with trepidation.

For Lafayette resident Katherine Tanner, the thought of sending her daughter, Madison, to kindergarten sends shivers down her spine. "I'm really nervous about whether Maddie is ready," Tanner says. "She has a lot of friends in her preschool, but only one of them is going to be at the new school." And while Tanner is certain the preschool Madison attends is a good one, she still isn't 100 percent sure her daughter is ready.

"Will she be able to handle the longer days? The school work?" Tanner wonders.

Karen Goodshaw, principal at St. Perpetua School in Lafayette, says kindergarten readiness means being prepared with the basic skills to ensure your child's success as a student. "These skills fall into four basic categories: academic development, motor skills, social readiness, and personal care," says Goodshaw. "It is important to realize that these skills develop at different times and rates for all children. Also recognize that your child will continue to obtain skills after the initial application process. We encourage parents to understand that it is not necessary for a child to master all of the skills at the time of 'readiness testing,' which at St. Perpetua School is Feb. 9."

Goodshaw says there are a variety of ways to determine a child's individual readiness for the kindergarten classroom: a publisher-created kindergarten assessment, feedback from the preschool teacher, and information from parents regarding developmental milestones should all be weighted in that decision.

According to Goodshaw and St. Perpetua development director Natalie Deininger, there are several ways parents can help their children prepare for that first day of kindergarten:

"Give your child opportunities to interact with text and develop appropriate verbal skills to practice academic development like singing the alphabet, or finding letters on a page or in a puzzle and see how they come together in the words of a favorite bedtime story," she says. "Improve your child's fine motor skills with Play-Doh, coloring, and experimenting with written expression."

"Encourage the development of gross motor skills, like balance and coordination, by playing ball games and spending time on play structures; Practice social readiness through play dates," adds Deininger. "And foster your child's independence by having them take care of basic personal needs, such as going to the bathroom and getting themselves dressed."

Giving a child these opportunities can not only prepare them for kindergarten, but can help reduce a parent's anxiety as well.

St. Perpetua School is hosting an annual open house on Jan. 27 following the regular 9:30 a.m. Children's Mass. For more information on any of these events, or to schedule a school tour, visit [www.stperpetua.org](http://www.stperpetua.org) or call (925) 284-1640.

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