**TEXT 2.**

**Kindergarten**

Ideally, kindergarten will be a smooth, sunny introduction to real school for your child, since it sets the stage for the rest of his education. While no program is perfect, some *are* better than others. Find out what sets them apart and how you can get the best possible start for your child — no matter what your options are. (Also be sure to check out our [guide to kindergarten](https://www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/school-success-guides/guide-to-kindergarten.html) to know what you can expect from the year ahead!)

**Why Kindergarten?**

First, consider the goal of a good kindergarten program. Kindergarten provides your child with an opportunity to learn and practice the essential social, emotional, problem-solving, and study skills that he will use throughout his schooling.

* **The development of self-esteem** is one of the important goals of kindergarten. This is the process of helping your child feel good about who she is and confident in her ability to tackle the challenges of learning. Books can be a great help with this — [these picks help boost confidence](https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/8-confidence-boosting-books-for-young-readers.html) in kids.
* **Kindergarten teaches cooperation**: the ability to work, learn, and get along with others. A year in kindergarten provides your child with the opportunity to learn patience, as well as the ability to take turns, share, and listen to others — all [social and emotional learning skills](https://www.scholastic.com/parents/school-success/school-life.html) that he will use through his school years and beyond.
* Most children are naturally curious, but some do not know how to focus or use this curiosity. Kindergarten is a time for **sparking and directing your child’s curiosity** and natural love of learning.

**What if the Program Is Less Than Ideal?**

Perhaps you have little or no choice about where to send your child to kindergarten but are concerned about its quality. First, give the program and teacher some time to get the year going. If you observed the class in the spring and it seems different when your child starts in the fall, there may be a good reason. Many programs start slowly, taking time to help children separate from their families and feel confident in school before adding learning demands.

If after a few weeks you still have concerns, talk to the teacher. Ask her about her goals and share your expectations. Sometimes an apparent mismatch can be just a difference in approach. Keep the dialogue going. Ask for information, but also be willing to hear the “whys” of the teacher’s philosophy.

Still, there are times when a teacher or his approach is not the right fit for your child. Then it is time to [talk with the principal](http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/parent-teacher-partnerships/be-your-childs-advocate). Come prepared with clear points you want to make. This will help the principal see what the problem is and make suggestions to help your child.

Sometimes (but rarely) children need to switch to a different teacher or school. This can be the result of many classroom observations of your child by the teacher, principal, and/or another professional. It is important to have group consensus on this decision.