

Minato Kids NAVI
Connecting children's
growth with learning
What is important at home
Parents' Handbook



Official tree of Minato City



Flowering dogwood

Cornaceae
Native to North America Foreign species
Deciduous broadleaf tree

Official flowers of Minato City



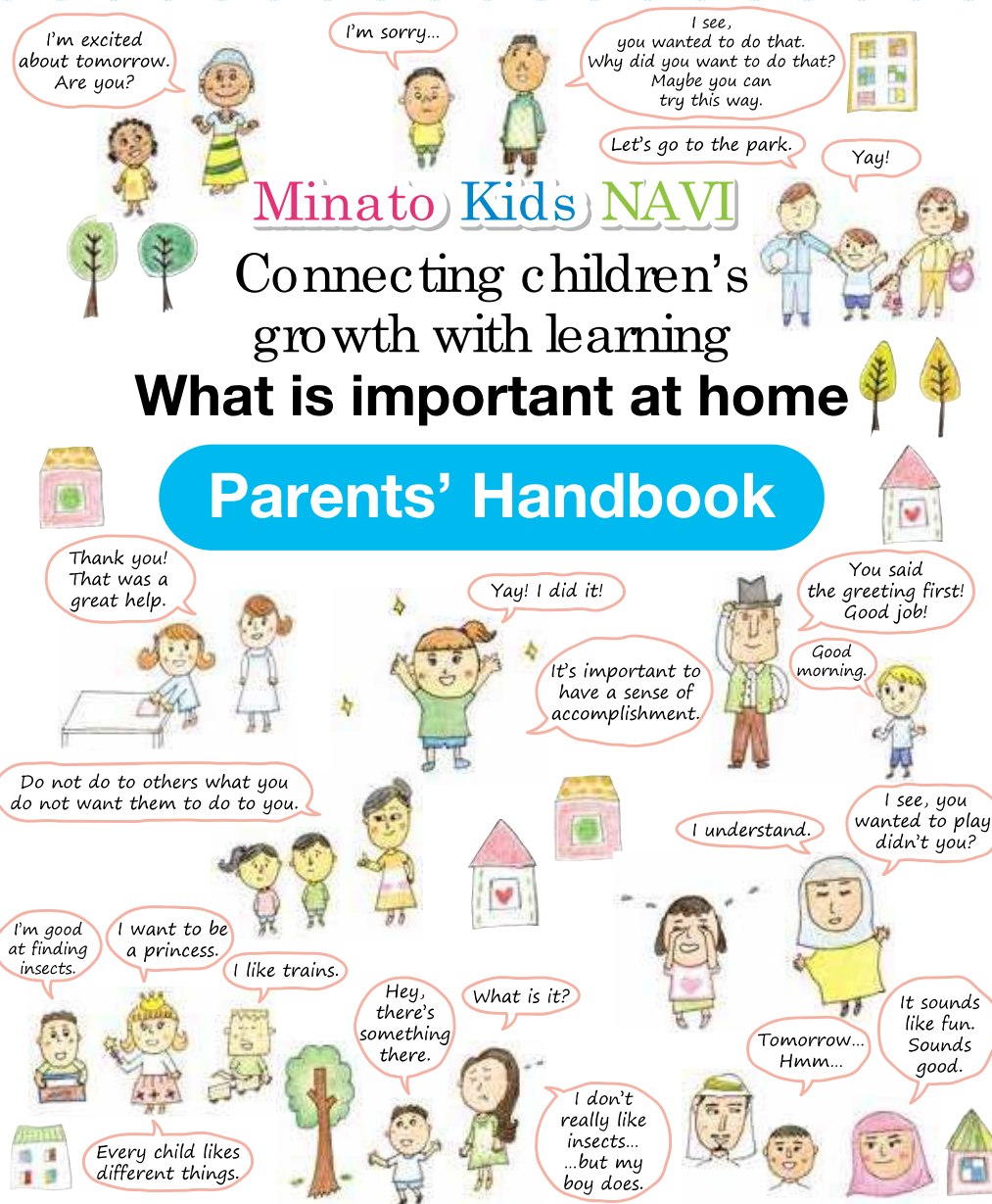
Hydrangea

Saxifragaceae
Native to Japan (Southern Kanto region)
Deciduous broadleaf tree (1.5 - 2.0 m)



Rose

Rosaceae
Native to Japan, China, and Europe
Evergreen, deciduous shrub or vines



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Connecting children's growth with learning What is important at home Parents' Handbook

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Minato City / Board of Education of Minato City 1-5-25 Shibakoen, Minato City, 105-8511

Minato City / Board of Education of Minato City

Message



Mayor of Minato City

清家 愛

According to a survey in March 2025, the total population of Minato City has continued to rise since 2023, and it is expected to approach 320,000 in 2036. Although there will be a slight decrease in the population of infants and young children (0 – 5 years old) through 2027, this population is forecast to continue increasing from 2028.

Minato City is home to embassies and many overseas companies, making it extremely cosmopolitan and lively. It is a center for diverse people to gather and mingle; at the same time, it is abundant in traditional cultural assets, historic landmarks, and nature such as rich greenery and waterside areas. I believe it is important to make maximum use of Minato City's potential and to promote child-rearing and educational policies that allow everyone to experience happiness so that all residents can look forward to the future.

In March 2025, Minato City revised our "Parents' Handbook – what is important at home" in line with the revision of the "Curriculum in the Bridge Period Between Early Childhood and Elementary School Education, Minato City Edition – open the door to connection[A1.1]." Along with this revision, we have consolidated the "Parents' Handbook – what is important at home" and the "Leaflet," summarizing the developmental outlook for 3- to 5-year-olds and what to expect through enrollment in elementary school in a way that is simpler to understand.

Going forward, we will strive to improve the educational and childcare environment for the children of the future, providing proper support for children's growth, and the Mayor's Office[A2.1] and Secretariat of the Board of Education will combine their efforts to develop educational policies that correspond to Minato City's unique local characteristics and the changing times. Furthermore, we will do our utmost by aiming to achieve the status of the world's happiest city for child-rearing and education, where all children can develop their individuality and learning.

The leading roles for the future will always be played by children and young people. I sincerely hope that these children responsible for the future will grow up with pride and affection for their local community, all while helping one another.

Message



Chairman of the Board of
Education of Minato City

新宮 弘章

Families are the foundation for children's healthy growth, and education in the family is said to be the starting point for all education. The life of children in early childhood at preschools finds its basis in life at home and elsewhere, and these parts of life cannot be considered separately.

The importance of this connection with the family has traditionally been emphasized in early childhood education. This is because it is believed that ideal development for children in early childhood is fostered through a cycle in which young children's life experiences in their household and community are further enriched through interactions with their teachers and friends at preschool, and what they cultivate in their school life is applied at home and in the local community.

Minato City began distributing the "Parents' Handbook – what is important at home" to families with 3- to 4-year-olds and the "Leaflet" to families with 5-year-olds as a way to help support education in the family in 2017.

Now, we have consolidated the "Parents' Handbook – what is important at home" and the "Leaflet" in line with the revision of the "Curriculum in the Bridge Period Between Early Childhood and Elementary School Education, Minato City Edition – open the door to connection," formulated in March 2025 in order to smoothly connect early childhood education with elementary school education. This document summarizes information on elementary school enrollment in addition to the early childhood period from 3 to 5 years old, aiming to provide more complete content.

I earnestly hope that all parents and guardians will come to understand the traits of their children that appear in the course of their development as traits of childhood growth as they look forward to their children's enrollment in elementary school, and that they will experience progress and joy.

Declaration as a City of Peace

All people are one in wishing to preserve the beauty of the earth and the permanence of world peace. These sentiments will never change.

We are working to build a community dedicated to the welfare of its citizens, while striving for true peace and the preservation of our cultural traditions.

Our duty to the generations that will follow is to hand over into their keeping a society built on the brotherhood of all people and a natural environment that is flourishing and beautiful.

We request our government to abide firmly by the "three nonnuclear principles" (renouncing possession, production, and introduction of nuclear weapons) and appealing to all citizens everywhere to seek the abolition of nuclear weapons. As it is our earnest wish for world peace, we hereby declare Minato City to be a City of Peace.

August 15, 1985

Minato City

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Chapter 1

About this parents' handbook

Home provides children with a spiritual and emotional foundation. The Basic Act on Education ⁽¹⁾ stipulates that "Mothers, fathers, and other guardians, have the primary responsibility for their children's education." In early childhood, it is important for a kindergarten, nursery school, or certified childcare and education center ⁽²⁾ to work closely with parents to establish a cooperative relationship for raising children.

Experiences at 3 and 4 years of age are linked to experiences at 5 years of age, and further, to experiences at elementary school. For children to go through the experiences that are important at each stage, the kindergarten/nursery school/certified childcare and education center and parents need to have a mutual understanding of how the children should spend time both at the respective childcare and education facilities and at home. By doing so, teachers and parents can take a long-term perspective of the children's development, which will allow parents to give their children greater room to grow when raising them.

We hope that this handbook will help parents and teachers cooperate and raise children together to promote their healthy growth and development.



*1 The Basic Act on Education

(Education in the Family)

Article 10 Mothers, fathers, and other guardians, having the primary responsibility for their children's education, shall endeavor to teach them the habits necessary for life, encourage a spirit of independence, and nurture the balanced development of their bodies and minds.

*2 Kindergarten, nursery school, certified childcare and education center

Kindergartens, nursery schools, and certified childcare and education centers are hereinafter referred to as "preschool(s)" (schools or childcare establishments for children before they enter elementary school).

Fundamental principles

What is important at home

Parents usually have their own parenting styles and ideas about how they wish to bring up their children. Watching children grow brings parents joy and excitement. At the same time, parents may feel worried or anxious at times about their children's growth and development. There may be times when they compare their children with others or refer to norms, asking themselves, "Is my child okay?" or "How do other families handle this?"

However, the growth and development of children differ from individual to individual. We believe that parents should accept their children for who they are, and watch over them calmly without becoming over-anxious.

Your child develops trust in people based on the degree to which he or she feels loved and protected. The way you interact with your child and your way of thinking affects his/her future. In order for your child to grow healthily, it is important for you to find, treasure, and develop his/her good traits and potential, while supporting and promoting his/her independence.



Minato City's efforts

Enhancement of early childhood education and cooperation with parents

Minato City's mission for promoting early childhood education is set out below.

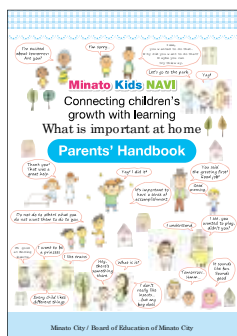
We guarantee a rich and varied education for our children.

We strive to smoothly connect early childhood education with elementary school education, as well as improve the quality and expertise of teachers.

Because parenting skills are an important aspect in enhancing early childhood education, we distribute the "Parents' Handbook – what is important at home" to all families for use in parent-teacher conferences and school discussions to promote interaction between families and preschools.



Parents' Handbook – what is important at home



[Contents]

This handbook summarizes what parents of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds should place importance on at home.

It contains information to prepare for entering elementary school.



* Visit the official website of Minato City Hall to see the abovementioned materials.

Website of Minato City > Children, Home, Education > Schools, Kindergartens, Education > Early Childhood Education

How children grow and learn

What do we do to connect children's growth with learning?

Growth at a preschool ^(*) is measured by the child's emotions, motivation, and attitude, which provide the basis for learning life skills and are developed during their time at preschool.

It entails compassion and kindness for others, the motivation to try new things, and an attitude of perseverance.

In order to connect early childhood growth with learning at elementary school, it is necessary to ensure that children are provided with abundant learning opportunities.

For children in early childhood, learning does not mean studying at a desk. **They learn while leading a play-focused life on their own initiative** (see page 6) **and having first-hand experiences.** This forms the basis for their lifestyle and studies in elementary school and beyond.

In order to ensure that children gain abundant learning opportunities through spontaneous play and daily life during early childhood education, it is essential that parents and preschools cooperate to ensure children's growth, and to connect it with elementary school education.



^(*) Growth at preschool is specified as a goal in Article 23 of the School Education Act for kindergartens, and in the General Provision of the Childcare Guidelines for Nursery Schools for nursery schools as well as the Act on Advancement of Comprehensive Service Related to Education, Child Care, etc. of Preschool Children (excerpt) for certified childcare and education centers.

Article 23, School Education Act

Education in kindergarten shall be administered to achieve the following goals, in order to realize the purposes stipulated in the preceding article:

1. To help children cultivate the basic habits necessary to lead a healthy, safe and happy life, and achieve the healthy development of physical functions.
2. To help children cultivate an attitude to voluntarily participate in a group activity, build trust in their family and people close to them, and cultivate a spirit of independence, autonomy and cooperation as well as respect for social norms.
3. To help children develop interest in their social interactions, life, and nature, and cultivate critical thinking skills, a positive attitude, and a capacity to think for themselves.
4. To help children learn the proper way of speaking and cultivate an attitude which encourages them to try to understand others, through daily conversation and acquiring familiarity with picture books and fairy tales.
5. To help children cultivate sensitivity and expressiveness through music, physical expression, and formative activities.

Chapter 1 General Provisions (excerpt) Childcare Guidelines for Nursery Schools

1. Basic principles regarding childcare at nursery school

(2) Goal of childcare

A) Preface omitted

- a) To satisfy the various desires that children have, keep them safe, and maintain their emotional stability in a relaxed atmosphere and under careful guidance.
- b) To help children cultivate the basic habits and attitudes necessary for everyday life with regard to health and safety, and establish a foundation for mental and physical health.
- c) To help children develop relationships with and trust for others, as well as respect for human rights, through interacting with others, to cultivate an attitude of autonomy, independence, and cooperation, and to develop a sense of morality.
- d) To cultivate children's interest in life, nature and social interaction, and develop their sensibility and a capacity to think.
- e) To develop children's interest in language and enrich their vocabulary in daily life, and cultivate their ability to speak, listen, and understand others
- f) To foster children's sensibility and ability to express themselves, and cultivate their creativity through various experiences.

Act on Advancement of Comprehensive Service Related to Education, Child Care, etc. of Preschool Children (excerpt)

Chapter 3 (Certified Childcare and Education Centers Linked to Kindergartens/Nursery Schools)

Article 9 (Goals of Education and Childcare) Preamble omitted

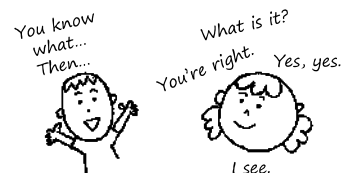
1. To help children cultivate the basic habits necessary to lead a healthy, safe, and happy life and strive for the accordant development of physical functions.
2. Through group activities, to help children cultivate an attitude to voluntarily participate; build trust in their family and people close to them; and cultivate a spirit of independence, autonomy, and cooperation as well as respect for social norms.
3. To help children develop interest in social interaction with those close to them, life, and nature and cultivate the proper understanding of, attitude toward, and critical thinking skills about those things.
4. Through daily conversation as well as familiarity with picture books and children's stories, to help children learn the proper way of speaking and cultivate an attitude which encourages them to try to understand others.
5. Through music, physical expression, and creative activities, to help children cultivate sensitivity and expressiveness.
6. Through achieving a comfortable environment and building trust between children and teachers/staff, to help children secure and promote mental and physical health.

How do children perceive "learning"?

What do children learn?

Children learn the following through play and in various situations in everyday life:

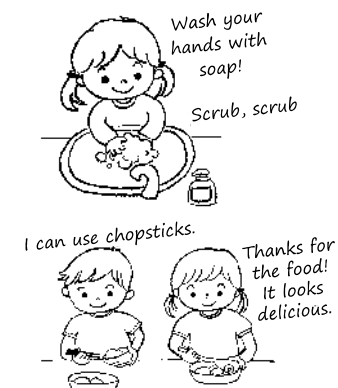
To be curious and interested in interacting with various people and things



To acquire vocabulary



To form basic lifestyle habits



To enjoy physical movement through play



To work hard towards a goal and feel a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem after overcoming some degree of difficulty



To understand the characteristics and principles of things through trial and error.



To acquire a creative way of thinking and an ability to express themselves



The mental and physical development of children is remarkable in early childhood. It is an important period that forms the foundation of the character children will have throughout their lives: they develop a sense of self, become independent in daily activities, and acquire language. It is important to help children gain sufficient experience suitable to early childhood, such as forming basic lifestyle habits and associating with other people and things on their own initiative.

Children in Minato City

Developmental milestones children should achieve before elementary school

We suggest nine developmental milestones for preschool children to aim for before elementary school. Think of these milestones as preparation for entering elementary school.

What can be expected of children to prepare for elementary school

- Interact while having fun with everyone; persist to accomplish goals while thinking for oneself, figuring things out, and cooperating
- Be aware of what must be done while enjoying various activities, work with a sense of what is necessary, and act with confidence

*These qualities and abilities are nurtured as children gain experience in preschool.



It is important to nurture these qualities and abilities in an integrated way.

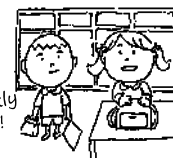


What a typical day looks like

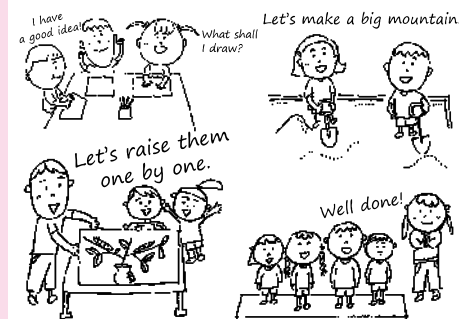
Morning
Attend preschool

Get prepared for the day for the day

I can do it without being told. Let's get ready quickly and play!



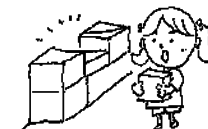
Activities / Tasks for the whole class



Tidy up

This block is perfect.

Lunch



Activities / Tasks carried out in rotation



Activities after going home

Do you have any news to share? Let's all listen!

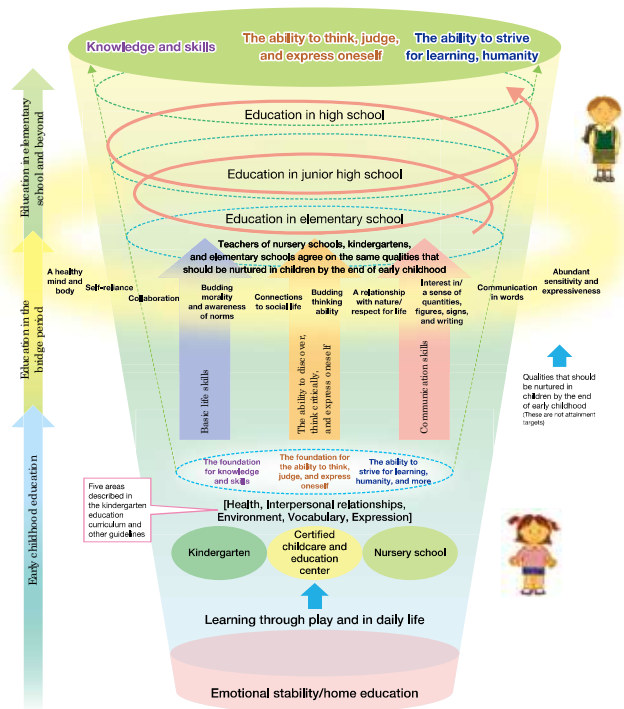
Return home



From early childhood to elementary school and beyond

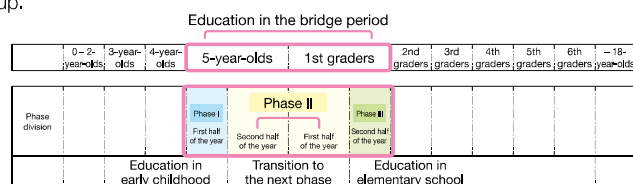
What are the qualities that should be nurtured in children by the end of early childhood?

When children accumulate developmentally necessary experiences in early childhood, the qualities and abilities that should be nurtured in early childhood (the foundation for knowledge and skills; the foundation for the ability to think, judge, and express oneself; the ability to strive for learning, humanity, and more) are cultivated. These qualities and abilities appear as “qualities that should be nurtured in children by the end of early childhood” (refer to the following page) when children are approaching 6 years old. The qualities and abilities nurtured in early childhood will lead to qualities and abilities that should be cultivated in elementary school and beyond.



○ In Minato City, the two years bridging early childhood and elementary school education are divided into three phases: Phase I, Phase II, and Phase III.

Phase II, especially, is the transition period to the next phase, and we are making a greater effort toward awareness of connections with learning by considering 5-year-olds and 1st graders as an integrated group.



Qualities that should be nurtured in children by the end of early childhood, which children will start to acquire in the connecting period from when they are approaching 6 years old until when they start elementary school, **form the foundation for their lifestyle and studies at elementary school and beyond**. Children develop and grow differently, at their own pace. These qualities cannot be uniformly applied to every child. Nurture the qualities and abilities of each child while respecting his or her strengths.

Qualities that should be nurtured in children by the end of early childhood ^(*)

- **A healthy mind and body**
Children learn to create a healthy, safe life for themselves.
- **Self-reliance**
Children learn to act with confidence through the experience of accomplishing things by themselves.
- **Collaboration**
Children learn to think and cooperate with their peers to achieve goals.
- **Budding morality and awareness of norms**
Children understand right and wrong and learn to put themselves in others' shoes. They become able to follow rules.
- **Connections to social life**
Children start to value their family, interact with people close to them, and become familiar with their neighborhood. They learn to use information necessary for life and play, use public facilities, and become aware of connections with society.
- **Budding thinking ability**
Children learn to perceive the nature of things through familiar phenomena, make predictions, and enjoy various interactions.
- **A relationship with nature/ respect for life**
Children develop love and respect for nature. They realize the wonders of life and start to treat living things with care.
- **Interest in/a sense of quantities, figures, signs, and writing**
Children develop an interest in, as well as a sense of, quantities, figures, signs, and writing while familiarizing themselves with these aspects during play and in their daily life.
- **Communication in words**
Children start to enjoy communication by expressing their experiences in words and listening to others.
- **Abundant sensitivity and expressiveness**
Children learn to express their feelings when they experience emotional events. They feel the joy of expressing themselves and become motivated.

(*) These are not attainment goals, but qualities that are nurtured according to individual development. In addition, only some elements of each quality are listed here. Please see the link below for details.

https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/youchien/1422302.htm

Kindergarten education pamphlet ("Qualities that should be nurtured in children by the end of early childhood")

See page 52 for examples of the qualities that should be nurtured in children by the end of early childhood, from the perspective of preschool staff.



Development of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds

Outlook for children's development in early childhood

Qualities and abilities to be nurtured ^{(*)5}

The foundation for knowledge and skills

The foundation for the ability to think, judge, and express oneself

The ability to strive for learning, humanity, and more

For example:

- Take care of oneself
- Lead a healthy, safe life
- Engage in sufficient physical activity and exercise voluntarily
- Interact with things with curiosity and interest
- Express thoughts and feelings with words
- Develop vocabulary and a sense of quantity
- Greet others
- Communicate with others
- Follow rules and keep promises
- etc.

3-year-olds

The age when children expand their world.

3-year-olds can express their own thoughts, depending on their mood at the time.

Their development

As their basic physical functions improve, they will be able to eat, use the toilet, and change clothes by themselves. Their intellectual interest will also develop; they begin to actively ask questions. Their self-awareness develops more. They associate with friends more often, but they are generally self-absorbed.



4-year-olds

The age when children proactively communicate with people around them.

At 4 years of age, children start to show hesitance in communicating with others, and act by taking cues from the surrounding situation.

Their development

As their imagination develops, they start to draw, create, and attempt to accomplish goals with a purpose. They also develop more emotions; they become considerate of the feelings of others and can contain their feelings and be patient.



5-year-olds

At this age, children gain a sense of fellowship with friends and develop more confidence in themselves.

They cooperate with friends and eagerly exercise their ability towards a goal.

Their development

They form basic lifestyle habits. As their physical function further develops, they play with friends more actively. They act in concert with friends more and more towards a common goal. They exert their originality and creativity to develop the way they play, using their experience and knowledge. Their independence develops even more through such experiences.



Children will start to acquire qualities that should be nurtured by the end of early childhood.

- A healthy mind and body
- Self-reliance
- Collaboration
- Budding morality and awareness of norms
- Connections to social life
- Budding thinking ability
- A relationship with nature/ respect for life
- Interest in/ a sense of quantities, figures, signs, and writing
- Communication in words
- Abundant sensitivity and expressiveness

Development of 0- to 2-year-olds



Start of the transition from dependence to independence.

Education at home supports the growth of children.

Home education serves as the foundation even after children enter elementary school.



Emotional stability (Refer to p.12)



Give us support so we can take care of ourselves.

Forming an attachment with parents/guardians



Trust in parents and guardians



Continue to give children support even after they enter elementary school.

Emotional stability

Home is a place of stability for children.

Early childhood is an important period for forming attachments; this is when children build trust in the adults around them (parents and guardians). Children can take confident steps into society on the basis of their trust in their parents and guardians.

Children start to show signs of independence from adults at 3 years of age. Naturally there are still many things they cannot do. When a 3-year-old can put on socks by himself or herself, for example, you can foster their independence by showing approval through expressions such as, "You can put on socks by yourself now. I'm impressed."

It is important for parents and guardians to accept their children for who they are and watch over them to give them a sense of security, and to be a source of psychological support.

The situation differs from family to family: some parents may be busy with work and chores, while others may have other family members to take care of. There may be times when you have to say to your child, "Sorry, I'm busy right now. Maybe later," but it is important for parents to be compassionate with their children, accept them, and watch over them. The emotional stability of children is nurtured when they feel protected by adults and they know they can trust them.

Daily life of children in
early childhoodPreschools and parents should work together
closely to raise children.

For children in early childhood, daily life in preschool is where they can gain a variety of life experiences. A wide variety of emotional experiences accumulate, correlate, and produce new meaning and value that enrich the way children learn.

That is to say, children in early childhood gain various experiences while they are absorbed in play, and these experiences accumulate and lead to learning. For this reason, preschools put importance on understanding children's development and interests, so as to offer an environment that allows them to be absorbed in play and have fun with their peers.

Similarly, at home, **it is important to give children opportunities to gain experiences that enrich their minds** in various situations in daily life. **For example, parents should place importance on experiences that touch the hearts of children. These could be, for example, looking up at the sky together to watch the clouds moving, having them sit on your lap to read a story, or cooking together.**

In order to help children enjoy a fulfilling early childhood, **the adults in their lives need to strive to cooperate with each other and raise the children together,** and to share with each other which experiences are important and should be emphasized for 3- to 4-year-olds.



Chapter 2

How teachers should interact with children at preschool, and what is important at home (Relationship with parents/guardians)

How do experiences at preschool and at home affect each other?

This chapter considers 1) relationships at preschool and 2) what is important at home (relationship with parents/guardians), from the perspective of qualities and abilities to be nurtured in early childhood education.

You will gain an understanding as to what children at each stage (the first and second half of the year for 3-year-olds and the first and second half of the year for 4-year-olds, and the two years bridging early childhood education and the first grade of elementary school, divided into Phases I and II, for 5-year-olds) should be achieving and what teachers and parents should do.

Children grow differently. Listed here are a rough indication of milestones and qualities that children may acquire during the period.



It's fun to cook with a frying pan.



Let's go exploring with binoculars.



"May I help you?" "I'll have this."



I made my favorite animal.