

I'm excited about tomorrow. Are you?

I'm sorry...

I see, you wanted to do that. Why did you want to do that? Maybe you can try this way.

Let's go to the park.

Yay!

Minato Kids NAVI

Connecting children's growth with learning

What is important at home

Parents' Handbook

Thank you! That was a great help.

Yay! I did it!

You said the greeting first! Good job!

Good morning.

It's important to have a sense of accomplishment.

Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you.

I understand.

I see, you wanted to play, didn't you?

I'm good at finding insects.

I want to be a princess.

I like trains.

Hey, there's something there.

What is it?

Tomorrow... Hmm...

It sounds like fun. Sounds good.

Every child likes different things.

I don't really like insects... but my boy does.

Message



Mayor of Minato City
Masaaki Takei

In recent years, the environment surrounding families has undergone significant changes, including further progress of technological innovation and greatly diversified lifestyles. At the same time, there are emerging issues in society as a whole, such as the weakening of family bonds, waning community ties, and a growing number of child abuse cases.

In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that has been ongoing since last year, we have had to change our behavior and actions in unprecedented ways as we grow accustomed to a new normal in which we must conduct our social lives while taking measures to stop the spread of the virus.

Under such circumstances, Minato City has been striving to provide seamless support for the healthy development of children from pregnancy to childbirth, through infancy, childhood, and school age, in order to make the city a local community where all children, the bearers of our future, can grow healthily.

We have been actively expanding support for childcare and improving the educational environment for children, such as by promoting digitalization of education and improving special needs education in public elementary and junior high schools, increasing subsidies for childbirth expenses, and establishing the Minato Children and Families General Support Center, which is a multifunctional facility comprised of the Minato Children and Families Support Center, the Minato City Child Consultation Center, and the Maternal and Child Living Support Facility.

In March 2020, in line with the revision of the kindergarten education procedure and other educational guidelines, we revised the Education Curriculum for Preschoolers in order to reliably connect young children's growth and learning with elementary school education. We also revised and have made use of the leaflet for families with a 5-year-old child, which gives parents guidance about what to value or work on with their children at home in preparation for elementary school life.

Furthermore, we have revised this parents' handbook for families with a 3- or 4-year-old child, first produced in March 2017. This handbook explains how 3- and 4-year-old children grow and learn, with photographs and illustrations to aid even more in the understanding of the content.

This revised version specifies qualities and abilities to nurture in children through play and in daily life. These are qualities that should be nurtured in children by the end of early childhood in order to help them gain sufficient experience that is appropriate for their early childhood. We hope this handbook serves as a useful aid for home education and contributes to the fulfillment of high-quality early childhood education, realized through cooperation between families and kindergartens/nursery schools/certified childcare and education centers.

We will strive to implement various measures for Minato City residents to raise children comfortably, so that all children here, with a bright future before them, can have a healthy and happy childhood, and that this city can be rated as a good place for raising children, with good educational resources.

Message



Chairman of the Board of Education of Minato City
Mikio Urata

Early childhood is an important period that forms the foundation of the character children will have throughout their lives. The home life of children can never be dissociated from their life at kindergarten/nursery school/certified childcare and education centers. By grasping the developmental outlook for children and working together to support their growth, teachers and parents can ensure that children's daily experiences at their childcare or education facility is reflected back to the home, leading to their further growth.

Children learn various things necessary for character formation through interactions with others in early childhood. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has limited the opportunities for them to mingle with others and made it harder to see the expressions of mask-wearing adults. Even under such circumstances, it is essential that families and kindergartens/nursery schools/certified childcare and education centers cooperate and provide high-quality early childhood education to children, so as to promote their healthy growth and development while taking the new way of living into consideration.

In March 2020, Minato City revised the Education Curriculum for Preschoolers with the objective of connecting early childhood education with elementary school education more smoothly. The contents of this curriculum conform with revised goals in the city's kindergarten education procedure, childcare guidelines, curriculum guidelines, and other educational guidelines, and are aimed at building a foundation for life skills and nurturing the qualities and abilities of children who will lead a new era. We have also revised the leaflet for families with a 5-year-old child, which residents are now making use of.

In line with this, we have now also revised this parents' handbook for families with a 3- or 4-year-old child. It aims to help parents further enrich home education while working closely with kindergartens/nursery schools/certified child centers.

We hope this handbook will help you take the opportunity to think about how you look at, talk with, and interact with your child. We suggest that you give your children opportunities to gain experiences that enrich their minds in various situations in daily life at home.

We sincerely hope that promoting a cooperative relationship between families and kindergartens/nursery schools/certified childcare and education centers will further improve Minato City's early childhood education and contribute to the smooth connection of early childhood education with elementary school education, and that you will experience the joys of parenting as you see your child grow throughout early childhood.

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).

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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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 following two materials to families for use in parent-teacher conferences and school discussions to promote interaction between families and preschools.



Leaflet

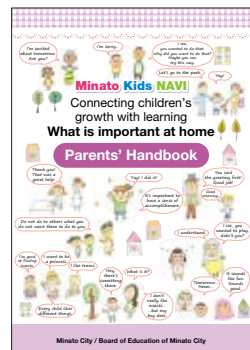


[Contents]

For parents with a 5-year-old child

This leaflet summarizes what parents should place importance on at home, in preparation for elementary school.

Parents' Handbook – what is important at home



[Contents]

For parents with a 3- or 4- year-old child

This handbook summarizes what parents should place importance on at home.



* 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.



*3 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

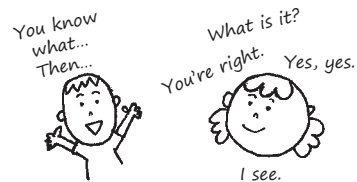
1. To help children cultivate the basic habits necessary to lead a healthy, safe, and happy life and strive for the accordant development of physical functions.
2. Through group activities, to help children cultivate an attitude to voluntarily participate; build trust in their family and people close 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.

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.

Developmental milestones to aim for before elementary school

- Keep regular hours
- Take care of oneself
- Be physically active

Basic life skills

- Actively interact with people and things
- Speak with confidence
- Develop an imagination and basic vocabulary

The ability to discover, think critically, and express oneself

- Greet others
- Acknowledge the positive qualities of peers
- Follow rules and keep promises

The ability to communicate

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!



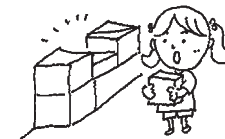
Activities / Tasks for the whole class



Tidy up

This block is perfect.

Lunch



Activities / Tasks carried out in rotation

It's your turn today. Thank you.

Why do we get into trouble if we don't follow the rules?



Activities after going home

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

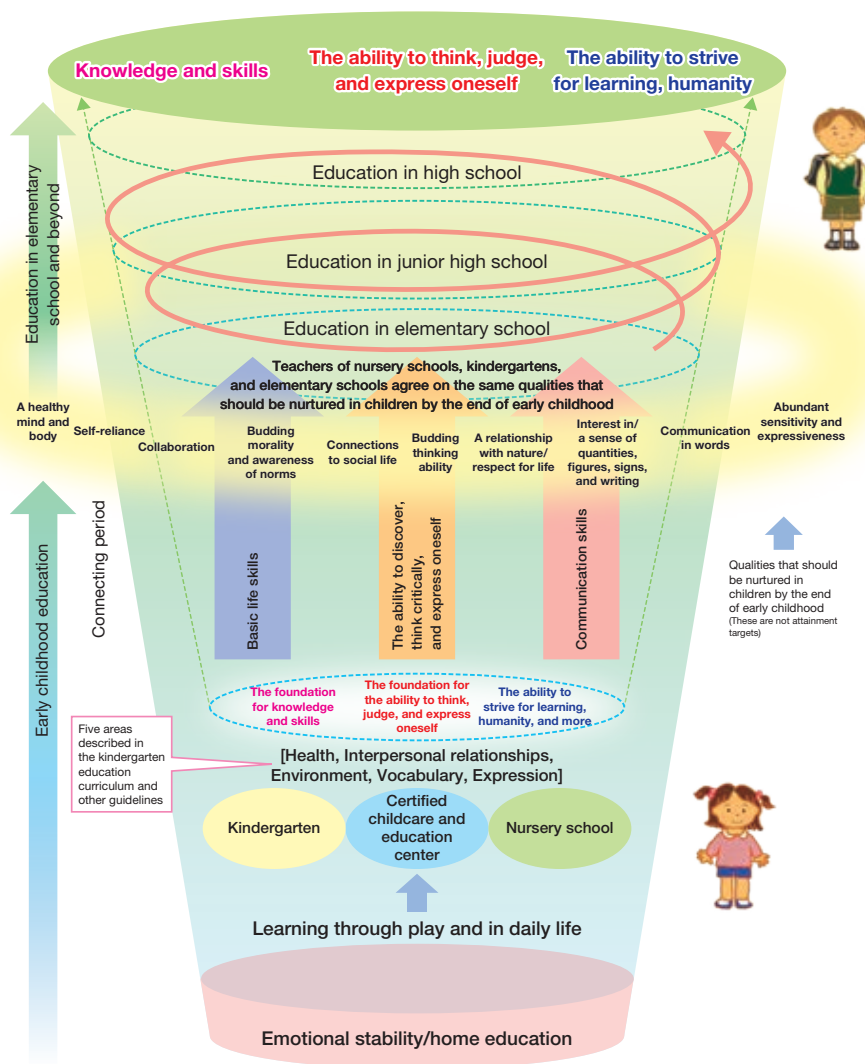
Return home



From early childhood to elementary school and beyond

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

As preschools and parents encourage children to cultivate "the three abilities" (basic life skills; the ability to discover, think critically, and express oneself; and communication skills) during play and in their daily life, the children will start to acquire qualities that should be nurtured in them by the end of early childhood (see the following page), principally during the connecting period from when they are approaching 6 years old until they start elementary school. This will lead to the **qualities and abilities** that should be cultivated through school education (knowledge and skills; the ability to think, judge and express; the ability to strive for learning; humanity, etc.), described in the top part of the illustration below.



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 (*4)

- **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.

(*4) 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**

Three abilities to be developed ^{(*)5}

Basic life skills

Specific skills:

- Take care of oneself
- Lead a healthy, safe life
- Engage in sufficient physical activity and exercise voluntarily

The ability to discover, think critically, and express oneself

Specific skills:

- Interact with things with curiosity and interest
- Express thoughts and feelings with words
- Develop vocabulary and a sense of quantity

Communication skills

Specific skills:

- Greet others
- Communicate with others
- Follow rules and keep promises

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 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.

