

nickelodeon™ **Dora's**
Beyond
the BACKPACK™

**GET READY FOR
KINDERGARTEN
WITH DORA
THE EXPLORER!**

BeyondtheBackpack.com



National
PTA®

everychild.one voice.®

GO BEYOND THE BACKPACK TO HELP YOUR CHILD PREPARE FOR SCHOOL

In partnership with National Parent Teacher Association® (PTA®), Dora invites you to be part of a great adventure: Beyond the Backpack, Nickelodeon's nationwide initiative to promote overall kindergarten readiness for preschoolers.

Just as Backpack helps Dora prepare for new adventures, Beyond the Backpack provides parents with tools to prepare their children to excel in life's next big adventure: school! Beyond the Backpack lends a hand by providing parents with tips, activities, and resources focusing on four major areas: **Language and Math Skills, Social and Emotional Skills, Physical Wellness, and Parent Involvement in Schools.**

Charting a successful journey to school needs to be established as early as possible. Starting here, with Beyond the Backpack, you can help build a solid foundation for your child's education. Check out www.BeyondtheBackpack.com for additional information and resources.



WHY IS SCHOOL READINESS SO IMPORTANT?

Learning starts long before the first day of kindergarten. Child development experts, including those at Born Learning, United Way Worldwide's public engagement campaign focused on helping communities improve school readiness for young children, agree that children start learning at birth. Children who get off to a good start by or before kindergarten tend to maintain that advantage as they progress through school.¹ Still, research shows that too many kindergartners in the U.S. are lacking in at least one area of development.

Research from United Way Worldwide shows that nearly half of today's children are not adequately prepared when it's time to start kindergarten.² In fact, more than one-third of American children begin kindergarten without the basic language skills they will need to learn to read.³ Children who can't read by third grade are less likely to graduate high school; meanwhile, 67 percent of all fourth graders can't read at grade level.⁴

Ongoing studies also confirm that children's readiness for school is multi-faceted. The National Head Start Association believes that children need to develop skills in a range of areas including language development, literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, social and emotional development, and physical health and development. Educational achievement gaps often already exist by the start of kindergarten, and the larger the gap at school entry is, the harder it is to close.⁵ That's why kids' earliest experiences and environments set the stage for future development in school and in life.

¹ National Center for Family & Community Connections with School. (2004). *Readiness: School, family, and community connections: Annual synthesis 2004*. Austin, TX: Boethel, M.

^{2, 4} United Way Worldwide. (March 2010). *United Way's education strategies: Improving success for children and youth*. Arlington, VA.

³ Reach Out and Read: Making Books Part of a Healthy Childhood. (March 2010). *Reach out and read*.

⁵ Getting Ready. (Feb 2005). *Findings from the national school readiness indicators initiative*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

KINDERGARTEN READINESS CHECKLIST

Keep track of your preschooler's progress with this checklist as you prepare for the adventure of kindergarten together! ¡Vámonos! Let's go!

My child can:

Language Skills

- 1. Recognize and name at least 10 letters in the alphabet, and identify letter sounds (e.g., B is "buh").
- 2. Look at pictures of objects and tell me which two represent words that rhyme.
- 3. "Write" letters, words, or stories by drawing or scribbling to express ideas.
- 4. Speak in complete sentences and make up or retell stories.

Math Skills

- 5. Count out loud from 1 to 10 in order and recognize a few single-digit numbers by sight.
- 6. Recognize basic shapes, like circles, squares, and triangles, and sort objects by shape, size, and/or color.
- 7. Compare two objects using words like less, more, smaller, bigger, etc.
- 8. Tell me what comes next in a simple pattern, like red button, blue button, red button, blue button, red button, _____.

Social and Emotional Skills

- 9. Talk about basic feelings such as anger, sadness, and happiness.
- 10. Cooperate, share, and take turns with others.
- 11. Follow 3-to-4-step directions and focus on a task independently for 15 minutes.

Physical Wellness

- 12. Engage in physical activities such as jumping, running, hopping on one foot, throwing, and kicking a ball.
- 13. Use a pencil properly, cut with safety scissors, and put together simple puzzles of 4 to 9 pieces.
- 14. Complete the following tasks independently: going to the bathroom, getting dressed, brushing teeth, and washing hands.

Continue to the next page for tips on how to get your preschooler ready for school!

*Please note: This checklist is intended merely as a guide for parents, highlighting skills and benchmarks that will help prepare their preschoolers for school. Kids develop at their own pace, so some preschoolers will master many of these skills before kindergarten, while others will learn them in school. Parents should contact their child's school for specifics on school entry requirements.

$$1 + 2 = 3$$

BEYOND THE BACKPACK: FOUR PRIORITIES AS YOU APPROACH KINDERGARTEN

In this toolkit, you'll find ideas, activities, and resources that will help you prepare your child for school. Here's a quick overview to help you get started.

Language and Math Skills

Help get your child's reading and math skills on the right track.

- * **Read** with or to your child every day.
- * **Practice** counting and recognizing shapes every day.

Social and Emotional Skills

Put these tips into practice to help prepare your child for school, socially as well as emotionally.

- * **Play** simple games together, like Go Fish or Hide and Seek, on a regular basis. Easy games help develop your child's readiness for taking turns and following rules in cooperative play.
- * **Model** friendships by asking questions, offering compliments, and inviting other children over for play dates.

Physical Wellness

Check out these suggestions and make physical wellness in your family a priority.

- * **Make** breakfast part of your child's routine. Encourage fruits and vegetables whenever possible, and say "Yes!" to active physical play.
- * **Talk** to your pediatrician about your child's overall physical and developmental needs including sleep, nutrition, and vaccinations. Don't be afraid to ask questions!

Parent Involvement in Schools

More than 40 years of research has shown that when parents get involved in their children's education, children do better in school.⁶ Get and stay involved.

- * **Get to know the teacher.** Take time to share information about your child that may help the teacher (e.g., shy, outgoing, already reading, etc.).
- * **Talk** with your child's teacher to find out what your child is learning and how you can reinforce his/her education at home.
- * **Ask** about how to get involved at your child's school. Joining your local PTA is a great first step. Check out www.pta.org for more info.

⁶National PTA. (2008). *National standards for family-school partnerships.*

GET READY FOR SCHOOL

Early experiences influence brain development in many ways, providing the foundation for the skills children need to thrive in school.⁷ With the help of our Beyond the Backpack Advisory Committee, Nickelodeon has identified four areas that are crucial to every child's development: **Language and Math Skills, Social and Emotional Skills, Physical Wellness, and Parent Involvement in Schools.** Within each section of this toolkit, we'll provide useful statistics, activities, and resources you can use to learn more.



WE'RE NOT PERFECT WE'RE PARENTS™

ParentsConnect.com provides daily tips, recipes, activities, and expert (but nonjudgmental!) parenting info, baby names and their meanings, and family-friendly resources offered in local communities. On **ParentsConnect.com**, parents share their expertise by submitting their own tips, local activities, crafts, recipes, photos, war stories, comments, and ratings. Throughout this toolkit, you will find comments and questions from ParentsConnect users who have also joined the adventure of preparing their kids for school.

⁷Getting Ready. (Feb 2005). *Findings from the national school readiness indicators initiative.* Providence, RI: Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.

LANGUAGE AND MATH SKILLS

While math scores in the U.S. have significantly improved in recent years, American students continue to rank behind many other countries.⁸ In addition, students overall have made little or no progress in reading proficiency in the past 17 years, according to results from a recent nationwide reading test.⁹

WHAT YOU CAN DO: **Make Reading and Counting Part of Your Daily Routine**

Here are a few suggestions for turning these stats around while you spend quality time with your child.

Activities

- * **Look for** and **read** street names, store signs, license plates, and building/house numbers you pass when you're on the go.
- * **Write a Book!** Come up with an idea together. Then write and draw the story out on a few pages.
- * **Join your local library** and take your child to participate in activities they offer for kids in your child's age group.
- * **Check out** the suggestions offered at www.nickjr.com and www.reachoutandread.org for great reading ideas.

.....
• See page 11 for a Bookmark and Reading Certificate and page 12 for a Dora Pyramid
• to practice counting with your child.
.....

Related Resources From Our Advisory Committee

PTA
www.pta.org
Topics > Student Success

DonorsChoose.org
www.donorschoose.org
Projects > Subject

National Head Start Association
www.nhsa.org

Reach Out and Read
www.reachoutandread.org
Parents & Educators > Importance of Reading Aloud
Parents & Educators > Literacy Milestones
Parents & Educators > Reading Tips

United Way Worldwide
www.bornlearning.org
About Early Learning > Promoting Learning

⁸U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *Highlights from PISA 2006: Performance of U.S. 15-year-old students in science and math literacy in an international context* (NCES 2008-016). Washington, DC: Baldi, S., Jin, Y., Skerner, M., Green, P.J., and Herget, D.

⁹Dillon, S. (2010, March 24). Stagnant National Reading Scores Lag Behind Math. *The New York Times*.



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Social and Emotional Skills help children develop positive friendships, express their feelings and needs in appropriate ways, and adapt to new situations—all of which are important for school. At least one in five children entering kindergarten is not socially or emotionally ready to start school.¹⁰ However, research has shown that children who make friends easily in kindergarten tend to be academic self-starters.¹¹

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Social and Emotional Exploration

Encourage your child to share his or her feelings about what's going on with friends and in the classroom. Developing your child's communication skills will yield social benefits, and it's a valuable way for you to find out how your child is feeling. These activities can help prepare your child for the interactions he or she will face every day at school.

"[My daughter] is my everything, but she is constantly doing things to upset others. Does anyone have any advice on what I can do?"

—bobslady0717, ParentsConnect.com

Activities

- * **Talk about your feelings** and encourage your child to do the same. "Today I was upset with myself for spilling the milk, but yesterday I was proud of myself for raking the leaves."
- * **Each night at bedtime**, have your child fill in one box on the calendar on page 13, describing what kind of day he or she had. Use that to spark a chat about the day.
- * **Create a to-do list** with your child. The list can include small jobs such as checking the mail, feeding a pet, or picking out clothes for the next day. Add a new task each week or rotate through certain jobs to keep the process fresh and interesting.
- * **Help your child say or write** the nicest, funniest, or coolest thing about each person in your family and then give them out or mail them to a few people.
- * **Teach** your child about the importance of giving back by talking about charities. Check out the suggestions offered at www.diegobank.nickjr.com for some starter ideas.

Related Resources From Our Advisory Committee

PTA

www.pta.org

Student Success > Helping Students Achieve > Communicating With Children: You Make the Difference

Student Success > Helping Students Achieve > Helping Students Be Their Best

DonorsChoose.org

www.donorschoose.org

Projects > Keyword > Social and Emotional

United Way Worldwide

www.bornlearning.org

Learning on the Go

¹⁰National Institute for Early Education Research. (March 2005). *Promoting children's social and emotional development through preschool education*. New Brunswick, NJ. Boyd, J., Barnett, W., Bodrova, E., Leong, D., Gombay, D.

¹¹Families and Work Institute. (n.d.). *Mind in the making: The science of early learning*. Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R.



PHYSICAL WELLNESS

Physical well-being is a key factor in every child's learning and long-term success. When children are well rested, well nourished, and physically fit, they are better prepared to learn.¹² Unfortunately, over the past 20 years, the U.S. has seen the number of overweight children from ages 6 to 11 more than double. For adolescents, the rate has tripled in that same time frame.¹³ Help keep your child healthy by making sure he or she gets enough sleep, engages in physical play, and eats a balanced diet—including breakfast—every day.

Immunizations are also crucial to keeping children healthy. According to the Centers for Disease Control, children often do not have maternal immunity against some vaccine-preventable diseases. Vaccines allow us to manage many infectious diseases that were once common in the U.S., including polio and measles, yet research shows that more than 20 percent of two-year-olds in the United States are not fully immunized.¹⁴ Be sure to check with your pediatrician to make sure your child is up-to-date on shots.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Get Healthy!

Give these activities a go to get your child used to making healthy decisions when it comes to eating, moving, and spending time together.

"What do you do if your kid won't eat any of those things?"—CDiazPeres, ParentsConnect.com

Activities

- * **Use the chart** on page 14 to help your child develop healthy eating habits. List healthy habits on one side (brushing teeth, eating a healthy snack, etc.) and add a gold star sticker to the correct row each time your child engages in a healthy habit. Then explain why that habit is important.
- * **Prepare a meal** that's healthy in every way: appetizer, main course, and even dessert. Check the recipes on www.nickjr.com for great ideas.
- * **Plan a family picnic or a hike.** It doesn't have to be a long trip; you can even make it a weekly event.

Additional Physical Wellness Resources

PTA

www.pta.org

Topics > Health & Wellness

ASCD

www.ascd.org

Initiatives & Programs > Healthy School Communities

Initiatives & Programs > The Whole Child

Children's Defense Fund

www.childrensdefense.org

How CDF Helps America's Children > Children's Health

United Way Worldwide

www.bornlearning.org

About Early Learning > Promoting Health

¹²National PTA. Retrieved from <http://www.PTA.org>

¹³Institute of Medicine. (Dec 2006). Progress in preventing childhood obesity: How do we measure up? *Obesity Management*, 2(6), 232-234. doi:10.1089/obe.2006.2.232.

¹⁴National Association for the Education of Young Children. (n.d.) Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/woyc/facts>

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Parent involvement plays an incredibly important role in every child's education. Making sure children succeed is a shared responsibility of families and schools.

One of Nickelodeon's Beyond the Backpack partners, National Parent Teacher Association® (PTA), has more than 5 million members supporting stronger parent involvement in schools and communities throughout the U.S. every day. Its website, www.pta.org, offers valuable resources for parents, teachers, and other school and community leaders.

As you get involved at your child's school, ask yourself the following questions:

- * Do I have a positive and welcoming relationship with the faculty and staff at my child's school?
- * Do I have regular communication with my child's teachers about his/her progress?
- * What information and resources are available from the school to help me support my child's academic progress?
- * What information can the school provide about what my child should be learning in school?
- * In what ways does the school's leadership share decision-making power with parents and families?
- * In what ways does the school collaborate with the community?

If you don't know the answers to some of these questions, don't worry. Make plans to attend the school's Open House and/or make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher or the school principal. Developing strong family-school partnerships takes time and effort on behalf of parents, caregivers, and educators. The great news is that you can be a part of the solution! These tips will help you get started.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Get Involved!

Involved parents are an asset to their children's schools and the community at large. There are lots of ways you can help your child and other children be successful in school, even if you work full time or are always on the go.

"Love the group, love the friends I've made, and I love the fact that I've learned more about our city and what's available to families!"

—Kim (on joining her local Early Childhood PTA), ParentsConnect.com

Take your involvement to the next level by talking to your child's teacher about starting a Backpack and School Supply Drive! See pages 15 and 16 for a guide and sample poster.

Explore the New Ways that PTA® Can Help Your Child's School

- * **Join your local PTA®** or if one does not exist, talk to the principal at your child's school about starting one. PTA® can help you connect with your child's teachers, discover great resources and programs, and tap into a network of other caring parents. It is also a great way to bring your family's values, culture, and unique contributions to the school. See www.pta.org for more information.
- * **Stay in touch** with your child's teacher on a regular basis from the beginning to find out what your child is learning in class and how he/she is doing academically and behaviorally. Don't wait for parent/teacher conferences that may occur only a few times per year.
- * **Participate** in school committees to have your voice heard (e.g., textbook committee, school improvement plan committee, etc).
- * **Register** to receive emailed newsletters, check blogs, or get the latest information via Facebook and Twitter from National PTA® (www.pta.org) as well as local organizations you'd like to keep up with, such as your school district and recreation department.
- * If there's an issue you want to learn more about, **reach out** to your child's teacher or the school's principal to ask questions and voice your concern. You can write a letter, send an email, or make a call.

Need more help with getting your child ready for school? Then consider contacting your local school system's Early or Special Education office, or dialing 2-1-1 to find a local childcare resource and referral agency.



Additional Parent Involvement Resources

PTA

www.pta.org

Get Involved > Why Join the PTA

Get Involved > Why your School Needs a PTA

Children's Defense Fund

www.childrensdefense.org

Child Advocacy Resource Center >

Take Action Online

Get Involved

Help Children & Support CDF

DonorsChoose.org

www.DonorsChoose.org

About > Do More

National Head Start Association

www.nhsa.org

For more ideas about getting involved, visit www.BeyondtheBackpack.com

Print out this **BOOKMARK** and **READING CERTIFICATE** for your child.
For extra durability, you can print on cardstock, but regular paper is also fine.

_____ is on a
READING
ADVENTURE!



I just read _____ !

My favorite character in the book was _____ .

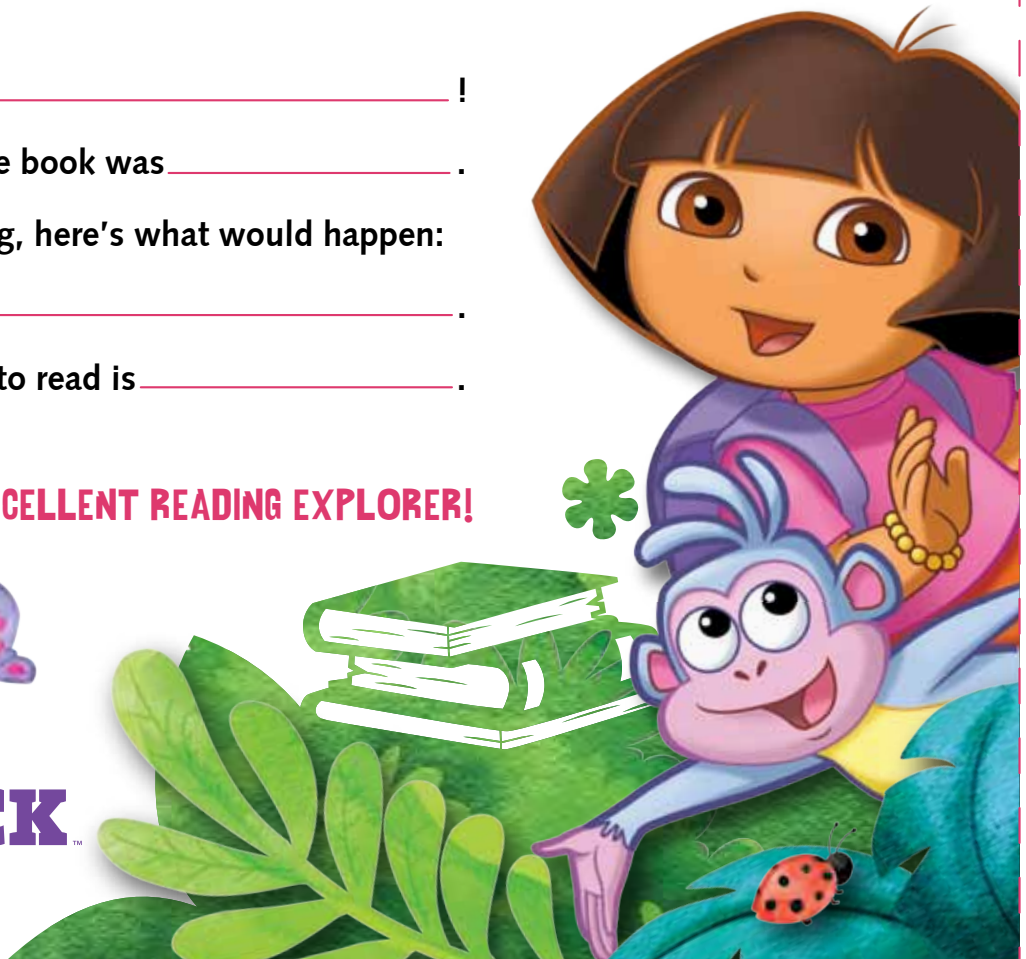
If I could change the ending, here's what would happen:

_____ .

The next book I can't wait to read is _____ .

¡MUY BIEN! YOU'RE AN EXCELLENT READING EXPLORER!

nickelodeon **Dora's**
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the BACKPACK™





Use this chart to
PRACTICE COUNTING!

1



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



3 2 1

Bonus: Now say the numbers in Spanish! ¡Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco, seis, siete, ocho, nueve, diez!



In addition to giving your child a great place to share his or her feelings every day, this **CALENDAR** can help with **math skills** by serving as a reminder of how days and weeks work.



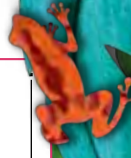
How do you feel today?

HOW I FEEL CALENDAR



(fill in month)

SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	I felt _____ today when _____.	I felt happy today when _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.
I am glad today is Sunday because _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	I felt _____ today when _____.	I felt happy today when _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.
The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	I felt _____ today when _____.	I felt happy today when _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.
The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	I felt _____ today when _____.	I felt happy today when _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	I am glad today is Thursday because _____.	The nicest thing I did for someone today was _____.	The coolest thing I learned today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.	The nicest thing someone did for me today was _____.	Today I laughed when _____.



ARE YOU A GOOD-HABITS EXPLORER?

Print out this **WEEKLY CHART** and use star stickers to keep track of your child's healthy habits. Whenever he or she eats a fruit or vegetable, or makes a healthy choice in general, add a star to the row for that day. At the end of the week, reward your child with the cut-out certificate below. A star-studded calendar results in a Good-Habits Explorer Certificate!



	EAT FRUITS & VEGETABLES	BRUSH TEETH	ACTIVE PLAY	WASH HANDS	TAKE BATH	FULL NIGHT OF SLEEP		
SUNDAY								
MONDAY								
TUESDAY								
WEDNESDAY								
THURSDAY								
FRIDAY								
SATURDAY								

¡FANTÁSTICO! YOU'RE DOING A GREAT JOB TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF!

_____ (child's name)

is an official Good-Habits Explorer!

CONGRATULATIONS!

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PTA®**
everychild.one voice.®





HOST A BACKPACK AND SCHOOL SUPPLY DRIVE!

The National School Supply and Equipment Association reported that on average, educators spent more than **\$1,752** out of their own pockets on supplies and instructional materials for the 2005-2006 school year. Help the teachers in your child's school by organizing a **Backpack and School Supply Drive**.

As you get started, keep in mind that it will help for you to be flexible and work within the school's needs and guidelines. **Here are some steps to get the ball rolling.**

- * Decide with your local PTA® when your drive will take place.
- * Figure out where you'd like the drive to take place (collect drop-offs at a certain location during certain hours, or collect donations and have volunteers drop them off). You may want to have two sites so people can choose the site most convenient for them.
- * Next, you'll want to decide what items you need. Check out the sample list below for suggestions, or talk to teachers and administrators to find out if your school has any special needs or projects for which you can collect supplies.
- * You'll also want to figure out how to approach donors. Make a list of businesses to call or visit.
- * Get the word out to your community to encourage participation.
A school's success depends on everyone!

MAKE A LIST OF SUPPLIES NEEDED

Here are a few examples:

- * Pencils
- * Backpacks
- * Children's scissors
- * Construction paper
- * Crayons
- * Glue sticks
- * Notebooks
- * Printer paper

If you are unable to set up a drive, ask the teacher to go to www.DonorsChoose.org to post a project request to raise funds for the supplies your students need.

DonorsChoose.org connects generous donors to thousands of students and classrooms in need of assistance every week.



Make **POSTERS** and **FLYERS** like the one below and distribute them around the community. Be sure to follow any local guidelines and keep the environment in mind. A few big, bold, and bright posters can go a long way.

_____ (school or class name)

NEEDS YOUR HELP!

PLEASE COME AND SUPPORT OUR DRIVE!

We're collecting school supplies including _____

Drop-Off Points:

Date:

Time:

Contact:



BEYOND THE BACKPACK ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Gracias to all of our Beyond the Backpack Advisory Committee members!

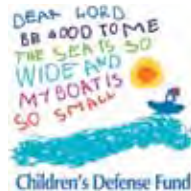


everychild.onevoice.®

National Parent Teacher Association® (PTA®) comprises millions of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business and community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and the promotion of family engagement in schools. www.pta.org



ASCD is a nonprofit, worldwide educational leadership organization with over 170,000 members dedicated to advancing best practices and policies for the success of each learner. www.ascd.org



Children's Defense Fund Leave No Child Behind® mission is to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. www.childrensdefensefund.org



DonorsChoose.org is an online charity where public school teachers from across America post classroom project requests that range from pencils for a poetry unit to violins for a school recital. Individuals can browse requests and give any amount to the one that inspires them. After reaching its funding goal, DonorsChoose.org delivers the materials to the school and donors receive photos and thank-you letters directly from the students. www.DonorsChoose.org



The **National Children's Museum** (NCM) is a world-class cultural and educational institution dedicated to engaging and empowering children. NCM's mission is to inspire children to care about and improve the world. www.ncm.museum



National Head Start Association is a private nonprofit dedicated to meeting the needs of more than one million Head Start children and their families. National Head Start advocates for policies that strengthen its services, provides extensive training and professional development, and develops and disseminates research, information, and resources. www.nhsa.org



Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based nonprofit that prepares America's youngest children to succeed in school by partnering with doctors to prescribe books and encourage families to read together. www.reachoutandread.org



Born Learning is **United Way's** national public engagement campaign, educating parents, caregivers and communities about early childhood education. The campaign includes 500+ public awareness, parent education, and communication action tools online. www.bornlearning.org

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1 + 2 = 3