Things I wish I knew before my kid started Kindergarten.
Starr King parents share their wisdom.

Start strong and get to school on time...
“Tell yourself and your kids that school starts at 8:30. This way, you will always arrive on time and the kids have a chance to play, and you will have a chance to get to know other parents.”

Our big kids are still so little....
“Be prepared with how little your child will look in comparison to the other kids when they are standing in line the first day of school and how quickly that changes.”

“Walking down the hall to the bathroom can be overwhelming for some so have extra clothes on hand and even have your child practice walking down the hall.”

Get to know other Starr King families...
“Be sure to attend the summer playdates -- they are not for the kids (who will likely run around and play with the kids they know already), but for you. I know my anxiety level decreased quite a bit when I could rely on a couple of moms those first weeks to make sure we kept an eye on each other's kids.”

“Get on the SKPTA and class listserves as soon as you can, these are great places to get your questions answered and to find out what is happening at school.” You can request to get on these by going to starrkingschool.org and looking under the “community” tab.

“Know that you will, at some point, need to look beyond your not so perfect teacher and think ‘what else is my child learning from this experience?’ And that sticking together as a community for that one (or two) not so great years will indeed create an amazing bond with other SK families.”

Even though Starr King kids wear uniforms, there always seem to be clothing issues. Know that their clothes will get lost and stained and holey...
“My kid will inevitably lose about 3 sweaters/jackets a year, so don't send them to school with anything you will be upset if they lose, especially that sweater that grandma knit.”

“I wish I had known not to buy so many uniforms of various styles because, even though it was a uniform, she still developed favorites and many clothes never got worn.”

“Old Navy, Target and Lands End sell uniforms year round. I wish I hadn’t bought so many sets at the beginning of the year, by March, they are either too small or really dirty!”
“Land’s End ‘iron knee’ chinos held up pretty well for my son, although a few still ripped at the knee.”

“If you have a boy, I found that buying a bunch of navy blue patches for the uniform pants ahead of time came in very handy. I think my son had a hole the first week. I started patching prophylactically.”

“We found JC Penny had good selections and that Crazy8 had cotton bike shorts.”

“I was happy to learn that Starr King collects still wearable uniforms before I sent mine to Goodwill.”

Kindergarteners often don’t have enough time or are too excited to eat lunch. BE SURE to have a snack on hand when you pick them up….. they will be famished.....

“Lunch is very short and the kids will be too busy talking and won’t eat anything, no matter what I pack.”

“I wish I had known that my daughter would not eat lunch, there was too much going on then, and to not sweat it. “

“I wish I’d had my kids practice opening the tupperware BEFORE I packed their lunch.”

“If you use thermos, the way you don’t create a vacuum (making those things impossible to open even for the adults!) is topping it with saran wrap then screwing on the cap.”

“Lunch containers by Systema are something our Kinder could open. She couldn’t open Tupperware’s or Gladware containers.”

“Parents should know we do a nut-free table and allow other kids to have nut-based lunches”

“Kinders sit at color coded table groupings for lunch and don’t just sit with their friends”

Homework will change your life...

“One of the hardest thing we had to do as a family is to carve out time for homework. Homework is important. Going over homework with your child reinforces its importance. Be prepared to add it your busy home life schedule.”

“Create a filing system with folders for homework, projects etc. 2 sets for English and Chinese.”

Volunteer!...

“There is a huge need to have lunch parent helpers in the first weeks - it is a great way to visit the school when volunteering in the classroom is not allowed yet. Plus the kinders really needed the parents there to open containers, mostly.”

“Very personal and not possible for everyone -- but I saved as many days off work as possible to take them off at the first four months of school. I was able to volunteer a lot and really get to
know all the kids in my son’s classroom. That meant that I was really stingy with my vacation time, though, especially in the first half of the year, possibly not OK with everybody.”

“Attending the first PTA meeting is really important since the budget is discussed. BUT our Kinder was lonely and scared on the playground because even though after-care is offered she hadn’t made friends yet and there were so many kids that the caregivers didn’t notice...so parents should know they can keep the kids with them for these meetings.”

“Parents sign up to provide fresh fruit for their class recess snack”

“Teachers need to establish a routine and relationship with our kids before they will let parents volunteer in the classroom. Be prepared to wait a month or more before they will need your help. The cafeteria - on the other hand - will gladly take your help. The kinders need help opening all those containers. This gave me a great opportunity to know the kids in my daughter’s class and kids in the other academic strands as well.”

Your Kindergartner’s classroom...

“Check outside your kid’s classroom door for information about what is going on in the class.”

“There is so much sitting!”

“Around December your child will be tired, overwhelmed, burnt out but after the winter break the child will likely be SUPER excited to return to school”

What happens when the kids are dismissed from school?..

“Teachers take kids in groups to the appropriate location. The onsite after school program meets in the Cafeteria and Rec and Parks, Fei Tien, PKS and parents pick up on the NE corner of the playground.”

After school programming is huge concern for many families. This is what parents say...

“I wish I had known that after school would work out. That was my biggest fear. Now there are even more options for kindergarten parents.”

“Recreation & Parks and ASP fill up before school starts”

Many students at Starr King are English Learners. As a parent of an English Learner, you might worry that your child might not get the support they need...

“I wish I hadn’t worried so much about my child being an English Learner. Starr King provides tremendous EL support. I had no idea!”
If your kid is in the Mandarin Immersion program, you might feel particularly anxious about kindergarten because you really have no idea what to expect...

“Your kid will absorb mandarin like a sponge.”

“The parent community is so helpful and supportive that it’s okay if you never understand a word of Mandarin.”

“Only 2 kids out of 22 came into the classroom fluent enough in Mandarin to converse with the teacher - one was a native speaker. I think only 2 sets of parents speak Mandarin fluently enough to converse with the teacher. So if you and your child don’t speak, don’t worry. You are not alone and the kids will do fine.” (This comment was made three years ago. We now have more native Mandarin speakers in class. That said, the sentiment remains the same, there will still be children who haven’t had a word of Mandarin spoken in preschool or home.)