

Is Your Child Ready for Kindergarten?

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What does it mean for your child to be considered “fully ready” to enter school? It means that he or she can consistently and successfully demonstrate the skills, behaviors, and abilities necessary to meet kindergarten expectations.

If children are not provided with solid learning preparation and opportunities early in life, there are short-term and long-term consequences. The short-term concern is that more children end up in special education or in remedial programs, where they are always having to “catch up.” The long-term implications are that children get frustrated because they are not succeeding in school and ultimately may want to drop out.

The things that we used to identify with kindergarten—finger-painting, cutting and pasting, and snack time—are now a part of preschool. Because schools have raised the academic standards for kindergarten classes, kindergarten readiness is taken more seriously today. Yet, at the same time that the importance of kindergarten readiness is being realized, more households consist of parent(s) working long hours outside of the home and spending less time reading to and teaching their children the basics. Parents are now leaning more on schools to begin educating their children at an early age.

All parents, however, are strongly encouraged to take an active role in developing a relationship with the local school and are urged to participate in any preparation classes or workshops that might be offered to educate parents on how to better prepare their children for kindergarten. Besides learning at home, preparation for kindergarten often includes preschool. Preschool sets the stage for what, hopefully, will be a positive experience where the child can develop a good attitude about education in general.

Here is a list of the skills kindergarten teachers feel are the most important for school readiness. A prospective kindergartner should be able to:

- Actively pay attention (sit and listen) for 10 to 15 minutes
- Respond to a teacher or authority figure giving directions
- Relate to other children
- Be empathetic
- Express emotions in a positive way
- Feel self-confident and capable
- Show initiative and self-direction
- Manage transitions
- Adapt to changes in routine

I guess it really is true that everything we know and every skill we use as adults to co-exist in society, we learned in kindergarten!

Parents want nothing more than to see their children succeed. Parents are their children’s first educators. As pediatricians, we want all families to understand that the seeds of learning begin at birth, with reading.

For practical tips on what parents can do to prepare their children for the transition to kindergarten, click on the links below...

- In English: <http://www.childcareaware.org/en/dailyparent/vol18/>
- En Español: <http://www.childcareaware.org/sp/dailyparent/vol18/>