

School Readiness

Success for Every Child





What do we mean by **SCHOOL READINESS?**

“Readiness” is a term used to describe preparation for what comes next! Since 1990, one of the top national educational goals has been that all children in America will start school “ready to learn”. While there is general agreement concerning the importance of school readiness, there is no consistent definition for it.

Children’s readiness for successful transition into kindergarten needs to be viewed as a community responsibility. Parents, prekindergarten teachers, elementary schools, and local community programs working together provide the best base for children’s success in school. Readiness needs to be defined in broad developmental terms so that the uniqueness of each child is preserved and respected. The National Education Goals Panel definition of school readiness covers three key areas:

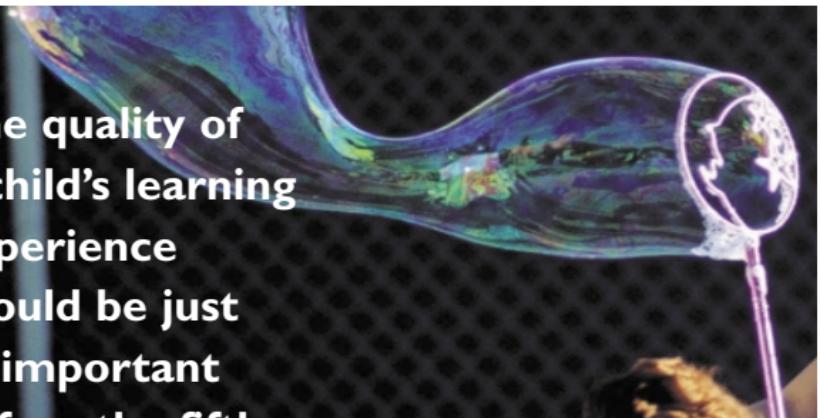
- children’s readiness for school
- schools’ readiness for children
- family and community supports and services that contribute to children’s readiness for school success

Why is **SCHOOL READINESS** an important issue today?

Children's school readiness is affected by the early care and learning experiences they receive. More women in the labor force with preschool children and more single parent families indicate the increasing NEED for prekindergarten programs. There are also more children today "at risk" for school success (poverty, limited English, special needs) who need early learning opportunities. The current research in brain development emphasizes that early learning experiences (especially from birth to five years) can directly influence a child's ability to learn and succeed in school. These trends have contributed to a growing awareness of the importance of **QUALITY** early education and prekindergarten experiences for children.

Recent studies indicate that despite our growing appreciation of the importance of early education, many children in this country are not receiving a quality experience. Research indicates that preschoolers who DO attend high-quality programs:

- Enter kindergarten with skills necessary for school success
- Show greater understanding of verbal and numerical concepts
- Receive higher ratings on social competence
- Show ability to stay with an activity longer
- Are more likely to make normal progress through the primary grades
- Are less often placed in special education classes

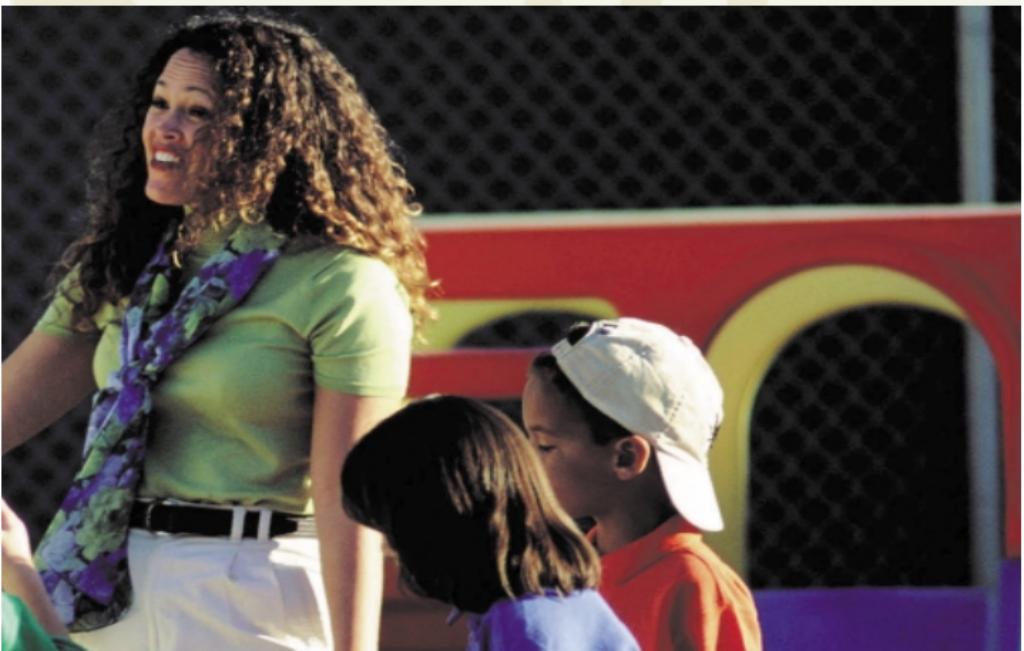


The quality of a child's learning experience should be just as important before the fifth birthday as after!

What does **QUALITY** **PREKINDERGARTEN** experience look like?

Early childhood education can foster children's development and be a key factor in preparing prekindergarten children to enter, and thrive, in school and in life. Research in the area has examined the effects of various program models and several specific program features do indicate **best practices** for program quality.

- All areas of growth and development—physical, cognitive, language, emotional, and social—are related and complement each other, and all areas are given active attention.
- Responsive relationships with teachers and providers nurture children's emerging skills and their eagerness to learn, as well as appreciate and value their cultural and linguistic differences.
- Low adult-child ratios and small class size are correlated with greater program effectiveness, allowing for more individualized experiences for children and more opportunities for teachers to extend children's problem-solving skills.
- Curriculum is appropriate and well-planned, and involves all areas of development, providing children with a mix of whole class, small group and individual interactions.
- Teachers and providers are encouraged to extend their professional development, reflect on their practice and observational skills, and to revise and plan accordingly.



What is “**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**” of readiness?

Appropriate assessment should benefit children and the adults who work with children. It can help to expand understanding related to the *condition* of children and the *capacity* of schools. Assessment needs to be age-appropriate and aware of the whole child. It also needs to be sensitive to language and cultural diversity. For assessment to be effective and helpful, it needs to be used as a guide to instruction and planning, and not to determine a child’s placement in schools.

It is important to remember that development varies widely at age five and each child is unique. Effective assessment tools typically observe five areas of development:

- Physical Well Being and Motor Development
- Emotional and Social Development
- Approaches Toward Learning
- Communication and Language Usage
- Cognition and General Knowledge

Appropriate assessment can create a partnership between families, prekindergarten teachers, schools, and community agencies.

Characteristics most important for a child to successfully transition into kindergarten:

- Ability to communicate basic needs
- Enthusiasm, high interest, desire to learn, joy of learning
- Well nourished and healthy
- Experience...they’ve seen a little of the world
- Desire to know things, to want to please, to feel good about themselves

Ways to help YOUR CHILD, and a child in your care, succeed in school

1. Talk with your child. Be available to listen and share information.
2. Pay attention to your child's strengths. Set high, but realistic expectations and help them develop realistic self expectations.
3. Encourage your child to make choices, even if it means making mistakes. Help them learn and grow from these experiences; this fosters self esteem and confidence.
4. Keep your child healthy; promote good nutrition and model an active, healthy lifestyle.
5. Support learning at home. Share books daily; let your child see you reading and limit TV viewing.
6. Communicate with your child's school; stay involved and keep informed on a regular basis.
7. Encourage your child to explore and discover the world. Foster new interests and help them make the most of the world around them.
8. Help your child develop friendships and recognize the importance of trust in relationships. Teach your child to be sensitive to other people's feelings.
9. Keep your child safe; teach them appropriate safety procedures and how to avoid dangerous situations.
10. Encourage community participation and awareness in your child. Help them learn to take their energy and skills beyond their classroom to help others.

**Y O U R C H O I C E S
S H A P E T H E I R
C H A N C E S**

Success for Every Child

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RESOURCES

Children and Families First Commission

264 Harbor Boulevard, Building A
Belmont, CA 94002-4017
650.802.5090

The Child Care Coordinating Council

700 Claremont Street, Suite 107
San Mateo, CA 94406
650.696.8780

Peninsula Partnership for Children, Youth and Families

1700 South El Camino Real, Suite 300
San Mateo, CA 94402-3049
650.358.9396

Raising a Reader

65 Tower Road
San Mateo, CA 94402
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Ready to Learn Project

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