

The Kindergarten Readiness Question

An ocean of information is available online to help parents answer the questions, "Is my child ready for kindergarten?" and "How can I get my child ready for kindergarten?" The information here is taken from a variety of sources, all of which are listed within the text. If, after swimming through all the thoughts included here, you still have questions, please feel free to contact the school.

Definition:

School Readiness is defined as the "ability to cope, learn, and achieve without undue stress." Memorizing a list of facts is not the same as having the developmental processing skills and maturation needed for success in school. ***School Readiness and intellectual capacity (I.Q.) do not necessarily correlate.*** Each child is a unique human being who grows and develops at his/her own individual rate.

What do Kindergarten Teachers Say?

Chancy & Bruce (www.chancyandbruce.com/kindergarten) recently asked Kindergarten teachers to respond to questions on readiness. A few of their responses include:

"More often it is the younger child in my class who is asked to repeat."

"Social-Emotional maturity is very important in looking at readiness."

"Children entering before their fifth birthday appear to be at a disadvantage compared with their older classmates."

"Boys with summer/fall birthdays seem to fall behind quickly."

"I would rather have enrichment activities for the 'very ready' child than watch a child struggle and not want to come to school."

One teacher stated, "Children are born when they are ready, creep when they are ready, walk when they are ready, talk when they are ready, but start school when they are told to."

What do Parents Ask?

The most frequent questions asked by parents are:

"What can I do to get my child ready?"

"My child has been in Preschool for 2 years, why did they not get him/her ready?"

"Will my child get bored if I give him/her the gift of time?"

"If I decide on the gift of time, where is the best place to spend an extra year?"

Specialists in the field of child development feel strongly that readiness is not something that a child is trained for, but is the understanding of a child's unique development and growth pattern and what types of activities will enhance the natural development of a child in the areas of motor development, visual processing skills, auditory processing skills, language skills, conceptual skills, and social-emotional behaviors.

Feelings of self worth develop as a child feels good about his/her environment and the way they interact in that environment. The most important gift (one) can give a child is the time to socialize and grow emotionally. (1)

(1) www.chancyandbruce.com

Answering the Questions

Kindergarten programs differ from place to place. Different types of curriculum and the delivery of that curriculum require certain maturation levels in processing skills, attending maturity, and social-emotional maturity. It is important that parents are aware of the demands of the Kindergarten curriculum in the school setting in which their child will be attending. At Faith Christian Academy, Kindergarten is academically oriented; learning to read and do basic math is the bulk of each day. Because of that, you may decide to

give your child another year to develop. Forcing academics on the child who is not yet ready, whether in kindergarten or another Pre-K program, is not in the child's best interest.

Kindergarten is a significant step on the path of education, so take time to consider if enrollment at this time is best for your child.

Most kindergarten teachers would agree that the standard indicators of readiness include:

- Enthusiasm toward learning
- Solid oral language skills
- The ability and willingness to learn
- The desire to be independent
- The ability to play with others
- Strong fine-motor skills
- Basic number and letter recognition (2)

(2) <http://content.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=701>

Specific skills needed for Kindergarten

Numbers, Color, and Shapes

Can your child recite numbers in order? Can he count? These are not the same skills. Actual counting means giving a number of items and figuring out how many there are. Many children recite numbers but cannot actually count. Count all day long, ask your child to count out place settings for the table, count the number of toy cars he has, count chairs, roses on a bush, and the toes and fingers.

Knowing colors and shapes is also useful. Ask him to identify colors and shapes on clothes, cereal boxes, signs etc.

Devote some time to teaching concepts as well. Understanding the difference between words like "same" and "different" or "more" and "less" will help a child express his thoughts. Another important tool is the art of describing and making distinctions. Put three oranges and a banana in a bowl, and ask him to choose the one that's different. Discuss "place" words, or prepositions, such as "under," "above," "beside," and "through," and words that describe time, such as "before" and "after." (3)

(3) http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0_how-can-i-prepare-my-child-for-kindergarten_67245.pc

Language skills

Your child should be able to speak in complete sentences using grammar that is standard for his age. His vocabulary should be as good as possible. Parents often simplify their sentences when speaking to their children, in order to be sure the child understands. Instead, say the sentence the same way you would to an adult, but then explain what you mean. Toss in hard words on a regular basis. You can even select words to teach your child, using them as often as possible over the course of a week or so. Remember that the word *simplify*, for example, has no more letters than does a word like elephant. Any word a child hears often is an easy word for him, even if it's a hard one for other children. Don't be afraid to tell your child to "imitate" or even to "emulate" you, instead of always saying, "Can you do this just the way I am?" Explain it by using two sentences: "Can you emulate me—can you do it just the way I do?"

Not only is vocabulary important, but so is correct pronunciation. You may be so used to hearing your child speak that you are unaware of the immature speech patterns he exhibits. Parents are often surprised when the kindergarten teacher suggests speech therapy or intensive speech work at home. Listen to see if your child correctly repeats words such as:

- this (not 'dis')
- wrong (not wong)
- ship (not sip)
- sink (not think)
- like (not wike)
- path (not paff)

If any of these word, or words like it, have pronunciation errors, you may want to begin speech therapy or at least start a daily routine of repeating sounds that give them difficulty. For example, if s/th is the problem sound (a child says 'Thara' rather than 'Sarah') make a three columned list of words with 's' in the initial, middle, and final place of the word. (Initial place: Sink; Middle place: basket; Final place: bless) Read each word one by one as the child repeats each word. Practice correct pronunciation that way for a few

minutes every day until they have conquered the error. Children with incorrect speech patterns have more trouble with phonics and spelling because of their pronunciation errors.

Small (fine) motor skills:

Give your child plenty of opportunities to color, cut, glue and write. Paint, use clay, and draw with sidewalk chalk. Art is the most interesting way to teach small motor skills, and is excellent preparation for the kindergarten curriculum. Try not to worry about mess—art should be creative and fun. Forget the “parent pleasers” and give your child a box of paper scraps to glue onto construction paper, or even a box of junk to “invent something”. Work with puzzles, build with Duplo and Legos, and string beads. All these things strengthen fingers and develop eye hand coordination needed for handwriting.

Speaking of handwriting, unless you insist on correct pencil grip, paper slant and letter formation, don't worry about teaching your child how to write the alphabet. All experience indicates that poor habits are very difficult to break! Even with coloring, your child should not be allowed to fist grip a crayon, or hold it in any other way than how to properly hold a pencil.

Large (gross) motor skills:

This may not seem like an academic skill, but large motor skills prepare a child for PE classes and improve coordination and perception. Teach your child to ride a bicycle, toss a ball, run, skip, hop, swing, and climb.

Alphabet:

Read alphabet books together. Cut letters from fuzzy material, sandpaper and anything else with interesting textures and let your child trace them as you tell him what they are. Examine letters wherever you are—in the doctor's office or in line at a store. Sing the alphabet song. Talk about the sounds a letter makes: “B is the first letter in the word baby. I know some more words that start with B. Listen!” Buy alphabet letters with magnets and let your child learn to spell his name or other words that interest him. Since lowercase letters are used far more often than capital letters, teach them as the priority.

Full name, address, telephone number, and parents' names.

Ask about these as you walk or ride in the car, do chores together or play. Try putting the telephone number to music. Teach your child to write his first name correctly, that is, one capital letter at the beginning and all the rest lower case.

Music:

Sing together. Listen to music. Play instruments, even if they are only homemade rhythm instruments. There is no better way to memorize than through song.

Imagination:

Imagination is absolutely essential. Give your child an imagination. Play what-if games, make up ridiculous stories and welcome those invisible friends into your home. Read fantasy books and allow for time to create and imagine. In today's world of movies and video games, imagination is often hindered and limited by what a child sees. Limit video games, TV, and movies and encourage self creativity. Take your child lots of interesting places: the zoo, museums, walk in the woods, explore a pond, keep a frog for a while, catch fireflies, go camping etc. All these experiences increase vocabulary, imagination, and empathy for the world around them. (4)

READ TO YOUR CHILD

Finally, read to your child; read every day. Once your child begins to read, require the same of him. Good reading skills are the keys to school success.

(4) <http://www.bellaonline.com/articles/art23051.asp>

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