

# An overview into the term school readiness



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Is my child ready for school? Will my child be ready for school? What is School Readiness? These are questions that bombard educators starting from preschool to college? There are not any guarantees that a child will be ready for school. School Readiness and other programs have been formed to foster the best practices for children to be as ready as possible for their school years. Educators and School Readiness Programs have emerged in the last years to help ignite the skills necessary to better school entrance and success. School readiness assessment is a hot topic these days, in large part because of increased accountability pressures in both the public schools and early care and education settings. What exactly is meant by the phrase school readiness and what should early care and education teachers and administrators know about it?

School readiness is more than just about children. School readiness involves children, families, early environments, schools, and communities. Through School Readiness, parents are included as full partners in their child development and learning. According to research, early childhood programs involving parents in their children's education have been more effective than those that focus exclusively on the child. Children are not innately ready or not ready for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school. Due to the large number of U. S. children in non-parental care arrangements the year before kindergarten, child care centers and family child care homes are important early environments that affect children's development and learning.

Schools are also an important piece of the readiness puzzle because different schools have different expectations about readiness. The same child, with the same strengths and needs, can be considered ready in one school and not ready in another school. It is the school's responsibility to educate all children who are old enough to legally attend school, regardless of their skills. The School of the 21st Century based at Yale University was developed, researched, networked and supervised to become a revolutionary educational model that links communities, families, and schools. The 21st Century School Program currently has over 1300, 21C schools across the United States. This program provides funds for school readiness programs for other schools.

School Readiness programs have been funded by the state. Local and Federal funds are used as an in-kind contribution to enhance the state money to provide School Readiness. Million of dollars have been allocated for School Readiness programs in 1991 and 2001. School districts are reviewed by two state agencies every other year for the dispersement of local funds.

School Readiness assessment plays a judgmental factor in school readiness indication. School readiness assessment typically refers to assessment of young children around school entry right before kindergarten, or at kindergarten entry. The tools described as school readiness differ with schools. Assessments vary in their purposes and designs. Different educators use different assessments to measure school readiness. There are several important limitations of school readiness assessments. First, each assessment tool is designed for a particular purpose and cannot automatically or easily be used for another purpose. This means that the

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purpose of the assessment must be clear before an appropriate assessment tool can be selected and that multiple assessment tools or approaches are needed to address multiple purposes. Second, each school readiness assessment tool is designed with a certain definition of school readiness. Third; assessments are only as good as the people conducting them. Assessment tools for the purposes of program evaluation and monitoring trends must meet high standards for technical properties.

## **Role of Parents**

Parents are usually a child's first teacher and can act as role model when it comes to teaching their children to interact socially with others and to do such simple things as understand to wait in line or wait their turn. Parents can also help their children develop organizational skills at home by:

Teaching them to pick up their clothes

Teaching them to put their toys away and

In older children, assigning simple household chores

Children should learn that they are sharing the home with others and they are not the only person in the home. This concept applies to the school environment. These are important skills because at school children will be asked to organize their desks put things away and wait their turn (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Having learned and practiced these skills/concepts at home will give them an edge once school starts (Baker, Piotrkowski & Brooks-Gum, 1999).

Another helpful pre-school activity that parents can practice is giving their children the opportunity to listen to and learn language through story telling. One of the best ways to prepare children for school entry is to read to them. Not only does story reading offer a one-on-one quiet time with children, it can help develop children's listening and language skills. Today, research suggests that pre-school age children watch TV for 3-8 hours a day (Baker, Piotrkowski & Brooks-Gum, 1999). Although educational TV programs are also helpful, they should complement and not replace the one-on-one reading time, which is also an opportunity for children to interact with their parents in a calm quiet setting and get used to communicating to each other.

Parental involvement in early care and education settings benefits children, families, and programs. Parents become more knowledgeable about their children's activities and are more able to continue the learning process at home. Families can receive support and referrals to needed services (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999). Programs that incorporate parent input and involvement on a regular basis are more likely to improve child and family outcomes (Miedel & Reynolds, 1999).

## **Role of Kindergarten**

Kindergarten is where the psychological process of learning is prepared, including:

Memory

Organizational skills

## Social interactions and

The experimentation of new processes, such as new, more advanced paper/pencil tasks.

Kindergarten prepares children in a more structured “ academic” environment. In most schools the alphabet is taught and mastered by January (LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003). Generally, by the time they are ready to enter Grade 1; kindergarten graduates will have a good knowledge of the alphabet and an understanding of the concept of reading (LaParo, Kraft-Sayre, & Pianta, 2003).

According to a recent initiative study by 17 states partnering to determine Indicators of School Readiness, children’s readiness for school was defined. Indicators of School Readiness were defined as a combination of Ready Families (positive environments for children, Ready Communities (community resources and supports to families, and programs for infants and toddlers), Ready Services (availability and quality of services), and Ready Schools (factors such as class size). All of these factors add up to children who are ready for school. Their research identified 5 factors most important in “ Ready Children.” The 5 factors were

- **Overall physical well-being and motor development:**
- . **Social and emotional development**
- **Approaches to Learning**
- **Cognition and General Knowledge**
- **Language Development and Literacy**

The research displays a difference in what is normally viewed as a typical “school readiness skill.” A child who follows directions, interacts well with others, uses her hands effectively to manipulate small parts, and has curiosity possesses the key readiness skills.

Along with other studies, the report states that reading is a critical role a family can play in preparing their children for school success. Daily reading, starting with infants and toddlers is a key to School Readiness. A high quality child care program enrollment is another factor in school success. Families and teachers working together can help ensure children are ready for School.

State policies regarding school entry is also evident in the idea of schools’ readiness for children. The NEGP concept of a ready school suggests that it is a school’s responsibility to educate all children who walk through its door, regardless of whether children are ready or not ready. Age in most states, not skill level, is used as the criterion for determining when a child is eligible and legally entitled to attend public school. A child’s readiness should not be a factor in determining eligibility for kindergarten. However, practice does not always follow this philosophy. Delayed school entry is wanted by some families, school administrators, and teachers on children’s readiness.

Research suggests that delaying school entry does not generally benefit

children. When a child is deemed not ready for school, preschool teachers and administrators can collaborate with the family and kindergarten teacher to help strengthen the particular needs of the child and work together to develop strategies for improving the child's skills. If concerned that the child's skills are far behind those of her peers. The team may refer the child for screening to determine whether he or she can also identify strategies all can use to support the child's success. If the team believes that the child is considered not ready because of inappropriate expectations from school staff, then a larger effort is likely needed to bring about change. Some children do well in Kindergarten without the exposure to any type of quality preschool or childcare programs.

When School Readiness is achieved the children entering Kindergarten and any child care program ready to learn and parents involved in their child's education, all facets of the society benefits. The idea that early childhood programs such as School Readiness to prevent or lessen later problems is supported by a vast amount of research. School Readiness programs recognize that early quality learning scaffolds better education and productivity. These programs prepare children through education programs, full day services, healthy and nutritional programs, and partnerships with local child care providers, parents, and communities. Cooperation and coordination with other programs and agencies for School Readiness services are vital to the program's success. School Readiness is an early investment that increases the effectiveness of the total investment society makes in education.



## Summary

The Code of Ethical Conduct is a guideline for responsible behavior and a common basis for solving problems that may arrive in the early childhood care and education. The code establishes a standard of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education based on commitment to adhering to the values that are the foundation of the field of early childhood care and education.

Advocating for “ School Readiness” programs, I am adhering to the Code of Ethical Conduct. It is the duty of educators, families, and communities to assist the program in providing the highest quality of service tangible for our children. According to the code, the ultimate job of educators is to promote and establish a safe, healthy, learning environment for the whole child. Teachers, administrators, and others involved in early childhood education follow these professional responsibilities in the code, while working, with the children and families.

The goal of the “ School Readiness” programs is to raise the quality of early childhood education for all children. School readiness programs provide a comprehensive plan to foster collaboration with an existing social service programs for families wit young children, a child development component, parent involvement, health referral services, and community outreach, and community based and staff and program resources.

Promoting “ School Readiness”, I believe I am making a conscious effort to promote a quality program that would provide additional quality services for our children. Implementing these programs during early childhood

education, children have a better chance for school success. The Code of Ethical Conduct guidelines are to provide and protect the child welfare.

School Readiness programs are in our children best interest.