

Understanding School Readiness

What is school readiness?

Stated in simple terms, school readiness means that a child possesses the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for high achievement in school and later learning in life. It is a measure of how well prepared—cognitively, socially, emotionally—a child is to succeed in school.

There is consensus, based upon a wealth of research, that a child's readiness for school should be measured and addressed across five distinct, but connected, domains:

- Physical Well-Being and Motor Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Language and Literacy Development
- Cognition and General Knowledge

While separate and distinct, these domains interact with and reinforce each other.

Most school districts administer a school readiness assessment to incoming kindergarteners, a screening to provide a snapshot of a child's school readiness levels, making it possible to confidently determine if students have the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in kindergarten. There is strong, research-based evidence that children who enter kindergarten with high levels of readiness are more likely to succeed academically throughout their school careers.

Additionally, a screener can identify the individual needs of children, enabling teachers to make informed instruction decisions right from the first day of kindergarten.

Often, children who are unprepared to start school fall behind in reading, leaving them unable to read well by the end of 3rd grade. Of course, research shows that learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten and it is critical for parents to engage their children from birth, so that children, even infants, are given the opportunity to soak up words, songs, rhymes, and images.

These early years of learning are critical and school readiness is key for all children. At nine months, researchers have found little difference between low-income children and their more affluent peers. But by 24 months, the lower-income children lose ground in five key cognitive and language skills, including the words they understand and speak, their listening and comprehension abilities, their discrimination skills, and early counting.



Source: By Dr. Susan Canizares for Learning Care Group, www.learningcaregroup.com.

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