

# Identifying If Your Child is Ready for Kindergarten

By Barrie Morganstein, Ph.D.

Kindergarten Readiness is the term used by educators to identify whether or not children have the skills and behaviors necessary to succeed in kindergarten. There are many components to kindergarten readiness. What teachers and educators look for and what parents look for are often different. Most parents look at academic knowledge (e.g., alphabet and counting skills) and whether or not the child is reading. However, a survey completed by the U.S. Department of Education revealed that kindergarten teachers believe the top three readiness indicators are that children are: 1) physically healthy, rested, and well nourished; 2) able to communicate needs, wants, and thoughts verbally, and 3) enthusiastic and curious in approaching new activities. Obviously, when deciding if your child is ready for kindergarten, it is important to look at the whole child, not only their academic skills.

Determining kindergarten readiness is frequently boiled down to five specific categories of skills or attributes; those categories and examples of each are listed below. To get a sense of how ready for kindergarten your child is, ask yourself how many of these apply to your child; the more of these the better, but not all are required for success.

## **Cognitive abilities - is your child:**

- \* curious and interested in learning
- \* able to focus on and complete tasks
- \* able to problem-solve and modify their approach to fit the dilemma
- \* imaginative and creative
- \* eager to try new things and take on new challenges

## **Social-Emotional Factors - does your child:**

- \* easily separate from you
- \* share with others
- \* wait their turn
- \* follow rules
- \* participate cooperatively
- \* exhibit self-control
- \* recognize and express humor
- \* manage transitions
- \* seek out interactions with others and play appropriately

## **Fine and gross motor development - is your child:**

- \* able to manipulate a pencil properly
- \* use scissors
- \* button and zip own clothes
- \* participate in a variety of playtime activities
- \* independently take care of their toileting needs

## **Language development - does your child:**

- \* have good receptive and expressive language
- \* express needs and wants verbally

bally

- \* use language that is readily understood by other adults
- \* understand directions and follow through independently
- \* state some personal information (e.g., birthdays, parents' names, phone number, etc.)

## **Pre-academic skills - is your child interested in:**

- \* letters and reading
- \* listening to stories
- \* talking about ideas
- \* learning about math concepts

If you are not sure if your child is ready for kindergarten, speaking to your child's preschool teacher is the best first step. His/her teacher can give you valuable insight into your child's abilities and how they handle the daily activities that are part of school. If you are still not sure, consider a kindergarten readiness assessment. This type of assessment offers objective data that compares your child to his/her same-age peers on a variety of cognitive, academic, and social-emotional areas. This will help identify your child's specific developmental strengths and weaknesses and likely provide recommendations for support and intervention.

## **A Kindergarten Readiness Assessment typically includes:**

- \* a brief interview with both child and parent
- \* a cognitive measure

- \* a measure of pre-academic skills
- \* questionnaire(s) to identify and measure problematic behaviors (e.g., inattention, hyperactivity, anxiety, etc.) and adaptive behaviors (e.g., emotional flexibility, social skills, etc.)

Cognitive measures look at children's verbal and non-verbal skills, their ability to reason with new information, visual-motor skills, attention, short- and long-term memory, and processing speed. Pre-academic measures look at children's language skills, phonemic awareness (e.g., sound-symbol association), letter identification, rhyming abilities, auditory attention and comprehension, number recognition, counting, and quantitative concepts. In addition to the assessment measures themselves, other abilities are evaluated from the interview and observations from testing, including: the child's ability to meet and relate to new people and new situations, receptive and expressive language and communication skills, comfort in separating from parents, approach to new tasks, problem solving abilities, persistence, and ability to focus and work hard when needed.

Not all children are ready for kindergarten at the same time or at the same age; their development happens at different paces. Pre-kindergarten or Transitional Kindergarten offers children an

extra year to mature, catch up on skills that are somewhat delayed, and build upon their already strong areas. It doesn't matter when kids begin kindergarten, only that they are developmentally ready for the challenge. ☆

*Dr. Morganstein is a CJP Parent, CJP Board Member and Licensed Psychologist in private practice in Charlotte at Southeast Psych (southeastpsych.com). Contact her at bmorganstein@southeastpsych.com.*

*For more information on how CJP prepares our preschoolers for kindergarten, please come by and visit. Please contact Alyson Kalik at akalik@shalomcharlotte.org or 704-944-6776.*



**Charlotte Jewish Preschool**

LEARN • GROW • CONNECT



**JOINED  
IN EDUCATION**

presents

Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair

Author of

**THE BIG DISCONNECT,  
Protecting Childhood  
and Family Relationships  
in the Digital Age**

**FEBRUARY 3, 7pm @ Providence Day School**

**FEBRUARY 4-Half & Full Day Workshops @ Shalom Park**



photo: Claire Holt



joinedineducation.org  
**704-366-4558**

