



School Readiness:

Is your child ready to succeed in kindergarten? And what does that even mean?

Kindergarten isn't quite what it used to be and parents often feel intense pressure and competition to make sure their children are little scholars before they walk through the door of their kindergarten classroom. But what really are the most important skills for children to have before they enter kindergarten and what can parents do to make sure their child is well-prepared? And if a child does not seem to be developmentally on track for school success, where should parents turn for help?

I. Underlying issues

- Children need to be ready for school, but schools also need to be ready for children (that is, the diverse group of children with a wide range of skills who are in any classroom – all of whom have a right to a free public education when they turn 5)
- “School readiness” encompasses much more than the 3 Rs and includes all domains of development
- Delaying school entrance has not been shown to be an effective way to help a child who appears to have difficulties with learning or behavior – in fact, delaying entrance may prevent that child from getting necessary help and intervention
- Whether a young child is cared for at home (by parent or other caregiver), in family childcare or a more formal early childhood care and education center, there are certain experiences that are important to a child's school success (tips follow)

II. Experiences young children need to succeed in school and life

- Secure attachments with parents and/or other caring adults
This is where motivation, empathy, confidence and self-regulation develop
- A rich language environment
Talking with babies long before they can talk back, exposure to books as a source of information and pleasure, opportunities to handle paper and crayons as a precursor to writing
- Safe opportunities to learn through play and exploration
- Opportunities to interact with other children, with adults guiding but not over-directing

III. Resources to help know how your child is progressing toward school success

- www.MomEnough.com - weekly podcasts and other information on wide range of parenting topics
- www.parentsknow.state.mn.us - state website with a wealth of info about development and learning, including Help Me Grow section that tells parents how to now if their child is on track and where to turn for further help