

Some Helpful Factors to Consider when Deciding if Your Child Will Be Ready for Kindergarten or if Junior Kindergarten Would Be Best

Making the decision for your child's school placement for the next school year can be extremely difficult and stressful. Careful consideration of your child's strengths and challenges will help you in the decision making process. There are many factors to consider when deciding if a child will be ready for Kindergarten. Academic readiness, social and emotional development, large motor and fine motor skills, self-help skills, communication/language skills, listening skills, following directions, thinking and reasoning skills, attention span, confidence level, learning interest, and possible learning differences all must be taken into careful consideration when deciding Kindergarten readiness. Parents and teachers should look at all areas of a child's development to predict Kindergarten readiness. The questions below may help decide if a child will be ready for Kindergarten or if they may need more time to develop readiness skills. The main goal is for children to feel good about themselves, enjoy learning, and feel comfortable at school.

Academic Readiness

- Does child recognize basic colors and shapes?
- Can child recite ABC's and a few nursery rhymes?
- Can child count to 30? Can child count up to ten objects?
- Does child recognize and identify numbers 0 - 10?
- Does child recognize and identify capital letters?
- Does child recognize and identify lowercase letters?
- Does child have a good understanding of letter sounds (phonics)?
- Can child complete simple patterns?
- Does child understand opposites and rhyming words?
- Does child sit and listen to a story?
- Can child complete a ten piece puzzle?
- Does child complete simple tasks in appropriate amount of time?
- Does child do his or her own work without seeking approval?
- Can child stay focused on a task for at least ten minutes?
- Does child show interest in learning?
- Does child follow directions and come when called?
- Does child use learning games as intended?
- Does child avoid or give up on tasks if unsure or feels challenged?

Fine Motor Skills

- Does child grip a pencil properly?
- Can child cut smoothly on a line with scissors?
- Does child write first name on a line using capital and lowercase letters?
- Can child write numbers (0-9) and alphabet letters?
- Does child attempt to stay in the lines when coloring?
- Can child draw a recognizable picture of a person with six or more features?
- Can child draw or copy simple shapes? (circle, square, triangle, rectangle)
- Does child participate in fingerplays, songs, and games?

Language and Communication Skills

- Does child speak in appropriate tone? (not a baby voice)
- Does child use proper pronouns.... he, she, I,,,?
- Does child respond when greeted?
- Does child communicate his or her needs?
- Does child answer questions with reasonable answers?
- Can child recite first and last name, birthday, phone number, and home address?
- Can child recite the days of the week?
- Can child retell a simple story?
- Does child speak in complete sentences?
- Does child communicate clearly during Show and Tell?
- Does child talk about daily activities, interests, and experiences?
- Does child express displeasure verbally rather than physically?
- Does child blurt out answers instead of waiting for his or her turn to answer?

Social and Emotional Readiness

- Does child willingly come to school most days or complain he/she wants to stay home?
- Does child separate from parents with little or no reluctance?
- Once at school, does child ask to go home?
- Does child complain about feeling sick or about aches and pains?
- Does child transition well from one activity to another?
- Does child initiate play and conversation with classmates?
- Does child play with other children or mainly by self?
- Does child play with more than one friend?
- Does child have appropriate control over his/her feelings?
- Does child accept correction in a positive manner?
- Does child wait patiently for his or her turn to do an activity?
- Does child think before acting or speaking? Impulsive?
- Does child ask for assistance when necessary?
- Does child participate in group activities or discussions?
- Does child volunteer answers?
- Does child take pride in his/her work and try his/her best without hurrying?
- Does child exhibit confidence in own ability to accomplish simple tasks?
- Is child reluctant to start or complete a task?
- Does child seek approval before doing an activity?
- Does child seek more than his/her fair share of teacher's attention?

Self-Help Skills

- Does child dress self with only a little assistance?
- Does child put on own coat or jacket?
- Does child put away toys and help clean up?
- Does child take care of own bathroom needs?
- Does child use a tissue when necessary?
- Does child sleep in own bedroom?

Large Motor Skills

Can child stand on one foot for ten seconds or more?

Can child run? hop? jump? skip? throw? catch a bounced ball?

Can child climb on playground equipment?

Can child walk up and down steps with alternating feet?

Does child appear awkward in movement, often bump into things, or often fall?

All children grow and develop at their own pace. Sometimes age is not a factor and other times age can make a difference in child development. Some young children may need more time to develop school readiness skills. Asking a child to perform tasks they are not developmentally ready for, may lead to frustration or low self-esteem. Just as a toddler who hasn't been given enough time to develop the muscles and balance techniques, can't be forced or expected to walk, a child who hasn't had enough time to develop school readiness skills shouldn't be expected to perform kindergarten skills. There is no one to blame and certainly no failure involved. Deciding to give a child more time to further develop readiness skills before moving on to a more structured all day Kindergarten class is a gift parents can give their child to help him or her be better prepared for success in Kindergarten and to the demands of progressively increasing school expectations. By giving a child another year to develop school readiness skills, he/she will most likely become more confident, interested, and motivated to learn. The child's attention span, self-help skills, and self assurance will improve. Teachers and parents want all children to be happy and successful on their educational journey. No parent or teacher wants to see a child become frustrated, think school is hard, or develop low self-esteem from struggling with school tasks that are too challenging for them. If only we had the ability to look into the future to see a child's successes or struggles as they move up in grade levels, it would make the decision to stay in Pre-K or move on to Kindergarten much simpler. Some children who move on do just fine. They gain the skills they need and are successful. Others struggle and have to work harder and longer than their classmates when assignments become more challenging. Most children who are given more time in Pre-K beam as they achieve social, emotional, or academic skills that once were challenging for them. Their confidence soars. They quickly develop friendships and often become role models with good leadership qualities as they develop more confidence and self-esteem. They smile and feel good about themselves which is extremely important.

Seeking advice from other parents who have made the decision to give their child more time to develop school readiness skills or who decided to move their child on may also be helpful. Your child's teacher can assist in connecting you with parents if you would like to talk to them. Your child's teacher can also help answer questions you might have. Sometimes teachers can readily recommend placement for children but with other students they are also unsure what is best for their students. Sometimes there are no clear answers. If you decide to enroll your child another year in Pre-K, generally they are placed in the other Pre-K class for the next school year as this change works best for most students. A new classroom with a new teacher helps children feel they are moving on and the change in setting, experience, and routine is stimulating. Please contact your child's teacher if you have further concerns or questions.

