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KINDERGARTEN...READY OR NOT, HERE I COME???

Why concern ourselves with kindergarten readiness?

1. A child's transition into kindergarten is a major turning point in a child's life.
2. School readiness is a national concern. The 1994 Legislation, Goals 2000; Educate America Act, established "National Education Goals, the first goal being, "By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.
3. Over the last several years, many schools have implemented downward displacement of academic content.

Even though there is much attention given to the concept of kindergarten readiness, there is much debate on what it means to be "ready for school".

What are the factors we need to look at when considering a child's readiness for school?

There are many factors to look at and consider. READINESS IS A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL CONCEPT. Many educators describe a child's development as having four dimensions;

- Physical
- Cognitive
- Social
- Emotional

ALL need to be considered when discussing a child's readiness for kindergarten.

The Role Child Care Plays in Kindergarten Readiness:

We know that the first few years of life are crucial for a child's brain development. The nurturing the child receives from significant caregivers and the learning he or she does in the early years play a major role in the child's ability to learn and thus be successful in school. Research shows that a high quality child care environment has a positive impact on cognitive skills and social and emotional development.

What Parents Can Do to Promote School Readiness:

Although much of a child's kindergarten readiness is developmental, parents can take an active role in promoting readiness. Steps parents can take:

- encourage independence
- encourage self-confidence
- encourage strong language skills
- read to their child
- foster social skills and the ability to play with others
- foster and promote fine motor skills
- foster and promote letter and number recognition
- encourage curiosity
- teach good health habits

Risk Factors:

There are certain risk factors that have been associated with accomplishments and difficulties children have when they enter kindergarten.

Sociodemographic risk factors:

- Low socioeconomic status
- Low level of maternal education
- Mother speaks a language other than English as her primary language
- Mother was unmarried at time of the child's birth.
- Untraditional family structures

Additional risk factors (as identified by The Child Mental Health Foundations & Agencies Network):

- low birth weight
- neurodevelopmental delays and other medical problems
- difficult temperament and personality
- maltreatment
- psychophysiological makeup

Developmental Kindergarten / Ready Schools

Rather than the concept of young children being ready for kindergarten, the new trend is that schools be "ready" to help children learn. But what constitutes a truly developmental kindergarten? If a kindergarten is TRULY developmental, it means it has programs which fit the curriculum and expectations to the developmental level of EACH and EVERY child.

The concept of "Ready Schools" is similar. Schools need to be part of the solution. There needs to be strong collaboration between parents, family and community for school readiness.

