

School Readiness

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What is School Readiness?

- In truth, it depends on *who* you ask, and even *when* you asked.
- The definition and conceptual framework has changed over the years.
- Former approaches stressed the maturity level of a child that would allow for quiet, efficient academic work. More recent approaches stress the interaction of the child with the environment and the interrelationships between the various developmental domains.
- The term “School Readiness” has a simplicity to it that belies its complex nature.
- Parents might believe it means one thing, Doctors believe it means something else, and children don’t know what to believe, they just want to go play.
- In fact, there are so many definitions and frameworks with which one can approach this subject, it is important to study it in a systematic way, which we will try to accomplish in this presentation.

Determining School Readiness

- Establish goals across 5 domains
- Create and implement an action plan to achieve those goals
- Assess the child's progress throughout the year
- Examine data in order to revise or implement program improvement

Motor Development and Physical Well Being

Motor Development and Physical Well-Being

- The link between maternal and child health and school performance
- Conditions such as very low birth weight and poor nutrition have long term effects on a child's preparedness for school
- Emphasis on optimal motor development in children
 - large motor movements on the playground to small motor work required for holding a crayon or putting together puzzles.

What does this include?

- Physical Development
 - Rate of growth – height, weight, and physical maturation
 - Physical fitness – stamina, energy, strength, and flexibility
 - Body physiology – optimal functioning of the body and its organ systems
- Physical Abilities
 - Gross motor skills – walking, running, jumping, climbing
 - Fine motor skills – cutting with scissors, fastening buttons
 - Sensorimotor skills – vision, hearing, touching, kinesthesia
 - Oral motor skills – sucking, coordination of breathing, movements necessary to produce speech

Curriculum based on motor development and physical well being

- Health and Safety Practices :
 - engage in structured and unstructured physical activity
 - become increasingly able to identify unsafe situations and gradually learn strategies for responding to them
 - develop self-help skills
- Gross motor development
 - develop large muscle control, strength, and coordination
 - develop traveling skills
- Fine motor development
 - Develop small muscle control, strength, and coordination
 - Develop writing and drawing skills

Language and Literacy

Language and Literacy

- Receptive Language
- Expressive Language
- Engagement in activities
- Book appreciation
- Alphabet Knowledge
- Early Writing

Language and Literacy Goals

- Demonstrate receptive and expressive language skills and communication strategies
 - Young infants: looking at who is speaking, take turns in conversation with facial expression, gestures, babbling, and signing
 - older infants: increasing non verbal communication by pointing, hand motions, starting to transition to spoken language
 - toddlers: moving onto two words sentences to talking about events

Language and Literacy

- Understand and begin to use oral language for conversation
 - Young infants: reciprocal pattern of conversation
 - Older infants: using language like sounds
 - Toddlers: understand and follow directions, remember words to songs, describe an event

Language and Literacy

- Hear and distinguish sounds of language
 - Young infant: develop an understanding of sounds of language
 - Older infant: enjoy playing with language sounds
 - Toddlers: making language sound generalizations, creating plural words, rhyming

Language and Literacy

- Learn and demonstrate how print works
 - Young infants: looking at photos as someone describes, exploring books
 - Older infants: making sounds when looking at pictures in books, recognizing a favorite book by the cover
 - Toddlers: using writing instruments, watching adults write, recognizing logos

Language and Literacy

- Engage with stories and books
 - Young infants: looking at pictures in book, responding when read a story
 - Older infants: pointing to pictures when named, look on books on their own
 - Toddlers: reading a familiar story to friends, listening to longer stories

Cognition and General Knowledge

Cognition and General Knowledge

- Logic and reasoning
- Problem solving
- Symbolic representation
- Number concepts
- Geometry and spatial sense
- Concepts of natural world
- Family and community

Cognition and General Knowledge

- Learn and begin to use math concepts during daily routines
 - Young infants: recognize difference in number of objects
 - Older infants: using shapes, words to describe
 - Toddlers: sorting circles from squares, setting plates at meal time, understand spatial relationship

Cognition and General Knowledge

- Use their senses to investigate the environment and discover how things work
 - Young infants: sucking, holding, looking, touching
 - Older infants: categorize, matching, ordering objects
 - Toddlers: begin to understand concept of timing, cause, remember where to find objects

Cognition and General Knowledge

- Begin to develop and demonstrate the ability to remember and connect new and known experiences
 - Young infants: object permanence
 - Older infants: cause and effect to predict events and solve problems
 - Toddlers: saying what will happen next in a story, remembering a game they played before

Approaches to Learning

Approaches to Learning

- How do children approach and engage the learning environment?
- Pertains to children's inclinations, dispositions, and learning styles
- Approaching new tasks with caution and hesitation vs. curiosity and enthusiasm
- Persistent to master tasks or do they move on quickly to activities that are more familiar and less difficult?
- Can vary in their origin and malleability

Predispositions

- Child's approach to learning may have little association with his/her level of knowledge or skill
- Predispositions – shaped at birth or developed very early
- Less conducive to change
- Inclination to use skills can be affected by:
 - Temperament
 - Gender expectations
 - Cultural patterns and values
 - Learned approaches

Learning Styles

- Approaches to learning that reflect the child's attitude toward the learning process, and are much more malleable
- Include:
 - Openness to and Curiosity for new tasks and challenges
 - Initiative, Task Persistence, and Attentiveness
 - Reflection and Interpretation
 - Imagination and Invention
 - Cognitive Styles/Problem solving

Positive Approaches to Learning and Success in School

- Six key skills or learning dispositions that reflect important approaches to learning:
 - Curiosity/initiative
 - Persistence
 - Attention
 - Self-direction
 - Problem solving
 - Creativity

Cognitive Flexibility, Approaches to Learning, and Academic School Readiness in Head Start Preschoolers

- 2011 study by Vitiello et al, in Early Education and Development
- 191 children from 22 Head Start preschools, assessed on cognitive flexibility and school readiness
- Teachers rated approaches to learning in three domains: competence/motivation, attention/persistence, and attitude toward learning
- Found that attention/persistence mediated the relation between cognitive flexibility and school readiness
- Suggest that cognitive flexibility may help with school readiness by supporting approaches to learning

Effective Early Education Practices

- How can early childhood educators promote positive approaches to learning to prepare young children for school?
- Scant research in this area
- Four strategies emerge from review of the literature
 1. Approaches to Learning included in the program's curriculum
 2. Provide opportunities that elicit these skills
 3. Challenge children with moderately difficult tasks
 4. Directly teach and support children to use these approaches

Universal Design of Early Education

- How can we make these practices work for all children, regardless of differences in abilities, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and economic status?
 - Design of the physical environment
 - Design of health and safety program components minimizes risks and hazards for all children
 - The design of the social-emotional environment
 - Design of the instructional environment
 - Design of individual assessment and program evaluation practices
 - Design of family involvement practices

Universal Design Applications

- Evidence-based practices:
 - The early educator includes positive approaches to learning as part of his/her curricular goals targeting what all children should be learning
 - Balance teacher-directed activities with child-directed activities
 - Choose activities and materials that are moderately difficult and offer multiple possibilities for each child's interactions
 - Directly teach children to use more positive approaches to learning by prompting and modeling their use.

Social and Emotional Development

What is SEH?

- The developing capacity of the child from birth through 5 years of age to form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, regulate, and express emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways and explore the environment and learn---all within the context of family, community and culture.

- Social-Emotional health may very well be the most important “School Readiness” component, even though cognitive and academic success seem to be stressed most often.
- These children are able to make friends, share and take turns, communicate feelings, understand and care about how other people feel, calm themselves when upset, and ask for what they need.

- These skills enable them to pay more attention the teacher, follow simple instructions, try new things, stick to the task at hand, and solve problems.
- Bottom line: Social and Emotional health sets children up for a positive, confidence boosting experience that becomes the foundation for their early school years and through adolescence and adulthood.

Why do we screen and assess SEH?

- To identify children who may need more comprehensive evaluations.
- To determine eligibility
- To individualize child and family planning
- To inform instruction
- To monitor progress
- To evaluate program effectiveness

Problems with Screening and Assessing:

- Parallels the process for other developmental areas, meaning there is a necessity to use valid and reliable tools, gathering information across multiple environments and source, and cultural sensitivity.
- Additionally, specific to SEH screens and assessments, there is a high degree of subjectivity (Ex: what is “too much” crying?)
- Individuals may differ in whether they view certain behaviors as acceptable or not.

- Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, March 2014:

Family Routines and Social-Emotional School Readiness Among Preschool-Age Children

Objective: to determine whether participation in family routines is associated with greater likelihood having high social-emotional health.

Methods: Data came from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Birth Cohort preschool wave, a nationally representative sample of children born in 2001. “Family Routines” categorized as present if children participated in

1. Family dinners \geq 5 times per week
2. Reading \geq 3 times per week
3. Storytelling \geq 3 times per week
4. Singing \geq 3 times per week
5. Play \geq few times per week

A “total routines” score (0-5) was computed and Mothers rated children’s SEH on 24 items scored 1-5. Items were summed into total score and dichotomized at 1 > SD above the mean to reflect High/Low SEH.

Results: Among 8,550 children, 16.6% had high SEH. For each additional routine in which a child participated, there was a 1.47 greater odds of having high SEH.

Which routines were best?

- Storytelling: 1.9 (95% CI 1.6-2.4)
- Singing: 1.5 (95% CI 1.2-1.9)
- Participating in dinners: 1.4 (95% CI 1.3-1.6)
- Play: 1.3 (95% CI 1.1-1.5) increased odds
- Reading not associated with greater odds of high SEH.

Conclusion: The obvious! Promoting family routines may contribute to a greater SEH before school entry.

Problems that arise

- Ability to master new experiences
- Lack of experiences
- Ability to tolerate separation from primary caregivers
- Independence in activities of daily living
- Executive function and ability to control impulses
- Appropriate play skills
- Mental health concerns
- Developmental delay