

## ***School Readiness ... what does this really mean for child care providers??***

By Eileen Nelson, M.A.

Early Childhood Specialist; Minnesota Department of Education

Found at [www.parentsknow.info](http://www.parentsknow.info)

Getting ready for school is a big job for any preschooler but the everyday experiences of your family are the foundation of school readiness. School readiness is defined as the skills, knowledge, behaviors and accomplishments that children know and can do as they enter kindergarten in the following areas of child development: social and emotional development; approaches to learning; language and literacy development; creativity and the arts; cognition and general knowledge; and physical well being and motor development.

For your preschooler, this means being curious and excited about learning new things, knowing how to follow directions, having some basic information about the world, enjoying being read to, knowing lots of vocabulary words and feeling confident enough to try new things. It means being able to count items, to know written words have meaning, to be developing running, skipping and hopping skills, and to dress and have some basic self-help skills, like using the bathroom and dressing.

### **Every day you can support your child's readiness for school in many ways:**

- Talk to your child about what is happening around you. Use lots of vocabulary words and describe the action.
- Help your child understand how the world works - how did you know how much gas cost or how you knew where to catch a bus. Make a grocery list with your preschooler and show them how to find the items in a grocery store.
- Read to your child whenever possible. Read at least one book a day and make it a relaxed time. Reading together in the evening can change the tempo of the day and prepare your child for bedtime. Point out words in the books and the letters that spell out the words. Sharing special books connects your child and you. Read labels, newspapers and picture captions.
- Walk and talk with your preschooler. Get to the park or provide other opportunities for your child to develop strength, endurance and motor skills.
- Follow routines in your home so your child understands structure and can predict what will happen. Your preschooler will learn a sense of responsibility by having tasks to do in the home. Chores or jobs also encourage real-world learning and problem-solving. For instance, ask your child to set the table for a meal using plates and silverware. Your child will need to count plates and silverware and put them in the proper place to successfully have the table prepared for the meal. You might also ask them to think about the additional items the family will want to have available, given the meal (ketchup, salsa, spatula, etc.).
- Take your child to places and events in your community - block parties, museums, orchards, swimming pools and lakes, etc. These events are rich sources of vocabulary words, problem-solving and new information.
- Play and have fun. Developing strong relationships based on time together and enjoyment builds confidence and a sense of value in your preschooler. Your whole family is stronger when you play together.

Early childhood programs can also help you prepare your child for kindergarten. High quality child care, nursery school, school-based programs, such as School Readiness, and Head Start programs work with you to prepare your child for school.