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# Cliff Valley School

## Cliff Notes:

### Kindergarten Readiness

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#### **What is kindergarten (school) readiness?**

Many think of kindergarten readiness in terms of specific academic skills such as knowing the letters of the alphabet and counting to twenty. But research supports what experienced preschool and kindergarten educators have known for years: readiness has less to do with specific skills, and everything to do with the development of the whole child in all areas of development – physical, cognitive, social and emotional. We can look at school readiness in terms of three areas: *maturatation, motivation and experience.*

#### ***Maturation: Is the child physically ready for school?***

Maturation involves the development of the body, motor systems and the neurological system, all of which are determinants of critical aspects of readiness. Each child matures according to his/her own timetable of development. This physical and neurological development cannot be rushed, but it can be nurtured in home and school settings where adults have developmentally appropriate expectations of children and provide experiences through which children flourish and grow in competence and independence. Some areas of readiness which are dictated by maturation are:

- The stamina to participate in a longer school day with more teacher directed activities and systematic instruction.
- The motor control to sit attentively for increased periods of time.
- A growing ability to modulate one's emotional responses, particularly when frustrated or tired.
- An increasing ability to control one's impulses with regard to speaking out or acting out.
- The ability to communicate with and develop age-appropriate relationships with both peers and adults.
- The ability to delay gratification in order to take turns, share and interact cooperatively with others.
- Issues of rest, nutrition and health do not distract the child from participating in the normal class routine on a regular basis.

#### ***Motivation: What is the child's attitude and outlook about learning?***

Educators identify a child's self-concept as a learner as being critical to success in school. How does a child develop an identity as a successful learner or as one who is not likely to succeed? In prior learning experiences at home and in school.....

- Have the child's curiosity and interest been encouraged and nurtured?
- Have expectations been appropriate, or has the child been made to feel that s/he cannot live up to unrealistic expectations set by parents and teachers?
- Are the child's attempts celebrated, or are parents and teachers holding out for perfection?

#### **What Can Parents Do To Foster School Readiness?**

- Share books with your child every day. Together, make predictions about what will happen, or what you think about the events or characters in a story.
- Tell stories with your child. Retelling stories you have read, or telling the stories of everyday life will help your child retell events in sequence and develop "story sense."
- Sing and play with your child! Make up silly songs and rhymes; play with alliteration. Your child needs to be able to identify words that rhyme and that begin with the same sounds.
- Talk with your child. Children need to be able to engage in the back and forth cycles that make up conversation.
- Think out loud as you apply mathematical thinking to everyday problems.
- Encourage your child to be independent in taking care of his needs, belongings and responsibilities. Supporting your child's independence fosters confidence and competence.
- Take your child out into the world. Let her experience different people, different places, different foods, different art and music.

## RESOURCES

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*Ready or Not: What Parents Should Know About School Readiness*. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1995, rev.

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Successful learners are curious and have varied interests. Learning is meaningful and rewarding for them. They are attentive and responsive. They know that they have the resources within them to face a challenging learning situation. They know that we learn from our mistakes; they take risks and do not equate error with failure. They experience joy and enthusiasm throughout the process of learning, and not just in the product. Children who see themselves as successful learners approach new experiences with a positive attitude and with excitement about where this new journey will take them.

**Experience: Has the child's life experience given him the knowledge and skills for kindergarten success?**  
What life experiences influence school readiness?

When a child's growing independence has been supported, s/he.....

- Can take care of personal needs such as dressing, toileting, eating.
- Takes responsibility for belongings and assignments.
- Is comfortable asking for help when necessary.

When a child's cognitive and language development has been supported by rich experiences, s/he.....

- Asks questions.
- Is attentive and responsive.
- Has a strong foundation on which to build new knowledge and skills.
- Knows that literacy and mathematical skills are useful and can be applied in many everyday situations.
- Has had the opportunity to develop many of the foundation skills crucial to early literacy learning: vocabulary, phonemic awareness, fluency in oral language.
- Has a growing understanding of the world and people.

### **Criteria for kindergarten readiness:**

At Cliff Valley School, we look for the development of the following criteria as indicators of readiness for kindergarten:

- Developmental readiness for a longer school day, increased teacher direction and systematic instruction.
  - The ability to clearly articulate his/her needs and ideas.
  - Readiness for and interest in literacy learning, specifically letter recognition, phonemic awareness and writing.
  - Readiness for and interest in mathematical concepts and reasoning, specifically recognition of number and quantity, examining the relationship between numbers and the application of mathematical concepts to everyday problems.
  - The ability to sustain attention and appropriately participate in large and small group activities.
  - The ability to predictably listen for and follow directions.
  - The ability to independently begin and complete a developmentally appropriate learning task.
  - Independence in performing self-help tasks such as toileting, handwashing, dressing and caring for belongings.
- In addition, the following may be problematic in a kindergarten classroom unless plans for support are in place:
- Engaging in behaviors that are disruptive to the learning environment.
  - Requiring individual attention and/or monitoring in excess of other children in the class.