Kindergarten Student Entrance Profile (KSEP):
What is School Readiness?

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How has school readiness been defined?

The concept of school readiness is complex and multidimensional. Early childhood education professionals have not reached agreement on a single definition of school readiness (Graue, 2006; Keating, 2007). Therefore, there are a range of definitions encompassing different components. A majority of definitions focus on the skills and capabilities existing within the child. For example, according to the National Education Goals Panel (1997), there are five domains of children’s readiness for school: health and physical development, emotional well-being and social competence, approach to learning, communicative skills, and cognition and general knowledge. More recently, the National Governor’s Association for Best Practices (2005) defined school readiness as expectations of how children will fare on entering kindergarten. Snow (2006) similarly defines school readiness as, “the state of child competencies at the time of school entry that are important for later success” (p. 9). More recent definitions tend to promote a more holistic view of children that takes into account many different influences on learning and development. From a more holistic standpoint, Maxwell and Clifford (2004) posit that children are not innately ready for school, but that school readiness encompasses the influence of families, early environments, schools, and communities.

What are the models of school readiness?

There is no single universally agreed upon definition of school readiness. Among the various models are Maturationist, Environmentalist, Constructivist, Cumulative, and Transactional-Ecological.

**Maturationist:** Children are ready to enter school when they have grown old enough and achieved a certain level of expected maturity (Snow, 2006). This model is biologically based on age maturation related to cognitive, psychomotor, and emotional development.

**Constructivist:** Readiness is the degree to which children can learn tasks through interactions with more and knowledgeable peers or adults and therefore encourages the involvement of parents, teachers, and other adults (Andrews & Slate, 2001).

**Environmentalist:** This model is based on early childhood skills acquisition in stimulating contexts and focuses on the “sociocultural” environment as supporting the development of a child’s level of functioning (Snow, 2006).

**Cumulative:** School readiness is based on a child’s acquisition of certain prerequisite skills that are necessary for kindergarten entry and learning particular subjects. (Andrews & Slate, 2001).

**Transactional–Ecological:** This model is based on the interaction of the child with the home, preschool, and community influences. The readiness of children is seen as a part of a larger picture involving the concept of “ready schools” (Snow, 2006).

How does the KSEP define school readiness?

The KSEP is based on the Transactional–Ecological Model. Its principles are that children need to acquire prerequisite cognitive, social-emotional, behavioral, and physical abilities before entering kindergarten. This most completely happens in the context of ready families, ready communities, and access to ready services.

**Cognitive** readiness includes both general intellectual and early academic abilities needed to succeed in school. The most important of these abilities are preliteracy and numeracy skills.

**Social and emotional** factors may be observed as the child’s ability to communicate their needs, to pay attention, to follow instructions, to resolve disagreements constructively, and to recognize and manage their emotional responses (emotional regulation).

**Behavioral** readiness may be observed as the child’s ability to sit quietly and follow directions (impulse control), in order to benefit from the instruction being presented.

**Physical** readiness refers to the general health of a child and considers any physical barriers to the child’s learning in school, including whether the child has chronic illnesses and/or vision or hearing problems that would interfere with their participation in the class.

**References**


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