

## Setting The Stage For Success

A child's brain is shaped dramatically in the first five years of life. What is learned early sets the foundation for all learning to follow, including desire and capacity for learning itself. The whole child - social, emotional, physical and identity - are largely shaped in these younger years. Early Childhood Development opportunities support children's overall growth, development and learning. High quality care, programs and services best prepare our children for future school and life success.

## Literacy For Your Child & Family

Literacy begins by birth and develops at the same time as oral language. Family Literacy programs support the parent/child relationship which is the most powerful influence on children's early brain development in the first two years. Through family literacy programs, parents/caregivers learn the importance of the parental role in children's emerging literacy and language development which cannot be overstated.

## Is My Toddler Ready For Preschool?

Most preschools in the region will start accepting children at around age 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 3, but that doesn't mean your child is magically ready for preschool when he reaches that age. Readiness for preschool has more to do with where your child is developmentally. Is he socially, emotionally, physically and cognitively ready to participate in a structured, educational program with a group of other children?

The best way to decide is to spend time thinking about your child and to talk to other people who know him well, such as your partner, your pediatrician and your child's caregiver. The following questions provided by Patricia Henderson Shimm, co-author of *Parenting Your Toddler*, will help you think about the most important factors for preschool readiness.

### ❖ Is your child fairly independent?

Is your child potty-trained? Can your child wash his hands; eat snack/lunch without assistance?

### ❖ Has your child spend time away from you?

If your child hasn't had many opportunities to be away from you, you might want to schedule some - a weekend with grandma, or a day with your sister and her kids. Even if you can't work out your separation issues up front, don't worry too much. The trick is to help your child adjust in short doses. Some experts believe that preschool may even be

*more* important for kids who've been at home with their parents, to help get them ready for the move to kindergarten.

❖ **Can your child work on projects on his own?**

You can get your child ready by setting up playtimes where he can entertain himself for a half hour or so. While you wash the dishes, encourage him to make creatures out of clay, for example. Gradually build up to longer stretches of solo play. Your goal here is to keep yourself moderately preoccupied with an activity so that he'll get on with his own without too much hand-holding from you.

❖ **Is my child ready to participate in group activities?**

Preschool activities like "circle-time" require that all the children in a class participate at the same time. These interactions give children a chance to play and learn together, but also require them to sit still, listen to stories and sing songs. Sometimes this can be very difficult for children under 3 who are naturally active explorers and not always developmentally ready to play with other children. If your child isn't used to group activities, you can start by taking him to story time at your local library or sign him up for a class such as tumbling to help him get used to playing with other children.

❖ **Is my child used to keeping a regular schedule?**

Children tend to feel most comfortable and in control when the same things happen at the same time each day. Preschools usually follow a predictable routine: circle time, play time, craft time, snack. So if your child doesn't keep to a schedule and each day is different from the last, it can help to standardize his days a bit before he starts preschool. Start by offering meals on a regular timetable or set - and stick to - a bedtime ritual (bath, then books, and bed).

❖ **Does my child have the physical stamina for preschool?**

Whether it's a half day or full day program, preschool keeps kids busy. If your child can keep going until lunch or even all day like a wind-up toy, he's set. If he still needs a mid-morning snooze, it might not be time yet to go to school. You can work toward building his stamina by making sure he gets a good night's sleep.

❖ **Why do you want to send your child to preschool?**

Think carefully about what your goals are for sending your child to preschool. Do you just need time for yourself or daycare for your child? There may be other options if it seems he isn't ready yet for the rigors of school.

Do you have any questions?

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