

---

***READY for SCHOOL Parent News:***  
**What is Meant by School Readiness?**

In a recent initiative by 17 states partnering to determine Indicators of School Readiness, children's readiness for school was defined as a combination of Ready Families (positive environments for children to learn and grow), Ready Communities (community resources and supports to families including lead poison testing and programs for infants and toddlers), Ready Services (availability and quality of services such as child care and health care), and Ready Schools (factors such as class size). All of these factors add up to children who are ready for school. While your advocacy efforts can have an impact on Communities, Services, and Schools, the focus of this article will be "Ready Families and Ready Children."

The report identified 5 factors most important in "Ready Children":

- **Overall physical well-being and motor development:** Children possessing age-appropriate fine motor skills which involve coordinating eyes and hands to complete tasks such as stacking blocks, putting together puzzles, connecting building toys like legos, drawing, using a paint brush, or writing, typically experience success in school.
- **Social and emotional development:** Children who interact positively with other children typically also do well in a school setting. Many of the skills children learn in child care and families such as taking turns, sharing, listening to others, developing empathy, and functioning as part of a group, help with school success.
- **Approaches to Learning:** The ability to follow through on one-step ("Hang up your coat") or multi-step directions ("Get some crayons, take them to the writing table and have a seat") directions is another school readiness indicator. This is one indicator of a larger cluster of positive approaches to learning including cooperativeness, persistence, independence, curiosity and creativity.
- **Cognition and General Knowledge:** Developing an observant, inquisitive mind which looks at, labels, asks questions, notes similarities and differences, and solves problems is another important school skill.
- **Language Development and Literacy:** The development of a significant expressive (talking) and receptive (understanding) vocabulary is important as well as later recognizing the relationships between letters and sounds.

Not surprisingly, only one of these factors, recognizing the connection between letters and their sounds, is what we think of as a typical "school readiness skill." Instead, a well-rounded child who interacts well with others, follows directions, effectively uses her hands to manipulate small parts, and has an inquisitive mind possesses the key readiness skills.

**Also not surprisingly, the report states that a critical role families can play in preparing their children for school success is by reading to them daily starting with infants and toddlers. Enrollment in high quality child care programs is another factor in school success. Families and teachers working together can help ensure children are *Ready for School*.**

*Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative – A 17 State Partnership.* (February 2005). Sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Prepared by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT.