



What is School Readiness?

David Elkind, Professor Emeritus of Child Development at Tufts University, has written extensively about children. Some of his books are [The Hurried Child](#), [All Grown Up and No Place to Go](#), [Miseducation](#) and [The Power of Play](#). An article he wrote on school readiness gives us encouragement as we design our programs with play and creative problem solving in mind. Here are some excerpts*:

“The phrase ‘school readiness’ was, until recently, most often used in connection with a child’s preparedness to meet the demands of a first grade classroom. With the contemporary push down of the curriculum, readiness is now taken to mean the child’s preparedness to meet the demands of kindergarten. There is a widespread belief that readiness is primarily academic, namely knowing one’s letters and numbers. In addition, readiness is often taken to mean that a child has acquired his or her knowledge of numbers and letters through one or another form of academic instruction. Finally, another interpretation of readiness is that it is a matter of maturation and is related to age. While all of these ideas about readiness are understandable, they happen to be incorrect. They are a misunderstanding as to what readiness is all about...

The skills a child needs to succeed in most kindergartens are not knowing numbers and letters, but rather **being able to communicate, follow instructions, and work cooperatively with other children**. These skills seem to be best acquired in preschools that are developmentally and play oriented. Finally, while maturation plays a role in the attainment of schooling skills, the child’s experience is also an important contributor. A true assessment of school readiness, therefore, must always take account of the child’s level of intellectual and social/emotional development, his or her experiential background, and the classroom expectations the child will encounter.

There is a widespread belief, despite all the evidence to the contrary, that education is a race and the earlier you start the better. We educators have an important role to play in taking back healthy play for children today.”

At Especially for Children, we help children make sense of the world, learn to communicate fully, understand how things work and deeply connect with people. By nurturing a love of learning we are preparing children to “be ready” for future challenges.

Priscilla Williams
President, Especially for Children

* From the article “Some Misunderstandings of School Readiness” by David Elkind, Exchange Magazine, 03/08.