Kindergarten Readiness
Importance of school readiness

- 30% of children entering kindergarten are not ready to learn
- 80% of these children don’t “catch up”
- Early experiences impact children’s later achievement
Defining school readiness

- Cut-off date for chronological age (Elkin, 1989).

- “The capacity to simultaneously learn and cope with the school environment.” (The Gessell Institute, 1987, p.7)

- A composition of 1) physical well-being and motor development, 2) social and emotional development, 3) approaches toward learning, 4) language usage, and 5) cognition and general knowledge. (United States National Education Goals Panel, 1997)
Defining School Readiness

- Language knowledge and skills, including oral language and listening comprehension; pre-reading knowledge and skills, including phonological awareness, print awareness, print skills, and alphabetic knowledge; pre-mathematics knowledge and skills, including aspects of classification, seriation, number, spatial relations, and time; cognitive abilities related to academic achievement; social and emotional development related to early learning, school success, and sustained academic gains; and, in the case of limited-English– proficient children, progress toward acquisition of the English language while making meaningful progress toward the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected for English-speaking children. (Head Start as the School Readiness Act of 2005, S1107; H.R.2123),
What do kindergarten teachers say is important for school readiness?

1. Social and emotional skills
   • Persistence, attention, strategy, flexibility, motivation, and attitudes toward learning

2. Regulatory skills
   • Attention
   • Self-regulation

3. Academic skills
Social-emotional skills and readiness

- Social, regulatory, and emotional impairments can influence normal early school entry adaptation (National Research Council, 2000).

- Emotional adjustment problems in preschool have been shown to impair learning processes and school preparation (Belsky & MacKinnon, 1994; Entwisle & Alexander, 1993).

- Emotional problems are likely to cross-over into other domains that impact a child’s ability to approach learning in an adaptive manner (Olson & Hoza, 1993; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997).
Self-regulation and readiness

• Research links self-regulation to school achievement and social-emotional functioning (Blair, 2002).

• Kindergarten teachers
  • Self-regulation is a major component of school success (Lewit & Baker, 1995).

• Problems of self-regulation are related to later adjustment
  • Aggression, juvenile delinquency, dropping out (Schunk, 2005)
Good news!

- SEL integrates self-regulatory strategies in most activities, including activities with literacy or oral language as their primary focus.

- High levels of dramatic play improves self-regulation when children practice making the rules and then follow them by regulating their own and their playmates’ behaviors (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Vygotsky, 1977).

- When using Play Plans, children progress from behaviors that are reactive and impulsive to behaviors that are deliberate and thoughtful.
Rethinking school readiness

- Non-cognitive characteristics, including persistence, social attractiveness, adaptability, and emotionality, are just as critical to school success (Carlton & Winsler, 1999).

- Children who can control themselves are more liked by peers and have more success in school.

- Approximately 20% of preschoolers from ethnically and economically diverse backgrounds display moderate to clinically significant social and emotional difficulties (Pianta & Caldwell, 1990).
References/Further reading