

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

An ocean of information is available to help parents answer the questions, “Is my child ready for kindergarten?” and “How can I get my child ready for kindergarten?” The information here is taken from a variety of trusted sources. If, after swimming through all the thoughts included, you still have questions, please feel free to contact the school.

Definition

School readiness is defined as the "ability to cope, learn, and achieve without undue stress." Being able to recite the alphabet or count is not the same as having the developmental processing skills and maturation needed for success in school. School readiness and intellectual capacity (“IQ”) do not necessarily correlate. Each child is a unique human being who grows and develops at his/her own pace.

In Our Experience

- It is more often the child that begins school too young who struggles socially and academically.
- Social/emotional maturity is equal in importance to academic readiness.
- Children with summer birthdays are more likely to struggle because they are the youngest five-year olds in their grade. Waiting until they are, instead, a young six is recommended and not uncommon at FCA.
- It’s easier to have enrichment material for “very ready” children than it is to push a struggling student along.
- It’s important to consider that your decision to begin kindergarten will set your child’s trajectory for the next twelve years.
- When there is doubt about readiness, keep your child home one more year.

Specialists in the field of child development feel strongly that school readiness is not something that is “trained” by things like preschool but may be enhanced by child’s play and family activities.

Kindergarten programs differ from place to place. Different types of curriculum and the delivery of that curriculum require certain maturation levels in processing, attention-to-task, and social/emotional skills. Kindergarten is academically oriented; learning to read and do basic math is a foundation of each day. Forcing academics on the child who is not yet ready is not in the child’s best interest.

Indicators of Readiness include:

- Enthusiasm toward learning
- Solid oral language skills
- The ability and willingness to learn
- The desire to be independent
- The ability to play with others
- Strong fine motor skills
- Basic number and letter recognition

Incoming students should be able to:

- Count: Reciting numbers in order and counting are two distinct skills. Children entering kindergarten should be able to recite numbers beyond ten, recognize two items without counting them, count at least four items, and identify numerals 1 – 10.
- Identify most upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet.
- Identify the primary colors.
- Identify and draw an X, circles, squares, and have some success in drawing triangles.
- Attempt to write first name and recognize the letters that spell his/her name.
- Understand the difference between words such as: before and after, same and different, more and less, under and above, beside and through.
- Speak in complete sentences using grammar that is standard for his age.
- Identify body parts: head, neck, shoulders, knees, elbows.

- Separate from parents easily or recover quickly; demonstrate ability to obey simple commands from an adult other than parent.

Skills to Develop

- **Fine Motor Skills**

Give your child plenty of opportunities to color, cut, glue, paint, use Play-Doh, draw with sidewalk chalk, work with puzzles, sort, match, build with Duplos or Lego, and string beads. All these things strengthen fingers and develop the eye-hand coordination needed for handwriting.

- **Gross Motor Skills**

This may not seem like an academic skill, but gross motor skills prepare a child for classes and improve coordination and perception. Teach your child to ride a bicycle, toss a ball, run, skip, hop, gallop, swing, and climb.

- **Alphabet**

Read alphabet books together. Cut letters from fuzzy material, sandpaper, and anything else with interesting textures; let your child trace them as you say what they are. Examine letters wherever you are—in the car or in line at a store. Sing the alphabet song. Talk about how letters stand for sounds, buy alphabet letters with magnets and let your child learn to spell his name or other words that interest him. Kindergarten-ready children should recognize their name in print and be able to identify each letter. Since lowercase letters are used far more often than capital letters, teach them as the priority. If you teach your child to write his first name, teach it correctly, that is, one capital letter at the beginning and all the rest lowercase.

- **Handwriting**

Unless you are prepared to insist on correct pencil grip, paper slant, and letter formation, don't worry about teaching your child how to write the alphabet. All experience indicates that poor habits are very difficult to break! Even with coloring, your child should be taught to hold a crayon correctly.

- **Speech Patterns**

Parents are often surprised when the kindergarten teacher suggests speech therapy or purposeful speech work at home because they've grown accustomed to hearing their child speak. Children with incorrect speech patterns have more trouble with phonics and spelling because of pronunciation errors.

Listen to see if your child correctly repeats words such as:

this (not 'dis')
 wrong (not wong)
 ship (not sip or thip)
 sink (not think)
 like (not wike)
 path (not paff)

Children with severe speech delays may not be admitted.

- **Full Name, Birthday, Parents' Names, and Phone Number**

Ask about these regularly. Try putting your telephone number to a tune. Kindergarten-ready children should know their full name, birthday, and parents' names; knowing their phone number is a secondary skill.

- **Music**
Sing together. Listen to music. Play instruments, even if they are only homemade rhythm instruments. There is no better way to memorize than through song. Sing common folk songs and nursery rhymes.
- **Imagination**
Imagination is essential. Play “what if” games, make up ridiculous stories, and welcome those invisible friends into your home. Read fairy tales and allow time to create and imagine. In today’s world of movies and video games, imagination is often hindered and limited by what a child sees. Limit video games, TV, and movies, and encourage creativity. Take your child to interesting places: the zoo, museums, walks in the woods, ponds, etc. Observe or keep a frog or insect, catch fireflies, go camping - all these experiences increase vocabulary, imagination, and wonder for the world around them.
- **Read to Your Child**
Read to your child *every day*. Read rhymes and poetry, too! Creating a good reader begins on the lap of a parent.
- **Limit Screen Time**
Avoid video games, overindulgence in television, and online games. Not only do studies show the negative effects of video gaming and screen time in children, but teachers also attest to the difference between students who are allowed screen time and those who aren’t. Those families who offer books and imaginative play have students more likely to read well, speak better and with a larger vocabulary, engage their imagination, and attend to learning tasks for longer periods of time.

Preparing for Kindergarten Assessment

Once application documents are submitted, you will be contacted to schedule a kindergarten assessment. Assessments begin in the spring of the upcoming school year. The assessment will be conducted by the lead kindergarten teacher and will take approximately 15 minutes. The child will sit with the teacher and dialogue about numbers, letters, shapes, colors, etc., and will be asked to write their first name, the shapes identified above, and to draw a picture of a person. They will count by rote and count individual items. Finally, they will identify as many letters of the upper- and lower-case alphabet as possible as well as recite them. Please do not put a lot of pressure on your child for this screening.

Further Reading

- [Transitioning to Kindergarten: School Readiness](#)
- [How Do Video Games Affect Brain Development in Children and Teens?](#)