

What does "school ready" really mean? ^[1]

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Source: Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years

Format: Report

Publication Date: 1 Sep 2013

AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Excerpts:

The key findings of this report are as follows:

1) Childcare professionals, parents and teachers interpret the term school ready in a way that is in stark contrast to that often stated by policy makers and regulators in England and more reflective of the approach taking by policy makers in Wales. The majority of each group of respondents, including 97% of childcare professionals, agree that the term should be defined as children who:

- have strong social skills
- can cope emotionally with being separated from their parents
- are relatively independent in their own personal care
- have a curiosity about the world and a desire to learn.

2) For a child to be considered school ready, respondents stated that cognitive and academic skills such as reading and writing are not as important as children being confident, independent and curious. Teachers were the least likely, at 4%, to rate understanding of reading, arithmetic and writing (RAW skills) as key importance to being school ready. Only a third of childcare professionals and a quarter of parents believe that a definition of school ready should include a child having a basic understanding of RAW skills.

3) Both teachers and childcare professionals (58% and 40% respectively) stated that they felt there needed to be greater emphasis on play in England. They, echoing evidence from international research, recognise that play best supports children's social and emotional development, as well as their creativity. The report shows concern that the importance of play in the early years is being neglected and risks being eroded even further by current government proposals in England. This erosion may lead to the "schoolification" of our early years, moving England's approach further away from countries like Finland which are internationally recognised for high quality early years provision and, indeed the play based approach of the Foundation Phase in Wales which supports children from 3 to 7 years.

4) Almost half of all respondents-childcare professionals, parents and teachers alike-identified a lack of communication and common expectation between each other as a barrier to preparing a child for school. Starting school is a time of transition. It requires cooperation between individuals, families and systems. PACEY believes it is crucial to overcome this barrier.

5) Respondents agreed that being school ready is about more than just the child being ready for school. This transition needs the support and cooperation of all individuals involved, to create a holistic approach so a child has an enjoyable and positive experience. Schools should be ready for the child as much as the child be ready for school, helping smooth the transition between play based early learning and more formal classroom based teaching. Parents recognise that they are key to preparing their children for school, but need more information and support in achieving this. Key to this successful transition is positive cooperation between parents, childcare professionals and teachers.

Region: Europe ^[3]

Tags: kindergarten ^[4]

integration ^[5]

curricula and pedagogy ^[6]

preschool ^[7]

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