

Visit With the Utays

January 2002

School Psychology and Education Specialists



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Ready or Not, Here Comes My Child

Several 2questions this month related to "readiness" issues

"My child has done fine in preschool but I worry if she'll be ready for what's expected now-a-days in kindergarten?"

"...I don't know if he's ready for Kindergarten. The preschool teacher is concerned about his attention and how long it takes to catch on."

Are held-back kids better off? A study published in the Harvard Education Letter indicated that the youngest children up through 8th grade are more likely to have emotional, social and academic problems than their older classmates. Another study found that half of the students diagnosed with learning disabilities were in the youngest third of their classes. When researching gifted students, it was found that 60% were in the older half of their classes.

So, one way or another **make sure your child is ready**. One way is assessing and taking steps to maximize their readiness. Results of a readiness assessment can suggest one of three options: 1) your child is ready so worry about something else, 2) use the assessed weak areas as a checklist for what to strengthen to become ready by the fall, or 3) if "not ready" in too many areas, still do what you can to aid maturity and readiness but this is also the situation to consider an extra year in preschool. It is the "across-the-board" immature child (pre-academically, socially, perhaps even physically) that benefits most from being held back, at least in terms of prevention of future problems. Children that start school before they are ready (no matter what their actual age) tend to face a number of potential problems including but not limited to unnecessary academic failure.

So far we've been talking about preventing future problems. After kindergarten though, many already

failing and/or frustrated children are held back as if all they need is a combination of a year to naturally mature and a repeat of the same instruction that didn't teach them the first time. There could though be something going on very different than "immaturity." For example, if there is an undiagnosed learning disability (or more accurately "learning difference") what they need is to be taught in a way more conducive to the way they are wired to learn. If what they have is Attention Deficit Disorder (not a deficit at all; they have plenty of attention, just not always focused where and when their told) then they need specific help strengthening their ability to **control the focus** of their energy, not another year either struggling or cruising through the same curriculum.

To get a general idea of your child's readiness for Kindergarten, visit the TLC website (www.TotalLearningCenters.com) for a checklist of expected knowledge and skills. For a more in-depth assessment and specific recommendations, have your child assessed either at their school, if a child development specialist (armed with nationally standardized tests) is available or have it done privately such as at a learning center that does this sort of assessment. Whatever you decide, to repeat or not to repeat, first gather enough information to make the best decision possible to help your child prepare today for success tomorrow.