

According to the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council (NECAC):

Children's readiness for school is made up of multiple components and shaped by numerous factors. Improving school readiness, therefore, must address children's development of skills and behaviors as well as the environments in which they spend their time. Early childhood leaders at the state and national level agree that efforts to improve school readiness must address three interrelated components:

Children's readiness for school.

School's readiness for children.

The capacity of families and communities to provide developmental opportunities for young children.

Ultimately the goal is that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children.

School readiness ... is the foundation defined by the intersection of two critical components: 1) children's condition to learn based on the five identified domains of learning, and 2) the school's capacity to meet the needs of all children to prepare them for future school success and the 21st century. This includes, but [is] not limited to providing access to high quality services for all children including aligned standards and curriculum, supportive relationships, engaging environment, smooth transitions and strong family and community connections.

There is consensus, based upon a wealth of research, that a child's readiness for school should be measured and addressed across five distinct but connected domains:

- Physical Development and Health
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning
- Language and Early Literacy Development
- Cognition and General Knowledge

Assessing the readiness of children to enter school is a crucial step in understanding what children need to succeed both in school and in life. Kindergarten entry assessments not only assist teachers in utilizing curriculum and aligning instruction to the needs of the children, it also assists in identifying what gaps exist in ensuring that children enter kindergarten ready to learn. In a needs assessment conducted for the NECAC for a common kindergarten entry assessment, the authors noted that: "According to research, up to half of school difficulties and failure is already apparent by the time

children start school (Rouse, Brooks-Gunn, & McClanahan, 2004) and gaps in cognitive development are apparent as early as nine months of age (Ille, et al., 2009). In educational practice, assessing what children “know and can do” is a continuous process that is aligned with curriculum to ensure intended outcomes are addressed and monitored (McLean, 2010) (Snow, 2011). It is vital to clearly identify a purpose for assessments and ensure that they are closely tied to utilization (Snow, 2011).” The report also outlines best practices for selecting a common kindergarten entry assessment and principles for implementation and utilization. Overall, the assessment found consensus among Nevada educators regarding the need for a statewide, comprehensive kindergarten readiness assessment tool.

Recommendations:

Adopt a state definition of school readiness that incorporates the five domains of early childhood development which are critical to early learning and long term success. A state definition will assist in creating alignment among providers and policy makers in determining best practice, policy and programs necessary to support comprehensive reform to improve school readiness for all children in Nevada.

Identify and implement a common kindergarten entry assessment to assist in providing a picture of what incoming kindergartners can do, so their teachers can design instruction that builds on children’s strengths. The data generated will not only assist teachers, but will also inform policy and help target state resources to improve school readiness on a statewide, systems level. Kindergarten entry assessments are also particularly important to create common expectations for what all preschoolers should learn.



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