

The Head Start Approach to School Readiness

The Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Historically, Head Start often has led the early childhood field with a strong, clear, and comprehensive focus on all aspects of healthy development.

All Head Start programs are required to establish school readiness goals for children. Goals are the highest achievement level that children should reach through quality program services and active parental engagement. The goals are based on the following developmental areas or domains:

- **Language and Literacy Development**-refers to the emerging ability to understand and use language and a focus on early reading and writing skills.
- **Cognition and General Knowledge**-refers to the comprehension of information and concepts including, but not limited to mathematics, science and creative arts.
- **Approaches to Learning**-refers to observable behaviors that indicate ways children become engaged in social interactions and learning experiences.
- **Physical Health and Well-Being**- refers to physical well-being, use of the body, muscle control, and appropriate nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and safety practices.
- **Social and Emotional Development**-refers to the skills necessary to foster secure attachment with adults, maintain healthy relationships, regulate one's behavior and emotions, and develop a healthy concept of personal identity.

The goals have been established for children birth to five years of age. Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

For parents and families, school readiness means they are engaged in the long-term, lifelong success of their child. Head Start recognizes that parents are their children's primary teachers and advocates. Programs are required to consult with parents in establishing school readiness goals (45 CFR 1307.3 (b) (1) (iii), as amended). As Head Start programs and schools work together to promote school readiness and to engage families as their children make the transition to kindergarten, schools will be ready for children.

Be sure to ask the Family Development Specialist or Center Director about our program's school readiness goals during your appointment.