

Did You Know?

...When Your Child Is Ready for Kindergarten

A Note From Marilyn Drino, Mandala Administrative Director

My child has a fall birthday? Should I send him to kindergarten or keep him in preschool? Not all children of kindergarten age, especially those with fall birthdays, are ready to move on to kindergarten in the fall. I think some parents are confused by what we mean.

A child must have developed confidence and competence in many areas in order for his or her school experience to be successful. This includes emotional, social and physical maturity, as well as academic readiness. In fact, *academic readiness is the least important area of all.*

What is most important? Children need to be able to sit quietly and work alone, to focus their attention without becoming too distracted, to have the coping skills to handle listening and waiting, to know how to stand up for themselves, to endure not getting what they want ("getting their way"), to independently ask for what they need, to speak up in a group, and to be able to get along with peers. Also, children need to have the emotional stamina to handle the rigors of doing homework after school, which is now an expectation for all kindergarteners.

Problems can occur later. When we say that a child is not ready for kindergarten it does not mean that he or she won't be able to get through their kindergarten year. They will probably cope with kindergarten relatively well, although it could be stressful for them. Actually, the real problems start occurring in 3rd and 4th grades. This is the point where many teachers notice that children with late birthdays (or delayed readiness) are not able to keep up. Because they have to struggle more and more, many children begin to lose their confidence and start to dislike school altogether.

But what if my child is really bright? Many parents at Mandala have very bright children, which makes kindergarten readiness a confusing question. I am including an article about the Bright Child which I find very helpful. I hope it gives you a broader perspective and supports you in making the best decision for your child's future.

THE BRIGHT CHILD and SCHOOL READINESS

Most of the stresses of school are not intellectual but social, emotional and physical. The bright child may survive in academics, but become socially isolated, or feel emotionally pressured.

A child may be intellectually gifted, but over-placement may cause him or her to have low self-esteem. Gifted children who are over-placed often lack the motivation to succeed. *Stress and even depression may result.*

Parents often have high expectations for bright children, so the pressure to succeed is on this child at an early age. Bright children are expected to continue their education through college, and even graduate school. It is important that these children receive rewarding experiences from school in the early years so they will continue their academic pursuits. Too often bright children “burn out” in school.

**The bright child who is offered an extra year before school
will continue to learn and develop, but in his own way and at
his own pace, which will enhance his total personality.**

The bright child may also excel at music, sports, or other extra-curricular activities. It is important that schoolwork be accomplished with ease, so the child has time to pursue outside interests. The child who is oldest in the class finds the going much easier than the young child who is struggling to keep up. One year makes a great difference in young children’s abilities.

The bright child may have a keen mind, but his eye and muscle development may not be advanced, nor his social responses or emotional feelings.

A bright child might be able to read to the parent at home at age four – but this will be a different experience from reading in a classroom, where a child’s nervous system may be too immature to cope with the structured setting.

When school entrance is delayed, the bright child will still have the opportunity to continue learning from the richness of his environment. Good preschools offer challenges and parents may provide a wealth of experiences. The extra year may prove to be the most valuable year in a child’s life, resulting in a well-rounded individual with social, as well as intellectual, gifts.

♦ Lois Robbert, Author

A Change: Many private schools in our area are making September 1st their kindergarten cut-off date. Recently, we have noticed that a significant number of private and parochial schools are now requiring that children be five years old by September 1st to enter kindergarten. This follows the lead of the majority of public schools in other states. Eventually, our legislature is expected to enact the date change for California public schools, as well.

If you want more information about kindergarten readiness, I would be happy to talk with you. I have many more articles, as well as personal examples, that show what an incredible gift you will give to your fall birthday child with an extra year before kindergarten. Usually an extra year of preschool gives children a chance to gain self confidence that makes school a much more positive experience. Our Afternoon Pre-K Class is perfect for giving these older preschoolers just what they need to get ready for school.

We know that not every child with a fall birthday needs an extra year, but many do. In our many years at Mandala, no parent has *ever* come back to tell us they regretted holding their young child back for an extra year! However, we have had *many* parents come back to say that they wished they had listened to the teachers’ recommendations and had given their child the gift of not having to struggle so hard in school.

If you have any specific questions about your child and kindergarten readiness, please check in with your child’s teachers too. Our teachers work with your child on a regular basis, and they keep an objective perspective. They can give you the best assessment of your child and his or her readiness for school.