

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

SCHOOL READINESS AND SCHOOL SUCCESS: From Research to Policy and Practice Quebec City, November 12-13, 2009

The [Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development](#) and the [Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development](#) have prepared this one-page summary of the main take-home messages from the *School Readiness and School Success* conference. This is a summary of what we learned during this two-day conference and what participants have identified as their most important take-home messages. We hope this document will be helpful to you and your colleagues.

The focus of “school readiness” is more about “learning readiness”.

- [School readiness](#): 1) is multi-faceted; 2) can be reliably assessed at the end of the preschool years; 3) is a good predictor of later school outcomes and; 4) can be improved by age-appropriate parenting, interventions and policies.
- There are two [preschool priorities](#) when preparing children for school: 1) enhancing instructional support to promote emergent literacy and math skills (cognitive readiness) and 2) enriching emotional support for positive socialization and motivated, goal-oriented learning skills (behavioural readiness).
- Studies have shown that emotional development, self-regulation and social skills are as important as cognitive skills at school entry and for later school outcomes.
- Longitudinal studies have shown that socio-behavioural dimensions in kindergarten do matter when it comes to high [school completion](#).

Of the numerous skills that need to be enhanced in early childhood to prepare for school, executive functions, language and numeracy skills are the most important.

- [Executive functions](#) comprise three core abilities: a) self-control: the ability to pay attention and stay on task; b) working memory: the ability to hold information in mind while working with or updating it, and; c) cognitive flexibility: the ability to easily and quickly switch the focus of attention, adjusting to changing demands.
- Studies have shown that as early as 18 to 30 months of age, [language skills](#) can predict reading performance in the 2nd grade of primary school.
- With regard to [mathematical skills](#), we learned that, over the first five years of life, children develop informal mathematical knowledge based on the manipulation or representation of concrete objects.

These skills can be developed and achieved in various ways:

- An environment where a child can read, play and socialize with other children will allow him/her to develop three fundamental competencies for school readiness: self-regulation, social interactions and basic cognitive acquisition.
- Joint [storybook reading](#) with children as young as 18 months of age contributes to reading performance. Family literacy practices help to maximize children's potential.
- Children who have more time to [play](#) perform better on academic outcome measures than children who spend more time in direct academic instruction. Play is the first learning environment.
- The ECD curriculum should be enriched to balance intentional instruction to foster emergent academic skills (i.e., literacy and math skills) and activities that actively promote self-regulation.
- To enhance their school readiness, [vulnerable children](#) need access to educational practices that have the quality of best programs (universal and targeted).
- [ECD services](#) need to be comprehensive and coordinated.

It is important to understand that early childhood is a crucial period for school readiness and success.

You can access this document and the conference's keynote and workshops PowerPoint presentations at: <http://www.sk-ced.ca>. Videos of keynote sessions are available upon request by contacting cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca.