

School Readiness Survey

Are our children ready to go to school?

With Kindergarten registration starting in a few weeks in Clinton County, many parents and schools are preparing children to start school in the fall. Are our children ready to go to school?

The Clinton County Early Care and Education Initiative in collaboration with Penn State Cooperative Extension surveyed kindergarten, licensed pre-school and head start educators in December of 2010 to assess school readiness and look for suggestions to improve existing school transition practices.

What educators said:

The top 3 strengths they saw in their students coming into their classroom for 2010 were:

- Physical well being (appeared physically healthy, well nourished and well rested)
- Self care skills (knows how to wash hands, use a tissues, take care of toilet needs)
- Communication (verbally communicate needs and wants)

The top 3 challenges or difficulties educators identified:

- Fine motor development (cuts with scissors and uses crayon/pencil comfortably)
- Attentiveness (sustains attention in learning situations, follows directions)
- Social adaptation (plays and works cooperatively with others)

The educators indicated the top reasons why they believe that children in our community may not reach Kindergarten prepared to experience school success are:

- Families do not understand the importance of parental/caretaker involvement in the child's education
- Families are not able to access existing training programs or support services (may be due to lack of transportation, lack of services during non-work hours or lack of awareness of services)
- Families have difficulty providing a healthy environment for the child due to the overwhelming life stresses
- Families do not have adequate support and training in parenting skills and child development

Currently, there are limited activities for children entering kindergarten. This past summer, the Keystone Central School District instituted a district-wide “Kindergarten Camps” that were very well attended and very successful. The kindergarten, pre-school and head start educators were asked a series of questions to uncover what types of transition activities they would like to see occur in our community. They indicated the following that would very beneficial or beneficial to improve transition into Kindergarten:

- Parents of pre-schools observing a Kindergarten class
- Pre-school children visiting a Kindergarten class prior to starting school
- Pre-Kindergarten meetings for parents prior to the start of school
- Written record of the child’s past experiences/status made available to teachers before the start of school
- A meeting with the teacher, child and parent before the start of school
- A visit by the teacher to the child’s home before the start of Kindergarten
- Kindergarten camp in the summer
- Family night in the spring prior to the start of Kindergarten held at the school

There are many things that can be done in our community to make a smooth transition from pre-school into the kindergarten setting. School transition, readiness and success take the entire community working together. For additional information or free school readiness materials, contact Laurie Welch at 570-726-0022 ext 132 or law27@psu.edu or www.clintoncountychildcare.org.