

# **Is Your Child Ready?**

## **A Primer for Parents and Educators**

by

Julia Berthiaume and Mark Goddard  
The Learning Center, Inc.  
[www.pullmanlearningcenter.com](http://www.pullmanlearningcenter.com)

School readiness and early childhood education is a prominent topic amongst public school educators, childcare providers and parents and a flagship of Gov. Gregoire's vision for education in Washington. Early childhood education must provide more than a fun environment, filled with arts and crafts. While early childhood education should be engaging, creative, and hands-on, it must also be directed to a purpose. Early childhood educators must reflect on the great importance of their role, and seek to provide exceptional learning opportunities for children... and parents should hold them to that standard.

Licensing guidelines for instruction are mandated for all childcare centers, yet these are not enough when examining the true importance of quality curriculum. Preschool teachers must carefully examine state standards and expectations for preschool age students, and design lessons that specifically target these skills. These expectations are clearly stated at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website:  
[www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/pubdocs/birth-to-five.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/pubdocs/birth-to-five.pdf).

Truly skilled preschool teachers should also examine the state grade level expectations that are provided for kindergarten teachers in Washington State. These guidelines lay out skills and concepts that kindergarten children should learn and master during their kindergarten year. If preschool teachers were to truly follow both of these documents, design engaging activities aligned with specific target skills or concepts, and then assess their student's success in achieving the goal, children would have much higher levels of success when they move into their first year in the public school system.

There are multitudes of checklists that can guide parents as to whether or not their children are ready for kindergarten (here's just one sample: <http://www.preschoolerstoday.com/resources/readykinder.htm> ), however, we strongly suggest that parents should be familiar with the standards that are required to be addressed by our public kindergarten teachers. With that information at hand, here are some tips for parents when evaluating a child care center for the early education of your children:

- We suggest taking the time to visit with your child's preschool teacher, discussing how they view your child's readiness.
- Ask your child's preschool teacher to show you progress that has been made during their time in preschool. Do they have a portfolio that has followed their children from birth to five? Do they do regular assessments and include those in your child's portfolio?
- Visit the OSPI website so that you are informed about school readiness ([www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/](http://www.k12.wa.us/EarlyLearning/)) and be informed about the state guidelines for skills that are the focus of our public kindergarten programs, then talk to your early learning/child care provider to learn how their program may or may not be aligned with those guidelines.
- Readiness is not just about content (science, math, literacy, etc.) but includes fine and gross motor skills, life skills, and social readiness. Your child care provider should be able to show you how their program addresses the full range of readiness through varied and innovative instruction.