

Parent Perspectives on Preschool

There is widespread debate on the distinction between academic versus intellectual goals for young children (Katz, 2015). Academic goals involve the master of discrete skills that are addressed through worksheets, drills, and other readiness-type exercises. In contrast, intellectual goals draw on children's interests and encourage reasoning, predicting, analyzing, and the quest for understanding. Many proponents of "kindergarten readiness" overlook the potential risks of premature formal academic instruction, failing to recognize the benefits of supporting children's natural curiosity and the cultivation of a life-long love of learning.

Research on brain development tells us that preschool programs are best when they focus on social, emotional, and intellectual goals (Blair, 2002). However, the common sense idea that "earlier is better" (Katz, 2015) is a widespread belief that has parents searching for programs they believe will provide their children with the best academic advantage for kindergarten entry.

Using photographs of preschool-aged children engaged in a variety of activities, this study seeks to sample parents of three, four, and five-year-old children to determine their perspective on programs that are "appropriate" versus those that are less appropriate in terms of preparation for kindergarten.