

THE CONTENT OF A CHILD'S MENTAL READINESS FOR SCHOOL

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Annotation: This article explores the mental readiness of children for school in preschool education institutions and highlights its distinctive features. It proposes innovative methods and approaches to assess children's mental preparedness.

Keywords: mental readiness, knowledge, perception, memory, behavior, skills, competence, imaginative thinking, literacy training.

One of the key components of mental readiness for school is a child's sufficient breadth of knowledge about the surrounding world. Basement of this knowledge is essential as it forms the foundation upon which teachers organize their work. The quality of the knowledge that children possess is considered as primary importance in assessing mental readiness. Key indicators of this quality include: children's conscious acquisition of knowledge; clarity and categorization of their ideas; completeness of basic concepts; their ability to apply acquired knowledge independently to solve academic and practical tasks; and consistency in understanding relationships and connections between objects and phenomena.

An essential element of a child's mental readiness for school is the development of cognitive activity. This mainly includes firstly:

- the growing intentionality in cognitive processes
- voluntary memorization and meaningful reproduction of material
- planned perception of objects and phenomena
- the ability to solve cognitive and practical problems purposefully and others

Secondly, improving the quality of cognitive processes is also vital:

- the accuracy of perception
- clarity and categorization of observation
- speed and precision of memory and reproduction

Moreover, it is important that children develop an inquisitive attitude toward the world and an eagerness to gain knowledge and attend school. The general level of thinking activity is crucial in developing school readiness. Under regular and goal-oriented educational conditions in preschools, children develop the ability to analyze objects from multiple perspectives, use socially accepted sensory standards to

explore characteristics of objects and phenomena, identify key connections and features, generalize based on those observations, and compare items by distinguishing similarities and differences. Children also develop elementary independence in intellectual activity, including the ability to:

- plan their actions independently
- carry out tasks according to a plan
- pose simple cognitive questions and solve them

Mental readiness also includes mastering elements of learning activity. By the end of the preschool period, under systematic education, children should be able to:

- understand academic tasks
- follow accurately carry out the teacher's instructions
- use demonstrated methods to reach a result
- control the quality of their actions and behavior
- critically assess their own and others' work

The level of speech development is a significant indicator of school readiness. This includes accurate pronunciation, a rich vocabulary, the ability to express thoughts logically and grammatically, and skills in polite communication. Additionally, early literacy, basic mathematical concepts, sufficient knowledge, skills, and competencies in the mother tongue are important components. Thus, mental readiness for school consists of interconnected aspects of cognitive and speech development. These are considered intellectual activity, cognitive interests, modes of thinking, organized knowledge about the surrounding world, vocabulary and elements of learning behavior. The unity of these factors ensures that a child is mentally prepared to absorb school material.

Mental readiness encompasses not only imaginative and logical thinking but also includes self-control, curiosity, independence, observation, listening, memorizing, and comparing. The effectiveness of school education largely depends on a child's proficiency in their native language and the development of their speech.

This is because all learning activities are built on the foundation of logical verbal development, the child's ability to think independently without adult help, and their ability to effectively use speech for storytelling, reasoning, explaining, and clear expression. In addition, practical intelligence plays an important role in school readiness—for instance, the ability to copy a pattern or complete verbal instructions accurately.

Adults working with preschool children must always consider the ongoing development of their physical and mental capacities. For example, forcing children to write before their finger muscles are fully developed may be harmful. If a child struggles with handwriting, it may lead to a decrease in self-confidence or interest in learning.

Often, mental readiness is equated with a child's worldview and knowledge about nature, people, and human labor. While this knowledge can form the foundation of school education, it is not the main indicator of readiness. A child's vocabulary and ability to follow certain behaviors are important but not sufficient on their own. The school curriculum requires the ability to compare, analyze, generalize, draw conclusions, and other well-developed cognitive processes.

For example, a 6–7-year-old child should not only understand specific natural phenomena but also grasp the connection and interaction between living organisms and the environment. At this stage of development, visual-figurative thinking enables children to distinguish essential features and relationships among objects. It is important to emphasize that both visual-active and visual-figurative thinking play a central role in the cognitive development of not only 6–7-year-olds but also younger school-age children.

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