What is school readiness?

School readiness involves more than just children. In the broadest sense, school readiness is about children, families, early environments, schools, and communities. Children are not innately “ready” or “not ready” for school. Their skills and development are strongly influenced by their families and through their interactions with other people and environments before coming to school.1

An elementary school that is ready to receive kindergarten students is prepared to deliver evidence-based instruction, hire and continually train knowledgeable teachers and principals, and be culturally responsive to all of its students.

Evidence-Based Instruction

• A ready school’s teachers deliver explicit, systematic, evidence-based instruction to help ensure student success—Policies, practices, and curriculum in Pre-K to Grade 1 are aligned to help establish continuity in instruction builds on prior learning.

• PK – 3: What Does It Mean for Instruction—Framework for Planning, Implementing, and Evaluating Pre-K – 3rd Grade Approaches

• Teaching Math to Young Children

• Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade

Culturally Responsive Staff

A ready school takes into account individual differences in language, culture, and prior experiences.

• Meeting the Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners Through Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices

• Culturally Responsive Instruction: Best Practices and Supports

Additional Resources

Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel


Rubric for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Kindergarten to Grade 5

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/projectID=4056

PLC Facilitator’s Guide for the Practice Guide: Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade


Getting It Right: Reference Guides for Registering Students with Non-English Names, 2nd Edition


Culminating Projects on Educator Effectiveness

• REL Projects on Educator Effectiveness

• Resources and Professional Development Opportunities from the National Association for the Education of Young Children

• Leading Pre-K – K: Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice

• Leading for Early Success: Building School Principals’ Capacity to Lead High-Quality Early Education

Well-trained Teachers and Leaders

A ready school employs teachers and leaders who know how to teach young children and have the resources to do so.

• REL Projects on Educator Effectiveness

• Resources and Professional Development Opportunities from the National Association for the Education of Young Children

• Leading Pre-K – K: Learning Communities: Competencies for Effective Principal Practice

• Leading for Early Success: Building School Principals’ Capacity to Lead High-Quality Early Education

School readiness occurs when children have the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in primary school, later learning, and life. Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development are essential ingredients of school readiness. School readiness refers not only to ready children, but to ready communities, families, and schools.2

This document was developed by a collaborative group of representatives of the ten Regional Educational Laboratories throughout the United States.


January 2017

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Resource Library

Rubric for Evaluating Reading/Language Arts Instructional Materials for Grades K–5


Getting It Right: Reference Guides for Registering Students with Non-English Names, 2nd Edition


REL southeast

The Southeast Education Laboratory (REL Southeast) is a Specialized Center Serving the Southeast Region of the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES). REL Southeast is a collaborative partnership of five Regional Educational Laboratories: Florida State University, Florida Atlantic University, Georgia State University, Georgia Tech, and the University of Georgia. REL Southeast’s mission is to strengthen the capacity of school systems and other educational stakeholders to build high-quality educational systems through research, technical assistance, and professional development. REL Southeast is one of ten Regional Educational Laboratories that make up IES’s National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE).
Cavazos, L. (2017). Meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners through culturally and linguistically responsive practices.


