

## Thoughts on School Readiness

November 1, 2016

Every year as the end of the summer break rolls around, there is the anxiety and excitement of a new school year for both parents and their children. This was the first year that I missed the start of the new school year with my own children due to work commitments.

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Every year as the end of the summer break rolls around, there is the anxiety and excitement of a new school year for both parents and their children. This was the first year that I missed the start of the new school year with my own children due to work commitments. In addition, both of my children were starting at a new school in a new city, and this heightened the “mixed bag” of emotions that are usually at play this time of year.

But the start of the school year also makes me think back to the first time they started school. My wife and I had all the usual concerns of every parent: Will they fit in? Will they be able to handle themselves without us? Will the bathroom breaks go smoothly? But upon further reflection perhaps these fears were somewhat limited.

What if my child resided in a war-torn part of the world—would not just the act of getting to and from school be a major consideration? Gun violence and bullying have entered the school dialogue more so than in the previous generation. The lack of safety in our schools has become a fear that is so much more prevalent in recent years.

An education is a child’s right—It is every child’s right! Schools, communities, and pediatricians play a large role in trying to ensure that right can be made readily available to all children as safely as possible.



The November 2016 PIR [In Brief](#) on [School Readiness](#), by Rebecca J Scharf, MD, MPH, is a concise paper on the 5 major domains for the determination of school readiness: self-regulation and social-emotional readiness, physical health and motor readiness, language and communication readiness, cognitive readiness, and approaches to learning. Each of these domains is explained in detail and put in the context of

the role of the pediatrician, as an advocate for both parent and child, to help realize school success from infancy.

Dr. Scharf also poignantly addresses the impact of poverty, chronic illnesses, malnutrition, and other risk factors that may impair academic success. The opportunity to intervene in a positive manner with regards to regular health assessments in preschool-aged children is one that should not go wasted by healthcare providers.

Another recent resource is the policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics, "[The Pediatrician's Role in Optimizing School Readiness](#)," which outlines the ways pediatricians contribute to the educational process. The impact of a pediatrician on successful school entry can have lifelong result, perhaps more so than anything else we do.

This influence is best described by Jeffrey Okamoto, MD, FAAP, immediate-past chair of the AAP Council on School Health (COSH) and co-author of the policy statement, who said:

"Because pediatricians often are the only health and development professional regularly involved in a young child's life, they are perfectly positioned to work with families and the community to monitor and promote the critical elements of early experiences that foster school readiness."

### **Further Reading**

For parent resources from the AAP, see [HealthyChildren.org](http://HealthyChildren.org):

- [AAP Highlights Impact of Children's Earliest Experiences on School Readiness](#)
- Spanish: [La AAP destaca el impacto de las primeras experiencias en la preparación escolar](#)
- [Healthy Children > Ages & Stages > Teen > School](#)
- Spanish: [Healthy Children > Edades y Etapas > Escuela primaria > Escuela](#)

For AAP Bright Futures resources, see: [brightfutures.aap.org](http://brightfutures.aap.org).

### **Further Reading**

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