“Your child is falling behind and I can’t help him.” Those were the words spoken to the mother of a kindergarten boy four months after school started by his teacher. Disappointed and discouraged, this mother questioned Kindergarten Readiness. Her child was solidly age appropriate, had attended the same preschool for two years, and appeared to be ready to enter kindergarten. “Looking back,” the mother said, “they did a lot of play and art, but not much academically at the preschool he attended.”

Another 4-year-old boy has attended a local preschool for two years. The program uses a thematic, semi-structured approach, with academic learning through play, music, and specific learning activities. Because a disconnect appeared in the way he processed information, he was sent to his local school district for evaluation. During the evaluation process, this mother was told that her child did not need to know any of the basic readiness concepts before entering kindergarten.

So what should a child know before entering kindergarten? Kindergarten Readiness includes social, emotional, and cognitive learning; language, and motor development. However, if a child is the chronological age of entry, they may enter school without having mastered any specific readiness skills. The school and its teachers must then have a kindergarten program in place that can meet the needs of each individual child.

The California Department of Education has developed a set of Preschool Learning Foundations in an attempt to “strengthen preschool education and school readiness and to help close the achievement gap in California.” They hope to “align expectations for preschool learning with the state’s kindergarten academic content standards.” Specific attention has been given to the social and emotional characteristics of a child like sitting still and managing emotions, over the importance of academics such as letters, numbers, and colors. These “foundations” are designed to be used as teaching and guidance “tools” to promote early learning and development.

To best prepare children for kindergarten, they must have support surrounding them. Family, school, and the community can strongly influence positive values and help create the desire to “enjoy” learning within a child. Children can be taught, and together we have a great opportunity to help children understand themselves. We should strive to create an environment in which they can learn and be positively motivated. By being a positive role model, we teach them how to interact with others and how to manage their emotions. We teach them respect for themselves and for others. By listening to a child and developing open communication, we establish trust and emotional support. Familiar routines help make tasks easier and teach children to take care of things. They learn patience and cooperation when we are consistent and positive. The use of praise works magic and helps create a desire within children to make good choices.

Together, family, school, and the community can create positive confidence in children entering kindergarten by helping them to be socially and emotionally prepared. We can also help them feel confident in their knowledge of basic concepts and skills. We can visit the school they will be attending and meet the teacher. We

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Because we work with young children and are constantly cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and toys, it is good for us to be reminded that all items used for cleaning, disinfecting, and deodorizing are to be considered “hazardous chemicals”. Back in 1970, the U.S. Department of Labor set forth some standards and regulations that must be followed by all employers, regardless of company size. Unfortunately, these regulations are often overlooked. Below are some highlighted points to help familiarize you with the regulations. For more detailed information, see their web site at: http://www.osha.gov/

- Employees have both a need and a right to know the hazards and identities of the chemicals they are exposed to when working. They also need to know what protective measures are available to prevent illnesses and injuries related to chemicals from occurring. MSDSs also contain information on first aid measures, however, it is strongly suggested that prior to the use of any chemicals, the appropriate health department, doctor, or poison control center be contacted to ensure the accuracy of first aid instructions listed on the MSDS sheet.

- Chemical manufacturers, importers, and distributors are all required to provide the appropriate MSDS to employers upon each shipment or request. In other words, if your center orders cleaning supplies from a company, you are already receiving the MSDS forms in the mail. Each time you order, the manufacturer must ensure that you are provided the most current MSDS form. However, if you are purchasing cleaning products from the store, you will need to call or write the manufacturer for their most current MSDS form. Another option for those who are needing MSDS forms for store-bought chemicals would be to use the following MSDS web site: http://www.msdssearch.com/DBLinksN.htm

- Containers of hazardous chemicals must be labeled, tagged, or marked with the identity of the material and appropriate hazard warnings. Chemical manufacturers, importers, and distributors are required to ensure that every container of hazardous chemicals they ship is appropriately labeled with such information and with the name and address of the producer or other responsible party. Employers purchasing chemicals can rely on the labels provided by their suppliers. If the material is subsequently transferred by the employer from a labeled container to another container, the employer will have to label that container with a label stating all the above information. The chemical company or distributor often provides the necessary labels at no cost.

This means that no chemical, of any kind, can be poured into unlabeled spray bottles, jars, or bowls. In addition, this means that simply writing the name of the chemical on the new container is not sufficient. It must be properly labeled with the identity of the material and appropriate hazard warnings.

- Employers that use hazardous chemicals must have a written program to ensure the MSDS information is provided to employees. In other words, the most important aspect of the written program in terms of MSDSs is to ensure that someone is responsible for obtaining and maintaining the MSDSs for every hazardous chemical in the workplace. All MSDS sheets must be kept current on an annual basis.

Employers must have a written policy in place that requires all employees to read and understand the information presented in the MSDS sheets. This is ideally accomplished at an annual staff meeting where the sheets are read, discussed, and explained. In addition, we recommend that each staff member sign a statement acknowledging that they have been appraised of the chemical hazards.
within the workplace, potential hazardous effects, physical and chemical characteristics, and recommendations for appropriate protective measures. Employees need to also understand the first aid measures necessary in the event of an emergency and where to find the appropriate MSDS sheet.

- MSDSs must be readily accessible to employees when they are in their work areas during their work shifts. The employees must have access to the MSDSs themselves. This means that all MSDS sheets and first aid instructions are kept in one place, readily accessible in the event of an emergency. Some employers keep the MSDSs in a 3-ring binder in a central location, with each chemical under a tab labeled with the chemical’s most common name.

The first action step for center Directors is to obtain a copy of the rule. You can do this by contacting OSHA’s Publications Office, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW., room N3101, Washington, DC 20210, telephone (800) 321-OSHA. Ask for the following:

Hazard Communication Standard
OSHA 3084, Chemical Hazard Communication booklet
OSHA 3111, Hazard Communication Guidelines for Compliance booklet

A copy of the Chemical Hazards Communication booklet may be ordered through the OSHA PUBLICATIONS web site at: http://www.osha.gov/pls/publications/publication.html

For more detailed information, you may want to look at the following Department of Labor web pages:

http://www.osha.gov/fso/ca.html

The above information is not meant to scare you, but it is necessary for all of us to be in compliance with the regulations of the federal government.

The Department of Labor (DOL) administers and enforces more than 180 federal laws. These mandates and the regulations that implement them cover many workplace activities for about 10 million employers and 125 million workers.

On their website they list a brief description of many of DOL's principal statutes most commonly applicable to businesses, job seekers, workers, retirees, contractors and grantees.

Employment Laws Assistance provides a list of selected U.S. Department of Labor laws and regulations with links to related compliance assistance activities. The DOL compliance assistance Web site offers complete information on how to comply with federal employment laws.

For employers, this website of information is invaluable. Remember, though, your local state Department of Labor (or Department of Employment) will have additional regulations for which you are responsible; all of which are in addition to the state’s child care licensing regulations.

If you have questions or would like assistance in learning more, feel free to contact the Pacific Union Conference, Early Childhood Division at (805) 413-7342. We will be happy to help.

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can find the classroom and discuss Kindergarten Readiness expectations with the teacher. If possible, we can meet other children who will also be attending their same kindergarten class. We can remember to talk positively about kindergarten. We can go to the library and check out books about going to kindergarten. Above all, we must remember that children mature and develop at different rates. We must remember children are always ready---it’s their development that may not be ready. We must also remember it is through play and interacting with their world that children get their brains ready for learning.

So what have we learned about Kindergarten Readiness? We have learned that Kindergarten Readiness is a topic full of controversial discussion. Educators at all levels have spent countless hours discussing the subject and simply do not agree on what it is and exactly how it can and should be measured. What we have learned and do know is that the home, neighborhood, school, and the community affect the readiness of a child. Each is a small stepping stone in the advancement of learning. YOU can contribute to the healthy development of a child. WE are the stepping stones to a child’s Kindergarten Readiness.

### Stepping Stones

#### Community

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- Building the Census & Maintaining Ratios
- Quality Control
- Three Steps to Stability
- Key Components of Success
- Working with a Board

We are excited to present this opportunity to you! We hope that this time together will inspire new ideas, while using tried and true methods, to create a successful program for teachers and students alike. We have a duty to offer top-rate education and a safe environment for young minds and characters to develop.