

WHY GOOD SCHOOLS DO NOT STRESS ACADEMICS

Children do grow intellectually in the younger years. Why not have all formal academic instruction in the program?

A child is "ready" to learn when the mind and the body have developed so that they can sit still without stress and cope with school tasks. (Girls are usually ready before boys.)

A child who is forced to learn before he or she is ready may become frustrated and nervous, and "give-up" on school. Young children are eager to learn, yet by fifth grade 50% of the children dislike school. The present method of discovery learning in school does not pressure a child or cause the child to feel defeated. It does broaden knowledge and help children to think of school as a good place to be. Formal academics in school increases the number of children who are "burned out" in later years.

The baby sits before walking. In the same way, a young child must learn to understand his/her world and use language with ease before attempting academic work.

Psychologists believe that mental structures for academic thinking do not develop until age seven or eight. This means that children taught formally in their younger years might learn the wrong way, by rote memory. This might damage the children's ability to learn later on through reasoning and problem solving.

Kindergarten is a transitional period where some formal academic work is being introduced yet; we still focus on the emotional needs of the young child. A child who is not in charge of his or her emotions cannot learn intellectually.

Programs are designed so that each child can learn according to his own individual interests. This way of learning is called "intrinsic motivation" or learning because it interests you. Intrinsic motivation is one of the highest forms of learning.

When children start school, they may not have been around many other children so socialization is an important part of the program. In our world, people have discovered how to blow up our planet, but they haven't learned how to get along with other people. Having good relationships with other people may be more important to a child than anything else that child learns in life.

When a young child starts school, it may be the first time he has been away from his family. The school needs to provide security and comfort for him, as well as substituting for the parent. Providing security and comfort does not go well with demanding academic programs.

Many children are in school ten to eleven hours a day. This puts a lot of pressure on the young nervous system. Schools are also homes-away-from-home and need to be as home-like and restful as possible.

GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND TEACHER by Lois Robbert