

Formal School Transition Stress

By David Elkind

“In helping prepare children for the challenge of first grade, parents often make an understandable, but incorrect assumption. They assume that what their children need to succeed in first grade are the basics of reading and arithmetic. In fact, most first grade teachers will have a different set of expectations for successful adjustment to first grade. These are:

- ❖ The ability to listen and follow instructions given by an adult.
- ❖ The ability to start a task and bring it to completion without help.
- ❖ The ability to work cooperatively with other children, take turns, stand in line, and so on.

If a child has these three social abilities, learning the academic skills is much easier than it is without them. It is important to communicate to parents how important these social skills are and to encourage them to reward and support these skills in their children. Of course they should continue to read to their children and help them learn the names of the letters and numbers; but the social skills should be given equal, if not more importance.”

David Elkind, PhD, was a long time professor of child development at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. He is past president of NAEYC and a long-standing advocate of developmentally appropriate practice. He is perhaps best known for his popular books – The Hurried Child, Miseducation, and All Grown up and No Place to Go.