

A preschool program that concentrates on the goals of furthering child development is to be preferred to that of keeping the child in the home where things are much the same from day to day. While there are many situations and materials in the home which mothers could use, they are often busy and have many interruptions and distractions. The preschool program is planned for and can focus on the needs of the children for an extended period of time. When mothers have children in preschool they often become quite involved and learn from the preschool and continue the concepts taught there.

The preschool setting also makes it possible for children to interact with other children on a regular basis. Those who are shy can gradually get to know others. In preschool the groups are small and children are not so quickly threatened by the larger group that they would meet if thrust into a kindergarten. All are encouraged to share and respect the rights of others.

Lagging development in one or more areas is not always recognized by the parents. Preschools can help point out the areas of

concern. When this is not recognized until kindergarten, it can cause frustration in both children and parents, for it is often viewed as failure. A second year in kindergarten, even though it shouldn't, leaves many with a negative feeling. A preschool can catch some of these difficulties; and with a variety of activities and materials, it can further readiness with an emphasis on continual growth according to each child's own rate with a minimum of concern about whether he will pass or fail. A second year in preschool does not bear the same stigma.

While not all children need readiness programs, I would say that all those who go would certainly benefit for the added dimensions it gives to learning. It can be an enriching and worthwhile experience that gives children confidence upon entering kindergarten.

Not just any preschool should be chosen. It must be one with values, attitudes, and beliefs consistent with our Reformed view of covenant child-rearing. Only then can we be assured that our young children are being trained in the fear of the Lord. □■□

Preschool: NO

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In order to discuss preschool at all we should begin with a definition. The only definition I can come up with is this: *pre* means

before in time, and *school* means the process of being educated. The *Webster New World Dictionary* of 1964 does not have a

definition for the noun preschool. This tells us that preschool is a relatively new term. In times past, this nursery school was for young children whose parents worked or for the very rich who could not be bothered with children around during the day.

My first argument against preschool comes from this lack of definition. A preschool can be anything that comes before kindergarten and therefore is poorly defined. As the word is poorly defined, so is the purpose. Why do we have preschool? Is it to get some formal education to prepare our child for kindergarten? Is it to be sure our child is at the head of the class when he gets to kindergarten? Is it a nursery school to babysit our children? Is it a status symbol for parents showing how concerned they are for their child's education? Is it a bridge to build between home and school?

Because preschool is not well defined there can be a variety of things taught. Some teach only social behavior; some teach letters and numbers; and some emphasize motor skills. Each preschool has its own set of standards, developed by the parents and the leader involved in it. Many times the father doesn't even become involved but leaves the duties of running the preschool to the mother.

The fact that some preschools

teach the numbers and letters can hurt the kindergarten. When a concept is formally taught too many times, a young child will think, "I had that before. Kindergarten is nothing new. I don't have to apply myself." Poor study habits are then formed. Yes, many children know numbers and letters before they start school, even without preschool, but the formal presentation always seems exciting to a child the first time. They have never really thought through those letters before. I do not think our children have to be taught subject matter at an earlier age; in fact I believe we push our children too fast already. Children have a definite potential and when they reach this peak they level off anyway. Why push?

The task of educating children belongs to the parents, and it should be given to others only when it is beyond the realm of the home. Motor skills and most social behavior *can* be taught in the home by the parents, especially day to day by the mother. Children don't have to be sent to preschool to do messy projects; but mother will have to take some extra time and patience for these experiences. Mothers can also "trade" children for a part of a day to expose children to other children and other situations. This is also extra work, but parents should be willing to give

