*we should prefer instead to keep them home as long as possible, giving them up only for the formal education which requires special expertise. Here they are.*

# Preschool: YES

Elaine Faber

Attending preschool is an excellent way for young children to become acquainted with the school routine which will be a major part of their life for many years to come. Leaving the home environment, interacting with other children, and the doing of activities related to learning are not always easy for those who have not had some prior experience with a school-like setting.

An experience in preschool can help make the transition from the home to the school a smooth and gradual one because the preschool program is similar to kindergarten in many ways, yet on a more limited scale. The child leaves the home to be with other children to be instructed by a teacher. With preschool the hours are shorter, perhaps two mornings per week. The groups are smaller, usually about ten children. There are no textbooks. Academics are not taught as such. The program is less structured, yet organized and directed toward the furthering of child development in the skills related to readiness.

We have all heard much about readiness and know that it is important for success in school. There is another term used now. It is pre-reading competency. For the mastery of any given task, there are pre-requisite skills to be learned. So to with school. Children must be able to sit still and attentively, they must be able to follow a sequence of directions, and they must be able to manipulate materials with a minimum of frustration to become competent in school. When these readiness goals are learned in preschool, it makes the job of the kindergarten teacher easier, and it is also more pleasant for the child.

Preschool also provides many experiences that further growth in language development. The use of language is an ingredient crucial for communication in oral and written instruction in and out of the classroom. The Bible lessons, songs, stories, fingerplays, books, Show-and-Tell time, and field trips are all opportunities that can motivate and stimulate the use of new words and ideas. Activities are used which appeal to the five senses, again helping to establish a foundation on which to build further learning.

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

Marilyn Schipper

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