

## Book Review

## School readiness and the characteristics of effective learning: The essential guide for early years practitioners by Tamsin Grimmer

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The book *School Readiness and the Characteristics of Effective Learning: The Essential Guide for Early Years Practitioners* aims to guide educators to support children when they move from early childhood education to school. Drawing on her research on transitions and her teaching experiences in England, the author offers her perspective about transitioning to school arguing that school readiness can be a misleading and narrowly defined term. She calls for a holistic approach and a childcentred pedagogy to ensure an optimal transitioning experience so that “children are not being prepared for school but prepared for life” (Grimmer, 2018, p. 179).

This book is well organised in 11 chapters. Chapter one starts with a discussion on the notion of school readiness. In this chapter, Grimmer advocates for a holistic approach to school readiness that accounts for learning in all aspects of children’s lives. The holistic nature of transitioning refers to the influences of the uniqueness of each child, and the contexts of an early childhood education setting, school, and family in a socio-cultural environment. In chapter two, the author argues that pressure of schoolification is placed upon early childhood settings by policymakers and that children are introduced to formal learning at a younger and younger age. The author challenges the misconception that real learning only takes place in school and advocates for life-long learning that starts from the early years. In the following chapter, Grimmer introduces the characteristics of effective learning as a context for supporting school readiness and as a framework to unpack how children learn and make sense of the world during their transitioning experiences. Chapters four, five and six are organised according to each of the three main characteristics of the effective learning framework - play and exploring, active learning, and creative and critical thinking. Within each chapter, case studies are offered to exemplify essential learning dispositions that prepare children for school and life. A clear discussion of adults’ roles is provided.

Key stakeholders involved in the transitioning to school experiences are examined in chapters seven, eight, nine and ten. Chapter seven shares children’s views on transitions to inform early childhood education settings and primary schools. Chapter eight shows how schools can be ready for children. Chapter nine focuses on early childhood education settings. Chapter ten intends to engage parents and advocates for collaborative relationships with families. Case studies and practical strategies are clearly illustrated to guide the readers. The final chapter summarises all aspects and makes a concise conclusion. The reflective practice questions at the end of each chapter can be used to initiate more dialogue about transitioning to school.

The ideas and strategies of early childhood teachers working together with children and their families, and primary school in the book resonate with the collaborative nature of early childhood education in New Zealand. This book will help kaiako/teachers to understand the international debates about transitioning to school and thus gain a broader perspective.

Overall, the book makes a valuable reference tool for early childhood professionals, early childhood teachers, student teachers and new entrant teachers in primary school. The book is easy to read and the practical strategies and exemplifications provided make it an excellent guide for practitioners to put theory into action.

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**Reference**

Grimmer, T. (2018). *School readiness and the characteristics of effective learning: The essential guide for early years practitioners*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.