



Ready Schools

The e-Newsletter of the CCSSO School Readiness Project

Issue 12 July 2006

The Ready Schools e-newsletter is a monthly publication from CCSSO that provides information, ideas and resources to support schools as they strive to become more prepared and ready to meet the needs of all children. A "ready school" is a critical component of the school readiness conversation and school improvement efforts. Through this newsletter, we will highlight efforts at the state and local level that support schools in their process toward becoming "ready schools."

Ready Schools Support Children's Transition to Kindergarten

Easing the Transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten: What Schools and Families Can Do to Address Child Readiness

<http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/rb/rb6-readiness.pdf>

This brief from the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools describes strategies for school staff on implementing successful transitions from pre-K to kindergarten. It provides objectives for staff to consider when planning activities and promotes a school culture that fosters family involvement. Transition activities that schools may consider include

- contacting families by phone or at community events to share grade-level expectations and school contact information
- visiting students at home to establish positive relationships with families
- hosting open houses, pre-enrollment classroom visits, and parent orientation sessions
- providing information for families on what the school will expect of them and tips they can do at home to support their children

Ready Schools Encourage Continuity and Alignment between Early Care and Education Programs and Elementary Schools

Building a 21st Century Economy: The Case for Investing in Early Education Reform

http://www.newamerica.net/Download_Docs/pdfs/Doc_File_2753_1.pdf

PK-3 aligns pre-K standards, expectations, and programs through Grade 3. This issue brief from the New America Foundation's Early Education Initiative puts forth the PK-3 agenda as the first critical step to remain globally competitive in the 21st century economy. The

author points to countries such as Great Britain and China that have increased enrollments and supports in early childhood education. The vision of PK-3 includes the following:

- Access to full-day programs is available for children ages 3 and 4 that focus on health, cognitive and social development, and motivation.
- Students have access to full-day kindergarten, which builds on pre-K experiences.
- There is alignment of standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment from pre-K to Grade 3.
- In addition to reading and math, the curriculum also focuses on social skills and self-discipline.
- Teachers meet qualifications to provide instruction at any grade level from pre-K to Grade 3. Compensation is equal to that of a public school teacher's salary.

Ready Schools Ensure High Quality Learning Environments

Two Sides of the Coin: School Readiness Means a Ready Child and a Ready School

<http://www.highscope.org/newsandinformation/ReSourceReprints/Fall%2005/Two%20Sides%20of%20a%20Coin.pdf>

This article from High/Scope discusses the challenges and the need for preparing pre-K students for the expectations of K-12 systems and how those systems may support them. It points to standardized testing as an inadequate tool to effectively evaluate developmental skills, such as curiosity, independence, or confidence. The brief asserts the need for increased collaboration and communication among early education providers and elementary teachers to align age appropriate instruction and properly prepare students entering kindergarten.

In addition, school systems have the responsibility to appropriately support incoming students. This article also introduces the Ready School Assessment (RSA), a self-assessment planning tool to be used by K-12 administrators, parents, teachers, and other community stakeholders working on school improvement. With funding from a three year grant by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, High/Scope developed the RSA. The RSA covers eight domains of a ready school:

- Leaders and Leadership
- Transitions
- Teacher Supports
- Engaging Environments
- Effective Curricula
- Family, School, and Community Partnerships
- Respecting Diversity
- Assessing Progress

In a field test of 73 schools, all but one being a public school, the findings suggest the RSA's self-assessment process and materials for K-12 systems are useful, productive, and easy to use. The work on the RSA completed its third year of the grant in 2005. The work focused on revising the tool based on field testing and providing technical assistance to pilot schools. The RSA is available for schools to purchase and training and technical assistance are also available. For more information, please visit www.readyschoolassessment.org or contact Paula Dowker at pdowker@highscope.org

Ready Schools Have Strong Partnerships with Parents and the Community

Building a Strong Community Partnership

<http://www2.districtadministration.com/viewarticle.aspx?articleid=209>

This article focuses on the parent-community-school partnership work of Joyce Epstein, a research professor of Sociology at Johns Hopkins University and the founder and director of the National Network of Partnership Schools. The parent-community-school partnership centers on student achievement. The partnership encompasses six types of involvement:

- Parenting--assisting families with parenting skills, understanding child development, and setting home conditions that support children as students. Also, this includes assisting schools in understanding families.
- Communicating--ensuring effective home-to-school and school-to-home communication about school programs and student progress.
- Volunteering--making improvements in recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families as volunteers at the school and in the community to support students and school programs.
- Learning at home--involving families with their children in learning activities and homework.
- Decision making--including families as participants in school decisions.
- Collaborating with the community--coordinating resources and services for families, students, and schools with the community.

Ready Schools: Other Resources, Publications and Sites of Interest

Legislative Agenda

<http://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/newsandissues/2006PolicyPapers.pdf>

This first *Legislative Agenda* features education policy initiatives from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). The organization advocates support for school readiness, which include:

- high quality learning environments containing smaller class sizes, qualified teachers, and incorporating family involvement
- alignment of developmentally appropriate curriculum supporting transitions into early elementary school grades
- financial resources and support for ongoing research focused on developing reliable assessments based on multiple measures
- collaboration among local schools and early childhood agencies providing health care and school readiness programs

About the School Readiness Project at CCSSO

The School Readiness Project is part of the School Improvement Initiative housed at CCSSO and is supported through funding from the [Annie E. Casey Foundation](#). The school readiness project is designed to support states in the development and implementation of comprehensive systems of early childhood education in low-income communities with a particular focus on ready schools.

To submit a news item relevant to School Readiness-Ready Schools at the state or district level, provide feedback, or to subscribe/unsubscribe, send an email to Morakot Masokas at morakotm@ccsso.org. PDF versions of all Ready Schools newsletters are available at http://www.ccsso.org/whats_new/newsletters/ready_schools/index.cfm.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on the major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress and the public.

Our mission statement: The Council of Chief State School Officers, through Leadership, Advocacy, and Service, assists chief state school officers and their organizations in achieving the vision of an American education system that enables all children to succeed in school, work, and life.