



Ready Schools

The e-Newsletter of the CCSSO School Readiness Project

Issue 10 May 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

The Des Moines Public Schools (**Iowa**) and the United Way of Central Iowa partnered with other agencies to create the district's first system wide school readiness calendar and checklist. The checklist incorporated in the calendar helps parents know what areas of development and learning their children should demonstrate to prepare for kindergarten. Those areas include:

- Physical Health and Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Approaches to Learning: Problem Solving Skills
- Language and Literacy: Communication Skills
- General Knowledge

Each area of development and learning lists explicit indicators for parents to look for in day to day interactions to determine mastery.

The calendar runs from September through August and includes a resource list of services and library information. Each month focuses on a specific skill and/or learning topic with suggested daily activities for parents to do with their children, such as naming letters on cereal boxes, writing a story, and practicing the first day of school. A sheet of colorful sparkle smile stickers is included for parents to reward completed activities. Additionally, each month highlights a list of age appropriate books and helpful websites.

In the first year, distribution of the calendars was made to Head Start families, in-home health care providers, counselors, and families with pre-kindergarten aged children. Training was provided to those distributing the resource to ensure that appropriate orientation was given to parents and families. Outreach to all families was not quite

met, however more effective ways are being considered for the next year's distribution.

The district's new early childhood transition coordinator, Lora Kracht, works with teachers, parents and children in eight pilot schools to support children entering kindergarten. Each pilot school has a Parent Ambassador, who is given a small stipend to stimulate parent-to-parent contact and to liaise with Lora. Some pilot schools will offer a half-day summer school program for small groups of kindergarten students. One focus of these sessions will be social-emotional readiness, including familiarizing both parents and children with school routines. Regarding academic preparation, the sessions will show children what to expect in reading and math, along with program goals and objectives. Materials are not online, but feel free to contact Lora at lora.kracht@dmps.k12.ia.us for more information.

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

The **Tennessee** Department of Education recently presented data to the state Senate Education Committee, demonstrating that at-risk students participating in a pilot preschool initiative outperformed their at-risk peers who had not attended preschool. Performance was measured using a norm referenced test (NRT) in reading and math for four cohorts and a criterion reference test (CRT) in reading and math for three cohorts. The state will continue to track student progress, to determine program effectiveness. To access the Senate Education Committee presentation, please visit

<http://www.prekfortn.com/documents/SenateEdPresentation3-28-06.pdf>

Ready Schools Ensure High Quality Learning Environments

Teacher Qualifications, Instructional Practices, and Reading and Mathematics Gains of Kindergartners: Research and Development Report

<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/2006031.pdf>

This report uses data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 to investigate the importance of teacher qualifications and instructional practices in promoting student achievement in reading and mathematics. Findings indicate significant gains among students attending full day kindergarten whose teachers spent 90 or more minutes on reading and 60 or more minutes on mathematics. In both subject areas, teachers completing two or more courses on methods in teaching utilized more of a variety of effective instructional practices than those indicating no completion of such coursework. A direct relationship between teacher certification and

student academic gains did not exist, except in mathematics instruction of measurement and advanced topics.

Ready Schools Have Strong Partnerships with Parents and the Community

The United Way Success by Six of Chester County (**South Carolina**) recently transported local parents to various services that are available to young children. The Child Watch event centered around a bus tour of early childhood resources at public and private day care and pre-kindergarten programs, public libraries and the Chester Regional Medical Facility. This collaboration of the Chester County School District and community volunteers from the business, education and medical community is a part of the Success by Six initiative to engage businesses in early care and education.

School Communication in Parents' Native Language

<http://www.childtrendsdatabank.org/indicators/104CommunicateNativeLang.cfm>

This data brief summarizes national trends in school involvement of parents' speaking languages other than English. The brief indicates that parents with income levels at or below poverty participate more when schools provide interpreters for parent-teacher conferences and additional school events, as well as translated materials, such as memos and newsletters. The 2003 National Household Education Survey identified additional trends for parents of students in grades kindergarten through three:

- Overall, sixty-four percent of parents enroll their children in schools providing both interpreters and translated documents.
- Eight percent enroll their children in schools providing only interpreters.
- Six percent enroll their children in schools providing only translated documents.
- Eighty-three percent with less than a high school diploma enroll their children in schools providing both interpreters and translated materials.
- Twenty-five percent with a bachelor's degree or more enroll their children in schools providing both interpreters and translated materials.

Ready Schools: Other Resources, Publications and Sites of Interest

Research Brief: Latino Students Take Different Paths in Learning Math from Kindergarten to Grade 3

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/type2/issue20/researchbrief2.htm>

This research brief uses the data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 to examine Hispanic students'

math learning between grades kindergarten to three. The study indicates the following findings:

- Students with family backgrounds from Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Central America enter kindergarten significantly lower than whites.
- Students with family backgrounds from Cuba and South America are more similar to whites over time in math learning.
- English language ability and socioeconomic status positively affect math learning.
- Socioeconomic status becomes less important by grade three.

English Language Learners who Struggle with Reading: Language Acquisition or LD?

http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/432471/english_language_learners_who_struggle_with_reading_language_acquisition_or/index.html

This literature review focuses on English language learners (ELLs) who struggle with reading language acquisition or have learning disabilities. Research collected includes topics such as:

- Population characteristics
- Understanding the traits and performance of ELLs
- A referral process identifying special needs
- Assessment practices for ELLs with learning disabilities
- Predictors of reading achievement
- Interventions
- The process of learning literacy in first and second languages

ELL enrollment is increasing, but these students are consistently behind in academic achievement, especially in literacy. ELL placement into special education is complex, as educators are unsure whether difficulties arise from language acquisition or learning disabilities. The authors suggest a much needed effort for further research to better define the population and subpopulation of ELLs.

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.

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