



Ready Schools

The e-Newsletter of the CCSSO School Readiness Project

Issue 15 October 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 Transition to Kindergarten: A Review of Current Research and Promising Practices to Involve Families

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/research/bohan.html>

This report from the Harvard Family Research Project focuses on transition activities from preschool to kindergarten. Examining the current research, this report presents promising practices that involve families categorized in three areas:

- *Reaching out* – Schools reaching out to families and early childhood education providers; engaging in communication about effective transition practices.
- *Reaching backward in time* – Schools reaching out to families prior to the first day of kindergarten.
- *Reaching with appropriate intensity* – Schools developing a range of practices with the appropriate amount of time for each (e.g. high concentration on personal contacts and less concentration on pamphlets/flyers).

Promising practices highlighted include

- Countdown to Kindergarten in Boston - This is a year-long program that reaches out to parents of incoming kindergarten students a full year prior to enrollment. It provides parents with registration and school information, opportunities to volunteer, and learning strategies to support their child's learning.
- The Continuity for Success Transition Planning Guide – This tool resulted from a partnership between the National Parent Teachers Association and the National Head Start Association. The guide focuses on supporting and increasing parent involvement in the

transition from Head Start programs to kindergarten by engaging national and local associations to work together to develop partnerships and action plans.

- Bilingual Teacher Aides. Okeechobee County, Florida provides bilingual teacher aides to assist in the transition to school for pre-K and kindergarten students and their families with limited English proficiency.

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

The **Illinois** State Board of Education created the Early Learning Standards for kindergarten. These standards align with and parallel the content of those established for pre-K and continuing grades 1-12. The information is formatted in a comprehensive guide for teachers that does the following:

- describes the eight subject areas of learning
- lists the state goals
- defines what students should know and be able to do
- explains the use of benchmarks to objectively evaluate student progress
- provides details and examples of supplemental instructional resources

For more information on the Illinois Early Learning Standards for Kindergarten, please visit:

http://www.isbe.state.il.us/earlychi/html/kindergarten_corner.htm

Ready Schools Ensure High Quality Learning Environments

Getting Ready. Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative. A 17 State Partnership

<http://www.gettingready.org/matriarch/d.asp?PageID=303&PageName2=pdfhold&p=&PageName=Getting+Ready+%2D+Full+Report%2Epdf>

This report prepared by Rhode Island KIDS COUNT presents the findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative. The initiative derived from a 17-state partnership. Participating states created teams to develop and implement a comprehensive set of school readiness indicators from birth to grade 3. This report compiles the shared set of core readiness indicators from participating states that are easily measured and tracked at the state level. These core indicators include

- Ready Children – Addresses the child's overall well being and social, emotional, and cognitive development
- Ready Families – Considers the child's family context
- Ready Communities – Focuses on community resources and supports for families
- Ready Services – Examines the availability and quality of health, early care, and education service programs

- Ready Schools – Focuses on schools meeting the needs of children and their families to foster development and academic success

These Ready Schools indicators point to class sizes and fourth grade reading scores as critical components to support student success:

- lower pupil-to-teacher ratios will permit teachers to identify and address individual student needs
- research indicates that students who are reading proficiently by the fourth grade are those who attend school regularly, are confident, and perform well in school

The report identifies emerging indicators, which are important to school readiness but are difficult to measure and/or track. Emerging indicators within the context of Ready Schools include transition practices from early care/learning to kindergarten and preschool special education services provided to students with special needs.

Ready Schools Have Strong Partnerships with Parents and the Community

The Dallas Fort Worth Independent School District (**Texas**) prepares pre-K students and their families for the expectations of the K-12 system through partnerships with community agencies. Those agencies include the City of Fort Worth, Campfire USA First Texas Council, and the University of Houston's Center for Improving Readiness of Children for Learning and Education (CIRCLE).

Using the City of Fort Worth's Extended Learning Opportunities Act, the district focuses on informing parents and teaching them strategies that will support their child's learning in literacy and math. The City of Fort Worth pays for the salaries of a coordinator and two specialists. Classes are held in the evening at recreation centers, and attending parents are provided with childcare.

The partnership with Campfire USA focuses on training local childcare centers and early childhood education providers on the district's literacy standards. Campfire USA assists with the training by providing child development specialists in the centers to ensure that instruction is developmentally appropriate.

Under the guidance of the University of Houston's CIRCLE program, the district uses the Texas Early Education Model (TEEM), which engages faculty and childcare providers in professional development training. Both district faculty and childcare providers learn research-based instruction techniques and strategies while also developing and implementing improved services and curriculum for pre-K students. This partnership is enabled by a grant from the Texas Education Agency.

For more information on Campfire USA Texas Council, please visit:
<http://www.firsttexascampfire.org/>

For more information on the University of Houston's Center for Improving Readiness of Children for Learning and Education, please visit:
<http://www.uth.tmc.edu/circle/>

For more information on the Texas Early Education Model, please visit:
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/opge/disc/teem/TEEM_faqs.doc

Ready Schools: Other Resources, Publications and Sites of Interest

Colorin Colorado provides free information, activities, and advice for educators and Spanish speaking families of English language learners. The Parents' Section provides information and activities on reading tips for students from pre-K through grade 3. General reading tips are accompanied by explicit examples to clearly inform parents of age/grade appropriate practices that support literacy. The information is available in both English and Spanish.

For more information on the Colorin Colorado website and its services, please visit: <http://www.colorincolorado.org/homepage.php>

For more information on the reading tips for parents, please visit:
<http://www.colorincolorado.org/tips/step7.php>

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, to 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.