



Ready Schools

The e-Newsletter of the CCSSO School Readiness Project

Issue 5 November 2005

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

*Paving the Way to Kindergarten: Timelines and Guidelines for
Preschool Staff Working with Young Children with Special Needs and
Their Families*

<http://thechp.syr.edu/PavingTheWay.html>

This booklet is designed for preschool staff, parents, and school district staff who are working to help children with special needs make the transition to kindergarten a less stressful event. The materials and suggestions are organized along a timeline to give a manageable approach to what could be a complicated process. Three tools are included in the appendices: the Kindergarten Survival Skills Checklist, an Observation Checklist, and the Parent Perspectives on Program Needs.

Early Childhood Research & Policy Briefs: Transition to Kindergarten

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PDFs/TranBrief.pdf>

Prepared by the National Center for Early Development and Learning, this policy brief examines how schools in the United States support transition to kindergarten. The most common practices include sending a letter to parents after the beginning of school; holding an open house after school starts; and sending a brochure home after school starts. These practices are characterized as low intensity, group-oriented practices that do little to involve families and build partnerships. To improve the transition process, the authors provide some suggestions that include meetings between teachers and families to discuss classroom expectations, home visitations, and planned meetings between the preschool teacher and elementary school staff.

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

Services and Programs that Influence Young Children's School Transition

<http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca/documents/EarlyANGxp.pdf>

A successful transition plan is designed to overcome the discontinuities that may disrupt children's learning and development. Optimal transitions to school are best supported by practices that are individualized and engage the child, family and preschool setting prior to the first day of school. Some suggestions for improving transitions for young children include the following:

- Schools need to focus on systematic transition planning for children. Plans need to be coordinated, flexible, and individualized and pay attention to helping children and families form relationships with schools and peers.
- Schools and communities need to focus on the issue of timing to ensure the transition process begins well before the first day of school.
- Provide pre-service and in-service training to teachers in the area of transition practices.

Beyond Transition: Ensuring Continuity in Early Childhood Services

<http://www.ericdigests.org/1992-3/beyond.htm>

There is a growing consensus that continuity is less about bridging the gap between different types of programs and more about institutionalizing key principles in all early childhood programs. Programs that provide effective early childhood services share three characteristics: (1) Developmentally Appropriate Practice; (2) Parent Involvement; and, (3) Supportive Services. Because we know that young children learn in similar ways throughout the early years, all programs in the community should adhere to developmentally appropriate principles from infancy through the primary grades. In addition, parent involvement, family support, and linkages to health services, which often characterize preschool programs, should continue into the early years of elementary schools. It is through the continuity of such services, in and out of the classroom, that we will eventually move beyond a concern for transition and be able to ensure continuous and effective services throughout the early years.

Ready Schools Ensure High Quality Learning Environments

Teacher Education: One Strong Step to Ensuring High Quality

<http://www.trustforearlyed.org/docs/report2.pdf>

"If we want our children to enter kindergarten ready to learn, our pre-kindergarten programs must be able to attract and retain well-

educated pre-kindergarten teachers. High quality learning environments and high quality classrooms are associated with high quality teachers: teachers with a Bachelor of Arts degree (B.A.) and specialized training in early childhood education." This paper produced by the Trust for Early Education (TEE) provides a review of research supporting the need to attract and retain high quality teachers in pre-kindergarten programs.

Resources to Promote Social and Emotional Health and School Readiness in Young Children and Families--A Community Guide
http://nccp.org/pub_rps05.html

From the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), this guide provides information about resources and strategies that families, child care providers, teachers, and others can use to help young children develop the social and emotional skills they need to succeed in school. The resources and strategies focus on babies and toddlers, preschoolers, and young children facing especially harsh early circumstances. All have been used in low-income communities and work best if embedded in a larger community effort to promote resilience and build on the strengths that exist in families and communities. Both an Executive Summary and the full report are available at http://nccp.org/pub_rps05.html

Ready Schools Have Strong Partnerships with Parents and the Community

Building Culturally and Linguistically Competent Services
<http://www.aecf.org/publications/data/cctoolkit.pdf>

From the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this tool kit defines cultural and linguistic competence and provides guidance, tools, and resources that will assist communities in building culturally and linguistically competent services and practices related to young children and families. It supports a holistic approach by encouraging cultural and linguistic competence across all systems that serve young children and their families so children can enter school ready to learn.

Maryland's Recommendations for Increasing Family and Community Involvement in Schools
http://www.ncpie.org/ncpie_update/M-PACArticleNov2005.pdf

The **Maryland** State Board of Education has recently adopted recommendations presented by the Maryland Parent Advisory Council (M-PAC) aimed at strengthening parent involvement in public education. The report completed by M-PAC encompasses five themes: (1) Communication; (2) Leadership; (3) Training; (4) Partnership; and, (5) Accountability. Some of the suggestions include mandatory

participation by parents on the State Board of Education, an emphasis on training in the field of parent involvement for parents and educators and a recommendation for local level districts to include parent satisfaction as a factor in staff reviews and assessments. To read additional suggestions for strengthening parent involvement at the Board and school district level, go to:
http://www.ncpie.org/ncpie_update/M-PACArticleNov2005.pdf

Ready Schools: Other Resources, Publications and Sites of Interest

Getting There: PK-3 as Public Education's Base Camp
<http://www.fcd-us.org/PDFs/2005AnnualReport1.pdf>

This 2004-2005 report from the Foundation for Child Development includes a description of PK-3 programs in New York, Chicago, Seattle, and Union City, NJ. The author makes the case that PK-3 gets children ready to learn and estimates the cost to implement PK-3 nationwide. There's also a list of PK-3 online resources.

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 Susan Taylor at susant@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.