



Ready Schools

The e-Newsletter of the CCSSO School Readiness Project

Issue 3 September 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

Starting School: Effective Transitions

<http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/dockett.html>

Starting School: Effective Transitions focuses on effective transition-to-school programs and reports on the research conducted by the Starting School Research Project. The authors remind us that effective transition programs are contextually relevant and suggest that transition-to-school programs should not be prescriptive. Guidelines for effective transition-to-school programs include the following:

- establish positive relationships between the children, parents, and educators;
- facilitate each child's development as a capable learner;
- differentiate between "orientation-to-school" and "transition-to-school" programs;
- draw upon dedicated funding and resources;
- involve a range of stakeholders;
- are well planned and effectively evaluated;
- are flexible and responsive;
- are based on mutual trust and respect;
- rely on reciprocal communication among participants; and
- take into account contextual aspects of community and of individual families and children within that community.

The paper provides examples of effective strategies and transition programs implemented by various groups. You may download the paper for viewing at: <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v3n2/dockett.html>

Terrific Transitions: Supporting Children's Transition to Kindergarten is a website developed through collaborative efforts of the [SERVE Regional Educational Laboratory](#) and the [National Head Start](#)

[Association](#). You will find a wide variety of transition information and resources for families, professionals, and community partnerships. Visit the website at <http://www.terrifictransitions.org/>.

Early Education Transitions

<http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/transition/movingon.htm>

The **Wisconsin** Department of Public Instruction has developed a website that provides information relative to the transition into kindergarten. This web site, *Early Education Transitions*, is sponsored by the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP) which includes over 44 public and private agencies that represents children and families in the state. Together they are dedicated to facilitating the development and implementation of a plan to permit every child and family in the state (Wisconsin) access to a blended, comprehensive delivery system for high quality early childhood care and education.

Kindergarten Transition Study

<http://first5ventura.org/publications/KinderTransitionSpReport.pdf>

The Center for Excellence in Early Childhood Development conducted a study to identify the extent to which effective transition practices were being implemented in Ventura County (California). Although the report is specific to Ventura County, the recommendations provided within the report will be useful to others:

- Ensure that all children have the opportunity to attend a high quality preschool that includes a developmental screening, a transition plan and a standardized reporting process from preschool teachers to kindergarten teachers.
- Expand programs such as “Bridging the Gap” to encourage effective communication and coordination between preschool and kindergarten teachers and to better align prekindergarten and kindergarten programs.
- Include kindergarten teacher participation in the kindergarten registration process to generate a tentative class list and provide parents and teachers with an opportunity to meet.
- Generate class lists sooner so teachers can make contact with families and children before the school year begins.
- Encourage more informal personal contacts between kindergarten teachers and parents before and after the start of the school year.
- Train and hire transition coordinators in each school district.
- Incorporate training on effective transition practices into community college course work.

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

“Because children who are ‘ready for school’ need schools that are ‘ready for children,’ effective schools also work to create a continuum of developmentally appropriate environments and strong educational strategies throughout the primary grades so that children’s progress is not lost when they enter the more demanding world of K-12.” This report, *School’s Readiness for Children*, is offered by the First 5 California School Readiness Initiative and provides specific examples and promising practices toward becoming a ready school. Read this 6 page document online at:

<http://www.healthychild.ucla.edu/First5CAReadiness/materials/practitioner/SRPractitionerBrief.SchoolsCapacity.pdf>

Ready Schools Ensure High Quality Learning Environments

A project providing a unique, comprehensive approach to improving literacy, reading readiness and social-emotional functioning of children from birth to five years of age was recently implemented in Pinellas County (Florida). [The Early Learning Opportunities \(ELO\) Act: Impact on Early Childhood Educators and Preschool Children](#) project offered opportunities for caregivers and teachers from publicly funded and private children’s programs to increase their level of professional education, earn college credit, gain early literacy teaching skills, receive tools and materials for their classrooms, and promote healthy social-emotional development in the children they serve.

The project provided teacher educator opportunities within a college course whose framework and structure was based on the HeadsUp! Reading (HUR) curriculum. “While ELO was directed toward teachers, the overall goal was to accelerate early literacy development in the students of the teachers targeted,” said Kathi Armstrong, PI of the project. “Numerous resources were provided to the ELO teachers, such as books for classroom libraries, props for dramatic play and story telling, and magnetic alphabet letters with display boards.”

The project also implemented the use of Literacy Coaches who visited teachers in their childcare settings. During the coaching sessions, the coaches engaged in a cycle of observing the teacher, providing feedback, modeling instructional strategies, and setting goals for the teacher for subsequent coaching sessions.

More information about this project can be found in the 54 page report, [The Early Learning Opportunities \(ELO\) Act: Impact on Early Childhood Educators and Preschool Children](#) located at: http://cfs.fmhi.usf.edu/cfsnews/cfsnews_pubs/ELOevaluation.pdf

Ready Schools Have Strong Partnerships with Parents and the Community

The **Wisconsin** Department of Public Instruction has posted several examples of practices and programs that schools and districts can use to encourage family and community support of children's learning. To view the webpage, *Making your Family-Community Partnership Work: A Checklist for Schools*, go to: <http://dpi.wi.gov/fscp/bbchekpg.html>.

Developing and Sustaining Research-Based Programs of School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Summary of Five Years of National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) Research
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/Research%20Summary.pdf>

Researchers associated with the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) conducted studies over the past five years that add information on how to improve partnership program development and how family and community involvement contribute to student achievement. Essential elements for effective leadership and programs of school, family and community partnerships include: leadership, teamwork, action plans, implementation of plans, funding, collegial support, evaluation, and networking. Data from school districts in NNPS revealed that three factors affected district leadership and district leaders' impact on school programs: (1) years of experience and time on partnerships; (2) use of NNPS planning and evaluation tools and technical assistance; and (3) the district leaders' direct assistance to schools. For more information about the essential elements of effective partnerships and additional data on results of family and community involvement for student achievement and success in school, read this report (3 pages) at <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/Research%20Summary.pdf>.

Strengthening Partnerships: Community School Assessment Checklist
<http://www.communityschools.org/assessmentnew.pdf>

This tool contains a series of checklists to assist school and community leaders in creating and/or strengthening community school partnerships. The first checklist helps you to assess the development of your community school partnership. The second checklist helps you to take inventory of existing programs and services in or connected to your school that support children, youth, families, and other community residents. The third checklist helps you to catalogue the funding sources that support these programs and services. Once completed, these checklists can serve as a planning tool to develop strategies to strengthen your partnership, improve coordination of existing programs and services, and/or to expand current levels of support.

Ready Schools: Other Resources, Publications and Sites of Interest

Embracing the Future: Educating all of South Carolina

http://www.sceoc.org/PDF/CommonGround_NCHEMS.pdf

This paper examines how South Carolina can integrate its educational delivery systems to improve student achievement and system excellence. Readers are provided a brief overview of the concept of P-16 education reform as well as an outline of the skills students need to master as they move through the education pipeline.

Recommendations to improve student transitions from early learning to kindergarten are provided on page 20 of the document.

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. The PDF version of this newsletter is available at the following URL:

<http://www.ccsso.org/content/pdfs/RSNewsletterSept05.pdf>

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.